

DO BUDDHISTS LIKE STORIES?



Buddhists tell stories to help them both explain and understand the *dharma*. Many of these stories were first told by the Buddha himself. A skilful teacher and storyteller, he often used stories and parables to get his message across. Stories were also told about the Buddha by his followers and these too have been passed down to the present day. Among the most popular Buddhist stories are the *Jatakas*, a collection of hundreds of tales about the Buddha's past lives. In many of these stories, the Buddha appears in animal form to teach the value of good qualities, such as compassion, wisdom, patience or generosity. The *Jatakas* are part of the Pali Canon. Buddhists use stories to teach children about Buddhism and to help them understand Buddhist teachings on sharing, helping others and the value of friendship.

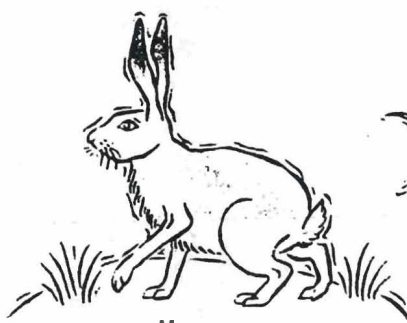
PAST LIVES

In many of the *Jatakas*, the Buddha is reborn as an animal. Here are just a few of his previous lives.



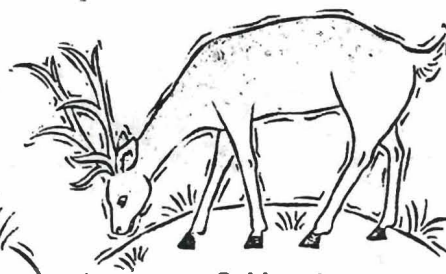
Golden peacock

The Buddha appeared as a beautiful peacock who was tricked into being caught, in a story to show that nobody is perfect.



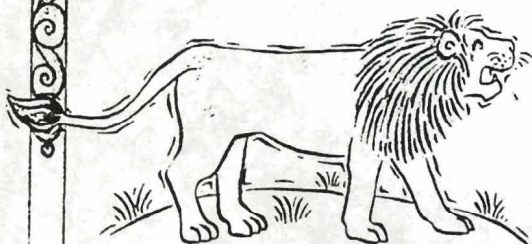
Hare

The Buddha was born as a wise hare, in a story to show the merit of being kind and generous to people less well off than yourself.



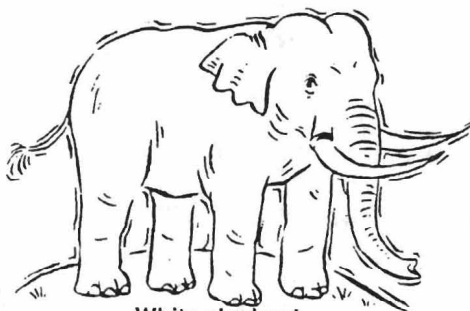
Golden stag

In several stories, the Buddha appeared as a stag to show the virtue of making sacrifices in your own life in order to help others.



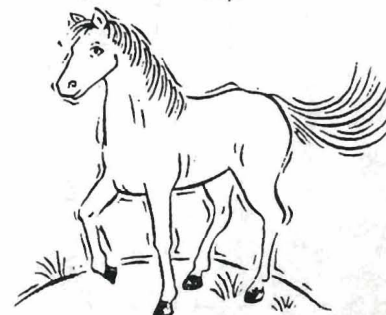
Lion

The Buddha often appeared as a lion, the king of the beasts, in stories to show the danger of trying to be something that you are not.



White elephant

In several past lives, the Buddha appeared as an elephant in stories to show the danger of acting badly towards others.



White horse

The Buddha was once born as a white horse in a story to show the importance of following the *dharma*.