



## Who Are Your Teachers?



“For one who is practicing with awareness, it isn't necessary to have someone to advise and teach all that much to be able to see and understand. An example is the case of the Buddha who, in a previous life, was King Mahajanaka. He didn't need to study very much. All he had to do was observe a mango tree.”

—Ajahn Chah

### 1. Background

- a. Jack Kornfield (b. 1945), American writer and teacher, co-founder of Insight Meditation Society and Spirit Rock Meditation Center
- b. Ajahn Chah (1918-1992), Thai monastic and teacher, Thai forest lineage
- c. The Jataka tales: birth stories about the hundreds of previous lives of the Buddha-to-be, Siddhartha Gotama, as bodhisattas
- d. The *Dasajati*, final 10 birth stories of the Buddha, King Mahajanaka “The Lost Prince”

### 2. A reading from Ajahn Chah, *Dhamma Nature*

### 3. Silent meditations on our teachers

- a. Our formal dharma teachers
- b. Teachers from nature

### 4. Group discussion

## NOTES



### Ajahn Chah, dharma talks and writings:

[https://www.ajahnchah.org/book/Dhamma\\_Nature1.php](https://www.ajahnchah.org/book/Dhamma_Nature1.php)

<https://www.ajahnchah.org/pdf/tree-forest.pdf>

Ajahn Chah, *Being Dhamma* (Boulder: Shambala, 2001)

### Jataka Tales, the *Dasajati*, Buddhist art and literature:

Elizabeth Wray, *Ten Lives of the Buddha* (New York: Weatherhill, 1972)

<https://thejatakatales.com/> Tim Bower, author & website compiler

<https://onlinebooks.library.upenn.edu/webbin/metabook?id=jataka>

<https://www.khanacademy.org/humanities/art-asia/beginners-guide-asian-culture/buddhist-art-culture/a/jatakas-the-many-lives-of-buddha-as-bodhisattva>

## A story about the Buddha as King Mahajanaka

Thus, for one who is practicing with awareness, it isn't necessary to have someone to advise and teach all that much to be able to see and understand. An example is the case of the Buddha who, in a previous life, was King Mahajanaka. He didn't need to study very much. All he had to do was observe a mango tree.

One day, while visiting a park with his retinue of ministers, from atop his elephant, he spied some mango trees heavily laden with ripe fruit. Not being able to stop at that time, he determined in his mind to return later to partake of some. Little did he know, however, that his ministers, coming along behind, would greedily gather them all up; that they would use poles to knock them down, beating and breaking the branches and tearing and scattering the leaves.

Returning in the evening to the mango grove, the king, already imagining in his mind the delicious taste of the mangoes, suddenly discovered that they were all gone, completely finished! And not only that, but the branches and leaves had been thoroughly thrashed and scattered.

The king, quite disappointed and upset, then noticed another mango tree nearby with its leaves and branches still intact. He wondered why. He then realized it was because that tree had no fruit. If a tree has no fruit nobody disturbs it and so its leaves and branches are not damaged. This lesson kept him absorbed in thought all the way back to the palace: "It is unpleasant, troublesome and difficult to be a king. It requires constant concern for all his subjects. What if there are attempts to attack, plunder and seize parts of his kingdom?" He could not rest peacefully; even in his sleep he was disturbed by dreams.

He saw in his mind, once again, the mango tree without fruit and its undamaged leaves and branches. "If we become similar to that mango tree", he thought, "our 'leaves' and 'branches,' too, would not be damaged."

In his chamber he sat and meditated. Finally, he decided to ordain as a monk, having been inspired by this lesson of the mango tree. He compared himself to that mango tree and concluded that if one didn't become involved in the ways of the world, one would be truly independent, free from worries or difficulties. The mind would be untroubled. Reflecting thus, he ordained.

From then on, wherever he went, when asked who his teacher was, he would answer, "A mango tree." He didn't need to receive teaching all that much. A mango tree was the cause of his Awakening to the *Opanayiko-Dhamma*, the teaching leading inwards. And with this Awakening, he became a monk, one who has few concerns, is content with little, and who delights in solitude. His royal status given up, his mind was finally at peace.

In this story the Buddha was a Bodhisatta who developed his practice in this way continuously. Like the Buddha as King Mahajanaka, we, too, should look around us and be observant because everything in the world is ready to teach us. — *Ajahn Chah*