Ja 319 — Tittira Jātaka

English translation by H. T. Francis and R. A. Neil.

Source: https://raw.githubusercontent.com/suttacentral/sc-data/2d9ca8da858f94302ed6783e2717bf73d651881b/html_text/en/pli/sutta/kn/ja/vol3/ja319.html

Source revision: 2d9ca8da858f94302ed6783e2717bf73d651881b

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Edited by E. B. Cowell

Original edition: Cambridge University Press, volume 3, 1897

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

“Happy life,” etc.—This was a story told by the Master while living in the Badarika Monastery near Kosambi, regarding the elder Rahula. The introductory story has been already related in full in the Tipallattha Birth. Now when the Brethren in the Hall of Truth were setting forth the praises of the venerable Rahula, and speaking of him as fond of instruction, scrupulous and patient of rebuke, the Master came up and on hearing from them the subject of their discourse said, “Not now only, but formerly also Rahula possessed all these virtues.” And then he told them a legend of the past.

Once upon a time when Brahmadatta was reigning in Benares, the Bodhisatta was born in a brahmin family. And when he grew up, he studied all the arts at Takkasila, and giving up the world devoted himself to the ascetic life in the Himalaya country, and developed all the Faculties and Attainments. There enjoying the pleasures of ecstatic meditation he dwelt in a pleasant grove, whence he journeyed to a frontier village to procure salt and vinegar. The people, on seeing him, became believers, and built him a hut of leaves in a wood, and providing him with all that a Buddhist requires, made a home for him there.

At this time a fowler in this village had caught a decoy partridge, and putting it in a cage carefully trained and looked after it. Then he took it to the wood, and by its cry decoyed all the other partridges that came near. The partridge thought: “Through me many of my kinsfolk come by their death. This is a wicked act on my part.” So it kept quiet. When its master found it was quiet, he struck it on the head with a piece of bamboo. The partridge from the pain it suffered uttered a cry. And the fowler gained a living by decoying other partridges through it. Then the partridge thought: “Well, suppose they die. There is no evil intention on my part. Do the evil consequences of my action affect me? When I am quiet, they do not come, but when I utter a cry, they do. And all that come this fellow catches and puts to death. Is there any sinful act here on my part, or is there not?” Thenceforth the only thought of the partridge is, “Who verily may resolve my doubt?” and it goes about seeking for such a wise man. Now one day the fowler snared a lot of partridges, and filling his

basket with them he came to the Bodhisatta's hermitage to beg a draught of water. And putting down the cage near the Bodhisatta, he drank some water and lay down on the sand and fell asleep. The partridge observing that he was asleep thought, "I will ask this ascetic as to my doubt, and if he knows he will solve my difficulty." And as it lay in its cage, it repeated the first stanza in the form of a question:

Happy life I lead all day,

Food abundant falls to me:

Yet I'm in a parlous way,

What's my future state to be?

The Bodhisatta solving this question uttered the second stanza:

If no evil in thy heart

Prompts to deed of villainy,

Shouldst thou play a passive part,

Guilt attaches not to thee.

The partridge on hearing this uttered the third stanza:

"Lo! our kinsman": thus they cry,

And in crowds they flock to see.

Am I guilty, should they die?

Please resolve this doubt for me.

On hearing this, the Bodhisatta repeated the fourth stanza:

If no sin lurks in the heart,

Innocent the deed will be.

He who plays a passive part

From all guilt is counted free.

Thus did the Great Being console the partridge. And through him the bird was freed from remorse. Then the fowler waking up saluted the Bodhisatta and took up his cage and made off.

The Master, having ended his lesson, identified the Birth: “At that time Rahula was the partridge, and I myself was the ascetic.”

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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