Ja 398 — Sutano Jātaka

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

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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

"The King has sent," etc.—The Master told this tale while dwelling in Jetavana, concerning a Brother who supported his mother. The occasion will appear in the Sama Birth.

Once upon a time when Brahmadatta was reigning in Benares, the Bodhisatta was born in the family of a poor householder: they called his name Sutana. When he grew up he earned wages and supported his parents: when his father died, he supported his mother. The king of that day was fond of hunting. One day he went with a great retinue to a forest a league or two in extent, and made proclamation to all, "If a deer escape by any man's post, the man is fined the value of the deer." The ministers having made a concealed hut by the regular road gave it to the king. The deer were roused by the crying of men who had surrounded their lairs, and one antelope came to the king's post. The king thought, "I will hit him," and sent an arrow. The animal, who knew a trick, saw that the arrow was coming to his broadside, and wheeling round fell as if wounded by the arrow. The king thought, "I have hit him," and rushed to seize him. The deer rose and fled like the wind. The ministers and the rest mocked the king. He pursued the deer and when it was tired he cut it in two with his sword: hanging the pieces on one stick he came as if carrying a pole and saying, "I will rest a little," he drew near to a banyan tree by the road and lying down fell asleep. A yakkha called Makhadeva was reborn in that banyan, and got from Vessavana all living things who came to it as his food. When the king rose he said, "Stay, you are my food," and took him by the hand. "Who are you?" said the king. "I am a yakkha born here, I get all men who come to this place as my food." The king, taking good heart, asked, "Will you eat to-day only or continually?" "I will eat continually what I get." "Then eat this deer to-day and let me go; from to-morrow I will send you a man with a plate of rice every day." "Be careful then: on the day when no one is sent I will eat you." "I am king of Benares: there is nothing I cannot do." The yakkha took his promise and let him go. When the king came to the town, he told the case to a minister in attendance and asked what was to be done. "Was a limit of time fixed, O king?" "No." "That was wrong when you were about it: but never mind, there are many men in the jail." "Then do you manage this affair, and give me

life." The minister agreed, and taking a man from the jail every day sent him to the yakkha with a plate of rice without telling him anything. The yakkha eats both rice and man. After a time the jails became empty. The king finding no one to carry the rice shook with fear of death. The minister comforting him said, "O king, desire of wealth is stronger than desire of life: let us put a packet of a thousand pieces on an elephant's back and make proclamation by drum, "Who will take rice and go to the yakkha and get this wealth?" and he did so. The Bodhisatta thought, "I get pence and halfpence for my wages and can hardly support my mother: I will get this wealth and give it her, and then go to the yakkha: if I can get the better of him, well, and if I cannot she will live comfortably": so he told his mother, but she said, "I have enough, dear, I don't need wealth," and so forbade him twice; but the third time without asking her, he said, "Sirs, bring the thousand pieces, I will take the rice." So he gave his mother the thousand pieces and said, "Don't fret, dear; I will overcome the yakkha and give happiness to the people: I will come making your tearful face to laugh," and so saluting her he went to the king with the king's men, and saluting him stood there. The king said, "My good man, will you take the rice?" "Yes, O king." "What should you take with you?" "Your golden slippers, O king." "Why?" "O king, that yakkha gets to eat all people standing on the ground at the foot of the tree: I will stand on slippers, not on his ground." "Anything else?" "Your umbrella, O king." "Why so?" "O king, the yakkha gets to eat all people standing in the shade of his own tree: I will stand in the shade of the umbrella, not of his tree." "Anything else?" "Your sword, O king." "For what purpose?" "O king, even goblins fear those with weapons in their hands." "Anything else?" "Your golden bowl, O king, filled with your own rice." "Why, good man?" "It is not meet for a wise man like me to take coarse food in an earthen dish." The king consented and sent officers to give him all he asked. The Bodhisatta said, "Fear not, O great king, I will come back today having overcome the yakkha and caused you happiness," and so taking the things needful and going to the place, he set men not far front the tree, put on the golden slippers, girt the sword, put the white umbrella over his head, and taking rice in a gold dish went to the yakkha. The yakkha watching the road saw him and thought, "This man comes not as they came on the other days, what is the reason?" The Bodhisatta drawing near the tree pushed the plate of rice in the shadow with the sword-point, and standing near the shadow spoke the first stanza—

The king has sent thee rice prepared and seasoned well with meat:

If Makhadeva is at home, let him come forth and eat!

Hearing him the yakkha thought, "I will deceive him, and eat him when he comes into the shadow," and so he spoke the second stanza—

Come inside, young man, with your seasoned food,

Both it and you, young man, to eat are good.

Then the Bodhisatta spoke two stanzas—

Yakkha, you'll lose a great thing for a small,

Men fearing death will bring no food at all.

You'll have good supply of cheer,

Pure and sweet and flavoured to your mind:

But a man to bring it here,

If you eat me, will be hard to find.

The yakkha thought, "The young man speaks sense," and being well disposed spoke two stanzas—

Young Sutana, my interests are clearly as you show:

Visit your mother then in peace, you have my leave to go.

Take sword, and parasol, and dish, young man, and go your ways,

Visit your mother happily and bring her happy days.

Hearing the yakkha's words the Bodhisatta was pleased, thinking, "My task is accomplished, the yakkha overcome, much wealth won and the king's word made good," and so returning thanks to the yakkha he spoke a final stanza—

With all thy kith and kin, yakkha, right happy may you be:

The king's command has been performed, and wealth has come to me.

So he admonished the yakkha, saying, "Friend, you did evil deeds of old, you were cruel and harsh, you ate the flesh and blood of others and so were born as a yakkha: from henceforth do no murder or the like:" so telling the blessings of virtue and the misery of vice, he established the yakkha in the five virtues: then he said, "Why dwell in the forest? come, I will settle you by the city gate and make you get the best rice." So he went away with the yakkha, making him take the sword and the other things, and came to Benares. They told the king that Sutana was come with the yakkha. The king with his ministers went out to meet the Bodhisatta, settled the yakkha at the city gate and made him get the best rice: then he entered the town, made proclamation by drum, and calling a meeting of the townsfolk spoke the praises of the Bodhisatta and gave him the command of the army: himself was established in the Bodhisatta's teaching, did the good works of charity and the other virtues, and became destined for heaven.

After the lesson, the Master declared the Truths, and identified the Birth—After the Truths, the Brother who supported his mother was established in the fruition of the First Path—"At that time the Yakkha was Angulimala, the king Ananda, the youth 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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