

Jataka Tales

Fletcher Soul Traveler &
Guy Nouri

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Intro Richard



This is a story inside of a story, inside of a story. Come around the campfire. This story started around 50 years ago. Little Ricky and Peter were surfers traveling from France to India with their surfboards. Why they had their surfboards is a good question.

Surfing Experience In France Something Will Happen In India



While I was in France one day I woke up and saw huge waves breaking. The waves were probably 15 feet high. The surfing spot was at Le Barre a famous but now extinct surf spot.

I took off on a huge wave stood up and the next moment I was free-falling down the wave. Back then there were no leases. My board got carried to shore.

Le Barre had a jetty and 15-foot waves were breaking on the rocks. The rip was so strong it was like a river. For the first time in my life, I said "Lord if you exist you had better do something real fast. I closed my eyes and saw an incredible light and a small Indian boy.

The next moment I was on shore. Everybody on shore said it was a miracle. The next day I decided to go to India. As I look back at that experience I feel the hand of grace in my life.

I felt so protected. Here I was only 18 years old but I knew my life was protected. I was about to start the adventure of a lifetime. This was a near-death experience for me.

In the early seventies, I read books about the death experience and my experience closely resembled that experience. I saw a great light that filled my being with bliss that is boundless. I saw a figure which told me without words that everything would be all right.

This experience I knew could be experienced consciously. It didn't have to be a hit-or-miss affair.

I knew a human being could experience the source directly no matter if he/she was sleeping, dreaming, or in an awake state. Man can tap into the source of life.



Five Summer Stories Soundtrack

18K views • 3 years ago



Five Summer Stories Soundtrack by Honk.



After my surfing accident, Peter and I started on our trip to India. I was very excited. I knew that something wonderful was going to happen in India.

All of my dreams would come true. We drove from Biarritz to Venice where we stayed two days with an Italian friend from high school. We drove through Yugoslavia. At that time it was a communist country. The people at that time were very suspicious of outsiders. They weren't very friendly. The countryside was amazing.

We were high up in the mountains and could see the Mediterranean Sea. Peter would drive and have this harmonica he would play. He was a good player.



John Mayall - Room to Move (The Turning Point, 1970)

634K views • 8 years ago



May seem peculiar How I think o'you If you want me, darlin' Here's what you must do You gotta give me 'cause I can't give the best ...



We drove to Athens in Greece. We spent a week there. I loved going to the Parthenon. Here I was in the cradle of such an incredible civilization. I was in awe.

We sold our car and took an airplane to Turkey. When we landed in Istanbul I knew this is where east meets west. This city was so different. The Muslim mosques were so beautiful. The policeman had submachine guns. I had never seen that before.

I remember staying at this house where a lady came in and said we had better leave because the police were going to raid the place. She said people used drugs and the police were going to bust the place. I felt someone was taking care of me.

I didn't want to end up in a Turkish jail. Especially because I didn't use drugs. That would be hard to prove in Turkey.

We spent a week in Istanbul and then went to Ankara. In Ankara, we had to stay a week because the border was closed.



Jethro Tull - Aqualung (Official Music Video)

1.8M views · 1 year ago



This song is the first track and the title track on the 1971 Jethro Tull album titled 'Aqualung'. Lyrics: Sitting on a park bench Eyeing ...



Jethro Tull: Bourée

8M views · 12 years ago



1fracos

AVO Session 2008, Basel Jethro Tull: <http://www.jethrotull.com> AVO Session Basel: <http://www.avo.ch>.



The Sufi Whirling Dervishes - Istanbul, Turkey

1.7M views · 8 years ago



Davidsbeenhere ✓

David's Been Here is in Istanbul, Turkey, exploring all the top sites and cultural attractions of the city. In this video, David presents ...



The Shah of Iran was having the 1000th-anniversary party for Persia. He didn't want young westerns or trouble to come to his land for this party. I heard that the Shah even built props to hide poverty. I had a friend who went to the party and he said it was quite the affair. They had air-conditioned tents. The Shah spent thousands of dollars.



While in Ankara we saw the Queen of England in a parade. There were thousands of soldiers carrying submachine guns.

After a week the border was opened and we took trains and buses to Iran. It was quite a scene traveling. Both Peter and I carried our surfboards and our packs. The trains were quite dirty and packed. We slept on the floor of the train.

The busses were like trains but they had livestock on board. I was getting quite a lesson on life. We arrive at the capital of Tehran. Tehran was quite a beautiful city.

We found out that a week before a young American tourist died the week before. Supposedly she entered a Muslim mosque and was stoned to death.

The reason was that only Muslims could go inside the temple. I met a man from the secret police.

He came up to me and said that he had killed about 30 Americans this year. In Iran, if they found drugs on you, they would shoot you on the spot. What a way to control the drug problem.



We then took buses to the border of Afghanistan. This is where the scenery drastically changed. I felt I have transferred back two thousand years ago.

The Afghanistan people are warriors. Their culture is the same for thousands of years. We were in a high mountain desert. Everyone carried guns or rifles. This was way before the Soviet invasion. I felt I was in an old Wild West town. There was no law or order. The people



were quite nice. But I knew you didn't want to cross them up. The people in Afghanistan smoked a lot of hash. They used this drug like alcohol.

The whole nation used it. The food was quite good. We took a bus from the border and made it to Kabul. Along the way, we bumped into this Hawaiian named Charley Krusner.

Charley was a great guy and we traveled together. Kabul at this time was a hangout for the European hippies.



The Europeans were heavily involved in drugs. These used a lot of opium. It was quite sad to see people my age addicted to opium.

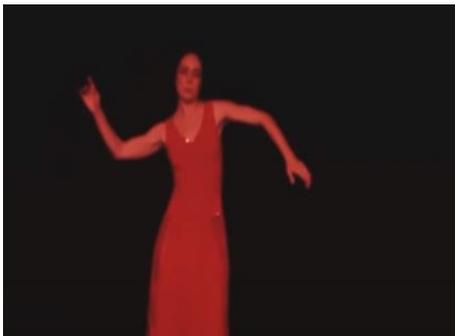
There was nothing I could do. Many of them simply wasted away. The drug was very cheap and could be bought anywhere. I know a lot of my friends in the states would have loved to be in that environment.

It was an eye-opening experience. For the first time, I saw so many young kids wasted and hanging on to life by a thread.

There were thousands of miles from home. During this time I would meditate each day. I knew something incredible was going to happen to me in India.

I just had the intuition that my dreams would come true. I knew I would meet someone who could show me the way to open the door. I felt protected.

It's a beautiful feeling to know that someone is watching over you. I was thousands of miles away from home and yet I felt great inside. I felt protected.





My main goal was to get to India. Ever since I left France the feeling kept on getting stronger.

I felt such a wave of anticipation that my dream will come true. I had only a short time and it would be shown to me.



I left Kabul and took the Khyber Pass from Afghanistan into Pakistan. The Khyber Pass was used by Genghis Khan. It is one of the oldest trade routes in the world.

Throughout history it has been an important trade route between Central Asia and India. What a radical road. It was all dirt which most of

Afghanistan was.

There were no guard rails and we had these crazy drivers driving as fast as they could down this pass.

The buses were quite different. Each bus would have a different altar depending on which religion they belong to. They would be flowers, incense, pictures, and memorabilia.

We would be driving down this huge mountain on a skinny road. This was the only route from Afghanistan to Pakistan.



Afghanistan Traditional Music

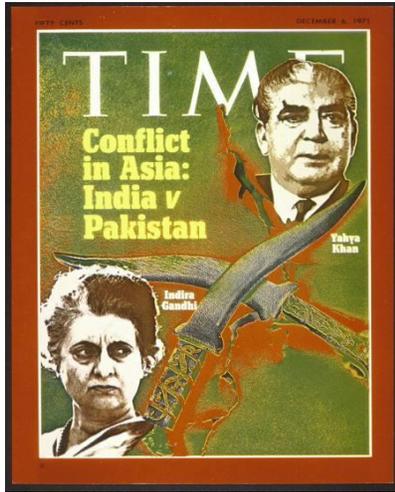
260K views • 4 years ago



UN approved music

Traditional music from a war-torn country.

Indian Pakistan War

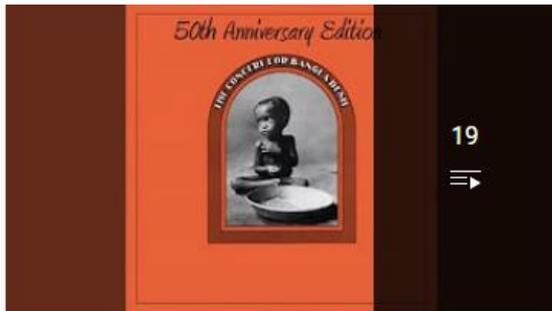


Well, we finally made it to Pakistan. Lahore was a busy city. We only stayed for a few days.

When I was in Pakistan I saw signs saying crush India.

When I arrived in India I saw signs saying crush Pakistan. I arrived at the border of India at the beginning of the Indian-Pakistan war.

The following day the border was closed for 5 years.



The Concert For Bangladesh 50th Anniversary Edition
The Video and Music preserver

George Harrison ~ Wah Wah (50th Anniversary Edition) • 3:30

George Harrison ~ My Sweet Lord (50th Anniversary Edition) • 4:36

[VIEW FULL PLAYLIST](#)

First Day In India



My first day in India was incredible. I remember crossing the border. At this time there was a two-mile walk to reach the border check for India.

There were parrots and wild birds everywhere. I felt such a strong spiritual experience. I was home. It's hard to put in words what I was feeling.

I knew something incredible was to happen to me in India. I was looking for a teacher who could give me a practical experience of who I was.

I remembered being checked by an Indian Tcustoms lady who was famous for busting people for bringing drugs into India. Since I didn't use drugs I wasn't worried. I remember such an aura of peace that came over me.

The sun was just setting and the whole forest was alive. Thousands of parrots were in the forest. The smell was like an incredible perfume in the air. I crossed the border and took an overnight train to New Delhi.

When I got to New Delhi I was very tired and exhausted. I heard rumors that the Sikhs allowed people to stay at their temples.

I went to this huge Sikhs temple. I asked can I stay here overnight. The man said no but there is a huge festival going on down the block.



This festival is for Maharaj Ji a thirteen-year-old boy who just came back from a tour of the west. I remember 4 months earlier reading about him in Time magazine and from my sister. I was intrigued by how a 13-year-old boy could have such a huge following.



The first person I met was Guy Nouri. He and his Mom came to India to partake in this adventure.



I arrived at the festival site and was escorted to the stage where 1 million people were sitting. It was amazing, a sea of people.

The next thing I knew a young Indian boy walked on the stage wearing a Krishna outfit. He was wearing a gold crown with jewels and a gold outfit. I was laughing and crying at the same time.

Something inside of me knew I was home, that the experience I was looking for could be shown by this Indian boy. Being eighteen years old



I was very practical that I wanted a direct experience of GOD inside of me.

What this young Indian boy said made sense. He said seeing is believing. If I told you an ant was 10 feet tall, would you believe me? But if I showed you seeing is believing.

He said don't believe in my words. Take my experience. See for yourself. If you suites your practice if not go on your way.

At this time of my life, this made sense. I have never heard someone saying I can reveal who you are. All my teachers in my past said to believe and maybe someday you will have that experience.

Maharaj Ji said to take the experience, practice it and let the seed bloom into a fruit tree.



Shri Rudram, an ancient Vedic Hymn by Music for Deep Meditation, Vidura Barrios
4.6M views · 8 years ago

 Music for Deep Meditation

Shri Rudram is an ancient Vedic text and part of the Krishna Yajurveda. It is a powerful hymn in praise of Rudra, or Shiva.

Initiation



The following day I packed up my bags and took a train to Prem Nagar, Maharaj Ji ashram near Hardwar is a small town in the foothills of the Himalayas.

For the next two weeks, I listened to discourses about this knowledge. Something inside of me knew that I was

to receive the experience of a lifetime. I knew the door to my soul was to be opened.

Words are hard to express the feeling that was going inside of my being. I knew that in a short time I would be shown and revealed the secret of life itself.

I knew this experience was real. I talked to a lot of people who had this experience and I could tell and sense that something wonderful was going on.

I liked the idea the proof is in the pudding. I didn't want to join a cult or a religious group. I just wanted a direct and continuous experience of the power that is keeping me alive. I knew through practice this could be achieved.



During this time the war between India and Pakistan was going on. Each night air raid sirens were going on and off in the distance we could hear bombs going off.

There was a general blackout at night. Pakistani bombers were only miles away.

Air raid sirens were heard in the distance. At the ashram, the whole place was so serene while in this part of the world people were dying.

Trains of Pakistanis were being massacred going from India to Pakistan and train loads of Indians were being massacred going from Pakistan to India. Such a dichotomy.



Tommy Emmanuel - Initiation

465K views · 15 years ago



D. Kelly

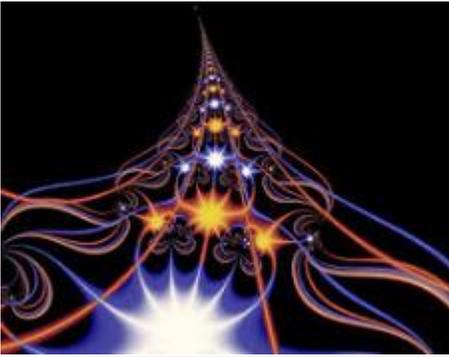
Another from the Sierra Nevada Centre Stage show in early-mid 2002. Great version this one! Still amazes me what Tommy can



I'll never forget my initiation. There were probably about 20 of us in a small room. Maharaj Ji had initiators who revealed his knowledge.

We were in the room while Maharaj Ji was playing on top of the roof directly overhead of us.

The experience that I had that day still sends shivers of joy just merely the thought.



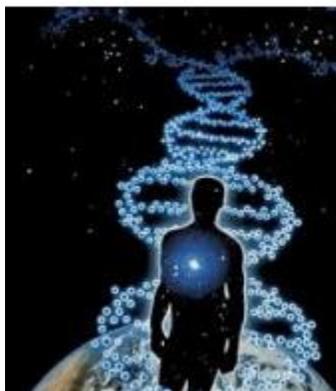
The first technique the initiator revealed was the light technique. I always knew that human beings could see the light inside. This is an actual experience.

When the initiator touched my forehead I felt this incredible surge of energy. I knew at that point that something incredible was going to happen.

My whole body and soul sensed it. My conscious completely left this physical existence. A golden circle of light appeared. Inside of this circle a brilliant blue star appeared.

