

Jataka Stories for Kids



Radhika Abeysekera

For Kalin and Kaveen

Preface

This book is a collection of bedtime stories that I shared with our grandsons. We live about 5,000 km away from our daughter, and it was a fun way of introducing some Dhamma stories to our grandkids and interacting with them.

The stories are written for a child of about eight to ten years. However, they can be narrated to a younger child by a parent or a teacher by simplifying and summarising the story. The book was edited by their *Nandhi* (Aunt Irushi) and their mother (our daughter, Chayanika). It was illustrated using AI (*Grok*) by their *Māma* (Uncle Chamal). It is hoped that parents and grandparents living in the West will enjoy introducing some important concepts of the Dhamma to their children as a fun activity.

The stories were selected carefully to introduce the child to the importance of good friends and morality for the practice of the spiritual path. The book also encourages questions and discussion of concepts such as rebecoming, intentional good and bad actions and their results (*kamma*), and observing the mind through reflection as they get older.

The references were included for teachers who may use the book in Dhamma schools. My gratitude to all that helped with these translations.

May all beings be well and happy,

Radhika Abeysekera

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A. The Importance of Good Friends

Venerable Ananda was grateful for the guidance he received from the Lord Buddha, and his great disciples Venerable Sāriputta and Venerable Mahā Mogallāna. He expressed his gratitude to the Buddha and said, "Half the success of the spiritual life is based on a good Dhamma friend (kalyāna mitta). The Buddha said "No Ananda. Don't say that. The whole success of the holy life is based on a good Dhamma friend".

1. Friendship - Best Friends (*Abhinha Jataka* - 27)

A long, long time ago, there was a royal bull elephant which was well fed and cared for by his mahout. As he was the King's royal elephant, he was fed rich milk, sweet rice, tender leaves and ripe fruit. Near the elephant's shed lived a scrawny, underfed puppy who was attracted by the smell of the rich food in the elephant's shed. He crawled into the elephant's shed and lapped up the droppings that fell from the royal elephant's mouth. The dog liked the food so much that he did not want to eat anywhere else. The elephant too was not disturbed by the tiny underfed puppy that did not bark or make any sound. The puppy started to visit the elephant every day and shared all his rich meals.

Before long the underfed scrawny puppy grew into a strong handsome dog. The good-natured elephant began to notice him. But the puppy who had grown up with the elephant had no fear of the royal elephant and continued his daily visit. As the dog had grown up with the elephant who had shared his food with him freely, the friendly dog too, did not bark or annoy the elephant.

Slowly, the elephant and the handsome dog became friends. In fact, the elephant would wait until the dog came to eat. Before long neither would eat without the other. They enjoyed being together and the elephant often picked him up with his trunk and swung him from side to side. They became best friends and were never separated. The playful dog began to live in the elephant's shed.

One day a wealthy man from a neighbouring village who was visiting the city, passed by the elephant's shed, saw the playful handsome dog, and wanted it. Even though the mahout did not own the dog, he sold it to the unknown man for a large sum of money.

The royal elephant was very sad and missed his best friend. He refused to eat, drink or even go to the river for his daily bath. The concerned mahout was worried that the royal elephant would die. He informed the king that the royal elephant was sick.

The king had a minister who was very fond of and good with animals. The king requested the minister to examine his elephant to find out what was wrong. The wise minister who was understanding of the ways of animals realised that the elephant was very sad. He knew that this once happy and friendly elephant was not sick. The

minister said that the royal elephant was very sad because he had lost a dear friend. The minister had seen this kind of behaviour before with other animals and even humans when they were separated from a loved one. The minister questioned the mahout if the royal elephant had a close friendship with anyone. The mahout said that the royal elephant was best friends with a stray dog that lived in the shed but that an unknown man had taken him away and he did not know where the dog was now.

The minister went back to the king and told him the full story about the elephant being very sad and missing his best friend, the stray dog. The minister advised the king to make an announcement that the villager who had taken the dog from the royal elephant's shed would be fined if he did not return it. Afraid of the king's punishment, the villager who had bought the dog released him. The dog ran joyfully back to the city and in to the elephant's shed. The royal elephant was overjoyed to see his best friend. Lifting the dog with his trunk the elephant raised it and placed it on his back.



Moral - It is unusual for elephants and dogs to be friends as elephants are usually annoyed by barking dogs. But this story shows that even natural enemies can become best friends.

Reference - This story was told by the Buddha in Banares regarding a very strong friendship between an ordained elder and a lay friend. They were such close friends that the villagers went to the Buddha and asked him about their devotion and kindness to each other. The Buddha then told this story and said that even in a previous birth that they had been inseparable friends.

The Buddha then informed the villages that in the previous birth story the knowledgeable minister was the Bodhisatta (the Buddha in a past birth), the ordained elder was the royal elephant and his very close friend the layman, the dog.

