



The Three Teachings of Prajā-pati

Discuss the title.

Display slide 1 from the Google Slides. Then transition to slide 2: allow some discussion for the question: Why do you think self-control, generosity, and compassion are important for everyone?

Introduction to the story.

- Explain that today we are going to read a story from Ancient India about Prajā-pati, called the “Grandfather,” and his three groups of descendants: the radiant ones (*devas*), humans, and selfish ones (*asuras*). Each group asks Prajā-pati for a teaching, and they each hear the same syllable, “Da,” but understand it in a different way. The story reminds us that self-control, generosity, and compassion are important for all people. (See slide 3.)

Meet the Characters

Using slide 4, discuss the main characters. Allow students to discuss the question with a partner: What do you think each group will learn in this story?

Key Vocabulary

See Slides 5-10

Spend a few minutes discussing each of the words on slides 5-10. Allow students to share examples relating to each of the words.

Pre-Reading

See Slide 11

Discuss the following question: *Which of these do you think is the hardest to practice: self-control, generosity, or compassion? Why?* Allow students to freely walk around the room discussing this with classmates for two minutes.

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During Reading

See Slides 12-15

Allow students to discuss each of the questions shown on slides 12, 13, 14, and 15 as you read. Pause at appropriate times to allow for clarification and reflection.

Post Reading

See Slides 16-18.

Allow students to discuss each of the questions shown on slides 16–18. Consider discussing each question using a whole group approach or a Think-Pair-Share strategy.

Connect to Your Life.

See Slide 19.

Using the provided worksheet (*Connect to Your Life – The Three Teachings of Prajā-pati*), have students draft a response to the Connect to Your Life questions.

Extension Activities

- Three “Da” Journal
 - Students keep a three to five-day journal where they record times they practiced self-control, generosity, or compassion.
- Illustration Challenge
 - Students create three illustrations showing examples of each teaching in everyday life.
- Classroom “Da” Reminder
 - As a class, create a poster with the three “Da” lessons to hang in the classroom as a reminder.
- Teamwork Challenge Game
 - See the instructions labeled “Da! Da! Da! The Three Challenge Relay”

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Adapted for the Classroom:

A long time ago, the Grandfather Prajā-pati was the wise teacher of three groups:

- the *devas* (the radiant ones)
- the *manuṣyas* (humans), and
- the *asuras* (selfish ones).

Each group lived with him for a while as his students.

First, the radiant ones came to him and said, “Teach us, Sir!”

Prajā-pati said only one sound: “*Da*.” Then he asked, “Do you understand?”

The radiant ones said, “Yes! You mean “*damayata*” — ‘Be self-controlled.’”

Prajā-pati smiled and said, “Yes, you have understood it correctly.”

Next, the humans came and said, “Teach us, Sir!”

Again, Prajā-pati said, “*Da*.” “Do you understand?” he asked.

The humans replied, “Yes! You mean *Datta* — ‘Be generous and charitable.’”

Prajā-pati said, “Yes, you have understood it correctly.”

Finally, the selfish ones came and said, “Teach us, Sir!”

Once again, Prajā-pati said, “*Da*.” “Do you understand?” he asked.

The selfish ones answered, “Yes! You mean “*dayadhvam*” — ‘Be compassionate.’”

Prajā-pati said, “Yes, you have understood it correctly.”

From that day on, whenever the storm clouds thunder in the sky, they seem to say “*Da! Da! Da!*”

It is a reminder for everyone:

- Be self-controlled.
 - Be generous.
 - Be compassionate.
-

Each of us has a little bit of the radiant, human, and selfish inside.

- The radiant part needs self-control, so we don’t become greedy or proud.
- The human part needs generosity, so we don’t think only about ourselves.
- The selfish part needs compassion, so we truly understand others and ourselves.

Self-control, generosity, and compassion are three important qualities that help us grow and live wisely.

