Ja 223 — Puta-Bhatta Jātaka

English translation by W. H. D. Rouse.

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Source revision: 2d9ca8da858f94302ed6783e2717bf73d651881b

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Edited by E. B. Cowell

Original edition: Cambridge University Press, volume 2, 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

“Honour for honour,” etc.—This story the Master told in Jetavana, about a landed proprietor.

Tradition has it that once a landowner who was a citizen of Savatthi did business with a landowner from the country. Taking his wife with him, he visited this man, his debtor; but the debtor averred that he could not pay. The other, in anger, set out for home without having broken his fast. On the road, some people met him; and seeing how famished the roan was, gave him food, bidding him share it with his wife.

When he got this, he grudged his wife a share. So addressing her he said, “Wife, this is a well-known haunt of thieves, so you had better go in front.” Having thus got rid of her, he ate all the food, and then showed her the pot empty, saying—“Look here, wife! they gave me an empty pot!” She guessed that he had eaten it all up himself, and was much annoyed.

As they both passed by the monastery in Jetavana, they thought they would go into the park and get a drink of water. There sat the Master, waiting on purpose to see them, like a hunter on the trail, seated under the shade of his perfumed cell. He greeted then kindly, and said, “Lay Sister, is your husband kind and loving?” “I love him, sir,” she replied, “but he does not love me; let alone other days, this very day he was given a pot of food on the way, and gave not a bit to me, but ate it all himself.” “Lay Sister, so it has always been—you loving and kind, and he loveless; but when by the help of the wise he learns your worth, he will do you all honour.” Then, at her request, he told an old-world tale.

On a time, while Brahmadatta was king in Benares, the Bodhisatta was the son of one of the king’s court. On coming of age he became the king’s adviser in things temporal and spiritual. It happened that the king was afraid of his son, lest he might injure him; and sent him away. Taking his wife, the son departed from that city, and came to a village of Kasi, where he- dwelt. By and by when the father died, his son hearing of it set out to go back to

Benares; “that I may receive the kingdom which is my birthright,” said he. On his way one gave him a mess of pottage, saying, “Eat, and give to your wife also.” But he gave her none, and did eat it all himself. Thought she—“A cruel man this, indeed!” and she was full of sorrow.

When he had come to Benares, and received his kingdom, he made her the queen consort; but thinking—“A little is enough for her,” he showed her no other consideration or honour, not so much as to ask her how she did.

“This queen,” thought the Bodhisatta, “serves the king well, and loves him; but the king spends not a thought upon her. I will make him show her respect and honour.”

So he came to the queen, and made salutation, and stood aside. “What is it, dear sir?” she asked.

“Lady,” he asked, “how can we serve you? ought you not to give the old Fathers a piece of cloth or a dish of rice?”

“Dear sir, I never receive anything myself; what shall I give to you? When I received, did I not give? But now the king gives me nothing at all: let alone giving anything else, as he was going along the road he received a bowl of rice, and never gave me a bit—he ate it all himself.”

“Well, madam, will you be able to say this in the king’s presence?”

“Yes,” she replied.

“Very well then. To-day, when I stand before the king, when I ask my question do you give the same answer: this very day will I make your goodness known.” So the Bodhisatta went on before, and stood in the king’s presence. And she too went and stood near the king.

Then said the Bodhisatta, “Madam, you are very cruel. Ought you not to give the Fathers a piece of cloth or a dish of food?” And she made answer, “Good sir, I myself receive nothing from the king: what can I give to you?”

“Are you not the queen consort?” quoth he.

“Good sir,” said she, “what boots the place of a queen consort, when no respect is paid? What will the king give me now? When he received a dish of rice on the road, he gave me none, but ate it all himself.” And the Bodhisatta asked him, “Is it so, O king?” And the king assented. When the Bodhisatta saw that the king assented, “Then lady,” quoth he, “why dwell here with the king after he has become unkindly? In the world, union without love is painful. While you dwell here, loveless union with the king will bring you sorrow. These folk honour him that honours, and when one honours not—as soon as you see it, you should go elsewhither; they that dwell in the world are many.” And he repeated the stanzas following:

Honour for honour, love for love is due:

Do good to him who does the same to you:

Observance breeds observance; but 'Tis plain

None need help him who will not help again.

"Return neglect for negligence, nor stay

To comfort him whose love is past away.

The world is wide; and when the birds descry

That trees have lost their fruit—away they fly."

Hearing this, the king gave his queen all honour; and from that time forward they dwelt together in friendship and harmony.

When the Master had ended this discourse, he declared the Truths, and identified the Birth—at the conclusion of the Truths the husband and wife entered on the Fruit of the First Path—"The husband and wife are the same in both cases, and the wise counsellor was I myself."

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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