Ja 495 — Dasa-Brahmana Jātaka

English translation by W. H. D. Rouse.

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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 righteous king,” etc.—This story the Master told while dwelling in Jetavana, about a gift incomparable. This has been explained in the Sucira Birth of the Eighth Book. We learn that the king, while making this distribution of gifts, examined five hundred Brethren with the Master their chief, and gave to the most holy saints among them. Then they sat talking in the Hall of Truth, and telling of his goodness thus: “Brother, the king, in giving the incomparable gift, gave it in a case of much merit.” The Master, entering, would know what they talked of sitting there: and they told him. Said he: “‘Tis no wonder, Brethren, that the King of Kosala, being the follower of such as I am, gives with discrimination. Wise men of old, ere yet the Buddha had arisen, even they gave with discrimination.” With these words, he told them a story of the past.

Once upon a time, in the kingdom of Kuru and the city called Indapatta, was reigning a king Koravya, of the stock of Yuddhitthila. His adviser in things temporal and spiritual was a minister named Vidhura. The king, with his great almsgiving, set all India in a commotion; but amongst all those who received and enjoyed these gifts, not one there was who kept so much as the Five Virtues: all were wicked to a man, and the king’s giving brought him no satisfaction. The king thought, “Great is the fruit of discriminate giving;” and, being desirous to give unto the virtuous, he determined to take counsel with the wise Vidhura. When, therefore, Vidhura came to wait on him, the king bade him be seated, and put the question to him.

Explaining this, the Master recited half the first stanza. All the rest are question and answer of the king and Vidhura.

“The righteous King Yudhitthila once asked Vidhura wise :

“Vidhura, seek me brahmins good, in whom much wisdom lies:

“Men free from deeds of evil lust, that they may eat my food:

So I would give, my friend, that I may reap a crop of good.”

“‘Tis hard to find such holy men, such brahmins, wise and good,

Who keep them spotless from all lust, that they may eat your food.

“Of brahmins, O most mighty king, ten several kinds are there:

Listen, while I distinguish them, and all these kinds declare.

“Some carry sacks upon their backs, root-filled and fastened tight;

They gather healing herbs, they bathe, and magic spells recite.

“These are physician-like, O king, and brahmins too they hight:

Such brahmins shall we seek for, now you know this kind aright?”

Quoth King Koravya:

“These have no right to such a name: lost is their brahminhood:

Vidhura, find me other men who shall be wise and good,

“Men free from deeds of evil lust, that they may eat my food:

So would I give, that I myself may reap a crop of good.”

“Some carry bells and go before, and as they go they ring,

A chariot they can drive with skill, and messages can bring:

“These are like servants, mighty king, and brahmins too they hight:

Such brahmins shall we seek for, now you know this kind aright?”

Quoth King Koravya:

“These have no right to such a name: lost is their brahminhood:

Vidhura, find me other men who shall be wise and good,

“Men free from deeds of evil lust, that they may eat my food:

So would I give, that I myself may reap a crop of good.”

“With waterpot and crooked staff some run to meet the king,

Through all the towns and villages, and as they follow, sing—

“In wood or town we never budge, until a gift you bring”!

“Like tax-men these importunate, and brahmins too they hight:

Such brahmins shall we seek for, now you know this kind aright?”

Quoth King Koravya:

“These have no right to such a name: lost is their brahminhood:

Vidhura, find me other men who shall be wise and good,

“Men free from deeds of evil lust, that they may eat my food:

So would I give, that I myself may reap a crop of good.”

“Some with long nails and hairy limbs, foul teeth, and matted hair,

Covered with dust and dirt-begrimed as beggar-men they fare:

“Hewers of wood, O mighty king! and brahmins too they hight:

Such brahmins shall we seek for, now you know this kind aright?”

Quoth King Koravya:

“These have no right to such a name: lost is their brahminhood:

Vidhura, find me other men who shall be wise and good,

“Men free from deeds of evil lust, that they may eat my food:

So would I give, that I myself may reap a crop of good.”

“Myrobolan and vilva fruit, rose-apple, mangoes ripe,

The labuj-fruit and planks of wood, tooth-brush and smoking-pipe,

“Sugar-cane baskets, honey sweet, and ointment too, O king,

All these they make their traffick in, and many another thing.

“These are like merchants, O great king, and brahmins too they hight:

Such brahmins shall we seek for, now you know this kind aright?”

Quoth King Koravya:

“These have no right to such a name: lost is their brahminhood:

Vidhura, find me other men who shall be wise and good,

“Men free from deeds of evil lust, that they may eat my food:

So would I give, that I myself may reap a crop of good.”

“Some follow trade and husbandry, keep flocks of goats in fold,

They give and take in marriage, and their daughters sell for gold.

“Like Vessa and Ambattha these; and brahmins they too hight:

Such Brahmins shall we seek for, now you know this kind aright?”

Quoth King Koravya:

“These have no right to such a name: lost is their brahminhood:

Vidhura, find me other men who shall be wise and good,

“Men free from deeds of evil lust, that they may eat my food:

So would I give, that I myself may reap a crop of good.”

