Ja 376 — Avariya 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/ja376.html

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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

“Ne’er be angry, etc.” The Master told this tale while dwelling at Jetavana, about a ferryman. This man, they say, was foolish and ignorant: he knew not the qualities of the Three Jewels and of all excellent beings: he was hasty, rough and violent. A certain country Brother, wishing to wait on the Buddha, came one evening to the ferry on the Aciravati and said to the ferryman: “Lay-brother, I wish to cross, let me have your boat.” “Sir, it is too late, stay here.” “Lay-brother, I cannot stay here, take me across.” The ferryman said angrily, “Come then, Sir Priest,” and took him into the boat: but he steered badly and made the boat ship water, so that the Brother’s robe was wet, and it was dark before he put him on the farther bank. When the Brother reached the monastery, he could not wait on the Buddha that day. Next day he went to the Master, saluted and sat on one side. The Master gave greeting and asked when he had come. “Yesterday.” “Then why do you not wait on me till to-day?” When he heard his reason, the Master said, “Not now only, but of old also that man was rough: and he annoyed wise men of old, as he did you.” And when asked he told an old-world tale.

Once upon a time when Brahmadatta was king in Benares, the Bodhisatta was born in a brahmin family. When he grew up, he was educated in all the arts at Takkasila , and became an ascetic. After living long on wild fruits in the Himalaya, he came to Benares for salt and vinegar: he stayed in the royal garden and next day went into the city to beg. The king saw him in the palace-yard and being pleased with his deportment caused him to be brought in and fed: then he took a promise and made him dwell in the garden: and he came daily to pay respect. The Bodhisatta said to him, “O great king, a king should rule his kingdom with righteousness, eschewing the four evil courses, being zealous and full of patience and kindness and compassion,” and with such daily exhortation he spoke two stanzas:

Ne’er be angry, prince of warriors; ne’er be angry, lord of earth:

Anger ne’er requite with anger: thus a king is worship-worth.

In the village, in the forest, on the sea or on the shore,

Ne’er be angry, prince of warriors: ’Tis my counsel evermore.

So the Bodhisatta spoke these stanzas to the king every day. The king was pleased with him and offered him a village whose revenue was a hundred thousand pieces: but he refused. In this way the Bodhisatta lived for twelve years. Then he thought, “I have stayed too long, I will take a journey through the country and return here”: so without telling the king and only saying to the gardener, “Friend, I weary, I will journey in the country and return, pray do you tell the king,” he went away and came to a ferry on the Ganges. There a foolish ferryman named Avariyapita lived: he understood neither the merits of good men nor his own gain and loss: when folk would cross the Ganges, he first took them across and then asked for his fare; when they gave him none, he quarrelled with them, getting much abuse and blows but little gain, so blind a fool was he.

Concerning him, the Master in his Perfect Wisdom spoke the third stanza:

The father of Avariya,

His boat’s on Ganges wave:

He ferries first the folk across,

And then his fare he’ll crave:

And that is why he earns but strife,

A thriftless, luckless, knave!

The Bodhisatta came to this ferryman and said, “Friend, take me to the other bank.” He said, “Priest, what fare will you pay me?” “Friend, I will tell you how to increase your wealth, your welfare, and your virtue.” The ferryman thought, “He will certainly give me something,” so he took him across and then said, “Pay me the fare.” The Bodhisatta said, “Very well, friend,” and so telling him first how to increase his wealth, he spoke this stanza:

Ask your fare before the crossing, never on the further shore:

Different minds have folk you ferry, different after and before.

The ferryman thought, “This will be only his admonition to me, now he will give me something else”: but the Bodhisatta said, “Friend, you have there the way to increase wealth, now hear the way to increase welfare and virtue,” so he spoke a stanza of admonition:

In the village, in the forest, on the sea, and on the shore,

Ne’er be angry, my good boatman; ’Tis my counsel evermore.

So having told him the way to increase welfare and virtue, he said, “There you have the way to increase welfare, and the way to increase virtue.” Then that stupid one, not reckoning his admonition as anything, said, “Priest, is that what you give me as my fare?” “Yes, friend.” “I have no use for it, give me something else.” “Friend, except that I have nothing else.” “Then why did you go on my boat?” he said, and threw the ascetic down on the bank, sitting on his chest and striking his mouth.

The Master said: “So you see that when the ascetic gave this admonition to the king he got the boon of a village, and when he gave the same admonition to a stupid ferryman he got a blow in the mouth: therefore when one gives this admonition it must be given to suitable people, not to unsuitable,” and so in his Perfect Wisdom he then spoke a stanza:

For counsel good the king bestowed the revenue of a town:

The boatman for the same advice has knocked the giver down.

As the man was striking the priest, his wife came with his rice, and seeing the ascetic, she said, “Husband, this is an ascetic of the king’s court, do not strike him.” He was angry, and saying, “You forbid me to strike this false priest!” he sprang up and struck her down. The plate of rice fell and broke, and the fruit of her womb miscarried. The people gathered round him and crying, “Murdering rascal!” they bound him and brought him to the king. The king tried him and caused him to be punished.

The Master in his Perfect Wisdom explaining the matter spoke the last stanza:

The rice was spilt, his wife was struck, child killed before its birth,

To him, like fine gold to a beast, counsel was nothing worth.

When the Master had ended his lesson, he declared the Truths—after the Truths the brother was established in the fruit of the first path: and identified the Birth: “ At that time the ferryman was the ferryman of to-day, the king was Ananda, the ascetic was 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.

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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.