Ja 43 — Veluka Jātaka

English translation by Robert Chalmers.

Source: https://raw.githubusercontent.com/suttacentral/sc-data/2d9ca8da858f94302ed6783e2717bf73d651881b/html_text/en/pli/sutta/kn/ja/vol1/ja43.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 headstrong man.”—This story was told by the Master while at Jetavana, about a certain headstrong Brother. For the Blessed One asked him whether the report was true that he was headstrong, and the Brother admitted that it was. “Brother,” said the Master, “this is not the first time you have been headstrong: you were just as headstrong in former days. also, and, as the result of your headstrong refusal to follow the advice of the wise and good, you met your end by the bite of a snake.” And so saying, he told this story of the past.

Once on a time when Brahmadatta was reigning in Benares, the Bodhisatta was born into a wealthy family in the Kingdom of Kasi. Having come to years of discretion, he saw how from passion springs pain and how true bliss comes by the abandonment of passion. So he put lusts from him, and going forth to the Himalayas became a hermit, winning by fulfilment of the ordained mystic meditations the five orders of the Higher Knowledge and the eight Attainments. And as he lived his life in the rapture of Insight, he came in after times to have a large following of five hundred hermits, whose teacher he was.

Now one day a young poisonous viper, wandering about as vipers do, came to the hut of one of the hermits; and that Brother grew as fond of the creature as if it were his own child, housing it in a joint of bamboo and shewing kindness to it. And because it was lodged in a joint of bamboo, the viper was known by the name of “Bamboo.” Moreover, because the hermit was as fond of the viper as if, it were his own child, they called him “Bamboo’s Father.”

Hearing that one of the Brethren was keeping a viper, the Bodhisatta sent for that Brother and asked whether the report was true. When told that it was true, the Bodhisatta said, “A viper can never be trusted; keep it no longer.”

“But,” urged the Brother, “my viper is dear to me as a pupil to a teacher; I could not live without him.” “Well then,” answered the Bodhisatta, “know that this very snake will lose you your life.” But heedless of the master’s warning, that Brother still kept the pet he could not bear to part with. Only a very few days later all the Brethren went out to gather fruits, and coming to a spot where all kinds grew in plenty, they stayed there two or three days. With them went “Bamboo’s Father,” leaving his viper behind in its bamboo prison. Two or three days afterwards, when he came back, he bethought him of feeding the creature, and, opening the cane, stretched out his hand, saying, “Come, my son; you must be hungry.” But angry with its long fast, the viper bit his outstretched hand, killing him on the spot, and made its escape into the forest.

Seeing him lying there dead, the Brethren came and told the Bodhisatta , who bade the body be burned. Then, seated in their midst, he exhorted the Brethren by repeating this stanza—

The headstrong man, who, when exhorted, pays

No heed to friends who kindly counsel give,—

Like ‘Bamboo’s father,’ shall be brought to nought.

Thus did the Bodhisatta exhort his followers; and he developed within himself the four Noble States, and at his death was re-born into the Brahma Realm.

Said the Master, “Brother, this is not the first time you have shewn yourself headstrong; you were no less headstrong in times gone by, and thereby met your death from a viper’s bite.” Having ended his lesson, the Master shewed the connexion and identified the Birth by saying, “In those days, this headstrong Brother was ‘Bamboo’s Father,’ my disciples were the band of disciples, and I myself their teacher.”

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.