Ja 395 — Kaka 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/ja395.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

“Our old friend,” etc.—The Master told this tale while dwelling in Jetavana, concerning a greedy Brother. The occasion is as above.

Once upon a time when Brahmadatta was reigning in Benares, the Bodhisatta was a pigeon and lived in a nest-basket in the kitchen of a Benares merchant. A crow became intimate with him and lived there also. Here the story is to be expanded. The cook pulled out the crow’s feathers and sprinkled him with flour, then piercing a cowrie he hung it on the crow’s neck and threw him into a basket. The Bodhisatta came from the wood, and seeing him made a jest and spoke the first stanza—

Our old friend! look at him!

A jewel bright he wears;

His beard in gallant trim,

How gay our friend appears!

The crow hearing him spoke the second stanza—

My nails and hair had grown so fast,

They hampered me in all I did:

A barber came along at last,

And of superfluous hair I’m rid.

Then the Bodhisatta spoke the third stanza—

Granted you got a barber then,

Who has cropped your hair so well:

Round your neck, will you explain,

What's that tinkling like a bell?

Then the crow uttered two stanzas—

Men of fashion wear a gem

Round the neck: it's often done:

I am imitating them:

Don't suppose it's just for fun.

If you're really envious

Of my beard that's trimmed so true:

I can get you barbered thus;

You may have the jewel too.

The Bodhisatta hearing him spoke the sixth stanza—

Nay, 'Tis you they best become,

Gem and beard that's trimmed so true.

I find your presence troublesome:

I go with a good-day to you.

With these words he flew up and went elsewhere; and the crow died then and there.

After the lesson, the Master declared the Truths and identified the Birth—After the Truths, the greedy Brother was established in the fruition of the Third 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.