Ja 533 — Cullahamsa Jātaka

English translation by H. T. Francis.

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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

“All other birds, etc.” This was a story told by the Master, while dwelling in the Bamboo Grove, as to how the venerable Ananda renounced his life. For when archers were suborned to slay the Tathagata, and the first one that was sent by Devadatta on this errand returned and said, “Holy sir, I cannot deprive the Blessed One of life: he is possessed of great supernatural powers,” Devadatta replied, “Well, sir, you need not slay the ascetic Gotama. I myself will deprive him of life.” And as the Tathagata was walking in the shadow cast westward by the Vulture’s Peak, Devadatta climbed to the top of the mountain and hurled a mighty stone as if shot from a catapult, thinking, “With this stone will I slay the ascetic Gotama,” but two mountain peaks meeting together intercepted the stone, and a splinter from it flew up and struck the Blessed One on the foot and drew blood, and severe pains set in. Jivaka, cutting open the Tathagata’s foot with a knife, let out the bad blood and removed the proud flesh, and anointing the wound with a medicament healed it. The Master moved about just as he was wont aforetime, surrounded by his attendants, with all the great charm of a Buddha. So on seeing him Devadatta thought, “Verily no mortal beholding the excellent beauty of Gotama’s person dare approach him, but the king’s elephant Nalagiri is a fierce and savage animal and knows nothing of the virtues of the Buddha, the Law, and the Assembly. He will bring about the destruction of the ascetic.” So he went and told the matter to the king. The king readily fell in with the suggestion, and, summoning his elephant-keeper, thus addressed him; “Sir, to-morrow you are to make Nalagiri mad with drink, and at break of day to let him loose in the street where the ascetic Gotama walks.” And Devadatta asked the keeper how much arrack the elephant was wont to drink on ordinary days, and when he answered, “Eight pots,” he said, “To-morrow give him sixteen pots to drink, and send him in the direction of the street frequented by the ascetic Gotama.” “Very good,” said the keeper. The king had a drum beaten throughout the city and proclaimed, “To-morrow Nalagiri will be maddened with strong drink and let loose in the city. The men of the city are to do all that they have to do in the early morning and after that no one is to venture out into the street.” And Devadatta came down from the palace and went to the elephant-stall and, addressing the keepers,

