

Repudiation
Nigrodha Jātaka
Script for a radio play

- Narrator 1: It was while staying at Veluvana that the Buddha told this story about Devadatta.
- Bhikkhu 1: Devadatta, shouldn't you show some respect to the Blessed One?
- Devadatta: Why?
- Bhikkhu 2: The Buddha ordained you, taught you the Dhamma, and instructed you in meditation.
- Devadatta: Ha! Look at this blade of grass. I can see no good that the ascetic Gotama has ever done me, not even this much!
- Narrator 2: Later, in the Hall of Truth . . .
- Bhikkhu 1: Devadatta is very ungrateful. He does not recognize how much the Buddha has done for him.
- Bhikkhu 2: I don't think we can trust Devadatta. He is really treacherous.
- The Buddha: Bhikkhus, what are you discussing?
- Bhikkhu 1: Venerable Sir, we have been talking about Devadatta's ingratitude and treachery.
- The Buddha: Bhikkhus, this is not the first time that Devadatta has been treacherous and ungrateful to friends. He was just the same in the past. Let me tell you a story.
- Narrator 3: Long, long ago, when a great monarch named Magadha was reigning in Rājagaha, a wealthy merchant had arranged for his son to wed the daughter of a trader from the countryside. After the couple had been married for some time, the man's family began abusing the wife because she hadn't produced an heir. They were always gossiping about her, even within her hearing.
- Relative 1: With a barren wife in our son's household, how can the family prosper?
- Relative 2: Without a son, how can the family line continue?
- Wife: Oh, I am so miserable. I wish I could have a child. What can I do?
Ah! I have an ideal. Nurse! Please come here.
- Nurse: Yes, my lady.
- Wife: Can I trust you to keep a secret?
- Nurse: Of course, my lady. I would never betray you.
- Wife: Good. Please tell me all about the signs of pregnancy.
- Nurse: Well, when a woman becomes pregnant . . . (*voice fades out*)
- Narrator 4: Following the nurse's description and with her complicity, the wife concealed her menses, affected all sorts of cravings, beat her hands and feet, so they appeared swollen, wrapped her belly with bandages, blackened her nipples, and permitted only her old nurse to be present at her toilet. In this way, she pretended to be pregnant and deceived everyone.
- Husband: My dear, I am delighted that you are, at last, going to have a baby. We must take good care of you during your pregnancy. Please get plenty of rest.
- Wife: Thank you, my dear husband. I, too, am very happy to provide you with an heir to continue your family line.

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- Narrator 5: His family, also, began treating her with respect, and she maintained the pretense for nine months.
- Wife: My dear, I wish to return home and to deliver my child in my parents' house. After all, this is the custom.
- Husband: Of course, my darling. Have a safe and pleasant journey. Send me a message as soon as the baby is born.
- Wife: Of course, I will, my dear. Good-bye. I will hurry back.
- Narrator 6: With a large number of attendants, she mounted a carriage and left Rājagaha. Traveling in front of her entourage was a caravan. Each day, at about breakfast time, she reached the spot where the caravan had spent the night. One night, a poor woman in the caravan gave birth under a great banyan tree. Realizing that she would not survive if she left the caravan and that the baby would not survive the rigors of travel with the caravan, she covered her newborn son with a cloth and left him at the foot of the tree. She trusted that someone would find him. The deva of that tree watched over the baby and tenderly cared for him because this was no ordinary child but was, in fact, the Bodhisatta.
- When the wife's entourage arrived at the place the next morning, the wife went with her nurse to the shelter of the banyan tree for her toilet.
- Wife: What a beautiful baby, and just born. His body is the color of gold!
Nurse! Come quickly!
- Nurse: What is it, Madam? What has happened?
- Wife: Look! There is a newly born baby lying here! My prayer has been answered! Our object has been accomplished. Quick! Help me unwrap the bandages from my belly. I will lie down so that it looks as though I have just given birth. Oh! This is wonderful!
Good! Let me compose myself. (*Pause*) OK! I'm ready
Now go and announce that I have given birth to a baby.
- Nurse: Good news! Good news! My mistress has just given birth to a son! He is a beautiful baby!
- Attendant 1: Congratulations!
- Attendant 2: How wonderful!
- Attendant 1: Let us erect a tent for her to rest in.
- Attendant 2: We must also send a messenger back to Rājagaha with the news.
- Attendant 1: The master will be so happy!
- Narrator 7: Her husband's parents replied that, since the baby had been born, there was no need for her to continue on to her father's house. The entourage turned around and returned by the same route to Rājagaha.
The family welcomed the baby, and, because he had been born under a banyan tree, they named him Nigrodha. A few days later, news arrived at the merchant's house.

