

CHAPTER THREE

ANIMAL CHARACTERS IN THE *JĀTAKAS*

The aim of the Buddha's teachings is to bring happiness not only to humankind but also to all living beings in the world. In order to achieve this aim, the Buddha had conveyed his compassionate message by many ways and in various aspects through stories in which animal characters play a central role.

The Buddha spent many lives, as a man, animal and god, building up the moral and spiritual perfections necessary for Buddhahood. These lives are described in what are known as the *Jātaka* stories. And a large number of the characters in the *Jātaka* stories are animals. The doctrines of *karma* and *rebirth* are also the sources for the construction of an authentically Buddhist environmental ethics. The *Jātaka* account of the Buddha's former births gives a good idea of the extent to which Buddhist teaching urges respect for animals.

III.1. Animals have life in the same way as humans

Animality as a concept is derived from the human or animal division in Western thought. Because humankind has been interested in explaining and reinforcing its preeminence, animality has been defined by what it lacks. The search for the special defining trait of humanity has involved underestimating other animals. Animality is an abstraction, or concept, loosely based upon observations of actual animals and sometimes relevant to human beings.

Since the middle of the nineteenth century, when Charles Darwin asserted the idea of continuity between humans and other animals, researcher have attempted to rebuild the idea of animality. It has been necessary to establish that animals experience emotions beyond basic ones: love, grief, resentment, hope, and the like. Darwin himself began this work in his magnum opus '*The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals.*'

III.1.1. Animals have emotions

Animals are intelligent and most of the animals that humans eat are very similar to humans in many ways. They form relationships and care for their young.¹ They care for their young, protecting them from danger and teaching them how to survive in their habitat. According to well-documented scientific research, emotions such as fear are present in many of the animals that humans eat just like the humans. However, some people have also argued that other animals' emotions cannot be measured scientifically and perhaps feel that other animals should not be described as having human feelings. However, other animals have internal biochemical reactions to threatening situations just as humans do.²

Fish do not express pain like land animals, so for many humans it is difficult to understand that they might be suffering. Therefore, animal rights campaigners say that fish suffer physical pain similar to other animals, as well as fear and distress.³

¹ Barbara James, *Animal Rights*, London: Hodder Murray, 2002: 5.

² Elaine Hatfield. 'Emotional Contagion'. In *Encyclopedia of Human Relationships, Volume 1*, eds. Harry T. Reis, Susan Sprecher and Susan K. Sprecher, New Delhi: Sage Publications, Inc, 2009: 492 - 493.

³ Barbara James, *Op. Cit.* 45.

Most animals are motile, meaning they can move spontaneously and independently. The differences between animals and humans are being blurred with every revelation. Man's closest relatives share over ninety-eight percent of our DNA, and all animals, including man, are related by a common ancestor. Chimpanzees are very closely related to humans. "Chimpanzees share more than ninety-eight percent of our genes; they have complex forms of communication and large stable societies. They use tool, plan for the future and share our emotion."⁴

In the Jātakas there are many stories that tell about Bodhisattva who had goodness, love and helped others. These describe his path of practice through many lives to purify himself and to perfect different qualities, such as altruism, so that in his last life he could become the fully awakened Buddha. Here, it may be worthwhile to mention that a few of the well-known *Jātaka* tales tell of the Buddha in a previous life of doing compassionate deeds such as throwing himself off a cliff so that on his death a starving tigress could feed herself and give milk to her cubs.⁵ Many of the stories describe not only great sacrifice but also great compassion and wisdom. This notion of the Buddha as bodhisattva implies that there was only one bodhisattva at a time working through many aeons to become a Buddha.

In another story from Jātaka no. 455 (*Mati-PosakaJātaka*)⁶ tells of a magnificent white elephant that lived with his blind mother in the forest. He took great care of his mother by making sure that sufficient fruits were

⁴ *Ibid.* 9.

⁵ Martine Batchelor, *The Path of Compassion: The Bodhisattva Precepts*, UK: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc, 2004: 4.

⁶ J. No. 455.

brought to her every day. One day a forester lost his way in the forest. The kind-hearted elephant directed him out of the forest. However, instead of showing gratitude to the elephant, the forester brought the king's troop to capture him. The elephant refused to eat any food. When questioned why he behaved in such a manner, the elephant replied that his blind mother was left helpless in the forest and he was worried for her health and safety. The king was moved by his strong love and concern for his mother. He set free the elephant and ordered food to be served to him and his mother every day.

Similarly, *Jātaka* story no. 501 (*Rohanta-Miga-Jātaka*)⁷ deals with the love of a stag called Rohanta. He was king of the deer. He used to support his parents who were getting older and blind. He helped them when they met an accident.

The most outstanding feature of the *Jātaka* tales is that they have not been written by basing them on the high, respectable class of society. On the contrary a tree, an elephant, quail, crow, jackal, poor farmer, deer etc. have been made the basis of the stories. The story line has been presented in an extremely simple way. They virtually lack didacticism. Yet, the characters of these stories sometimes amuse the ordinary reader and sometimes compel the enlightened reader to automatically think. Actually even the animals on which these stories are based represent the dutiful, true friend, innocent, clever, cunning or flattering characters found in human society. There is no scarcity of interest in the *Jātaka* tales. Therefore, these stories are interesting, entertaining and knowledgeable not only for children but also for people of all ages.

⁷ J. No. 501.

III.1.2. Animals suffer and feel like humans

All animals and humans have the same core emotion systems in the brain.⁸ When people are suffering mentally, they want to feel better. They want to stop having bad emotions and start having good emotions. That is the right goal for animals, too. Therefore, Jaak Panksepp, a neuroscientist at Washington State University who wrote the book *Affective Neuroscience* and is one of the most important researchers in the field, calls the core emotion systems the “blue ribbon emotions,” because they “generate well organized behavior sequences that can be evoked by localized electrical stimulation of the brain.” He says seeking is “the basic impulse to search, investigate, and make sense of the environment.” Animals and humans feel FEAR when their survival is threatened in anyway, from the physical to the mental and social.⁹

According to the *Jātaka* tales, when the Buddha attained enlightenment, he was able to remember his many previous lives, both animal and human. In some of these lives, the Buddha sacrificed his own life for that of animals. Many Buddhists believe that we have all lived as animals before and it therefore makes little sense to look down on animals as lesser beings. The first illustration is a tendency toward animism, the idea that animals live and experience life in the same way as humans. Animals and humans should be viewed as equally capable of suffering, so we should care about human rights and animal rights equally. All beings humans and animals as having feelings, as being sentient, animals suffer and feel pain as

⁸ Catherine Johnson and Temple Grandin, *Making Animals Happy: How to Create the Best Life for Pets and Other Animals*, London: Bloomsbury, 2009: 5.

