Ja 467 — Kama Jātaka

English translation by W. H. D. Rouse.

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Source revision: 2d9ca8da858f94302ed6783e2717bf73d651881b

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Edited by E. B. Cowell

Original edition: Cambridge University Press, volume 4, 1901

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

“He that desires,” etc. This story the Master told while dwelling at Jetavana, about a certain brahmin.

A brahmin, so they say, who dwelt at Savatthi, was felling trees on the bank of the Aciravati, in order to cultivate the land. The Master perceiving his destiny, when he visited Savatthi for alms, went out of his road to talk sweetly with him. “What are you doing, brahmin?” he asked.”O Gotama,” said the man, “I am cutting a space free for cultivation.” “Very good,” he replied, “go on with your work, brahmin.” In the same manner the Master came and talked with him when the felled trunks were all away, and the man was clearing his acre, and again at plowing time, and at making the little embanked squares for water. Now on the day of sowing, the brahmin said, “To-day, O Gotama, is my plowing festival. When this corn is ripe, I will give alms in plenty to the Order, with the Buddha at their head.” The Master accepted his offer, and went away. On another day he came, and saw the brahmin watching the corn. “What are you doing, brahmin?” asked he. “Watching the corn, O Gotama!” “Very good, brahmin,” said the Master, and away he went. Then the brahmin thought, “How often Gotama the ascetic comes this way! Without doubt he wants food. Well, food I will give him.” On the day when this thought came into his mind, when he went home, there he found the Master come also. Thereat arose in the brahmin a wondrous great confidence.

By and bye, when ripe was the corn, the brahmin resolved, to-morrow he would reap the field. But while he lay in bed, in the upper reaches of the Aciravati the rain poured in bucketsful: down came a flood, and carried the whole crop away to the sea, so that not one stalk was left. When the flood subsided, and the Brahmin beheld the destruction of his crops, he had not the strength to stand: pressing his hand to his heart (for he was overcome with great sorrow) he went weeping home, and lay down lamenting. In the morning the Master saw this brahmin overwhelmed with his woe, and thought he, “I will be the brahmin’s support.” So next day, after his alms-round in Savatthi, on his return from

receipt of food he sent the Brethren back to their monastery, and himself with the junior who attended him visited the man's house. When the brahmin heard of his coming, he took heart, thinking—"My friend must be come for a kindly talk." He offered him a seat; the Master entering sat upon the seat indicated, and asked, "Why are you downhearted, brahmin? what has happened to displease you?" "O Gotama!" said the man, "from the time that I cut down the trees on the bank of the Aciravati, you know what I have been doing. I have been going about, and promising gifts to you when that crop should be ripe: now a flood has carried off the whole crop, away to the sea, nothing is left at all! Grain has been destroyed to the amount of a hundred waggon-loads, and so I am deep in grief!"—"Why, will what is lost come back for grieving?"—"No, Gotama, that will it not."—"If that is so, why grieve? The wealth of beings in this world, or their corn, when they have it, they have it, and when it is gone, why, gone it is. No composite thing but is subject to destruction; do not brood over it." Thus comforting him, the Master repeated the Kama Scripture as appropriate to his case. At the conclusion of the Kama, the mourning brahmin was established in the Fruit of the First Path. The Master having eased him of his pain, arose from his seat, and returned to the monastery.

All the town heard how the Master had found such a brahmin pierced with the pangs of grief, had consoled him and established him in the Fruit of the First Path. The Brethren talked of it in the Hall of Truth: "Hear, Sirs! The Dasabala made friends with a brahmin, grew intimate, took his opportunity to declare the Law to him, when pierced with the pangs of grief, eased him of pain, established him in the Fruit of the First Path!" The Master came in, and asked, "What speak ye of, Brethren, as ye sit here together?" They told him. He replied, "This is not the first time, Brethren, I have cured his grief, but I did the same long, long ago:" and with these words he told a story of the past.

