

PART ONE

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TEACHINGS  
*from*  
BUDDHIST  
TRADITIONS

The rain falls everywhere,  
coming down on all four sides.  
Its flow and saturation are measureless,  
reaching to every area of the earth,  
to the ravines and valleys of the mountains and streams,  
to the remote and secluded places where grow  
plants, bushes, medicinal herbs,  
trees large and small,  
a hundred grains, rice seedlings,  
sugar cane, grape vines.  
The rain moistens them all;  
none fails to receive its full share.

—*Lotus Sutra*

## INTRODUCTION



THE IDEAS AND PRACTICES HANDED DOWN by Shakyamuni Buddha and his followers contain teachings of profound relevance for those who care for the earth. From the earliest stories of the Buddha's previous lives to the finely honed koans of Zen, many Dharma texts offer wise guidance for living in right relation with nature. The classic passages in this section are a small sample from an immense body of writing that spans 2,500 years of history and dozens of cultures.

The initial selections demonstrate reverence for life, often expressed in terms of nonharming or nonviolence (*ahimsa*). The first Buddhist precept, "Do not kill," is at the same time an ethical standard, an intrinsic worldview, and a disposition to be cultivated. In "Dwelling in the Forest," the Buddha advises solitary monks to live in a way that is attentive to the other beings of the forest. A fifth-century Indian monk, Buddhagosa, uses the story of a wounded tree-spirit to establish the precept not to harm plants and trees. Another early text, again in the words of the Buddha, advocates an attitude of friendliness even toward poisonous snakes, who may then be friendly in return.

Two *Jataka* tales, from a popular genre with pre-Buddhist origins, depict the Buddha-to-be in his previous lives. In one, a lowly clump of grass saves a tree from a carpenter's axe; in the other, a rabbit sacrifices himself as food for a poor traveler, throwing his body onto a fire "as joyfully as a bird drops into a bed of lotuses." In manifesting their compassion, both the grass and the rabbit are on their way to becoming Buddha.

In the Theravada tradition of Buddhism, a devotee practices self-restraint and consideration for others; in the Mahayana tradition, followers aspire to liberate all beings from suffering. The following selections reveal that on the subject of compassion the two streams have much in

common. In the *Metta Sutta*, recited by Theravada monks and lay adherents alike, the source of loving-kindness is a boundless heart: "Even as a mother protects with her life her child, her only child, so with a boundless heart should one cherish all living beings." A selection from an influential Mahayana text, the *Hua-yen Sutra*, extends the domain of compassion to all manner of beings, even those "without thoughts or form."

A bodhisattva is one who aspires to enlightenment for the sake of others. This ideal achieves full expression in the spiritually impassioned poetry of the eighth-century monk Shantideva, who vows to "always support the life of all the boundless creatures." Dedicating himself completely to the path of compassion, Shantideva takes upon himself the burdens of others' suffering. The revered Tibetan master Milarepa uses Dharma teachings, sung in poetic verses, to pacify a violent hunter and his ferocious dog. This account infers that the natural world responds in some mysterious way to human intention and morality.

The historical Buddha lived and taught in the company of nature and experienced his great awakening under a large fig tree. In the second set of selections, nature shines forth as teacher, companion, and source of refuge. For Buddhists throughout Asia, the natural world not only expresses truth directly, it also points metaphorically to the richness and generosity of Dharma teachings. The *Lotus Sutra* figuratively describes the Buddha's teachings as rain. Just as rain falls everywhere, the Buddha looks upon all things "as being universally equal." Yet in the midst of this equality, people vary in their spiritual capacities. Just as plants of varying sizes receive moisture as needed, the Buddha offers teachings to serve the needs of his listeners.

The *Hua-yen Sutra* asks: If the truth is one, how can there be so many different teachings in so many languages? Again, answers are found in metaphors from nature: one ocean that travels in myriad waves, one wind that blows everywhere, one sun that shines in all directions. Mahakashyapa, a principal disciple of the Buddha, extols the pleasures of practice amid nature, surpassed only by the joy of true insight. Across a span of many centuries and cultures, the Chinese poet Han-shan withdraws to Cold Mountain and finds nothing lacking:

As for me, I delight in the everyday Way,  
Among mist-wrapped vines and rocky caves.

Here in the wilderness I am completely free,  
With my friends, the white clouds, idling forever.

For three Japanese haiku poets, nature is at once intimately familiar and infinitely mysterious. Although these writers may not formally qualify as Buddhist poets, their work is steeped in Buddhist perceptions of nature.

But what exactly is the meaning of nature for Buddhists? The answer is complex, for there is neither a single Buddhist philosophy of nature nor a universally shared experience of nature. The third set of selections, "The Nature of Nature," begins with the Buddhist teaching of interdependence: all phenomena depend on all other phenomena for their existence. As an aid to understanding this central concept, the Chinese scholar-monk Tu-shun envisions the radiant Net of Indra, in which multifaceted jewels reflect one another ad infinitum. Eighth-century Chinese Ch'an (Zen) master Shih-t'ou marvels at the perfect interlocking of essence and particularity, "as a lid fits its box." Myoe, a thirteenth-century Japanese monk who liked to meditate in trees, writes an unusual "Letter to the Island" in which personal declarations of fondness are interspersed with Buddhist teachings.

The final two selections are by the early Japanese Zen masters Dogen (1200–1253) and Daito (1282–1337), who founded lineages that remain influential today. For both masters, the reality of nature is synonymous with the nature of reality. In the realm of nonduality, mountains and human beings are not separate. Dogen points to this dimension when he declares, "Green mountains are always walking." For Daito, a surprise rainshower becomes a fresh experience of oneness with the moment: "I'll just use the rain as my raincoat."

These explorations of the Buddhist canon are merely a beginning. Many sutras, commentaries, and other seminal works have yet to be reviewed for their potential environmental significance. Whatever the future of an ecologically oriented Buddhism, the process of identifying and assessing historical roots will surely continue. The works presented here suggest that those roots have the strength to support many more seasons of growth.

