# Ja 437 — Putimansa 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/ja437.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

“Why thus does Putimansa,” etc.—This was a story told by the Master while at Jetavana concerning the subjugation of the senses. For at one time there were many Brethren who kept no guard over the avenues of the senses. The Master said to the elder Ananda, “I must admonish these Brethren,” and owing to their want of self-restraint he called together the assembly of the Brethren, and seated in the middle of a richly-adorned couch he thus addressed them: “Brethren, it is not right that a Brother under the influence of personal beauty should set his affections on mental or physical attributes, for should he die at such a moment, he is re-born in hell and the like evil states; therefore set not your affections on material forms and the like. A Brother ought not to feed his mind on mental and physical attributes. They who do so even in this present condition of things are utterly ruined. Therefore it is good, Brethren, that the eye of the senses should be touched with a red-hot iron pin.” And here he gave other details, adding, “There is a time for you to regard beauty, and a time to disregard it: at the time of regarding it, regard it not under the influence of what is agreeable, but of what is disagreeable. Thus will ye not fall away from your proper sphere. What then is this sphere of yours? Even the four earnest meditations, the holy eight-fold path, the nine transcendent conditions. If ye walk in this your proper domain, Mara will not find an entrance, but if ye are subject to passion and regard things under the influence of personal beauty, like the jackal Putimansa, ye will fall away from your true sphere,” and with these words he related a story of the past.

Once upon a time in the reign of Brahmadatta, king of Benares, many hundreds of wild goats dwelt in a mountain-cave in a wooded district on the slopes of the Himalayas. Not far from their place of abode a jackal named Putimansa with his wife Veni lived in a cave. One day as he was ranging about with his wife, he spied those goats and thought, “I must find some means to eat the flesh of these goats,” and by some device he killed a single goat. Both he and his wife by feeding on goat’s flesh waxed strong and gross of body. Gradually the goats diminished in number. Amongst them was a wise she-goat named Melamata. The jackal though skilful in devices could not kill her, and taking counsel with his wife he

said, “My dear, all the goats have died out. We must devise how to eat this she-goat. Now here is my plan. You are to go by yourself, and become friendly with her, and when confidence has sprung up between you, I will lie down and pretend to be dead. Then you are to draw nigh to the goat and say, “My dear, my husband is dead and I am desolate; except you I have no friend: come, let us weep and lament, and bury his body.” And with these words come and bring her with you. Then I will spring up and kill her by a bite in the neck.” She readily agreed and after making friends with the goat, when confidence was established, she addressed her in the words suggested by her husband. The goat replied, “My dear, all my kinsfolk have been eaten by your husband. I am afraid; I cannot come.” “Do not be afraid; what harm can the dead do you?” “Your husband is cruelly-minded; I am afraid.” But afterwards being repeatedly importuned the goat thought, “He certainly must be dead,” and consented to go with her. But on her way there she thought, “Who knows what will happen?” and being suspicious she made the she-jackal go in front, keeping a sharp look-out for the jackal. He heard the sound of their steps and thought, “Here comes the goat,” and put up his head and rolling his eyes looked about him. The goat on seeing him do this said, “This wicked wretch wants to take me in and kill me: he lies there making a pretence of being dead,” and she turned about and fled. When the she-jackal asked why she ran away, the goat gave the reason and spoke the first stanza:

Why thus does Putimainsa stare?

His look misliketh me:

Of such a friend one should beware,

And far away should flee.

With these words she turned about and made straight for her own abode. And the she-jackal failing to stop her was enraged with her, and went to her husband and sat down lamenting. Then the jackal rebuking her spoke the second stanza:

Veni, my wife, seems dull of wit,

To boast of friends that she has made;

Left in the lurch she can but sit

And grieve, by Mela’s art betrayed.

On hearing this the she jackal spoke the third stanza:

You too, my lord, were hardly wise,

And, foolish creature, raised your head,

Staring about with open eyes,

Though feigning to be dead.

At fitting times they that are wise

Know when to ope or close their eyes,

Who look at the wrong moment, will,

Like Putimansa, suffer ill.

This stanza was inspired by Perfect Wisdom.

But the she jackal comforted Putimansa and said, “My lord, do not vex yourself, I will find a way to bring her here again, and when she comes, be on your guard and catch her.” Then she sought the goat and said, “My friend, your coming proved of service to us; for as soon as you appeared, my lord recovered consciousness, and he is now alive. Come and have friendly speech with him,” and so saying she spoke the fifth stanza:

Our former friendship, goat, once more revive,

And come with well-filled bowl to us, I pray,

My lord I took for dead is still alive,

With kindly greeting visit him to-day.

The goat thought, “This wicked wretch wants to take me in. I must not act like an open foe; I will find means to deceive her,” and she spoke the sixth stanza,:

Our former friendship to revive,

A well-filled bowl I gladly give:

With a big escort I shall come;

To feast us well, go hasten home.

Then the she-jackal inquired about her followers, and spoke the seventh stanza:

What kind of escort will you bring,

That I am bid to feast you well?

The names of all remembering

To us, I pray you, truly tell.

The goat spoke the eighth stanza and said:

Hounds grey and tan, four-eyed one too,

With Jambuk form my escort true:

Go hurry home, and quick prepare

For all abundance of good fare.

“Each of these,” she added, “is accompanied by five hundred dogs: so I shall appear with a guard of two thousand dogs. If they should not find food, they will kill and eat you and your mate.” On hearing this the she-jackal was so frightened that she thought, “I have had quite enough of her coming to us; I will find means to stop her from coming,” and she spoke the ninth stanza:

Don’t leave your house, or else I fear

Your goods will all soon disappear:

I’ll take your greeting to my lord;

Don’t stir: nay, not another word!

With these words she ran in great haste, as for her life, and taking her lord with her, fled away. And they never durst come back to that spot.

The Master here ended his lesson and identified the Birth: “ In those days I was the divinity that dwelt there in an old forest tree.”

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.

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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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