said, “We are able, I tell you, from a high position to degrade a man to a lowly one and to raise a man from a low position to a high one. If you are eager for honour, early to-morrow morning give Nalagiri sixteen pots of fiery liquor, and at the time when the ascetic Gotama comes that way, wound the elephant with spiked goads, and when in his fury he has broken down his stall, drive him in the direction of the street where Gotama is wont to walk, and so bring about the destruction of the ascetic.” They readily agreed to do so. This rumour was noised abroad throughout the whole city. The lay disciples attached to the Buddha, the Law, and the Priesthood, on hearing it, drew nigh to the Master and said, “Holy sir, Devadatta has been closeted with the king and to-morrow he will have Nalagiri let loose in the street where you walk. Do not go into the city to-morrow for alms but remain here. We will provide food in the monastery for the priests, with Buddha at their head.” The Master without directly saying, “I will not enter the city to-morrow for alms,” answered and said, “Tomorrow I will work a miracle and tame Nalagiri and crush the heretics. And without going my round for alms in Rajagaha I will leave the city, attended by a company of the Brethren, and go straight to the Bamboo Grove, and the people of Rajagaha shall repair thither with many a bowl of food and to-morrow there shall be a meal provided in the refectory of the monastery.” In this way did the Master grant their request. And on learning that the Tathagata had acceded to their wishes, they set out from the city, carrying bowls of food, and saying, “We will distribute our gifts in the monastery itself.” And the Master in the first watch taught the Law, in the middle watch he solved hard questions, in the first part of the last watch he lay down lion-like on his right side, and the second part he spent in the Attainment of Fruition, in the third part, entering into a trance of deep pity for the sufferings of humanity, he contemplated all his kinsfolk that were ripe for conversion and seeing that as the result of his conquest of Nalagiri eighty-four thousand beings would be brought to a clear understanding of the Law, at daybreak, after attending to his bodily necessities, he addressed Ananda and said, “Ananda, to-day bid all the Brethren that are in the eighteen monasteries that are round about Rajagaha to accompany me into that city.” The elder did so, and all the Brethren assembled at the Bamboo Grove. The Master attended by a great company of Brethren entered Rajagaha and the elephant-keepers proceeded according to their instructions and there was a great gathering of people. The believers thought, “To-day there will be a mighty battle between the lord elephant Buddha and this elephant of the brute world. We shall witness the defeat of Nalagiri by the incomparable skill of the Buddha,” and they climbed up and stood upon the upper storeys and roofs and house-tops. But the unbelieving heretics thought, “Nalagiri is a fierce, savage creature, and knows nothing of the merits of Buddhas and the like. To-day he will crush the glorious form of the ascetic Gotama and bring about his death. To-day we shall look upon the back of our enemy.” And they took their stand on upper storeys and other high places. And the elephant, on seeing the Blessed One approach him, terrified the people by demolishing the houses and raising his trunk he crushed the waggons into powder, and, with his ears and tail erect with excitement, he ran like some towering mountain in the direction of the Blessed One. On seeing him the Brethren thus addressed the Blessed One, “This Nalagiri, holy sir, a fierce and savage creature, and a slayer of men, is coming along this road. Of a truth he knows nothing of the merit of Buddhas and the like. Let the Blessed One, the Auspicious One, withdraw.” “Fear not, Brethren,” he said, “I am able to overcome Nalagiri.” Then the venerable Sariputta prayed the Master, saying, “Holy sir, when any service has to be rendered to a

father, it is a burden laid on his eldest son. I will vanquish this creature." Then the Master said, "Sariputta, the power of a Buddha is one thing, that of his disciples is another," and he rejected his offer, saying, "You are to remain here." This too was the prayer of the eighty chief elders for the most part, but he refused them all. Then the venerable Ananda by reason of his strong affection for the Master was unable to acquiesce in this and cried, "Let this elephant kill me first," and he stood before the Master, ready to sacrifice his life for the Tathagata. So the Master said to him, "Go away, Ananda, do not stand in front of me." The elder said, "Holy sir, this elephant is fierce and savage, a slayer of men, like the flame at the beginning of a cycle. Let him first slay me and afterwards let him approach you." And though he was spoken to for the third time, the elder remained in the same spot and did not retire. Then the Blessed One by the exercise of his supernatural power made him fall back and placed him in the midst of the Brethren. At this moment a certain woman, catching sight of Nalagiri, was terrified with the fear of death, and as she fled she dropped the child, which she was carrying on her hip, between the Tathagata and the elephant and made her escape. The elephant, pursuing the woman, came up with the child, who uttered a loud cry. The Master thrilling with the charity that is expressly commanded, and, uttering the honeyed accents of a voice like that of Brahma, called to Nalagiri, saying, "Ho! Nalagiri, those that maddened you with sixteen pots of arrack did not do this that you might attack someone else, but acted thus thinking you would attack me. Do not tire out your strength by rushing about aimlessly but come hither." On hearing the voice of the Master he opened his eyes and beheld the glorious form of the Blessed One, and he became greatly agitated and by the power of Buddha the intoxicating effects of the strong drink passed off. Dropping his trunk and shaking his ears he came and fell down at the feet of the Tathagata. Then the Master addressing him said, Nalagiri, you are a brute elephant, I am the Buddha elephant. Henceforth be not fierce and savage, nor a slayer of men, but cultivate thoughts of charity." So saying he stretched forth his right hand and coaxed the elephant's forehead and taught the Law to him in these words:

This elephant shouldst thou presume to assail,

An awful doom thou wouldst erelong bewail.

To strike this elephant would destine thee

To state of suffering in worlds to be.

