Ja 108 — Bahiya Jātaka

English translation by Robert Chalmers.

Source: https://raw.githubusercontent.com/suttacentral/sc-data/2d9ca8da858f94302ed6783e2717bf73d651881b/html_text/en/pli/sutta/kn/ja/vol1/ja108.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

“Learn thou betimes.”—This story was told by the Master, while he was dwelling in the Gabled Chamber at the Great Grove near Vesali, about a Licchavi, a pious prince who had embraced the Truth. He had invited the Brotherhood with the Buddha at their head to his house, and there had shewn great bounty towards them. Now his wife was a very fat woman, almost bloated in appearance, and she was badly dressed.

Thanking the King for his hospitality, the Master returned to the monastery and, after a discourse to the Brethren, retired to his perfumed chamber.

Assembled in the Hall of Truth, the Brethren expressed their surprise that a man like this Licchavi prince should have such a fat badly-dressed woman for his wife, and be so fond of her. Entering the Hall and hearing what they were discussing, the Master said, “Brethren, as now, so in former times he was fond of a fat woman.” Then, at their request, he told this story of the past.

Once on a time when Brahmadatta was reigning in Benares, the Bodhisatta was one of his courtiers. And a fat and badly-dressed country woman, who worked for hire, was passing near the courtyard of the palace, when pressing need for an occasion came upon her. Bending down with her raiment decently gathered round her, she accomplished her purpose, and was erect again in a trice.

The King chanced to be looking out on to the courtyard through a window at the time and saw this. Thought he, “A woman who could manage this with so much decency must enjoy good health. She would be sure to be cleanly in her house; and a son born into a cleanly house would be sure to grow up cleanly and virtuous. I will make her my queen-consort.” And accordingly the King, first assuring himself that she was not another’s, sent for her and made her his queen. And she became very near and dear to him. Not long afterwards a son was born, and this son became an Universal Monarch.

Observing her fortunes, the Bodhisatta took occasion to say to the King, “Sire, why should not care be taken duly to fulfil all proper observances, when this excellent woman by her modesty and decency in relieving nature won your majesty’s favour and rose to such fortune?” And he went on to utter this stanza—

Learn thou betimes, though headstrong folk there be;

The rustic pleased the King by modesty.

Thus did the Great Being commend the virtues of those who devoted themselves to the study of proper observances.

His story ended, the Master identified the Birth by saying, “The husband and wife of to-day were also the husband and wife of those times, and I the wise courtier.”

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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Prepared for SuttaCentral by Bhikkhu Sujato.