Ja 375 — Kapota 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/ja375.html

Source revision: 2d9ca8da858f94302ed6783e2717bf73d651881b

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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

“I feel quite well,” etc.—This story the Master, whilst dwelling at Jetavana, told concerning a greedy Brother. This story of the greedy Brother has already been fully told in divers ways. In this case the Master asked him if he were greedy and on his confessing that it was so, said, “Not now only, but formerly also, Brother, you were greedy, and through greed came by your death.” And herewith he told a story of the past.

Once upon a time in the reign of Brahmadatta, king of Benares, the Bodhisatta came to life as a young pigeon and lived in a wicker cage, in the kitchen of a rich merchant of Benares. Now a crow hankering after fish and flesh made friends with this pigeon, and lived in the same place. One day he caught sight of a lot of fish and meat and thought, “I’ll have this to eat,” and lay loudly groaning in the cage. And when the pigeon said, “Come, my friend, let us sally out for our food,” he refused to go, saying, “I am laid up with a fit of indigestion. Do you go.” And when the pigeon was gone, he said, “My troublesome enemy is off. I will now eat fish and meat to my heart’s content.” And so thinking, he repeated the first stanza:

I feel quite well and at my ease,

Since Mr. Pigeon off is gone.

My cravings I will now appease:

Potherbs and meat should strengthen one.

So when the cook who was roasting the fish and meat came out of the kitchen, wiping away streams of sweat from his person, the crow hopped out of his basket and bid himself in a basin of spices. The basin gave forth a “click” sound, and the cook came in haste, and seizing the crow pulled out his feathers. And grinding some moist ginger and white mustard he pounded it with a rotten date, and smeared him all over with it, and rubbing it

on with a potsherd he wounded the bird. Then he fastened the potsherd on his neck with a string, and threw him back into the basket, and went off.

When the pigeon came back and saw him he said, “Who is this crane lying in my friend’s basket? He is a hot-tempered fellow and will come and kill this stranger.” And thus jesting, he spoke the second stanza:

“Child of the Clouds,” with tufted crest,

Why didst thou steal my poor friend’s nest?

Come here, Sir Crane. My friend the crow

Has a hot temper, you must know.

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

Well mayst thou laugh at such a sight,

For I am in a sorry plight.

The cook has plucked and basted me

With rotten dates and spicery.

The pigeon, still making sport of him, repeated the fourth stanza:

Bathed and anointed well, I think,

Thou hast thy fill of food and drink.

Thy neck so bright with jewel sheen,

Hast thou, friend, to Benares been?

Then the crow repeated the fifth stanza:

Let not my friend or bitterest foe

On visit to Benares go.

They plucked me bare and as a jest

Have tied a potsherd on my breast.

The pigeon hearing this repeated the final stanza:

These evil habits to outgrow

Is hard with such a nature, crow.

Birds should be careful to avoid

The food they see by man enjoyed.

After thus reproving him, the pigeon no longer dwelt there, but spread his wings and flew elsewhere. But the crow died then and there.

The Master here ended his lesson and revealed the Truths and identified the Birth—At the conclusion of the Truths the greedy Brother attained fruition of the Second Path—“At that time the crow was the greedy Brother, the pigeon was myself.”

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.