“Some chaplains fortunes tell, or geld and mark a beast for pay:

With proffered food the village folk invite them oft to stay.

There kine and bullocks, swine and goats are slaughtered many a day.

“Like butchers base are these, O king, and brahmins too they hight:

Such brahmins shall we seek for, now you know this kind aright?”

Quoth King Koravya:

“These have no right to such a name: lost is their brahminhood:

Vidhura, find me other men who shall be wise and good,

“Men free from deeds of evil lust, that they may eat my food:

So would I give, that I myself may reap a crop of good."

"Some brahmins, armed with sword and shield, with battle-axe in hand,

Ready to guide a caravan before the merchants stand.

"Like herdmen these, or bandits bold, yet brahmins too they hight:

Such brahmins shall we seek for, now you know this kind aright?"

Quoth King Koravya:

"These have no right to such a name: lost is their brahminhood:

Vidhura, find me other men who shall be wise and good,

"Men free from deeds of evil lust, that they may eat my food:

So would I give, that I myself may reap a crop of good."

"Some build them huts and lay them traps in any woodland place,

Catch fish and tortoises, the hare, wild-cat and lizard chase.

"Hunters are these, O mighty king, and brahmins they too hight:

Such brahmins shall we seek for, now you know this kind aright?"

Quoth King Koravya:

"These have no right to such a name: lost is their brahminhood:

Vidhura, find me other men who shall be wise and good,

"Men free from deeds of evil lust, that they may eat my food

So would I give, that I myself may reap a crop of good."

"Others for love of gold lie down beneath the royal bed,

At soma-sacrifice: the kings bathing above their head.

"These are like barbers? O great king, but brahmins too they hight:

Such brahmins shall we seek for, now you know this kind aright?"

Quoth King Koravya:

“These have no right to such a name: lost is their brahminhood:

Vidhura, find me other men who shall be wise and good,

“Men free from deeds of evil lust, that they may eat my food:

So would I give, that I myself may reap a crop of good.”

Thus having described those who are brahmins in name only, he went on to describe the brahmins in the highest sense in the following two stanzas:

“But there are brahmins, too, my lord, men very wise and good,

Free from the deeds of evil lust, to eat your offered food.

“One only meal of rice they eat: strong drink they never touch:

And now you know this kind aright, say shall we look for such?”

When the king heard his words, he asked “Where, friend Vidhura, where dwell these brahmins, worthy of the best things?” “In the further Himalaya, O king, in a cave of Mount Nanda.” “Then, wise sir, bring me those brahmins hither, by your power.” Then in great joy the king recited this stanza:

“Vidhura, bring those brahmins here, so holy and so wise,

Invite them, O Vidhura, here, let no delay arise!”

The Great Being agreed to do as he was requested, adding this: “Now, O king! send the drum beating about the city, to proclaim that the city must be gloriously adorned, and all the people of it must give alms, and undertake the holy-day vows, and pledge themselves to virtue; and you with all your court must take the holy-day vows upon you.” Himself at early dawn, having taken his meal, and taken the holy-day vows, at eventide he sent for a basket of the colour of jasmine, and together with the monarch made a salutation with the full prostration, and he called to memory the virtues of the Pacceka Buddhas, uttering these words: “Let the five hundred Pacceka Buddhas who dwell in Northern Himalaya, in the cave of Mount Nanda, to-morrow partake of our food!” he cast eight handfuls of flowers into the air. At once these flowers fell upon the five hundred Pacceka Buddhas, in the place where they dwelt. They pondered, and understood the fact, and accepted the invitation, saying, “Reverend Sirs, we are invited by the wise Vidhura, and no mean creature is he: he has the seed of a Buddha within him, and in this very cycle a Buddha he will be. Let us show him favour.” The Great Being understood that they would comply, by token that the flowers did not return. Then he said, “O great king! to-morrow the Pacceka Buddhas will come; do them honour and worship.” Next day the king did them great honour, preparing precious seats for them upon a great dais. The Pacceka Buddhas, in Lake Anotatta, having waited for the time when their bodily needs were seen to, travelled

through the air and descended in the royal courtyard. The king and the Bodhisatta, faith in their hearts, received the bowls from their hands, and caused them to come up on the terrace, seated them, gave them the gift-water into their hands, and served them with food hard and soft most delightful.

After the meal, he invited them for the next day, and so on for seven days following, presenting them with many gifts, and on the seventh day he gave them all the requisites. Then they gave him thanks, and passing through the air returned to the same place, and the requisites also went with them.

The Master, after finishing this discourse, said: “No wonder, Brethren, that the king of Kosala being my follower, has given me the gift incomparable, for wise men of old when as yet there was no Buddha, did the same.” Then he identified the Birth: “At that time Ananda was the king, and the wise Vidhura was I myself.”

The Jātaka, or Stories of the Buddha’s Former Births, edited by E.B. Cowell, published by The Cambridge University Press.

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Vol. 2, translated by W.H.D. Rouse, 1895.

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Vol. 4, translated by W.H.D. Rouse, 1901.

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