Once upon a time, Brahmadatta king of Benares had two sons. To the elder he gave the viceroyalty, the younger he made commander-in-chief. Afterwards when Brahmadatta was dead, the courtiers were for making the elder son king by the ceremonial sprinkling. But he said, "I care nought for a kingdom: let my younger brother have it." They begged and besought him, but he would none of it; and the younger was sprinkled to be king. The elder cared not for the viceroyalty, or any such thing; and when they begged him to remain, and feed on the fat of the land, "Nay," quoth he, "I have nothing to do in this city," and he departed from Benares. To the frontier he went; and dwelt with a rich merchant's family, working with his own hands. These after a while, learning that he was a king's son, would not allow him to work, but waited upon him as a prince should be attended.

Now after a time the king's officers came to that village, for taking a survey of the fields. Then the merchant came to the prince, and said, "My lord, we support you; will you send a letter to your younger brother, and procure for us remission of taxes?" To this he agreed, and wrote as follows: "I am living with the family of such a merchant; I pray you remit their taxes for my sake." The king consented, and so did. Thereupon all the villagers, and the people of the country side, came to him, and said, "Get our taxes remitted, and we will pay taxes to you." For them too he sent his petition, and got the taxes remitted. After that the people paid their taxes to him. Then his receipts and honour were great; and with this greatness grew his covetousness also. So by degrees he asked for all the district, he asked

for the office of viceroy, and the younger brother gave it all. Then as his greed kept growing, he was not content even with viceroyalty, and determined to seize the kingdom; to which end he set out with a host of people, and taking up a position outside the city, sent a letter to his younger brother—"Give me the kingdom, or fight for it."

The younger brother thought: "This fool refused once kingdom, and viceroyalty, and all; and now says he, I will take it by battle! If I slay him in battle, it will be my shame; what care I for being king?" So he sent a message, "I have no wish to fight: you may have the kingdom." The other accepted it, and made his younger brother viceroy.

Thenceforward he ruled the kingdom. But so greedy was he, that one kingdom could not content him, but he craved for two kingdoms, then for three, and yet saw no end to his greed.

At that time Sakka, king of the Gods, looked abroad: "Who are they," thought he, "carefully tend their parents? who give alms and do good? who are in the power of greed?" He perceived that this man was subject to greed: "Yon fool," thought he, "is not satisfied with being king of Benares. Well, I will teach him a lesson." So in the guise of a young brahmin, he stood at the door of the palace, and sent in word, that at the door stood a clever young man. He was admitted, and wished victory to the king; then the king said, "Why have you come?" "Mighty King!" he answered, "I have a thing to say to you, but I desire privacy." By power of Sakka, at that very instant the people retired. Then said the young man, "O great king! I know three cities, prosperous, thronged with men, strong in troops and horses: of these by my own power I will obtain the lordship, and deliver it to you. But you must make no delaying, and go at once." The king being full of covetise gave his consent. (But by Sakka's power he was prevented from asking, "Who are you? whence come? and what are you to receive?") So much Sakka said, and then returned to the abode of the Thirty-three.

Then the king summoned his courtiers, and thus addressed them. "A youth has been here, promising to capture and give me the lordship of three kingdoms! Go, look for him! Send the drum a-beating about the city, assemble the army, make no delay, for I am about to take three kingdoms!" "O great king!" they said, "did you offer hospitality to the young man, or did you ask where he dwelt?" "No, no, I offered him no hospitality, I did not ask where he dwelt: go, and look for him!" They searched, but found him not; they informed the king, they could not in the whole city find the young man. On hearing this the king became gloomy. "The lordship over three cities is lost," he thought again and again: "I am shorn of great glory. Doubtless the young man went away angry with me, that I gave him no money for his expenses, nor a place to dwell in." Then in his body, full of greed, a burning arose; as the body burnt, his bowels were moved to a bloody flux; as the food went in, so it came out; physicians could not cure him, the king was exhausted. His illness was bruited abroad all through the city.