⁹ *Ibid.* 8.

human and not deserving deliberately to be hurt. Animals feel pain and do not wish to be harmed.

“All living things fear being beaten with clubs.
All living things fear being put to death.
Putting oneself in the place of the other,
Let no one kill nor cause another to kill.”¹⁰

For humans, the most horrible deaths involve terror.¹¹ In the same way, the animals experience feeling, pain, suffering; they also fear killing and hurting. They feel pain, hunger, fear and pleasure. It is morally wrong to treat other people as slaves or to kill them.¹² That the animals have feelings is undeniable. An injured animal, such as a pet dog or cat, reacts much the same way as we might when we are hurt. It screeches, yelps, or cries. This is not surprising since animals have nervous systems similar to ours with respect to feeling physical pain. No doubt some animals can suffer emotionally and psychologically as well. Since the capacity for suffering is well-developed in animals as it is in humans, both equally deserve to be treated with kindness. Everything we have learned about animals suggests that in terms of experiencing terror, pain, grief, anxiety and stress these sentient beings are relevantly similar to humans.¹³

Richard Ryder wrote that animals were thought to possess the same feelings as human beings, and several kings of ancient India built hospitals

¹⁰ Dhp.129.

¹¹ Peter Singer and Tom Regan, *Animal Rights and Human Obligations*, New Jersey: Prentice-hall, Eaglewood Cliffs, 1976: 183.

¹² Barbara James, *Op. Cit.*5.

¹³ Peter Singer and Tom Regan, *Op. Cit.* 183.

for sick animals.¹⁴ Based upon the idea of the transmigration of souls and the belief that all living creatures are the same in essence, Hinduism provided an entirely different basis from Christianity on which to build society. Animals, like humans, were arranged in a complex social hierarchy. According to this tradition, to kill a cow was as serious as to murder a high caste man.¹⁵ Elephants and horses also held elevated status, but the penalty for killing even the despised dog was no less than that for the murder of an ‘untouchable’ human being. If we gradually bring non-humans into the same moral and legal circle as ourselves then we will not be able to exploit them as our slaves.

Buddhism shares with Brāhmaṇical-Hinduism the belief in the retributive karma and rebirth. The Buddha first ‘trained himself to be kind to all animate life’ and pointed out that it was a sin to kill any living creature. He wished for all people that they might know the blessedness of a pure spirit and not suffer from unsatisfied desires.¹⁶ In *Jātaka* No. 12 (*Nigrodha-Miga Jātaka*) the Buddha in a former life was reborn as a Deer-king.¹⁷ He offers to substitute his own life for that of a pregnant doe who is about to give birth. In another previous lifetime, the Buddha sacrificed his own life to feed a starving tiger and her two cubs, who were trapped in the snow. He reasoned that it would be better to save three lives than to merely preserve his own. It is better to lose one’s own life than to kill another being.

The stories seek to inculcate good manners, good sense, and good behavior, all of which usually reap an appropriate reward owing to the

¹⁴ Susan Jean Armstrong, *The Animal Ethics Reader*, New York: Routledge, 2003: 3.

¹⁵ Richard Ryder, *Animal Revolution: Changing Attitudes toward Specialism*, New York: Berg, 2000: 21.

¹⁶ Dwight Goddard, *Buddha, Truth and Brotherhood*, Kessinger Publishing, LLC, 2003:12.

¹⁷ J. No. 12.

working of karma by which the result of a volitional act, of body, speech or thought, is suited to the nature of that act.¹⁸ Therefore, there is a sense in which the dog has his feelings, whether sad or happy.¹⁹ As well as the emotions animals and humans have in common.²⁰ To deny animals' emotions is to deny a large part of who these beings are.²¹ Animals have the same emotions as human beings. So we should not distinguish between human and animals. Every living creature longs to live and loathes dying. But we participate in the survival of the fittest; as we use our power to take by force the lives of other creatures we rob them of their lives. And at that moment before death, they experience tremendous hatred. Within their minds they harbor this hateful thought of vengeance, and they hold onto this resentment, until it becomes as deep as the sea and the mutual antagonism is very hard to level. There's no way to resolve those feelings of resentment.

A non-human animal is just another creature. It is just another being that can feel as any human can feel. The suffering that any man can feel is the same as the suffering that any animal can feel.

III.2. The influence of the teaching of Karma in Buddhism

The teaching of the law of karma is a valuable element in Buddhism, and it offers some interesting social and historical perspectives. It is an important doctrine. Walpola Rahula, a Sri Lankan monk and Buddhist scholar, has noted that this mistaken view has theistic overtones and warned that in the context of karma, "the term justice is ambiguous and dangerous,

¹⁸ I. B. Horner, *Ten Jātaka stories*, London: Luzac & company, Ltd, 1957: ix.

¹⁹ Jared T. Williams, *Dogs never lie about Love*, New York: Crown Publishers, Inc., 1997: 31.

²⁰ *Ibid.* 6.

²¹ Marc Bekoff, *Minding Animals: Awareness, Emotions, and Heart*, USA: Oxford University Press, 2002: 100.

and in its name more harm than good is done to humanity. The theory of karma is the theory of cause and effect, of action and reaction; it is a natural law, which has nothing to do with the idea of justice or reward and punishment.”²²

It is clear that underpinning and pervading the whole of the Buddhist teaching on the path, at both ordinary (*lokiya*) and super mundane (*lokuttara*) levels, is the notion of karma. Because a general knowledge of Buddhist teaching about karma is now quite common in the East and West, it is easy to underestimate the impact of the Buddha’s innovative reworking of a traditional Brāhmaṇic concept. This impact is dramatically described in early texts dealing with the Buddha’s final stages of attainment and his enlightenment.²³

III.2.1. The Meaning of Karma in Buddhism

Karma means “action” or “doing”. Whatever one does, says, or thinks is karma. In Buddhism, the term *karma* is used specifically for those actions which spring from the intention of an unenlightened being. For the sole purpose of understanding this ‘karma’ better, it may be worthwhile to Rahula from his book “Now, the Pali word kamma or the Sanskrit work *karma* (from the root *kr* to do) literally means ‘action’, ‘doing’. But the Buddhist theory of Karma has a specific meaning: it means only ‘volitional action’, not all action. Nor does it mean the result of karma as many people wrongly and loosely use it.”²⁴

²² Walpola Rahula, *What the Buddha Taught*, London: The Gordon Fraser Gallery Ltd, 1972:16–29.

²³ Peter Harvey, *Buddhism*, New York: Continuum, 2001: 190.

²⁴ Walpola Rahula, *Op. Cit.* 32.