# REVERENCE FOR LIFE



## *Dwelling in the Forest*

MAHARATNAKUTA SUTRA

THEN MAHAKASHYAPA asked the Buddha, “World-Honored One, some monks declare themselves to be forest-dwelling monks. World-Honored One, how should a monk act to be called a forest-dwelling monk? How should a monk act to be called a food-begging monk? How should a monk act to be called one who wears a garment of cast-off rags? How should a monk act to be called one who dwells under a tree? How should a monk act to be called one who wanders in a graveyard? How should a monk act to be called one who lives in the open air?”

The Buddha replied to Kashyapa, “A forest-dwelling monk must delight in a secluded forest and live in it. Kashyapa, a secluded place is a place where there are no loud noises and no deer, tigers, wolves, flying birds, robbers, cowherds, or shepherds. Such a place is suitable for a *sramana*’s Dharma practice. Therefore, such a monk should devote himself to Dharma practice in a secluded place.

“A monk should think of eight things if he wishes to live in a secluded place. What are the eight?

To renounce the body;  
to renounce life;  
to relinquish material possessions;

The *Maharatnakuta Sutra* is composed of forty-nine Mahayana sutras. The text was collated and rendered in Chinese by the sixth-century monk Bodhiruchi. Translation by Garma C. C. Chang.

to leave all beloved places;  
to die on a mountain, like a deer;  
to perform the deeds of a forest-dweller when in a secluded place;  
to live by the Dharma; and  
not to abide in afflictions.

Kashyapa, a monk who wishes to live in a secluded forest should contemplate these eight things, and then he should go to a secluded place.

“Kashyapa, after a forest-dwelling monk arrives at a secluded place, he should follow the Dharma of a forest-dweller and perform eight deeds to show kindness for all sentient beings. What are the eight?

To benefit sentient beings;  
to gladden sentient beings;  
not to hate sentient beings;  
to be straightforward;  
not to discriminate among sentient beings;  
to be compliant with sentient beings;  
to contemplate all dharmas; and  
to be as pure as space.

Kashyapa, a forest-dwelling monk should perform these eight deeds to show kindness for all sentient beings.

“Kashyapa, when a forest-dwelling monk arrives at a secluded place, he should think, ‘I have come to this remote place alone, with no companion. No one teaches or rebukes me, whether I practice virtue or nonvirtue.’ He should think further, ‘However, there are gods, dragons, ghosts, spirits, and Buddhas, the World-Honored Ones, who know that I apply my mind entirely to devotion. They can be my witnesses. Now I am here to practice what a forest-dweller should. If I bear malice, I shall not be free and at ease. Now I am in this remote place all alone; I associate closely with no one and have nothing to call my own. I should now beware of feelings of desire, hatred, annoyance, and so forth. I should not be like those who are fond of crowds or attached to villages. If I am, I shall be deceiving the gods, dragons, ghosts, and spirits; and the Buddhas will not like to see me. If I now follow the right practice of a forest-

dweller, the gods, dragons, ghosts, and spirits will not upbraid me, and the Buddhas will be glad to see me.'

"Kashyapa, when a forest-dwelling monk lives in a secluded place, he should practice the right actions of a forest-dweller:

- to persist, with all his heart, in keeping the precepts leading to liberation;
- to maintain well the precepts of every category, and purify his own deeds, words, and thoughts;
- not to practice flattery or fraud;
- to earn his livelihood in a proper way;
- to keep his mind inclined to *dhyanas*;
- to memorize the Dharma he has heard;
- to cultivate right thought diligently;
- to move toward passionless, quiescent, and cessative nirvana;
- to be afraid of *samsara*;
- to regard the five aggregates as enemies, the four elements as poisonous snakes, and the six senses as uninhabited villages;
- to be adept in devising skillful means;
- to contemplate the twelve links of dependent origination in order to part with the views of eternalism and nihilism;
- to contemplate the emptiness of a sentient being, of a self, of a personal identity, and of a life;
- to understand that the dharmas are devoid of signs, and to practice signlessness;
- to decrease his actions gradually and to practice nonaction;
- to fear the activities of the three realms;
- always to practice the Dharma diligently, as if to save his head from being burned;
- always to strive with vigor and never regress;
- to contemplate the reality of the body, thinking and contemplating so as to know the origin of suffering, to sever the cause of suffering, to realize the cessation of suffering, and to cultivate assiduously the path leading to the cessation of suffering;
- to practice kindness;
- to abide securely in the four mindfulnesses;

- to avoid unwholesome dharmas and enter the door to wholesome dharmas;
- to establish himself in the four right efforts;
- to master the four bases of miraculous powers;
- to protect the five good roots and to have a command of the five powers;
- to be awakened to the seven factors of enlightenment;
- to practice the eightfold noble path industriously;
- to develop *dhyana* and *samadhi*; and
- to discriminate all the forms of dharmas by virtue of wisdom.

"Kashyapa, a forest-dwelling monk adorns himself with such doctrines. Having adorned himself in this way, he should live in a mountain grove, and diligently cultivate the various practices even in the early and late parts of the night without sleeping then. He should always be eager to attain the supramundane Dharma.

"Kashyapa, a forest-dwelling monk should constantly cultivate the path wherever he is; he should not decorate his body with fine clothes; he should gather withered grass to cushion his seat; he should not take things from resident or visiting monks. In a secluded place, a forest-dwelling monk should, in order to practice the noble path, be content with any garment which can cover his body.

"Kashyapa, if a forest-dwelling monk goes to a city or a village to beg for food, he should think, 'I have come to this city or village from my secluded place in order to beg for food; my mind should be neither depressed nor elated, whether I obtain food or not. Indeed, if I am not given food, I should be content and regard it as the karmic retribution for deeds in my previous lives, and from now on I should cultivate virtuous deeds industriously.' Furthermore, he should remember that even the Tathagata did not always acquire food when he begged for it.

