Ja 235 — Vaccha-Nakha Jātaka

English translation by W. H. D. Rouse.

Source: https://raw.githubusercontent.com/suttacentral/sc-data/2d9ca8da858f94302ed6783e2717bf73d651881b/html_text/en/pli/sutta/kn/ja/vol2/ja235.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

“Houses in the world are sweet,” etc.—This story the Master told at Jetavana, about Roja the Mallian.

We learn that this man, who was a lay friend of Ananda’s, sent the Elder a message that he should come to him. The Elder took leave of the Master, and went. He served the Elder with all sorts of food, and sat down on one side, engaging him in a pleasant conversation. Then he offered the Elder a share of his house, tempting him by the five channels of desire. “Ananda, Sir, I have at home great store of live and dead stock. I will divide it and give you half; let us live in one house together!” The Elder declared to him the suffering which is involved in desire; then rose from his seat, and returned to the monastery.

When the Master asked whether he had seen Roja, he replied that he had. “What did he say to you?” “Sir, Roja invited me to return to the world; then I explained to him the suffering involved in desires and the worldly life.” The Master said, “Ananda, this is not the first time that Roja the Mallian has invited anchorites to return to the world; he did the same before;” and then, at his request, he told a story of the olden time.

Once upon a time, when Brahmadatta was king of Benares, the Bodhisatta was one of a family of brahmins who lived in a certain market town. Coming to years, he took up the religious life, and dwelt for a long time amid the Himalayas.

He went to Benares to purchase salt and seasoning, and abode in the king’s grounds; next day he entered Benares.

Now a certain rich man of the place, pleased at his behaviour, took him home, gave him to eat, and receiving his promise to abide with him, caused him to dwell in the garden and attended to his wants. And they conceived a friendship each for the other.

One day, the rich man, by reason of his love and friendship for the Bodhisatta, thought this within himself: “The life of an ascetic is unhappy. I will persuade my friend Vacchanakha to unfrock himself; I will part my wealth in two, and give half to him, and we both will dwell together.” So one day, when the meal was done, he spake sweetly to his friend and said—

“Good Vacchanakha, unhappy is the hermit’s life; ’Tis pleasant to live in a house. Come now, let us both together take our pleasure as we will.” So saying, he uttered the first stanza—

“Houses in the world are sweet,

Full of food, and full of treasure;

There you have your fill of meat

Eating, drinking at your pleasure.”

The Bodhisatta on hearing him, thus replied: “Good Sir, from ignorance you have become greedy in desire, and call the householder’s life good, and the life of the ascetic bad; listen now, and I will tell you how bad is the householder’s life;” and he uttered the second stanza:

“He that hath houses peace can never know,

He lies and cheats, he must deal many a blow

On others’ shoulders: nought this fault can cure:

Then who into a house would willing go?”

With these words the great Buddha told the defects of a householder’s life, and went into the garden again.

When the Master had ended this discourse, he identified the Birth—“Roja the Mallian was the Benares merchant, and I was Vacchanakha the mendicant.”

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.