In Buddhist terminology karma never means its effect; its effect is known as the ‘fruit’ or the ‘result’ of karma (*kamma-phala* or *kamma-vipāka*). “Deeds are one’s own ... beings are heir to deeds, deeds are matrix, deeds are kin and deeds are arbiters. Deeds divide beings, which are to say by lowness and excellence.”²⁵ This is explained as referring to the karmic effect of various actions. A person’s actions mould their consciousness, making them into a certain kind of person, so that when they die their out ter form tends to correspond to the type of nature that has been developed.²⁶ Volition may relatively be good or bad. So karma may be good or bad relatively. Good karma (*kusala*) produces good effects, and bad karma (*akusala*) produces bad effects. ‘Thirst’, volition, karma, whether good or bad, has one force as its effect: force to continue-to continue in a good or bad direction. Whether good or bad it is relative, and is within the cycle of continuity (*samsāra*).

The six realms are actual places in which we can be reborn. They are brought into existence through the power of our actions or karma.²⁷ Karma is the spiritual law of justice which makes us experiences the good and the bad effects of what we do to others. So, if we harm animals by killing them, eating them, or experimenting on them, we will have to suffer analogous experiences ourselves in the future or at least have to undergo some form of suffering. Only when we ourselves go through what the animals have been through will we definitely know that hurting animals is wrong. So eventually we will develop empathy, a belief in our kinship with all sentient beings, including animals. It is interesting to note, also, that if we are kind to

²⁵ M. III. 203.

²⁶ Peter Harvey, *An Introduction to Buddhist Ethics: Foundations, Values, and Issues*, Cambridge University Press, 2000:15.

²⁷ Geshe Kelsang Gyatso, *Transform your life*, New Delhi: New Age Books, 2002: 52.

animals, kindness and happiness flow back to us. The Buddha says that if you perform one act of kindness to an animal, you will be recompensed a hundredfold.

III.2.2. The influence of Karma and Rebirth

Prior to the time of the Buddha, the basic idea of karma and rebirth had been expressed in the early Brāhmaṇical-Hindu compositions known as *Upaniṣads*. Here, though, there was as much emphasis on karma or actions being ritually right as on their being ethically right. In Buddhism, though, the ethical aspect of action is strongly emphasized as the relevant factor in causing karmic results.

At his enlightenment, the Buddha gained direct knowledge of rebirth, karma and the Four Holy Truths. One word used for the cycle of rebirths is *saṃsāra*, ‘wandering on’, which indicates that the process is seen as a long and often aimless process.²⁸ The Buddhist view, in fact is that there is known beginning to the cycle of rebirths and the world: ‘inconceivable is any beginning of this *saṃsāra*, an earliest point is not discerned of beings who, obstructed by spiritual ignorance and fettered by craving, run and wander on’.²⁹ In one early text, the Buddha says that to believe in these principles, and so live a moral life, will lead to a good rebirth if rebirth exists.³⁰

According to the rules of karma, a good cause leads to a good result and a bad cause leads to a bad result. Thus we should always try to do good however trivial it may seem. We should also always try to restrain ourselves

²⁸ Peter Harvey, *An Introduction to Buddhism: Teaching, History and Practices*, New Delhi: Foundation Books Pvt. Ltd, 2005: 32.

²⁹ S. II.178.

³⁰ Peter Harvey, *Op. Cit.* 44.

from harming anyone however small our actions may appear to be. However, when we try to break free of the chain of karma once and for all, we must also free ourselves from all attachments to the notions of good and bad actions.

According to Buddhist teachings on rebirth, you can be born as one of those animals in your next birth. One of those animals may be your dead mother, father or a loved one. Some Buddhists believe that if a person is reborn as an animal, this is a result of that person's unskillful actions from a previous life. This suggests that animals are spiritually inferior to humans. Human souls could be reborn as animals if they had behaved badly, with all souls regarded as part of the Supreme Being. Failing to observe the duty to care could lead to bad karma, which increased the likelihood of returning as an animal next time round'.³¹

Actions can also lead to karmic fruits in a human life. This might be the present life, or a future human life, be this one's next life, or one that comes after one or more other types of rebirth. Karma works sort of like a bank account. Beings that have caused bad karma are reborn as lesser beings (animals, demons); those who follow the moral precepts and spread good karma will be reborn as higher beings (gods, humans). When lesser beings pay off their "debts", they can be reborn as humans. Since human beings are in the best position for enlightenment, this is the most desired level. As the Buddha explained in the *Śuraṅgama Sūtra*, "If he is a person with strength, blessings, and virtue, then once he is in the human realm, he will not have to lose his human rebirth after what is owed him is restored.

³¹ Peter Harvey, *Op. Cit.* 15.

But if he lacks blessings, the he will return to the animal to continue repaying his debts.”³²

This traditional equanimity-meditation helps us remember the truth of the nature of impermanence and cause and effect: “All beings are owners of their actions, heirs of their actions, born of their actions, related through their actions, and have their actions as their arbitrator. Action is what differentiates beings in terms of baseness & excellence.”³³ When we kill, we increase and perpetuate the bad karma of the killing karma. This bad karma will come back to us in this life or the next, but certainly has a more immediate effect on the being that we have just killed. Spreading the killing karma affects the whole so much that it collects and perpetuates, eventually leading to wars in the future.

The Buddha said:

“There is the case, student, where a woman or man is a killer of living beings, brutal, bloody-handed, given to killing and slaying, showing no mercy to living beings. Through having adopted and carried out such actions, on the break-up of the body, after death, he reappears in the plane of deprivation, the bad destination, the lower realms, hell. If, on the break-up of the body, after death instead of reappearing in the plane of deprivation, the bad destination, the lower realms, hell he comes to the human state, then he is short-lived wherever reborn. This is the way leading to a short life: to be a

³² Hsuan Hua, *The Shurangama Sutra: Sutra Text and Supplements*, Malaysia: Buddhist Text Translation Society, 2003: 231.

³³ Joan Halifax, Ira Byock, *Being with Dying: Cultivating Compassion and Fearlessness in the Presence of Death*, Boston: Shambhala Publications, Inc, 2008: 44. See. Bhikkhu Bodhi, *In the Buddha's Words: An Anthology of Discourses from the Pali Canon*, USA: Wisdom Publications, Inc, 2005: 162. See, M. 135.

killer of living beings, brutal, bloody-handed, given to killing and slaying, showing no mercy to living beings.”³⁴

And “But then there is the case where a woman or man is not one who harms beings with his fists, with clods, with sticks, or with knives. Through having adopted and carried out such actions, on the break-up of the body, after death, he reappears in a good destination... If instead he comes to the human state, then he is healthy wherever reborn. This is the way leading to health: not to be one who harms beings with one’s fists, with clods, with sticks, or with knives.”³⁵

Generally speaking, reincarnation of ordinary sentient being may be divided into two kinds, although it is important to member that each individual is a unique case. There is the ordinary death without anything positive or negative during moment of death. People who experience this kind of death reincarnate with their past karma in complete control, because there has been no special influence during the moment of dead if there is a strong influence of a positive or negative sort that will override past karma. That is the second category reincarnation, in which positive or negative thoughts direct individual mind into a more positive or more negative rebirth.

