Ja 349 — Sandhibheda 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/ja349.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

“Nought in common,” etc.—This story the Master, dwelling at Jetavana, told concerning the moral precept on slander.

Once upon a time the Master hearing that the Six Priests collect slanderous tales, called them to him and asked, “Is it true, Brothers, that you collect slanderous tales of such of your brethren as are inclined to quarrelling and strife and disputation, and that quarrels therefore, that would not otherwise arise, spring up and when they so arise have a tendency to grow?” “It is true,” they said. Then he reproved those brethren and said, “Brothers, backbiting speech is like to a blow with a sharp sword. A firm friendship is quickly broken up by slander and people that listen thereto become liable to be estranged from their friends, as was the case with the lion and the bull.” And so saying he told an old legend of the past.

Once upon a time when Brahmadatta was reigning in Benares, the Bodhisatta was born as his son, and after acquiring all the arts at Takkasila, on his father’s death, he ruled his kingdom righteously.

At that time a certain neatherd, who was tending cattle in their sheds in the forest, came home and inadvertently left behind him a cow that was in calf. Between this cow and a lioness sprang up a firm friendship. The two animals became fast friends and went about together. So after a time the cow brought forth a calf and the lioness a cub. These two young creatures also by the force of family ties became fast friends and wandered about together. Then a certain forester, after observing their affection, took such wares as are produced in the forest and went to Benares and presented them to the King. And when the king asked him, “Friend, have you seen any unusual marvel in the forest?” he made answer, “I saw nothing else that was wonderful, my lord, but I did see a lion and a bull wandering about together, very friendly one towards another.”

“Should a third animal appear,” said the king, “there will certainly be mischief. Come and tell me, if you see the pair joined by a third animal.”

“Certainly, my lord,” he answered.

Now when the forester had left for Benares, a jackal ministered to the lion and the bull. When he returned to the forest and saw this he said, “I will tell the king that a third animal has appeared,” and departed for the city. Now the jackal thought, “There is no meat that I have not eaten except the flesh of lions and bulls. By setting these two at variance, I will get their flesh to eat.” And he said, “This is the way he speaks of you,” and thus dividing them one from another, he soon brought about a quarrel and reduced them to a dying condition.

But the forester came and told the king, “My lord, a third animal has turned up;” “What is it?” said the king. “A jackal, my lord.” Said the king, “He will cause them to quarrel, and will bring about their death. We shall find them dead when we arrive.” And so saying, he mounted upon his chariot and travelling on the road pointed out by the forester, he arrived just as the two animals had by their quarrel destroyed one another. The jackal highly delighted was eating, now the flesh of the lion, and now that of the bull. The king when he saw that they were both dead, stood just as he was upon his chariot, and addressing his charioteer gave utterance to these verses:

Nought in common had this pair,

Neither wives nor food did share;

Yet behold how slanderous word,

Keen as any two-edged sword,

Did devise with cunning art

Friends of old to keep apart.

Thus did bull and lion fall

Prey to meanest beast of all:

So will all bed-fellows be

With this pair in misery,

If they lend a willing ear

To the slanderer’s whispered sneer.

But they thrive exceeding well,

E’en as those in heaven that dwell,

Who to slander ne’er attend—

Slander parting friend from friend.

The king spoke these verses, and bidding them gather together the mane, skin, claws, and teeth of the lion, returned straight to his own city.

The Master, having ended his lesson, thus identified the Birth: “At that time I myself was the king.”

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.

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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.