Ja 433 — Lomasakassapa 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/ja433.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

“A king like Indra,” etc.—This story the Master dwelling at Jetavana told concerning a worldly-minded Brother. The Master asked him if he were longing for the world, and when he admitted that it was so, the Master said, “Brother, even men of the highest fame sometimes incur infamy. Sins like these defile even pure beings; much more one like you.” And then he told a story of the past.

Once upon a time prince Brahmadatta, son of Brahmadatta king of Benares, and the son of his family priest named Kassapa , were schoolmates and learned all the sciences in the house of the same teacher. By and bye the young prince on his father’s death was established in the kingdom. Kassapa thought, “My friend has become king: he will bestow great power on me: what have I to do with power? I will take leave of the king and my parents, and become an ascetic.” So he went into the Himalayas and adopted the religious life, and on the seventh day he entered on the Faculties and Attainments, and gained his living by what he gleaned in the fields. And men nicknamed the ascetic Lomasakassapa (Hairy Kassapa). With his senses mortified he became an ascetic of grim austerity. And by virtue of his austerity the abode of Sakka was shaken. Sakka, reflecting on the cause, observed him and thought, “This ascetic, by the exceedingly fierce fire of his virtue, would make me fall even from the abode of Sakka. After a secret interview with the king of Benares, I will break down his austerity.” By the power of a Sakka he entered the royal closet of the king of Benares at midnight and illuminated all the chamber with the radiance of his form, and standing in the air before the king he woke him up and said, “Sire, arise,” and when the king asked, “Who are you?” he answered, “I am Sakka.” “Wherefore are you come?” “Sire, do you desire or not sole rule in all India?” “Of course I do.” So Sakka said, “Then bring Lomasakassapa here and bid him offer a sacrifice of slain beasts, and you shall become, like Sakka, exempt from old age and death, and exercise rule throughout all India,” and he repeated the first stanza:

A king like Indra thou shalt be,

Ne’er doomed old age or death to see,

Should Kassapa by thy advice

Offer a living sacrifice.

On hearing his words the king readily assented. Sakka said, “Then make no delay,” and so departed. Next day the king summoned a councillor named Sayha and said, “Good sir, go to my dear friend Lomasakassapa and in my name speak thus to him: “The king by persuading you to offer a sacrifice will become sole ruler in all India, and he will grant you as much land as you desire: come with me to offer sacrifice.” He answered, “Very well, sire,” and made proclamation by beat of drum to learn the place where the ascetic dwelt, and when a certain forester said, I know,” Sayha went there under his guidance with a large following, and saluting the sage sat respectfully on one side and delivered his message. Then he said to him, “Sayha, what is this you say?” and refusing him he spoke these four stanzas:

No island realm, safe-guarded in the sea,

Shall tempt me, Sayha, to this cruelty.

A curse upon the lust of fame and gain,

Whence spring the sins that lead to endless pain.

Better, as homeless waif, to beg one’s bread

Than by a crime bring shame upon my head.

Yea better, bowl in hand, to flee from sin

Than by such cruelty a kingdom win.

The councillor, after hearing what he said, went and told the king. Thought the king, “Should he refuse to come, what can I do?” and kept silent. But Sakka at midnight came and stood in the air and said, “Why, sire, do you not send for Lomasakassapa and bid him offer sacrifice?” When he is sent for, he refuses to come.” “Sire, adorn your daughter, princess Candavati, and send her by the hand of Sayha and bid him say, “If you will come and offer sacrifice, the king will give you this maiden to wife.” Clearly he will be struck with love of the maiden and will come.” The king readily agreed, and next day sent his daughter by the hand of Sayha. Sayha took the king’s daughter and went there, and after the usual salutation and compliments to the sage, he presented to him the princess, as lovely as a celestial nymph, and stood at a respectful distance. The ascetic losing his moral sense looked at her, and with the mere look he fell away from meditation. The councillor seeing that he was smitten with love said, “Your Reverence, if you will offer sacrifice, the king will give you this maiden to wife.” He trembled with the power of passion and said, “Will he

surely give her to me?" "Yes, if you offer sacrifice, he will." "Very well," he said, "If I get her, I will sacrifice," and taking her with him, just as he was, ascetic locks and all, he mounted a splendid chariot and went to Benares. But the king, as soon as he heard he was certainly coming, prepared for the ceremony in the sacrificial pit. So when he saw that he was come, he said, "If you offer sacrifice, I shall become equal to Indra, and when the sacrifice is completed, I will give you my daughter." Kassapa readily assented. So the king next day went with Candavati to the sacrificial pit. There all four-footed beasts, elephants, horses, bulls and the rest were placed in a line. Kassapa essayed to offer sacrifice by killing and slaying them all. Then the people that were gathered together there said, "This is not proper or befitting you, Lomasakassapa: why do you act thus ?" And lamenting they uttered two stanzas:

Both sun and moon bear potent sway,

And tides no power on earth can stay,

Brahmins and priests almighty are,

But womankind is mightier far.

E'en so Candavati did win

Grim Kassapa to deadly sin,

And urged him by her sire's device

To offer living sacrifices.

At this moment Kassapa, to offer sacrifice, lifted up his precious sword to strike the royal elephant on the neck. The elephant at the sight of the sword, terrified with the fear of death, uttered a loud cry. On hearing his cry the other beasts too, elephants, horses, and bulls through fear of death uttered loud cries, and the people also cried aloud. Kassapa, on hearing these loud cries, grew excited and reflected on his matted hair. Then he became conscious of matted locks and beard, and the hair upon his body and breast. Full of remorse he cried, "Alas! I have done a sinful deed, unbecoming my character," and showing his emotion he spoke the eighth stanza:

This cruel act is of desire the fruit;

The growth of lust I'll cut down to the root.

Then the king said, "Friend, fear not: offer the sacrifice, and I will now give you the princess Candavati, and my kingdom and a pile of the seven treasures." On hearing this Kassapa said, "Sire, I do not want this sin upon my soul," and spoke the concluding stanza:

Curse on the lusts upon this earth so rife,

Better by far than these the ascetic life;

I will forsaking sin a hermit be:

Keep thou thy realm and fair Candavati.

With these words he concentrated his thoughts on the mystic object, and recovering the lost idea sat cross-legged in the air, teaching the law to the king, and, admonishing him to be zealous in good works, he bade him destroy the sacrificial pit and grant an amnesty to the people. And at the king's request, flying up into the air he returned to his own abode. And as long as he lived, he cultivated the Brahma perfections and became destined to birth in the Brahma world.

The Master having ended his lesson revealed the Truths and identified the Birth—At the conclusion of the Truths the worldly-minded Brother attained to Sainthood—"In those days the great councillor Sayha was Sariputta, Lomasakassapa 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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