Ja 457 — Dhamma Jātaka

English translation by W. H. D. Rouse.

Source: https://raw.githubusercontent.com/suttacentral/sc-data/2d9ca8da858f94302ed6783e2717bf73d651881b/html_text/en/pli/sutta/kn/ja/vol4/ja457.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

"I do the right," etc.—This story the Master told while dwelling in Jetavana, how Devadatta was swallowed up in the earth. They gathered in the Hall of Truth to talk: "Friend, Devadatta fell at enmity with the Tathagata, and was swallowed up in the earth." The Master entering asked what they were talking of as they sat there. They told him. He replied, "Now, Brethren, he has been swallowed up in the earth because he dealt a blow at my victorious authority; but formerly he dealt a blow at the authority of right, and was swallowed up in the earth, and went on his way to nethermost hell." So saying, he told a story of the past.

Once upon a time, when Brahmadatta was king in Benares, the Bodhisatta was born into the world of sense as one of the gods, and was named Dhamma, or Right, while Devadatta was called Adhamma, or Wrong.

As on the fast-day of the full moon, in the evening when meals were done, men were sitting in enjoyment each at his own house-door in village and city and royal capital, Dhamma appeared before them, poised in the air, in his celestial chariot mounted, and adorned with celestial array, in the midst of a multitude of nymphs, and thus addressed them:

"Take not the life of living creatures, and the other ten paths of evildoing eschew, fulfil the duty of service to mother and the duty of service to father and the threefold course of right; thus ye shall become destined for heaven, and shall receive great glory." Thus did he urge men to follow the ten paths of right-doing, and made a, solemn circuit around India right-wise. But Adhamma taught them, "Kill that which lives," and in like manner urged men to follow the other ten paths of evildoing, and made a circuit around India left-wise.

Now their chariots met face to face in the air, and their attendant multitudes asked each the other, "Whose are you? and whose are you?" They replied, "We are of Dhamma, we of

Adhamma," and made room, so that their paths were divided. But Dhamma said to Adhamma, "Good sir, you are Adhamma, and I am Dhamma; I have the right of way; turn your chariot aside, and give me way," repeating the first stanza:

"I do the right, men's fame is of my grace,

Me sages and me brahmins ever praise,

Worshipt of men and gods, the right of way

Is mine. Right am I: then, O Wrong, give place!"

These next follow:

"In the strong car of Wrong enthroned on high

Me mighty there is nought can terrify:

Then why should I, who never yet gave place,

Make way to-day for Right to pass me by?"

"Right of a truth was first made manifest,

Primeval he, the oldest, and the best;

Wrong was the younger, later born in time.

Way, younger, at the elder-born's behest!"

"Nor if you worthy be, nor if you pray,

Nor if it be but fair, will I give way:

Here let us two to-day a battle wage;

He shall have place, whoever wins the fray."

"Known am I in all regions far and near,

Mighty, of boundless glory, without peer,

All virtues are united in my form.

Right am I: Wrong, how can you conquer here?"

"By iron gold is beaten, nor do we

Gold used for beating iron ever see:

If Wrong ‘gainst Right shall win the fight to-day,

Iron as beautiful as gold will be.”

“If you indeed are mighty in the fray,

Though neither good nor wise is what you say,

Swallow I will all these your evil words;

And willy nilly I will make you way.”

These six stanzas they repeated, one answering the other.

But at the very moment when the Bodhisatta repeated this stanza, Adhamma could no longer stand in his car, but head-foremost plunged into the earth which gaped to receive him, and was born again in nethermost hell.

The Blessed One no sooner perceived this that had happened, than in his Perfect Wisdom he recited the remaining stanzas:

The words no sooner heard, Wrong from the height

Plunged over heels head-foremost out of sight:

This was the end and direful fate of Wrong.

I had no battle, though I longed to fight.

“Thus by the Mighty-in-Forbearance lies

Conquered the Mighty Warrior Wrong, and dies

Swallowed in earth: the other, joyful, strong,

Truth-armoured, in his car away he hies.

“Who in his house no due observance pays

To parents, sages, brahmins, when he lays

The body down, and bursts its bonds asunder,

He, even from this world, goes straight to hell,

Even as Adhamma down head-foremost fell.

“Who in his house all due observance pays

To parents, sages, brahmins, when he lays

The body down, and bursts its bonds asunder,

Straight from this world, onward to heaven he hies,

As Dhamma in his chariot sought the skies.”

When the Master had ended this discourse, he said, “Not now only, Brethren, but in former times also, Devadatta attacked me, and was swallowed up in the earth”: then he identified the Birth—“At that time Devadatta was Adhamma, and his attendants were the attendants of Devadatta, and I was Dhamma, and the Buddha’s attendants were the attendants of Dhamma.”

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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