From mad and foolish recklessness abstain,

The reckless fool to heaven will ne'er attain.

If in the next world thou wouldst win heaven's bliss,

See that thou doest what is right in this.

The whole body of the elephant constantly thrilled with joy, and had he not been a mere quadruped, he would have entered on the fruition of the First Path. The people, on

beholding this miracle, shouted and snapped their fingers. In their joy they cast upon him all manner of ornaments and covered therewith all the body of the elephant. Thenceforth Nalagiri was known as Dhanapalaka (keeper of treasure).—Now on the occasion of this encounter with Dhanapalaka eighty-four thousand beings drank the nectar of immortality.—And the Master established Dhanapalaka in the five moral laws. With his trunk taking up dust from the feet of the Blessed One the elephant sprinkled it on his head, and retiring with bent body he stood bowing to the Dasabala as long as he was in sight, and then he turned and entered the elephant-stall. Thenceforth he was quite tame and harmed no man. The Master, now that his desire was fulfilled, decided that the treasure should remain the property of those by whom it had been thrown upon the elephant and thinking, "To-day I have wrought a great miracle. It is not seemly that I should go my rounds for alms in this city," and after crushing the heretics, surrounded by a band of the Brethren, he sallied forth from the city like a victorious warrior chief and made straight for the Bamboo Grove. The citizens, taking with them a quantity of boiled rice, drink, and some solid food, went to the monastery and set on foot almsgiving on a grand scale. That day at eventide, as they sat filling the Hall of Truth, the Brethren started a topic, saying, "The venerable Ananda achieved a marvellous thing in being ready to sacrifice his life for the sake of the Tathagata. On seeing Nalagiri, though he was thrice forbidden by the Master to remain, he refused to go away. O sirs, of a truth the elder was the doer of a marvellous deed." The Master, thinking, "The conversation turns on the merits of Ananda, I must be present at it," went forth from his Perfumed Chamber and came and asked them, saying, "On what subject are ye discoursing, Brethren, as ye sit here?" And when they answered, "On such and such a topic," he said, "Not now only, but formerly too, Ananda, even when he was born in an animal form, renounced his life for my sake," and so saying he told a story of the past.

Once upon a time in the kingdom of Mahimsaka in the city of Sakula a king named Sakula ruled his kingdom righteously. At that time not far from the city a certain fowler in a village of fowlers got his living by snaring birds and selling them in the city. Near that city was a lotus-lake called Manusiya, twelve leagues in circumference, covered with five varieties of lotus. Thither repaired a flock of all manner of birds and the fowler set his snares there freely. At this time the king of the Dhatarattha geese, with a following of ninety-six thousand geese, dwelt in Golden Cave on mount Cittakuta and his commander-in-chief was named Sumukha. Now one day a flock composed of some golden geese came to the lake Manusiya, and, after browsing to their heart's content in this abundant feeding ground, they flew up to the beautiful Cittakuta and thus addressed the Dhatarattha king: "Sire, there is a lotus-lake called Manusiya, a rich feeding ground lying midst the haunts of men. Thither we will go to feed." He answered, "The haunts of men are dangerous: let not this approve itself to you." And though he declined to go, yet being importuned he said, "If it be your good pleasure, we will go," and with his following he repaired to that lake. Alighting from the air he set his foot in a noose at the very moment he touched the ground. So the noose seized his foot as it were with an iron vice and caught and held him fast. Then thinking to sever the snare he tugged at it, and first the skin was broken, next the flesh was torn, and lastly the tendon, till the snare touched the bone and the blood flowed and severe pains set in. He thought, "If I should utter a cry of capture, my kinsfolk would be alarmed and without feeding would fly away famished and through weakness