"A forest-dwelling monk should adorn himself with the Dharma before he begs for food in a city or a village, and should go to beg only after he has done so. How does he adorn himself with the Dharma? He should not be contaminated with or attached to the sight of pleasant forms, nor be angry at the sight of unpleasant forms, and likewise with pleasant or unpleasant sounds, odors, tastes, textures, and dharmas. He should pro-

rect his sense organs from being attracted, and should gaze no farther than several feet ahead. He should control his mind well and keep in mind the Dharma he has contemplated. He should practice begging for food without defiling his mind with food. He should beg for food from door to door without feeling attachment to a place where he is given food or feeling aversion toward a place where he is not. If he obtains nothing after begging at ten or more houses, he should not be worried, and should think, 'These elders and brahmins do not give me food for many reasons. They have never even thought of me, not to speak of giving me food.' Kashyapa, a forest-dwelling monk will not be afraid when begging for food if he can think in this way.

"Kashyapa, if a forest-dwelling monk sees men, women, boys, girls, or animals when begging for food, he should have kindness and compassion toward them and think, 'I strive with vigor so that I can make the vow that sentient beings who see me and those who give me food will all be reborn in heaven.'

"Kashyapa, after a forest-dwelling monk obtains food, whether it is coarse or of high quality, he should look for poor people in the city or village and share half the food with them. If he does not see any poor people, he should think, 'I [mentally] give the best of the food I obtain to the sentient beings whom I do not see with my eyes. I am the donor and they are the recipients.'

"Kashyapa, a forest-dwelling monk should return to his secluded dwelling-place with the food given to him and wash his hands and feet. According to the pure rules of deportment for a *sramana*, he should arrange a seat with grass he has gathered, sit cross-legged on the seat, and eat without attachment, pride, hatred, or distraction. When he is about to eat, he should think, 'In my body, there are eighty thousand worms which will be secure and happy when they obtain the food I eat. Now I attract these worms to my following with food; but when I attain supreme enlightenment, I shall attract them to my following with the Dharma.'

"Kashyapa, when a forest-dwelling monk does not have enough to eat, he should think, 'Now that my body is light, I can cultivate patience, purify evils, and have less excrement and urine. My mind is light when my body is light. Therefore, I can sleep little and have no desire.' He should think in this way.

"Kashyapa, if a forest-dwelling monk is given much food, he should gladly put a handful of it on a clean rock, thinking, 'I give this to the birds and beasts that can eat it. I am the donor and they are the recipients.'

"Kashyapa, after eating, a forest-dwelling monk should wash and dry his bowl and rinse his hands and mouth. He should put away his patched robe and walk near his secluded place, pondering the forms of dharmas.

"Kashyapa, a forest-dwelling monk who is still an ordinary man and has not yet achieved the fruit of a *sramana* may be approached at times by tigers or wolves as he cultivates the practices of a forest-dweller. When he sees these beasts, he should not fear them, but should think, 'Since I came to this secluded place, I have relinquished my body and life; therefore, instead of being afraid, I should cultivate kindness and rid myself of all evils and fears. If tigers or wolves kill me and eat my flesh, I should think that I am greatly benefited, for I shall get rid of my fragile body and gain a stable one. I have no food to give to the tigers or wolves, but they will be comfortable and happy after they eat my flesh.' Kashyapa, a forest-dwelling monk should relinquish his body and life in this way when he follows the right practice of a forest-dweller.

"Kashyapa, when a forest-dwelling monk follows the right practice of a forest-dweller, nonhumans may come to his place in either beautiful or ugly forms. Toward such nonhumans, he should generate neither love nor hate.

"Kashyapa, if the gods who have met the Buddha come to the place of a forest-dwelling monk and bring up many questions, the monk should explain to them as best he can the doctrines which he has studied. If he cannot give an answer to a difficult question which a god puts to him, he should not become arrogant, but should say, 'I have not learned much, but do not despise me. From now on I shall cultivate and study the Buddha-Dharma more diligently, so that one day I may be thoroughly conversant with the Buddha-Dharma and able to answer all questions.' He should also urge the gods to preach, saying, 'Please explain the Dharma to me. I shall hear and accept it.' He should also say gratefully, 'May you not refuse my request!'

"Moreover, Kashyapa, a forest-dwelling monk who follows the right practice of a forest-dweller should cultivate well the thoughts of a forest-dweller: 'Just as grass, trees, tiles, and stones have no inner master, self,

or owner, so it is with the body. There is no self, no life, no personal identity, no sentient being, no contention. The body arises from the combination of conditions. If I contemplate it well, I shall sever all wrong views.' A forest-dwelling monk should always think of the doctrine of emptiness, signlessness, and nonaction.

"Kashyapa, when a forest-dwelling monk follows the right practice of a forest-dweller, he will find that fruits, herbs, grass, and trees arise from the combination of conditions and cease with their dispersion. These external things have no master, no 'I' or 'mine,' and no contention; they arise naturally and cease naturally, yet there is no entity that arises or ceases. Kashyapa, just as grass, trees, tiles, and stones have no self, master, or owner, so it is with the body. There is no self, no life, no personal identity, no sentient being, no contention. All dharmas arise from the combination of conditions and cease with their dispersion. In reality, no dharma arises or ceases.

"Kashyapa, a forest-dwelling monk should cultivate this doctrine when he stays in a secluded place. Kashyapa, a forest-dwelling monk who practices this doctrine will achieve the fruit of a *sramana* quickly if he follows the Sravaka-vehicle. If he is hindered from achieving the fruit of a *sramana* in this life, he will without fail end all his defilements after seeing one buddha, or two, or at most three. If he follows the bodhisattva-vehicle, he will obtain in this life the realization of the nonarising of dharmas and the Dharma of nonobstruction, see future buddhas without fail, and attain supreme enlightenment quickly."

When this discourse on the forest-dwelling monk was spoken, five hundred monks eliminated all their defilements and achieved liberation.

