Ja 397 — Manoja 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/ja397.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

“The bow is bent,” etc.—The Master told this while dwelling in the Bamboo Grove, concerning a Brother who kept bad company. The occasion was given at length in the Mahilamukhata Birth. The Master said, “Brethren, he is not keeping bad company for the first time,” and told an old tale.

Once upon a time when Brahmadatta was reigning in Benares, the Bodhisatta was a lion and living with a lioness had two children, a son and a daughter. The son’s name was Manoja. When he grew up he took a young lioness to wife: and so they became five. Manoja killed wild buffaloes and other animals, and so got flesh to feed his parents, sister and wife. One day in his hunting ground he saw a jackal called Giriya, unable to run away and lying on his belly. “How now, friend?” he said. “I wish to wait on you, my lord.” “Well, do so.” So he took the jackal to his den. The Bodhisatta seeing him said, “Dear Manoja, jackals are wicked and sinners, and give wrong advice; don’t bring this one near you:” but could not hinder him. Then one day the jackal wished to eat horseflesh, and said to Manoja, “Sir, except horseflesh there is nothing we have not eaten; let us take a horse.” “But where are there horses, friend?” “At Benares by the river bank.” He took this advice and went with him there when the horses bathe in the river; he took one horse, and throwing it on his back he came with speed to the mouth of his den. His father eating the horseflesh said, “Dear, horses are kings’ property, kings have many stratagems, they have skilful archers to shoot; lions who eat horseflesh don’t live long, henceforward don’t take horses.” The lion not following his father’s advice went on taking them. The king, hearing that a lion was taking the horses, had a bathing-tank for horses made inside the town: but the lion still came and took them. The king had a stable made, and had fodder and water given them inside it. The lion came over the wall and took the horses even from the stable. The king had an archer called who shot like lightning, and asked if he could shoot a lion. He said he could, and making a tower near the wall where the lion came he waited there. The lion came and, posting the jackal in a cemetery outside, sprang into the town to take the horses. The archer thinking “His speed is very great when he comes,” did not shoot him, but when he

was going away after taking a horse, hampered by the heavy weight, he hit him with a sharp arrow in the hind quarters. The arrow came out at his front quarters and flew in the air. The lion yelled “I am shot.” The archer after shooting him twanged his bow like thunder. The jackal hearing the noise of lion and bow said to himself, “My comrade is shot and must be killed, there is no friendship with the dead, I will now go to my old home in the wood,” and so he spoke two stanzas—

The bow is bent, the bowstring sounds amain;

Manoja, king of beasts, my friend, is slain.

Alas, I seek the woods as best I may:

Such friendship’s naught; others must be my stay.

The lion with a rush came and threw the horse at the den’s mouth, falling dead himself. His kinsfolk came out and saw him blood-stained, blood flowing from his wounds, dead from following the wicked; and his father, mother, sister and wife seeing him spoke four stanzas in order—

His fortune is not prosperous whom wicked folk entice;

Look at Manoja lying there, through Giriya’s advice.

No joy have mothers in a son whose comrades are not good:

Look at Manoja lying there all covered with his blood.

And even so fares still the man, in low estate he lies,

Who follows not the counsel of the true friend and the wise.

This, or worse than this, his fate

Who is high, but trusts the low:

See, ’Tis thus from kingly state

He has fallen to the bow.

Lastly, the stanza of the Perfect Wisdom—

Who follows outcasts is himself out cast,

Who courts his equals ne’er will be betrayed,

Who bows before the noblest rises fast;

Look therefore to thy betters for thine aid.

After the lesson, the Master declared the Truths and identified the Birth—After the Truths the brother who kept bad company was established in the fruition of the First Path—“At that time the jackal was Devadatta, Manoja was the keeper of bad company, his sister was Uppalavanna, his wife the Sister Khema, his mother the mother of Rahula, his father 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.