This golden circle of light and this blue star were so beautiful. It was probably the most beautiful thing I have ever seen.

Waves of love, joy, and peace were surging inside my consciousness. All of a sudden the star transformed into a ray, a tunnel of blue light that went on infinitely. I merged with the blue ray. It's very hard



to describe this experience. I was at home. The doors were opened. I was given the keys and it was up to me to cultivate the experience.

I have definite proof that we are more than these bodies. All of a sudden the mystery of life was revealed. I knew the secrets behind all religions.

There was a genuine experience that could be shown and experience. Years later I realized that this experience was an initiation into Lord Michael's blue ray. It was the Jacobs ladder. This experience was the ladder to God. To this day I'll never forget this

experience. It gave me practical proof that God existed. I knew it but this was a practical experience.

It was more real than any outside human experience. I knew that my life was on track. I have waited years to go home and I was shown such a glorious place.

When I returned to this earth and regained physical consciousness my whole body was shaking like a duck.

My body had a hard time. Can you imagine being hooked up to the power plant of the whole universe?

I knew no damage was done. Over time I knew that the body was built and designed to handle that kind of currents. Day by day through mediation man can slowly harmonize with these frequencies and begin to vibrate at this frequency.

inner music

Three other techniques were revealed. One was the music techniques. I was shown how to listen to the innermost frequencies of life.

Since God is energy, man can be in tune and listen to subtle energy frequencies. Different religions have different concepts of this experience.

By listening to this music over time man is filled with such joy and peace in his life. The mind slowly begins to slow down. In this state, man gets in contact with an energy frequency that is infinite.



This energy is pure love and bliss. The whole universe is composed of this energy. It was is and will always be.

This is the Word of God. Every major religion talks about the Word in some form or another. There is a very simple technique where a man can be in direct communion with this subtle energy.

When a person first receives this initiation the word is very subtle. The majority of people don't understand the power of this word.

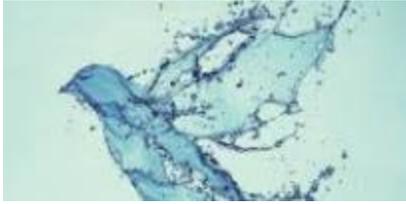
I know a lot of people who took this experience and never really tried it out. Over time I can consciously put myself in direct communication with this Word.

My whole being is instantly filled with such a wave of love and bliss. I'm not there 24 hours a day but I know it is possible. I have had experiences that I was completely taken out of this physical world and taken to a place where there is no time and space.

The only thing that existed was this incredible energy of love. I knew I was at home with my father. This energy exists through all of the creation.

It exists in the manifest and unmanifest. It exists throughout time and space and beyond. All of creation comes from this word. In the bible, in Saint John, the verse goes like this.

In the beginning, was the Word. The Word was with God and the Word was God. Human beings can tune into this experience.



The last experience was one of the living waters or nectar experiences. When a man is in this experience powerful hormones and enzymes are secreted through the endocrine system.

Through the ages, man has learned that he can experience this nectar or living water. Just one drop of this is an incredibly powerful experience.

One drop can take man's consciousness into an altered state. This fluid is very cleansing to the body. When Christ was in the desert for 40 days and nights he lived off this manna.

This experience is energy in its subtle form. It is energy yet it transmutes itself into matter. This experience is very powerful to the endocrine system.

I have had numerous experiences with this nectar. It's probably the most intoxicating drug known in the universe. Unlike a drug that has a side effect, this experience is completely beneficial to the body and soul.

These experiences reveal over time who we are. We are more than our mind and body. We are this source of life.

Each one of us is part of this universal consciousness. We just don't remember it. It's amazing when we were born we came from the source.

Our whole being was this consciousness. Over time we forgot. Years later we have completely forgotten our true existence.

After the initiation, I thanked my creator for revealing himself to me. My dreams come true. I had the tools. Everything made sense to me. I could read the scriptures and understand the hidden meaning. The scriptures were at the same wavelength. I had a lot of respect for the major religions.



Hank Williams Sr... I Saw The Light - 1948

11M views • 9 years ago



V.A. HOSS

Don't forget to rate and subscribe...

Mediation Ganges



The following day I was sitting by the Ganges meditating when I completely lost consciousness of this planet. I saw a light more brilliant than the noonday sun.

My consciousness was flowing into a river of nectar. I felt the whole Ganges River was flowing through me. Maharaj Ji had a beautiful poem by Rumi a great Sufi teacher that sums it up. It goes like this.

There is a palace in the sky without any foundation. A blind man sees a light more brilliant than a million suns. A deaf man listens to the unstuck music.



Castle in the air - Don McLean Original

4M views • 13 years ago

keyoshei morinaka

This song is my favorite since childhood... http://www.4shared.com/audio/FuRrNjDs/02_-_Castles_In_The_Air_-_Don_.html

A lame man climbs up a well and drinks the nectar and becomes intoxicated. The clincher is only a wise man who understands what I'm talking about.

From then on my life was to change drastically. After my initiation and this experience, my life was never the same. I was shown something so incredible that my focus was on this experience. My whole life from

then on was based on practically cultivating this experience. Day by day I was going deeper and deeper into my existence.



My days in India were spent in meditation and spending time with Maharaj Ji.

Mediation was such an incredible experience. I call it going to the movies.

Day by day I was going deeper and deeper into realms I have never been before. Prem Nagar was such a beautiful place.

I was thousands of miles away from home and then again I was truly at home. I was content and full of such incredible bliss. My mind was learning to focus on something inside of me that never changes that is, was, and will always be.

I was learning how to be connected to that experience twenty-four hours a day. I practiced meditation liked how I surfed with joy and the thrill of riding the wave of life.



To this day I'm still blown away that this experience is lying dormant inside of humanity just waiting to be discovered. We are searching for the jewel and the jewel is hidden inside of each one of us.

Over time it's not all bliss and roses with this experience. I had to face my mind. The mind is such a powerful thing. It can be your friend or enemy.

I learned over time to become its friend. In the beginning, at times I thought I would go crazy. The mind was constantly chattering. I would sit for hours and at times I wanted to get up and just forget the whole thing.

But then I would break through. Then the experience would rush in and completely saturate your being. You are bliss. I felt that I had to break down the door.

Over time I walked through the door and my mind hasn't bothered me in this way since. I'm not saying my mind doesn't bother me at times it does.

But when I close my eyes or put my connection to this Word of God my whole being is filled with bliss. In the beginning, it took tremendous effort to have this kind of experience. In the beginning, you meditate on the experience. Years later the experience meditates on you.

I remember that on a few days before Christmas the whole ashram took a train ride from Hardware to Patna a city in Bihar India. Bihar is one of the poorest states in India.



The scenery was beautiful. We were traveling on this old funky Indian train. We would see swamps that were full of Lotus flowers. Wildlife was everywhere.

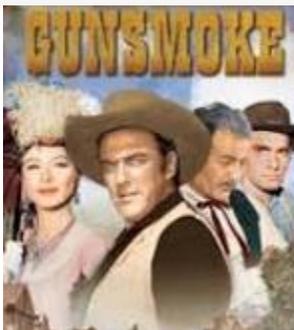
Maharaj Ji was having a three-day program. I remembered at the festival there were probably a million people there.

At one point in the festival, the Arya Samaj attacked the festival. I'm not sure how many people died. This group caused a lot of trouble in India.

It was kind of scary to sit on the stage watching fighting only a half-mile away. India was quite a different place. The people were quite friendly. They liked westerners. The Indian people, in general, had a strong conviction for God.



Before leaving Bihar my friend Peter left to go back to America. I loaned him the money which I got back in South Africa. The westerns left in January.



There were only a few of us left. I spent my remaining time in Delhi. I remember I would meditate and go into town. The Indian food was great.

I bumped into the son of James Arness. His father was a famous actor in Hollywood. He

played in Gunsmoke on TV. He had a son (Rolf) at the time was a world champion surfer.



It was quite funny meeting him. I was buying a kilo of cashews for one dollar. I just started talking to him.

During this time Maharaj Ji was planning to go to South Africa. He needed a few westerners to go and help set up the necessary arraignments.

Somehow Maharaj Ji's mother asked me to go. So in early February, we embarked to Bombay.

Finding Bombay Ashram



We took a train from Delhi to Bombay. Maharaj Ji was in Bombay for a week. Upon reaching the train station I realized that I lost the directions to the ashram.

I just laughed and knew that everything would be all right. I was traveling with three western girls. I

said let's go hop in a taxi. We got in the taxi and the driver said where you want to go. I said we will direct you.

Bombay is a huge city. None of us have been there and he couldn't believe it. But he did as he was told. I close my eyes and received directions on where to go. Left-right etc.

After about 45 minutes of driving, I told the driver to stop. We got out of the car knocked on the door and walked right into the ashram. I never told Maharaj Ji how we got there. It was just a matter of fact.



Jefferson Starship - Miracles (Official Audio)

11M views • 5 years ago

 RHINO

You're listening to the official audio for "Miracles" by Jefferson Starship from the album 'Red Octopus' (1975) Subscribe to the ...

6:55

Asokananda Incident

While we were in Bombay one day I was in Maharaj Ji's room when all of a sudden he got off his bed stood up and started to wave his hands



towards one of his Initiators Asokananda. The hair on his whole body stood up. It looked like he put his hand in a light socket. He was yelling please Maharaj Ji, stop it.

After about 20 seconds Maharaj Ji's hand fell to his side and Asokananda was back to normal. Being an eighteen kid that I was I said Maharaj do you want to zap him once more?

Maharaj Ji said sure and for just a fraction of a second, he raised his hands and put electricity back into him. Maharaj Ji was electrocuting him. We all laughed.

This was the first time that I spent close time with Maharaj Ji. There were only a few westerns there. It was so beautiful to play with Maharaj Ji and at the same time have such great respect for him.



Elton John - Electricity

1.2M views · 11 years ago

 Elton John

"Electricity", from Billy Elliot The Musical, became Elton John's 63rd UK Top 40 hit. The video features Liam Mower in the role of ...

Getting Drunk On Water

Before we left for Kenya Maharaj Ji asked us if we wanted any holy water. Holy water is a custom in India where the master places his foot in the water.



I had only a canteen and Maharaj Ji placed his foot inside of the canteen. We all laughed. The next day we headed out for Kenya.

On board, the plane was Kali, Kathleen, and Tess. These were the three girls I traveled with from New Delhi. On board the plane we drank the water from the canteen.

All of us got rip-roaring drunk. I've been drunk before that one or twice but this was a drunk of joy. We all somehow managed to saunter off the plane.

We spent a few days in Nairobi. Tess's parents lived on the outskirts of town. Kenya was an incredible country. Parts of it looked like England.

We relaxed for a few days. I remember one moment at Tess's house. I was meditating in the backyard with I opened my eyes and saw Maharaj Ji standing there.

He was laughing and laughing. I remember in Bombay asking him if we were to make it to South Africa. We were going to hitchhike from Kenya to South Africa. He said we would but we were going to have a hell of a lot of adventures along the way.



Simon & Garfunkel - Bridge Over Troubled Water (Audio)

24M views • 9 years ago



Lyrics: When you're weary, feeling small When tears are in your eyes, I'll dry them all (all) I'm on your side, oh, when times ge

Travels In Africa



We slowly started to hitchhike from Kenya to South Africa. I have memories of our first night getting a ride and being on the Kenya plains in a horrendous rain storm.

Here we were in Africa and the only houses around were grass huts. It was quite an experience. I remember one border crossing between Kenya and Tanzania.

The Tanzania border official became very upset because we didn't have a visa to enter the country. Kali became very upset and told the guy off.

I was receiving an intuition to be quiet and to respect this officer. They pulled us into a room and this officer just started to yell at Kali.



All of a sudden he stopped and said "I am about to throw both of you in jail but because pointing to me you have been such a gentleman I will let you go. Another lesson in intuition.

In Tanzania, the Chinese were building a railroad.

Thousands of Chinese truck drivers were passing us by. They all had the same expression on their faces.

I remember one ride where Kali and I got picked up by two intelligent black Africans. We got in the car. After a few hours of driving, they got out of the car and shot two cows with a rifle.



We thought we were next. They got in the car and they said: "O we just shot two elephants." We agreed with them. We knew we shouldn't cause any conflict or maybe we would be next.



I remember one night we were in this small jungle town in the middle of nowhere. I was eating this soup that was full of mosquitoes.

The air was so thick of mosquitoes that mosquitoes were falling into my soup. It was quite the scene. It was super humid and hot. I was lucky not to get malaria.



The Doors-No me moleste mosquito

1.5M views • 15 years ago

 Manczarekfan

A post-Morrison Song.

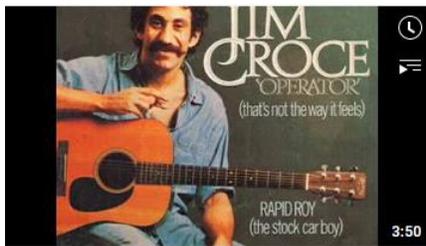
Seeing Maharaj Ji On Telephone Wires



One night we were sleeping in the tent when a huge thunderstorm came and blew away the tent.

We awoke and found ourselves sleeping in a sea of mud. Quite the experience. I

remember looking up at the telephone poles and seeing Maharaj Ji laughing and laughing.



Operator - Jim Croce

6.2M views • 12 years ago

piano084

Hello, guys. Thanks for all the views!!!! I'd like to apologize for the advertisements that are being showed at the beginning of th

Fast Forward 49 years



I wrote a book called Family and Friends. I wrote about 540 family and friends. I'm doing a series of talk story sessions. Talk Story is Hawaiian slang for conversation.

Guy Nouri was one of the first on my list. You can listen to our discussion after 49 years of not talking or seeing each other. This is where the story within the story takes place. Come join us on this grand storytelling adventure. You will have the time of your life.

Stories



Where they came from

This story belongs to the Jātaka tales, which are part of sacred Buddhist literature. The Jātaka are a collection of 547 stories that deal with anecdotes, legends and fables about the incarnations of the Buddha prior to his existence as such, between 563 and 483 b.c.e. Jātaka stories are dated between 300 b.c.e. and 400 c.e.; that is, they were composed over seven centuries.

1

The following came from an article by Andrew Schelling which appeared in the Tricycle magazine Fall 1991

¹ <https://tricycle.org/magazine/jataka-mind/>

The *Jataka Tales*, from which this story comes, gather some of the earliest and strangest writings preserved in the Buddhist heritage. *Jataka* means “birth.” The old collection, inscribed in a vernacular language called Pali, preserves 550 legends which tell of the Buddha’s miraculous births in the aeons before he became enlightened. The stories occur in a rough-hewn prose, studded with cryptic shards of a much older verse. It is in these broken oddments of poetry that you find something remarkably ancient—animal tales dating in all likelihood to Paleolithic times.

