Ja 400 — Dabbhapuppha 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/ja400.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

“Friend Anutiracari,” etc.—The Master told this while dwelling in Jetavana, concerning Upananda, of the Sakya tribe. He was ordained in the faith, but forsook the virtues of contentment and the rest and became very greedy. At the beginning of the rains he tried two or three monasteries, leaving at one an umbrella or a shoe, at one a walking-stick or a water-pot, and dwelling in one himself. He began the rains in a country-monastery, and saying, “The Brethren must live contentedly,” explained to the Brethren, as if he were making the moon rise in the sky, the way to the noble state of content, praising contentment with the necessaries. Hearing him the Brethren threw away their pleasant robes and vessels, and took pots of clay and robes of dust-rags. He put the others in his own lodging, and when the rains and the pavarana festival were over he filled a cart and went to Jetavana. On the way, behind a monastery in the forest, wrapping his feet with creepers and saying, “Surely something can be got here,” he entered the monastery. Two old Brethren had spent the rains there: they had got two coarse cloaks and one fine blanket, and, as they could not divide them, they were pleased to see him, thinking, “This Elder will divide these between us,” and said, “Sir, we cannot divide this which is raiment for the rains; we have a dispute about it, do you divide it between us.” He consented and giving the two coarse cloaks to them he took the blanket, saying, “This falls to me who know the rules of discipline,” and went away. These Elders, who loved the blanket, went with him to Jetavana, and told the matter to the Brethren who knew the rules, saying, “Is it right for those who know the rules to devour plunder thus?” The Brethren seeing the pile of robes and bowls brought by the Elder Upananda, said, “Sir, you have great merit, you have gained much food and raiment.” He said, “Sirs, where is my merit? I gained this in such and such a manner,” telling them all. In the Hall of Truth they raised a talk, saying, “Sirs, Upananda, of the Sakya tribe, is very covetous and greedy.” The Master, finding their subject, said, “Brothers, Upananda’s deeds are not suited for progress; when a Brother explains progress to another he should first act suitably himself and then preach to others.”

Yourself first stablish in propriety,

Then teach; the wise should not self-seeking be.

By this stanza of the Dhammapada he showed the law and said, “Brothers, Upananda is not covetous for the first time; he was so before and he plundered men’s property before”: and so he told an old tale.

Once upon a time when Brahmadatta was reigning in Benares, the Bodhisatta was a tree-spirit by a river-bank. A jackal, named Mayavi, had taken a wife and lived in a place by that river-bank. One day his mate said to him, “Husband, a longing has come upon me: I desire to eat a fresh rohita fish.” He said, “Be easy, I will bring it you,” and going by the river he wrapt his feet in creepers, and went along the bank. At the moment, two otters, Gambhiracari and Anutiracari, were standing on the bank looking for fish. Gambhiracari saw a great rohita fish, and entering the water with a bound he took it by the tail. The fish was strong and went away dragging him. He called to the other, “This great fish will be enough for both of us, come and aid me,” speaking the first stanza—

Friend Anutiracari, rush to my aid, I pray:

I’ve caught a great fish: but by force he’s carrying me away.

Hearing him, the other spoke the second stanza—

Gambhiracari, luck to you! your grip be firm and stout,

And as a roc would lift a snake, I’ll lift the fellow out.

Then the two together took out the rohita fish, laid him on the ground and killed him: but saying each to the other, “You divide him,” they quarrelled and could not divide him: and so sat down, leaving him. At the moment the jackal came to the spot. Seeing him, they both saluted him and said, “Lord of the grey grass-colour, this fish was taken by both of us together: a dispute arose because we could not divide him: do you make an equal division and part it,” speaking the third stanza—

A strife arose between us, mark! O thou of grassy hue,

Let our contention, honoured sir, be settled fair by you.

The jackal hearing them, said, declaring his own strength—

I’ve arbitrated many a case and done it peacefully:

Let your contention, honoured sirs, be settled fair by me.

Having spoken that stanza, and making the division, he spoke this stanza—

Tail, Anutiracari; Gambhiracari, head:

The middle to the arbiter will properly be paid.

So having divided the fish, he said, “You eat head and tail without quarrelling,” and seizing the middle portion in his mouth he ran away before their eyes. They sat downcast, as if they had lost a thousand pieces, and spoke the sixth stanza—

But for our strife, it would have long sufficed us without fail:

But now the jackal takes the fish, and leaves us head and tail.

The jackal was pleased and thinking “Now I will give my wife rohita fish to eat,” he went to her. She saw him coming and saluting him spoke a stanza—

Even as a king is glad to join a kingdom to his rule,

So I am glad to see my lord to-day with his mouth full.

Then she asked him about the means of attainment, speaking a stanza—

How, being of the land, have you from water caught a fish?

How did you do the feat, my lord? pray answer to my wish.

The jackal, explaining the means to her, spoke the next stanza—

By strife it is their weakness comes, by strife their means decay:

By strife the otters lost their prize: Mayavi, eat the prey.

There is another stanza uttered by the Perfect Wisdom of Buddha—

Even so when strife arises among men,

They seek an arbiter: he’s leader then:

Their wealth decays, and the king’s coffers gain.

After the lesson, the Master declared the Truths and identified the, Birth—“At that time the jackal was Upananda, the otters the two old men, the tree-spirit who witnessed the cause 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.

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Vol. 4, translated by W.H.D. Rouse, 1901.

Vol. 5, translated by H.T. Francis, 1905.

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