Ja 399 — Gijjha 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/ja399.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

“How will the old folks,” etc.—The Master told this when dwelling in Jetavana, concerning a Brother who supported his mother.

Once upon a time when Brahmadatta was reigning in Benares, the Bodhisatta was born of a vulture. When he grew up he put his parents, now old and dim of eye, in a vulture’s cave and fed them by bringing them flesh of cows and the like. At the time a certain hunter laid snares for vultures all about a Benares cemetery. One day the Bodhisatta seeking for flesh came to the cemetery and caught his foot in the snares. He did not think of himself, but remembered his old parents. “How will my parents live now? I think they will die, ignorant that I am caught, helpless and destitute, wasting away in that hill-cave:” so lamenting he spoke the first stanza—

How will the old folks manage now within the mountain cave?

For I am fastened in a snare, cruel Niliya’s slave.

The son of a hunter, hearing him lament, spoke the second stanza, the vulture spoke the third, and so on alternately—

Vulture, what strange laments of yours are these my ears that reach?

I never heard or saw a bird that uttered human speech.

I tend my aged parents within a mountain cave,

How will the old folks manage now that I’ve become your slave?

Carrion a vulture sights across a hundred leagues of land;

Why do you fail to see a snare and net so close at hand?

When ruin comes upon a man, and fates his death demand,

He fails to see a snare or net although so close at hand.

Go, tend your aged parents within their mountain-cave,

Go, visit them in peace, you have from me the leave you crave.

O hunter, happiness be thine, with all thy kith and kin:

I'll tend my aged parents their mountain-cave within.

Then the Bodhisatta, freed from the fear of death, joyfully gave thanks and speaking a final stanza took his mouthful of meat, and went away and gave it to his parents.

After the lesson, the Master declared the Truths and identified the Birth—After the Truths, the Brother was established in the fruition of the First Path— "At that time, the hunter was Channa, the parents were king's kin, the vulture-king 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.