Ja 124 — Amba Jātaka

English translation by Robert Chalmers.

Source: https://raw.githubusercontent.com/suttacentral/sc-data/2d9ca8da858f94302ed6783e2717bf73d651881b/html_text/en/pli/sutta/kn/ja/vol1/ja124.html

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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

“Toil on, my brother.”—This story was told by the Master while at Jetavana, about a good brahmin belonging to a noble Savatthi family who gave his heart to the Truth, and, joining the Brotherhood, became constant in all duties. Blameless in his attendance on teachers; scrupulous in the matter of foods and drinks; zealous in the performance of the duties of the chapter-house, bath-house, and so forth; perfectly punctual in the observance of the fourteen major and of the eighty minor disciplines; he used to sweep the monastery, the cells, the cloisters, and the path leading to their monastery, and gave water to thirsty folk. And because of his great goodness folk gave regularly five hundred meals a clay to the Brethren; and great gain and honour accrued to the monastery, the many prospering for the virtues of one. And one day in the Hall of Truth the Brethren fell to talking of how that Brother’s goodness had brought them gain and honour, and filled many lives with joy. Entering the Hall, the Master asked, and was told, what their talk was about. “This is not the first time, Brethren,” said he, “that this Brother has been regular in the fulfilment of duties, In days gone by five hundred hermits going out to gather fruits were supported on the fruits that his goodness provided.” So saying, he told this story of the past.

Once on a time when Brahmadatta was reigning in Benares, the Bodhisatta was born a brahmin in the North, and, growing up, gave up the world and dwelt at the head of five hundred hermits at the foot of the mountains. In those days there came a great drought upon the Himalaya country, and everywhere the water was dried up, and sore distress fell upon all beasts. Seeing the poor creatures suffering from thirst, one of the hermits cut down a tree which he hollowed into a trough; and this trough he filled with all the water he could find. In this way he gave the animals to drink. And they came in herds and drank and drank till the hermit had no time left to go and gather fruits for himself. Heedless of his own hunger, he worked away to quench the animals’ thirst. Thought they to themselves, “So wrapt up is this hermit in ministering to our wants that he leaves himself no time to go in quest of fruits. He must be very hungry. Let us agree that everyone of us who comes here to drink must bring such fruits as he can to the hermit.” This they agreed to do, every

animal that came bringing mangoes or jambus or bread-fruits or the like, till their offerings would have filled two hundred and fifty waggons; and there was food for the whole five hundred hermits with abundance to spare. Seeing this, the Bodhisatta exclaimed, “Thus has one main’s goodness been the means of supplying with food all these hermits. Truly, we should always be stedfast in right-doing.” So saying, he uttered this stanza—

Toil on, my brother; still in hope stand fast;

Nor let thy courage flag and tire;

Forget not him, who by his grievous fast

Reaped fruits beyond his heart’s desire.

Such was the teaching of the Great Being to the band of hermits.

His lesson ended, the Master identified the Birth by saying, “This Brother was the good hermit of those days, and I the hermits’ master.”

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.