Ja 289 — Nana-Cchanda 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/ja289.html

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Edited by E. B. Cowell

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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

“We live in one house,” etc.—This story the Master told in Jetavana, about the venerable Ananda’s taking a valuable article. The circumstances will be explained in the Junha Birth, in the Eleventh Book.

Now once upon a time, when Brahmadatta was reigning in Benares, the Bodhisatta was horn as the son of his Queen Consort. He grew up, and was educated at Takkasila,; and became king on his father’s death. There was a family priest of his father’s who had been removed from his post, and being very poor lived in an old house.

One night it happened that the king was walking about the city in disguise, to explore it. Some thieves, their work done, had been drinking in a wine-shop, and were carrying some more liquor home in a jar. They spied him there in the street, and crying—“Halloo, who are you?” they knocked him down, and took his upper robe; then, they picked up their jar, and off they went, scaring him the while.

The aforesaid brahmin chanced at the time to be in the street observing the constellations. He saw how the king had fallen into unfriendly hands, and called to his wife; quickly she came, asking what it was. Said he, “Wife, our king has got into the hands of his enemies!” “Why, your reverence,” said she, “what dealings have you with the king? His brahmins will see to it.” This the king heard, and, going on a little, called out to the rascals, “I’m a poor man, masters—take my robe and let me go!” As he said this again and again, they let him go out of pity. He took note of the place they lived in, and turned back again.

Said the brahmin to his wife, “Wife, our king has got away from the hands of his enemies!” The king heard this as before; and entered his palace.

When dawn came, the king summoned his brahmins, and asked then a question.

“Have you been taking observations?”

“Yes, my lord.”

“Was it lucky or unlucky?”

“Lucky, my lord.”

“No eclipse?”

“No, my lord, none.”

Said the king, “Go and fetch me the brahmin from such and such a house,” giving them directions.

So they fetched the old chaplain, and the king proceeded to question him.

“Did you take observations last night, master?”

“Yes, my lord, I did.”

“Was there any eclipse?”

“Yes, my lord: last night you fell into the hands of your enemies, and in a moment you got free again.”

The king said, “That is the kind of man a star-gazer ought to be.” He dismissed the other brahmins; he told the old one that he was pleased with him, and bade him ask a boon. The man asked leave to consult with his family, and the king allowed him.

The man summoned wife and son, daughter-in-law and maidservant, and laid the matter before them. “The king has granted me a boon; what shall I ask?”

Said the wife, “Get me a hundred milch kine.”

The son, named Chatta, said, “For me, a chariot drawn by fine lily-white thoroughbreds.”

Then the daughter-in-law, “For me, all manner of trinkets, earrings set with gems, and so forth!”

And the maidservant (whose name was Punna), “For me, a pestle and mortar, and a winnowing basket.”

The brahmin himself wanted to have the revenue of a village as his boon. So when he returned to the king, and the king wanted to know whether his wife had been asked, the brahmin replied, “Yes, my lord king; but those who are asked are not all of one mind”; and he repeated a couple of stanzas—

“We live in one house, O king,

But we don’t all want the same thing.

My wife’s wish—a hundred kine;

A prosperous village is mine;

The student’s of course is a carriage and horses,

Our girl wants an earring fine.

While poor little Punna, the maid,

Wants pestle and mortar, she said!”

“All right,” said the king, “they shall all have what they want”; and repeated the remaining lines—

“Give a hundred kine to the wife,

To the goodman a village for life,

And a jewelled earring to the daughter:

A carriage and pair be the student’s share,

And the maid gets her pestle and mortar.”

Thus the king gave the brahmin what he wished, and great honour besides; and bidding him thenceforward busy himself about the king’s business, he kept the brahmin in attendance upon himself.

When the Master had ended this discourse, he identified the Birth: “At that time the Brahmin was Ananda, but the king 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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