Ja 209 — Kakkara 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/ja209.html

Source revision: 2d9ca8da858f94302ed6783e2717bf73d651881b

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Edited by E. B. Cowell

Original edition: Cambridge University Press, volume 2, 1895

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

“Trees a many have I seen,” etc.—This story the Master told while dwelling at Jetavana, about a Brother who was one of the fellow-students of Elder Sariputta, Captain of the Faith.

This fellow, as we learn, was clever at taking care of his person. Food very hot or very cold he would not eat, for fear it should do him harm. He never went out for fear of being hurt by cold or heat; and he would not have rice which was either over-boiled or too hard.

The Brotherhood learnt how much care he took of himself. In the Hall of Truth, they all discussed it. “Friend, what a clever fellow Brother So-and-so is in knowing what is good for him!” The Master came in, and asked what they were talking of as they sat there together. They told him. Then he rejoined, “Not only now is our young friend careful for his personal comfort. He was just the same in olden days.” And he told them an old-world tale.

Once upon a time, in the reign of Brahmadatta, king of Benares, the Bodhisatta became a Tree-spirit in a forest glade. A. certain fowler, with a decoy bird, hair noose, and stick, went into the forest in search of birds. He began to follow one old bird which flew off into the woods, trying to escape. The bird would not give him a chance of catching it in his snare, but kept rising and alighting, rising and alighting. So the fowler covered himself with twigs and branches, and set his noose and stick again and again. But the bird, wishing to make him ashamed of himself, sent forth a human voice and repeated the first stanza:

“Trees a many have I seen

Growing in the woodland green:

But, O Tree, they could not do

Any such strange things as you!”

So saying, the bird flew off and went elsewhere. When it had gone, the fowler repeated the second verse—

“This old bird, that knows the snare,

Off has flown into the air;

Forth from out his cage has broken,

And with human voice has spoken!”

So said the fowler; and having hunted through the woods, took what he could catch and went home again.

When the Master had ended this discourse, he identified the Birth—“Devadatta was the fowler then, the young dandy was the bird, and the tree-sprite that saw the whole thing was I myself.”

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.