Ja 294 — Jambu-Khadaka 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/ja294.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 it sits,” etc.—This story the Master told at the Bamboo-grove, about Devadatta and Kokalika. At the time when Devadatta began to lose his gettings and his repute, Kokalika went from house to house, saying, “Elder Devadatta is born of the line of the First Great King, of the royal stock of Okkaka, by an uninterrupted noble descent, versed in all the scriptures, full of ecstatic sanctity, sweet of speech, a preacher of the law. Give to the Elder, help him!” In these words he praised up Devadatta. On the other hand, Devadatta praised up Kokalika, in such words as these: “Kokalika comes from a northern brahmin family; he follows the religious life; he is learned in doctrine, a preacher of the law. Give to Kokalika, help him!” So they went about, praising each other, and getting fed in different houses. One day the brothers began to talk about it in the Hall of Truth. “Friend, Devadatta and Kokalika go about praising each other for virtues which they haven’t got, and so getting food.” The Master came in, and asked what they were talking about as they sat there. They told him. Said he, “Brethren, this is not the first time that these men have got food by praising each other. Long ago they did the same,” and he told them an old-world tale.

Once upon a time, when Brahmadatta was king of Benares, the Bodhisatta became a tree-sprite in a certain rose-apple grove. A Crow perched upon a branch of his tree, and began to eat the fruit. Then came a Jackal, and looked up and spied the Crow. Thought he, “If I flatter this creature, perhaps I shall get some of the fruit to eat!” So in flattery he repeated the first stanza:

“Who is it sits in a rose-apple tree—

Sweet singer! whose voice trickles gently to me?

Like a young peacock she coos with soft grace,

And ever sits still in her place.”

The Crow, in his praise, responded with the second:

“He that is noble in breeding and birth

Can praise others’ breeding, knows what they are worth.

Like a young tiger thou seemest to be:

Come, eat, Sir, what I give to thee!”

With these words she shook the branch and made some fruit drop. Then the spirit of the tree, beholding these two eating, after flattering each other, repeated the third stanza:

“Liars foregather, I very well know.

Here, for example, a carrion Crow,

And corpse-eating Jackal, with puerile clatter

Proceed one another to flatter!”

After repeating this stanza, the tree-sprite, assuming a fearful shape, scared them both away.

When the Master had ended this discourse, he summed up the Birth-tale; “At that time the Jackal was Devadatta, the Crow was Kokalika, but the Spirit of the Tree 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.