## *A Tree-Spirit Joins the Assembly of Monks*

BUDDHAGHOSA

AFTER THE TEACHER HAD GIVEN PERMISSION to the congregation of monks to lodge outside the walls of the monastery . . . a certain monk decided to build himself a lodging, and seeing a tree that suited him, began to cut it down. Thereupon a certain spirit who had been reborn in that tree, and who had an infant child, appeared before the monk, carrying her child on her hip, and begged him not to cut down the tree, saying, "Master, do not cut down my home." But the monk said, "I shall not be able to find another tree like this," and paid no further attention to what she said.

The tree-spirit thought to herself, "If he but look upon this child, he will desist," and placed the child on a branch of the tree. The monk, however, had already swung his axe, was unable to check the force of his upraised axe, and cut off the arm of the child. Furious with anger, the tree-spirit raised both her hands and exclaimed, "I will strike him dead!" In an instant, however, the thought came to her, "This monk is a righteous man; if I kill him, I shall go to hell. Moreover, if other tree-spirits see monks cutting down their own trees, they will say to themselves, 'Such and such a tree-spirit killed a monk under such circumstances,' and will follow my example and kill other monks. Besides, this monk has a master; I will therefore content myself with reporting this matter to his master."

Lowering her upraised hands, she went weeping to the Teacher, and having saluted him, stood on one side. Said the Teacher, "What is the matter, tree-spirit?" The tree-spirit replied, "Reverend sir, your disciple did this and that to me. I was sorely tempted to kill him, but I thought this and that, refrained from killing him, and came here." So saying, she

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Buddhaghosa, an Indian monk of the early fifth century, wrote *The Path to Purification* and commented extensively on the early Buddhist canon. These works became the mainstream of Theravada teachings. Translation by Eugene W. Burlingame.

told him the story in all its details. When the Teacher heard her story, he said to her, “Well done, well done, spirit! You have done well in holding in, like a swift-speeding chariot, your anger when it was thus aroused.” So saying, he pronounced the following stanza:

Whoever controls his anger like a swift-speeding chariot, when it is  
aroused,  
Him I call a charioteer; other folk are merely holders of reins.

At the conclusion of the lesson, the tree-spirit was established in the fruit of conversion. The assembled company also profited by it.

But even after the tree-spirit had obtained the fruit of conversion, she stood weeping. The Teacher asked her, “What is the matter, tree-spirit?” “Reverend sir,” she replied, “my home has been destroyed; what am I to do now?” Said the Teacher, “Enough, tree-spirit, be not disturbed; I will give you a place of abode.” With these words he pointed out near the Perfumed Chamber at Jetavana a certain tree from which a tree-spirit had departed on the preceding day and said, “In such and such a place is a tree which stands by itself; enter therein.” Accordingly the tree-spirit entered into that tree. Thenceforth, because the tree-spirit had received her place of abode as a gift from the Buddha, although spirits of great power approached that tree, they were unable to shake it. The Teacher took this occasion to lay down and enjoin upon the monks observance of the precept regarding the injuring of plants and trees.

## *Love for Animals*

CULLAVAGGA

NOW AT THAT TIME a certain priest had been killed by the bite of a snake, and when they announced the matter to the Blessed One, he said:

“Surely now, O priests, that priest never suffused the four royal families of the snakes with his friendliness. For if that priest had suffused the four royal families of the snakes with his friendliness, that priest would not have been killed by the bite of a snake. And what are the four royal families of the snakes? The Virupakkhas are a royal family of snakes; the Erapathas are a royal family of snakes; the Chabyaputtas are a royal family of snakes; the Kanhagotamakas are a royal family of snakes. Surely now, that priest did not suffuse the four royal families of the snakes with his friendliness. For surely, if that priest had suffused the four royal families of the snakes with his friendliness, that priest would not have been killed by the bite of a snake. I enjoin, O priests, that you suffuse these four royal families of the snakes with your friendliness; and that you sing a song of defense for your protection and safeguard. In this manner shall you sing:

Virupakkhas, I love them all,  
The Erapathas, too, I love,  
Chabyaputtas, I love them too,  
And all Kanhagotamakas.

Creatures without feet have my love,  
And likewise those that have two feet,  
And those that have four feet I love,  
And those, too, that have many feet.

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*Cullavagga* is one section of the *Vinaya*, which records the regulations that govern the communal life of Buddhist monks and nuns. The texts that comprise the *Vinaya* were written in the first to fourth centuries CE. Translation by the Pali Text Society.



May those without feet harm me not,  
 And those with two feet cause no hurt;  
 May those with four feet harm me not,  
 Nor those who many feet possess.

Let creatures all, all things that live,  
 All beings of whatever kind,  
 See nothing that will bode them ill!  
 May no evil come to them!

Infinite is the Buddha, infinite the Dharma, infinite the Sangha. Finite are creeping things: snakes, scorpions, centipedes, spiders, lizards, and mice. I have now made my protection, and sung my song of defense. Let all living beings retreat! I revere the Blessed One and the seven Supreme Buddhas!

## *The Wishing Tree and The Noble Hare*

### JATAKA TALES

#### THE WISHING TREE

Once, during the Buddha's earthly sojourn, there was a merchant who was friendly with a poor man and, though his friends tried to break the friendship, said that friendship did not depend on equality or inequality of external things. To show his trust, he left his affairs in the hands of the poor friend when he went away, and they prospered.

The Buddha told him:

A friend rightly called is never inferior.  
 The standard measure for friendship is the ability to befriend.

Then he told the following story.

Once the life that was to become the Buddha was born as the spirit that lived in a clump of kusa grass growing in the king's park. Nearby was a wishing tree whose trunk was straight and tall, with many spreading branches. The king's own seat was near the tree, for he was very fond of it. Between the spirit of the wishing tree and the spirit of the lowly kusa grass grew up a great friendship.

One day it was noticed that the pillar which supported the king's house was weak, and another had to be found to replace it. The carpenters therefore searched for a tree trunk straight enough and tall enough and strong enough for the purpose. At last they came to the wishing tree and found what they needed. Knowing that the king was very fond of the tree, they dared not cut it down before telling him. But when he heard that it was perfect for the new pillar, he said that even though he was fond of it, it must be cut down.

The carpenters then took sacrifices to the tree and let it know that they were coming to cut it down on the next day.

