Ja 337 — Pitha 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/ja337.html

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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

“Alas! we offered thee,” etc.—This story the Master told while living at Jetavana, about a certain Brother. He came, it was said, from the country to Jetavana, and, after putting away his bowl and robe, he saluted the Master and inquired of the young novices, saying, “Sirs, who look after the stranger Brethren that come to Savatthi?” “The Treasurer Anathapindika,” they said, “and the great and holy lay sister Visakha look after the order of the Brethren, and stand in the place of father and mother to them.” “Very good,” he said, and next day quite early, before a single brother had entered the house, he came to Anathapindika’s door. From his having come at an unseasonable hour there was no one to attend to him. Without getting anything there he went off to the door of Visakha’s house. There also from having come too early, he got nothing. After wandering hither and thither he came back, and finding the rice-gruel was all finished, he went off. Again he wandered about hither and thither, and on his return, finding the rice all finished, he went back to the monastery, and said, “The brethren here speak of these two families as faithful believers, but both of them really are without faith and unbelievers.” Thus did he go about abusing these families. So one day they started a discussion in the Hall of Truth, how that a certain Brother from the country came to the door of certain households too early, and failing to obtain alms went about reviling those families. When the Master came and inquired what was the topic the Brethren were sitting to discuss, on hearing what it was, he called the Brother and asked him if it were true. When the Brother said, “Yes, your Reverence, it is true,” the Master asked, “Why are you angry, Brother? Of old, before Buddha arose upon the world, even ascetics when they visited a household and received no alms, showed no anger.” And with this he told a story of the olden days.

Once upon a time when Brahmadatta was reigning in Benares, the Bodhisatta was born in a brahmin family, and when he was of age he studied all the arts at Takkasila, and subsequently adopted the religious life of an ascetic. After sojourning a long time in the Himalayas he went to Benares to procure salt and vinegar, and, taking up his abode in a garden, on the next day he entered the city for alms. There was at this time a merchant at

Benares, who was a faithful believer. The Bodhisatta asked which was a believing household, and on hearing of the merchant's family, he went to the door of his house. At that moment the merchant had gone to pay his respects to the king, and neither did any of his people happen to see him. So he turned back and came away.

Then the merchant who was returning from the palace saw him, and saluting him took his alms-bowl and led him to his house. There he offered him a seat and comforted him with the washing and anointing of his feet, and with rice, cakes and other food, and in the course of his meal he asked him one thing and another, and after he had finished eating, he saluted him and sitting respectfully on one side, he said, "Reverend Sir, strangers who have come to our doors, whether beggars or holy priests or brahmins, have never before gone away without receiving marks of honour and respect, but to-day owing to your not being seen by our retainers, you have gone away without being offered a seat, or water to drink, and without having your feet washed, or rice and gruel given you to eat. This is our fault. You must forgive us in this." And with these words he uttered the first stanza:

Alas! we offered thee no seat,

No water brought, nor anything to eat:

We here confess our sinfulness,

And pardon humbly, Holy Sir, entreat.

The Bodhisatta on hearing this repeated the second stanza:

Nought have I to condone,

No anger do I feel,

The thought just once I own

Across my mind did steal,

"Habits of people here

Are just a trifle queer."

The merchant hearing this responded in two more stanzas:

The custom of our family—'twas so

Received by us from ages long ago—

Is to provide the stranger with a seat,

Supply his needs, bring water for his feet

And every guest as kinsman dear to treat.

And the Bodhisatta, after sojourning there a few days, and teaching the merchant of Benares his duty, went straight back to the Himalayas, where he developed all the Faculties and Attainments.

The Master, having ended his lesson, revealed the Truths and identified the Birth— At the conclusion of the Truths the Brother attained fruition of the First Path— “At that time Ananda was the merchant of Benares, and I myself was the ascetic.”

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.