

## **Lesson 15 - TRUTHFULNESS**

*Opening chants, meditation and review of last lesson.*

*Question to think about before the story:* Have you ever been afraid to tell the truth because someone may be disappointed or angry at you if you told the truth?

### **Story: Ven. Rahula and the Dipper**

The Buddha's son was ordained as a monk when he was only seven years old. He obeyed the older monks, was well disciplined, and was eager to learn. One day, when Ven. Rahula was 11 years old, he saw the Buddha coming to visit. Ven. Rahula prepared a seat for the Buddha and some water with a dipper to wash the feet. When the Buddha arrived, he washed his feet in the water, and Ven. Rahula bowed to him and sat down. The Buddha poured a small amount of water in the water dipper and said, "Rahula, do you see a small amount of water in the dipper?" Ven. Rahula replied, "Yes, Bhante." The Buddha said, "Unless people are careful to avoid telling lies, they only have as little good in them as this little bit of water in the dipper."

The Buddha then threw the water away. He said, "Rahula, do you see the small amount of water I threw away?" Ven. Rahula said, "Yes, Bhante." The Buddha said, "Unless people are careful to avoid telling lies, the good in them is thrown away like this."

The Buddha then turned the dipper upside down. He said, "Rahula, do you see the dipper upside down?" Ven. Rahula said, "Yes, Bhante." The Buddha said, "Unless people are careful to avoid telling lies, the good in them is treated like this- overturned."

The Buddha then turned the dipper right side up. He said, "Rahula, do you see the dipper now empty?" Ven. Rahula said, "Yes, Bhante." The Buddha said, "Unless people are careful to avoid telling lies, they are as empty of good as this. Anyone who is a liar does not care about his future, and he will do any evil act."

The Buddha continued, "Suppose a man rides a big elephant in battle, and the elephant fights with his four feet, his head, his ears, his tusks and even his tail, but not with his trunk. The man on his back would think, 'This elephant has not yet devoted his life to defending the king, because he is not making effort in all the ways that he can.' If the elephant uses his trunk also, then the man would think, 'Now the elephant has devoted his life to defending the king, because he is making effort in all the ways that he can. Now he needs no more training.' So, Rahula, you must train yourself in this way. Following Dharma in some ways is not enough. You must follow Dharma in all the ways that you can. You must train yourself never to speak a lie even for a joke."

The Buddha asked, "Rahula, what is a mirror for?" Ven. Rahula answered, "To look at yourself, Bhante." The Buddha said, "In the same way, you should keep

looking at yourself; look at the acts of your body, your speech and your mind. Look at each act, *before* you act, and think, ‘Would this act lead to my own harm? Would this act lead to harm to others? Would this act lead to harm to both myself and others?’ Then you must not do that wrong act. Before you act, think, ‘Would this act lead to no harm to me? Would this act lead to no harm to others? Would this act lead to no harm to me nor to others?’ Then the act is good, you can do it. Also, *when* you are doing an act, think ‘Is this act going to lead to my own harm? Is this act going to lead to harm to others?’ If so, then stop doing that wrong act. Also, *after* you do an act, think about whether it was a good act or a bad act. If you realize that you have done a wrong act, then you must confess it to me or to the other monks, and not do it again.”

*Questions after the story:*

1. What is the meaning of the little bit of water in the dipper?
2. What is the meaning of throwing away the water from the dipper?
3. What is the meaning of the dipper held upside down?
4. What is the meaning of the empty dipper held right side up?
5. What is the meaning of the elephant who uses his feet, head, ears, tusks and tail, but not his trunk?

*Quotation of Buddha about the moral of the story:*

**“Ekaṃ Dhammaṃ atītassa, musāvādissa jantuno, viṭṭṇaparalokassa, natthi pāpaṃ akāriyaṃ.”**

**“For a liar who has violated the one Dharma virtue of truthfulness, he does not care about his future in his next lives, and he will do any evil act.”**

Dhammapada 176 (13:10)

*Application of the moral(s) in the story to our daily lives:*

Most of us avoid lying. That is the fourth Precept: *Musavada veramani sikkhāpadam samādayami*. Every religion teaches not to lie. So we know this is one of the most important virtues, to speak the truth and not to lie. But there may be many times when we are tempted to lie. Can you think of any examples? When we don’t want to be punished. When we are worried that someone will be upset, angry or disappointed in us if we tell the truth. Or when we would be embarrassed to tell the truth. How do you feel if you say these kinds of lies? We might feel better for a while when we lie, because we avoided getting in trouble, or avoided getting embarrassed.

