

PROGRAM NOTES

Hare

One particular fast-day the wise hare lay in his thicket. As the giving of alms while fasting brings great reward, the hare thought to himself, if any supplicant comes, I will give him my own flesh. Such fiery spiritual zeal heated up the marble throne of Sakka, the ruler of the heaven of sensual pleasure, and he resolved to test the hare. He disguised himself as a Brahman and appeared before the future Buddha.

“Brahman, why are you standing there?” asked the hare.

“Pandit, if I could only get something to eat, I would keep the fast-day vows and perform the duties of a monk.”

The future Buddha was delighted. “Brahman,” he said, “Today I will give alms such as I never gave before. I will sacrifice my life by jumping into this bed of live coals. And as soon as my body is cooked, eat my flesh and perform the duties of a monk.”

The future Buddha shook himself three times, saying, “If there are any insects in my fur, I must not let them die.” Then “throwing his whole body into the jaws of his generosity” (as the Sutra puts it), he jumped into the bed of coals, as delighted in mind as a royal flamingo when it alights in a cluster of lotus blossoms.

The fire, however, was unable to burn even a hair-pore of the future Buddha’s body. “Brahman,” said the hare, “the fire you have made is exceedingly cold. What does it mean?”

“Pandit, I am no Brahman. I am Sakka, come to try you. Let your virtue be proclaimed to the end of this world-cycle.” And taking a mountain in his hand, he squeezed it and with the juice, drew the outline of a hare on the disk of the moon.

Rabbit

“Well, I ‘spect I got you dis time, Brer Rabbit,” sez Brer Fox. “Der you is, en der you'll stay ‘till I fixes up a brush-pile and fires her up, cuz I'm gwintetuh barbycue you.”

“I don't keer w'at you do wid me, Brer Fox,” sez Brer Rabbit, “so long as you don't fling me in dat der brier-patch. Roas' me alive,” sezee, “but don't fling me in dat brier-patch!”

“Hit's so much trouble tuh kindle a fire,” sez Brer Fox, sezee, “dat I ‘spect I'll hafta hang you.”

“Hang me jus as high as you please, Brer Fox,” sez Brer Rabbit, sezee, “but fer de Lord's sake don't fling me in dat briar-patch.”

“I ain't got no string,” sez Brer Fox, sezee, “an now I speck I'll hafta skin you,” sezee.

“Skin me, Brer Fox,” sez Brer Rabbit, sezee, “snatch out my eyeballs, tear out my ears by de roots, an' cut off my legs,” sezee, “but do please, Brer Fox, don't fling me in dat brier-patch!”

Brer Fox wanta hurt Brer Rabbit bad as he kin, so he catch 'im by de behime legs an' slung 'im right in de middle uh de brierpatch. Dar wuz a considerbul flutter whar Brer Rabbit struck de bushes, an' Brer Fox sorta hang 'roun' tuh see w'at wuz gwinter happen. Bimeby he hear somebody call 'im, an' way up de hill he see Brer Rabbit settin' crosslegged on a chinkapin log combin' de tar outa his hair wid a chip. Brer Rabbit holler out:

“Bred an' bawn in a brier-patch, Brer Fox--bred an' bawn in a brier-patch!” An' wid dat he skip out jus' as lively as a cricket in de embers.