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- Attendant 2: My Lord, you should know that, on the same day that Nigrodha was born, the daughter-in-law of another merchant in Rājagaha gave birth to a son named Sākha and the wife of a tailor working for that family delivered a son in the shop, and he is named Pottika.
- Merchant 1: That is excellent news! It is a very auspicious sign. Those two must come and live here. The three boys should grow up together.
- Messenger: Yes, sir. I will bring them here immediately.
- Narrator 8: The three children grew up together in the great merchant's house, and when they were old enough, the merchant summoned them.
- Merchant 1: My boys, it is now time for you to finish your education. You must go to Takkasila. Nigrodha, here are one thousand coins for you. Sākha, here are one thousand coins from your parents. This is for your teacher's fee. Pottika, your family cannot afford to pay such a fee, but please accompany your friends, take care of them, and learn what you can.
- Nigrodha: Thank you, Grandfather.
- Sākha: Thank you, sir. I will study hard.
- Pottika: Thank you, sir. I will do what I can for my friends.
- Narrator 9: The three boys set out for Takkasila.
- Nigrodha: Don't be upset, Pottika. I will be your tutor.
- Pottika: Thank you, Nigrodha. Don't worry. I am not at all upset. I am just happy to be with you and Sākha. I'm sure we will all enjoy Takkasila.
- Narrator 10: When their studies were finished, the boys took leave of their teacher and wandered here and there to see something of the world and to learn the customs of other folk. Eventually, they reached the gate of Bārānasi during a festival. Seven days earlier, the king had died without a successor, and a proclamation, accompanied by the beating of a drum, was being made throughout the city that on the next day a chariot carrying the five symbols of royalty would be driven around to find the new king.
- The three friends lay down to sleep under a tree outside the city.
- At dawn, Pottika awoke and overheard some roosters talking in the branches. The rooster at the very top had let fall a dropping on the back of one below.
- Rooster 1: What just fell on me?
- Rooster 2: Don't lose your temper. I didn't mean to do it.
- Rooster 1: Oh, so you think my body is a good place for your droppings! Obviously, you don't know my importance!
- Rooster 2: Look! I said it was an accident! And what is your importance, anyway?
- Rooster 1: If someone eats me this morning, he will get one thousand coins this very day. Isn't that something to be proud of?

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Rooster 2: Pooh! Proud of a little thing like that? The man who eats my fat will become king this morning. The man who eats my white meat will be commander-in-chief, and the man who eats the meat next to my bones will be treasurer!

Pottika: One thousand coins is a mere trifle. Best to be king!

Narrator 11: Silently Pottika climbed the tree, seized the cock at the top, wrung its neck, kindled a fire, and cooked it under the tree.

Pottika: My friends, come and eat. I have roasted a rooster. Nigrodha, here is some fat for you; Sākha, you can eat the white meat, and I will eat the meat next to the bones.

Nigrodha
and

Thank you very much. It's delicious!

Sākha:

Pottika: I'm glad you enjoy it. Nigrodha, Sir, you will be king today. Sākha, sir, you will be commander-in-chief. I will be treasurer!

Sākha: How do you know that?

Pottika: This morning, I awoke very early and overheard two roosters talking in the branches of this tree. One of them said that the man who ate his fat would become king this morning. The man who ate his white meat would be commander-in-chief, and the man who ate the meat next to his bones would be treasurer! I silently climbed the tree, seized the cock, wrung its neck, roasted it, and served it to accordingly to you.

Nigrodha: Pottika, that is wonderful! You are very clever! Isn't he, Sākha?

Sākha: I guess so.

Narrator 12: The three young men went into the city to visit a brahmin's house, where they were given a breakfast of rice-porridge with ghee and sugar. They left the city again and walked to the royal park.

In the park, Nigrodha lay down on a great slab of stone, and his two companions lay down on the ground beside him.

At that time, the royal advisors were following the royal chariot around the city.

Advisor: Look! The horses are heading toward the royal park. Someone of great merit must be there.