they would fall into the water." So he bore with the pain and when his kinsfolk had eaten their fill and were disporting themselves after the manner of geese, he uttered the loud cry of a captured bird. On hearing it these geese were frightened with the fear of death and flew off in the direction of Cittakuta. As soon as they were gone, Sumukha, the captain of the geese, thought, "Can it be that this means something terrible has happened to the Great King? I will find out what it is," and flying at full speed, and not seeing the Great Being amongst those in the van of the retreating army of geese, he sought him in the main body of the birds and there too failing to find him he said, "Without all doubt something terrible has occurred," and he turned back and found the Great Being caught in a snare, stained with blood and suffering great pain, lying on the muddy ground, And he alighted and sat on the ground and trying to comfort the Great Being he said, "Fear not, sire: I will release you from the snare at the sacrifice of my own life."

Then to test him the Great Being spoke the first stanza:

All other birds, heedless of me, have fled in haste away;

What friendship can a captive know? Be off, make no delay.

Here moreover followed these stanzas :

Whether I go or stay with thee, I still some day must die:

I've courted thee in weal, in woe from thee I may not fly.

I either then must die with thee, or live a life forlorn,

Far better 'twere to die at once than live thy loss to mourn.

It is not right to leave thee, sire, in such a sorry state;

Nay, I am well content to share whate'er may be thy fate.

What fate for one caught in a snare except the cruel spit?

How in thy senses and still free couldst thou to this submit?

What good for thee or me, O bird, herein dost thou descry,

Or for the kin surviving us, if both of us should die?

Wrapt, golden-winged one, in night will be thy deed of worth;

What moral would such sacrifice, if brought to light, show forth?

That blessings follow Right, O king of birds, dost thou not see?

Right duly honoured shows to men what their true good may be.

Seeing the Right and all the Good that still from Right may spring,

For love of thee I cheerfully my life away would fling.

If mindful of the Right one ne'er forsakes a suffering friend,

Not e'en to save one's life, such act as Right the wise commend.

Thy duty nobly done, the while I recognise thy love,

Depart at once, if thou wouldst do the thing I most approve.

Perhaps in time the ties that bound my kin beneath my sway,

With fuller knowledge and control may pass to thee some day.

As thus these noble birds exchanged high thoughts, to them, behold,

Like Death to some bedridden wretch appeared this fowler bold.

The friends in him discerning well the enemy they fear,

Long silent sat and motionless, as he to them drew near.

Seeing the geese rise here and there and vanish into space,

Their foe, where sat these noble birds, in haste approached the place.

And as he ran with utmost speed and reached the fated spot,

The fowler, trembling at the thought, cried, "Are they caught or not?"

The one he saw caught in the snare, the other bird he found

Watching his captive friend, himself unfettered and unbound.

Perplexed and doubting in his mind he viewed the noble pair,

—Full grown were they, two comely birds—and thus he spake them fair.

Granted that one caught in a snare may never fly away,

Why, mighty bird, dost thou, still free, resolve with him to stay?

What is this fowl to thee, that when the rest are fled and gone,

Though free, beside the captive bird thou sittest here alone?

0 foe of birds, my friend and king, dear as my life is he;

Forsake him—no, I never will, until Death calls for me.

How was it that this bird ne'er spied the fowler's secret snare?

Of mighty chiefs the function is of danger to be ware.

When ruin comes upon a man and Death's hour draweth nigh,

Though you may close upon it come, nor trap nor snare you spy.

Snares of all kinds, O holy ones, are ofttimes set in vain:

In fatal hour at last one's caught in hidden snare and slain.

Thus did he by discoursing with him soften the fowler's heart, and begging for the life of the Great Being he spoke this stanza:

Is this the happy issue, say, of friendly talk with thee,

And wilt thou, prithee, spare our lives and let us both go free?

The fowler, charmed by Sumukha's sweet discourse, spoke this stanza:

No prisoner of mine art thou; begone, quick, hence away;

I would not shed thy blood; unscathed, live on for many a day.

Then Sumukha repeated four stanzas:

I should not care to live myself, if this my friend were dead,

Content with one, let him go free, and eat my flesh instead.

