Ja 244 — Viticcha 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/ja244.html

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

“What he sees,” etc.—This story the Master told at Jetavana, about a turntail vagrant who wandered about the country.

It is said that this man could not find any one to argue with him in all India; till he came to Savatthi, and asked whether any one could dispute with him. Yes—ho was told—the Supreme Buddha; hearing which, he and a multitude with him repaired to Jetavana, and put a question to the Master, whilst he was discoursing in the midst of the four kinds of disciples. The Master answered his question, and then put one to him in return. This the man failed to answer, got up, and turned tail. The crowd sitting round exclaimed, “One word, Sir, vanquished the itinerant!” Said the Master, “Yes, Brethren, and just as I have vanquished him now with one word, so I did before.” Then he told a story of olden days.

Once upon a time, when Brahmadatta was king of Benares, the Bodhisatta was born a brahmin in the kingdom of Kasi. He grew up, and mastered his passions; and embracing the religious life, he dwelt a long time in the Himalayas.

He came down from the highlands, and took up his abode near a considerable town, in a hut of leaves built beside a bend of the river Ganges. A certain pilgrim, who found no one that could answer him throughout all India, came to that town. “Is there anyone,” asked he, “who can argue with me?”

Yes, they said, and told him the power of the Bodhisatta. So, followed by a great multitude, he made his way to the place where the Bodhisatta dwelt, and after greeting him, took a seat.

“Will you drink,” he asked, “of the Ganges water, infused with wild wood odours?”

The pilgrim tried to catch him in his words. “What is Ganges? Ganges may be sand, Ganges may be water, Ganges may be the near bank, Ganges may be the far bank!”

Said the Bodhisatta to the pilgrim, “Besides the sand, the water, the hither and the further bank, what other Ganges can you have?” The pilgrim had no answer for this; he rose up, and went away. When he had gone the Bodhisatta spake these verses by way of discourse to the assembled multitude—

“What he sees, he will not have;

What he sees not he will crave.

He may go a long way yet—

What he wants he will not get.

“He contemns what he has got;

Once ’Tis gained, he wants it not.

He craves everything always:

Who craves nothing earns our praise.”

When this discourse was ended, the Master identified the Birth: “The vagrant is the same in both cases, and I myself was then the ascetic.”

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.