



Devadatta, the arch enemy of the Buddha, tamed by Metta (loving kindness)

Every person in one way or another has to face the animosity and hostility from an associate when the relationship breaks down. This is explicitly exposed by the statement a person makes such as "even the Buddha had a Devadattaya" to console him/her self. Ironically, this comes through generations, especially among the rural folk, and no one would dare to challenge it as it is well accepted by the community in whatever

"Hatred is never ceased by hatred. It is appeased by non-hatred. This is an eternal law."

The Dhammapada is a concise encyclopaedia of the teachings of the Buddha that have deeply influenced the lives of man and woman the world over.

The story of Devadatta not only explains the personality and the life of Devadatta but also the great, noble qualities of the Buddha. He did always show his kindness, love and compassion (Metta) to all beings, and even to his arch enemy Devadatta who planned systematically to kill the Buddha and take over the leadership



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form they have experienced or heard about it. The story of Devadatta with his life-long animosity against the Buddha is a classic example of this trend.

The verse in the Dhammapada – stanza number 5 in Yamaka Vagga – says:

"Nahi verena verani
Sammanti'da kudachanang
Averenacha sammanti
Esadhammo sananthano," meaning

of the Buddha Sasana.

Devadatta is the son of King Suppabuddha and his wife Pamita, an aunt of the Buddha. Devadatta's sister was Yasodhara and her marriage to Prince Siddhartha, who later attained Buddhahood, made him both a cousin and the brother-in-law of the Buddha.

While Princes Siddhartha and Devadatta were walking in a forest, Devadatta shot at a flying stork with his bow and arrow. A skilled

Devadatta got the ferocious Nalagiri elephant intoxicated with alcohol - perhaps toddy- and led it to kill the Buddha.

Devadatta failed to kill the Buddha. King Bimbisara was a devoted supporter of the Buddha and so was Ajatasattu in his relationship with Devadatta.

Failing to kill the Buddha by two hired men, Devadatta wanted to kill the Buddha by himself. He climbed to the summit of the Vultures' Rock (Gijukula Pavva) and pushed a big boulder on to the head of the Buddha down the slope of the Rock where the Buddha used regularly to have his usual walk. It struck another rock and missed the target but a splinter struck the foot of the Buddha, causing a wound and blood to flow.

After some time, Devadatta got the ferocious Nalagiri elephant intoxicated with alcohol - perhaps toddy- and led it to kill the Buddha. But the Buddha, by his power of Metta (loving-kindness), tamed the elephant which left the place peacefully.

Because of his several futile attempts to kill the Buddha, he started planning another strategy to grab the Buddhahood. He got the support of 500 monks to create a split in the Order of monks by requesting the Buddha to agree to five additional rules such as live all their lives in the forest, live only on alms obtained by begging, wear robes made from rags obtained from dustbins and cemeteries, live at the foot of trees, and refrain from eating fish or meat throughout their lives. Devadatta knew they would be refused by the Buddha which he did. These new monks left the Buddha and accepted Devadatta as their leader. Venerable Sariputta and Maha Moggallana, the two chief disciples of the Buddha, intervened and explained to the monks the disastrous effect of those new set of rules and won them over. The monks went back to the Buddha's Order of monks.

Years later, Devadatta fell ill and wanted to see the Buddha before his death. While he was on his way to meet the Buddha, he reached the gate of Jetavana Vihara where the Buddha was living, and fell dead.

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