Ja 329 — Kalabahu 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/ja329.html

Source revision: 2d9ca8da858f94302ed6783e2717bf73d651881b

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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

“Once we enjoyed,” etc.—This was a story told by the Master while dwelling in the Bamboo Grove, with regard to Devadatta’s loss of gains and honour. For when Devadatta had unreasonably conceived a grudge against the Buddha and suborned a band of archers to slay him, his offence became known by the letting loose of the elephant Nalagiri. Then men took away his office and the rations provided for him, and the king ceased to regard him. And having lost his source of gains and honour, he went about living on what he begged in noble families. The Brethren started a discussion in the Hall of Truth, how that Devadatta thought to get gain and honour, but when he had got it he could not keep it. The Master came and inquired what was the subject the Brethren sat in conclave to discuss, and on being told what it was he said, “Not only now, Brethren, but formerly too, Devadatta was deprived of gains and honour.” And he then told them an old-world legend.

Once upon a time when Dhanainjaya was reigning in Benares, the Bodhisatta became a parrot named Radha. He was a well-grown bird with perfectly-formed limbs. And his younger brother was called Potthapada. A certain fowler trapped these two birds and brought them as a present to the king of Benares. The king put the pair in a golden cage and took care of them and gave them honey and parched corn to eat in a golden dish and sugar-water to drink. Great attention was paid them, and they attained to the highest degree of profit and honour. Then a certain forester brought a big black monkey, called Kalabahu, as a present to the king, and from the fact of his coming later than the parrots, he received still greater gain and respect, while that paid to the parrots fell off. The Bodhisatta through his possession of Buddha qualities said not a word, but his younger brother, from the absence of these qualities being unable to put up with the honour paid to the monkey, said, “Brother, formerly in this royal house men gave us savoury food, but now we get nothing, and they offer it all to the monkey Kalabahu. As we receive neither gain nor honour in this place from the king, what are we to do? Come, let us go and live in the forest.” And as he talked with him, he uttered the first stanza:

Once we enjoyed of food abundant store,

This monkey now has what was ours before.

Come, Radha, let us to the forest hie;

Such scurvy treatment what can justify?

Radha, on hearing this, replied in the second stanza:

Gain and loss and praise and blame,

Pleasure, pain, dishonour, fame,

All as transient states conceive—

Why should Potthapada grieve?

On hearing this, Potthapada was unable to get rid of his grudge against the monkey and repeated the third stanza:

Radha, wisest bird alive,

Sure thou knowest things to come,

This vile creature who shall drive

From the court to his old home?

Radha, on hearing this, uttered the fourth stanza:

Oft will his puckered face and moving ears

The royal children fill with foolish fears:

Soon Kalabahu through some impish freak,

Far far away his food will have to seek.

In a very short time the monkey by shaking his ears and the like tricks before the young princes terrified them. In their alarm they made an outcry. The king asked what it meant, and hearing the cause, said, “Drive him away.” So he had the monkey driven away, and the parrots were restored to their former condition of gain and honour.

The Master here ended his lesson and identified the Birth—“At that time Devadatta was Kalabahu, Ananda was Potthapada, and I myself was Radha.”

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.