Ja 406 — Gandhara 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

“Villages full sixteen thousand,” etc.—The Master told this when dwelling in Jetavana, concerning the precept on the storing up of medicines. The occasion however arose in Rajagaha. When the venerable Pilindiyavaccha went to the king’s dwelling to set free the park-keeper’s family, he made the palace all of gold by magic power: and the people in their delight brought to that elder the five kinds of medicine. He gave them away to the congregation of Brethren. So the congregation abounded in medicines, and as they received the medicines, they filled pots and jars and bags in this way and laid them aside. People seeing this murmured, saying, “Those greedy priests are hoarding in their houses.” The Master, hearing this thing, declared the precept, “Whatever medicines for sick brethren [sc. are received, must be used within seven days],” and said, “Brethren, wise men of old, before the Buddha appeared, ordained in heresy and keeping only the five precepts, used to chide those who laid aside even salt and sugar for the next day; but you, though ordained in such a rule of salvation, make a hoard for the second and the third day,” and so he told the tale of old.

Once upon a time the Bodhisatta was the king’s son of the Gandhara kingdom; at his father’s death he became king and ruled with righteousness.

In the Central Region, in the kingdom of Videha a king named Videha was ruling at the time. These two kings had never seen each other, but they were friends and had great trust the one in the other. At that time men were long-lived: their life was for thirty thousand years. Then once, on the fast day of the full moon, the king of Gandhara had taken the vow of the commands, and on the dais in the middle of a royal throne prepared for him, looking through an open window on the eastern quarter, he sat giving to his ministers a discourse on the substance of the law. At that moment Rahu was covering the moon’s orb which was full and spreading over the sky. The moon’s light vanished. The ministers, not seeing the moon’s brightness, told the king that the moon was seized by Rahu. The king, observing the moon, thought, “That moon has lost its light, being marred

by some trouble from outside; now my royal retinue is a trouble, and it is not meet that I should lose my light like the moon seized by Rahu: I will leave my kingdom like the moon's orb shining in a clear sky and become an ascetic: why should I admonish another? I will go about, detached from kin and people, admonishing myself alone: that is meet for me." So he said, "As ye please so do," and gave over the kingdom to his ministers. When he gave up his kingdom in the two kingdoms of Kashmir and Gandhara, he took the religious life, and attaining the transcendental faculty he passed the rains in the Himalaya region devoted to the delight of meditation. The king of Videha, having asked of merchants, "Is it well with my friend?" heard that he had taken the religious life, and thought, "When my friend has taken the religious life, what should I do with a kingdom?" So he gave up the rule in his city of Mithila, seven leagues in extent, and his kingdom of Videha, three hundred leagues in extent, with sixteen thousand villages, storehouses filled, and sixteen thousand dancing girls, and without thinking of his sons and daughters he went to the Himalaya region and took the religious life. There he lived on fruits only, dwelling in a state of quietude. Both of them following this quiet life afterwards met, but did not recognise each other: yet they lived together in this quiet life in friendliness. The ascetic of Videha waited upon the ascetic of Gandhara. On a day of full moon as they were sitting at the root of a tree and talking on things relating to the law, Rahu covered the moon's orb as it was shining in the sky. The ascetic of Videha looked up, saying, "Why is the moon's light destroyed?" And seeing that it was seized by Rahu, he asked, "Master, why has he covered the moon and made it dark?" "Scholar, that is the moon's one trouble, Rahu by name; he binders it from shining: I, seeing the moon's orb struck by Rahu, thought, "There is the moon's pure orb become dark by trouble from outside; now this kingdom is a trouble to me: I will take the religious life so that the kingdom does not make me dark as Rahu does the moon's orb": and so taking the moon's orb seized by Rahu as my theme, I forsook my great kingdom and took the religious life." "Master, were you king of Gandhara?" "Yes, I was." "Master, I was the king Videha in the kingdom of Videha and city of Mithila: were we not friends though we never saw each other?" "What was your theme?" "I heard that you had taken the religious life and thinking, "Surely he has seen the good of that life," I took you as my theme, and leaving my kingdom took the religious life." From that time they were exceedingly intimate and friendly, and lived on fruits only. After a long time's dwelling there they came down from Himalaya for salt and vinegar, and came to a frontier village. The people, being pleased with their deportment, gave them alms and taking a promise made for them houses for the night and the like in the forest, and made them dwell there, and built by the road a room for taking their meals in a pleasant watered spot. They, after going their rounds for alms in the frontier village, sat and ate the alms in that hut of leaves and then went to their dwelling-house. The people who gave them food one day put salt on a leaf and gave it them, another day gave them saltless food. One day they gave them a great deal of salt in a leaf basket. The ascetic of Videha took the salt, and coming gave enough to the Bodhisatta at the meal time and took to himself the proper measure: then putting up the rest in a leaf basket he put it in a roll of grass, saying, "This will do for a saltless day." Then one day when saltless food was received, the man of Videha, giving the alms-food to the man of Gandhara, took the salt from the roll of grass and said, "Master, take salt." "The people gave no salt to-day, where have you got it?" "Master, the people gave much salt one day before: then I kept what was over, saying, "This will do for a saltless day." "Then the Bodhisatta chid him, saying, "O foolish man, you forsook the kingdom of Videha, three

