

## **Lesson 30 – AVOID CONFLICT**

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

*Question to think about before the story:* In your school, do you have cliques, or groups of kids who are not friendly with other kids outside the group?

### ***Story: Devadatta Divides the Sangha***

After Devadatta lost his reputation trying to kill the Buddha, he didn't want the Buddha to have all the honor, respect and attention. So he thought of how he could destroy it. He talked to his friend Kokālika, and said, "Let's create a disagreement in that monk Gautama's Sangha." Kokālika replied, "The monk Gautama is very powerful, so how can we do that?" Devadatta already had an idea: "Let's ask five requests that would lead to a monk's greater self-control. He won't grant these requests, but people will see that we are superior to them, because they admire self-control."

So Devadatta went with monks who were his followers to visit the Buddha. They bowed, and Devadatta said, "You teach that it is good to have few wishes, to be content, and to get rid of impurities. Here are five ways that will lead to these things: (1) bhikkshus live in the forest their whole life, not in villages; (2) they only beg for food, not receive food at people's homes; (3) they only wear rags sewn together into robes, and not accept robes from laypersons; (4) they only live at the foot of a tree, not in a building; and (5) they not eat any fish or meat or else they get punished." The Buddha said, "Let him who wishes to live in the forest and him who wishes to live in a village do so, let him who wishes to beg for food and him who wishes to eat at houses do so, let him who wishes to wear rags and him who wishes to wear robes from householders do so, and let him who wishes to live at the root of a tree do so but not during the rainy season. Fish and meat may be eaten if it is not seen or heard or suspected to have been killed for the monk personally."

Devadatta was happy that his plan worked, saying "The Buddha does not grant these five requests." He and his followers bowed and left. Devadatta went to the town, Rajagaha, and told the people there about the five rules that the Buddha refused to accept and told them that he and his followers vowed to obey the rules. Some people were persuaded by Devadatta, thinking, "These monks are really self-controlled, but the monk Gautama likes to have luxuries."

The bhikkshus heard about it, and reported it to the Buddha, who then asked Devadatta, "Are you trying to create a disagreement in the Sangha?" Devadatta admitted that was what he was doing. The Buddha told him, "Don't create a disagreement in the Sangha. It is a very bad karma leading to life in a hell-world. But reuniting the Sangha leads to great merit and rebirth in a heaven-world."

In the morning, when Ven. Ananda went out to receive food in the town, Devadatta saw him and said, "Friend Ananda, from today I will carry on with my

sangha apart from the Sangha of the Buddha.” Devadatta then met with many monks and had them vote on whether they would follow the five extra rules of Devadatta. Five hundred new monks voted in favor of his rules. So, Devadatta took these 500 monks with him to another town.

Ven. Sariputta and Ven. Moggallana told the Buddha about what Devadatta had done. The Buddha told them to go to them before they are ruined. Ven. Sariputta and Ven. Moggallana traveled to where Devadatta was teaching a large crowd, including the 500 monks. Devadatta announced, “See, bhikkshus, I am teaching the Dharma well. Even the chief disciples of the monk Gautama have come to me.” Kokālika warned Devadatta not to trust them, but Devadatta said they were welcome since they came to hear his teaching. After he taught for awhile, he invited Ven. Sariputta to teach for awhile, since Devadatta’s back was hurting. Devadatta then lay down in the same posture like the Buddha usually lays down, and he fell asleep.

Ven. Sariputta taught Dharma to the crowd, and then Ven. Moggallana gave Dharma teachings. Hearing them, the crowd fully understood the Buddha’s teaching that all that arises must end. Then Ven. Sariputta said he was going back to the Buddha and whoever believes the Buddha’s Dharma is welcome to join him. When Ven. Sariputta and Ven. Moggallana got up to leave, the 500 monks came with them. Kokālika saw what happened and woke up Devadatta, saying, “See, you shouldn’t have trusted them.” Devadatta was so angry and jealous that he felt as if hot blood was pouring from his mouth.

