Ja 14 — Vatamiga Jātaka

English translation by Robert Chalmers.

Source: https://raw.githubusercontent.com/suttacentral/sc-data/2d9ca8da858f94302ed6783e2717bf73d651881b/html_text/en/pli/sutta/kn/ja/vol1/ja14.html

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Edited by E. B. Cowell

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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

“There’s nothing worse.” This story was told by the Master while at Jetavana, about the Elder Tissa, called Direct-alms the Less. Tradition says that, while the Master was dwelling at the Bamboo-grove near Rajagaha, the scion of a wealthy house, Prince Tissa by name, coming one day to the Bamboo-grove and there hearing a discourse from the Master, wished to join the Brotherhood, but, being refused because his parents would not give their consent, obtained their consent by following Rattha-pala’s example and refusing food for seven days, and finally took the vows with the Master.

About a fortnight after admitting this young man, the Master repaired from the Bamboo-grove to Jetavana, where the young nobleman undertook the Thirteen Obligations and passed his time in going his round for alms from house to house, omitting none. Under the name of the Elder Tissa Direct-alms the Less, he became as bright and shining a light in Buddhism as the moon in the vault of heaven.

A festival having been proclaimed at this time at Rajagaha, the Elder’s mother and father laid in a silver casket the trinkets he used to wear as a-layman, and took it to heart, bewailing thus,—“At other festivals our son used to wear this or that bravery as he kept the festival; and he, our only son, has been taken away by the sage Gotama to the town of Savatthi. Where is our son sitting now or standing?” Now a slave-girl who came to the house, noticed the lady of the house weeping, and asked her why she was weeping; and the lady told her all.

“What, madam, was your son fond of?” “Of such and such a thing,” replied the lady. “Well, if you will give me authority in this house, I’ll fetch your son back.” “Very good,” said the lady in assent, and gave the girl her expenses and despatched her with a large following, saying, “Go, and manage to fetch my son back.”

So away the girl rode in a palanquin to Savatthi, where she took up her residence in the street which the Elder used to frequent for alms. Surrounding herself with servants of her own, and never allowing the Elder to see his father's people about, she watched the moment when the Elder entered the street and at once bestowed on him an alms of victual and drink. And when she had bound him in the bonds of the craving of taste, she got him eventually to seat himself in the house, till she knew that her gifts of food as alms had put him in her power. Then she feigned sickness and lay down in an inner chamber.

In the due course of his round for alms at the proper time, the Elder came to the door of her house; and her people took the Elder's bowl and made him sit down in the house.

When he had seated himself, he said, "Where is the lay-sister?" "She's ill, sir; she would be glad to see you."

Bound as he was by the bonds of the craving of taste, he broke his vow and obligation, and went to where the woman was lying.

Then she told him the reason of her coming, and so wrought on him that, all because of his being hound by the bonds of the craving of taste, she made him forsake the Brotherhood; when he was in her power, she put him in the palanquin and came back with a large following to Rajagaha again.

All this was noised abroad. Sitting in the Hall of Truth, the Brethren discussed the matter, saying, "Sirs, it is reported that a slave-girl has bound in the bonds of the craving of taste, and has carried off, the Elder Tissa the Less, called Direct-alms." Entering the Hall the Master sat down on his jewelled seat, and said, "What, Brethren, is the subject of discussion in this conclave?" They told him the incident.

"Brethren," said he, "this is not the first time that, in bondage to the craving of taste, he has fallen into her power; in bygone days too he fell into her power in like manner." And so saying, he told this story of the past.

Once on a time when Brahmadatta was reigning in Benares he had a gardener named Sanjaya. Now there came into the king's pleasaunce a Wind-antelope, which fled away at the sight of Sanjaya, but the latter let it go without terrifying the timid creature. After several visits the antelope used to roam about in the pleasaunce. Now the gardener was in the habit of gathering flowers and fruits and taking them day by day to the king. Said the king to him one day, "Have you noticed anything strange, friend gardener, in the pleasaunce?" "Only, sir, that a Wind-antelope has come about the grounds." "Could you catch it, do you think?" "Oh, yes; if I had a little honey, I'd bring it right into your majesty's palace."

The king ordered the honey to be given to the man and he went off with it to the pleasaunce, where he first anointed with the honey the grass at the spots frequented by the antelope, and then hid himself. When the antelope came and tasted the honied grass it was so snared by the lust of taste that it would go nowhere else but only to the

pleasaunce. Marking the success of his snare, the gardener began gradually to show himself. The appearance of the man made the antelope take to flight for the first day or two, but growing familiar with the sight of him, it gathered confidence and gradually came to eat grass from the man's hand. He, noting that the creature's confidence had been won, first strewed the path as thick as a carpet with broken boughs; then tying a gourd full of honey on his shoulder and sticking a bunch of grass in his waist-cloth, he kept dropping wisps of the honied grass in front of the antelope till at last he got it right inside the palace. No sooner was the antelope inside than they shut the door. At sight of men the antelope, in fear and trembling for its life, dashed to and fro about the hall; and the king coming down from his chamber above, and seeing the trembling creature, said, "So timid is the Wind-antelope that for a whole week it will not revisit a spot where it has so much as seen a man; and if it has once been frightened anywhere, it never goes back there again all its life long. Yet, ensnared by the lust of taste, this wild thing from the jungle has actually come to a place like this. Truly, my friends, there is nothing viler in the world than this lust of taste." And he put his teaching into this stanza—

There's nothing worse, men say, than taste to snare,

At borne or with one's friends. Lo! taste it was

That unto Sanjaya deliver'd up

The jungle-haunting antelope so wild.

And with these words he let the antelope go back to its forest again.

When the Master had ended his lesson, and had repeated what he had said as to that Brother's having fallen into that woman's power in bygone days as well as in the present time, he shewed the connexion and identified the Birth, by saying, "In those days this slave-girl was Sanjaya, Direct-alms the Less was the wind-antelope, and I myself was the King of Benares."

The Jātaka, or Stories of the Buddha's Former Births, edited by E.B. Cowell, published by The Cambridge University Press.

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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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