hundred leagues in extent, took the religious life and attained freedom from attachments, and now you get a desire for salt and sugar." And so admonishing him he spoke the first stanza—

Villages full sixteen thousand with their wealth you threw away,

Treasuries with wealth in plenty: and you're hoarding here to-day!

Videha, being thus chidden, did not endure the chiding but became estranged, saying, "Master, you see not your own fault, though you see mine; did you not leave your kingdom and become religious, saying, "Why should I admonish another? I will admonish myself alone": why then are you now admonishing me?" So he spoke the second stanza—

Candahar and all its province, all its wealth, you threw away,

Giving no more royal orders: and you're ordering me to-day!

Hearing him the Bodhisatta spoke the third stanza—

It is righteousness I'm speaking, for I hate unrighteousness:

Righteousness when I am speaking, sin on me leaves no impress.

The ascetic of Videha, hearing the Bodhisatta's words, said, "Master, it is not meet for one to speak after annoying and angering another, even though he speaks to the point: you are speaking very harshly to me, as if shaving me with blunt steel," and so he spoke the fourth stanza—

Whatsoever words, if spoken, would to others cause offence,

Wise men leave those words unspoken, though of mighty consequence.

Then the Bodhisatta spoke the fifth stanza—

Let my hearer scatter chaff, or let him take offence or not,

Righteousness when I am speaking, sin on me can leave no spot.

Having so said, he went on, "I will not work with you, O Ananda, as a potter with raw clay only: I will speak chiding again and again; what is truth, that will abide." And so being steadfast in conduct suitable to that admonition of the Blessed One, as a potter among his vessels, after beating them often, takes not the raw clay, but takes the baked vessel only, so preaching and chiding again and again he takes a man like a good vessel, and preaching to show him this, he spoke this pair of stanzas—

Were not wisdom and good conduct trained in some men's lives to grow,

Many would go wandering idly like the blinded buffalo.

But since some are wisely trained in moral conduct fair to grow,

Thus it is that disciplined in paths of virtue others go.

Hearing this, the Videha ascetic said, “Master, from this time admonish me; I spoke to you with peevish natural temper, pardon me,” and so paying respect he gained the Bodhisatta’s pardon. So they dwelt together in peace and went again to Himalaya. Then the Bodhisatta told the Videha ascetic how to attain to mystic meditation. He did so and reached the higher Faculties and Attainments. So both, never leaving off meditation, became destined for the Brahma world.

After the lesson, the Master identified the Birth: “At that time the Videha ascetic was Ananda, the Gandhara king 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.

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.