Ja 379 — Neru 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/ja379.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

“Ravens and crows,” etc.—The Master told this tale in Jetavana concerning a certain Brother. The story is that he got the forms of meditation from the Master and then went to a frontier village. There the people, pleased with his deportment, fed him, built him a hut in the wood, and exacting a promise, made him live there, and gave him great honour. But they forsook him for the teachers of the permanence of matter, afterwards forsaking those for the sect who deny immortality, and those again for the sect of naked ascetics: for teachers of all these sects came among them in turn. So he was unhappy among those people who knew not good and evil, and after the rains and the pavarana he went back to the Master, and at his request told him where he had stayed during the rains and that he had been unhappy among people who knew not good and evil. The Master said, “Sages of old, even when born as beasts, stayed not a day among those who knew not good and evil, why have you done so?” and so he told the tale.

Once upon a time when Brahmadatta was king in Benares, the Bodhisatta was born as a golden goose. Along with his younger brother he lived on the hill Cittakuta and fed on wild paddy in the Himalaya. One day in their flight back to Cittakuta they saw the golden mountain Neru and settled on its summit. Around the mountain dwell birds and beasts of various kinds for feeding ground: from the time of their coming to the mountain onwards they became golden of hue from its lustre. The Bodhisatta’s brother saw this, but being ignorant of the cause said, “Now what is the cause here?” and so talking to his brother he spoke two stanzas:

Ravens and crows, and we the best of birds,

When on this mountain, all appear the same.

Mean jackals rival tigers and their lords,

The lions: what can be the mountain’s name?

The Bodhisatta hearing this spoke the third stanza:

Noblest of Mountains, Neru is it hight,

All animals are here made fair to sight.

The younger one hearing this spoke the remaining three stanzas:

Where’er the good find honour small or none,

Or less than others, live not, but begone.

Dull and clever, brave and coward, all are honoured equally:

Undiscriminating Mountain, good men will not stay on thee!

Best, indifferent and meanest Neru does not separate,

Undiscriminating Neru, we alas! must leave thee straight.

With this they both flew up and went to Cittakuta.

After the lesson, the Master proclaimed the Truths and identified the Birth: at the close of the Truths, that Brother was established in the fruition of the First Path: “At that time the younger goose was Ananda, the elder 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.