When Ven. Sariputta and Ven. Moggallana arrived back at the Buddha’s monastery, the Buddha told them that Devadatta will die a miserable death because he tried to imitate the Buddha. He said that Devadatta’s mind is obsessed with getting things, being famous, and being honored, and worried about not getting things, not being famous, not being honored, and thinking about evil wishes and evil friends. He said that these things will lead to unhappy rebirths.

*Questions after the story:*

1. Why did Devadatta want to create a disagreement in the Sangha?
2. What were his five rules?
3. Did the Buddha agree to those rules?
4. What did Devadatta do when the Buddha did not accept the rules?
5. Why did some people like Devadatta’s rules?
6. What did the Buddha say would happen to Devadatta?

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

**“Jayam veram pasavati, dukkham seti parājito, upasanto sukham seti, hitvā jayaparājayam.”**

**“Victory causes enemies; the defeated live in pain. Happily the peaceful ones live, rejecting both victory and defeat.”**

Dhammapada 201 (15:5)

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

Devadatta had strong desires to be famous, a great Dharma teacher, honored and respected, with many students. In other words, he wanted to be popular. He was still angry at the Buddha for not letting him lead the Sangha, which made him feel unimportant and unworthy. So he also felt revengeful. He thought he would be happy if he could ruin the Buddha's reputation and become the great important leader of monks. So, he tried to divide up the monks, so the Buddha and his followers would be the enemy and the loser, and he would be the great famous monk, the winner. He wanted to "win" the monks over to be under his leadership by a trick of making them think he was better, more disciplined, than the Buddha.

Do you know people who want to be popular and who are egoistic, self-centered and arrogant? These are the conditions that lead a person to manipulate others, or to control them. This kind of person is selfish - he doesn't care much about how happy people are, as long as they admire him and do what he wants them to do. He may say or do things to impress them, or to make them stay away from his rivals. So, he tries to make others look bad, they say bad things about them, insult them, laugh at them, and spread rumors. Being self-centered, he may have the best clothes and newest gadgets. He may imitate the style of music or movie stars, like Devadatta tried to imitate the Buddha. Because of his confidence and style, others admire him and hope he will be their friend. A clique, or group of friends forms, who follow this person, who are influenced by this person. He or she often controls what they do, and controls who their friends are. Similarly, the 500 monks were like a clique, greatly influenced by Devadatta, until Ven. Sariputta and Ven. Moggallana came and taught them.

Are you in a clique, or have you ever tried to be part of one? Some cliques may start conflicts with others who are not part of the group. Sometimes these groups engage in misbehavior, daring deeds, bullying, or fights. If a person who is part of the group doesn't cooperate or join in, he may be ridiculed, rejected, or insulted. This is peer pressure. These types of cliques are not true friends, because they are not based on loving-kindness and compassion. We should be very aware of who our real friends are, and not be led into following people with wrong ideas, like the 500 monks were fooled into following Devadatta.

We should remember that it is not important to win or lose popularity, or win or lose admiration of a clique. Trying to win popularity leads to conflicts, and it leads to painful feelings when we don't win against a rival, or when we win but worry that a rival will try to attack us in some way.

*Activity to reinforce the lessons:* Matching: For each group of words, draw a line from each word in the first column to the correct description in the second column:

Group A:

Ven. Sariputta	Robe offering ceremony at end of Rainy Season
Ven. Angulimala	Generous man who donated a monastery
Ven. Ananda	Cousin of the Buddha who hated him
Visakha	A chief disciple of the Buddha
Anathapindika	Generous woman who donated a monastery & monks' food
Sopaka	Buddha's attendant who helped wash sick monk
Gautami	Murderer who became a great monk
Rahula	Boy who was left in the cemetery
Devadatta	Siddhartha's foster mother who was the first bhikkshuni
Katina	Prince Siddhartha's son

---

Group B:

Forbearance	Too much concern about how we look
Merit	The opposite of revenge
Humility	Personal quality we gain if we practice Dharma
Diligence	Admiring good qualities
Vanity	Earned by good deeds and practicing Dharma
Reverence	Opposite of arrogance
Confidence	Doing with great interest and attention

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