Ja 57 — Vanarinda Jātaka

English translation by Robert Chalmers.

Source: https://raw.githubusercontent.com/suttacentral/sc-data/2d9ca8da858f94302ed6783e2717bf73d651881b/html_text/en/pli/sutta/kn/ja/vol1/ja57.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

“Whoso, O monkey-king.”—This story was told by the Master, while at the Bamboo-grove, about Devadatta’s going about to kill him. Being informed of Devadatta’s murderous intent, the Master said, “This is not the first time, Brethren, that Devadatta has gone about seeking to kill me; he did just the same in bygone days, but failed to work his wicked will.” And so saying, he told this story of the past.

Once on a time when Brahmadatta was reigning in Benares, the Bodhisatta came to life again as a monkey. When full-grown, he was as big as a mare’s foal and enormously strong. He lived alone on the banks of a river, in the middle of which was an island whereon grew mangoes and bread-fruits, and other fruit-trees. And in mid-stream, half-way between the island and the river-bank, a solitary rock rose out of the water. Being as strong as an elephant, the Bodhisatta used to leap from the bank on to this rock and thence on to the island. Here he would eat his fill of the fruits that grew on the island, returning at evening by the way he came. And such was his life from day to day.

Now there lived in those days in that river a crocodile and his mate; and she, being with young, was led by the sight of the Bodhisatta journeying to and fro to conceive a longing for the monkey’s heart to eat. So she begged her lord to catch the monkey for her. Promising that she should have her fancy, the crocodile went off and took his stand on the rock, meaning to catch the monkey on his evening journey home.

After ranging about the island all day, the Bodhisatta looked out at evening towards the rock and wondered why the rock stood so high out of the water. For the story goes that the Bodhisatta always marked the exact height of the water in the river, and of the rock in the water. So, when he saw that, though the water stood at the same level, the rock seemed to stand higher out of the water, he suspected that a crocodile might be lurking there to catch him. And, in order to find out the facts of the case, he shouted, as though addressing the rock, “Hi! rock!” And, as no reply came back, he shouted three times, “Hi! rock!” And as

the rock still kept silence, the monkey called out, “How comes it, friend rock, that you won’t answer me to-day?”

“Oh!” thought the crocodile; “so the rock’s in the habit of answering the monkey. I must answer for the rock to-day.” Accordingly, he shouted, “Yes, monkey; what is it?” “Who are you?” said the Bodhisatta. “I’m a crocodile.” “What are you sitting on that rock for? “To catch you and eat your heart.” As there was no other way back, the only thing to be done was to outwit the crocodile. So the Bodhisatta cried out, “There’s no help for it then but to give myself up to you. Open your mouth and catch me when I jump.”

Now you must know that when crocodiles open their mouths, their eyes shut. So, when this crocodile unsuspiciously opened his mouth, his eyes shut. And there he waited with closed eyes and open jaws! Seeing this, the wily monkey made a jump on to the crocodile’s head, and thence, with a spring like lightning, gained the bank. When the cleverness of this feat dawned on the crocodile, he said, “Monkey, he that in this world possesses the four virtues overcomes his foes. And you, methinks, possess all four.” And, so saying, he repeated this stanza—

Whose, O monkey-king, like you, combines

Truth, foresight, fixed resolve, and fearlessness,

Shall see his routed foemen turn and flee.

And with this praise of the Bodhisatta, the crocodile betook himself to his own dwelling-place.

Said the Master, “This is not the first time then, Brethren, that Devadatta has gone about seeking to kill me; he did just the sane in bygone days too.” And, having ended his lesson, the Master shewed the connexion and identified the Birth by saying, “Devadatta was the crocodile of those days, the brahmin-girl Cinca was the crocodile’s wife, and I myself the Monkey-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.