

CAT PREACHES DHARMA

Once upon a time, there was a monk in Samdrupling who had a cat that knew how to talk. Cat always stole many things, and one day it stole a monk's rosary. As soon as the monk saw that, he grabbed Cat by the tail and yanked it back and forth. Finally the tail broke and he lost it. After that Cat could not catch mice and was hungry. He became meek. He wore the rosary on his neck and said to Mouse, "I'm the Mouse-god, a monk's disciple. I don't take the lives of others, I don't take what is not given, I don't tell a single lie, I don't do a single perverse deed, I don't drink a mouthful of intoxicating beer. It is all right if you prostrate to me." Mouse thought what Cat said was true, and gathered the other mice. "My maternal uncle Mouse-god is good to us. All of us should go and ask him for teachings." So all the many mice assembled.

Then Cat sat on a grindstone and preached to the mice. At each break he made each mouse do a circumambulation, caught them by the tail and ate them. So Mouse-god's strength increased and the mice grew fewer. Therefore, the mice did not trust him and they all met and held discussions. Their leader saw that there were fur and bones in the teacher's poop, and he grew really suspicious of the teacher. In order to sort out what was true or not, he asked Mouse-god, "Teacher, what sorts of food do you accept?" "I'm a vegetarian." After the mice knew all the circumstances, they got scared and said, "What can we do?" Chief Mouse said, "It'd be best if we gave the teacher an ornament," and they put a bell around Mouse-god's neck. Then as soon as the bell rang, when everyone looked, he caught a mouse and killed it. Then Chief Mouse said:

You, our teacher, have grown strong.
My crowd of mice has grown small
You eat vegetarian food, but
There are hairy things in your shit.
You, our teacher, are really pious.

They quickly ran away without making an obeisance or doing him honor.

—Nor bu tshe ring, *Qinghai Folk Literature* 9, 1984