When the wishing tree spirit heard this, it burst into tears, and its friends in the forest came to ask what was the matter. But though they were full of sympathy, they could do nothing to help.

That night the kusa grass spirit called to see the tree spirit and heard the news and determined to save his friend.

Changing himself into a chameleon, he went to the tree before the men came, and got into the roots. Then he worked his way up to the branches, making the tree look full of holes. When he had finished he rested on a branch, his head moving from side to side.

In the morning the men came to saw the tree down, but before beginning the leader struck the trunk with his hand. Of course, it sounded as if it was rotten! Turning away, he blamed them for not looking more carefully the day before, and they went to look for another tree.

All the tree spirits sang the praises of the kusa grass spirit, for they said that they had not known how to help their friend even though they were stronger than the kusa grass. And the wishing tree spirit sang:

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*Jatakas* are moral tales of the Buddha's heroic self-cultivation during his former lives. Inspired by pre-Buddhist narrative traditions, the stories depict Gautama's 357 past lives as a human being, 123 rebirths as an animal, and 66 incarnations as a god. Translation by Ethel Beswick.

Let great and small and equals, all,  
Do each their best, if harm befall,  
And help a friend in evil plight,  
As I was helped by the kusa sprite.

The Master identified the birth: Ananda was the tree spirit and “I myself the kusa grass spirit.”

### THE NOBLE HARE

Once the Buddha and his brotherhood were welcomed and fed by a landowner for many days. At the end, the Buddha told this old legend to show that it was a tradition of the wise men to sacrifice even themselves to beggars.

Once the life that was to become the Buddha took form as a hare and made his home in a forest near a stream of fresh water, so clean and clear that it looked as blue as lapis lazuli. The grass nearby was green and tender and soft to the touch of the feet of the animals who lived there. The trees were full of flowers and fruit. It was such a verdant spot, and the jungle around it was so pleasant with creeping plants and trees, that men had also begun to live there.

The hare, though strong, was gentle. He was also wise, and in time the other animals who lived in this part of the forest began to look up to him as though he were their king. Three of them became his special friends—a monkey, a jackal, and an otter—and every evening they sat together and talked of many things. Gradually their character began to change and many bad habits were dropped, including the habit of stealing, and they became friendly toward all the other animals.

One evening as they sat together, and the moon, nearly full, was shining very brightly in the dark midnight sky, the hare told his friends that by its appearance he could tell that the following day would be a holy day. He told them it was, therefore, a good thing if they all arranged not to eat anything that day but to give whatever food they found to anyone who asked for it. Quite cheerfully they agreed to do so.

In the morning the monkey went to the mountain nearby, gathered

some ripe mango fruits, and took them back to his home. There he put them aside and sat waiting to see if anyone would come for them. And he thought to himself that if no one came he would have a good meal the next day.

The jackal found a lizard and a pot of milk-curd outside a hut, and asking aloud if they belonged to anyone and not receiving any answer, took the cord attached to the pot of curds and placed it round his neck, picked up the lizard and went home. Then, like the monkey, he sat and wondered if anyone would ask for them. He thought, too, that if no one wanted them he would have a good meal the next day.

The otter found some fish in the sand by the river where they had been placed by a fisherman. He asked aloud if they belonged to anyone; receiving no reply, he took them home. Then he sat and waited, and thought of the good meal he would have the next day if no one wanted them.

The hare started out to get his food, which was grass. Suddenly he realized that men did not eat grass, and therefore he had nothing to offer. After worrying for a little while, he remembered that men ate flesh. All the flesh he had to offer was his own body, and he decided, with joy in his heart, that he would offer his body to anyone who asked for food.

The force of this great vow was felt by the whole earth. The mountains shook with joy, the oceans stirred to their depths, the air seemed full of music and the sky full of glorious colors. Lightning flashed and thunder rolled gently, making a very pleasing sound. Flowers fell around him, and the wind in tribute blew the pollen over him.

Sakka, lord of the Devas, heard the vow and thought he would put it to the test. So, at noon, he went to the forest, making himself look like a poor lonely traveler, and cried out that he had lost his caravan and was hungry and tired. He begged for help.

When he came near the monkey, he called again for help. The monkey immediately offered him the mango fruit, but he refused it, saying if he needed it he would come again later on. Hearing his cry, the otter offered his fish, but it was also refused. The jackal offered the lizard and the pot of curds but they, too, were refused, the traveler saying he would come again if he needed them.

When he came to the hare, the hare immediately offered his own

body as food. Then a problem arose: how could a man kill someone who had been kind to him? Such a thing was not possible.

In consternation the hare pondered.

While he thought, Sakka caused a charcoal fire to appear behind him, with golden flames and without smoke. As soon as the hare saw it he rushed toward it. Shaking his body three times and calling to any little insect that might be in his fur to come out, he jumped into the middle of the flames as joyfully as a bird drops into a bed of lotuses.

The flames did not feel hot to him, but cool and refreshing, and Sakka, with his jeweled hands soft and white like the petals of the lotus, lifted him up and took him to heaven. There he told the heavenly beings of this wonderful sacrifice, and to commemorate it for all time he caused an image of the hare to appear on his palace, Vaigrahanta, and another on Sudharma, the Hall of the Devas. And with the juice he obtained from a mountain, he drew, for all men to see, the figure of the hare on the face of the moon. There it will remain until the end of the great period of time in which we live, as a reminder of the sacrifice of the hare.\*

This is one of the great marvels of our age.

The Buddha identified the birth: Moggallana was the jackal, Ananda the otter, Sariputta the monkey. "I myself was the hare."

