Ja 83 — Kalakanni Jātaka

English translation by Robert Chalmers.

Source: https://raw.githubusercontent.com/suttacentral/sc-data/2d9ca8da858f94302ed6783e2717bf73d651881b/html_text/en/pli/sutta/kn/ja/vol1/ja83.html

Source revision: 2d9ca8da858f94302ed6783e2717bf73d651881b

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Edited by E. B. Cowell

Original edition: Cambridge University Press, volume 1, 1895

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

“A friend is he.”—This story was told by the Master while at Jetavana, about a friend of Anatha-pindika’s. Tradition says that the two had made mud-pies together, and had gone to the same school; but, as years went by, the friend, whose name was ‘Curse,’ sank into great distress and could not make a living anyhow. So he came to the rich man, who was kind to him, and paid him to look after all his property; and the poor friend was employed under Anatha-pindika and did all his business for him. After he had gone up to the rich man’s It was a common thing to hear in the house—“Stand up, Curse,” or “Sit down, Curse,” or “Have your dinner, Curse.”

One day the Treasurer’s friends and acquaintances called on him and said, “Lord Treasurer, don’t let this sort of thing go on in your house. It’s enough to scare an ogre to hear such ill-omened observations as—‘Stand up, Curse,’ or ‘Sit down, Curse,’ or ‘Have your dinner, Curse.’ The man is not your social equal; he’s a miserable wretch, dogged by misfortune. Why have anything to do with him?” “Not so,” replied Anatha-pindika; “a name only serves to denote a man, and the wise do not measure a man by his name; nor is it proper to wax superstitious about mere sounds. Never will I throw over, for his mere name’s sake, the friend with whom I made mud-pies as a child.” And he rejected their advice.

One day the great man departed to visit a village of which he was headman, leaving the other in charge of the house. Hearing of his departure certain robbers made up their mind to break into the house; and, arming themselves to the teeth, they surrounded it in the night-time. But ‘Curse’ had a suspicion that burglars might be expected, and was sitting up for them. And when he knew that they had come, he ran about as if to rouse his people, bidding one sound the conch, another beat the drum, till he had the whole house full of noise, as though be were rousing a whole army of servants. Said the robbers, “The house is not so empty as we were told; the master must be at home.” Flinging away their stones, clubs and other weapons, away they bolted for their lives. Next day great alarm was

caused by the sight of all the discarded weapons lying round the house; and Curse was lauded to the skies by such praises as this—"If the house had not been patrolled by one so wise as this man, the robbers would have simply walked in at their own pleasure and have plundered the house. The Treasurer owes this stroke of good luck to his staunch friend." And the moment the merchant came back from his village they hastened to tell him the whole story. "Ah," said he, "this is the trusty guardian of my house whom you wanted me to get rid of. If I had taken your advice and got rid of him; I should be a beggar to-day. It's not the name but the heart within that makes the man." So saying he raised his wages. And thinking that here was a good story to tell, off he went to the Master and gave him a complete account of it all, right through. "This is not the first time, sir," said the Master, "that a friend named Curse has saved his friend's wealth from robbers; the like happened in bygone days as well." Then, at Anatha-pindika's request, he told this story of the past.

Once on a time when Brahmadatta was reigning in Benares, the Bodhisatta was a Treasurer of great renown; and he had a friend whose name was Curse, and so on as in the foregoing story. When on his return from his zemindary the Bodhisatta heard what had happened he said to his friends, "If I had taken your advice and got rid of my trusty friend, I should have been a beggar to-day." And he repeated this stanza—

A friend is he that seven steps will go

To help us; twelve attest the comrade true.

A fortnight or a month's tried loyalty

Makes kindred, longer time a second self.

—Then how shall I, who all these years have known

My friend, be wise in driving Curse away?

His lesson ended, the Master identified the Birth by saying, "Ananda was the Curse of those days, and I myself the Treasurer of Benares."

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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