(Pause)

Yes. There is a man lying on the stone slab. Let me lift this cloth and look at his feet. Why, I can tell from the auspicious marks on this young man's feet that he will have a splendid future. He is destined to be not only the king of Kāsi, but the ruler of the entire Jambudīpa! Musicians! Begin beating the gongs and clanging the cymbals to announce to everyone that the king has been found!

Narrator 13: The noise awakened Nigrodha, and he removed the cloth from his face. Seeing the huge crowd assembled around him, he turned and lay still for a moment before sitting erect with his legs crossed. The royal chaplain fell to one knee beside the stone slab.

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Advisor: Sire, the kingdom is yours!

Nigrodha: So be it.

Narrator 14: The advisors led him to the chariot, seated him on a heap of precious jewels, presented him with the royal paraphernalia, and formally sprinkled him with water.

Nigrodha: As my first official act, I appoint my friend, Sākha, my commander-in-chief. Now let us enter the city.

Narrator 15: King Nigrodha ruled righteously, and his subjects loved him.
One day, he summoned Sākha.

Nigrodha: My friend, I have been thinking about my parents in Rājagaha. It would be very pleasant to have them here in Bārānasi. Please go to Rājagaha with a large retinue and bring them back.

Sākha: That is not my business!

Nigrodha: Very well. Never mind.

Soldier! Tell Pottika to come and see me.

Soldier: Yes, Your Majesty.

Pottika: Did you wish to see me, Sire?

Nigrodha: Yes. I have been thinking about my parents in Rājagaha. It would be very pleasant to have them here in Bārānasi. Please go to Rājagaha with a large retinue and bring them back.

Pottika: Of course, Your Majesty. I will go at once.

Narrator 16: Pottika mounted a splendid chariot and left immediately for Rājagaha. When he arrived, he freshened himself from the journey and went to the home of the great merchant, where he was warmly greeted.

Husband: Pottika, my boy, it is good to see you. How is everything in Bārānasi?

Pottika: Everything is fine, sir. King Nigrodha is kind to us all. He is a very good king!

Husband: I'm very happy to hear that. What brings you to Rājagaha?

Pottika: Well, sir. King Nigrodha has asked me to take you and your wife to Bārānasi. He would very much like you to live there with him.

Husband: Oh, no, Pottika. We are very comfortable here in Rājagaha.

Pottika: I see, sir, but I, too, would be very happy to have you join us in Bārānasi.

Husband: It's very nice of you to say that, Pottika, but my wife and I are wealthy enough here. We do not wish to live in Bārānasi. Rājagaha is our home.

Wife: It was good of you to come, Pottika, but please tell Nigrodha not to worry about us. We are very happy here in Rājagaha.

Pottika: I understand, Sir and Madam. I will tell him. I hope to see you again soon. Good-bye.

Husband:

and Good-bye, Pottika.

Wife:

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- Pottika: Well, if they won't go to Bārānasi, perhaps Sākha's parents will. I will ask them.
- Merchant 2: Pottika, How nice to see you. What can we do for you?
- Pottika: Sir, King Nigrodha has sent me to Rājagaha. I was wondering whether you and your wife would like to come with me to Bārānasi and live with your son, Sākha, who is now commander-in-chief.
- Merchant 2: It's very kind of you to make such an offer, but we are very happy here in Rājagaha. We have no need of Bārānasi. Thank you very much, but we cannot accept your invitation. Please give our regards to Sākha and to King Nigrodha. Good-bye.
- Pottika: Good-bye, sir.
Well, I wonder whether my parents will go with me to Bārānasi.
Hello, Mother. Hello, Father.
- Father: Pottika! Welcome home!
- Mother: Pottika, I'm so happy to see you. How have you been? Are you eating well? Is everything OK in Bārānasi?
- Pottika: Yes, Mother. I am very well. Everything is fine. We are all very happy in Bārānasi, but I miss you very much. In fact, King Nigrodha invites you to come and live with us in Bārānasi. Please say that you will come!
- Mother: Oh, dear! It would be fun to see you more often, but living in Bārānasi would be very difficult.
- Father: Son, it's very kind of you and King Nigrodha to make such an offer, but we cannot move to Bārānasi. We earn enough from tailoring here in Rājagaha. We have no need of Bārānasi. We're sorry.
- Pottika: That's OK. I understand, but I am disappointed. Good-bye.
- Father: Good-bye, Son.
- Mother: Good-bye, Pottika. Please come to see us again.
- Pottika: I will. Good-bye. *(Pause)*
Oh, dear! I have completely failed in my mission. I will just have to go back to Bārānasi empty-handed. *(Pause)*
Well, here I am. I hate to report my failure to the king. First let me go to Sākha's house and freshen up a bit. *(Pause)*
Good afternoon. Tell the commander-in-chief that his comrade, Pottika, is here.
- Doorman: Yes, sir. Please wait here.
Sir, your comrade, Pottika, is at the door and would like to see you.
- Sākha: Comrade indeed! Who is his comrade? That vulgar, lowborn son of a tailor! He gave the kingship to Nigrodha instead of to me. That's how much he thinks of me! Throw him out!
- Doorman: Go away! Sākha does not want to see you!
- Narrator 17: Guards seized Pottika, beat him, and kicked him. Then, taking him by the neck, they threw him down the stairs.

