Ja 252 — Tila-Mutthi 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/ja252.html

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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

“Now I bethink me,” etc.—This story the Master told in Jetavana, about a passionate man. We learn that there was a Brother who was full of bitterness. No matter how little was said to him, he fell in a rage and spoke roughly; showing wrath, hatred, and mistrust. In the Hall of Truth the Brethren discussed the matter. “Friend, how angry and bitter is Brother So-and-so! He goes snapping about for all the world like salt in the fire. Though he has adopted this peaceful religion, yet he cannot even restrain his anger.” The Master heard this and sent a brother to fetch the man in question. “Are you really as passionate as they say?” he asked. The man said he was. Then the Master added, “This is not the first time, Brethren, that this man has been passionate. He was just the sane before;” and he told them an old-world tale.

Once on a time, Brahmadatta the king of Benares had a son named Prince Brahmadatta. Now kings of former times, though there might be a famous teacher living in their own city, often used to send their sons to foreign countries afar off to complete their education, that by this means they might learn to quell their pride and highmindedness, and endure heat or cold, and be made acquainted with the ways of the world. So did this king. Calling his boy to him—now the lad was sixteen years old—he gave him one-soled sandals, a sunshade of leaves, and a thousand pieces of money, with these words:

“My son, get you to Takkasila, and study there.”

The boy obeyed. He bade his parents farewell, and in due course arrived at Takkasila. There he enquired for the teacher’s dwelling, and reached it at the time when the teacher had finished his lecture, and was walking up and down at the door of the house. When the lad set eyes upon the teacher, he loosed his shoes, closed his sunshade, and with a respectful greeting stood still where he was. The teacher saw that he was weary, and welcomed the new-corner. The lad ate, and rested a little. Then he returned to the teacher, and stood respectfully by him.

“Where have you come from?” he asked.

“From Benares.”

“Whose son are you?”

“I am the son of the king of Benares.”

“What brings you here?”

“I come to learn,” replied the lad.

“Well, have you brought a teacher’s fee? or do you wish to attend on me in return for teaching you?”

“I have brought a fee with me:” and with this he laid at the teacher’s feet his purse of a thousand pieces.

The resident pupils attend on their teacher by day, and at night they learn of him: but they who bring a fee are treated like the eldest sons in his house, and thus they learn. And this teacher, like the rest, gave schooling to the prince on every light and lucky day. Thus the young prince was taught.

Now one day, he went to bathe along with his teacher. There was an old woman, who had prepared some white seeds, and strewed them out before her: there she sat, watching them. The youth looked upon these white seeds, and desired to eat; he picked up a handful, and ate them.

“Yon fellow must be hungry,” thought she; but she said nothing, and sat silent.

Next day the same thing happened at the same time. Again the woman said nothing to him. On the third day, he did it again; then the old dame cried out, saying,

“The great Teacher is letting his pupils rob me!” and uplifting her arms she raised a lamentation.

The Teacher turned back. “What is it, mother?” he asked.

“Master, I have been parching some seeds, and your pupil took a handful and ate them! This he has done to-day, he did it yesterday, and he did it the day before! Surely he will eat me out of house and home!”

“Don’t cry, mother: I will see that you are paid.”

“Oh, I want no payment, master: only teach your pupil not to do it again.”

“See here, then, mother,” said he; and he caused two lads to take the young fellow by his two hands, and smote him thrice upon the back with a bamboo stick, bidding him take care not to do it again.

The prince was very angry with his teacher. With a bloodshot glare, he eyed him from his head to foot. The teacher observed how angry he was, and how he eyed him.

The youth applied himself to his work, and finished his courses. But the offence he hid away in his heart, and determined to murder his teacher. When the time came for him to go away, he said to him,

“O my Teacher, when I receive the kingdom of Benares, I will send for you. Then come to me, I pray.” And so he exacted a promise most affectionately.

He returned to Benares, and visited his parents, and showed proof of what he had learnt. Said the king, “I have lived to see my son again, and while I yet live, I will see the magnificence of his rule.” So he made his son king in his stead.

When the prince enjoyed the splendour of royalty, he remembered his grudge, and anger rose within him. “I will be the death of that fellow!” he thought, and sent off a messenger to fetch his teacher.

“I shall never be able to appease him while he is young,” thought the teacher; so he came not. But when the prince’s time of rule was half over, he thought he could appease him then; and he came, and stood at the king’s door, and sent to say that the teacher from Takkasila had arrived. The king was glad, and caused the brahmin to be led in. Then his anger rose, and his eyes grew bloodshot. He beckoned to those about him. “Ha, the place which my teacher struck still hurts me to-day! He has come here with death written upon his forehead, to die! To-day his life must end!” and he repeated the first two verses—

“Now I bethink me, for a few poor seeds, in days of yore,

You seized me by the arm, and beat me with a stick full sore.

Brahmin, are you in love with death, and do you nothing fear

For seizing me and beating me, that now you venture here?”

Thus he threatened him with death. As he heard, the teacher uttered the third verse:

“The gently born who uses blows ungentleness to quell—

This is right discipline, not wrath: the wise all know it well.”

“And so, great king, understand this yourself. Know that this is no just cause for anger. Indeed, if you had not been taught this lesson by me, you would have gone on taking cakes and sweets, fruit, and the like, until you became covetous through these acts of

theft; then by degrees you would have been lured on to house-breaking, highway robbery, and murder about the villages; the end would have been, that you would have been taken red-handed and haled before the king for a public enemy and a robber; and you would have come in fear of public punishment, when the king should say, 'Take this man, and punish him according to his crimes.' Whence could have come all this prosperity which you now enjoy? Is it not through me that you have attained to such magnificence?"

Thus did his teacher talk over the king. And the courtiers, who stood round, said when they heard his speech, "Of a truth, my lord, all your magnificence really belongs to your teacher!"

At once the king recognised the goodness of his teacher, and said to him,

"All my power I give to you, my teacher! receive the kingdom!" But the other refused, saying, "No, my lord king; I have no wish for the kingdom."

And the king sent to Takkasila for the teacher's wife and family; he gave them great power, and made him the royal priest; he treated him like a father, and obeyed his admonitions; and after bestowing gifts and doing good deeds he became destined for paradise.

When the Master had ended this discourse, he declared the Truths—at the conclusion of the Truths the passionate brother attained the Fruit of the Third Path, and many others entered on the First, or Second, or Third—"At that time the passionate Brother was the king; but the Teacher was I myself."

"'Tis gentle to respect old age, red Goose:

Go where you will: I set your husband loose:"

"Your mien shows breeding, and your clear calm eye:

You must have left some noble family.

What made you wish to leave your home and wealth

To be an anchorite for your soul's health?"

and adds yet this other:

"Clad in a semblance of fair piety

But all deceitful, boldly forth leapt he,

A babbler of vain sayings, mean and base,

Intemperate, the ruin of his race."

(The last four line; occur in Sutta Nipata, verse 89.)

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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