We two are much the same in age, in length and breadth of limb;

No loss for thee, if thou shouldst take me in exchange for him.

Regard it in this light and glut thy appetite on me;

First bind me in the snare, then let this king of birds go free.

Thus thou wouldst gain thy wish and I my heart's desire secure,

And peace would be ’twixt geese and thee, long as life should endure.

Thus by the preaching of the Law was this fowler’s heart softened, even as cotton dipped in oil, and in yielding up the Great Being to him, as a slave to his owner, he said:

Be witness all your sages, friends, servants, and kith and kin,

Through thee alone this king of birds his liberty did win.

To few ’Tis given to own a friend like thee prepared to share

A common fate, as when thy king was caught in deadly snare.

So I release thy friend the king, to follow thee afar,

Quick, hence away, amidst thy kin to shine fair as a star.

And so saying, the fowler with kindness in his heart drew nigh to the Great Being, and cutting his bonds took him up in his arms and lifting him out of the water laid him on the bank of the lake upon the fresh grass, and with great tenderness gently loosing the snare that bound his foot threw it to a distance. Then conceiving a strong affection for the Great Being, with a heart full of love he took some water and washed away the blood from his wound, and once and again wiped it. Through the power of his charity the wound in the Bodhisatta’s foot grew together, tendon uniting with tendon, flesh with flesh, skin with skin. Fresh skin formed and fresh down grew over it. The Bodhisatta was just as if his foot had never been trapped and sat rejoicing in his ordinary form. Then Sumukha, beholding how happy the Great Being was all owing to his action, in his gladness sang the praises of the fowler.

The Master, to make the matter clear, said:

The goose glad at the king’s release, in honour of his lord,

Thus charmed his benefactor’s ear with this most pleasant word:

“Fowler, with all thy kith and kin, right happy mayst thou be,

As I am happy to behold the king of birds set free.”

After thus singing the fowler’s praises, Sumukha said to the Bodhisatta, “Sire, this man has wrought us a great service: had he not hearkened to our words, he might have won great wealth, either by making us tame birds to be kept for pleasure and offering us to some great lords, or by killing and selling us for food. But utterly regardless of his own livelihood he hearkened to our words. Let us conduct him into the king’s presence and make him happy for life.” The Great Being agreed to this. Then Sumukha, after conversing with the Great Being in their own language, addressed the fowler in human speech and asked him, saying, “Friend, why did you set snares?” and on his replying, “For gain,” “This being the

case," said Sumukha, "take us with you into the city and present us to your king, and I will persuade him to bestow on you great riches," and he spoke these stanzas:

Come, I will teach thee how thou mayst win for thyself great gain,

Seeing the honour of this goose brooks not the slightest stain.

Quick, take us to the royal court, in body sound and whole,

Standing, unbound, at either end of this thy carrying-pole.

And say, "O sire, lo! here to thee two ruddy geese we bring,

The one is captain of the host, the other is their king."

This lord of men beholding then this royal goose will be

So glad and overjoyed, he will great wealth bestow on thee.

When he had so spoken, the fowler replied, "Let it not be your pleasure to see the king. Verily kings are fickle-minded: they would either keep you captive for their amusement or would put you to death." Sumukha said, "Fear not, my friend. By my preaching of the Law I have softened the heart of a fierce creature like you and have brought you to my feet, a fowler whose hand is red with blood. Kings, verily, are full of goodness and wisdom, and are such as can discern between good and evil words. So make haste and bring us into the presence of your king." The fowler said, "Well, be not angry with me. As it is your good pleasure, I will take you to him." So he mounted the pair of birds on his pole and went to the court and introduced them to the king, and on being questioned by him the fowler declared all the facts of the case.

The Master, to make the matter clear, said:

On hearing this he wrought the thing they craved in heart and soul,

And quickly took the geese to court, in body sound and whole,

Standing, unbound, one at each end of his long carrying-pole.

"Lo! here," he said, "two ruddy geese, O sire, to thee we bring,

One is the captain of the host, the other is their king."

