Ja 268 — Arama-Dusa 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/ja268.html

Source revision: 2d9ca8da858f94302ed6783e2717bf73d651881b

License: Public Domain (original English edition, published 1895–1907)

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

“Best of all,” etc.—This story the Master told whilst dwelling in the country near Dakkhinagiri, about a gardener’s son.

After the rains, the Master left Jetavana, and went on alms-pilgrimage in the district about Dakkhinagiri. A layman invited the Buddha and his company, and made them sit down in his grounds till he gave them of rice and cakes, Then he said, “If any of the holy Fathers care to see over the grounds, they might go along with the gardener;” and he ordered the gardener to supply them with any fruit they might fancy.

By and bye they came upon a bare spot. “What is the reason,” they asked “that this spot is bare and treeless?” “The reason is,” answered the gardener, “that a certain gardener’s son, who had to water the saplings, thought he had better give them water in proportion to the length of the roots; so he pulled them all up to see, and watered them accordingly. The result was that the place became bare.”

The Brethren returned, and told this to their Master. Said he, “Not now only has the lad destroyed a plantation; he did just the same before;” and then he told them an old-world tale.

Once upon a time, when a king named Vissasena was reigning over Benares, proclamation was made of a holiday. The park keeper thought he would go and keep holiday; so calling the monkeys that lived in the park, he said:

“This park is a great blessing to you. I want to take a week’s holiday. Will you water the saplings on the seventh day?” “Oh, yes,” said they; he gave them the watering-skins, and went his way.

The monkeys drew water, and began to water the roots.

The eldest monkey cried out: “Wait, now! It’s hard to get water always. We must husband it. Let us pull up the plants, and notice the length of their roots; if they have long roots, they need plenty of water; but short ones need but a little.” “True, true,” they agreed; then some of them pulled up the plants; then others put them in again, and watered them.

The Bodhisatta at the time was a young gentleman living in Benares. Something or other took him to this park, and he saw what the monkeys were doing.

“Who bids you do that?” asked he.

“Our chief,” they replied.

“If that is the wisdom of the chief, what must the rest of you be like!” said he; and to explain the matter, he uttered the first stanza:

“Best of all the troop is this:

What intelligence is his!

If he was chosen as the best,

What sort of creatures are the rest!”

Hearing this remark, the monkeys rejoined with the second stanza:

“Brahmin, you know not what you say

Blaming us in such a way!

If the root we do not know,

How can we tell the trees that grow?”

To which the Bodhisatta replied by the third, as follows:

“Monkeys, I have no blame for you,

Nor those who range the woodland through.

The monarch is a fool, to say

‘Please tend my trees while I’m away.’”

When this discourse was ended, the Master identified the Birth: “The lad who destroyed the park was the monkey chief, and I was the wise man.”

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.

These translations are in the public domain. You are free to do whatever you like with them.

Scanned, proofed and formatted at sacred-texts.com, January 2006–February 2010, by John Bruno Hare and others. Thanks to the Sacred Texts Archive for making these texts available in digital form.

Prepared for SuttaCentral by Bhikkhu Sujato.