In cosmological terms, the animals were believed to inhabit a distinct world, separated from humans not by space but by state of mind. Rebirth as an animal was considered to be one of the unhappy rebirths, usually involving more than human suffering. Buddhist commentarial texts depict many sufferings associated with the animal world, even where no human

³⁴ M.I.135.

³⁵ *Ibid.*

beings are present, they are attacked and eaten by other animals or live in fear of it, they endure extreme changes of environment throughout the year, and they have no security of habitation. Those that live among humans are often slaughtered for their bodies, or taken and forced to work with many beatings until they are slaughtered at the end of their lives. On top of this, they suffer from ignorance, not knowing or understanding what is happening to them with any clarity, and unable to do very much about it, acting primarily on instinct. A person who kills living creatures and has no compassion for them would, on account of that behavior, be reborn in an evil state after death. If he was reborn in an evil state and as a human, he would be short-lived.³⁶

There are three types of action: bodily actions, verbal actions, and mental actions. Since our bodily and verbal actions are always initiated by our mental actions, or intentions, ultimately the six realms are created by our mind. For example, a hell realm is a place that arises as a result of the worst actions, such as murder or extreme mental. As Śāntideva says in *Guide to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life*, “Those who regard themselves as high and others as low will be reborn in the lower realms. If they are later reborn as human beings, they will be servants or of a low class.”³⁷

As a result of regarding ourselves as superior and others as inferior we perform many negative actions that will later ripen as rebirth in the lower realms. Due to this haughty attitude, even when we finally take rebirth again as a human being we shall be of a low social status, living like a servant or slave. Buddhism links karma directly to the motives behind an action.

³⁶ David J. Kalupahana, *Buddhist Philosophy: A Historical Analysis*, Honolulu: Hawaii, 1977: 49.

³⁷ Geshe Kelsang Gyatso, *Eight Steps to Happiness: The Buddhist Way of Loving Kindness*, USA: Tharpa Publications, 2003: 59 – 60.

Motivation usually makes the difference between “good” and “bad” actions, but included in the motivation is also the aspect of ignorance such that a well-intended action from an ignorant mind can subsequently be interpreted as a “bad” action in the sense that it creates unpleasant results for the “actor”. Depending on how we act, we may experience ‘heavenly’ or ‘hellish’ states of mind.³⁸

Master Hsing Yun suggests that some people are reincarnated into one of the six until we get off, until we obtain liberation, Nirvāṇa. We will go up and down in each one of our lives without choice according to the karma that manifest when we die. Buddha calls it the karma that ripens when we die.³⁹

According to Buddhist theory, we are born and reborn countless numbers of times, and it is conceivable that each being has been our parent at one time or another. In this way all beings in the universe share a family relationship.

In Buddhism, according to karma, one who do good action, he will get good fruit. Such as long time ago, Bodhisattva practice *pāramitā*, he gave his material goods and his body for anyone who needs anything. After he die, he reborn in the heaven realm. If karma is interpreted in a very mechanical manner, it, too, can be seen as a fatalistic teaching. Fatalistic interpretations of karma were advocated by a number of non-Buddhist groups. Buddhists, by interpreting karma through the teaching of Dependent Origination, affirmed free will and the value of religious practice. If the Self

³⁸ Peter Harvey, *Op. Cit.* 45.

³⁹ Wynand Goosen, *Affecting Deep Level Change in the Devine Matrix: Metaphysics*, Germany: GRIN Verlag, 2009: 15.

is considered to be a permanent and substantial entity, then it cannot change and cannot be affected by the fruits of a person's actions. If the causal relations that affect a person are not acknowledged, then the causal laws governing karma also cannot be recognized. Consequently, Buddhists applied the Middle Way between annihilationist and eternalist positions and their teachings concerning Dependent Origination to karma and thereby refuted fatalistic theories of karma.⁴⁰

Buddhist ethics are based on the principle that certain actions (karma) result in certain effects; in short, they are based on the Law of Causality (*Paṭiccasamupāda*). As has been seen the five precepts (*pañcasīla*) ensures our security in society. Also, to a great extent, the fact that good actions lead to beneficial results and that bad actions lead to suffering is observable in daily life and we are able to know this experientially.

III.2.3. Why Believe in *Karma*?

Simply said, if we chose to ignore the workings of *karma*, we tend to create many problems for ourselves. For example, if we like to have something expensive, but we cannot afford it, it becomes very tempting to steal. If we are smart and attentive enough, we may never be caught stealing. However, by stealing, (according to the law of *karma*) we create problematic situations for ourselves in the future, like poverty, or being the victim of robbery. Therefore, if we chose to ignore *karma*, the results of our actions will still haunt us. Belief in the law of causation generates the conviction that just as our past actions shaped the present, so will the life we lead today determine the nature of our future. We are the architects of our own lives. If

⁴⁰ Akira Hirakawa, *A History of Indian Buddhism: From Śākyamuni to Early Mahāyāna*, (trans.) Paul Groner, Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1998: 188.

we build with noble materials, carved with patient care, we shall have beauty and grace in our live. If we put into them love, loyalty, gentleness, meekness, kindness, faith, forbearance, patience, hope, we shall not fail to draw good dividends from all these things, dividends which shall rejoice our hearts, cause our eyes to sparkle, and the song of gladness to well up.⁴¹

Therefore, according to Buddhism, one who believes in the law of causation, will be careful not to cause pain to people, animals, plants, or the earth itself, for harming them is simultaneously harming oneself. It is said that ‘the mental aspiration of a moral person is effective through its purity’.⁴² That is, when such a person give a gift to a monk or Brāhmaṇa with the hope of being reborn in a certain way, this will occur, whether the heart is set on rebirth as a rich human, or in any of the six heavens of the desire realm, or even in the world of the *brahmas*. Yet if such an aspiration is really going to work, it must not be itself the sole motive of the giving, for this is seen to affect the nature of the beneficial karmic result. If a person give something to a monk ‘with longing, with the heart bound (to the gift), intent on a store (of karmic fruitfulness), thinking “I will enjoy this after death”, it is said that he will be reborn for a while in the lowest of all the heavens.⁴³ While Buddhists often see a large gift as generating more karmic fruitfulness than a small one, a small gift from a poor person is said to be worth as much as a large one from a rich person.⁴⁴ When practicing the Noble Eightfold Path, especially the right livelihood, a Buddhist avoids becoming a hunter, a fisherman, a jailer... because these kinds of persons will receive bad Karma

⁴¹ C.W. Naylor, ‘A Great Adventure’. In *Your Cry Has Been Heard*, ed. Beth Michael, The United States of America, 2009: 82.

⁴² D. III. 259 – 60.