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Original: The Three Teachings of Prajā-pati

Once all three descendants of the Grandfather Prajā-pati - the radiant ones (*devas*), the humans, and the selfish ones (*asuras*), lived with him for some time as students.

One day, the radiant ones approached the Grandfather and said, “Teach us, Sir!”

In reply, the Grandfather uttered one syllable, ‘Da.’ Then he said, “Have you understood?”

They answered, “Yes, we have understood. You said to us, Damayata, Be self-controlled.”

“Yes,” agreed the Grandfather, “you have understood.”

Then the humans went to the Grandfather and said, “Teach us, Sir.”

Prajā-pati uttered the same syllable, ‘Da.’ Then he asked the humans, “Have you understood?”

They answered, “Yes, we have understood. You said to us, Datta, Be charitable.”

“Yes,” agreed the Grandfather, “you have understood.”

Finally, it was the turn of the selfish ones. They went to the Grandfather and said, “Teach us, Sir.”

The Grandfather uttered the same syllable, ‘Da.’ Then he said, “Have you understood?”

They said, “Yes, we have understood. You told us Dayadhvam—Be compassionate.”
“Yes,” agreed the Grandfather, “you have understood.”

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Every time the storm cloud thunders, it says 'Da! Da! Da!' And that reminds us to be self-controlled, to be charitable, and to be compassionate.

For the radiant part in each individual, the guidance given by the Grandfather is to be self-controlled. Without self-control, one gets caught up in the splendors and riches and becomes egoistic. For the human part in each individual, the guidance given is to be charitable, generous, and giving. Without this, one gets completely caught up by one's limitedness. For the selfish part in each individual, the teaching given is to be compassionate. Without this, one becomes the slayer of oneself.

Self-control, generosity, and compassion indeed are three essential disciplines of spiritual progress.

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Game Title: “Da! Da! Da! – The Three Challenge Relay”

Goal: Students work in teams to complete three challenges, each linked to one of the Grandfather’s lessons: **self-control**, **generosity**, and **compassion**.

Setup:

- Divide students into small teams (3–5 students each).
- Place three stations around the room, each with a different challenge.
- Label the stations “Self-Control,” “Generosity,” and “Compassion.”

Station 1 – Self-Control

- **Activity:** A “quiet balance” challenge — each team member must walk across a taped line on the floor while holding a book on their head *without talking or laughing*.
- **Lesson tie-in:** Students must stay focused and control their impulses to succeed.

Station 2 – Generosity

- **Activity:** Teams are given a small pile of tokens (counters, beads, etc.). They must “gift” at least half their tokens to another team *without losing their own chance to complete the game*.
- **Lesson tie-in:** Students see how giving can help others without leaving them with nothing.

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Station 3 – Compassion

- **Activity:** One team member is “injured” (pretends they can’t walk) and must be guided or carried (safely) by their teammates to the finish line.
- **Lesson tie-in:** Students work together to help someone who can’t complete the task alone.

Winning the Game:

- The first team to complete all three stations wins, *but* the teacher emphasizes that the real goal is to practice the three “Da” lessons while working together.

Connect to Your Life – *The Three Teachings of Prajā-pati*

Name: _____

Think About It: In the story, Prajā-pati gave the same sound “Da” to the radiant ones, humans, and selfish ones. Each group understood a different lesson — to be self-controlled, to be generous, and to be compassionate. These three lessons are important for everyone, no matter who they are or where they live.

1 Practicing Self-Control

Think of a time when you had to control your actions, feelings, or words.

- What happened?
- Why was self-control important at that moment?

2 Working Together as a Team

Describe a time when you gave something — your time, help, or resources to someone else.

- What did you give?
- How did it make the other person feel?

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3 Acting with Compassion

Think of a time when you helped someone who was hurt, sad, or having a hard time.

What did you do?

How did showing compassion make you feel?

Optional Drawing Activity:

Draw three small scenes: one showing self-control, one showing generosity, and one showing compassion.