2. Friendship -The Deer, Tortoise, and Woodpecker (Kurunga Miga Jataka - 206)

A long, long time ago, a deer, a tortoise, and a woodpecker who were good friends lived in harmony in the forest. Each day they would meet under a large tree close to the lake and talk and eat together. The woodpecker told them about the blue skies and the beautiful birds in the forest. The tortoise talked about the underwater plants and fish in the lake and the deer told them about the beautiful grass lands on the other side of the forest. Then when the sun went down, and it was time to sleep each went back to their own resting place.

One day a hunter saw the hoof prints of the deer near the lake and decided to trap the deer. "This deer is sure to come for water to drink" he thought. I will lay down this trap under this large tree. The hunter made a trap and placed it under the tree. The next day the deer walked past the tree and his foot got caught in the trap. "Help, help," screamed the deer. "I am caught in a trap, please help me."

The tortoise and the woodpecker heard the cries of their friend, the deer. The woodpecker flew as fast as he could to the tree and the tortoise swam out of the water to see his friend, the deer, with a rope pulled tight around his foot. "We must get him out before the hunter comes back," said the woodpecker. "I will delay the hunter by pecking him, you must bite the rope until it breaks, and his foot is released from the trap".

The tortoise started to slowly bite at the rope. Little by little he gnawed at the rope and broke the strands. His jaws hurt and his gums bled, but he did not give up. He continued biting the rope weakening and breaking the thick rope strand by strand.

Meanwhile the woodpecker flew to a tree near the hunter's hut. When the sun rose, the hunter came out of his house and walked towards the lake to check his trap. The woodpecker swooped down on him and pecked him hard. "shoo shoo", shouted the hunter. "Get away you crazy bird. Have you gone mad?" cried the hunter. But the woodpecker did not stop. The hunter went back to his hut and lied down to rest. "I will wait for that crazy bird to fly away", thought the hunter. The woodpecker squawked and made a loud noise to delay the hunter. He then flew back to the tortoise and asked him to hurry up. I have delayed the hunter but he will come in a

short time. The tortoise used all his strength and took one last bite and the rope fell away.



"Thank you, thank you" said the deer and he ran towards the thick forest. The woodpecker flew up high into the tree and hid himself. The tired tortoise started to walk towards the lake. The angry hunter came crashing through the bushes and ran toward the tortoise. "So, it was you who freed my deer," he yelled. "I have lost my deer but I will eat you instead" he thought. He grabbed the tortoise, put him into a cloth bag and walked back towards his hut.

The deer was horrified. His friend the tortoise had saved him, but was now in grave danger. He turned, came back, and showed himself to the hunter. Then running past the hunter, the deer ran back into the forest. "Ah! my deer has come back" thought the hunter. Dropping his cloth bag and the tortoise he ran after the deer.

The deer ran through the forest in circles until the hunter was totally lost. Then turning back, he came to the lake and together with the help of the woodpecker they opened the bag and freed the tortoise. Agreeing to meet at the other side of the lake the three friends each went back to safety. The tortoise walked into the lake, dived deep into the water, and swam towards the other shore.

The three friends met on the other bank far from the hunter's hut. They hugged each other joyfully. They continued their friendship and lived happily as best friends in the forest.

Moral - Friends help each other in time of need. Use your wisdom and kindness to find ways to help your friends when they are in distress.

Reference - *The Buddha told this story to the villagers when Devadatta tried to kill him by pushing a rock down a hill. The Buddha said that even in a previous birth Devadatta had tried to kill him.*

The Bodhisatta (the Buddha in a past birth) was the deer and his Chief Disciples Venerable Sāriputta and Venerable Mahā Mogallāna the turtle and the woodpecker. Devadatta had been the hunter.

3. Friendship -The Wind and the Moon (Maluta Jataka - 17)

A long, long time ago, there were two very good friends that shared a rock cave. One was a lion and the other was a tiger. This may seem strange because usually lions and tigers are not friends. They had met when they were too young to know the difference between a lion and a tiger. So, they did not think that their friendship was unusual.



They lived in a very peaceful area of the mountains near a forest and a meditating forest monk. The monk was a wise, gentle, and kind man who was friends with all of the forest animals. Often, he spoke to the animals and shared his kindness and

wisdom with them. All the animals lived in harmony because of the kindness of the gentle monk and went to him for advice.

One day the two friends got into a silly argument. It was about the cold that comes to the forest. The tiger said that the cold comes when the full moon fades (waned) to become a new moon. The lion said that the cold comes when the new moon grows (waxes) to a full moon. Both the lion and the tiger were sure that each of them was right. The argument got stronger and stronger until they started calling each other rude names. They could not settle their differences. Fearing for their friendship, they decided to seek the advice of the wise forest monk.

They visited the wise monk, bowed respectfully, and asked him, when the cold weather came to the forest. Does it come with the fading of the full moon to a new moon or the growing of the new moon to a full moon. The wise monk thought for a moment and then said the cold comes when the wind blows. The wind may blow from the north, east or west. It is the strong wind that brings the cold to our forest. He then united the two friends and said, the cold comes and the cold goes, because the seasons change. But good friends are rare. Your friendship is more important than these differences of opinion. Together you can overcome whatever harsh weather or difficulty you have to face. After thanking the wise monk for his good advice, the lion and the tiger lived happily in the forest as best friends.

