Ja 260 — Duta 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/ja260.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

“O king, the Belly’s messenger,” etc. This story the Master told while staying at Jetavana, about a Brother who was addicted to covetousness. The circumstances will be given at large under the Kaka Birth, in Book the Ninth. Here again the Master told the Brother, “You were greedy before, Brother, as you are now; and in olden days for your greed you had your head cleft with a sword.” Then he told an old-world story.

Once on a time, when Brahmadatta was king over Benares, the Bodhisatta was born as his son. He grew up, and finished his education at Takkasila. On his father’s death, he inherited the kingdom, and he was very dainty in his eating; accordingly he earned the name of King Dainty. There was so much extravagance about his eating, that on one dish he spent an hundred thousand pieces. When he ate, he ate not within doors; but as he wished to confer merit upon many people by showing them the costly array of his meals, he caused a pavilion adorned with jewels to be set up at the door, and at the time of eating, he had this decorated, and there he sat upon a royal dais made all of gold, under a white parasol with princesses all around him, and ate the food of an hundred delicate flavours from a dish which cost an hundred thousand pieces of money.

Now a certain greedy man saw the king’s manner of eating, and desired to have a taste. Unable to master his craving, he girt up his loins tight, and ran up to the king, calling out loudly—“Messenger! messenger! O king”—with his hands held up. (At that time and in that nation, if a man called out “Messenger!” no one would stay him; and so it was that the multitude divided and gave him way to pass.)

The man ran up swiftly, and catching a piece of rice from the king’s dish, he put it in his mouth. The swordsman drew his sword, to cleave the man’s head. But the king stayed him. “Smite not,” said he; then to the man, “fear nothing, eat on!” He washed his hands, and sat down. After the meal, the king caused his own drinking water and betel nut to be given to the man, and then said—

“Now my man, you had tidings, you said. What are your tidings?”

“O king, I am a messenger from Lust and the Belly. Says Lust to me, Go! and sent me here as her messenger;” and with these words he spake the first two stanzas—

“O king, the Belly’s messenger you see:

O lord of chariots, do not angry be!

For Belly’s sake men very far will go,

Even to ask a favour of a foe.

“O king, the Belly’s messenger you see;

O lord of chariots, do not angry be!

The Belly holds beneath his puissant sway

All men upon the earth both night and day.”

When this the king heard, he said, “That is true; Belly-messengers are these; urged by lust they go to and fro, and lust makes them go. How prettily this man has put it!” he was pleased with him, and uttered the third stanza—

“Brahmin, a thousand red kine I present

To thee; thereto the bull, for complement.

One messenger may to another give;

For Belly’s messengers are all that live.”

So said the king; and continued, “I have heard something I never heard before, or thought of, said by this great man.” And so pleased was he, that he showered honours upon him.

When the Master had ended this discourse, he declared the Truths and identified the Birth—at the conclusion of the Truths the greedy Brother reached the Fruit of the Third Path, and many others entered the other Paths—“The greedy man is the same in both stories, and I was King Dainty.”

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.