



CREATING SPACES  
TO SHARE OUR STORIES  
AND BUILD FRIENDSHIPS ACROSS DIVIDES

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## How can we care for our planet? – BUDDHISM

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### Background:

The Buddhist tradition goes back to the 6<sup>th</sup> Century BC in Northern India. Buddha gained enlightenment during a time of meditation and became known as one who was fully awake. His teaching is known as the Middle Way and describes how to live a balanced life based on moderate discipline and individual circumstances.

There are several Buddhist scriptures and teachings in existence. Many of these sacred writings that tell of the life of Buddha. The Jataka tales are ancient narratives which are believed to have been told by the Buddha himself and form part of the sacred literature from the Buddhist tradition. This story encourages us to share our insights with others to help them appreciate the world.



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## The Kingshuk Tree - (Story can be found on back)

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### Follow up questions:

1. Do you have a favourite time of year? What do you like most about it?
2. Do you have a favourite place where you appreciate the wonder of creation?
3. The princesses realised if they wanted to learn about the wonderful Kingshuk tree they needed to learn from each other. Can you think of a time when you discovered something interesting about the world from someone else?
4. What can we do to care for our environment at this time of the year?

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## The Kingshuk Tree

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There were four young princesses who had been well educated about everything in their land. They had seen exotic birds and animals from all over the world, and the collection of trees and flowers in the palace gardens was said to be beyond compare. When the four princesses heard about a magical tree called the Kingshuk Tree they were fascinated to go and see it. They asked the gardener to take them to see it for themselves.

“It would be my pleasure, your Highnesses!” said the gardener. “But the Kingshuk Tree is a magic tree: people can only see it on their birthday. The rest of the time it is invisible. So, I will only be able to take you one at a time, when it is your birthday.”

The princesses agreed and the eldest went first. As she looked at the beautiful tree: its small green leaves were unfurling like sparkling emeralds and the princess was filled with its joy. As spring rolled into summer, the second eldest princess celebrated her birthday and the gardener took her to find the Kingshuk Tree. She gasped when she saw it, for it was an explosion of deep-red blossoms, glowing like rubies. The hot summer days were turning to autumn when the gardener brought the third princess to see the Kingshuk Tree. Her eyes widened when she saw its boughs crammed with luscious purple fruits, which hung from the tree like giant amethysts.

Finally, as winter chased the last autumn leaves from the trees, the birthday of the fourth and youngest princess arrived. She asked to be taken at night as she wanted to see it in the moonlight. And, sure enough, its silvery branches, wet with dew, looked spectacular and sparkled as if they were dressed in silver threads laced with tiny diamonds.

When the girls finally met up they began to share what they had seen of the magic Kingshuk Tree. They felt confused because each had what seemed to have seen a different tree. The gardener laughed. “Your Highnesses,” he said calmly, “you have indeed each seen the same Kingshuk Tree and experienced its magic. But it was dressed for the season of your birthday when each of you visited. To truly appreciate the tree, you need to visit it in all the seasons which is, impossible because of its invisibility!” The girls then realized that the only way they would be able to discover more about the magical Kingshuk Tree was by listening to, and learning from, each other and anyone else who’d been lucky enough to see it.

*(Adapted from Buddha at Bedtime, Nagaraja, D. 2008)*