⁴³ Peter Harvey, *Op. Cit.* 19.

⁴⁴ S. I. 20-22.

result. They will suffer an unpleasant state for a long period and rebirth in some lower form of being. Obviously, the results mentioned here are unlikely to come immediately (so-called ‘instant karma’ is considered rare), instead the karmic results may take lifetimes to ripen. For example, if I steal an ice-cream and enjoy eating it afterwards, the enjoyment is not a karmic result of stealing the ice-cream; it may be the result of helping someone else long ago. The karmic result of stealing an ice-cream is an unpleasant experience, such as being robbed.

In *A Living Buddhism for the West*, Lama Anāgārika Govinda expresses another approach: “All the suffering of this world arises from a wrong attitude. The world is neither good nor bad. It is only the relation to our ego that makes it seem the one or the other.”⁴⁵

Buddhism shows that both animals and human beings are the products of ignorance conjoined with craving, and that the differences between them are the consequences of past karma. In this sense, though not in any other, ‘all life is one’. It is one in its origin, ignorance-craving, and in its subjection to the universal law of causality. But every being’s karma is separate and individual. So long as a man refuses to become submerged in the herd, so long as he resists the pressure that is constantly brought to bear upon him to make him share the mass mind and take on the identity of mass activities, he is the master of his own destiny. Whatever the karma of others around him may be, he need have no share in it. His karma is his own, distinct and individual. In this sense all life is not one, but each life is a unique current of causal determinants, from lowest to highest in the scale. The special position of the human being rests on the fact that he alone can consciously direct his

⁴⁵ Anāgārika Govinda, *A Living Buddhism for the West*, Shambhala, 1990: 56.

own personal current of karma to a higher or lower destiny. All beings are their own creators; man is also his own judge and executioner. He is also his own savior.⁴⁶

It is said that *samsāra* is without beginning, and there has never been a time when the round of rebirths did not exist. Consequently, the karmic history of every living being extends into the infinite past, and each has an unexpected potential of karma, good and bad. When a human being dies, the nature of the succeeding life-continuum is determined by the morally wholesome or unwholesome mental impulse that arises in his last conscious moment, that which follows it being his *Paṭisandhi-viññāna*, or rebirth-linking consciousness.⁴⁷ But where no such good or bad thought-moment arises the rebirth-linking consciousness is determined by some unexpended karma from a previous existence. Animals, being without moral discrimination, are more or less passive sufferers of the results of past bad karma, as are morally irresponsible human beings, such as congenital idiots and imbeciles. But the fact that the animal has been unable to originate any fresh good karma does not exclude it from rebirth on a higher level. When the results of the karma which caused the animal birth are exhausted some unexpended good karma from a previous state of existence will have an opportunity to take over, and in this way the life-continuum is raised to the human level again.⁴⁸

The *Cūḷakammavibhaṅgasutta* of the *Majjhimanikāya* mentions that a person who kills a living creature will be born in an evil state. Not killing in

⁴⁶ Soma Thera, *Collected Bodhi Leaves Volume 1*, Kandy: Buddhist Publication Society, 2010:319.

⁴⁷ Bhikkhu Ñānamoli, *The Path of Purification: Visuddhimagga*, Colombo: Samayawardana Printers, 2010: 567.

⁴⁸ Soma Thera, *Op. Cit.* 320.

this life, one will not encounter disasters and difficulties in future live. If we refrain from killing all living beings, in future lives, we will not be killed and we will be free from all disasters and difficulties. We will not be killed by gunshots, burned by fire, or drawn in water. Since we didn't kill in previous life, we will also be free from all illnesses.

When we kill, we increase and perpetuate the bad karma of the killing karma. This bad karma will come back to us in this life or the next, but certainly has a more immediate effect on the being that we have just killed. Spreading the killing karma affects the whole so much that it collects and perpetuates, eventually leading to wars in the future. These experiences are the result of our past evolutionary actions (*karma*) which were motivated by the self-cherishing thought.

In past lives, due to egoism, wanting happiness just for ourselves, we harmed others, robbed and killed. In this life we are experiencing the result of those actions; therefore those sufferings are to be blamed only on egoism, the self-cherishing thought.⁴⁹

A man is man due to the force of his *karma*. The gods are gods due to the force of their *karmas*. Whatever happens is the effect of an anterior *Karma* and what is going to happen will be an effect of *karma* of today. By *karma* our Lord considers the position of men noble and ignoble. He says: "A man is not noble because he injures living beings. He is called noble because he does not injure living beings, that is, he has compassion for all living beings".⁵⁰

⁴⁹ Ribur Rinpoche, *How to generate Bodhicitta*, Singapore: Ad Graphic Pte Ltd, 1999: 31.

⁵⁰ Shanti Bhikhusastri, *The Law of Karma in Buddhism*, also see Dh. 270.

In the *Jātaka*, there are many stories that tell animals. An animal can become a man and man can become an animal according his good or bad *karma*. This is a story that tell a women become a crane and the crane become a woman and then reborn in heavenly. Therefore stories in *Jātaka* containing a fable proper, where animals speak and act like men.⁵¹

III.2.4. The Six Buddhist Realms of Existence

There are six Buddhist realms of saṃsāric existence. Buddhists believe that the cycle of a person's life is perpetrated by ignorance, greed, pride, anger and jealousy. The 'six realms of existence', sometimes also translated as the 'six states of saṃsāra' or the six paths of rebirth' (Wheel of Life), are the six main types of birth that beings may have within Buddhist cosmology. Which state we are born into is driven by our karma our actions and states of awareness from previous lives.

According to the teachings of the Buddha, we will endlessly incarnate within these realms until we receive and practice the teachings, and through them break free of the karmas that pull us into the six realms, thereby attaining enlightenment. A human birth, which is one of the six realms, is the easiest realm to do this in, and is therefore the most auspicious birth. The ordinary beings living in our present world fall into six categories or occupy six realms of existence, arranged in hierarchical order in terms of their desirability. Lowest are the hell dwellers, being who because of their evil actions in the past are compelled, for a time at least, to suffer in the various hells that exist beneath the earth, the most terrible of which is the Avīci hell or the hell of incessant suffering. On a slightly higher level are the hungry

⁵¹ T.W. Rhys Davids, *Buddhist Birth-Stories (Jātaka Tales)*, Delhi: BKP, 2005: vii.

ghosts or spirits, beings who are tormented by endless hunger and craving. Above this is the level of beasts or beings of animal nature, and above that the realm of the *asuras*, demons who are pictured in Indian mythology as constantly engaged in angry warfare. These first three or four realms represent the “evil paths,” the lowest, most painful and undesirable states of existence.⁵²

The realms are not only relevant in terms of studying rebirth, but also in terms of understanding the karma associated with different states of awareness while we are in a human birth. Each realm has a certain mind-state that drives it, and the teachings on the six realms can help us to understand the risks and challenges of each mind state.