Moral - Good friends should not argue and fight over small disagreements. They should seek advice from elders and wise persons.

Reference - The Buddha was living in Sāvatti when he told this story. Two ordained elders who were friends were arguing about from where the cold weather came. Unable to settle the argument they had gone to the Buddha. The Buddha told this story and said that even in the distant past they had been quarrelling about the same thing.

In this story the Buddha had been the wise hermit and the monks had been the lion and the tiger. The Bodhisatta (the Buddha in a past birth) had settled their quarrel by answering their question in the past birth too, but they could not remember the incident.

4. Friendship - A Hero named Jinx (*Kālakanni Jataka* - 83)

A long, long time ago, there was a rich man who was well known for his kind and skillful ways. He had a very good friend who had an unusual name, called Jinx¹. They had been friends from childhood and used to make mud pies together when they were little. They had gone to the same school, played and studied together and helped each other in many ways.

After graduating from school, Jinx, who came from a poor family, had a hard time finding a suitable job. Jinx decided to go to his friend who was a rich businessman for help in finding a job. After comforting him, the rich man who trusted his friend Jinx decided to hire him as a manager to help with his property and business.

Jinx worked hard and learnt his friend's business well. He was a good worker and everybody liked him and asked him for help and advice. Before long Jinx was well known by all who worked for the rich man and was called for help and assistance often. The name "Jinx" was used by all the workers as they said "Do this Jinx, do that Jinx, hurry up Jinx, I need your help Jinx" throughout the day.

Some concerned neighbours who heard the name "Jinx" being used often in the rich man's property went to the rich businessman and said, "Dear friend, we are concerned that some misfortune may come to you. The name "Jinx" is an unlucky name and it is heard throughout the day on your property. People use the word "Jinx" when misfortune or bad luck strikes them. The man named Jinx is inferior to you. He could not even find a job and he is from a poor family.

The rich man who trusted Jinx said "Jinx is my best friend. He is a lifelong friend and I have known him since we were little. We have helped each other in good times and hard times. I will not reject him and lose his friendship just because of his name". The rich man refused to follow the advice of his superstitious neighbours.

¹ *Kālakanni* -The literal translation of the term *Kālakanni* is one who wastes time. - A person who dawdles, is not focused and does not get their work done in time. Over time the term "good for nothing" was used for a person who wastes time as they could not do anything successfully and later, as everything they undertook was a failure the term Jinx. Basically, having a *Kālakanni* as an employee was believed to be a curse and brought bad luck to the business as nothing he did or touched turned out well.

Shortly after, the rich man had to go away to another city on business. He left Jinx in charge of his business and property. A gang of robbers heard that the master was going to be away from his mansion and thought that it would be a good time to rob the rich man's house. They surrounded the mansion with all kinds of weapons at night and prepared to break into the mansion.



Jinx, who was alone in the mansion, suspected that robbers would try to break into the house when his friend was gone. He ran around the mansion and made a huge noise by banging pots and pans together so that the robbers would think that there were many people in the house. Scared by the loud noises the gang of robbers

decided to get out of the property as they were outnumbered. When the neighbours heard how Jinx had prevented the robbery, they were ashamed of their accusations and praised Jinx's quick thinking and action. The rich man was very grateful and happy with his trusted friend Jinx's bravery and wisdom. He told the neighbours that they should not judge a person by his name, status or lack of wealth.

Moral - Good, trustworthy, loyal friends are hard to find. One must be grateful for the loyalty of brave good friends and not judge them by their name, appearance, status, or lack of wealth.

Reference - *This story was told by the Buddha in Sāvatti to Anāthapindika who was the Buddha's foremost male lay benefactor. Anāthapindika bought Prince Jeta's grove and built the monastery called Anāthapindikarāma in Sāvatti for the Buddha and his retinue of monks.*

Anāthapindika informed the Buddha that one day when he was away on business, he had left a loyal friend named Jinx in charge of his property and mansion. Jinx, who was brave and loyal, had saved his property from a band of robbers.

The Buddha told this past birth story and informed Anāthapindika how a loyal friend with the same name had helped the Bodhisatta (Buddha in a past birth) in the same manner. The rich man was our Bodhisatta and Jinx, his brave, loyal, trusted friend was Venerable Ananda, his personal attendant.

5. Friendship - The Travelling Salesmen (Kaccaputa, Serivaniya Jataka -3)

A long, long time ago, there were two travelling salesmen named Kaccaputa and Serivaniya who sold valuable jewellery and other goods for gold coins. They made their living by carrying their wares from village to village. They came to a new village where the road divided in a fork and decided that they would separate and part ways.

In this village there lived an old grandmother and her young granddaughter who lived in a small house. They had been rich at one time but due to grave sickness they had lost most of their family members and were very poor. Serivaniya walked past their house calling, "bangles for sale bangles for sale". The little girl ran to her grandmother and pleaded with her to buy her some bangles. The grandmother was sad. She had no money and had difficulty paying even for their food and clothes but she did not want to disappoint her granddaughter.

