Ja 424 — Aditta 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/ja424.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

“Whate’er a man can save,” etc.—The Master told this tale while dwelling in Jetavana, concerning an incomparable gift. The incomparable gift must be described in full from the commentary on the Mahagovindasutta. On the day after that on which it had been given, they were talking of it in the Hall of Truth, “Sirs, the Kosala king after examination found the proper field of merit, and gave the great gift to the assembly with Buddha at its head.” The Master came and was told what the subject of their talk was as they sat together: he said, “Brethren, it is not strange that the king after examination has undertaken great gifts to the supreme field of merit: wise men of old also after examination gave such gifts,” and so he told a tale of old.

Once upon a time a king named Bharata reigned at Roruva in the kingdom of Sovira. He practised the ten royal virtues, won the people by the four elements of popularity, stood to the multitude like father and mother and gave great gifts to the poor, the wayfarers, the beggars, the suitors and the like. His chief queen Samuddavijaya was wise and full of knowledge. One day he looked round his alms-hall and thought, “My alms are devoured by worthless greedy people: I don’t like this: I should like to give alms to the virtuous paccekabuddhas who deserve the best of gifts: they live in the Himalaya region: who will bring them here on my invitation and whom shall I send on this errand?” He spoke to the queen, who said, “O king, be not concerned: sending flowers by the force of our giving suitable things, and of our virtue and truthfulness, we will invite the paccekabuddhas, and when they come we will give them gifts with all things requisite.” The king agreed. He made proclamation by drum that all the townspeople should undertake to keep the precepts; he himself with his household undertook all the duties for the holy days and gave great gifts in charity. He had a gold box brought, full of jasmine flowers, came down from his palace and stood in the royal courtyard. There prostrating himself on the ground with the five contacts, he saluted towards the eastern quarter and threw seven handfuls of flowers, with the words, “I salute the saints in the eastern quarter: if there is any merit in us, shew compassion on us and receive our alms.” As there are no paccekabuddhas in the

eastern quarter, they did not come next day. On the second day he paid respects to the south quarter: but none came from thence. On the third day he paid respects to the west quarter , but none came. On the fourth day he paid respects to the north quarter, and after paying respects he threw seven handfuls of flowers with the words, “May the paccekabuddhas who live in the north district of Himalaya receive our alms.” The flowers went and fell on five hundred paccekabuddhas in the Nandamula cave. On reflection they understood that the king had invited them; so they called seven of their number and said, “Sirs, the king invites you; shew him favour.” These paccekabuddhas came through the air and lighted at the king’s gate. Seeing them the king saluted them with delight, made them come up into the palace, shewed them great honour and gave them gifts. After the meal he asked them for next day and so on until the fifth day, feeding them for six days: on the seventh day he made ready a gift with all the requisites, arranged beds and chairs inlaid with gold, and set before the seven paccekabuddhas sets of three robes and all other things used by holy men. The king and queen formally offered these things to them after their meal, and stood in respectful salutation. To express their thanks the Elder of the assembly spoke two stanzas—

Whate’er a man can save from flames that burn his dwelling down,

Not what is left to be consumed, will still remain his own.

The world’s on fire, decay and death are there the flame to feed;

Save what you can by charity, a gift is saved indeed.

Thus expressing thanks the Elder admonished the king to be diligent in virtue: then lie flew up in the air, straight through the peaked roof of the palace and lighted in the Nandamula cave: along with him all the requisites that had been given him flew up and lighted in the cave: and the bodies of the king and queen became full of joy. After his departure, the other six also expressed thanks in a stanza each—

He who gives to righteous men,

Strong in holy energy,

Crosses Yama’s flood, and then

Gains a dwelling in the sky.

Like to war is charity:

Hosts may flee before a few:

Give a little piously:

Bliss hereafter is your due.

Prudent givers please the Lord,

Worthily they spend their toil.

Rich the fruit their gifts afford,

Like a seed in fertile soil.

They who never rudely speak,

Wrong to living things abjure:

Men may call them timid, weak:

For ’Tis fear that keeps them pure.

Lower duties win for man, reborn on earth, a princely fate,

Middle duties win them heaven, highest win the Purest State.

Charity is blest indeed,

Yet the Law gains higher meed:

Ages old and late attest,

Thus the wise have reached their Rest.

So they also went with the requisites given them.

The seventh paccekabuddha in his thanks praised the eternal nirvana to the king, and admonishing him carefully went to his abode as has been said. The king and queen gave gifts all their lives and passed fully through the path to heaven.

After the lesson, the Master said, “So wise omen of old gave gifts with discrimination,” and identified the Birth: “At that time the paccekabuddha reached nirvana, Samuddavijaya was the mother of Rahula, and the king Bharata 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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