



CREATING SPACES  
TO SHARE OUR STORIES  
AND BUILD FRIENDSHIPS ACROSS  
DIVIDES

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## How can we be peacemakers? – BUDDHIST

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### Background:

The Buddhist tradition goes back to the 6th 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 balance life based on moderate discipline.

There are several Buddhist scriptures and teachings in existence. The Jataka tales are ancient narratives which are believed to have been told by the Buddha himself. They were retold between 300BC and 400AD and form part of the sacred literature from the Buddhist tradition. This story demonstrates how the sharabha deer and the king created a peaceful environment for all to live in safety.



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## The Fabulous Sharabha Deer – (Story can be found on back)

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### Follow up questions:

1. What did the sharabha deer do in the story and how did the king respond?
2. What role did forgiveness play in the story?
3. How did the king's attitude change after the incident?
4. Have you ever changed your mind about something after encountering kindness?

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## The Fabulous Sharabha Deer

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Once long ago there was a king who set out on a hunt. He was passionate about sport and would hunt elephants with chariots and footmen by his side. One day he had crossed a great distance and became distracted. Without realizing it he had become lost inside a deep dark wood inhabited by the sharabha deer. This sharabha deer was no ordinary deer, It was extraordinarily virtuous, swift and beautiful in colour. It was full of compassion and was friendly towards all animals, living happily in the forest and living off the natural vegetation in the woods.

The king quickly spotted the deer and reached for his bow and arrows. He strung his bow and started to chase after the deer until they reached a big chasm, which the deer leapt across easily. The king's horse came to a sudden halt and the king was thrown from his horse. When the deer looked back, he realized what had happened. The king had fallen off the horse and landed deep in the chasm, landing on the rocks. He was badly injured and in need of help.

The deer completely forgave the king's attempt to kill him and slowly climbed down into the chasm to help him out. The king was deeply moved by the kindness of the deer and tears started to roll down his face. He apologized to the deer and asked for forgiveness. The king was sorry that he had believed the deer was nothing more than a low-minded beast, when instead he recognised that *he* was the one behaving like a brute.

The deer carried the king up the hill and back to his horse. The king was overcome with remorse and gratitude. He begged the deer to come and live in his place. The deer declined the offer but said that he did have one request. He asked that the king and his people stop hunting the deer in the woods. He said that the forest animals are worthy of his compassion and protection and not his arrows. The king agreed and from that day onwards hunting was outlawed.

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