How did these winged mighty ones, fowler, become thy prey,

How didst thou creep close up to them, nor frighten them away?

O lord of men, in every pool behold a gin or net,

In every haunt of birds, methinks, a deadly snare was set.

'Twas in some hidden trap like this I caught the king of geese,

His friend, still free, sat by his side and sought his lord's release.

This bird essayed a task beyond what vulgar souls achieve,

Resolved his every nerve to strain, his master to relieve.

There sat he, worthy to survive, content his life to give,

If but his lord, whose praise he sang, might be allowed to live.

Hearing his words I all at once attained to state of grace,

Gladly set free the captive bird and bade them leave the place.

The goose, rejoiced at his release, in honour of his lord,

Thus charmed his benefactor's ear with this most pleasant word:

"Fowler, with all thy kith and kin, right happy mayst thou be,

As I am happy to behold the king of birds set free.

Come, I will teach thee how thou mayst win for thyself great gain,

Seeing the honour of this goose brooks not the slightest stain.

Quick, take us to the royal court, in body sound and whole,

Standing, unbound, at either end of this thy carrying-pole.

And say, "O sire, lo! here to thee two ruddy geese we bring,

The one is captain of the host, the other is their king."

This lord of men, beholding then this royal goose will be

So glad and overjoyed, he will great wealth bestow on thee."

Thus at his bidding hither led by me the pair have come,

Although for me they both were free to seek their mountain home.

Such was the fate of this poor bird, though very righteous he,

So much that he with pity moved a fowler fierce like me.

This goose, O lord of men, to thee an offering bring I here,

Amidst the haunts of fowling men one scarce could find his peer.

Thus did he standing there proclaim the virtues of Sumukha. Then the king Sakula offered to the goose-king a costly throne and to Sumukha a precious golden chair, and when they had taken their seats he served them with parched corn, honey, molasses, and the like, in golden vessels, and, when they had finished their meal, with outstretched hands he prayed the Great Being to preach the Law and took his seat upon a golden chair. And at his request the goose-king held pleasant converse with him.

The Master, to make everything clear, said:

Seeing the king now seated on a lovely golden chair,

The goose in tones to charm the ear thus did bespeak him fair.

Dost thou, my lord, enjoy good health and is all well with thee?

I trust thy realm is flourishing and ruled in equity.

O king of geese, my health is good and all is well with me;

My realm is very flourishing and ruled in equity.

Hast thou true men to counsel thee, free from all stain or blame,

Ready to die, if need there be, for thy good cause and name?

I have true men to counsel me, free from all stain or blame,

Ready to die, if need there be, for my good cause and name.

Hast thou a wife of equal birth, obedient, kind in word,

With children blest, good looks, fair name, compliant with her lord?

I have a wife of equal birth, obedient, kind in word,

With children blest, good looks, fair name, compliant with her lord.

When the Bodhisatta had ended his words of friendly greeting, the king again conversing with him said:

When some mischance delivered thee to thy most deadly foe,

Didst thou then at his hands, O bird, great suffering undergo?

Did he run up and with his stick belabour thee, I pray?

Of such vile creatures, as I hear, this ever is the way.

I never was in danger, as I gratefully recall,

Nor did he deal with us as foes in any way at all.

The fowler, trembling and amazed, to question us was fain,

And Sumukha, wisest of birds, made answer back again.

Hearing his words he all at once attained to state of grace,

Gladly released me from the snare, and bade us leave the place.

To come and visit thee, O king, was Sumukha's desire,

Thinking our friend the fowler thus great riches might acquire.

You are right welcome, sirs, be sure, I'm glad to see you here,

And let your fowler friend receive his fill of earthly gear.

And so saying the king fixed his gaze upon a certain councillor and when he asked, "What is your pleasure, sire," he said, "See that this fowler has his hair and beard trimmed and that after being washed and anointed he is sumptuously arrayed and then bring him here." And when this was done and the fowler was brought back, the king presented him with a village producing annually a hundred thousand pieces of money, and moreover a house standing in a position abutting on two streets, and a splendid chariot, and much store of yellow gold.

