Ja 173 — Makkata Jātaka

English translation by W. H. D. Rouse.

Source: https://raw.githubusercontent.com/suttacentral/sc-data/2d9ca8da858f94302ed6783e2717bf73d651881b/html_text/en/pli/sutta/kn/ja/vol2/ja173.html

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Edited by E. B. Cowell

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Pinned source revision: https://github.com/suttacentral/sc-data/commit/2d9ca8da858f94302ed6783e2717bf73d651881b

Scope: Complete numbered source article from the traditional Jātaka commentary; canonical verses appear in story context. This is not a verse-only edition.

Changes: Converted the pinned SuttaCentral HTML article to plain text; removed inline print page-reference labels and normalized whitespace. The original source retains references.

Text

“Father, see! a poor old fellow,” etc.—This story the Master told whilst staying in Jetavana, about a rogue.—The circumstances will be explained in the Uddala Birth, Book xiv. Here too the Master said, “Brethren, not this once only has the fellow turned out a rogue; in days of yore, when he was a monkey, he played tricks for the sake of a fire.” And he told a tale of days long gone by.

Once upon a time, when Brahmadatta was reigning in Benares, the Bodhisatta was born in a brahmin family in a village of Kasi.. When he came of years, he received his education at Takkasila, and settled down in life.

His lady in time bore him a son; and when the child could just run to and fro, she died. The husband performed her obsequies, and then, said he, “What is home to me now? I and my son will live the life of hermits.” Leaving his friends and kindred in tears, he took the lad to the Himalaya, became a religious anchorite, and lived on the fruits and roots which the forest yielded.

On a day during the rainy season, when there had been a downpour, he kindled some sticks, and lay down on a pallet, warming himself at the fire. And his son sat beside him chafing his feet.

Now a wild Monkey, miserable with cold, spied the fire in the leaf-hut of our hermit. “Now,” thought he, “suppose I go in: they’ll cry out Monkey! Monkey! and beat me back: I shan’t get a chance of warming myself.—I have it!” he cried. “I’ll get an ascetic’s dress, and get inside by a trick!” So he put on the bark dress of a dead ascetic, lifted his basket and crooked stick, and took his stand by the hut door, where he crouched down beside a palm tree. The lad saw him, and cried to his father (not knowing he was a monkey) “Here’s an old hermit, sure enough, miserably cold, come to warm himself at the fire.” Then he addressed his father in the words of the first stanza, begging him to let the poor fellow in to warm

himself:

“Father, see! a poor old fellow huddled by a palmtree there!

Here we have a hut to live in; let us give the man a share.”

When the Bodhisatta heard this, up he got and went to the door But when he saw the creature was only a monkey, he said, “My son, men have no such face as that; ’Tis a monkey, and he must not be asked in here.” Then he repeated the second stanza:

“He would but defile our dwelling if he came inside the door;

Such a face—’Tis easy telling—no good brahmin ever bore.”

The Bodhisatta seized a brand, crying—“What do you want there?”—threw it at him, and drove him away. Mr Monkey dropt his bark garments, sprang up a tree, and buried himself in the forest.

Then the Bodhisatta cultivated the Four Excellences until he came unto Brahma’s heaven.

When the Master had ended this discourse, he identified the Birth: “This tricky Brother was the Monkey of those days; Rahula was the hermit’s son, and I myself was the hermit.” ‘

The Jātaka, or Stories of the Buddha’s Former Births, edited by E.B. Cowell, published by The Cambridge University Press.

Vol. 1, translated by Robert Chalmers, 1895.

Vol. 2, translated by W.H.D. Rouse, 1895.

Vol. 3, translated by H.T. Francis and R.A. Neil, 1897.

Vol. 4, translated by W.H.D. Rouse, 1901.

Vol. 5, translated by H.T. Francis, 1905.

Vol. 6, translated by E.B. Cowell and W.H.D. Rouse, 1907.

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Prepared for SuttaCentral by Bhikkhu Sujato.