Ja 333 — 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/ja333.html

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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

"Then wert thou," etc.—This is a story told by the Master while at Jetavana, of a certain landowner. The introductory story has been told in full before. But in this case, as the husband and wife were returning home, after calling in a debt, in the course of their journey some hunters gave them a roasted lizard, bidding them both to eat of it. The man sent his wife to fetch water and ate up the whole lizard, and when she came back, he said, "My dear, the lizard has run away." "Well, my lord," she said, "what can one do with a roast lizard that runs away?" She drank some water and afterwards at Jetavana when sitting in the presence of the Master, she was asked by him as follows: "Lay sister, is this man affectionate, loving and helpful to you?" She answered, "I am loving and affectionate to him, but he has no love for me." The Master said, "Well, suppose he does behave thus to you. Do not be grieved. When he recalls to mind your virtues, he will give supreme power to you alone." And at their request he related an old-world story.

This old story is just like the one given above, but in this case, as the husband and wife were on their way home, some hunters saw how distressed they were and gave them a roasted lizard and bade them share it between them. The royal lady tied it about with a creeper used as a string, and went on her way, carrying it in her hand. They came upon a lake, and leaving the high road sat down at the foot of a Bo-tree. The prince said, "Go, my dear, and fetch water from the lake in a lotus leaf, then we will eat this meat." She hung the lizard on a bough and went to fetch water. Her companion ate up all the lizard and then sat with averted face, holding the tip of the tail in his hand. When she returned with the water, he said, "My dear, the lizard came down from the bough and made for an ant-heap. I ran and seized it by the tip of its tail. The lizard broke in two and left in my hand the part I had seized and disappeared in the hole."

"Well, my lord," she replied, "how can we deal with a roast lizard that runs away? Come, let us be off."

And so drinking the water, they journey to Benares. The prince when he came to the throne gave her the titular rank of queen consort, but no honour or respect was paid to her. The Bodhisatta, desiring to win honour for her, standing in the king's presence asked her, "Lady, is it not the case that we receive nothing at your hands? Why do you neglect us?"

"Dear sir," she said, "I get nothing from the king. How then should I give a present to you? What is the king likely to give me now? When we were coming from the forest, he ate a roast lizard all by himself."

"Lady," he said, "the king would not act after this sort. Do not speak thus of him."

Then the lady said to him, "Sir, this is not clear to you, but it is clear enough to the king and me," and she repeated the first stanza—

Then wert thou first known to me,

When in forest-depths, O king,

Roasted lizard broke its string

And from Bo-tree branch got free.

Though 'neath robe of bark, I ween,

Sword and coat of mail were seen.?

Thus spake the queen, making known the king's offence in the midst of his courtiers. The Bodhisatta, on hearing her, said, "Lady, ever since the time when your husband ceased to love you, why do you go on living here, making unpleasantness for both?" and he repeated two stanzas—

To one that honours thee, due honour show

With full requital of good service done:

No kindness on illiberal folk bestow,

Nor those affect that would thy presence shun.

Forsake the wretch who has forsaken thee,

And love not one who has for thee no love,

E'en as a bird forsakes a barren tree,

And seeks a home in some far distant grove.

The king, while the Bodhisatta was yet speaking, called to mind her virtues and said, “My dear, ever so long I observed not your virtues, but through the words of this wise man, I have observed them. Bear with my offence. This whole realm of mine I give to you alone.” And hereupon he spoke the fourth stanza—

Far as in his power may be,

Gratitude a king should show:

All my realm I grant to thee,

Gifts, on whom thou wilt, bestow.

With these words the king conferred on the queen supreme power, and thinking, “It was by this man that I was reminded of her virtues,” he gave great power to the wise man also.

The Master, having brought his lesson to an end, identified the Birth—At the conclusion of the Truths, both husband and wife attained fruition of the First Path—“The husband and wife of the present story played the same part in the old tale. But I myself was the wise minister.”

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.