The Six Realms are an allegorical description of conditioned existence, or *saṃsāra*, into which beings are reborn. The nature of one’s existence is determined by karma. Some realms seem more pleasant than others heaven sounds preferable to hell but all are *dukkha*, meaning they are temporary and imperfect.

For Buddhists, these six realms represent all possible states of existence. They were traditionally conceived as real places, but can also be interpreted symbolically. The animal, ghost and hell realms are all places of punishment for previous sins, whereas birth in the heavenly, *asura*, or human realms comes through the accumulation of karmic merit.⁵³ Life in any of these realms is ultimately impermanent one does not suffer forever in hell, nor enjoy eternal bliss in heaven.

⁵² Burton Watson, *Miao-Fa Lion-Hua Ching (The Lotus Sutra)* New York: Columbia University Press, 1993: xiv.

⁵³ Martin A. Mills, *Identity, Ritual and State in Tibetan Buddhism: The Foundations of Authority in Gelukpa Monasticism*, New York: Routledge Curzon, 2003: 56.

Birth in any of these realms is based on one's *karma* ("action") essentially the moral causality that good actions bring good results, and bad actions bad results. Since one's motive is critical for "goodness" or "badness," one's thoughts become at least as important as one's actions (for example, accidentally killing something is far less serious than intentional killing).

Karma presupposes a dynamic universe one's present life reflects past choices, but one's present choices are shaping the future. Only human beings can make choices and accrue karma, which means that one's human actions (good or bad) determine one's future births. This gives added emphasis to one's moral choices; it also means that a change of heart or better guidance can help one to lay a positive foundation for the future. Such guidance can range from simple moral precepts all the way to instructions on how to select one's next birth, as found in the final section of *The Tibetan Book of the Dead*.

In some schools, the realms of Devas and Asuras are combined, leaving five realms instead of six. Note that each of these realms has a resident Buddha, through which its inhabitants can hear the dharma this may reflect the Mahayana Buddhist notion that the ultimate Buddha-nature (*dharmakāya*) pervades the entire universe. The six realms are:

1. *Deva* or Heavenly Realm (God Realm).

In the heavens, there are many beings who are rewarded for past good deeds. Life in heaven is a continual round of pleasure and enjoyment, with no suffering, anxiety, or unfulfilled desires until the moment one is about to be reborn in another realm. And this is one of the problems. Life in heaven is extremely long, but is ultimately impermanent, and one must inevitably leave

to take birth in another realm. To be born in heaven, one also needs to “spend” an enormous amount of religious merit, and life there is so carefree that people have no inclination toward religious life. For these reasons, religious authorities have discouraged seeking birth in heaven.

In Buddhist tradition, the Deva realm is populated by godlike beings that enjoy great power, wealth and long life.⁵⁴ They live in splendor and happiness. Yet even the Devas grow old and die. Further, their privilege and exalted status blind them to the suffering of others, so in spite of their long lives they have neither wisdom nor compassion. The privileged Devas are reborn in another of the Six Realms. The *Lotus Sūtra Commentary* describes devas as “Pure and pristinely bright, they are the most honored and supreme, hence the name deva.”

In Buddhism, this is not an immortal state, and also not the ideal one for attaining liberation. We can become addicted to pleasure here, including meditative bliss, and can become trapped, forgetting to work towards liberation, and falling into lower realms because of this forgetfulness and self-absorption.

2. Asura or Demi-god Realm (Jealous God Realm)

The second highest realm of existence is called the Demi-god realm, or the Jealous God Realm. It is believed to be the realm of Titans, Asuras, and is marked by jealousy and paranoia. The fruit of disentanglement will be obtained when arriving the Nirvāṇic Path, and the fruit of contributory causes will not have any limitation in space or time.⁵⁵ Those born into this realm,

⁵⁴ Hsing Yun, Robert Smitheram, *The Universal Gate: A Commentary on Avalokiteśvara’s Universal Gate Sūtra*, Taiwan: Buddha’s Light Publishing, 2011: 130.

⁵⁵ Dukkyu Choi, *Mechanism of Consciousness During Life, Dream and After – Death*, Bloomington: Author House, 2011: 169.

though blessed with a high birth, are exceedingly jealous of the God realm and of each other. They are believed to spend most of their time fighting among themselves to compete. ‘Demi-God’ Realm is also pleasurable; this realm is nevertheless defined by jealousy and competitiveness. Although a birth here does offer more opportunities for pleasure than a human birth, here we are prone to coveting the pleasures of the Devas, which we can see (just as animals and humans can see each other.) In this state, we are prone to envy and a sense of victimhood that we are not getting our fair share and become fixated on evening the score. Theravada teachings generally do not recognize this as a realm separate from the Deva realm. The Asuras are strong, powerful and amoral beings who are sometimes depicted as enemies of the Devas. Asuras are marked by their fierce envy. The karma of hate and jealousy causes rebirth in the Asura Realm.

3. Human Realm

Human Realm, a middle realm, our human existence is defined by our ability and free-will to experience any state, from blissful to hellish. It is therefore perfect for attaining enlightenment, because there is just enough suffering to motivate us to seek liberation (unlike in the god realms, where we are easily distracted by pleasure) but not so much that we cannot hear and practice the teachings (unlike in the lower realms, where we are so consumed by our suffering that we cannot practice). From a human birth, we can cultivate the compassion and wisdom necessary to free ourselves from the entire wheel of saṃsāra.⁵⁶ In this realm we also have the most control over our future births, because we can influence our

⁵⁶ Vopen Koreis, *The Fool's Pilgrimage: A Fantasy on the Tarot Initiation*, Australia: Book Splendour Publishing, 2007: 87.

karma through our choices, whereas in the other realms we generally do not move into another birth until the karma that has brought us there has run its course.

The human realm is the only one in which one's choices (good or bad) affect one's future in all the others, one is either being rewarded or punished for one's actions as a human being. One's present human condition (e.g., wealth, social status, and physical and psychological qualities) is based on one's past *karma*, but one's present choices also determine one's future (in this life, or a future life). As conscious moral agents, human beings have agency that the beings in other realms do not; this clearly underscores the importance of moral action and spiritual development. The difference between humans and the other realms is that we can practice Dharma. Furthermore, falling into the lower realms is like losing a wish-fulfilling jewel. A human life has incredible potential. Humans have the intelligence to comprehend the difference between good and bad and the relationship between cause and effect. If we are born as animals, we will not be able to see beyond immediate events. Because animals tend to indulge in negative activity, their next rebirth is even worse. It is like a rock tumbling down the side of a ravine from a high mountain peak; it is most difficult to stop and bring it back up. Once in a low rebirth we may experience many, many lives stuck away at the bottom. It is foolish to think that we will be reborn as humans very soon.⁵⁷ So we can take the teachings, and practice them in our lives. So, in the Human Realm we can move out of the six flights of *karma*.

