Ja 413 — Dhumakari 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/ja413.html

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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 righteous king,” etc.—The Master told this tale while dwelling in Jetavana, concerning the Kosala king’s favour to a stranger. At one time, the story goes, that king showed no favour to his old warriors who came to him in the usual way, but gave honour and hospitality to strangers coming for the first time. He went to fight in a disturbed frontier province: but his old warriors would not fight, thinking that the new-corners who were in favour would do so; and the new-corners would not, thinking that the old warriors would. The rebels prevailed. The king, knowing that his defeat was owing to the mistake he had made in showing favour to new-comers, returned to Savatthi. He resolved to ask the Lord of Wisdom whether he was the only king who had ever been defeated for that reason: so after the morning meal he went to Jetavana and put the question to the Master. The Master answered, “Great King, yours is not the only case: former kings also were defeated by reason of the favour they showed to new-corners,” and so, at the king’s request, he told an old tale.

Once upon a time in the city of Indapattana, in the kingdom of the Kurus, a king was reigning named Dhananjaya, of the race of Yudhitthila. The Bodhisatta was born in the house of his family priest. When he grew up, he learned all the arts at Takkasila. He returned to Indapattana, and at his father’s death he became family priest to the king and his counsellor in things temporal and spiritual. His name was called Vidhurapandita.

King Dhananjaya disregarded his old soldiers and showed favour to new-comers. He went to fight in a disturbed frontier province: but neither his old warriors nor the new-comers would fight, each thinking the other party would see to the matter. The king was defeated. On his return to Indapattana he reflected that his defeat was due to the favour he had shown to new-comers. One day he thought, “Am I the only king who has ever been defeated through favour shown to new-corners, or have others had the same fate before? I will ask Vidhurapandita.” So he put the question to Vidhurapandita when he came to the king’s levee.

The Master, declaring the reason of his question, spoke half a stanza:

The righteous king Yudhitthila once asked Vidhura wise,

“Brahmin, dost know in whose lone heart much bitter sorrow lies?”

Hearing him, the Bodhisatta said, “Great king, your sorrow is but a trifling sorrow. Of old, a brahmin goatherd, named Dhumakari, took a great flock of goats, and making a pen in the forest kept them there: he had a smoking fire and lived on milk and the like, tending his goats. Seeing some deer of golden hue who had come, he felt a love for them, and disregarding his goats he paid the honour due to them to the deer. In the autumn the deer moved away to the Himalaya: his goats were dead and the deer gone from his sight: so for sorrow he took jaundice and died. He paid honour to new-comers and perished, having sorrow and misery a hundred, a thousand times more than you.” Bringing forward this instance, he said,

A brahmin with a flock of goats, of high Vasittha’s race,

Kept smoking fire by night and day in forest dwelling-place.

Smelling the smoke, a herd of deer, by gnats sore pestered, come

To find a dwelling for the rains near Dhumakari’s home.

The deer have all attention now; his goats receive no care,

They come and go untended all, and so they perish there.

But now the gnats have left the wood, the autumn’s clear of rain:

The deer must seek the mountain-heights and river-springs again.

The brahmin sees the deer are gone and all his goats are dead:

Jaundice attacks him worn with grief, and all his colour’s fled.

So he who disregards his own, and calls a stranger dear,

Like Dhumakari, mourns alone with many a bitter tear.

Such was the tale told by the Great Being to console the king. The king was comforted and pleased, and gave him much wealth. From that time onward he showed favour to his own people, and doing deeds of charity and virtue, he became destined for heaven.

After the lesson, the Master identified the Birth: “At that time the Kuru king was Ananda, Dhumakari was Pasenadi, king of Kosala, and Vidhurapandita 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.