Ja 374 — Culladhanuggaha 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/ja374.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

“Since thou hast gained,” etc.—This story was told by the Master whilst living at Jetavana, about the temptation of a Brother by the wife of his unregenerate days. When the Brother confessed that it was owing to the wife that he had left, that he regretted having taken orders, the Master said, “Not now only, Brother, did this woman do you a mischief. Formerly too it was owing to her that your head was cut off.” And at the request of the Brethren he related a story of the past.

Once upon a time in the reign of Brahmadatta, king of Benares, the Bodhisatta was reborn as Sakka. At that time a certain young brahmin of Benares acquired all the liberal arts at Takkasila, and having attained to proficiency in archery, he was known as the clever Little Archer. Then his master thought, “This youth has acquired skill equal to my own,” and he gave him his daughter to wife. He took her and wishing to return to Benares he set out on the road. Half way on his journey, an elephant laid waste a certain place, and no man dared to ascend to that spot. The clever Little Archer, though the people tried to stop him, took his wife and climbed up to the entrance of the forest. Then when he was in the midst of the wood, the elephant rose up to attack him. The Archer wounded him in the forehead with an arrow, which piercing him through and through came out at the back of his head, and the elephant fell down dead on the spot. The clever Archer after making this place secure, went on further to another wood. And there fifty robbers were infesting the road. Up to this spot too, though men tried to stop him, he climbed till he found the regular place, where the robbers killed the deer and roasted and ate the venison, close to the road. The robbers, seeing him approach with his gaily attired wife, made a great effort to capture him. The robber chief, being skilled in reading a man’s character, just gave one look at him, and recognizing him as a distinguished hero, did not suffer them to rise up against him, though he was single-handed. The clever Archer sent his wife to these robbers, saying, “Go and bid them give us a spit of meat, and bring it to me.” So she went and said, “Give me a spit of meat.” The robber chief said, “He is a noble fellow,” and bade them give it her. The robbers said, “What! is he to eat our roast meat?” And they gave her a

piece of raw meat. The Archer, having a good opinion of himself, was wroth with the robbers for offering him raw meat. The robbers said, “What! is he the only man, and are we merely women?” And thus threatening him, they rose up against him. The Archer wounded and struck to the ground fifty robbers save one with the same number of arrows. He had no arrow left to wound the robber chief. There had been full fifty arrows in his quiver. With one of them he had wounded the elephant, and with the rest the fifty robbers save one. So he knocked down the robber chief, and sitting on his chest bade his wife bring him his sword in her hand to cut off his head. At that very moment she conceived a passion for the robber chief and placed the hilt of the sword in his hand and the sheath in that of her husband. The robber grasping the hilt drew out the sword, and cut off the head of the Archer. After slaying her husband he took the woman with him, and as they journeyed together he inquired of her origin. “I am the daughter,” she said, “of a world-famed professor at Takkasila.”

“How did he get you for his wife?” he said.

“My father,” she said, “was so pleased at his having acquired from him an art equal to his own, that he gave me to him to wife. And because I fell in love with you, I let you kill my lawful husband.”

Thought the robber chief, “This woman now has killed her lawful husband. As soon as she sees some other man, she will treat me too after the same sort. I must get rid of her.”

And as he went on his way, he saw their path cut off by what was usually a poor little shallow stream, but which was now flooded, and he said, “My dear, there is a savage crocodile in this river. What are we to do?”

“My lord,” she said, “take all the ornaments I wear, and make them into a bundle in your upper robe, and carry them to the further side of the river, and then come back and take me across.”

“Very well,” he said, and took all her adornments, and going down to the stream, like one in great haste, he gained the other bank, and left her and fled.

On seeing this she cried, “My lord, you go as if you were leaving me. Why do you do this? Come back and take me with you.” And addressing him she uttered the first stanza:

Since thou hast gained the other side,

With all my goods in bundle tied,

Return as quickly as may be

And carry me across with thee.

The robber, on hearing her, as he stood on the further bank, repeated the second stanza:

Thy fancy, lady, ever roves

From well-tried faith to lighter loves,

Me too thou wouldst ere long betray,

Should I not hence flee far away.

But when the robber said, “I will go further hence: you stop where you are,” she screamed aloud, and he fled with all her adornments. Such was the fate that overtook the poor fool through excess of passion. And being quite helpless she drew nigh to a clump of cassia plants and sat there weeping. At that moment Sakka, looking down upon the world, saw her smitten with desire and weeping for the loss of both husband and lover. And thinking he would go and rebuke her and put her to shame, he took with him Matali and Pancasikha, and went and stood on the bank of the river and said, “Matali, do you become a fish, Pancasikha, you change into a bird, and I will become a jackal. And taking a piece of meat in my mouth, I will go and place myself in front of this woman, and when you see me there, you, Matali, are to leap up out of the water, and fall before me, and when I shall drop the piece of meat I have taken in my mouth, and shall spring up to seize the fish, at that moment, you, Pancasikha, are to pounce upon the piece of meat, and to fly up into the air, and you, Matali, are to fall into the water.”

Thus did Sakka instruct them. And they said, “Good, my lord.” Matali was changed into a fish, Pancasikha into a bird, and Sakka became a jackal. And taking a piece of meat in his mouth, he went and placed himself in front of the woman. The fish leaping up out of the water fell before the jackal. The jackal dropping the piece of meat he held in his mouth, sprang up to catch the fish. The fish jumped up and fell into the water, and the bird seized the piece of meat and flew up into the air. The jackal thus lost both fish and meat and sat sulkily looking towards the clump of cassia. The woman seeing this said, “Through being too covetous, he got neither flesh nor fish,” and, as if she saw the point of the trick, she laughed heartily.

The jackal, on hearing this, uttered the third stanza:

Who makes the cassia thicket ring

With laughter, though none dance or sing,

Or clap their hands, good time to keep?

Fair one, laugh not, when thou shouldst weep.

On hearing this, she repeated the fourth stanza:

O silly jackal, thou must wish

Thou hadst not lost both flesh and fish.

Poor fool! well mayst thou grieve to see

What comes of thy stupidity.

Then the jackal repeated the fifth stanza:

Another's faults are plainly seen,

'Tis hard to see one's own, I ween.

Methinks thou too must count the cost,

When spouse and lover both are lost.

On hearing his words she spoke this stanza:

King jackal, 'Tis just as you say,

So I will hie me far away,

And seek another wedded love

And strive a faithful wife to prove.

Then Sakka, king of heaven, hearing the words of this vicious and unchaste woman, repeated the final stanza:

He that would steal a pot of clay

Would steal a brass one any day:

So she who was her husband's bane

Will be as bad or worse again.

Thus did Sakka put her to shame and brought her to repent, and then returned to his own abode.

The Master here ended his lesson and revealed the Truths, and identified the Birth—At the conclusion of the Truths the backsliding Brother attained the fruit of the First Path—" At that time the backsliding Brother was the Archer, the wife he had left was that woman, and I myself was Sakka, king of heaven."

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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