Ja 296 — Samudda 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/ja296.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

“Over the salt sea wave,” etc.—This story the Master told at Jetavana, about Elder Upananda. This man was a great eater and drinker; there was no satisfying him even with cartloads of provisions. During the rainy season he would pass his time at two or three different settlements, leaving his shoes in one, his walking-stick in another, and his water jar in a third, and one he lived in himself. When he visited a country monastery, and saw the brothers with their requisites all ready, he began to talk about the four classes of contented ascetics; laid hold of their garments, and made them pick up rags from the dust-heap; made them take earthen bowls, and give him any bowls that he fancied and their metal bowls; then he filled a cart with them, and carried them off to Jetavana. One day people began to talk in the Hall of Truth. “Friend, Upananda of the Sakka clan, a great eater, a greedy fellow, has been preaching religion to other people, and here he comes with a cartful of priests’ property!” The Master came in, and wanted to know what they were talking of as they sat there. They told him. “Brethren,” said he, “Upananda has gone wrong before by talking about this contentment. But a man ought first of all to become modest in his desires, before praising the good behaviour of other people.

“Yourself first stablish in propriety,

Then teach; the wise should not self-seeking be.”

Pointing out this verse from the Dhammapada, and blaming Upananda, he went on, “This is not the first time, Brethren, that Upananda has been greedy. Long ago, he thought even the water in the ocean ought to be saved.” And he told an old-world tale.

Once upon a time, when Brahmadatta was king of Benares, the Bodhisatta became a Sea-spirit. Now it so happened that a Water-crow was passing over the sea. He went flying about, and trying to cheek the shoals of fish and flocks of birds, crying,

“Don’t drink too much of the sea-water! be careful of it!” On seeing him, the Sea-spirit repeated the first stanza:

“Over the salt sea wave who flies?

Who checks the shoals of fish, and tries

The monsters of the deep to stay

Lest all the sea be drunk away?”

The Water-crow heard this, and answered with the second stanza:

“A drinker never satisfied

So people call me the world wide,

To drink the sea I fain would trey,

And drain the lord of rivers dry.’”

On hearing which the Sea-spirit repeated the third:

“The ocean ever ebbs away,

And fills again the selfsame day.

Who ever knew the sea to fail?

To drink it up can none avail!”

With these words the spirit assumed a terrible shape and frightened the Water-crow away.

When the Master had ended this discourse, he identified the Birth: “At that time, Upananda was the Water-crow, but the Spirit 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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Prepared for SuttaCentral by Bhikkhu Sujato.