Folklore and archaeology suggest that the *Jataka*’s interest in wild animal personalities is not an isolated instance. The earliest pictorial art largely depicts animals—think of the Magdalenian cave paintings found in Spain and southern France, or comparable rock art that survives across the planet. There is every reason to believe that the earliest verbal art was concerned with similar themes. As written documents the *Jataka Tales* are ancient, but from any anthropological perspective they look comparatively recent—humans have been speaking for 40,000 years, perhaps longer. During that time-span the animal fable occurred many places, but survives into our day largely in cultures like India’s, where the old spoken lore met on friendly terms with the scholar’s pen.



Courtesy of Hosho.

I do believe, however, that the *Jataka Tales* register the first instance in written literature of what I’d call *cross-species compassion*, or *Jataka Mind*, an immediate and unqualified empathy shown towards creatures not of one’s own biological species. Perhaps the tales retain traces of a universal contract between living creatures, so long ago vanished that no

one remembers its ancient imperatives. With a bow to the old stories, Jataka Mind is that conscious human behavior which bears a whiff of that old way of thinking. Tales like the one just recounted were meant to waken a notion of kinship that sweeps across animal species. Animals in the *Jatakas* surely justify the storyteller's interest—they show themselves to be of an equal, often a higher, ethical order than humans.

A thousand, two thousand, maybe ten thousand years after these tales first began to circulate through the villages and pass along the trade routes of Asia, Buddhism cast the *Jataka Tales* into philosophical form. *The Diamond Sutra*, a central document in India, Tibet, China and Japan, makes explicit what the old stories had gestured towards. It is here that the Buddha announces an unqualified brother and sisterhood of creatures:

One should produce a thought in this manner: 'As many beings as there are in the universe of beings, comprehended under the term *beings*—egg-born, born from a womb, moisture-born, or miraculously born; with or without form; with perception, without perception, and with neither perception nor non-perception—as far as any conceivable form of beings is conceived, all these I must lead out of misery.'

The fundamental vow of the Buddhist practitioner, fashioned two thousand years ago in India, makes explicit the ethical stance. India however, has passed both metaphysics and ethics down the ages in a nearly hallucinogenic cloak of symbols. Myth, folklore, dance, sculpture, music, and painting have made sophisticated doctrine readily available to the popular mind. Thus the finest poem of Buddhist India, which cast its metaphysics into durable shape, was in fact a recasting of the ancient *Jataka Tales*.



Where they came from

Fletcher Soul Traveler

6:37



Where they came from Part 2

Fletcher Soul Traveler

5:13

Buddha and the drunk elephant



Buddha and the drunk elephant

Buddha had a cousin named Devadatta. Devadatta was very jealous of the Buddha. He would think to himself why does he get all the attention. I'm just as good as he is. Sometimes we believe what the mind tells us. Devadatta came up with a master plan. He knew that in a few days Buddha was going to a particular village.

Devadatta went to this village a day before Buddha was supposed to show up. He got an elephant totally drunk. I mean totally drunk. Then he started to beat the poor old elephant with a stick. He did this once he saw Buddha enter the village. The elephant was in extreme pain and furious. He wanted revenge. Devadatta then opened up the gate and the elephant saw the Buddha and his followers. Like a mad elephant, he ran towards them. Everyone scrambled for dear life. Everyone except for the Buddha and his close attendant Ananda.

The Buddha didn't even flinch. He was in a complete state of love and compassion. It was like a young puppy dog rushing to its master. Well, the elephant was still angry and drunk. What was going to happen next?

When the drunk elephant was just inches from barreling down and crashing the Buddha, the elephant stopped in his track. It was a sight to be seen. Nobody could believe it especially Devadatta. The elephant just melted like butter into Buddha's arms and they embraced. The Buddha took away the pain and the state of intoxication of the elephant. They became from that point in time best friends. Whenever the Buddha came to this town the Buddha and the elephant would meet and greet each other. They were the best of friends.

The Deer King of the Banyan ²



The Deer King of the Banyan

In one of his previous incarnations, the Buddha incarnated in the form of a deer in a forest near Kashi, which later received the name of Varanasi or Benares. Over the years, he grew into a beautiful, golden stag. His eyes shone like two stars, his mouth was as red as the forest berries. His hooves were black and as bright as night in the Thar desert, and everyone who saw him said that his antlers were made of silver. Besides being beautiful, this golden deer was also compassionate and just. So much so, that he became the king of a herd of five hundred deer, the Herd of the Banyan.

In the same forest, there was another herd of deer that was equally numerous, the Herd of the Antlers, and their king was likewise a noble, beautiful and impressive golden deer.

Around that time, Brahmadata was crowned king of Kashi. Brahmadata was a man of good heart, but he had regrettable tastes in pursuits. He liked to hunt. Obviously, a king did not need to hunt for survival; instead, Brahmadata hunted for pleasure. In addition, he loved venison above all other foods, as you can imagine, this combination of interests did not bode well for the herds of deer who lived in the forest near Kashi.

Brahmadatta went out almost every day to hunt, starting each time from a different village. The people of the villages were thus obliged to set aside their own work in order to accompany and serve the king and his hunting parties.

The people of the villages began to get frustrated with the number of interruptions the king was subjecting them to. The farmers could not take care of their fields, so the crops were harvested haphazardly and later than they should

² https://theearthstoriescollection.org/en/the-deer-king-of-the-banyan/?fbclid=IwAR31Ud25GAxSL-LNkkAG7CWjeba_UHFJk96BF5Bs84a3aWAT-UQFXyv-e8M

be. The merchants and traders did not have the time to take care of their businesses properly. So the people from all the villages gathered together and decided to build a big deer park for the king next to Kashi. That way, they thought, the king could easily hunt any time he wished, and he would not need to recruit villagers to help him.

No sooner said than done, the peasants built a high palisade around a large meadow dotted with dense groves of trees and bushes. and they dug ponds where the deer could drink and bathe. They opened the large door in the palisade and, banging sticks and poles to create a deafening noise, they drove the deer out of the forest and into the park. When the last deer had gone through, the door was closed.

The representative of the villages went to visit the king and said:

‘Your Majesty, as you know, we have always been willing to help your hunting parties, but our fields and businesses are increasingly neglected because of this, and we have families to feed. We know that you are a wise king and that, consequently, you will know how to value what we have created for you. We have made you a nice deer park next to the city, in which we have gathered two big herds for your enjoyment. Now, you can go hunting whenever you want to, without needing to recruit villagers for each outing. Days that you do not go out hunting, you can still have fresh venison, because your own cooks will be able to kill all the meat they need.’

The king, who was not a bad man, understood perfectly the problem brought to him by the peasants and merchants of the villages and agreed to their initiative.

The following day, Brahmadata went to the park and was pleased to see so many deer roaming the grounds. It did not take him long to discern two golden stags of impressive stature, which he supposed to be the kings of the herds. Brahmadata pointed them out to his assistant, the chief of the guard, and his cook giving the order that those two deer should not be slaughtered under any circumstances.

Every day, Brahmadata came to the park and killed a deer, which was taken by the cook to prepare dishes for the king’s table. Sometimes, if the king was very busy, it was the cook himself who gave the order to the chief of the guard to kill a deer.

But as soon as the deer saw the bows and arrows, they panicked. They ran from here to there, they crashed against trees or got caught between them, hooking their antlers and wounding themselves, twisting their legs and breaking bones with the falls. Others were injured by the loose arrows.

The king of the Banyan Herd was saddened by all the injuries, deaths and panic, so he went to see the king of the Antlers Herd.

‘It is clear that we are trapped here, at least for the moment,’ the Banyan Stag said, ‘We may have to face this unfortunate situation for a while. But we should, at least, try to reduce the suffering of everyone as much as possible.’

‘I agree,’ said the Antlers Stag. ‘I have also been thinking about this, but I do not know what we can do.’

‘Well,’ the Banyan Deer said. ‘I thought something that, although it is very hard to accept, could at least limit the damage to the rest of the deer in both herds. Since the human king only needs the meat of one deer a day, I suggest that one of us could be chosen by lot each day, and that deer should go directly to king Brahmadata to be killed, or to the chopping block to be sacrificed by the cook. One day we would choose one of my herd, and the next day a deer of yours. In this way, we would avoid the chaos and mad racing that causes so many injuries and wounds.’

‘I agree with your proposal,’ the Stag of the Antlers said, and addressing the other deer in both herds, he asked, ‘What do you think?’

After some debate, the members of both herds were unanimous in accepting the proposal of the Banyan Stag.

The next day, when the king and his men looked over the palisade of the park, they saw a single deer standing there. He was shaking with fear, but he held his antlers high with pride. The king paused, thoughtful. He realized what had happened: the kings of both herds, those magnificent golden stags, had convinced their herds to sacrifice one deer each day, in order to avoid injuries to the rest.

Brahmadatta fell into a deep sadness in the face of the nobility of those animals. After a few minutes of reflection, he said to his men:

‘You will no longer hunt among the herds. You will only kill the deer that is offered to you every day down here for the sacrifice.’

He put away his bow, climbed down from the palisade, and rode silently back to his palace, absorbed in his sad thoughts. That night he slept restlessly and dreamt that a bright deer gazed at him sadly as he approached.

Thus, for a time, a deer was chosen by lot, by turns from each herd, and was sent to the chopping block of the Kashi king's cook. Injuries and wounds were avoided in this way and, despite their gloomy fate and the deep anguish of seeing one of them leave each day, the deer were able to live in some tranquillity.

Despite having improved the situation slightly, the Banyan Stag felt his soul break every day, when he saw a deer leave the herds and walk towards its death. Day after day, he tried to encourage the deer of his herd so that they would not lose hope.

'Try not to think beyond the present,' he told them as the sun lit his shining eyes. 'Enjoy the fresh air you breathe and the comfortable grass that welcomes you when resting. Let yourselves be warmed by the sun. Do not give up. As long as we live, there will be hope. I will find a way out of here.'

One day, the tragic draw fell on a pregnant hind of the Herd of the Antlers. The doe went to see her king and said:

'I'm ready to take my destiny, but not before my fawn was born. Understand me, please,' she insisted, 'if I go now, two will die. I do not ask you to save my life. I am not asking for myself, but for my fawn. Let my little one be born, and I swear that the next day I will take my place on the block.'

But the Antlers Stag responded sadly:

'The law is the law. I cannot change the rules now and, therefore, I cannot spare you from your destiny. Please, understand me. Fate has chosen you, and there can be no exceptions. You have to go.'

Desperate, the doe went to the Deer King of the Banyan. Folding her front legs, she knelt before him and begged him to do something. The Banyan Stag watched her silently, sweetly, moved to the depths of his heart.

'Get up, sister,' the deer king said, finally. 'For once we will change the rules. Do not worry. Calm down and rest. You are not going to be sacrificed. I will take care of everything.'

The doe looked at him with relief and gratitude, though not joy, for she knew that, whatever the Banyan Stag did, some other would have to take her place.

The Banyan Stag lowered his head and closed his eyes. He knew that the time had come to behave like a true king. Then, he raised his head again, his magnificent silver antlers outlined against the sky.

‘My position as king and leader forces me to assume what no one else can take on.’ He thought to himself. ‘I will take her place.’

He walked slowly and with dignity towards the door of the palisade, while the members of his herd watched him pass by. They knew what he was going to do. They knew him well, he would not allow such an injustice to take place, even if it cost him his life.

A deep silence descended over the park when the Banyan King arrived at the door of the palisade. When the cook saw him, he said to the soldiers:

‘Do not shoot! The two golden stags must not die. This is what the king decreed.’

He immediately sent a messenger to the king. Soon after, Brahmadata appeared at the palisade. The king of Kashi met the eyes of the king of the deer and realized that this was the deer from his dreams.

‘Deer King of the Banyan,’ Brahmadata said at last, ‘I know you, for you have been visiting me in my dreams. Why are you here? I freed you from this commitment, you and the king of the other herd. Why do you offer yourself for sacrifice, when I do not want your death?’

‘Oh, king of men!’ replied the Banyan Deer. ‘Today the sacrifice has fallen to a pregnant hind, who has begged me to do something to free her from this obligation, at least until after her fawn is born. But I could not do anything other than taking her place. I could not condemn another of our people to die when luck had favored them? I could not force the death penalty on someone whom fate had not called. So it must be me who takes her place.’

The Deer King of the Banyan lowered his head and swallowed and then raised his magnificent antlers to the sky and said:

‘Go ahead, shoot your arrows.’

The soldiers looked at their king, waiting for an order, but Brahmadata could not speak. Two large tears rolled down his cheeks. How could he have been so blind, so insensitive to the feelings of these noble animals, he wondered. In

truth, he felt ashamed of the suffering humans caused to beings who were just as sensitive to pain and the anguish of death as they were.

‘Oh, Great Deer King!’ Brahmadata said at last, ‘You are right. A King must take responsibility for all of his subjects. Not even among human beings have I witnessed as much nobility as you have demonstrated today, along with compassion and generosity. I beg you to forgive me for not being aware of the pain and suffering of deer.’

He continued, ‘You and all the deer prisoners of this park are free to return to your forests. You may graze where you wish to on my lands. No one will hunt you again. Go and live in peace.’

‘Sir, your kindness moves me,’ the Deer King of the Banyan replied. ‘But what will happen to the other animals, birds, and fish that suffer just as we do and you do? Will you hunt them, now that you have freed us from suffering?’

‘Noble king,’ Brahmadata replied with tears in his eyes. ‘I never would have thought that I could see things as clearly as I am seeing them now! Please, take my word that, while they are in my kingdom, no animal, bird, or fish will be killed by the hand of a man.’

‘Listen to me, all courtiers and assistants present here,’ he shouted. ‘I decree that, from today, all beings in my kingdom will be considered my subjects. Therefore, they must not be hunted or killed. I order you to go forth and announce this decree throughout the country,’

Brahmadata, returned his attention to the Banyan King. ‘Tell me, compassionate king of the deer, is your heart at peace with me now?’

‘Yes, great king Brahmadata!’ replied the golden stag. ‘My heart is at peace!’

The people of the kingdom were amazed at first, but they complied with the royal order, and the animals were no longer hunted and massacred in those lands. Since the kingdom came to depend on the crops in the fields, the farmers and their lands became more respected.

As for the Deer King of the Banyan and the two herds that were once imprisoned in the park, they returned to the depths of the forests, where they led a life free from the anguish of hiding and fleeing.

