Ja 342 — Vanara 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/ja342.html

Source revision: 2d9ca8da858f94302ed6783e2717bf73d651881b

License: Public Domain (original English edition, published 1895–1907)

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

“Have I from water,” etc.—This story was told by the Master, when dwelling in the Bamboo Grove, concerning the going about of Devadatta to kill the Buddha. The incident that led to the story has been already given in detail.

Once upon a time when Brahmadatta reigned in Benares, the Bodhisatta came to life as a young monkey in the Himalaya region. And when fully grown he lived on the banks of the Ganges. Now a certain female crocodile in the Ganges conceived a longing for the flesh of the Bodhisatta’s heart, and told, it to her husband. He thought, “I will kill the Bodhisatta by plunging him in the water and will take his heart’s flesh and give it to my wife.” So he said to the Bodhisatta, “Come, my friend, we will go and eat wild fruits on a certain island.”

“How shall I get there?” he said.

“I will put you on my back and bring you there,” answered the crocodile.

Innocent of the crocodile’s purpose he jumped on his back and sat there. The crocodile after swimming a little way began to dive. Then the monkey said, “Why, Sir, do you plunge me into the water?”

“I am going to kill you,” said the crocodile, “and give your heart’s flesh to my wife.”

“Foolish fellow,” said he, “do you suppose my heart is inside me?” “Then where have you put it?”

“Do you not see it hanging there on yonder fig-tree?”

“I see it,” said the crocodile. “But will you give it me?”

“Yes, I will,” said the monkey.

Then the crocodile—so foolish was he—took him and swam to the foot of the fig-tree on the river bank. The Bodhisatta springing from the crocodile’s back perched on the fig-tree and repeated these stanzas:

Have I from water, fish, to dry land passed

Only to fall into thy power at last?

Of bread fruit and rose apples I am sick,

And rather figs than yonder mangoes pick.

He that to great occasion fails to rise

‘Neath foeman’s feet in sorrow prostrate lies:

One prompt a crisis in his fate to know

Needs never dread oppression from his foe.

Thus did the Bodhisatta in these four stanzas tell how to succeed in worldly affairs, and forthwith disappeared in the thicket of trees.

The Master, having brought his lesson to an end, identified the Birth: “At that time Devadatta was the crocodile, and I myself was the monkey.”

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.

These translations are in the public domain. You are free to do whatever you like with them.

Scanned, proofed and formatted at sacred-texts.com, January 2006–February 2010, by John Bruno Hare and others. Thanks to the Sacred Texts Archive for making these texts available in digital form.

Prepared for SuttaCentral by Bhikkhu Sujato.