The grandmother went to the kitchen, took a discarded old urn² (large water bowl) that was black with soot and dirt and asked the salesman Serivaniya if he would take the bowl and give the child some bangles.

Serivaniya was a greedy and cunning salesman. The large bowl was unusually heavy. After examining the bowl carefully, he scraped the bowl with a pin and found that it was made of gold. He said, "This dirty old pot is not worth anything". Then giving the bowl back, he decided to come back later and offer a few bangles in exchange for the valuable gold bowl. He wanted to trick the poor old woman and take her golden bowl and pretend to be kind by giving a few bangles later, on the way back.

Meanwhile, the salesman Kaccaputa had finished his side of the village and started selling on the other side of the village. He too walked past the old woman's house and called out "Bangles for sale bangles for sale". The little girl ran to her grandmother for the second time and pleaded with her to buy her some bangles from the new salesman.

The old grandmother took the blackened bowl from the kitchen and saying she had no gold coins for payment asked the salesman Kaccaputa if he would take this old

² Urn - A large water bowl kept outside the house for the use of thirsty travellers. It was the custom for rich people to keep boiled, cool water outside the gate of their house for travellers.

bowl in exchange for a few bangles. Kaccaputa immediately realized the value of the heavy bowl. He too examined it carefully and took a pin and scraped the soot and dirt from the bowl. Seeing the shining gold underneath the dirt and black soot he said, "This is a golden bowl, worth about 1000 gold coins. I only have 500 gold coins with me. I will give you all the goods in my cart and all the money that I have, keeping just the boat fare. I need to cross the river back to my home".

The grandmother was overjoyed. She thanked the kind and honest salesman and accepted the exchange. She told him about the cunning, greedy salesman who had tried to cheat her by saying it was a worthless bowl. Taking the bowl Kaccaputa walked towards the river and paid the old boatman to take him across the river.



Serivaniya was just coming back to the grandmother's house to take the bowl and give a few silver bangles to the little girl, when he saw Kaccaputa in the distance crossing the river. He was very angry and ran to the river bank screaming that Kaccaputa had stolen his bowl as he had seen it first and was going to buy it himself. But he was too late. The boatman was nearing the other bank of the river and could not hear him.

Serivaniya fell on the ground and had a temper tantrum. He beat his chest with his fists and started to cry and lament. He vowed to get even with Kaccaputa someday in the future for buying the golden bowl and taking away his opportunity to cheat the old grandmother and make a huge amount of money by selling the bowl. Serivaniya burned with anger and hatred and collapsed on the grounds as though he was dead.

Moral - Be careful when you select your friends. Make sure they are good, kind and generous. Do not make friends with greedy cunning, dishonest people as they could hurt you with their foolish, bad behaviour.

Do not direct anger and hatred to anyone. Work out disagreement calmly and let go of (separate from) "friends" that quarrel and are quick to anger.

Reference - The Buddha told this story to his devotees in Sāvatti when Devadatta tried to kill him by rolling a huge rock down the hill towards him. The Buddha told this story and said that Devadatta had been the greedy salesman named Serivaniya. The Bodhisatta had been the kind and honest salesman Kaccaputa. Serivaniya had carried his anger and hatred for Kaccaputa through many births and his jealousy and anger had grown more and more over time.

6. The Taming of the Prince (*Ekapanna Jataka* - 149)

A long, long time ago, during one rainy season, an ascetic who lived in the Himalayan Mountains, left the mountains and went to the city to get some salt and other necessities. The king, impressed by the ascetic's calm and serene behaviour, invited him to live under his care in the royal park until it was time to return to his home in the mountains.

The king had a bad-tempered, uncontrollable son, who was disliked by all. None of the king's family, councillors, or ministers could advise or change him. The king asked the calm ascetic to talk to the prince and try to change his ways. The ascetic took the prince for a walk in the royal park. Then, seeing a tender seedling of a bitter tree, the ascetic picked a few leaves and asked the young prince to chew the leaves. The taste was so bitter and terrible that the angry prince screamed out some bad words and spat out the leaves. Then thinking, "if such a tender small seedling could have such bitter poisonous leaves how much more bitter, strong, and deadly would the leaves be when the tree grew large", the prince acted quickly. He pulled the seedling out of the ground and crushed it.



The wise Ascetic gently explained to the prince that the people of the kingdom felt the same way about him. They would never allow someone so fierce and bad tempered to be the king. Eventually someone would "uproot" him and force him into exile. The lesson entered the prince's heart, and his attitude changed immediately. He realised that the ascetic's words were true. The prince made an effort to be humble, gentle and kind, and after his father's death he became a wise and generous king.

Moral - Anger must be managed and restrained. It does more harm to oneself than an enemy ever could. Associate the wise. They are good friends that guide and lead you to good behaviour and happiness.

Reference - At the time of the Buddha there was a young prince who was cruel and uncontrollable, like an enraged snake. Nobody in the palace liked him or could change his ways. The king decided to take him to hear a talk from the Buddha.