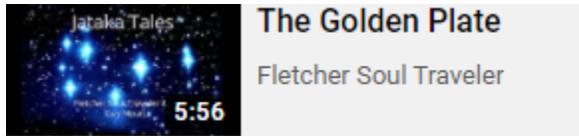
Adapted by Grian A. Cutanda (2018).

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The Deer King of the Banyan story is Jātaka no. 12, and its original title is the Nigrodhamiga-Jātaka, although for this adaptation I have drawn mainly on the adaptations of Rafe Martin (1999), Todd Anderson (1995), and K. R. Vidhyaa (2014).

The Golden Plate
[Greed and Honesty] ³



Once upon a time in a place called Seri, there were two salesmen of pots and pans and hand-made trinkets. They agreed to divide the town between them. They also said that after one had gone through his area, it was all right for the other to try and sell where the first had already been.

One day, while one of them was coming down a street, a poor little girl saw him and asked her grandmother to buy her a bracelet. The old grandmother replied, "How can we poor people buy bracelets?" The little girl said, "Since we don't have any money, we can give our black sooty old plate." The old woman agreed to give it a try, so she invited the dealer inside.

The salesman saw that these people were very poor and innocent, so he didn't want to waste his time with them. Even though the old woman pleaded with him, he said he had no bracelet that she could afford to buy. Then she asked, "We have an old plate that is useless to us, can we trade it for a bracelet?" The man took it and, while examining it, happened to scratch the bottom of it. To his surprise, he saw that underneath the black soot, it was a golden plate! But he didn't let on that he had noticed it. Instead, he decided to deceive these poor people so he could get the plate for next to nothing. He said, "This is not worth even one bracelet. There's no value in this. I don't want it!" He left, thinking he would return later when they would accept even less for the plate.

Meanwhile the other salesman, after finishing in his part of town, followed after the first as they had agreed. He ended up at the same house. Again the poor little girl begged her grandmother to trade the old plate for a bracelet. The woman saw that this was a nice tender looking merchant and thought, "He's a good man, not like the rough-talking first salesman." So she invited him in and offered to trade

³ http://www.buddhanet.net/bt1_03.htm

the same black sooty old plate for one bracelet. When he examined it, he too saw that it was pure gold under the grime. He said to the old woman, "All my goods and all my money together are not worth as much as this rich golden plate!"

Of course, the woman was shocked at this discovery, but now she knew that he was indeed a good and honest fellow. So she said she would be glad to accept whatever he could trade for it. The salesman said, "I'll give you all my pots and pans and trinkets, plus all my money, if you will let me keep just eight coins and my balancing scale, with its cover to put the golden plate in." They made the trade. He went down to the river, where he paid the eight coins to the ferry man to take him across.

By then the greedy salesman had returned, already adding up huge imaginary profits in his head. When he met the little girl and her grandmother again, he said he had changed his mind and was willing to offer a few cents, but not one of his bracelets, for the useless black sooty old plate. The old woman then calmly told him of the trade she had just made with the honest salesman, and said, "Sir, you lied to us."

The greedy salesman was not ashamed of his lies, but he was saddened as he thought, "I've lost the golden plate that must be worth a hundred thousand." So he asked the woman, "Which way did he go?" She told him the direction. He left all his things right there at her door and ran down to the river, thinking, "He robbed me! He robbed me! He won't make a fool out of me!"

From the riverside, he saw the honest salesman still crossing over on the ferry boat. He shouted to the ferry man, "Come back!" But the good merchant told him to keep on going to the other side, and that's what he did.

Seeing that he could do nothing, the greedy salesman exploded with rage. He jumped up and down, beating his chest. He became so filled with hatred towards the honest man, who had won the golden plate, that he made himself cough up blood. He had a heart attack and died on the spot!

The moral is: "Honesty is the best policy."

Beauty and Grey [A Wise Leader] ⁴



Beauty and Grey

Fletcher Soul Traveler

Once upon a time, there was a deer who was the leader of a herd of a thousand. He had two sons. One was very slim and tall, with bright alert eyes, and smooth reddish fur. He was called Beauty. The other was Grey in color, also slim and tall, and was called Grey.

One day, after they were fully grown, their father called Beauty and Grey to him. He said, "I am now very old, so I cannot do all that is necessary to look after this big herd of deer. I want you, my two grown-up children, to be the leaders, while I retire from looking after them all the time. We will divide the herd, and each of you will lead 500 deer." So it was done.

In India, when the harvest time comes, the deer are always in danger. The rice is at its tallest, and the deer cannot help but go into the paddies and eat it. To avoid the destruction of their crops, the human beings dig pits, set sharp stakes in the ground, and build stone traps - all to capture and kill the deer.

Knowing this was the season, the wise old deer called the two new leaders to him. He advised them to take the herds up into the mountain forest, far from the dangerous farm lands. This was how he had always saved the deer from being wounded or killed. Then he would bring them back to the low lands after the harvest was over.

Since he was too old and weak for the trip, he would remain behind in hiding. He warned them to be careful and have a safe journey. Beauty set out with his herd for the mountain forest, and so did Grey with his.

⁴ http://www.buddhanet.net/bt1_12.htm

The villagers all along the way knew that this was the time the deer moved from the low-lying farm lands to the high countryside. So they hid along the way and killed the deer as they passed by.

Grey did not pay attention to his father's wise advice. Instead of being careful and traveling safely, he was in a hurry to get to the lush mountain forest. So he moved his herd constantly, during the night, at dawn and dusk, and even in broad daylight. This made it easy for the people to shoot the deer in Grey's herd with bows and arrows. Many were killed, and many were wounded, only to die in pain later on. Grey reached the forest with only a few deer remaining alive.

The tall sleek red-furred Beauty was wise enough to understand the danger to his moving herd. So he was very careful. He knew it was safer to stay away from the villages, and from all humans. He knew it was not safe in the daytime, or even at dawn or dusk. So he led his herd wide around the villages and moved only in the middle of the night. Beauty's herd arrived in the mountain forest safe and sound, with no one killed or injured.

The two herds found each other and remained in the mountains until well after the harvest season was over. Then they began the return to the farmland country.

Grey had learned nothing from the first trip. As it was getting cold in the mountains, he was in a hurry to get to the warmer low lands. So he was just as careless as before. Again the people hid along the way and attacked and killed the deer. All Grey's herd were killed, later to be eaten or sold by the villagers. Grey himself was the only one who survived the journey.

Beauty led his herd in the same careful way as before. He brought back all 500 deer, completely safe. While the deer was still in the distance, the old chief said to his doe, "Look at the deer coming back to us. Beauty has all his followers with him. Grey comes limping back alone, without his whole herd of 500. Those who follow a wise leader, with good qualities, will always be safe. Those who follow a foolish leader, who is careless and thinks only of himself, will fall into troubles and be destroyed."

After some time, the old deer died and was reborn as he deserved. Beauty became chief of the herd and lived a long life, loved and admired by all.

The moral is: A wise leader puts the safety of his followers first.

The Wind and the Moon

[Friendship]⁵



The Wind and the Moon

Fletcher Soul Traveler

6

Once upon a time, two very good friends lived together in the shade of a rock. Strange as it may seem, one was a lion and one was a tiger. They had met when they were too young to know the difference between lions and tigers. So they did not think their friendship was at all unusual. Besides, it was a peaceful part of the mountains, possibly due to the influence of a gentle forest monk who lived nearby. He was a hermit, one who lives far away from other people.

For some unknown reason, one day the two friends got into a silly argument. The tiger said, "Everyone knows the cold comes when the moon wanes from full to new!" The lion said, "Where did you hear such nonsense? Everyone knows the cold comes when the moon waxes from new to full!"

The argument got stronger and stronger. Neither could convince the other. They could not reach any conclusion to resolve the growing dispute. They even started calling each other names! Fearing for their friendship, they decided to go ask the learned forest monk, who would surely know about such things.

Visiting the peaceful hermit, the lion and tiger bowed respectfully and put their question to him. The friendly monk thought for a while and then gave his answer. "It can be cold in any phase of the moon, from new to full and back to new again. It is the wind that brings the cold, whether from west or north or east. Therefore, in a way, you are both right! And neither of you is defeated by the other. The most important thing is to live without conflict, to remain united. Unity is best by all means."

The lion and tiger thanked the wise hermit. They were happy to still be friends.

⁵ http://www.buddhanet.net/bt1_19.htm

6

The moral is: Weather comes and weather goes, but friendship remains.

Two Stupid Children

[Foolishness]



Two Stupid Children

Fletcher Soul Traveler

7

Once upon a time, there was an old carpenter with a shiny bald head. On sunny days, his head shined so brightly that people shaded their eyes when talking to him!

On just such a sunny day, a hungry mosquito was attracted to the old carpenter's bright bald head. He landed on it and started biting into it.

The carpenter was busy smoothing a piece of wood with a plane. When he felt the mosquito biting him, he tried to chase him away. But the hungry mosquito would not leave such a good-looking meal. So the man called over his son and asked him to get rid of the stubborn pest.

Unlike his father's shiny head, the son was not so bright. But he was hard working and obedient. He said, 'Don't worry Dad, be patient. I'll kill that bug with just one blow!'

Then he picked up a very sharp ax and took careful aim at the mosquito. Without thinking, he came down with the ax and split the mosquito in two! Unfortunately, after slicing through the mosquito, the ax also split the old carpenter's shiny bald head in two.

Meanwhile, an adviser to the king happened to be passing by with his followers. They saw what had just happened, and were quite shocked that anyone could be so stupid!

⁷ http://www.buddhanet.net/bt1_47.htm

The king's adviser said, "Don't be so surprised by human stupidity! This reminds me of a similar event that occurred just yesterday.

"In a village not far from here, a woman was cleaning rice. She was pounding it in a mortar with a pestle, to separate the husks. As she worked up a sweat, a swarm of flies began buzzing around her head. She tried to chase them away, but, the thirsty flies would not leave.

"Then she called over her daughter and asked her to shoo away the bothersome bugs. Although she was a rather foolish girl, the daughter always tried her best to please her mother.

"So she stood up from her own mortar, raised her pestle, and took careful aim at the biggest and boldest of the flies. Without thinking, she pounded the fly to death! But of course, the same blow that killed the fly also ended her mother's life.

"You all know what they say," said the adviser, finishing his story, "'With friends like these, who needs enemies!'"

The moral is: A wise enemy is less dangerous than a foolish friend.

The Tree That Acted Like a Hunter

[Impatience]



The Tree That Acted Like a Hunter

8

Once upon a time, there was an antelope who lived in the deep forest. He ate the fruits that fell from the trees. There was one tree that had become his favorite.

In the same area, there was a hunter who captured and killed antelopes and deer. He put down fruit as bait under a tree. Then he waited, hiding in the branches above. He held a rope noose hanging down to the ground around the fruits. When an animal ate the fruit, the hunter tightened the noose and caught him.

Early one morning the antelope came to his favorite tree in search of fruits to eat. He did not see that the hunter was hiding in it, with his noose-trap ready. Even though he was hungry, the antelope was very careful. He was on the lookout for any possible danger. He saw the delicious-looking ripe fruits at the foot of his favorite tree. He wondered why no animal had yet eaten any, and so he was afraid something was wrong.

The hiding hunter saw the antelope approaching from a distance. Seeing him stop and take great care, he was afraid he would not be able to trap him. He was so anxious that he began throwing fruits in the direction of the antelope, trying to lure him into coming closer.

But this was a pretty smart antelope. He knew that fruits only fall straight down when they fall from trees. Since these fruits were flying towards him, he knew

⁸ http://www.buddhanet.net/bt1_23.htm

there was danger. So he examined the tree itself very carefully and saw the hunter in the branches. However, he pretended not to see him.

He spoke in the direction of the tree. "Oh my dear fruit tree, you used to give me your fruits by letting them fall straight down to the ground. Now, throwing them towards me, you do not act at all like a tree! Since you have changed your habits, I too will change mine. I will get my fruits from a different tree from now on, one that still acts like a tree!"

The hunter realized his mistake and saw that the antelope had outsmarted him. This angered him and he yelled out, "You may escape me this time, you clever antelope, but I'll get you next time for sure!"

The antelope realized that, by getting so angry, the hunter had given himself away a second time. So he spoke in the direction of the tree again. "Not only don't you act like a tree, but you act like a hunter! You foolish humans, who live by killing animals. You do not understand that killing the innocent brings harm also to you, both in this life and by rebirth in a hell world. It is clear that we antelopes are far wiser than you. We eat fruits, we remain innocent of killing others, and we avoid the harmful results."

So saying, the careful antelope leaped into the thick forest and was gone.

The moral is: The wise remain innocent.

The Magic Priest and the Kidnapper Gang

[Power and Greed] ⁹ ¹⁰



The Magic Priest and the Kidnapper Gang

Fletcher Soul Traveler

Once upon a time in Benares, there was a king named Brahmadata. In one of the kingdom's remote villages, there was a priest who had magical power. He knew a special magic spell which was a secret given to him by his teacher.

This spell could be used only once a year when the planets were lined up in a certain way. Only then, the priest could say the secret magic words into his open palms. Then he looked up into the sky, clapped his hands, and a shower of precious jewels came down on him.

The magic priest was also a teacher. He had a very good student, who was intelligent and able to understand the most difficult ideas. He was obedient and faithful, always wishing to honor and protect his master.

One day, the priest had to go on a trip to a faraway village, in order to perform an animal sacrifice. Since he had to take a dangerous road, the good student went with him.

Along this road there happened to be a gang of 500 bandits. They were known as the 'Kidnapper Gang'. They captured people and demanded ransom money in return for letting them live.

Lo and behold, the magic priest and his good student were captured by the Kidnapper Gang. They set the ransom at 5,000 gold coins and sent the student to go get it, in order to save his master's life.

Before leaving, the student knelt before his teacher and bowed respectfully. He said to him quietly, so the bandits could not hear, "Oh master, tonight is the one

⁹ http://www.buddhanet.net/bt1_50.htm

¹⁰

night of the year when the planets will be lined up perfectly. Only then can your magic spell be used to shower you with jewels from the sky. However, I must warn you, my beloved and respected teacher, that to use such a power to save yourself from such greedy men as these would be extremely dangerous. Obtaining great wealth so easily must lead to disaster for men like them. And if you think only of your own safety, bringing such harm to them will cause danger to you as well.

"Therefore, I warn you, do not give in to the desire to make the spell of jewels. Let the lucky night pass by for this year. Even if these bandits harm you, trust your faithful student to save you, without adding to your danger." So saying, he took his leave.

