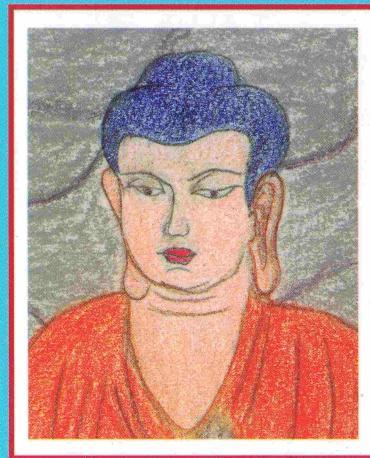


No Words

Teachings of the Buddha

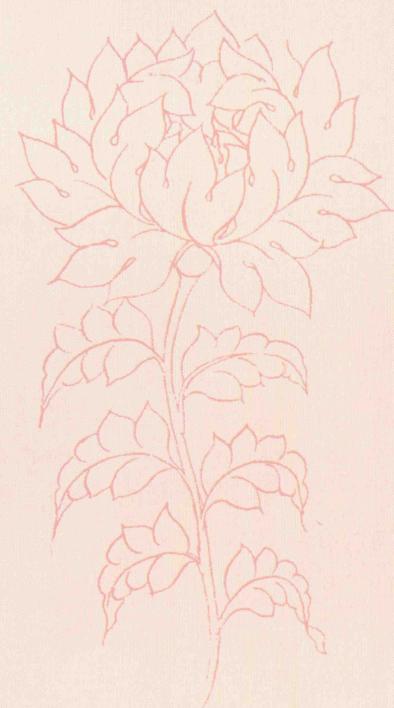


— A Treasury of Buddhist Stories and Values —

— No Words —

Teachings of the Buddha

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The Deer King

A long time ago, in the royal park of Benares, the Buddha appeared as a king of deer named Banyan Deer King. His coat was golden like the sun and his horns glistened like silver. He watched over a herd of five hundred deer. Not far away, another herd of five hundred deer was led by another golden deer named Branch. In the tall grass and shadows of the forest, the two herds lived together in peace.

One day the Prince of Benares was out on a hunt and spied the deer. "What a perfect hunting ground!" he cried, and into the park he dashed with his hunters. When he saw Banyan Deer King and Branch Deer, he withdrew his bow. "Shoot all the deer you want," he told his hunters. "But spare the golden ones."

Thereafter, he came to the park every day and killed more deer than was needed for his dinner table. At sight of the hunters, the deer would dash off, yet many were killed and wounded by the flying arrows.

Banyan Deer King called the herds together and said, "Friends, we know there is no escape from death, but this needless killing must be stopped. Let the deer draw lots to be killed, one a day from each herd."

The next day Banyan Deer King and Branch Deer paid the prince a visit and discussed their plan with him. "Very well," said the prince, admiring the wisdom of the deer kings. "Send a deer tomorrow."

The first lot fell to a pregnant doe from Branch Deer's herd. She begged him, "Grant that I be passed over until after my fawn is born. Then I will gladly take my turn."

"No one wants to take your place," Branch Deer said. "You must go."

In despair, the poor doe went to Banyan Deer King and explained her plight. He said, "Go in peace. I shall put your turn upon another." Then he went to the palace and laid his golden head upon the chopping block. A deep silence fell upon the forest.

When the prince saw Banyan Deer King ready for sacrifice, he said, "You're the leader of the herd. You should be the last to die."

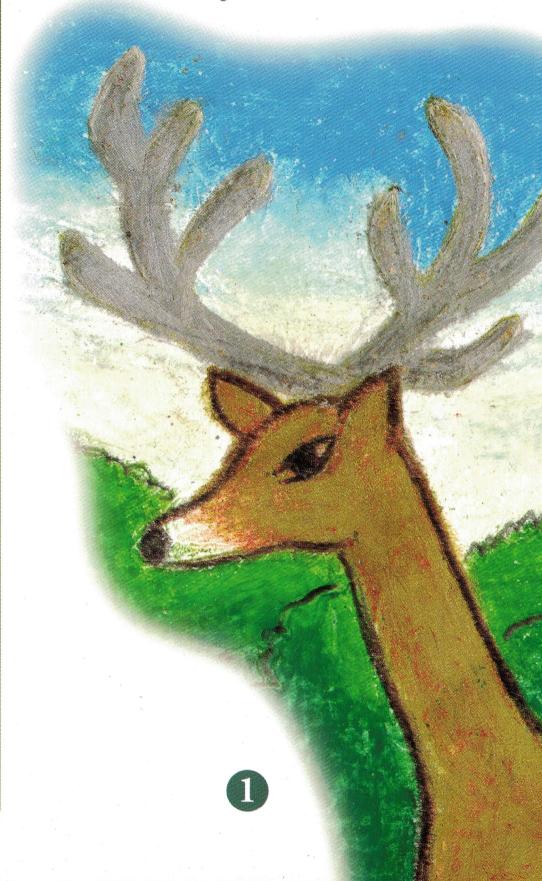
Banyan Deer King said, "I came to save the life of a doe whose fawn is yet to be born."

The prince's eyes filled with tears. "Among men and beasts, I have never known such compassion. Arise, Banyan Deer King, I spare your life and the life of the doe."

Banyan Deer King did not move. "So we shall be free? But what about the other deer and furry animals? And the birds and the fish, what will they do?"

"I shall also spare their lives," said the prince. "All creatures of the land, sea, and sky will be free." Banyan Deer King raised his head from the chopping block and returned to the forest.

Banyan Deer King did not move. "So we will be free? But what about the other deer and furry animals? And the birds and the fish, what will they do?"



The Buddha taught that everyone should have values such as kindness and compassion. Since these values are difficult to understand, he didn't attempt to explain them. Instead he set examples and told stories to get his point across. For this reason, the teachings of the Buddha are sometimes called "No Words."

This book includes Jataka tales and stories about the Buddha. In these Jatakas, the Buddha appeared as an animal in his past lives to teach the value of goodness, working his way towards enlightenment.

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