Ja 394 — Vattaka 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/ja394.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

“Oil and butter,” etc.—The Master told this while dwelling in Jetavana, concerning a greedy Brother. Finding that he was greedy the Master said to him, “This is not the first time you are greedy: once before through greed in Benares you were not satisfied with carcases of elephants, oxen, horses and men; and in hopes of getting better food you went to the forest;” and so he told an old tale.

Once upon a time when Brahmadatta was reigning in Benares, the Bodhisatta was born as a quail and lived in the forest on rude grass and seeds. At the time there was in Benares a greedy crow who, not content with carcases of elephants and other animals, went to the forest in hopes of better food: eating wild fruits there he saw the Bodhisatta and thinking “This quail is very fat: I fancy he eats sweet food, I will ask him of his food and eating it become fat myself,” he perched on a bough above the Bodhisatta. The Bodhisatta , without being asked, gave him greeting and spoke the first stanza—

Oil and butter are your victuals, nuncle; rich your food, I trow:

Tell me then what is the reason of your leanness, master crow.

Hearing his words the crow spoke three stanzas—

I dwell in midst of many foes, my heart goes pit-a-pat

In terror as I seek my food: how can a crow be fat?

Crows spend their lives in fear, their wits for mischief ever keen;

The bits they pick are not enough; good quail, that’s why I’m lean.

Rude grass and seeds are all your food: there's little richness there:

Then tell me why you're fat, good quail, on such a scanty fare.

The Bodhisatta hearing him spoke these stanzas, explaining the reason of his fatness—

I have content and easy mind, short distances to go,

I live on anything I get, and so I'm fat, good crow.

Content of mind, and happiness with little care of heart,

A standard easily attained: that life's the better part.

After the lesson, the Master declared the Truths, and identified the Birth—At the end of the Truths the Brother was established in the fruition of the First Path: "At that time the crow was the greedy Brother, the quail 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.

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.