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- Pottika: (At the same time) Oh! Ouch! Stop! What are you doing! No! Ouch! Ow!
(A few seconds later) Even though it was through me that Sākha gained his position of commander-in-chief, he treats me like this! He is thoroughly rude and ungrateful! At least, Nigrodha is a good, wise, and agreeable man. I will go to him now.
Please tell King Nigrodha that Pottika, his comrade, has returned and is waiting to see him.
- Nigrodha: Pottika, my friend! Welcome back! Please tell me all about Rājagaha! Have you brought my parents? What! You look terrible! What has happened? No, don't say anything yet. Just wait! Servants! Come here! Take my comrade, Pottika, to the guest chamber, bathe him, shave him, and give him some clean silk robes to wear. It looks like he has been injured. Treat him gently and clean his wounds. When he is completely refreshed, bring him to the royal table that we may dine together.
- Pottika: Thank you, Sire. You are very gracious.
- Narrator 18: As they talked, King Nigrodha asked about Pottika's parents, as well as about his own. He expressed disappointment that none of them had chosen to move to Bārānasi, but he was gratified to learn that they were all well and contented in Rājagaha.
In the meantime, Sākha became worried.
- Sākha: Pottika is angry and is bound to slander me to the king. If I am there, maybe he will feel too intimidated to say anything against me. I had better hurry to the palace.
- Doorman: Your Majesty, your commander-in-chief has arrived and would like to see you.
- Nigrodha: Sākha, my friend! How good of you to come! Pottika has just returned from Rājagaha. He has news of our parents. Come and join us. Please sit down!
- Sākha: Well, Your Majesty . . .
- Pottika: Sire, when I first got back to Bārānasi, I went to Sākha's house, hoping to rest there before coming to you. Sākha refused to see me. He called me a lowborn son of a tailor and did not even recognize me as his comrade. He went so far as to set his men on me. They beat me and threw me down the stairs. Can you believe it? We've been together since we were babies!
- Nigrodha: I have never heard of such ingratitude as Sākha has shown! The three of us have always lived together! We've been comrades all our lives, and our shares of this kingdom are entirely from you! A good deed done to a virtuous man returns double, but a good deed done to an evil man is wasted indeed!
Well, Sākha, do you recognize Pottika as your comrade? (Pause)
You can't answer? Disgraceful!
Guards! Seize this worthless traitor who refuses to recognize our friend. Get him out of my sight, and kill him!

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Pottika: No, Your Majesty! Show mercy! Life, once taken, cannot be brought back. Forgive the fool, and let him live. I wish him no harm.

Nigrodha: Well, Pottika, I appreciate your compassion. Sākha, you are fortunate to have a friend as faithful as Pottika. I forgive you, and I will spare you life, but you must no longer stay in my court. Gather your belongings and leave the palace. You are no longer in my service.

Pottika, my loyal comrade, you must become my commander-in-chief! I appoint you to that esteemed position.

Pottika: No, Your Majesty. I am flattered by the offer, but commander-in-chief of the army is no position for me. Please let me be your treasurer instead. After all, that is what the rooster foretold.

Nigrodha: Of course, my friend. That is perfectly suited to you. I hereby appoint you my royal treasurer. I know that my wealth will always be safe in your hands!

Narrator 19: Pottika prospered in his new post and was blessed with a large family. He was often heard to exclaim:

Pottika: Even death with King Nigrodha would be better than living with Sākha!

(Pause)

Narrator 20: Having concluded his story, the Buddha identified the birth.

The Buddha: At that time, Devadatta was Sākha, Ānanda was Pottika, and I was Nigrodha.

Bhikkhus: Sadhu! Sadhu!! Sadhu!!!