

In its hollow dwelt, with his talons and eyes gone through an adverse turn of fate, a vulture, Jaradgava by name. Now, out of pity, the birds, roosting in the tree, spared small portions from their food and gave them to him. He lived on that and P.13 looked after the young birds. Now, once a cat, named Dirghakarṇa (the long-eared) came there to eat the young of the birds. Seeing him coming, the nestlings being terror-stricken, raised a cry. Hearing it Jaradgava asked—Who is this that is coming? Dirghakarṇa, seeing the vulture, said in alarm—Alas, it is all up with me. However,

One should dread a danger only as long as it has not arrived; but seeing that the danger has come, a man should do what the occasion demands.

Now that I am in his presence, I cannot run away. So let things take what course they may. I will first create confidence in him and then approach him. Thus resolved, he went forth and said—Sir, I salute you. The Vulture asked—Who are you? He replied—A cat. The Vulture said—Get away, else I shall have to kill you. The cat said—In the first place, hear me, and then, if you deem me to be worthy of death, let me not live. For,

Is any one killed or honoured merely because he belongs to a particular caste? It is only on one's actions (conduct) being fully known that one is found fit to merit death or respect.

The Vulture said—Explain why you have come here. The cat replied—I dwell here on the bank of the Ganges, bathing every day, living a life of celibacy and practising the vow of Ohāndráyana. All birds, worthy of confidence, always declare before me that you are devoted to the study of religious law. Hence did I come here to hear from you, who are advanced both in knowledge and years (*lit.* old both as regards knowledge and age), the holy law. But your honour is so well versed in that law that you are ready to kill me, a guest. While the duty of a house-holder is this—

Fitting hospitality should be shown even to a foe coming to the house: the tree withdraws not its shade from its cutter.

And if there be no wealth, a guest should be honoured with kind words at least. For,

Grass (a seat made of grass), place, water and the fourth (thing), agreeable speech, these, at any rate, are never refused in the house of the good. Moreover, 60.