Ja 326 — Kakkaru 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/ja326.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

“He that from thievish act,” etc.—This story was told by the Master while he was at Jetavana, about Devadatta, how that after causing a schism in the Order, as he was going away with his chief disciples, when the assembly broke up, a hot stream of blood gushed from his mouth. Then the Brethren discussed the matter in the Hall of Truth, and said that Devadatta by speaking falsely had created a schism, and afterwards fell sick and suffered great rain. The Master came and inquired what subject the Brethren were discussing as they sat in conclave, and on hearing what it was he said, “Not now only, Brethren, but of old too this fellow was a liar, and not now only, but of old also he suffered pain as the penalty of lying.” And so saying he repeated this old-world legend.

Once upon a time when Brahmadatta was reigning in Benares, the Bodhisatta became a certain god in the heaven of the Thirty-three. Now at this time there was a great festival at Benares. A crowd of Nagas and Garuda birds and terrestrial deities came and watched the festival. And four divine beings from the heaven of the Thirty-three, wearing a wreath made of heavenly kakkaru flowers, came to see the festival. And the city for the space of twelve leagues was filled with the fragrance of these flowers. Men moved about, wondering by whom these flowers were worn. The gods said, “They are watching us,” and flying up from the royal court, by an act of supernatural power they stood poised in the air. The multitude gathered together, and the king with his vassal princes came and asked from what world of the gods they had come.

“We come from the heaven of the Thirty-three.”

“For what purpose are you come?”

“To see the festival.”

“What are these flowers?”

“They are called the heavenly kakkaru flowers.”

“Sirs,” they said, “in the world of the gods you may have other flowers to wear. Give these to us.”

The gods made answer, “These divine flowers are fit for those possessed of great powers: for the base, foolish, faithless and sinful beings in this world of men they are not fitted. But whosoever amongst men are endued with such and such virtues, for them they are suitable.” And with these words the chief amongst these divine beings repeated the first stanza—

He that from thievish act refrains,

His tongue from lying word restrains,

And reaching dizzy heights of fame

Still keeps his head—this flower may claim.

On hearing this the family priest thought, “I own not one of these qualities, but by telling a lie I will get these flowers to wear, and thus the people will credit me with these virtues.” Then he said, “I am endued with these qualities,” and he had the flowers brought to him and he put them on, and then begged of the second god, who replied in a second stanza—

He that should honest wealth pursue

And riches gained by fraud eschew,

In pleasure gross excess would shun,

This heavenly flower has duly won.

Said the priest, “I am endued with these virtues,” and had the flowers brought to him and put them on, and then begged of the third god, who uttered the third stanza—

He that from purpose fixed ne’er swerves

And his unchanging faith preserves,

Choice food alone scorns to devour,

May justly claim this heavenly flower.

Said the priest, “I am endued with these virtues,” and had the flowers brought to him and he put them on, and then begged of the fourth god, who spoke the fourth stanza—

He that good men will ne’er attack

When present, nor behind their back,

And all he says, fulfils in deed,

This flower may claim as his due weed.

The priest said, “I am endued with these virtues,” and he had the flowers brought to him and put them on. So these divine beings gave the four wreaths of flowers to the priest and returned to the world of gods. As soon as they were gone, the priest was seized with a violent pain in the head, as if it were being pounded by a sharp spike, or crushed by an instrument of iron. Maddened with the pain he rolled up and down, and cried out with a loud voice. When men asked, “What means this?” he said, “I claimed these virtues when I had them not, and spoke falsely and so begged these flowers of the gods: take them from off my head.” They would have removed them, but could not, for they were fastened as it were with an iron band. Then they raised him up and led him home. And as he lay there crying aloud, seven days passed. The king spake to his councillors and said, “This wicked brahmin will die. What are we to do?” “My lord,” they answered, “let us again celebrate a festival. The sons of the gods will come back.”

And the king held a festival, and the sons of the gods returned and filled all the city with the perfume of the flowers, and took their stand in the same place in the royal court. The people gathered together, and bringing that wicked brahmin they laid him down before the gods on his belly. He prayed the gods, saying, “My lords, spare my life.” They said, “These flowers are not meet for a wicked and evil man. You thought in your heart to deceive us. You have received the reward of your false words.”

After thus rebuking him in the presence of the people, they removed the wreath of flowers from his head and having admonished the people, they returned to their own place of abode.

The Master, having ended his lesson, identified the Birth: “At that time Devadatta was the brahmin, of the divine beings Kassapa was one, Moggallana was another, Sariputta a third, and I myself was the chief one of all.”

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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