## *Loving-kindness*

### METTA SUTTA

This is what should be done  
 By those who are skilled in goodness,  
 And who know the path of peace:  
 Let them be able and upright,  
 Straightforward and gentle in speech,  
 Humble and not conceited,  
 Contented and easily satisfied,  
 Unburdened with duties and frugal in their ways,  
 Peaceful and calm, wise and skillful,  
 Not proud and demanding in nature.  
 Let them not do the slightest thing  
 That the wise would later reprove.  
 Wishing: in gladness and in safety,  
 May all beings be at ease.  
 Whatever living beings there may be,  
 Whether they are weak or strong, omitting none,  
 The great or the mighty, medium, short or small,  
 The seen and the unseen,  
 Those living near and far away,  
 Those born and to-be-born—  
 May all beings be at ease!  
 Let none deceive another,  
 Or despise any being in any state.  
 Let none through anger or ill-will  
 Wish harm upon another.  
 Even as a mother protects with her life  
 Her child, her only child,

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\*In many parts of Asia, people see the image of a hare in the moon, just as westerners see "the man in the moon."

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The *Metta Sutta* is part of the *Suttanipata*, which contains some of the oldest texts of the Buddhist canon. This passage is a locus classicus for the term *metta*, loving-kindness. Translation by members of the Amaravati Monastery.

So with a boundless heart  
 Should one cherish all living beings,  
 Radiating kindness over the entire world,  
 Spreading upward to the skies,  
 And downward to the depths,  
 Outward and unbounded.  
 Freed from hatred and ill-will,  
 Whether standing or walking, seated or lying down,  
 Free from drowsiness,  
 One should sustain this recollection.  
 This is said to be the sublime abiding.  
 By not holding to fixed views,  
 The pure-hearted one, having clarity of vision,  
 Being freed from all sense desires,  
 Is not born again into this world.

## *How Bodhisattvas Serve Sentient Beings*

HUA-YEN SUTRA

**O**NOBLE-MINDED PEOPLE, in what manner should one accommodate and serve sentient beings? To do so, one should think:

Throughout the realm-of-dharma and the realm-of-space, in the ocean-like cosmoses in the ten directions, there are infinite kinds of sentient beings; some are born of eggs; some are born of the womb, of wetness, or of metamorphosis. . . . Some live by earth, some by water, fire, wind, space, trees, or flowers. . . . O countless are their kinds, and infinite are their forms, shapes, bodies, faces, longevities, races, names, disposi-

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The *Hua-yen (Flower Ornament) Sutra* is a vast and prominent Mahayana scripture. Its teachings form the basis of Hua-yen, a principal school of Buddhism in China. The first comprehensive Chinese version was completed in 420 CE. Translation by Garma C. C. Chang.

tions, views, knowledge, desires, inclinations, manners, costumes, and diets. They abide in numerous kinds of dwellings: in towns, villages, cities, and palaces. They comprise the devas, the *nagas*, the eight-groups, men, non-men, the beings without feet, the beings with two, four, or many feet; some are with form, some are without form, some with or without thoughts, or neither with nor without thoughts. To all these infinite kinds of beings, I will render my service, and accommodate them in whatever way is beneficial to them. I will provide them with all they need and serve them as though serving my parents, teachers, or even arhats and Tathagatas, all equally without discrimination. To the sick, I will be a good physician; to those who have lost their way, I will show them the right path; to the wanderers in darkness, I will light the light; and to the poor and needy, I will show the treasury.

It is in these ways that a Bodhisattva should benefit all sentient beings without discrimination. Why? Because, if a Bodhisattva accommodates sentient beings as such, he is then making sincere offerings to all Buddhas. If he respects and serves sentient beings, he is paying respect and giving service to all Tathagatas. If he makes sentient beings happy, he is making all Tathagatas happy. Why? Because the essence of Buddhahood consists in great compassion. Because of sentient beings, a great compassion is aroused; because of the great compassion, the thought-of-enlightenment is aroused; because of the thought-of-enlightenment, supreme Buddhahood is achieved. This is like unto a great tree in the wilderness of a desert; if its roots are well watered, it will flourish in full foliage, blossom, and bear plentiful fruit. So it is also with the great Tree-of-Bodhi . . . all sentient beings are its roots, and all the Bodhisattvas and Tathagatas are its flowers and fruits. If a Bodhisattva applies the water of compassion to help sentient beings, the Bodhi-tree will bear the fruit of Tathagata's wisdom. Why is this so? Because if a Bodhisattva can benefit man with the water of compassion, he will most assuredly attain the supreme enlightenment. Therefore, Bodhi belongs to sentient beings; without them no Bodhisattva can achieve the supreme Buddhahood.

O noble-minded people, if you can help all sentient beings equally without discrimination, you will then consummate the full and perfect compassion, with which, if you accommodate sentient beings, you can then make all Tathagatas happy and satisfied. In this manner a Bodhi-

sattva should accommodate and embrace all sentient beings. This compassionate embracing will not cease till the realm-of-space is ended, the realm-of-beings is ended, the karmas, sorrows, and passion-desires are ended, thought succeeding thought without interruption, with bodily, oral, and mental deeds without weariness.

Again, O noble-minded person, how should one turn over one's merits to all? To do so, one should think:

All the merits I have acquired from the commencement of paying homage to the serving of all sentient beings, I will turn over to each and every living being throughout the entire Dharmadhatu in the infinite realm-of-space. By the power of my merits, I wish them to be always happy and free from all ills and sorrows; I wish all their evil plans to fail, and all their virtuous undertakings to succeed. Let all the doors that lead to evil and misery be closed, and let the broad paths that lead to heaven and Nirvana be open! Let me take upon myself the burdens and sufferings of all sentient beings, lest they suffer the heavy afflictions of retribution. In this manner, I will continue to turn over my merits to all until the realm-of-space is exhausted, the sphere-of-beings is ended, and the karmas, sorrows, and passion-desires of beings are ended, thought following upon thought without interruption, with bodily, oral, and mental deeds without weariness.

## *The Bodhisattva Path*

SHANTIDEVA

May I be the doctor and the medicine,  
And may I be the nurse  
For all sick beings in the world  
Until everyone is healed.

May a rain of food and drink descend  
To clear away the pain of thirst and hunger,  
And during the con of famine  
May I myself change into food and drink.

May I become an inexhaustible treasure  
For those who are poor and destitute.  
May I turn into all things they could need,  
And may these be placed close beside them.