At that time, the Bodhisatta had returned to his parents in Benares from Takkasila, after mastering all branches of learning. He hearing the news about the king, proceeded to the palace door, with intent to cure him, and sent in a message, that a young man was there ready to cure the king. The king said, "Great and most renowned physicians, known far and

near, are not able to cure me: what can a young lad do? Pay his expenses, and let him depart." The young man made answer, "I want no fee for my physic, but I will cure him; let him simply and solely pay me the price of my remedy." When the king heard this, he agreed, and admitted him. The young man saluted the king, "Fear nothing, O king!" said he; "I will cure you; do but tell me the origin of your disorder." The king answered in wrath, "What is that to you? make up your medicine." "O great king," quoth he, "it is the way of physicians, first to learn whence the disease arises, then to make a remedy to suit." "Well, well, my son," said the king, and proceeded to tell the origin of the disease, beginning where that young man had come, and made his promise, that he would take and give to him the lordship over three cities. "Thus, my son, the disease arose from greed; now cure it if you can." "What, O king!" quoth he," can you capture those cities by grieving?"—"Why no, my son."—"Since that is so, why grieve, O great king? Every thing, animate or inanimate, must pass away, and leave all behind, even its own body. Even should you obtain, rule over four cities, you could not at one time eat four plates of food, recline on four couches, wear four sets of robes. You ought not to be the slave of desire; for desire, when it increases, allows no release from the four states of suffering." Thus having admonished him, the Great Being declared the Law in the following stanzas:

"He that desires a thing, and then this his desire fulfilment blesses,

Sure a glad-hearted man is he, because his wish he now possesses.

"He that desires a thing, and then this his desire fulfilment blesses,

Desires throng on him more and more, as thirst in time of heat oppresses.

"As in the horned kine, the horn with their growth larger grows:

So, in a foolish undiscerning man, that nothing knows,

While grows the man, the more and more grows thirst, and craving grows

"Give all the rice and corn on earth, slave-men, and kine, and horse,

'Tis not enough for one: this know, and keep a righteous course.

"A king that should subdue the whole world wide,

The whole wide world up to the ocean bound,

With this side of the sea unsatisfied

Would crave what might beyond the sea be found.

"Brood on desires within the heart—content will ne'er arise.

Who turns from these, and the true cure descries,

He is content, whom wisdom satisfies.

“Best to be full of wisdom: these no lust can set afire;

Never the man with wisdom filled is slave unto desire.

“Crush your desires, and little want, not greedy all to win:

He that is like the sea is not burnt by desire within,

But like a cobbler, cuts the shoe according to the skin.

“For each desire that is let go a happiness is won:

He that all happiness would have, must with all lust have done.”

But as the Bodhisatta was repeating these stanzas, his mind being concentrated on the king’s white sunshade, there arose in him the mystic rapture attained through white light. The king on his part became whole and well; he arose in joy from his seat, and addressed him thus: “When all those physicians could not heal me, a wise youth has made me whole by the medicine of his wisdom!” And he then repeated the tenth stanza:

“Eight verses have you uttered, worth a thousand pieces each:

Take, O great brahmin! take the sum, for sweet is this your speech.”

At which the Great Being repeated the eleventh:

“For thousands, hundreds, million times a million, nought care I:

As the last verse I uttered, in my heart desire did die.”

More and yet more delighted, the king recited the last stanza in praise of the Great Being:

“Wise and good is indeed this youth, all the lore of all worlds knowing:

All desire in very truth is mother of misery by his showing.”

“Great king!”said the Bodhisatta, “be circumspect, and walk in righteousness.” Thus admonishing the king, he passed through the air to Himalaya, and living the life of a recluse, while life lasted, cultivated the Excellences, and became destined for the world of Brahma.

This discourse ended, the Master said, “Thus, Brethren, in former days as now, I made this brahmin whole:” so saying, he identified the Birth: “At that time this brahmin was the king, and I was the wise young man.”

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.