The Buddha told the prince that people who acted like he did were disliked by all and have misery on earth and then again in unhappy (hell) realms after death; and this cycle of suffering would repeat for many lifetimes.

But people who show kindness and do good deeds need not fear unhappy (hell) realms. The Buddha's words were so persuasive that the prince was humbled and his heart filled with kindness and love. He changed his ways and became as gentle as a snake with no fangs, a crab with broken claws, and a bull with broken horns.

When the Buddha heard his disciples discussing his incomparable teaching ability of "taming the wild", he told them this story so that they knew that he had also tamed this prince in the past.

In this story the Bodhisatta was the ascetic. The King was Venerable Ananda, the Buddha's personal attendant.

B. The Foundation of Morality

Rahula, before you say or do something, reflect (think), Is this for my welfare/benefit and for the welfare/benefit of others. If it is, then say or do it.

Rahula, before you say or do something, reflect (think), Is this for my welfare/benefit and for the welfare/benefit of others. If it is not, then refrain from saying or doing it, use restraint.

1. Morality - The Story of the Swan (From Life Story of the Buddha)

Prince Siddhartha was a quiet, kind and reflective young boy. Often, he walked in the beautiful palace gardens which had lakes, lotus ponds and trees with many blooms. One day, when the prince was walking among the flower gardens, he saw some white trumpet swans flying over the trees towards the lake. Then, an arrow tore across the sky and hit one of the swans. With a cry of pain, the swan dived down into the trees.

Prince Siddhartha ran towards the trees and picked up the injured swan. Then holding him close to his chest he spoke to it in a soothing voice and gently removed the arrow. His teacher had taught the young prince about plants and their medicinal value. Seeing a bush of soothing herbs, he took a hand full of leaves and pressed it against the wound. Then cradling the swan, he walked slowly back towards the palace.



The silence was broken with the thrashing of bushes in the forest. Looking back, he heard Prince Devadatta shouting in a loud angry voice. He had a bow in his hand and a canister with many arrows on his back. He informed prince Siddhartha that he had shot the bird and asked him to give the bird back to him. Prince Siddhartha calmly continued to walk towards the palace and calmed the injured swan with soft gentle words.

When Devadatta had caught up with him, Prince Siddhartha said "yes Devadatta, you shot the arrow that injured the bird. But I saved its life by taking out the arrow and placing soothing medicinal herbs on the wound. The bird would have been yours if it had died. But it is alive and I saved its life. Therefore, the bird belongs to me."

Then realizing that Devadatta would not agree to his proposal, he said, "Let us take it to the king's court. His wise ministers will listen to our plea and make a decision. We will agree to their decision". The disgruntled Devadatta knew that Prince Siddhartha would not give the bird to him. The prince just continued to walk towards the palace and talked with a gentle voice to the swan. Passing the Prince, Devadatta stormed up the palace steps and opened the door of the Kings Court room.

A hush fell upon the ministers and all eyes turned towards the two young princes. Devdatta could not contain himself. In a loud voice he explained how he had shot the swan and what a good marksman he was. Prince Siddhartha who had picked up the swan before he could get to it was not giving the bird to him. He asked the court to command Siddhartha to give back his swan.

In a soft gentle voice Prince Siddhartha agreed that Devadatta had shot down the swan. He agreed that he would have given the bird to him if it had died. But the bird was alive.

The prince then explained how he had carefully taken out the arrow and placed soothing herbs on its wound. He told them how he had soothed the frightened swan with gentle words. "Look!" he said, "The swan is alive. I will take care of it until it is fully recovered and strong enough to fly. The swan is mine because I saved its life". The swan raised his graceful head and looked with gentle eyes at the king and his ministers.

The ministers discussed the case in soft voices. The decision was unanimous. The swan, they said, belongs to Siddhartha. Life, they said, belongs to its saviour, not its destroyer. Devadatta stormed out of the courtroom in anger. Prince Siddhartha

smiled and thanked the ministers and took the swan back to give it some water and food.

Moral - Do not hurt or kill any living being. All beings fear pain and death. All beings love life. Feeling for others as for yourself be kind and compassionate to all living beings.

2. Morality - The Wise Deer and the King (Saraba Miga Jataka - 483)

A Long, long time ago there lived a foolish king who liked to hunt animals for fun. Often, he would go hunting with his rich friends who would help him to catch deer and other animals that lived in the forest. The friends who were cunning and cruel would go ahead of the king and beat long wooden clubs on the ground and make noise to disturb the animals in the forest. Then the animals who were disturbed and confused would run this way and that way and it was easy for the king to shoot at them with his bow and arrow. A beautiful deer disturbed by the noise of the thumping clubs ran towards the king.

The king raised his bow and arrow and shot in the direction of the running deer. But the wise deer saw the arrow and dived down, rolled over and ran into a thicket of bushes. The cruel king, thinking that he had shot the deer, cheered and ran towards the bushes to look for the fallen deer. But when he reached the bushes, he could not find the deer.