Without any sense of loss or attachment,  
I shall give up my body and enjoyments  
As well as all my virtues of the three times  
For the sake of benefitting all.

By giving up all, sorrow is transcended,  
And my mind will realize the sorrowless state.  
It is best that I now give everything to all beings  
In the same way as I shall at death.




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Shantideva, a revered monk, scholar, and poet, lived in India in the eighth century. *A Guide to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life*, the source of these verses, is a classic evocation of the bodhisattva path. Translation by Stephen Batchelor.

May I be a protector for those without one,  
 A guide for all travelers on the way.  
 May I be a bridge, a boat and a ship  
 For all who wish to cross the water.

May I be an island for those who seek refuge  
 And a lamp for those desiring light.  
 May I be a bed for all who wish to rest  
 And a slave for all who want a slave.

May I be a wishing jewel, a magic vase,  
 Powerful mantras and great medicine.  
 May I become a wish-fulfilling tree  
 And a cow of plenty for the world.

Just like space  
 And the great elements such as earth,  
 May I always support the life  
 Of all the boundless creatures.

And until they pass away from pain,  
 May I also be the source of life  
 For all the realms of varied beings  
 That reach unto the ends of space.

## *The Hunter and the Deer*

MILAREPA

HAVING DIRECTED HIS DISCIPLE to remain at different hermitages for their devotions, Jetsun Milarepa went to a secluded place at Nyi Shang Gur Da Mountain on the border between Nepal and Tibet. The upper slopes were very rugged, cloudy, foggy, and continuously deluged with rain. To the right of the mountain towered a precipitous hill where one could always hear the cries of wild animals and watch vultures hovering above. To its left stood a hill clothed with soft, luxuriant meadows, where deer and antelopes played. Below there was a luxurious forest with all kinds of trees and flowers and within which lived many monkeys, peacocks, turkeys, and other beautiful birds. The monkeys amused themselves by swinging and leaping among the trees, the birds darted here and there with a great display of wing, while warblers chirped and sang. In front of the hermitage flowed a stream, fed by melting snow and filled with rocks and boulders. A fresh, clear, bubbling sound could always be heard as one passed by.

This hermitage was called Ghadaya. It was a very quiet and delightful place with every favorable condition for devotees. And so it was here that Jetsun Milarepa indulged in the River-Flow Samadhi, while all the benevolent local deities rendered him services and oblations.

One day, Milarepa heard a dog barking in the distance; after that a great noise arose. He thought, "Hitherto, this place has been very favorable for meditation. Is some disturbance on the way?" So he left the cave, came to a huge rock, and sat upon it absorbed in the Compassion of Non-discrimination. Before long, a black, many-spotted deer ran up, badly frightened. Seeing this, an unbearable compassion arose within the Jetsun. He thought, "It is because of the evil karma this deer has acquired

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Milarepa (1040–1123), cofounder of the Kagyupa school of Tibetan Buddhism, spent years meditating alone in high Himalayan caves. *The Hundred Thousand Songs of Milarepa*, the source of this passage, is a classic of Tibetan literature. Translation by Garma C. C. Chang.

in the past that he was born in such a pitiable form. Though he has not committed any sinful deeds in this life, he must still undergo great suffering. What a pity! I shall preach to him the Dharma of Mahayana, and lead him to eternal bliss." Thinking thus, he sang to the deer:

I bow down at the feet of Marpa;  
Pray, relieve the sufferings of all beings!

Listen to me, you deer with sharp antlers!  
Because you want to escape  
From something in the outer world,  
You have no chance to free yourself  
From inner blindness and delusions.

With no regret or sadness,  
Forget your mind and outer body—  
The time has come for you  
To renounce all blindness and delusion.

The ripening karma is fearful and compelling,  
But how can you escape from it  
By fleeing with your delusory body?

If escape is what you want,  
Hide within mind-essence;  
If you want to run away,  
Flee to the place of enlightenment.  
There is no other place of safe refuge.

Uprooting all confusion and from your mind,  
Stay with me here in rest and quiet.  
At this very moment the fear of death is full upon you;  
You are thinking, "Safety lies on the far side of the hill;  
If I stay here I shall be caught!"  
This fear and hope is why you wander in Samsara.

I shall now teach you the six yogas of Naropa,  
And set you to practicing the Mahamudra.

Thus he sang in a tuneful voice like that of the god Brahma. Had there been anyone to hear, he could not have helped feeling charmed and delighted.

Affected by the Jetsun's compassion, the deer was relieved from its painful fear of capture. With tears streaming from its eyes, it came near to Milarepa, licked his clothes, and then lay down at his left side. He thought, "This deer must be hunted by a ferocious dog, the one whose barking I heard just now."

As Milarepa was wondering what kind of a dog it could be, a red dog with a black tail and a collar round her neck ran toward him. She was a hunting dog—such a savage and fearful creature that her tongue was hanging out like a blazing ribbon, while the sharp claws on her feet could rend any prey, and her threatening growl was like thunder. Milarepa thought, "It must be this dog that has been chasing the deer. She is indeed ferocious. Full of anger, she regards whatever she sees as her enemy. It would be good if I could calm her and quench her hatred." Great pity for the dog rose in him, and he sang with great compassion:

I bow down at the feet of Marpa;  
I pray for you, pacify the hate of all beings.

Oh you dog with a wolf's face,  
Listen to this song of Milarepa!

Whatever you see, you deem it to be your foe;  
Your heart is full of hatred and ill thoughts.  
Because of your bad karma, you were born a dog,  
Ever suffering from hunger, and agonized by passion.

If you do not try to catch the Self-mind within,  
What good is it to catch prey outside?  
The time has come for you to capture your Self-mind;  
Now is the time to renounce your fury,  
And with me sit here restfully.

Your mind is full of greed and anger,  
Thinking, "If I go that way, I shall lose him,

But I will catch him if I go forward on this side.”  
This hope and fear is why you wander in Samsara!

I shall now teach you the six yogas of Naropa,  
And set you to practicing the Mahamudra.