There are many different types of lies. Can you think of some? Saying “I didn’t do it” when we did something wrong. Saying “OK I will,” and we really don’t intend to. Saying “I’ll call you tomorrow,” and we don’t intend to call. That is an untruth, a false promise. Saying, “I did it,” when we didn’t do it yet, but we are thinking that we *will* do it and they won’t find out that we didn’t do it yet -- that is a lie, because we really did not do it.

Sometimes we may exaggerate - tell something more extreme than it really was to make it more interesting, but not true. Have you ever said that something happened but you really did not know for sure whether it happened? This may start gossip or spread rumors. Have you ever said you have done something that you have never really done before? That might be bragging. Has anyone ever told you something unusual or upsetting, and then laughed at you for believing it? We see this type of behavior on television sometimes. Or someone tells you something that makes you angry, to see your reaction, and then says "just joking." We may say things that sound nice but are dishonest, like "I like your haircut" when we think it looks horrible. These are all dishonest, types of lies.

Isn't it OK to tell little lies? So many people do. We may think it is OK to lie to prevent a friend from getting in trouble, or to prevent someone from getting angry at us and causing an argument. But the Buddha told Ven. Rahula that all lies, even lies that are jokes, should not be told.

Why do you think it is so important not to lie? Lying very easily becomes a bad habit. Often, one lie leads to another one. If we lie, we may have to tell another lie to avoid getting caught in our first lie. We have to remember our lies and we may have to repeat them so we don't get caught lying. When we get away with saying little lies, then we tell more and more lies. We try to make our lies very convincing because we don't want to get caught lying. Then, as we get away with more and more lies, we become confident that we won't get caught. We become a skilled liar. We can remember the Buddha holding only a little water in the dipper - we may think we are good, but if we lie, we only have a little good in us. When we lie more, then the good in us will be thrown away.

Another reason to avoid telling lies is to avoid hurting others with our lies. We know how much it hurts us when someone lies to us, or lies about us to others, or when someone tells us they will do something and they don't, or when we get in trouble because of their lie. So we also should not hurt others by doing those things. Also, we know how much it hurts our parents if they find out we lied.

Another reason to avoid lying is to maintain our self-respect. When we can't trust someone, when someone tends to lie, how do we feel? We lose respect for them. Similarly, others lose respect for us if we lie, even if we say little lies. We can remember the Buddha holding the dipper upside down.

Another important reason to avoid lying is that it leads to other wrong behavior. We get tempted to do wrong things if we think we can just lie to avoid getting caught. We may enjoy the thrill of doing wrong things, and do more wrong things, lying to avoid getting caught. This is what the Buddha meant when he said that if we do not avoid telling lies, we will have no goodness in us, like the empty dipper, and when he said "... a liar ... will do any evil act."

It is always best to avoid telling a lie. Instead, we can say the truth in a kind way, confess and apologize for our wrongdoing, explain the facts, or just stay silent. If

we are afraid of telling the truth, we can say, “I don’t want to upset you, but I want to tell you the truth.” We can remember that good friends are impressed with us when we are truthful, honest, trustworthy, and when they can rely on our word. They are not as impressed with lies, whether jokes, gossip, false promises, exaggeration, or bragging. We should watch what we say, like looking at ourselves in a mirror, to make sure we do not say even small lies. Noticing when we lie is important, because if we don’t notice them, then we can’t stop them. We should not be afraid to admit to ourselves when we have lied, because that helps us to become more truthful.

*Activity to reinforce the lesson: Fill in the Blanks:*

I SHOULD NOT LIE BECAUSE . . .

1. I will lose the \_\_\_\_\_ in me.
2. Lying becomes a bad \_\_\_\_\_.
3. “\_\_\_\_\_ veramani sikkhapadam samādayami” is one of the 5 Precepts.
4. Good friends will lose \_\_\_\_\_ for me.
5. I will have to \_\_\_\_\_ my lies to avoid getting caught lying.
6. Other people will not \_\_\_\_\_ me if I lie.
7. If I tell one lie, I may make up \_\_\_\_\_ lies to avoid getting caught lying.
8. Lies \_\_\_\_\_ others.
9. I would feel very \_\_\_\_\_ if I got caught lying.
10. Lies lead to other \_\_\_\_\_ behavior.

WORD BOX:

HURT	TRUST	REMEMBER	GOODNESS	WRONG
HABIT	ASHAMED	MUSAVADA	MORE	RESPECT

*Closing chant:* Sabbe sattā bhavantu sukhittā!      May all beings have happy minds!