

Buddhist Basics: A Prayer Is Answered
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This new series uses various stories to illustrate points about Buddhism.

In his *Just So Stories*, Rudyard Kipling tells the tale of a gray, four-legged animal in Australia who wanted to be different and wonderfully popular.

So he went to the Big God Nqong and said, “Make me different from all other animals.”

At first, Nqong said he would grant this wish. But then, to the animal’s surprise, Nqong turned his hungry dog, Dingo, loose on him.

The animal ran — because it had to. Dingo chased him all over Australia. He ran and ran, and his hind legs grew stronger and larger. Then he began to hop to stay ahead of Dingo. And, as he hopped across Australia, he was transformed into a kangaroo.

When Dingo got tired of running, he and Kangaroo stopped to catch their breath. Nqong asked Kangaroo: “Aren’t you grateful to Dingo? Why don’t you thank him for all he’s done for you?”

But Kangaroo was mad, not thankful.

So Nqong said, “Perhaps I’m mistaken, but didn’t you ask me to make you different from all other animals, as well as to make you truly sought after?”

“Yes,” said Kangaroo. “But I wish that I hadn’t. I thought you would do it by charms and incantations, but this is a practical joke.”

Actually, Kangaroo got exactly what he wanted, just not in the way he had expected.

Sometimes, the harder we practice Buddhism and chant to achieve something, it may seem as if we’re moving farther and farther away from our goal. But the important thing is to keep going no matter what. In the end we’ll see that our prayer has been answered and that we’ve been transformed in the process. Our struggles and “dingoes” can help us become the people we want to be — so why not be grateful for them?

One in a series