Ja 325 — Godha 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/ja325.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

“One that plays,” etc.—This story was told by the Master, while living at Jetavana, with regard to a certain cheating rogue. The introductory story has been already given in full. But oh this occasion they brought the Brother to the Master and exposed him, saying, “Holy Sir, this Brother is a cheat.” The Master said, “Not now only, but formerly also he was a rogue.” And then he told an old-world story.

Once upon a time when Brahmadatta was reigning in Benares, the Bodhisatta was born as a young lizard, and when he grew up and was lusty and strong, he dwelt in a forest. And a certain wicked ascetic built a hut of leaves, and took up his abode near him. The Bodhisatta, in ranging about for food, saw this hut of leaves and thought to himself, “This hut must certainly belong to some holy ascetic,” and he went there and after saluting the holy man returned to his own place of abode.

Now one day this false ascetic ate some savoury food prepared in the house of one of his retainers, and asked what meat it was. On hearing that it was lizard-flesh, he became such a slave to his love of dainties that he thought, “I will kill this lizard that so constantly keeps coming to my hermitage and will cook him to my taste and eat him.” So he took some ghee, curds, condiments and the like, and went with his club concealed under his yellow robe and sat perfectly still at the door of his hut, waiting for the Bodhisatta to come, as quiet as quiet could be.

And when the Bodhisatta saw this depraved fellow he thought, “This wretch must have been eating the flesh of my kinsfolk. I will put it to the test.” So he stood to leeward of him and getting a whiff from his person he knew that he had been eating the flesh of a lizard, and without going near him he turned back and made off. And when the ascetic saw he was not coming, he threw his club at him. The club missed his body, but just reached the tip of his tail. The ascetic said, “Be off with you, I have missed you.” Said the Bodhisatta, “Yes, you have missed me, but you will not miss the fourfold States of Suffering.” Than he

ran off and disappeared in an ant-hill which stood at the end of the cloister walk, and putting out his head at some other hole, he addressed the ascetic in these two stanzas:

One that plays the ascetic role

Should exhibit self-control.

Thou didst hurl thy stick at me,

False ascetic thou must be.

Matted locks and robe of skin

Serve to cloke some secret sin.

Fool! to cleanse for outward show,

Leaving what is foul below.

The ascetic, on hearing this, replied in a third stanza:

Prithee, lizard, hasten back,

Oil and salt I do not lack:

Pepper too I would suggest

May to boiled rice add a zest.

The Bodhisatta, on hearing this, uttered the fourth stanza:

I will hide me snug and warm

Midst the anthill's myriad swarm.

Cease of oil and salt to prate,

Pepper I abominate.

Moreover he threatened him and said, "Fie! false ascetic, if you continue to dwell here, I will have you seized as a thief by the people who live in my feeding ground, and given over to destruction. So make haste and be off." Then the false ascetic fled from that place.

The Master, his lesson ended, identified the Birth: "At that time the rogue of a Brother was the false ascetic, but I myself was the royal lizard."

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.