



Story: Monks in the forest

Once Buddha sent a group of monks to meditate in the forest that was inhabited by tree spirits. The spirits did not like the presence of the monks and tried to drive them away.

And then they appeared in very horrible visions. So, the monks were frightened, terrified, they ran back to the Buddha, begging him to send them to a different forest. But the Buddha said: “No, I’m going to send you back to that forest, but I will provide you with the one protection that you need.”

He then gave the first teaching on loving kindness.

What was the essence of this, what was the secret that Buddha taught?

The secret was a few words, like a mantra which the Buddha gave to the monks. These words are very simple: “May you be well... May you be happy.”

Because of this message of love and loving kindness the monks slowly overcame their fear.

The monks repeated the magic formula “May you be well, may you be happy” several times. This created a very loving energy which filled the whole forest. The spirits were very sensitive to this loving atmosphere.

When the monks returned to the forest and practised loving kindness, the tree spirits were so moved by the loving energy that filled the forest that their aggression dissolved. Instead of harming, they started to care for and serve the monks in whatever way they could.

Teacher’s note:

The reading of this story can be supported by *illustrations* (see *illustrations in separate file*).