That evening, the kidnappers tied up the magic priest tightly and left him outside their cave for the night. They gave him nothing to eat or drink.

After the moon came out, the priest saw the planets lining up so his spell could work. He thought, "Why should I suffer like this? I can magically pay my own ransom. Why should I care if harm comes to these 500 kidnappers? I am a magic priest. My life is worth much more than theirs. I care only for my own life. And besides, this lucky night only comes but once a year. I cannot waste the chance to use my great power!"

Having decided to ignore the advice of the good student, he called the kidnappers and said, "Oh brave and mighty ones, why do you want to tie me up and make me suffer?"

They replied, "Oh holy priest, we need money. We have many mouths to feed. We must have money, and lots of it!"

The magic priest said, "Ah, you did this for money? Is that all there is to it? In that case, I will make you rich beyond your wildest dreams! For I am great and powerful. As a holy priest, you can trust me. You must untie me, wash my head and face, dress me in new clothes, and cover me with flowers. Then, after so honoring me properly, leave me alone to do my magic."

The kidnappers followed his instructions. But, not trusting him completely, they hid in the bushes and secretly watched him.

This is what they saw. The washed and flower-covered priest looked up into the sky. Seeing that the planets were lined up in the special lucky pattern, he lowered his head and muttered the magic spell into his hands. They were sounds that no one could understand, something like this: "Nah Wah Shed-nath. Eel Neeah Med-rak. Goh Bah Mil-neeay."

Then he gazed into the sky and clapped his hands. Suddenly he was showered with the most beautiful jewels!

The Kidnapper Gang came out from hiding and grabbed all the precious stones. They wrapped them up in bundles and went off down the road, with the magic priest following behind.

On the way, they were stopped by another gang of 500 robbers. They asked them, "Why are you stopping us?" "Give us all your wealth!" the others demanded.

The kidnapers said, "Leave us alone. You can get all the riches you want from this magic priest, just as we have done. He says magic words, looks up into the sky, claps his hands, and the most fabulous jewels come down!"

So they let the Kidnapper Gang go, and surrounded the priest. They demanded that he make a shower of precious stones for them as well.

He said, "Of course I can give you all the jewels you want. But you must be patient and wait for one year. The lucky time, when the planets are lined up properly, has already come this year. It will not happen again until next year. Come see me then, and I will be happy to make you rich!"

Robbers are not exactly known for their patience. They became angry at once. They shouted at him, "Ah, you tricky lying priest! You made the Kidnapper Gang wealthy, but now you refuse to do the same for us. We'll teach you to take us so lightly!" Then they cut him in two with a sharp sword and left both halves of his body in the middle of the road.

The robbers chased after the Kidnapper Gang. There was a terrible bloody battle. After hours of fighting, they killed all 500 kidnappers and stole the wonderful jewels.

As soon as they left the battleground, the 500 robbers began quarreling over the wealth. They divided into two rival groups of 250 each. These fought another bloody battle until only two were left alive one from each side.

These two collected all the valuable jewels and hid them in the forest. They were very hungry. So one guarded the treasure, while the other started cooking rice.

The one doing the guarding thought, "When the other is finished cooking, I will kill him and keep all this loot for myself?"

Meanwhile, the one doing the cooking thought, "If we divide these jewels in two, I will get less. Therefore, I will add poison to this rice, kill the other, and keep all the jewels for myself. Why share, when I can have it all!"

So he ate some of the rice, since he was so hungry, and poisoned the rest. He took the rice pot to the other and offered it to him. But he immediately swung his sword and chopped off the cook's head!

Then the hungry killer began gobbling up the poisoned rice. Within minutes, he dropped dead on the spot!

A few days later, the good student returned with the ransom money. He could not find his teacher or the Kidnapper Gang. Instead, he found only the worthless possessions they had left behind after getting the jewels.

Continuing down the road, he came to the two halves of his teacher's dead body. Realizing that the magic priest must have ignored his warning, he mourned his cruel death. Then he built a funeral pyre, covered it with wildflowers, and burned the body of his respected teacher.

A little further down the road, the good student came upon the 500 dead bodies of the Kidnapper Gang. Further still, he started seeing the dead robbers, until he counted 498.

Then he saw the footprints of the last two going into the forest. He realized that they too must fight over the treasure, so he followed them. Finally, he came to the dead body slumped over the rice pot, the other one with his head chopped off, and the bundles of valuable jewels. He could tell immediately what had happened.

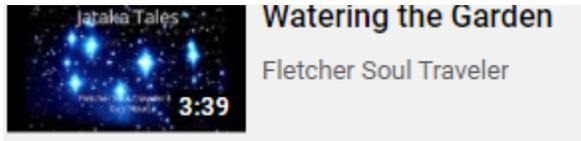
He thought, "It is so sad. My teacher had great knowledge, but not enough common sense. He could not resist using his magical power, regardless of the results. By causing the deaths of the one-thousand greedy gangsters, he doomed himself as well."

The good student took the treasure back to the village and used it generously for the benefit of many.

The moral is: When power has no conscience, and greed has no limit - the killing has no end.

Watering the Garden

[Foolishness] ¹¹



It was just before New Year's in Benares, in northern India. Everyone in the city was getting ready for the three-day celebration, including the gardener of the king's pleasure garden.

There was a large troop of monkeys living in this pleasure garden. So they wouldn't have to think too much, they always followed the advice of their leader, the monkey king.

The royal gardener wanted to celebrate the New Year's holiday, just like everybody else. So he decided to hand over his duties to the monkeys.

He went to the monkey king and said, "Oh king of monkeys, my honorable friend, would you do a little favor for me? New Year's is coming. I too wish to celebrate. So I must be away for three full days. Here in this lovely garden, there are plenty of fruits and berries and nuts to eat. You and your subjects may be my guests and eat as much as you wish. In return, please water the young trees and plants while I'm gone."

The monkey king replied, "Don't worry about a thing, my friend! We will do a terrific job! Have a good time!"

The gardener showed the monkeys where the watering buckets were kept. Feeling confident, he left to celebrate the holiday. The monkeys called after him, "Happy New Year!"

The next day, the monkeys filled up the buckets, and began watering the young trees and plants. Then the king of the monkeys addressed them: "My subjects, it is not good to waste water. Therefore, pull up each young tree or plant before watering. Inspect it to see how long the roots are. Then give more water to the

¹¹ http://www.buddhanet.net/bt1_48.htm

ones with long roots and less water to the ones with short roots. That way we will not waste water, and the gardener will be pleased!"

Without giving it any further thought, the obedient subjects followed their king's orders.

Meanwhile, a wise man was walking by outside the entrance to the garden. He saw the monkeys uprooting all the lovely young trees and plants, measuring their roots, and carefully pouring water into the holes in the ground. He asked, "Oh foolish monkeys, what do you think you're doing to the king's beautiful garden?"

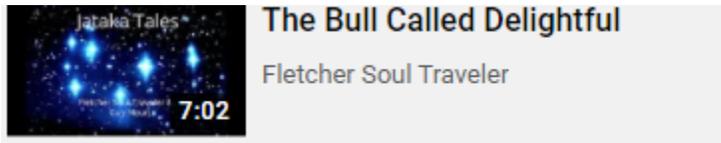
They answered, "We are watering the trees and plants, without wasting water! We were commanded to do so by our lord king."

The man said, "If this is the wisdom of the wisest among you - the king - what are the rest of you like? Intending to do a worthwhile deed, your foolishness turns it into a disaster!"

The moral is: Only fools can make good deeds into bad ones.

The Bull Called Delightful

[All Deserve Respect] ¹²



Once upon a time, in the country of Gandhara in northern India, there was a city called Takkasila. In that city, the Enlightenment Being was born as a certain calf. Since he was well-bred for strength, he was bought by a high-class rich man. He became very fond of the gentle animal, and called him 'Delightful'. He took good care of him and fed him only the best.

When Delightful grew up into a big fine strong bull, he thought, "I was brought up by this generous man. He gave me such good food and constant care, even though sometimes there were difficulties. Now I am a big grown-up bull and there is no other bull who can pull as heavy a load as I can. Therefore, I would like to use my strength to give something in return to my master."

So he said to the man, "Sir, please find some wealthy merchant who is proud of having many strong bulls. Challenge him by saying that your bull can pull one-hundred heavily loaded bullock carts."

Following his advice, the high-class rich man went to such a merchant and struck up a conversation. After a while, he brought up the idea of who had the strongest bull in the city.

The merchant said, "Many have bulls, but no one has any as strong as mine." The rich man said, "Sir, I have a bull who can pull one hundred heavily loaded bullock carts." "No, friend, how can there be such a bull? That is unbelievable!" said the merchant. The other replied, "I do have such a bull, and I am willing to make a bet."

The merchant said, "I will bet a thousand gold coins that your bull cannot pull a hundred loaded bullock carts." So the bet was made and they agreed on a date and time for the challenge.

¹² http://www.buddhanet.net/bt1_29.htm

The merchant attached together one-hundred big bullock carts. He filled them with sand and gravel to make them very heavy.

The high-class rich man fed the finest rice to the bull called Delightful. He bathed him and decorated him and hung a beautiful garland of flowers around his neck.

Then he harnessed him to the first cart and climbed up onto it. Being so high class, he could not resist the urge to make himself seem very important. So he cracked a whip in the air, and yelled at the faithful bull, "Pull, you dumb animal! I command you to pull, you big dummy!"

The bull called Delightful thought, "This challenge was my idea. I have never done anything bad to my master, and yet he insults me with such hard and harsh words!" So he remained in his place and refused to pull the carts.

The merchant laughed and demanded his winnings from the bet. The high-class rich man had to pay him the one thousand gold coins. He returned home and sat down, saddened by his lost bet, and embarrassed by the blow to his pride.

The bull called Delightful grazed peacefully on his way home. When he arrived, he saw his master sadly lying on his side. He asked, "Sir, why are you lying there like that? Are you sleeping? You look sad." The man said I lost a thousand gold coins because of you. With such a loss, how could I sleep?"

The bull replied. "Sir, you called me 'dummy'. You even cracked a whip in the air over my head. In all my life, did I ever break anything, step on anything, make a mess in the wrong place, or behave like a 'dummy' in any way?" He answered, "No, my pet."

The bull called Delightful said, "Then sir, why did you call me 'dumb animal', and insult me even in the presence of others? The fault is yours. I have done nothing wrong. But since I feel sorry for you, go again to the merchant and make the same bet for two thousand gold coins. And remember to use only the respectful words I deserve so well."

Then the high-class rich man went back to the merchant and made the bet for two-thousand gold coins. The merchant thought it would be easy money. Again he set up the one hundred heavily loaded bullock carts. Again the rich man fed and bathed the bull, and hung a garland of flowers around his neck.

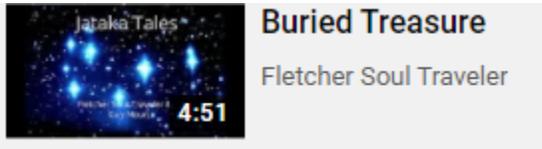
When all was ready, the rich man touched Delightful's forehead with a lotus blossom, having given up the whip. Thinking of him as fondly as if he were his own child, he said, "My son, please do me the honor of pulling these one hundred bullock carts."

Lo and behold, the wonderful bull pulled with all his might and dragged the heavy carts until the last one stood in the place of the first.

The merchant, with his mouth hanging open in disbelief, had to pay the two thousand gold coins. The onlookers were so impressed that they honored the bull called Delightful with gifts. But even more important to the high-class rich man than his winnings was his valuable lesson in humility and respect.

The moral is: Harsh words bring no reward. Respectful words bring honor to all.

Buried Treasure
[The Arrogance of Power] ¹³



Once upon a time, there was an old man who lived in Benares. He had a very good friend, who was known to be wise. Luckily, or perhaps unluckily, he also had a beautiful young wife.

The old man and his young wife had a son. The man came to love his son very much. One day he thought, "I have learned that my beautiful young wife cannot always be trusted. When I die, I am sure she will marry another man, and together they will waste the wealth I have worked so hard for. Later on, there will be nothing left for my son to inherit from his mother. So I will do something to guarantee an inheritance for my deserving son. I will bury my wealth to protect it for him."

Then he called for his most faithful servant, Nanda. Together they took all the old man's wealth deep into the forest and buried it. He said, "My dear Nanda, I know you are obedient and faithful. After I die, you must give this treasure to my son. Keep it a secret until then. When you give the treasure to him, advise him to use it wisely and generously."

Before long, the old man died. Several years later, his son completed his education. He returned home to take his place as the head of the family. His mother said, "My son, being a suspicious man, your father has hidden his wealth. I am sure that his faithful servant, Nanda, knows where it is. You should ask him to show you. Then you can get married and support the whole family."

So the son went to Nanda and asked him if he knew where his father had hidden his wealth. Nanda told him that the treasure was buried in the forest and that he knew the exact spot.

¹³ http://www.buddhanet.net/bt1_41.htm

Then the two of them took a basket and a shovel into the forest. When they arrived at the place the treasure was buried, all of a sudden Nanda became puffed up with how important he was. Although he was only a servant, he had the power of being the only one to know the secret. So he became conceited and thought he was better than the son. He said, "You son of a servant girl! Where would you inherit a treasure from?"

The patient son did not talk back to his father's servant. He suffered his abuse, even though it puzzled him. After a short time, they returned home empty-handed.

This strange behavior was repeated two more times. The son thought, "At home, Nanda appears willing to reveal the secret of the treasure. But when we go into the forest carrying the basket and shovel, he is no longer willing. I wonder why he changes his mind each time."

He decided to take this puzzle to his father's wise old friend. He went to him and described what had happened.

The wise old man said, "Go again with Nanda into the forest. Watch where he stands when he abuses you, which he surely will do. Then send him away saying, "You have no right to speak to me that way. Leave me."

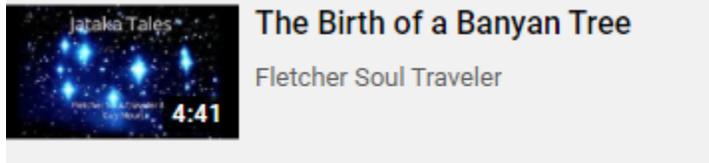
"Dig up the ground on that very spot and you will find your inheritance. Nanda is a weak man. Therefore, when he comes closest to his little bit of power, he turns it into abuse."

The son followed this advice exactly. Sure enough, he found the buried treasure. As his father had hoped, he generously used the wealth for the benefit of many.

The moral is: A little power soon goes to the head of the one not used to it.

