Ja 336 — Brahachatta 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/ja336.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

“Grass is still,” etc.—This story was told by the Master while at Jetavana, of a certain rogue. The incident that suggested the story has been already related.

Once upon a time when Brahmadatta was reigning in Benares, the Bodhisatta became his minister and temporal and spiritual adviser. The king of Benares went against the king of Kosala with a large army, and coming to Savatthi, after a battle entered the city and took the king prisoner. Now the king of Kosala had a son, prince Chatta by name. He made his escape in disguise, and went to Takkasila, where he acquired the three Vedas and the eighteen liberal arts. Then he left Takkasila, and while still studying the practical uses of science he arrived at a certain border village. In a wood near this five hundred ascetics dwelt in huts of leaves. The prince approached them, and with the idea of learning somewhat of them, he became an ascetic, and so acquired whatsoever knowledge they had to impart. By and bye he became the leader of that band of disciples.

One day he addressed his company of holy men and asked them, saying, “Sirs, why do you not go to the central region?”

“Sir,” they said, “in the central region are said to be living wise men. They pose one with questions, call upon one to return thanks and to repeat a form of blessing, and reprove the incompetent. And therefore we are afraid to go there.”

“Fear not,” he said, “I will manage all this for you.”

“Then we will go,” they said. And all of them taking their various requisites in due course reached Benares. Now the king of Benares, having got all the kingdom of Kosala into his possession, set up loyal officials as governors, and himself, having collected all their available treasure, returned with his spoil to Benares. And filling iron pots with it, he buried them in the royal garden, and then continued to live there. So these holy men spent the

night in the king's garden, and on the morrow went into the city to beg alms, and came to the door of the palace. The king was so charmed with their deportment that he called them up and made them sit on the dais and gave them rice and cakes, and till it was their meal-time asked them such and such questions. Chatta won the king's heart by answering all his questions, and at the close of the meal he offered up various forms of thanksgiving. The king was still more pleased, and exacting a promise from them he made them all stay in his garden.

Now Chatta knew a spell for bringing to light buried treasure, and while dwelling there he thought, "Where can this fellow have put the money which belonged to my father?" So repeating the spell and looking about him he discovered that it was buried in the garden. And thinking that with this money he would recover his kingdom also, he addressed the ascetics and said, "Sirs, I am the son of the king of Kosala. When our kingdom was seized by the king of Benares, I escaped in disguise, and so far I have saved my life. But now I have got the property which belonged to my family. With this will I go and recover my kingdom. What will you do?"

"We too will go with you," they replied.

"Agreed," he said, and had some big leather sacks made, and at night digging a hole in the ground he pulled out the treasure-pots, and putting the money into the sacks he had the pots filled with grass. Then he ordered the five hundred holy men and others as well to take the money, and fled to Savatthi. There he had all the king's officers seized, and recovering his kingdom he restored the walls, watch-towers and other works, and having thus made the city impregnable against the attack of any hostile king, he took up his abode there. It was told to the king of Benares, "The ascetics have carried off the treasure from your garden and are fled." He went to the garden and opening the pots found only grass in them. And by reason of his lost treasure great sorrow fell upon him. Going to the city he wandered about murmuring, "Grass, grass," and no one could assuage his grief, Thought the Bodhisatta, "The king is in great trouble. He wanders to and fro, idly chattering. Except myself, no one has the power to drive away his sorrow. I will free him from his trouble." So one day while seated quietly with him, when the king began to chatter, he repeated the first stanza:

"Grass" is still thy constant cry;

Who did take thy grass away?

What thy need of it, or why

Dost thou this word only say?

The king, on hearing what he said, replied in a second stanza:

Chatta, holy man of fame,

As it happened this way came:

Him alone to blame I hold,

Substituting grass for gold.

The Bodhisatta, on hearing this, uttered a third stanza:

Canny folk their rule should make,

“Little give and mickle take.”

What he took was all his own,

What he left was grass alone.

On hearing this the king uttered the fourth stanza:

Virtue follows no such rules,

These are morals fit for fools.

Doubtful morals they must be,

Learning too is vanity.

While he thus blamed Chatta, the king by these words of the Bodhisatta was freed from his sorrow and ruled his kingdom righteously.

The Master here ended his lesson and identified the Birth: “At that time the knavish Brother was the great Chatta, and I myself was the wise minister.”

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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