⁵⁷ Lhundup Sopa Geshe, *Steps on the Path to Enlightenment: A Commentary on Tsongkhapa's Lamrim Chenmo. Volume 3: The Way of the Bodhisattva*, USA: Wisdom Publications, 2008:436.

4. Animal Realm

Animal birth is seen as the result of past sins, and one expiates these sins through suffering in animal form (being hunted, worked, driven, slaughtered, etc.), often for thousands of consecutive births (as a dog, pig, dung beetle, etc.). Animal behavior is also run by instinct, which means that animals cannot generate good karma; they are simply working off the bad. This suffering and lack of control make birth as an animal undesirable. The conviction that animals are sentient beings also underlies the prohibition on intentionally killing anything, which goes back to the Buddha's earliest teaching (the Buddha was also vocally opposed to the animal sacrifice prevalent in his time).

The Animal realm is based on strong mental states of stupidity and prejudice cultivated in a previous life or lives. This realm is the realm of existence of the nonhuman animals on Earth. The earth on which we live is just one of many planes, and the fact that it happens to accommodate both the human and animal states of existence does not in any way distinguish it from other planes as a possible milieu for sentient life. In fact, besides humans and animals, it harbours various classes of devas (deities), *pretas* (spirits) and other non-human beings.⁵⁸ Humans can, however, be seen by the animals, in the same way that the Asuras can see the Devas.

5. *Preta* Realm or Hungry Ghost Realm

This realm is defined by constant desire and greed. They have huge stomachs but tiny mouths, food and water is very scarce and when a *preta* sees

⁵⁸ Francis Story, *Rebirth as Doctrine and Experience: Essays and Case Studies*, Kandy: Buddhist Publication Society, 2000: 56.

food or water they are so delusional that they believe they are seeing blood, bile and other disgusting things of that nature. And even if a *preta* finds food or water and is able to consume it, it burns its throat and stomach like fire. In this realm, we are so overcome by our desire for more, and more whether food, drink, sex, wealth, or even certain emotional states that we are consumed by it, and cannot focus on anything else. In this state, we cannot practice the teachings because we cannot focus on anything other than our wants.

As with the hells, beings in the *preta* realm expiate their past misdeeds through suffering. *Pretagati* (“going to the realm of hungry ghosts”) is hungry ghost level of rebirth in the world of *samsāra*.⁵⁹ Pretas are described as tormented by hunger and thirst illustrated by showing them with tiny thin necks, through which they can never eat or drink enough to satisfy themselves; this is described as the result of greed and stinginess in previous lives.

Other torments are psychological, since *pretas* remain in the places where they used to live, but cannot be seen by the living (which brings feelings of frustration, isolation, and despair). A hungry ghost is one who is always looking outside himself for the new thing that will satisfy the craving within.

6. *Naraka* or Hell Realms

The Hell Realm is the most terrible of the Six Realms.⁶⁰ The lowest among the realms of existence is the hell realm. One is punished for one’s evil actions. Buddhist visions of hell often link particular punishments to

⁵⁹ John C. Huntington and Dina Bangdel, *The Circle of Bliss: Buddhist Meditational Art*, Belgium: Serindia Publications, Inc, 2003: 532.

⁶⁰ Lama Dudjom Dorjee, *Heartfelt Advice*, USA: Snow Lion Publications, 2009: 50.

particular sins, doubtless to warn the hearers. One expiates one's evil deeds through suffering hunger and thirst, dismemberment, torture, psychological distress, and so on. The hell realms are looked upon as journey full of suffering; one born into this realm must not only endure suffering in their respective hell but also pass through each of lesser hells. This journey is supposed to take eternities to complete. In the course of which, even the Dharma is forgotten and even if it was remembered, the anguish is such that it makes practice impossible. The hell realm is characterized by acute aggression.

'Hell' Realm is defined by hatred and rage, and by defining all other beings as enemies. Within this realm, there is no opportunity for compassion or desire for the teachings to arise, as all our momentum goes toward fighting others, and suffering the consequences. But within Buddhist cosmology this state, like all the others, is not permanent. Instead, when the negative karma that brought us here has run out, we will be reborn into another realm, with the possibility of working towards a human birth again.

In brief, Buddhists believe that each person is reborn in accordance with their respective deeds (*karma*) in their previous lives. To form a mental image of the six realms we can compare them to the floors of a large, old house. In this analogy the house represents *saṃsāra*, the cycle of contaminated rebirth.⁶¹ All the sufferings we experienced in countless rebirths in the three lower realms come from nothing other than the self-cherishing thought.⁶² After all of the positive merits have been used up in the

⁶¹ Kelsang Gyatso, *Op. Cit.* 53.

⁶² Ribur Rinpoche, *Op. Cit.* 31.

higher realms a being will tumble into the lower realms continuing the viscous cycle of rebirth and death.

III.2.5. Human and animal can change place and position.

The Buddha taught that the human beings are also reborn from other forms like as animals. “Contaminated virtuous actions throw us into higher saṃsāric rebirths as a human, demi-god, or god, whereas non-virtuous actions throw us into lower rebirths in the animal, hungry spirit, or hell realms”.⁶³

The *Karma* leads one to a good position or places one in a bad position. The Buddha says: “Some enter the womb, that is, are reborn on earth. Evil doers go to hell. The good go to heaven. Those free from worldly desires attain *Nirvāṇa*.”⁶⁴ The death of a person is must for not leading to rebirth in the human realm. He can be reborn in another realm due to his *karma*.

Animals have always been regarded in Buddhist thought as sentient beings, though less intellectually advanced than humans but no less capable of feeling suffering. Moreover, the doctrine of rebirth held that any human could be reborn as an animal, and any animal could be reborn as a human. An animal birth might be the rebirth of a dead relative, and if one looks far enough back in one’s infinite series of lives, one would eventually have to be related to others in some way. One cannot, therefore, make a hard distinction between moral rules applicable to animals and those applicable to people. Ultimately humans and animals are part of a single family.

⁶³ Kelsang Gyatso, *Op. Cit.* 57.

⁶⁴ Hsuan Hua, ‘Eating flesh: pros and cons’, *Cherishing Life*, Volume II: 142-144.