The king's friends were not true friends. They were keeping company with the king just to get favours. They began laughing and jeering at the king saying he was a poor marksman. This made the king very angry. He ran after the deer into the forest and into a deep pond that was hidden by the thicket of bushes. The king could not swim. He started thrashing about in the deep pool in fear. The deer hearing the sound he made felt compassion for the king. He came back, jumped into the water and swam to the king and asked him to get on his back. Then with great difficulty he swam across the pool and saved the king.

The grateful king was surprised and touched by the deer's actions. He felt ashamed that he had tried to kill such a kind and courageous animal. The king asked the deer to come back to the palace with him by saying that he would protect and take care of it with good food and a safe place to sleep.



The deer, however, liked his freedom and living in the forest with the other animals. He asked the king if he would give him a wish instead of a place in the palace. The king who was very wealthy agreed. The wise deer decided to teach the king a kind and compassionate way of living. The wise deer taught him the five precepts of morality and asked him to change his ways and be a righteous (good behaviour) king. He asked the king to practice generosity and the five precepts of harmlessness. The king who had never heard of the five precepts of good behaviour or harmlessness asked the deer what it was.

The deer said:

1. **Do not kill or hurt any living being.** (Just as you do not want and are afraid of pain and death, all living beings do not want and are afraid of pain and death).

2. **Do not steal or take things that belong to another.** (Just as you do not want anyone stealing or taking things that belong to you, all living beings do not want anyone stealing or taking things that belong to them).
3. **Do not misbehave or harm any living being.** (Just as you do not want anyone misbehaving or causing any kind of harm to you, all living beings do not want any one misbehaving or harming them),
4. **Do not tell lies or use hurtful speech towards any living being.** (Just as you do not want anyone deceiving or hurting you with lies or hurtful speech, all living beings do not want anyone deceiving them with lies or hurtful speech).
5. **Do not take intoxicating drinks, drugs or food and do not encourage others to take such substances that can harm one's body or mind.** (Certain drinks, drugs and food are harmful to your body and mind)

The king had made a promise to the deer to give it a wish in gratitude for saving his life. He agreed to the advice of the wise deer. He gave up hunting and became a kind and good king. His friends who were with him also agreed to accept and follow the advice of good behaviour and harmlessness.

When the king went back to the palace, he told his ministers who helped him to rule his kingdom of the wise deer who had saved his life. They all agreed to rule the kingdom with kindness and harmlessness. Before long the king, his ministers and the people in his kingdom were all practicing generosity, kindness, and harmlessness. They also used gentle and true speech. The King and his people lived in harmony and happiness.

Moral - Before saying or doing anything reflect (check) and see if you would like others to say and do such things to you. Take the advice of the wise elders, teachers and friends and be a kind and generous person.

Do not be judgemental. People can change. A wise person can sometimes change the behaviour of another person and help him to be good. People do wrong things due to ignorance. The best way to help a person is by example.

In this story the wise deer was the Bodhisatta (Buddha in a past birth) and the king was the Buddha's personal attendant, Venerable Ananda, his friends and ministers who changed their ways and helped to rule his kingdom were ordained great disciples of the Buddha.

3. Gratitude to Mother (*Mati Posaka Jataka 455*)

A long, long time ago, there was a strong, majestic elephant who lived in the Himalayan mountains with a large herd of elephants. He took care of the herd of elephants and always ensured that they had enough food and were safe. They roamed the Himalayan mountains and forest looking for food and lived peacefully.

After some time its mother, who was old and blind, could no longer travel with the herd. Letting her rest in a cave near a lake, the lead elephant moved on with the herd in search of food. He then chose some fruit and tender leaves and asked some of his elephants in the herd to deliver it to his mother as she was old and blind and could not keep up with the herd. However, instead of taking the good food to his mother, they ate all the food themselves. The kind and caring lead elephant was sad. He left the herd and went to live with his mother in the cave near the lake so that he could take care of her. His mother was very happy that her son was living with her.



One day, the majestic lead elephant heard a man crying in the forest and went to his help. The man who was a wood cutter, said he'd been lost in the forest for seven days and could not find his way back to the city. The kind lead elephant kneeled down and told the tired man to climb on its back. Then he carried the man out of the forest so that he could find his way back to the city.

Shortly after, the king's royal elephant died. The king announced to the people of his kingdom to let him know of any elephant fit for a king. The wood cutter who was saved by the lead elephant told the king about the magnificent elephant that had saved his life, and said he could lead the king's mahouts to capture it.

The king sent the wood cutter with a large group of men, and they found the majestic elephant drinking at the lake. The majestic, strong elephant knew that if he wanted to, he could destroy the men and cause much harm and blood shed. But he did not want to hurt anyone. The elephant bowed its head and walked calmly towards them.

The king's men captured the elephant and led it down to the city where the king had decorated the streets and prepared a special stable. The lead elephant was taken to a large comfortable stable and served all kinds of fine food, but he refused to eat anything. He told them about his old, blind mother elephant who would have no food and no way to feed herself.

