Ja 451 — Cakka-Vaka Jātaka

English translation by W. H. D. Rouse.

Source: https://raw.githubusercontent.com/suttacentral/sc-data/2d9ca8da858f94302ed6783e2717bf73d651881b/html_text/en/pli/sutta/kn/ja/vol4/ja451.html

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Edited by E. B. Cowell

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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

“Fine-coloured art thou,” etc.—This story the Master told while dwelling in Jetavana, about a greedy Brother. This man, it is said, dissatisfied with his mendicant’s garb and so forth, used to march about asking, “Where is there a meal for the Order? where is there an invitation?” and when he heard mention of meat, he showed great delight. Then some well-meaning Brethren, from kindness towards him, told the Master about it. The Master summoning him, asked, “Is it true, Brother, as I hear, that you are greedy?” “Yes, my lord, it is true,” said he. “Brother,” said the Master, “why are you greedy, after embracing a faith like ours, that leads to salvation? The state of greed is sinful; long ago, by reason of greed, you were not satisfied with the dead bodies of elephants and other offal in Benares, and went away into the mighty forest.” So saying, he told a story of the past.

Once upon a time, when Brahmadatta was king of Benares, a greedy Crow was not content with the corpses of elephants in Benares, and all the other offal. “Now I wonder,” thought he, “what the forests may be like?” So to the forest he went; but neither was he satisfied with the wild fruits that he found there, and proceeded to the Ganges. As he passed along the bank of the Ganges, spying a pair of Ruddy Geese, he thought, “Yonder birds are very beautiful; I suppose they find plenty of meat to eat on this Ganges bank. I will question them, and if I too can eat their food doubtless I shall have a fine colour like them.” So perching not far from the pair, he put his question to the Ruddy Goose by reciting two stanzas:

“Fine-coloured art thou, fair of form, all plump in body, red of hue,

O Goose! I swear thou art most fair, thy face and senses clear and true!

“A-sitting on the Ganges’ bank thou feedest on the pike and bream,

Roach, carp, and all the other fish that swim along the Ganges’ stream !”

The Red Goose contradicted him by reciting the third stanza:

“No bodies from the tide I eat, nor lying in the wood:

All kinds of weed—on them I feed; that, friend, is all my food.”

Then the Crow recited two stanzas:

“I cannot credit what the Goose avers about his meat.

Things in the village soused with salt and oil are what I eat,

“A mess of rice, all clean and nice, which a man makes and pours

Upon his meat; but yet, my colour, Goose, is not like yours.”

Thereupon the Ruddy Goose recited to him the remaining stanzas showing forth the reason of his ugly colour, and declaring righteousness:

“Beholding sin your heart within, destroying humankind,

In fear and fright your food you eat; therefore this hue you find.

“Crow, you have erred in all the world by sins of former lives,

You have no pleasure in your food; ’Tis this your colour gives.

“But, friend, I eat and do no hurt, not anxious, at my ease,

Having no trouble, fearing nought from any enemies.

“Thus you should do, and mighty grow, renounce your evil ways,

Walk in the world and do no hurt; then all will love and praise.

“Who to all creatures kindly is, nor wounds nor makes to wound,

Who harries not, none harry him, gainst him no hate is found.”

“Therefore if you wish to be beloved by the world, abstain from all evil passions;” so said the Ruddy Goose, declaring righteousness. The Crow replied, “Don’t prate to me of your manner of feeding!” and crying “Caw! Caw!” flew away through the air to the dunghill of Benares.

When the Master had ended this discourse, he declared the Truths: (now at the conclusion of the Truths, the greedy Brother was established in the fruit of the Third Path): “At that

time, the greedy Brother was the Crow, Rahula's mother was the mate of the Ruddy Goose, and I was the Ruddy Goose 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.