The Birth of a Banyan Tree

[Respect for Elders]



14

Once upon a time, there was a big banyan tree in the forest beneath the mighty Himalayas. Living near this banyan tree were three very good friends. They were a quail, a monkey, and an elephant. Each of them was quite smart.

Occasionally the three friends got into a disagreement. When this happened, they did not consider the opinion of any one of them to be more valuable. No matter how much experience each one had, his opinion was treated the same as the others. So it took them a long time to reach an agreement. Every time this happened, they had to start from the beginning to reach a solution.

After a while, they realized that it would save time, and help their friendship, if they could shorten their disagreements. They decided that it would certainly help if they considered the most valuable opinion first. Then, if they could agree on that one, they would not have to waste time, and possibly even become less friendly, by arguing about the other two.

Fortunately, they all thought the most valuable opinion was the one based on the most experience. Therefore, they could live together even more peacefully if they gave higher respect to the oldest among them. Only if his opinion were clearly wrong, would they need to consider others.

Unfortunately, the elephant and the monkey, and the quail had no idea which one was the oldest. Since this was a time before old age was respected, they had no reason to remember their birthdays or their ages.

¹⁴ http://www.buddhanet.net/bt1_39.htm

Then one day, while they were relaxing in the shade of the big banyan tree, the quail and the monkey asked the elephant, "As far back as you can remember, what was the size of this banyan tree?"

The elephant replied, "I remember this tree for a very long time. When I was just a little baby, I used to scratch my belly by rubbing it over the tender shoots on top of this banyan tree."

Then the monkey said, "When I was a curious baby monkey, I used to sit and examine the little seedling banyan tree. Sometimes I used to bend over and nibble its top tender leaves."

The monkey and the elephant asked the quail, "As far back as you can remember, what was the size of this banyan tree?"

The quail said, "When I was young, I was looking for food in a nearby forest. In that forest, there was a big old banyan tree, which was full of ripe berries. I ate some of those berries, and the next day I was standing right here. This was where I let my droppings fall, and the seeds they contained grew up to be this very tree!"

The monkey and the elephant said, "Aha! Sir quail, you must be the oldest. You deserve our respect and honor. From now on we will pay close attention to your words. Based on your wisdom and experience, advise us when we make mistakes. When there are disagreements, we will give the highest place to your opinion. We ask only that you be honest and just."

The quail replied, "I thank you for your respect, and I promise to always do my best to deserve it." It just so happened that this wise little quail was the Bodhisatta the Enlightenment Being.

The moral is: Respect for the wisdom of elders leads to harmony.

The Fawn Who Played Hooky

[Truancy]



The Fawn Who Played Hooky

Fletcher Soul Traveler

15

Once upon a time, there was a herd of forest deer. In this herd was a wise and respected teacher, cunning in the ways of deer. He taught the tricks and strategies of survival to the young fawns.

One day, his younger sister brought her son to him, to be taught what is so important for deer. She said, "Oh brother teacher, this is my son. Please teach him the tricks and strategies of deer." The teacher said to the fawn, "Very well, you can come at this time tomorrow for your first lesson."

At first, the young deer came to the lessons as he was supposed to. But soon, he became more interested in playing with the other young bucks and does. He didn't realize how dangerous it could be for a deer who learned nothing but deer games. So he started cutting classes. Soon he was playing hooky all the time.

Unfortunately, one day the fawn who played hooky stepped in a snare and was trapped. Since he was missing, his mother worried. She went to her brother the teacher, and asked him, "My dear brother, how is my son? Have you taught your nephew the tricks and strategies of deer?"

The teacher replied, "My dear sister, your son was disobedient and unteachable. Out of respect for you, I tried my best to teach him. But he did not want to learn the tricks and strategies of deer. He played hooky! How could I possibly teach him? You are obedient and faithful, but he is not. It is useless to try to teach him."

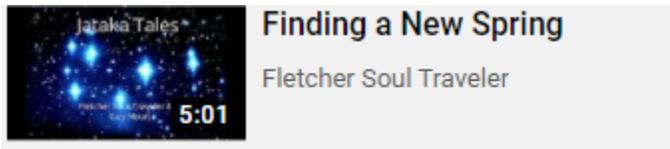
Later they heard the sad news. The stubborn fawn who played hooky had been trapped and killed by a hunter. He skinned him and took the meat home to his family.

¹⁵ http://www.buddhanet.net/bt1_17.htm

The moral is: Nothing can be learned from a teacher, by one who misses the class.

Finding a New Spring

[Perseverance]



16

Once upon a time, a certain tradesman was leading a caravan to another country to sell his goods. Along the way, they came to the edge of a severe hot-sand desert. They asked about, and found that during the daytime the sun heats up the fine sand until it's as hot as charcoal, so no one can walk on it - not even bullocks or camels! So the caravan leader hired a desert guide, one who could follow the stars, so they could travel only at night when the sand cools down. They began the dangerous night-time journey across the desert.

A couple of nights later, after eating their evening meal, and waiting for the sand to cool, they started out again. Later that night the desert guide, who was driving the first cart, saw from the stars that they were getting close to the other side of the desert. He had also overeaten, so that when he relaxed, he dozed off to sleep. Then the bullocks who, of course, couldn't tell directions by reading the stars, gradually turned to the side and went in a big wide circle until they ended up at the same place they had started from!

By then it was morning, and the people realized they were back at the same spot they'd camped at the day before. They lost heart and began to cry about their condition. Since the desert crossing was supposed to be over by now, they had no more water and were afraid they would die of thirst. They even began to blame the caravan leader and the desert guide - "We can do nothing without water!", they complained.

Then the tradesman thought to himself, "If I lose courage now, in the middle of this disastrous situation, my leadership has no meaning. If I fall to weeping and regretting this misfortune, and do nothing, all these goods and bullocks and even the lives of the people, including myself, may be lost. I must be energetic and face

¹⁶ http://www.buddhanet.net/bt1_02.htm

the situation!" So he began walking back and forth, trying to think out a plan to save them all.

Remaining alert, out of the corner of his eye, he noticed a small clump of grass. He thought, "Without water, no plant could live in this desert." So he called over the most energetic of his fellow travelers and asked them to dig up the ground on that very spot. They dug and dug, and after a while, they got down to a large stone. Seeing it they stopped and began to blame the leader again, saying "This effort is useless. We're just wasting our time!" But the tradesman replied, "No no, my friends, if we give up the effort we will all be ruined and our poor animals will die - let us be encouraged!"

As he said this, he got down into the hole, put his ear to the stone, and heard the sound of flowing water. Immediately, he called over a boy who had been digging and said, "If you give up, we will all perish - so take this heavy hammer and strike the rock."

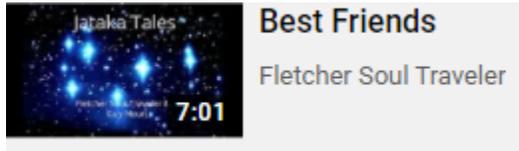
The boy lifted the hammer over his head and hit the rock as hard as he could - and he himself was the most surprised when the rock spilt in two and a mighty flow of water gushed out from under it! Suddenly, all the people were overjoyed. They drank and bathed and washed the animals and cooked their food and ate.

Before they left, they raised a high banner so that other travelers could see it from afar and come to the new spring in the middle of the hot-sand desert. Then they continued on safely to the end of their journey.

The moral is: Don't give up too easily - keep on trying until you reach the goal.

Best Friends

[The Power of Friendship]



17

Before the time of this story, people in Asia used to say that there would never be a time when an elephant and a dog would be friends. Elephants simply did not like dogs, and dogs were afraid of elephants.

When dogs are frightened by those who are bigger than they are, they often bark very loudly, to cover up their fear. When dogs used to do this when they saw elephants, the elephants would get annoyed and chase them. Elephants had no patience at all when it came to dogs. Even if a dog were quiet and still, any nearby elephant would automatically attack him. This is why everybody agreed that elephants and dogs were 'natural enemies', just like lions and tigers, or cats and mice.

Once upon a time, there was a royal bull elephant, who was very well fed and cared for. In the neighborhood of the elephant shed, there was a scrawny, poorly fed, stray dog. He was attracted by the smell of the rich sweet rice being fed to the royal elephant. So he began sneaking into the shed and eating the wonderful rice that fell from the elephant's mouth. He liked it so much, that soon he would eat nowhere else. While enjoying his food, the big mighty elephant did not notice the tiny shy stray dog.

By eating such rich food, the once underfed dog gradually got bigger and stronger, and became very handsome looking. The good-natured elephant began to notice him. Since the dog had gotten used to being around the elephant, he had lost his fear. So he did not bark at him. Because he was not annoyed by the friendly dog, the elephant gradually got used to him.

Slowly they became friendlier and friendlier with each other. Before long, neither would eat without the other, and they enjoyed spending their time together. When they played, the dog would grab the elephant's heavy trunk, and the

¹⁷ http://www.buddhanet.net/bt1_28.htm

elephant would swing him forward and backward, from side to side, up and down, and even in circles! So it was that they became 'best friends', and wanted never to be separated.

Then one day a man from a remote village, who was visiting the city, passed by the elephant shed. He saw the frisky dog, who had become strong and beautiful. He bought him from the mahout, even though he didn't really own him. He took him back to his home village, without anyone knowing where that was.

Of course, the royal bull elephant became very sad, since he missed his best friend the dog. He became so sad that he didn't want to do anything, not even eat or drink or bathe. So the mahout had to report this to the king, although he said nothing about selling the friendly dog.

It just so happened that the king had an intelligent minister who was known for his understanding of animals. So he told him to go and find out the reason for the elephant's condition.

The wise minister went to the elephant shed. He saw at once that the royal bull elephant was very sad. He thought, "This once happy elephant does not appear to be sick in any way. But I have seen this condition before, in men and animals alike. This elephant is grief-stricken, probably due to the loss of a very dear friend."

Then he said to the guards and attendants, "I find no sickness. He seems to be grief-stricken due to the loss of a friend. Do you know if this elephant had a very close friendship with anyone?"

They told him how the royal elephant and the stray dog were best friends. "What happened to this stray dog?" asked the minister. He was taken by an unknown man," they replied, "and we do not know where he is now."

The minister returned to the king and said, "Your majesty, I am happy to say your elephant is not sick. As strange as it may sound, he became best friends with a stray dog! Since the dog has been taken away, the elephant is grief-stricken and does not feel like eating or drinking, or bathing. This is my opinion."

The king said, "Friendship is one of life's most wonderful things. My minister, how can we bring back my elephant's friend and make him happy again?"

"My lord," replied the minister, "I suggest you make an official announcement, that whoever has the dog who used to live at the royal elephant shed, will be fined."

This was done, and when the villager heard of it, he released the dog from his house. He was filled with great happiness and ran as fast as he could, straight back to his best friend, the royal bull elephant.

The elephant was so overjoyed, that he picked up his friend with his trunk and sat him on top of his head. The happy dog wagged his tail, while the elephant's eyes sparkled with delight. They both lived happily ever after.

Meanwhile, the king was very pleased by his elephant's full recovery. He was amazed that his minister seemed to be able to read the mind of an elephant. So he rewarded him appropriately.

The moral is: Even 'natural enemies' can become 'best friends.'

The Baby Quail Who Could Not Fly Away [The Power of Truth, Wholesomeness and Compassion]



The Baby Quail Who Could Not Fly Away

Fletcher Soul Traveler

18

Once upon a time, the Enlightenment Being was born as a tiny quail. Although he had little feet and wings, he could not yet walk or fly. His parents worked hard bringing food to the nest, feeding him from their beaks.

In that part of the world, there were usually forest fires every year. So it happened that a fire began in that particular year. All the able birds flew away at the first sign of smoke. As the fire spread, and got closer and closer to the nest of the baby quail, his parents remained with him. Finally, the fire got so close, that they too had to fly away to save their lives.

All the trees, big and small, were burning and crackling with a loud noise. The little one saw that everything was being destroyed by the fire that raged out of control. He could do nothing to save himself. At that moment, his mind was overwhelmed by a feeling of helplessness.

Then it occurred to him, "My parents loved me very much. Unselfishly they built a nest for me, and then fed me without greed. When the fire came, they remained with me until the last moment. All the other birds could have flown away a long time before.

"So great was the loving-kindness of my parents, that they stayed and risked their lives, but still they were helpless to save me. Since they could not carry me, they were forced to fly away alone. I thank them, wherever they are, for loving me so. I hope with all my heart they will be safe and well and happy.

"Now I am all alone. There is no one I can go to for help. I have wings, but I cannot fly away. I have feet, but I cannot run away. But I can still think. All I have left to use is my mind - a mind that remains pure. The only beings I have known in my short life were my parents, and my mind has been filled with loving-kindness

¹⁸ http://www.buddhanet.net/bt1_37.htm

towards them. I have done nothing unwholesome to anyone. I am filled with newborn innocent truthfulness."

Then an amazing miracle took place. This innocent truthfulness grew and grew until it became larger than the little baby bird. The knowledge of truth spread beyond that one lifetime, and many previous births became known. One such previous birth had led to knowing a Buddha, a fully enlightened knower of Truth - one who had the power of Truth, the purity of wholesomeness, and the purpose of compassion.

Then the Great Being within the tiny baby quail thought, "May this very young innocent truthfulness be united with that ancient purity of wholesomeness and power of Truth. May all birds and other beings, who are still trapped by the fire, be saved. And may this spot be safe from fire for a million years!"

And so it was.

The moral is: Truth, wholesomeness, and compassion can save the world.

The Mouse Merchant [Diligence and Gratitude]



The Mouse Merchant

Fletcher Soul Traveler

19

Once upon a time, an important adviser to a certain king was on his way to a meeting with the king and other advisers. Out of the corner of his eye, he saw a dead mouse by the roadside. He said to those who were with him. "Even from such small beginnings as this dead mouse, an energetic young fellow could build a fortune. If he worked hard and used his intelligence, he could start a business and support a wife and family."

A passerby heard the remark. He knew this was a famous adviser to the king, so he decided to follow his words. He picked up the dead mouse by the tail and went off with it. As luck would have it, before he had gone even a block, a shopkeeper stopped him. He said, "My cat has been pestering me all morning. I'll give you two copper coins for that mouse." So it was done.

With the two copper coins, he bought sweet cakes and waited by the side of the road with them and some water. As he expected, some people who picked flowers for making garlands were returning from work. Since they were all hungry and thirsty, they agreed to buy sweet cakes and water for the price of a bunch of flowers from each of them. In the evening, the man sold the flowers in the city. With some of the money, he bought more sweet cakes and returned the next day to sell to the flower pickers.