The king was moved by this devotion and set the elephant free so that it could go back and take care of its mother. The lead elephant walked back to the cave and continued to find sweet fruit and tender leaves and care for his mother. The king decided to help the kind and gentle lead elephant. He continued to support the gentle elephant and its mothers by starting a small village near the lake.

Moral - The Buddha said that our parents have made many sacrifices and taken care of us and educated us when we were young. The Buddha encouraged gratitude and care for our parents. He said that Brahma (God) is in our home as the qualities of God - Kindness, compassion, sympathetic joy, and equanimity are in our parents.

You can encourage others to be good and change a person by example. The wise elephant changed the king by his kindness and gentle behaviour.

The Buddha told his disciples about this story in Sāvatti to praise a monk who looked after and supported his old parents with the food that he collected through

alms round by not eating any food until they had been fed and cared for. The Buddha said that we must take care of our parents when they are old and sick because they have done much for us when we were young and not able to take care of ourselves.

In this story the Bodhisatta (Buddha in a past birth) was the majestic elephant. The kind king was his attendant, Venerable Ananda. The old blind mother elephant was the Buddha's birth mother Queen Maha Maya.

4. Morality - The Monkey King and the Mango Tree (Mahakappi Jataka - 407)

A long, long time ago, there was a wise monkey king who had a large group of monkeys. He looked after his monkeys making sure they had sweet fruit, tender leaves and were safe from the arrows of hunters. One day they found an extraordinarily large mango tree that supplied the whole herd of monkeys with sweet, ripe mangoes. The tree was near a river and one of its branches stretched out over the river.



The wise monkey king advised his monkeys to eat all the flowers that bloomed in the branch over the river. He realised that downstream there were many men who would eat the sweet fruit that fell into the river and kill the monkeys for food. It was important to make sure that no ripe fruit fell into the river and went down stream to the village. The monkeys followed the advice of their leader and made sure that

there was no fruit in that branch. But the monkeys had missed one fruit due to an ant's nest that blocked their view. The fruit had ripened and fallen into the water and was caught in the net of a fisherman. Seeing the unusually large ripe mango the fisherman took it as a gift to the king.

The king who had never eaten such a sweet and delicious fruit was delighted by the mango. He asked his wood cutters to search the forest upstream and find the tree with sweet, ripe mangoes. A few days later the men found a tree with large ripe mangoes near the river. They came back to the kingdom and told the king that they had found the tree. The king and a large group of his ministers and army of archers went with the wood cutters and filled their stomachs with the sweet rich mangoes. Then they set up camp in a clearing nearby to rest for the night.

At midnight the monkey king led his monkeys to the tree to feed. When the king saw the large group of monkeys eating the sweet mangoes, he asked his archer to guard the tree by making a ring around the tree until morning. The king decided that they would kill the monkeys in the morning when they could see them well and eat their meat.

The wise monkey king knew that they were in danger. Using all his strength he jumped across the river. Then taking a creeper that had long vines like rope he tied them together to make a long rope. Then tying one end of the rope to a strong tree he tied the other end around his waist and jumped back across the river. But the rope was not long enough. Stretching his arms he reached out and grabbed onto the branch of the mango tree that stretched across the river. He then asked his monkeys to walk over him and cross the river to the other bank. The monkeys who loved their king walked gently but quickly across the river to safety. The last monkey to cross the river was a cruel monkey who was jealous of the monkey king. He jumped from a higher branch onto the monkey king's back and injured his back then ran quickly across the river to safety.

The king was surprised and moved by the courageous monkey king's kind and brave act. He asked his men to bring the injured king monkey and use medicinal herbs to save its life. The king asked the head monkey as to why he had done such a brave and selfless act. The monkey king with his last dying breath answered, that a good leader must care for the welfare of his clan and must make their safety and wellbeing his goal.

Moral – A good leader should be kind and gentle to his people. He should teach them good qualities by leading by example. It is the duty of a king to rule the people of his kingdom with their welfare, happiness, and safety in mind.

Reference – King Pasenadhi Kosala was a faithful follower of the Buddha. He had fallen in love with and married a beautiful, spiritual girl named Mallika who was the daughter of a garland maker. As he had married a commoner, King Pasenadhi wanted to raise his status as a king. He requested a princess from the Buddha's Sakyan Clan as his second queen.

The proud Sakyans had a custom of marrying their princesses only to members of the royal Sakyan and Koliya caste. They gave king Pasenadhi Kosala a beautiful woman who was a child of a Sakyan Prince and a slave girl. King Pasenadhi Kosala, unaware of the trickery and true heritage of his second queen, Vasabha Khattiya, treated her also with love and great care.

Queen Vasabha Khattiya gave birth to a baby son named Vidhudhaba, who grew up to be a strong and ferocious prince. When he heard of the trickery of the Sakyan kings, and the true heritage of his mother, he vowed to destroy the Sakyan clan and the City of Kapilavattu.

The Buddha seeing the anger and ferocious intention of Vidhudhaba sat in meditation outside the gates of the Sakyan kingdom. Calmed by the serene Buddha, Prince Vidhudhaba turned and returned to the kingdom of Kosala twice.

