Ja 324 — Cammasataka Jātaka

English translation by H. T. Francis and R. A. Neil.

Source: https://raw.githubusercontent.com/suttacentral/sc-data/2d9ca8da858f94302ed6783e2717bf73d651881b/html_text/en/pli/sutta/kn/ja/vol3/ja324.html

Source revision: 2d9ca8da858f94302ed6783e2717bf73d651881b

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Edited by E. B. Cowell

Original edition: Cambridge University Press, volume 3, 1897

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

“The kindly beast,” etc.—This story was told by the Master while living at Jetavana, about a mendicant priest who wore a leather jerkin. Both his upper and under garment, it is said, were of leather. One day sallying out of the monastery, he went his rounds in Savatthi for alms, till he came to the fighting-ground of the rams. A ram on seeing him drew back, desiring to butt him. The mendicant thought, “He is doing this, as an act of respect for me,” and himself did not draw back. The ram came on with a rush and striking him on the thigh felled him to the ground. This case of imaginary salutation was blazed abroad in the Congregation of the Brethren. The matter was discussed by them in the Hall of Truth, as to how the leather-coated mendicant fancied he was being saluted and met with his death. The Master came and inquired the subject of their discussion and on being told what it was said, “Not now only, Brethren, but of old too this ascetic imagined he was being saluted and so came by his death,” and he then related to them an old-world legend.

Once upon a time the Bodhisatta was born in a merchant family and plied his trade. At that time a certain religious mendicant, clad in a leather garment, in going his rounds for alms, came to the rams’ fighting ground, and on seeing a ram falling back before him, he fancied it did this as a mark of respect, and did not himself retire. “In the whole world,” he thought, “this ram alone recognises my merits,” and raising his joined hands in respectful salutation he stood and repeated the first stanza:

The kindly beast obeisance makes before

The high-caste brahmin versed in holy lore.

Good honest creature thou,

Famous above all other beasts, I vow!

At this moment a wise merchant sitting in his stores, to restrain the mendicant, uttered the second stanza:

Brahmin, be not so rash this beast to trust,

Else will he haste to lay thee in the dust,

For this the ram falls back,

To gain an impetus for his attack.

While this wise merchant was still speaking, the ram came on at full speed, and striking the mendicant on the thigh, knocked him down. He was maddened with the pain and as he lay groaning, the Master, to explain the incident, gave utterance to the third stanza:

With broken leg and bowl for alms upset,

His damaged fortune he will sore regret.

Let him not weep with outstretched arms in vain,

Haste to the rescue, ere the priest is slain.

Then the mendicant repeated the fourth stanza:

Thus all that honour to the unworthy pay,

Share the same fate that I have met to-day;

Prone in the dust by butting ram laid low

To foolish confidence my death I owe.

Thus lamenting he there and then came by his death.

The Master, his lesson ended, thus identified the Birth: “The man in the leather coat of to-day was the same then as now. And I myself was the wise merchant.”

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.