This went on for a while, until one day there was a terrible storm, with heavy rains and high winds. While walking by the king's pleasure garden, he saw that many branches had been blown off the trees and were lying all around. So he offered to the king's gardener that he would clear it all away for him if he could keep the branches. The lazy gardener quickly agreed.

¹⁹ http://www.buddhanet.net/bt1_04.htm

The man found some children playing in a park across the street. They were glad to collect all the branches and brush at the entrance to the pleasure garden, for the price of just one sweet cake for each child.

Along came the king's potter, who was always on the lookout for firewood for his glazing oven. When he saw the piles of wood the children had just collected, he paid the man a handsome price for it. He even threw into the bargain some of his pots.

With his profits from selling the flowers and the firewood, the man opened up a refreshment shop. One day all the local grass mowers, who were on their way into town, stopped in his shop. He gave them free sweet cakes and drinks. They were surprised at his generosity and asked, "What can we do for you?" He said there was nothing for them to do now, but he would let them know in the future.

A week later, he heard that a horse dealer was coming to the city with 500 horses to sell. So he got in touch with the grass mowers and told each of them to give him a bundle of grass. He told them not to sell any grass to the horse dealer until he had sold his. In this way, he got a very good price.

Time passed until one day, in his refreshment shop, some customers told him that a new ship from a foreign country had just anchored in the port. He saw this to be the opportunity he had been waiting for. He thought and thought until he came up with a good business plan.

First, he went to a jeweler friend of his and paid a low price for a very valuable gold ring, with a beautiful red ruby in it. He knew that the foreign ship was from a country that had no rubies of its own, where gold too was expensive. So he gave the wonderful ring to the captain of the ship as an advance on his commission. To earn this commission, the captain agreed to send all his passengers to him as a broker. He would then lead them to the best shops in the city. In turn, the man got the merchants to pay him a commission for sending customers to them.

Acting as a middle man in this way, after several ships came into port, the man became very rich. Being pleased with his success, he also remembered that it had all started with the words of the king's wise adviser. So he decided to give him a gift of 100,000 gold coins. This was half his entire wealth. After making the proper

arrangements, he met with the king's adviser and gave him the gift, along with his humble thanks.

The adviser was amazed, and he asked, "How did you earn so much wealth to afford such a generous gift?" The man told him it had all started with the adviser's own words not so long ago. They had led him to a dead mouse, a hungry cat, sweet cakes, bunches of flowers, storm damaged tree branches, children in the park, the king's potter, a refreshment shop, grass for 500 horses, a golden ruby ring, good business contacts, and finally a large fortune.

Hearing all this, the royal adviser thought to himself, "It would not be good to lose the talents of such an energetic man. I too have much wealth, as well as my beloved only daughter. As this man is single, he deserves to marry her. Then he can inherit my wealth in addition to his own, and my daughter will be well cared for."

This all came to pass, and after the wise adviser died, the one who had followed his advice became the richest man in the city. The king appointed him to the adviser's position. Throughout his remaining life, he generously gave his money for the happiness and well-being of many people.

The moral is: With energy and ability, great wealth comes even from small beginnings.

The Fortunate Fish [Desire]



20

Once upon a time, King Brahmadata had a very wise adviser who understood the speech of animals. He understood what they said, and he could speak to them in their languages.

One day the adviser was wandering along the riverbank with his followers. They came upon some fishermen who had cast a big net into the river. While peering into the water, they noticed a big handsome fish who was following his pretty wife.

Her shining scales reflected the morning sunlight in all the colors of the rainbow. Her feather-like fins fluttered like the delicate wings of a fairy, as they sent her gliding through the water. It was clear that her husband was so entranced by the way she looked and the way she moved, that he was not paying attention to anything else!

As they came near the net, the wife fish smelled it. Then she saw it and alertly avoided it at the very last moment. But her husband was so blinded by his desire for her, that he could not turn away fast enough. Instead, he swam right into the net and was trapped!

The fishermen pulled in their net and threw the big fish onto the shore. They built a fire and carved a spit to roast him on.

²⁰ http://www.buddhanet.net/bt1_36.htm

Lying on the ground, the fish was flopping around and groaning in agony. Since the wise adviser understood fish talk, he translated for the others. He said, "This poor fish is madly repeating over and over again:

"My wife! My wife! I must be with my wife!

I care for her much more than for my life!

'My wife! My wife! I must be with my wife!

I care for her much more than for my life!"

The adviser thought, "Truly this fish has gone crazy. He is in this terrible state because he became a slave to his own desire. And it is clear that he has learned nothing from the results of his actions. If he dies keeping such agony, and the desire that caused it, in his mind, he will surely continue to suffer by being reborn in some hell world. Therefore, I must save him!"

So this kind man went over to the fishermen and said, "Oh my friends, loyal subjects of our king, you have never given me and my followers a fish for our curry. Won't you give us one today?"

They replied, "Oh royal minister, please accept from us any fish you wish!" "This big one on the riverbank looks delicious," said the adviser. "Please take him, sir," they said.

Then he sat down on the bank. He took the fish, who was still groaning, into his hands. He spoke to him in the language only fish can understand, saying, "You foolish fish! If I had not seen you today, you would have gotten yourself killed.

Your blind desire was leading you to continued suffering. From now on, do not let yourself be trapped by your own desires!"

Then the fish realized how fortunate he was to have found such a friend. He thanked him for his wise advice. The minister released the lucky fish back into the river and went on his way.

The moral is: Fools are trapped by their own desires.

Bamboo's Father [Wasted Advice]



21

Once upon a time, there was a teacher who meditated much and developed his mind. Gradually his fame spread. Those who wished to be guided by a wise man came to hear him. Considering what he said to be wise indeed, 500 decided to become his followers.

One of these 500, who considered his teachings to be wise, was a certain pet lover. In fact, he loved pets so much that there was no animal he did not wish to keep as a pet.

One day he came upon a cute little poisonous snake, who was searching for food. He decided he would make an excellent pet. So he made a little bamboo cage to keep him in when he had to leave him alone. The other followers called the little snake, 'Bamboo'. Because he was so fond of his pet, they called the pet lover, 'Bamboo's Father'.

Before long, the teacher heard that one of his followers was keeping a poisonous snake as a pet. He called him to him and asked if this was true. Bamboo's Father said, "Yes master, I love him like my own child!"

The wise teacher said, "It is not safe to live with a poisonous snake. Therefore, I advise you to let him go, for your own good."

²¹ http://www.buddhanet.net/bt1_46.htm

But Bamboo's Father thought he knew better. He replied, "This little one is my son. He wouldn't bite me. I can't give him up and live all alone!".

The teacher warned him, "Then surely, this little one will be the death of you!" But the follower did not heed his master's warning.

Later on, all 500 of the teacher's followers went on a trip to collect fresh fruits. Bamboo's Father left his 'son' locked up in the bamboo cage.

Since there were many fruits to collect, it was several days before they returned. Bamboo's Father realized that poor Bamboo had not eaten the whole time he was away. So he opened the cage to let him out to find food.

But when he reached inside, his 'son' bit his hand. Having been neglected for all that time, Bamboo was angry as well as hungry. Since he was only a snake, he didn't know anything about poison!

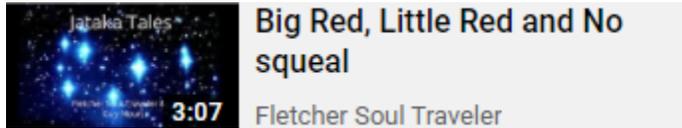
But his 'father' should have known better. After all, he had been warned by the very teacher he considered wise.

Within minutes of being bitten, Bamboo's Father dropped dead!

The moral is: There's no benefit in following a teacher if you don't listen to what he says

.

Big Red, Little Red and No-squeal [Envy]



22

Once upon a time, two calves were part of a country household. At the same home, there also lived a girl and a baby pig. Since he hardly ever made a sound, the pig was called 'No-squeal'.

The masters of the house treated No-squeal very very well. They fed him large amounts of the very best rice and even rice porridge with rich brown sugar.

The two calves noticed this. They worked hard pulling plows in the fields and bullock carts on the roads. Little Red said to Big Red, "My big brother, in this household you and I do all the hard work. We bring prosperity to the family. But they feed us only grass and hay. The baby pig No-squeal does nothing to support the family. And yet they feed him the finest and fanciest of foods. Why should he get such special treatment?"

The wise elder brother said, "Oh young one, it is dangerous to envy anybody. Therefore, do not envy the baby pig for being fed such rich food. What he eats is really "the food of death".

²² http://www.buddhanet.net/bt1_31.htm

"There will soon be a marriage ceremony for the daughter of the house, and little No-squeal will be the wedding feast! That's why he is being pampered and fed in such a rich fashion.

"In a few days, the guests will arrive. Then this piglet will be dragged away by the legs, killed, and made into curry for the feast."

Sure enough, in a few days, the wedding guests arrived. The baby pig No-squeal was dragged away and killed. And just as Big Red had said, he was cooked in various types of curries and devoured by the guests.

Then Big Red said, "My dear young brother, did you see what happened to baby No-squeal?" "Yes brother," replied Little Red, "now I understand."

Big Red continued, "This is the result of being fed such rich food. Our poor grass and hay are a hundred times better than his rich porridge and sweet brown sugar. For our food brings no harm to us, but instead promises long life!"

The moral is: Don't envy the well-off until you know the price they pay.

The Crane and the Crab [Trickery]



The Crane and the Crab

Fletcher Soul Traveler

23

Once upon a time, there was a crane that lived near a small pond. Right next to the pond was a big tree with a fairy living in it. He learned by observing the various animals.

There were also many small fish living in the small pond. The crane was in the habit of picking up fish with his beak and eating them. Since there happened to be a drought in the area, the water level in the pond was becoming lower and lower. This made it easier for the crane to catch fish. In fact, he was even getting to be a little fat!

However, the crane discovered that no matter how easy it was to catch fish, and no matter how many he ate, he was never completely satisfied. But he did not learn from this. Instead, he decided that if he ate all the fish in the pond, then he would find true happiness. "The more the merrier!" he said to himself.

In order to catch all the fish in the pond, the crane thought up a clever plan. He would trick the fish, and deceive them into trusting him. Then when they trusted him the most, he would gobble them up. He was very pleased with himself for thinking up such a trick.

²³ http://www.buddhanet.net/bt1_40.htm

To begin with, the crane sat down on the shore. He remained quietly in one position, just like a holy man in the forest. This was intended to get the fish to trust him.

The fish came to him and asked. "Sir crane, what are you thinking?" The holy-looking crane answered, "Oh my dear fish, it makes me sad to think of your future. I am thinking about the coming miserable disaster."

They said, "My lord, what disaster is coming to us?" To which the crane replied, "Look around you! There is very little water left in this pond. You are also running out of food to eat. This severe drought is very dangerous for you poor little ones."

Then the fish asked, "Dear uncle crane, what can we do to save ourselves?" "My poor little children," said the crane, "you must trust me and do as I say. If you allow me to pick you up in my beak, I will take you, one at a time to another pond. That pond is much bigger than this one. It is filled with water and covered with lovely lotuses. It will be like a paradise for you!"

When they heard the part about the beak, the fish became a little suspicious. They said, "Mr. Crane, how can we believe you? Since the beginning of the world, there has never been a crane that wanted to help fish. Cranes have put fish in their beaks only to eat them. This must be a trick. Or else you must be joking!"

The crane then raised his head and made himself look as dignified as possible. He said, "Please don't think such a thing. Can't you see that I am a very special crane? You should trust me. But if you don't believe me, send one fish with me and I will show him the beautiful pond. Then when I bring him back here, you will know I can be trusted."

The fish said to each other, "This crane looks so dignified. He sounds like an honest crane. But just in case it's a trick. let us send with him a useless little troublemaker fish. This will be a test." Then they found a young fish who was known for playing hooky from school. They pushed him towards the shore.

The crane bent his head and picked up the little one in his beak. Then he spread his wings and flew to a big tree on the shore of a beautiful big pond. Just as he had said, it was covered with lovely lotuses. The fish was amazed to see such a wonderful place. Then the crane carried him back to his poor old pond, just as he had promised.

Arriving home, the little fish described the wonders of the beautiful big pond. Hearing this, all the other fish became very excited and rushed to be the first to go.

The first lucky passenger was that same useless little troublemaker. Again the crane picked him up in his beak and flew to the big tree on the shore of the beautiful new pond. The little one was sure the helpful crane was about to drop him into the wonderful pond. But instead, the crane suddenly killed him, gobbled up his flesh, and let the bones fall to the ground.

The crane returned to the old pond, brought the next little fish to the same tree, and ate him in the same way. Likewise, one by one, he gobbled up every last fish!

He became so stuffed with fish meat that he had trouble flying back to the little pond. He saw that there were no more fish left for him to trick and eat. Then he noticed a lonely crab crawling along the muddy shore. And he realized that he was still not completely satisfied!

So he walked over to the crab and said, "My dear crab, I have kindly carried all the fish to a wonderful big pond not far from here. Why do you wish to remain here alone? If you simply do as the fish have done, and let me pick you up in my beak, I will gladly take you there. For your own good, please trust me."

But the crab thought, "There is no doubt this over-stuffed crane has eaten all those fish. His belly is so full he can hardly stand up straight. He definitely cannot be trusted! If I can get him to carry me to a new pond and put me in it, so much the better. But if he tries to eat me, I will have to cut off his head with my sharp claws."

Then the crab said, "My friend crane, I am afraid I am much too heavy for you to carry in your beak. You would surely drop me along the way. Instead, I will grab onto your neck with my eight legs, and then you can safely carry me to my new home."

The crane was so used to playing tricks on others, that he did not imagine he would be in any danger -even though the crab would be grasping him by the throat. Instead, he thought, "Excellent! This will give me a chance to eat the sweet meat of this foolish trusting crab."

So the crane permitted the crab to grab onto his neck with all eight legs. In addition, he grasped the crane's neck with his sharp claws. He said, "Now kindly take me to the new pond."

The foolish crane, with his neck in the clutches of the crab, flew to the same big tree next to the new pond.

Then the crab said, "Hey you stupid crane, have you lost your way? You have not taken me to the pond. Why don't you take me to the shore and put me in?"

The crane said, "Who are you calling stupid? I don't have to take that from you. You're not my relative. I suppose you thought you tricked me into giving you a free ride. But I'm the clever one. Just look at all those fish bones under this tree. I've eaten all the fish, and now I'm going to eat you too, you stupid crab!"

The crab replied, "Those fish were eaten because they were foolish enough to trust you. But no one would trust you now. Because you tricked the fish, you have become so conceited you think you can trick anyone. But you can't fool me. I have you by the throat. So if one dies, we both die!"