The beings here experience unrelenting torment.”All human beings go into the human world by virtuous actions, but the experiences they have as human beings vary considerably depend upon their different completed actions. Similarly, animals have all been thrown into the animal world by the retribution of non-virtuous actions, but their experiences as animals vary considerably depending upon their different completing actions. Some animals, such as some domestic pets, can experience a life of luxury, receiving more care and attention than many human beings.⁶⁵

Human souls could be reborn as animals and insects if they had behaved badly, with all souls regarded as part of the Supreme Being. Failing to observe the duty to care could lead to bad karma, which increased the likelihood of returning as an animal next time round.⁶⁶ Species sentience due to its association with rebirth eschatology leads to cross-species reincarnation.⁶⁷

A person who has done evil persistently, or even one heavy crime, is likely to see at the time of death a vision, either relating to his past evil actions, or else to the bourn which his past evil actions or karma have prepared for him. When his physical body is no longer a suitable basis to support life, his mind creates a body ghostly and subtle in substance, which then and there begins to experience one of the evil bourns. But in case his karma drives him to be born as animals, there is the vision of animals copulating and he is dragged into the womb or egg of those animals.⁶⁸

⁶⁵ Kelsang Gyatso, *Op. Cit.* 57-58.

⁶⁶ Richard Ryder, *Op. Cit.* 21.

⁶⁷ Obeyesekere, Gananath, *Karma & Rebirth: A Cross Cultural Study*, Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publisher, 2006: 176.

⁶⁸ Phra Khantipalo, *The Wheel of Birth and Death*, Kandy: Buddhist Publication Society, 1970.

It may not be far from the truth to say that this attitude of renunciation is behind every moral virtue. Not only those who leave everyday life and embrace the life of monks, but everyone is expected to practice renunciation to the extent to which he is able. Without such sacrifices, there cannot be perfect harmony in society. Thus, even the simplest of virtues, such as generosity, liberality, caring for one's parents, family, fellow beings and others cannot be practiced without an element of renunciation or sacrifice. This is the sacrifice that the Buddha emphasized.

In the Buddhist tradition, the teaching of rebirth states that humans can be reborn as animals if they commit heinous deeds, and those animals can be reborn as humans if they exert effort to act meritoriously. As James P. McDermott writes, "After the breaking up of the body after death, individuals of comparatively good conduct will be reborn in a relatively satisfactory state of existence such as the human state."⁶⁹ This is illustrated in the *Campeyya-Jātaka*.⁷⁰ There was a puissant serpent King who left all his magnificence on the fast-days. He went to the human world and lie on the way. There was a serpent- charmer came to catch him and made him dance for show. After that the serpent King became a young man, into the human being realm, due to force of his good *karma*.

Through that story, we see an animal doing good deeds and with the force of good karma and changing its life from an animal he becomes a man in the next life. Thus, we know that if animal do good deeds it will be reborn in the good realms.

⁶⁹ Wendy Doniger, *Karma and Rebirth in Classical Indian Traditions*, USA: University of California Press, 1980: 191.

⁷⁰ J. No. 506.

Those of bad conduct and wrong views, to the contrary, are destined to attain a miserable rebirth as an animal or worse. Thus, for example, if they do not end up in hell itself, individuals who creep or slink along in this life, be they bloody handed hunters, robbers, or whatever, are most likely to be reborn in the form of a sneaky or creeping creature as a snake, a scorpion, a centipede, a mongoose, a cat, a mouse, an owl or the like.⁷¹

III.3. Personification of Animals in Buddhist Literature

In the personification of animals, animals and human talk to each other on the same footing which in a way indicates that we should respect all living beings because they can become enlightenment. Moreover, as we have pointed out earlier, as all the living beings are related to each other, if we do harm to anyone of them it means we harm ourselves.

Some individuals recognize the inviolability of animals. In other words, they believe that animals are not ours to use, abuse, or consume. They believe that if animals could talk, farmed animals, vivisected animals, fur-bearing animals, circus, zoo, and rodeo animals, hunted animals, would all say the same thing: “Don’t touch me!” In the absence of a language that animals can speak that proclaims their inviolability; some human beings are searching for a language that speaks this on their behalf. So far most of these efforts could be grouped under the general heading of animal rights theory. The notion of animal inviolability is a deep belief in search of a language. Because we have no adequate language for emotions or intuitions, we have no framework into which our misgivings about animal current violability

⁷¹ Christopher Key Chapple, *Nonviolence to Animals, Earth, and Self in Asian Traditions*, Delhi: Indian Book Centre, 1995: 23.

can be fit. In the absence of such language, it is important that we widen Christian ethical discourse to address the problem of the use of animals.

The Jātaka stories which tell of past lives of the Buddha in folktale fashion, frequently involve animals as peripheral or main characters, and it is not uncommon for the Bodhisattva (the past-life Buddha) to appear as an animal as well. The stories sometimes involve animals alone, and sometimes involve conflicts between humans and animals; in the latter cases, the animals often exhibit characteristics of kindness and generosity that are absent in the humans.

Many gain an added interest if the symbolism of Buddhism is already understood, for example the story of the monkey-king who by risking his own life, made of himself a bridge so that his troupe could pass safely over his back to the security of the beyond, a notion reflected again, but without the bridge motif. In the story of the desert-pilot who took the caravan safely across the waterless desert, likewise arriving beyond, all perils past.⁷²

Once the Bodhisattva lived as a Kuru deer in a wild forest where splendid trees and bushes grew and where all kinds of animals, large and small had their abode. His body was very beautiful and his skin shone like gold he knew the cruelty of man and that is beautiful would surely attract the eyes of hunter, he withdrew deep into the forest, far away from the habitations of people.

The bodhisattva felt the pain of others more than his own and saved very many lives in his re-births in the world. He did not think of his own danger; Kuru deer saved life of a man. The deer told him that he did not talk

⁷² I. B. Horner, *Op. Cit.* ix.

to anyone about the place where deer stayed because if he did so people would catch him. The man promised that.

Thereafter, this man desired money and this aim he took the king to the forest in order to catch deer. The bodhisattva at once recognized the man, whom he had rescued and he said: 'Shame upon you, surely it is true that it is better to save a log of wood from the water than an ungrateful man. I wonder that you did not know that bad karma would follow you for your ingratitude.' The king understood what had happened. He said: 'a man who can be so vile as to betray his rescuer should not live.' But bodhisattva, full of compassion, called out: 'stay, your Majesty, do not kill a man already punished. I stand here to plead for him, for I know how hard his punishment is'.

The Kuru Deer followed the king back to his capital; hence he was placed on the royal throne. Then the Deer in a sweet voice preached to them about 'Mercy to all creatures'. He said: 'if men would consider the animals their younger brothers, then all wickless would disappear in the world. The want of mercy is the cause of trouble. Mercy will bring rich fruits, as fruitful rain dose to vegetation. Mercy destroys the desire for injuring any creature and is the seed of other virtues. A merciful person is loved and esteemed by everybody. His mind is so filled with mercy that anger and passion cannot blaze in him. In mercy the whole Law of Righteousness is contained.'

Thus the bodhisattva taught the Law of Righteousness a long time before he became the Buddha. And the king and his people took the words to their hearts and from that time onwards the killing of animals and birds was forbidden.