Hearing this song of Dharma, sung in a heavenly voice and with immense compassion, the dog was greatly moved, and her fury subsided. She then made signs to the Jetsun by whining, wagging her tail, and licking his clothes. Then she put her muzzle under her two front paws and prostrated herself before him. Tears fell from her eyes, and she lay down peacefully with the deer.

Milarepa thought, “There must be a sinful person who is following these two animals. He will probably be here any moment.” Before long, a man appeared looking very proud and violent; from under his lashes his eyes glared fiercely, his hair was knotted on the top of his head, and his long sleeves flapped from side to side as he ran toward the Jetsun. In one hand he held a bow and arrow, and in the other a long lasso for catching game. As he dashed up, one could hear his breath coming in suffocating gasps and see streams of sweat pouring down his face and almost choking him to death. When he saw the Jetsun with the dog and deer lying beside him, like a mother with her sons, he thought, “Are the deer and my dog both bewitched by this yogi?” He then cried angrily to Milarepa, “You fat, greasy repas and yogis! I see you here, there, and everywhere! High in the mountain snows you come to kill game; low on lake shores you come to hook fish; on the plains you visit towns to trade in dogs and fight with people. It does not matter if one or two like you die. You may have the power of keeping my dog and my deer, but now see whether your clothes can also keep out my arrow.” So saying, the hunter drew his long bow, aimed at Milarepa, and shot. But the arrow went high and missed. The Jetsun thought, “If even ignorant animals understand my preaching, he should be able to understand it too, for after all he is a man.”

So he said: “You need not hurry to shoot me, as you will have plenty of time to do so later. Take your time, and listen to my song.” Whereupon, in a tuneful voice like that of the god Brahma, the Jetsun sang to the hunter, whose name was Chirawa Gwunbo Dorje:

I pray to all accomplished beings;  
I pray you to extinguish the five poisonous defilements.

You man with a human body but a demon's face,  
Listen to me. Listen to the song of Milarepa!

Men say the human body is most precious, like a gem;  
There is nothing that is precious about you.  
You sinful man with a demon's look,  
Though you desire the pleasures of this life,  
Because of your sins, you will never gain them.  
But if you renounce desires within,  
You will win the Great Accomplishment.

It is difficult to conquer oneself  
While vanquishing the outer world;  
Conquer now your own Self-mind.  
To slay this deer will never please you,  
But if you kill the five poisons within,  
All your wishes will be fulfilled.

If one tries to vanquish foes in the outer world,  
They increase in greater measure.  
If one conquers the Self-mind within,  
All one's foes soon disappear.

Do not spend your life committing sinful deeds;  
It is good for you to practice holy Dharma.  
I shall now teach you the six yogas of Naropa,  
And set you to practicing the Mahamudra.

While the Jetsun was singing this, the hunter waited and listened. He thought, “There is nothing to prove that what this yogi has just said is true. Usually, a deer is very frightened, and my dog very wild and savage. Today, however, they lie peacefully together, one on his left and the other on his right, like a mother with her sons. Hitherto I have never missed a shot during my winter hunting in the snow mountains, but today I could not hit him. He must be a black magician, or a very great and unusual Lama. I will find out how he lives.”



Thinking thus, the hunter entered the cave, where he found nothing but some inedible herbs; seeing such evidence of austerity, a great faith suddenly arose within him. He said, "Revered Lama, who is your Guru, and what teachings do you practice? Where did you come from? Who is your companion, and what do you own? If I am acceptable to you, I should like to be your servant; also I will offer you the life of this deer."

Milarepa replied, "I shall tell you of my companion, from whence I come, and how I live. If you can follow my way of life, you may come with me." And he sang to Chirawa Gwunbo Dorje:

The Lamas Tilopa, Naropa, and Marpa—  
These three are my Gurus;  
If you they satisfy,  
You may come with me.

The Guru, the Yidham, and the Dakini—  
To these three Mila pays his homage;  
If you they satisfy,  
You may come with me.

The Buddha, the Dharma, and the Sangha—  
These three are Mila's refuge;  
If you they satisfy,  
You may come with me.

The view, the practice, and the action—  
These three are the dharmas Mila practices;  
If you can absorb these teachings,  
You may come with me.

The snow, the rocks, and the clay mountains—  
These three are where Mila meditates;  
If you they satisfy,  
You may come with me.

The deer, the argali, and the antelope—  
These three are Mila's herd;  
If you they satisfy,  
You may come with me.

The lynx, the wild dog, and the wolf—  
These three are Mila's watchdogs;  
If you they satisfy,  
You may come with me.

The grouse, the vulture, and the singing Jolmo—  
These three are Mila's flock;  
If you they satisfy,  
You may come with me.

The sun, the moon, and the stars—  
These three are Mila's pictures;  
If you they satisfy,  
You may come with me.

The gods, the ghosts, and the sages—  
These three are Mila's neighbors;  
If you they satisfy,  
You may come with me.

The hyena, the ape, and the monkey—  
These three are Mila's playmates;  
If you they satisfy,  
You may come with me.

Bliss, illumination, and non-thought—  
These three are my companions;  
If you they satisfy,  
You may come with me.

Porridge, roots, and nettles—  
These three are Mila's food;  
If you they satisfy,  
You may come with me.

Water from snow, and spring, and brook—  
These three are Mila's drink;  
If you they satisfy,  
You may come with me.

The *nadis*, breaths, and *bindus*—  
These three are Mila's clothing:  
If you they satisfy,  
You may come with me.

The hunter thought, "His words, thoughts, and actions are truly consistent." The uttermost faith thus arose within him. He shed many tears and bowed down at Mila's feet, crying, "Oh precious Jetsun! I now offer you my deer, my dog, my bow and arrows, and my lasso. I and my dog have committed many sins. I pray you to free my dog, Red Lightning Lady, thus delivering her to the higher realms; and I pray you to bring this black deer to the Path of Great Happiness. I pray you grant me, the hunter Chirawa Gwunbo Dorje, the teaching of the Dharma and lead me to the Path of Liberation."