Unfortunately, on his third attempt, Prince Vidhudhaba succeeded in destroying the kingdom of Kapilavattu and most of the Sakyan Clan. The remaining few fled and started a new City named Kapilavattu close to the old City. The ruins of new City can be seen in India at present. On Vidhudhaba's third attempt, the Buddha realized that the Sakyans had poisoned a well and killed a village in a previous birth and that he could not prevent this massacre.

The Buddha overheard some of his followers talking about the Buddha's attempts to save the Sakyan Clan. The Buddha told this story saying that even in the past he had protected and attempted to save the lives of his clan by making a bridge and taking them across the river.

In this story the monkey king was the Bodhisatta (Buddha in a past birth). The last monkey, that tried to kill the monkey king was Devadatta. The king was Venerable Ananda, the Buddha's personal attendant. The group of monkeys the Bodhisatta saved from death were some of his devoted followers.

5. Morality - The Ascetic and the Rich Merchant (Telovada Jataka 246)

A long, long time ago, there was a meditating ascetic who lived in the region of the Himalaya mountains. As an ascetic living in the mountains in meditation, he often ate fruits, herbs and edible yams and plants for his meals. One day he went into a town to get some salt and seasoning for his meals. As he was in town, he decided to go on alms round from door to door with his begging bowl for his meal.

A rich man who saw the ascetic go on his alms round amused himself by harassing the ascetic. He invited and took the ascetic to his house and served him a meal with fish. When the meal was over, the rich man told the ascetic that he had killed the fish especially for him and accused him of doing wrong by eating it.



The wise ascetic answered that only the killing of a living being is unskillful. He said that it is customary for ascetics to accept and eat whatever is prepared and served by generous donors who had taken much trouble to prepare a meal for them. He was unaware that the fish had been caught and killed just for him. He had come into town to beg for some salt and seasoning and decided to go on alms round to give the good people in the town an opportunity to perform the meritorious deed of generosity.

Moral - One should not kill any living being. Eating of meat is not an unskillful deed if the meal prepared (animal) has not been killed just for your own consumption. It is also not an unskillful deed if it had been killed just for the purpose of your own consumption, but you had not seen, heard or known that it was killed just for the purpose of your meal (Amagandha Sutta - The Buddha's answer to Jivaka).

Many people pretend to be good and righteous but are jealous and mean. Be wary and careful of persons who are wolves in sheep's clothing

References - The Buddha told this story to his followers when a prominent ascetic who was jealous of the Buddha's popularity wrongly criticized and opposed him.

A well-known general had become a follower of the Buddha, and offered a large meal to the Buddha that included meat. When the prominent ascetic found out about this, he went around criticizing the Buddha for knowingly accepting and eating meat. He was jealous of the Buddha popularity and growing number of disciples.

Later, when the Buddha heard some of his disciples discussing this prominent ascetic and his untrue criticism, the Buddha told them this story so they knew that this prominent ascetic had made the same spiteful, errant attack on our Bodhisatta in the past.

The rich man who hassled the ascetic who lived near the Himalayan mountains in this story was the prominent ascetic. The wise Ascetic who lived near the Himalayan mountains was our Bodhisatta (Buddha in a past life).

6. Morality - A Deceitful Cruel Man (*Salaka Jataka* - 249)

One day a snake charmer who also had a performing monkey came to the city. The snake charmer wanted to go to a festival that was taking place in the city. He left his performing monkey with a grain merchant in the market and asked him to take care of it for a short time.

A week later, after much merrymaking and drinking the snake charmer came back to the grain merchant's shop and beat the poor monkey. The monkey was hurt at the cruel snake charmer's treatment. He waited until the snake charmer had fallen asleep and untied his rope and climbed up a mango tree. After eating a ripe mango from the tree, the monkey dropped the seed on the snake charmer's head.



The snake charmer was very angry. He realised that he had lost his performing monkey. He tried to encourage it to come back by saying that he would not beat it anymore and that he would give it many sweet fruits if it came back. The monkey, however, did not trust the snake charmer as he had shown his cruel behaviour from time to time even in the past. He preferred to have its freedom and remain in the jungle where there was plenty of sweet fruit. Turning its back, the monkey took off from tree top to tree top into the jungle. The snake charmer went home very upset and angry as he had lost his trained performing monkey.

Moral - You do not have to tolerate abuse and cruelty from anyone. If anyone is (repeatedly) cruel or harsh to you, go for help to someone that you trust. Or (like the novice monk at the time of the Buddha), go home and let your parents know.

Reference - *The Buddha told this story to the villagers when an elder monk had been cruel and mean to his novice monk and the novice monk had left the elder and gone back home. The Buddha said that even in a past birth that the elder monk had been cruel to his student and that his student had left him and not come back.*

The snake charmer was the elder ordained monk and his monkey was his novice student monk. In this story the Bodhisatta (the Buddha in a past birth) was the kind grain merchant, who had taken care of the monkey when the snake charmer left for the festival and left him alone for a week.

