

These are examples of stories that demonstrate the Buddhist concern for all living creatures:

1. Limping Puppy

The owner of a pet store placed a “Puppies For Sale” sign in his store window, expecting to attract children to his shop. Soon enough a little boy came into the store and asked about the puppies.

“How much are the puppies?” he asked.

“Thirty pounds,” replied the shop owner.

The boy was upset as he had only £6.54. However, he asked the shop owner if he could at least look at the puppies, and as he was not very busy, the shop owner agreed. The shop owner whistled loudly and an energetic Spaniel ran into the shop through the back door. The spaniel was followed by five little furry puppies. After a short time, a sixth puppy limped into the shop after his brothers and sisters.

“What is wrong with that puppy?” asked the boy.

The shop owner explained that a vet had looked at the puppy and discovered that the puppy did not have a hip socket and would always limp and need special attention. At this, the boy became rather excited. “This is the puppy I want to buy,” the boy exclaimed! “Can I give you £6.54 now and 50p a week until I have paid for him?”

The store owner replied, “No, you don’t want this puppy. He will never be able to play like the other puppies. But ...”, he added after seeing the look on the boy’s face, “If you insist I will give him to you.”

The boy was upset. He looked in the store owners eyes and said, “I don’t want you to give him to me. The little puppy is worth every bit as much as the other dogs and I will pay full price.”

The store owner tried to persuade the boy to buy another puppy and reminded the boy about the extra care and attention that this puppy would need.

To this, the boy reached down and rolled up his trouser leg to show a badly twisted and crumpled left leg, held firmly with a big metal brace. He looked at the store owner and replied, "Well, I don't run so well myself, and the little puppy will need someone who understands!"

2. The Old Man and the Scorpion

An old man was meditating by a river. As he finished he noticed a scorpion floating by, hanging on to a small leaf. The old man grabbed a small stick and quickly stretched out his hand to try and rescue the drowning scorpion. As soon as his hand got close, the scorpion stung him. The poisonous sting was painful and the old man drew his hand back in pain. Again and again the old man tried. Again and again the scorpion stung him painfully.

A passer by, witnessing the old man in his pain struggling to save the scorpion shouted out, "Hey old man, why do you continue to do that. It is only a stupid scorpion. Don't you know you could kill yourself trying to rescue the ungrateful poisonous creature?"

Looking calmly at the passer by, the old man replied, "My dear friend, just because it is the scorpion's nature to sting, that does not change my nature to save."

3. Starfish

A man was walking down a deserted beach at sunset. As he walked along he noticed another man in the distance. This man kept on leaning down, picking something up and throwing it out into the water. Over and over the man bent down and threw something out to sea.

As the observer drew nearer he noticed that the man was picking up starfish that had been washed up onto the beach and this is what he was throwing back into the water.

The observer was puzzled and asked, "Good evening, stranger. Why are you throwing these starfish back into the water?"

"Well," replied the man, sensibly. "The tide will not be in for some time now and if I don't throw the starfish back they will die from lack of oxygen."

"Yes, I understand that," replied the observer but there are thousands of starfish here. You could not possibly save them all. What difference could the few that you save make?"

The man smiled, bent down and picked up one more. As he threw it back into the sea he replied, "Made a difference to that one!"