Then the crane realized the danger he was in. He begged the crab, "Oh my lord crab, please release me. I have learned my lesson. You can trust me. I have no desire to eat such a handsome crab as you."

Then he flew down to the shore and continued, "Now please release me. For your own good, please trust me."

But this old crab had been around. He realized the crane could not be trusted no matter what he said. He knew that if he let go of the crane, he would be eaten for sure. So he cut through his neck with his claws, just like a knife through butter! And the crane's head fell to the ground. Then the crab crawled safely into the wonderful pond.

Meanwhile, the inquisitive fairy had also come to the new pond and seen all that had happened. Sitting on the very top of the big tree, he said for all the gods to hear:

"The one who lived by tricks and lies,
No longer trusted now he dies."

The moral is: The trickster who can't be trusted, has played his last trick.

Salty Liquor [Foolishness]



Salty Liquor
Fletcher Soul Traveler

24

Once upon a time, there was a tavern owner in Benares. He had a hard-working bartender, who was always trying to be helpful by inventing new ways of doing things.

One hot day, the tavern owner wanted to bathe in a nearby river. So he left the bartender in charge while he was gone.

The bartender had always wondered why most of the customers ate a little salt after drinking their liquor. Not wishing to show his ignorance, he never bothered to ask them why they did this. He did not know that they ate the salt in order to chase away the aftertaste of the liquor. He thought it needed salt to taste good.

He wondered why taverns did not add salt to their liquor. He decided that if he did so, the business would make much higher profits, and the tavern owner would be very pleased. So he added salt to all the liquor!

To his surprise, when the customers came to the tavern and drank the salty liquor, they immediately spit it out and went to a different bar.

When the owner returned from his dip in the river, he found his tavern without customers, and all his liquor ruined.

²⁴ http://www.buddhanet.net/bt1_49.htm

So he went and told this story to his friend, an adviser to the king. The adviser said, "The ignorant, wishing only to do good, often cannot help doing harm."

The moral is: The best intentions are no excuse for ignorance.

Little Prince No-father [The Power of Truth]



Little Prince No father
Fletcher Soul Traveler

25

Once upon a time, the King of Benares went on a picnic in the forest. The beautiful flowers and trees and fruits made him very happy. As he was enjoying their beauty, he slowly went deeper and deeper into the forest. Before long, he became separated from his companions and realized that he was all alone.

Then he heard the sweet voice of a young woman. She was singing as she collected firewood. To keep from being afraid of being alone in the forest, the king followed the sound of the lovely voice. When he finally came upon the singer of the songs, he saw that she was a beautiful fair young woman, and immediately fell in love with her. They became very friendly, and the king became the father of the firewood woman's child.

Later, he explained how he had gotten lost in the forest, and convinced her that he was indeed the King of Benares. She gave him directions for getting back to his palace. The king gave her his valuable signet ring, and said, "If you give birth to a baby girl, sell this ring and use the money to bring her up well. If our child turns out to be a baby boy, bring him to me along with this ring for recognition." So saying, he departed for Benares.

In the fullness of time, the firewood woman gave birth to a cute little baby boy. Being a simple shy woman, she was afraid to take him to the fancy court in Benares, but she saved the king's signet ring.

²⁵ http://www.buddhanet.net/bt1_08.htm

In a few years, the baby grew into a little boy. When he played with the other children in the village, they teased him and mistreated him, and even started fights with him. It was because his mother was not married that the other children picked on him. They yelled at him, "No-father! No-father! Your name should be No-father!"

Of course this made the little boy feel ashamed and hurt and sad. He often ran home crying to his mother. One day, he told her how the other children called him, "No-father! No-father! Your name should be No-father!" Then his mother said, "Don't be ashamed, my son. You are not just an ordinary little boy. Your father is the King of Benares!"

The little boy was very surprised. He asked his mother, "Do you have any proof of this?" So she told him about his father giving her the signet ring, and that if the baby was a boy she should bring him to Benares, along with the ring as proof. The little boy said, "Let's go then." Because of what happened, she agreed, and the next day they set out for Benares.

When they arrived at the king's palace, the gatekeeper told the king the firewood woman and her little son wanted to see him. They went into the royal assembly hall, which was filled with the king's ministers and advisers. The woman reminded the king of their time together in the forest. Finally, she said, "Your majesty, here is your son."

The king was ashamed in front of all the ladies and gentlemen of his court. So, even though he knew the woman spoke the truth, he said, "He is not my son!" Then the lovely young mother showed the signet ring as proof.

Again the king was ashamed and denied the truth, saying, "It is not my ring!"

Then the poor woman thought to herself, "I have no witness and no evidence to prove what I say. I have only my faith in the power of truth." So she said to the king, "If I throw this little boy up into the air if he truly is your son, may he remain in the air without falling. If he is not your son, may he fall to the floor and die!"

Suddenly, she grabbed the boy by his foot and threw him up into the air. Lo and behold, the boy sat in the cross-legged position, suspended in mid-air, without falling. Everyone was astonished, to say the least! Remaining in the air, the little boy spoke to the mighty king. "My lord, I am indeed a son born to you. You take care of many people who are not related to you. You even maintain countless elephants, horses, and other animals. And yet, you do not think of looking after and raising me, your own son. Please do take care of me and my mother."

Hearing this, the king's pride was overcome. He was humbled by the truth of the little boy's powerful words. He held out his arms and said, "Come to me my son, and I will take good care of you."

Amazed by such a wonder, all the others in the court put out their arms. They too asked the floating little boy to come to them. But he went directly from mid-air into his father's arms. With his son seated on his lap, the king announced that he would be the crown prince, and his mother would be the number one queen.

In this way, the king and all his court learned the power of truth. Benares became known as a place of honest justice. In time the king died. The grown up crown prince wanted to show the people that all deserve respect, regardless of birth. So he had himself crowned under the official name, "King No-father!" He went on to rule the kingdom in a generous and righteous way.

The moral is: The truth is always stronger than a lie.

The Silent Buddha [Generosity]



The Silent Buddha
Fletcher Soul Traveler

26

Once upon a time, there was a very rich man living in Benares, in northern India. When his father died, he inherited even more wealth. He thought, "Why should I use this treasure for myself alone? Let my fellow beings also benefit from these riches."

So he built dining halls at the four gates of the city - North, East, South, and West. In these halls, he gave food freely to all who wished it. He became famous for his generosity. It also became known that he and his followers were practitioners of the Five Training Steps.

In those days, a Silent Buddha was meditating in the forest near Benares. He was called Buddha because he was enlightened. This means that he no longer experienced himself, the one called 'I' or 'me', as being in any way different from all life living itself. So he was able to experience life as it really is, in every present moment.

Being one with all life, he was filled with compassion and sympathy for the unhappiness of all beings. So he wished to teach and help them to be enlightened just as he was. But the time of our story was most unfortunate, a very sad time. It was a time when no one else was able to understand the Truth, and experience life as it really is. And since this Buddha knew this, that was why he was Silent.

²⁶ http://www.buddhanet.net/bt1_54.htm

While meditating in the forest, the Silent Buddha entered into a very high mental state. His concentration was so great that he remained in one position for seven days and nights, without eating or drinking.

When he returned to the ordinary state, he was in danger of dying from starvation. At the usual time of day, he went to collect alms food at the mansion of the rich man of Benares.

When the rich man had just sat down to have lunch, he saw the Silent Buddha coming with his alms bowl. He rose from his seat respectfully. He told his servant to go and give alms to him.

Meanwhile, Mara, the god of death, had been watching. Mara is the one who is filled with greed for power over all beings. He can only have this power because of the fear of death.

Since a Buddha lives life fully in each moment, he has no desire for future life and no fear of future death. Therefore, since Mara could have no power over the Silent Buddha, he wished to destroy him. When he saw that he was near death from starvation, he knew that he had a good chance of succeeding.

Before the servant could place the food in the Silent Buddha's alms-bowl, Mara caused a deep pit of red hot burning coals to appear between them. It seemed like the entrance to a hell world.

When he saw this, the servant was frightened to death. He ran back to his master. The rich man asked him why he returned without giving the alms-food. He replied, "My lord, there is a deep pit full of red hot burning coals just in front of the Silent Buddha."

The rich man thought, "This man must be seeing things!" So he sent another servant with alms-food. He also was frightened by the same pit of fiery coals. Several servants were sent, but all returned frightened to death.

Then the master thought, "There is no doubt that Mara, the god of death, must be trying to prevent my wholesome deed of giving alms-food to the Silent Buddha. Because wholesome deeds are the beginning of the path to enlightenment, this Mara wishes to stop me at all costs. But he does not understand my confidence in the Silent Buddha and my determination to give."

So he himself took the alms-food to the Silent Buddha. He too saw the flames rising from the fiery pit. Then he looked up and saw the terrible god of death, floating above in the sky. He asked, "Who are you.?" Mara replied I am the god of death!"

"Did you create this pit of fire?" asked the man. "I did," said the god. "Why did you do so?" "To keep you from giving alms food, and in this way to cause the Silent Buddha to die! Also to prevent your wholesome deed from helping you on the path to enlightenment, so you will remain in my power!"

The rich man of Benares said, "Oh Mara, god of death, the evil one, you cannot kill the Silent Buddha, and you cannot prevent my wholesome giving! Let us see whose determination is stronger!"

Then he looked across the raging pit of fire, and said to the calm and gentle Enlightened One, "Oh Silent Buddha, let the light of Truth continue to shine as an example to us. Accept this gift of life!"

So saying, he forgot himself entirely, and at that moment there was no fear of death. As he stepped into the burning pit, he felt himself being lifted up by a beautiful cool lotus blossom. The pollen from this miraculous flower spread into the air and covered him with the glowing color of gold. While standing in the heart of the lotus, the Great Being poured the alms-food into the bowl of the Silent Buddha. Mara, the god of death, was defeated!

In appreciation for this wonderful gift, the Silent Buddha raised his hand in blessing. The rich man bowed in homage, joining his hands above his head. Then the Silent Buddha departed from Benares and went to the Himalayan forests.

Still standing on the wonderful lotus, glowing with the color of gold, the generous master taught his followers. He told them that practicing the Five Training Steps is necessary to purify the mind. He told them that with such a pure mind, there is great merit in giving alms - indeed it is truly the gift of life!

When he had finished teaching, the fiery pit and the lovely cool lotus completely disappeared.

The moral is: Have no fear when doing wholesome deeds.

Demons in the Desert [The Correct Way of Thinking]



Demons in the Desert
Fletcher Soul Traveler

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Once upon a time, there were two merchants, who were friends. Both of them were getting ready for business trips to sell their merchandise, so they had to decide whether to travel together. They agreed that, since each had about 500 carts, and they were going to the same place along the same road, it would be too crowded to go at the same time.

One decided that it would be much better to go first. He thought, "The road will not be rutted by the carts, the bullocks will be able to choose the best of all the grass, we will find the best fruits and vegetables to eat, my people will appreciate my leadership and, in the end, I will be able to bargain for the best prices."

The other merchant considered carefully and realized there were advantages to going second. He thought, "My friend's carts will level the ground so we won't have to do any road work, his bullocks will eat the old rough grass and new tender shoots will spring up for mine to eat. In the same way, they will pick the old fruits and vegetables and fresh ones will grow for us to enjoy. I won't have to waste my time bargaining when I can take the price already set and make my profit." So he agreed to let his friend go first. This friend was sure he'd fooled him and gotten the best of him - so he set out first on the journey.

The merchant who went first had a troublesome time of it. They came to a wilderness called the 'Waterless Desert', which the local people said was haunted by demons. When the caravan reached the middle of it, they met a large group

²⁷ http://www.buddhanet.net/bt1_01.htm

coming from the opposite direction. They had carts that were mud smeared and dripping with water. They had lotuses and water lilies in their hands and in the carts. The head man, who had a know-it-all attitude, said to the merchant, "Why are you carrying these heavy loads of water? In a short time, you will reach that oasis on the horizon with plenty of water to drink and dates to eat. Your bullocks are tired from pulling those heavy carts filled with extra water - so throw away the water and be kind to your overworked animals!"

Even though the local people had warned them, the merchant did not realize that these were not real people, but demons in disguise. They were even in danger of being eaten by them. Being confident that they were helping people, he followed their advice and had all his water emptied onto the ground.

As they continued on their way they found no oasis or any water at all. Some realized they'd been fooled by beings that might have been demons and started to grumble and accuse the merchant. At the end of the day, all the people were tired out. The bullocks were too weak from lack of water to pull their heavy carts. All the people and animals lay down haphazardly and fell into a deep sleep. Lo and behold, during the night the demons came in their true frightening forms and gobbled up all the weak defenseless beings. When they were done there were only bones lying scattered around - not one human or animal was left alive.

After several months, the second merchant began his journey along the same way. When he arrived at the wilderness, he assembled all his people and advised them - "This is called the 'Waterless Desert' and I have heard that it is haunted by demons and ghosts. Therefore we should be careful. Since there may be poison plants and foul water, don't drink any local water without asking me." In this way, they started into the desert.

After getting about halfway through, in the same way, as with the first caravan, they were met by the water-soaked demons in disguise. They told them the oasis

was near and they should throw away their water. But the wise merchant saw through them right away. He knew it didn't make sense to have an oasis in a place called 'Waterless Desert'. And besides, these people had bulging red eyes and an aggressive and pushy attitude, so he suspected they might be demons. He told them to leave them alone saying, "We are businessmen who don't throw away good water before we know where the next is coming from."

Then seeing that his own people had doubts, the merchant said to them, "Don't believe these people, who may be demons, until we actually find water. The oasis they point to maybe just an illusion or a mirage. Have you ever heard of water in this 'Waterless Desert'? Do you feel any rain-wind or see any storm clouds?" They all said, "No", and he continued, "If we believe these strangers and throw away our water, then later we may not have any to drink or cook with - then we will be weak and thirsty and it would be easy for demons to come and rob us, or even eat us up! Therefore, until we really find water, do not waste even a drop!"

The caravan continued on its way and, that evening reached the place where the first caravan's people and bullocks had been killed and eaten by the demons. They found the carts and human and animal bones lying all around. They recognized that the fully-loaded carts and the scattered bones belonged to the former caravan. The wise merchant told certain people to stand watch around the camp during the night.

The next morning the people ate breakfast and fed their bullocks well. They added to their goods the most valuable things left from the first caravan. So they finished their journey very successfully and returned home safely so that they and their families could enjoy their profits.

The moral is: One must always be wise enough not to be fooled by tricky talk and false appearances.