The Master, to make the matter clear, said:

The king with riches manifold the fowler amply blest,

And then in tones that charmed the ear the ruddy goose addressed.

Then the Great Being instructed the king in the Law, and hearing his exposition he was glad at heart, and, being minded to pay some mark of respect to the preacher of the Law, he presented him with the white umbrella and made over his kingdom to him and he spoke these stanzas:

Whate’er I lawfully possess, whate’er I duly claim,

Shall pass beneath your sway, if ye your heart’s desire will name.

Whether for alms or to enjoy and use it for your own,

To you I yield my gear and all, to you resign my throne.

Then the Great Being returned the white umbrella which the king had given to him. And the king thought, “I have heard the Law preached by the goose-king, but this Sumukha has been highly praised by the fowler, as speaking words sweet as honey, I shall have to hear him also preach the Law.” So holding converse with him he spake yet another stanza:

If wise and learned Sumukha would speak of his free will

A word or two, my happiness would then be greater still.

Then Sumukha said:

I could not in your presence, with propriety, my lord,

As though I were some Naga prince, utter a single word.

For this the chief of ruddy geese, and thou, O mighty king,

On many grounds may rightly claim the homages that I bring.

I a mere underling, my lord, may scarcely intervene,

When high debate is being held your Majesties between.

The king, hearing what he said, was glad at heart and said, “The fowler praised you, and surely there cannot be any other like you, so sweet a preacher of the Law,” and he repeated these stanzas:

The fowler rightly praised this bird as wise beyond its kind:

Such prudence is not found in one undisciplined in mind.

Of noble creatures I have seen, with highest nature blest,

Surely this matchless bird amongst them all is far the best.

Your noble form and sweet discourse cast o’er me such a spell,

My only wish is that you both long time with me may dwell.

Then the Great Being in praise of the king said:

Thou hast dealt with us as a man deals with his dearest friend:

Such was the kindness, Sir, thou didst to us poor birds extend.

Yet a great void the circle of our kin has to deplore,

And many a bird is sorely grieved to see our face no more.

To drive away their sorrow thou, O king, hast set us free,

So humbly taking leave we fly our friends once more to see.

I'm very glad acquaintance with your Highness to have made,

Henceforth, I trust, my friends may have less cause to be afraid.

When he had thus spoken the king suffered them to depart. And the Great Being declared to the king the misery attending the five kinds of vice and the blessing that followed virtue, and exhorted him, saying, "Keep the moral law and rule your kingdom righteously, and win the hearts of your people with the four modes of conciliation," and forthwith he set out for Cittakuta.

The Master, to make the matter clear, said:

Thus to the lord of mortals spake the Dhatarattha king,

Then sought these geese their kith and kin with utmost speed of wing.

Seeing their chiefs all safe and sound returned from haunts of men,

The winged flock with noisy cries welcomed them back again.

Thus circling round their lord in whom they trust, these ruddy geese

Paid all due honour to their king, rejoiced at his release.

While thus escorting their king these geese asked him, saying, "How, sire, did you escape?" The Great Being told them of his escape by the help of Sumukha, and of the action of the Sakula king and the fowler. On hearing this the flock of geese in their joy sang their praises, saying, "Long live Sumukha, captain of our host, and the Sakula king and the fowler. May they be happy and free from sorrow."

The Master, to make the matter clear, repeated a final stanza:

Thus all whose hearts are full of love succeed in what they do,

E’en as these geese back to their friends once more in safety flew.

The Master here ended his story, saying, “Brethren, not now only, but of old also, Ananda for my sake renounced his life,” and he identified the Birth: “At that time Channa was the fowler, Sariputta the king, Ananda Sumukha, the followers of Buddha the ninety thousand geese, and I myself was the goose-king.”

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.