Ja 274 — Lola 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/ja274.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

“Who is this tufted crane,” etc.—This story the Master told in Jetavana about a greedy Brother. He too was brought to the Audience Hall, when the Master said—“It is not only now that he is greedy; greedy he was before, and his greed lost him his life; and by his means wise men of old were driven out of house and home.” Then he told a story.

Once upon a time, when Brahmadatta was king of Benares, a rich merchant’s cook of that town hung up a nest-basket in the kitchen to win merit by it. The Bodhisatta at that time was a Pigeon; and he came and lived in it.

Now a greedy Crow as he flew over the kitchen was attracted by the fish which lay about in great variety. He fell a-hungering after it. “How in the world can I get some?” thought he. Then his eye fell upon the Bodhisatta. “I have it!” thinks he, “I’ll make this creature my cat’s-paw.” And this is how he carried out his resolve.

When the Pigeon went out to seek his day’s food, behind him, following, following, came the Crow.

“What do you want with me, Mr Crow?” says the Pigeon. “You and I don’t feed alike.”

“Ah, but I like you,” says the Crow. “Let me be your humble servant, and feed with you.”

The Pigeon agreed. But when they went feeding together, the Crow only pretended to eat with him; ever and anon he would turn back, peck to bits some lump of cow-dung, and get a worm or two. When he had had his bellyful, up he flies—“Hullo, Mr Pigeon! what a time you take over your meal! You never know where to draw the line. Come, let’s be going back before it is too late.” And so they did. When they got back together, the Cook, seeing that their Pigeon had brought a friend, hung up another basket.

In this way things went on for four or five days. Then a great purchase of fish came to the rich man's kitchen. How the Crow longed for some! There he lay, from early morn, groaning and making a great noise. In the morning, says the Pigeon to the Crow:

"Come along, old fellow,—break fast!"

"You can go," says he, "I have such a fit of indigestion!"

"A Crow with indigestion? Nonsense!" says the Pigeon. "Even a lamp-wick hardly stays any time in your stomach; and anything else you digest in a trice, as soon as you eat it. Now you do what I tell you. Don't behave in this way just for seeing a little fish!"

"Why, Sir, what are you saying? I tell, you I have a bad pain inside!

"All right, all right," says the Pigeon; "only do take care." And away he flew.

The Cook got all the dishes ready, and then stood at the kitchen door, mopping the sweat off him. "Now's my time!" thinks Mr Crow, and alights on a dish with some dainty food in it. Click! The cook heard the noise, and looked round. Ah! in a twinkling he caught the Crow, and plucked off all his feathers, except one tuft on the top of his head; then he powdered ginger and cinnamon, and mixt it up with buttermilk, and rubbed it in well all over the bird's body. "That's for spoiling my master's dinner, and making me throw it away!" said he, and threw him into his basket. Oh, how it hurt!

By and by, in came the Pigeon from his hunt. The first thing he saw was our Crow, making a great to-do. What fun he did make of him, to be sure! He dropt into poetry, as follows—

"Who is this tufted crane I see

Where she has no right to be?

Come out! my friend the Crow is near,

Who will do you harm, I fear!"

To this the Crow answered with another verse—

"No tufted crane am I—no, no!

Nothing but a greedy Crow.

I would not do as I was told

So I'm plucked, as you behold."

And the Pigeon rejoined with a third—

“You’ll come to grief again, I know—

It is your nature to do so.

If people make a dish of meat,

’Tis not for little birds to cat.”

Then the Pigeon flew away, saying—“I can’t live with this creature.” And the Crow lay there groaning until he died.

When the Master had ended this discourse, he declared the Truths and identified the Birth—at the conclusion of the Truths the greedy Brother reached the Fruit of the Third Path—“The greedy Brother in those days was the greedy Crow; and I was the Pigeon.”

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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