Ja 58 — Tayodhamma Jātaka

English translation by Robert Chalmers.

Source: https://raw.githubusercontent.com/suttacentral/sc-data/2d9ca8da858f94302ed6783e2717bf73d651881b/html_text/en/pli/sutta/kn/ja/vol1/ja58.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, like you.”—This story was told by the Master while at the Bamboo-grove also upon the subject of going about to kill.

Once on a time when Brahmadatta was reigning in Benares, Devadatta came to life again as a monkey, and dwelt near the Himalayas as the lord of a tribe of monkeys all of his own begetting. Filled with forebodings that his male offspring might grow up to oust him from his lordship, he used to geld them all with his teeth. Now the Bodhisatta had been begotten by this same monkey; and his mother, in order to save her unborn progeny, stole away to a forest at the foot of the mountain, where in due season she gave birth to the Bodhisatta. And when he was full-grown and had come to years of understanding, he was gifted with marvellous strength.

“Where is my father?” said he one day to his mother. “He dwells at the foot of a certain mountain, nay son,” she replied; “and is king of a tribe of monkeys.” “Take me to see him, mother.” “Not so, my son; for your father is so afraid of being supplanted by his sons that he gelds them all with his teeth.” “Never mind; take me there, mother,” said the Bodhisatta; “I shall know what to do.” So she took him with her to the old monkey. At sight of his son, the old monkey, feeling sure that the Bodhisatta would grow up to depose him, resolved by a feigned embrace to crush the life out of the Bodhisatta. “Ah! my boy!” he cried; “where have you been all this long time?” And, making a show of embracing the Bodhisatta, he hugged him like a vice. But the Bodhisatta, who was as strong as an elephant, returned the hug so mightily that his father’s ribs were like to break.

Then thought the old monkey, “This son of mine, if he grows up, will certainly kill me.” Casting about how to kill the Bodhisatta first, he bethought him of a certain lake hard by, where an ogre lived who might eat him. So he said to the Bodhisatta, “I’m old now, my boy, and should like to hand over the tribe to you; to-day you shall be made king. In a lake hard by grow two kinds of water-lily, three kinds of blue-lotus, and five kinds of white-lotus. Go

and pick me some." "Yes, father," answered the Bodhisatta; and off he started. Approaching the lake with caution, he studied the footprints on its, banks and marked how all of them led down to the water, but none ever came back. Realising that the lake was haunted by an ogre, he divined that his father, being unable himself to kill him, wished to get him killed by the ogre. "But I'll get the lotuses," said he, "without going into the water at all." So he went to a dry spot, and taking a run leaped from the bank. In his jump, as he was clearing the water, he plucked two flowers which grew up above the surface of the water, and alighted with them on the opposite bank. On his way back, he plucked two more in like manner, as he jumped; and so made a heap on both sides of the lake,—but always keeping out of the ogre's watery domain. When he had picked as many as he thought he could carry across, and was gathering together those on one bank, the astonished ogre exclaimed, "I've lived a long time in this lake, but I never saw even a human being so wonderfully clever! Here is this monkey who has picked all the flowers he wants, and yet has kept safely out of range of my power." And, parting the waters asunder, the ogre came up out of the lake to where the Bodhisatta stood, and addressed him thus, "O king of the monkeys, he that has three qualities shall have the mastery over his enemies; and you, methinks, have all three." And, so saying, he repeated this stanza in the Bodhisatta's praise—

Whose, like you, O monkey-king, combines

Dexterity and Valour and Resource,

Shall see his routed foemen turn and flee.

His praises ended, the ogre asked the Bodhisatta why he was gathering the flowers.

"My father is minded to make me king of his tribe," said the Bodhisatta, "and that is why I am gathering them."

"But one so peerless as you ought not to carry flowers," exclaimed the ogre; "I will carry them for you." And so saying, he picked up the flowers and followed with them in the rear of the Bodhisatta.

Seeing this from afar, the Bodhisatta's father knew that his plot had failed. "I sent my son to fall a prey to the ogre, and here he is returning safe and sound, with the ogre humbly carrying his flowers for him! I am undone!" cried the old monkey, and his heart burst asunder into seven pieces, so that he died then and there. And all the other monkeys met together and chose the Bodhisatta to be their king.

His lesson ended, the Master shewed the connexion and identified the Birth by saying, "Devadatta was then the king of the monkeys, and I his son."

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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