Ja 535 — Sudhabhojana Jātaka

English translation by H. T. Francis.

Source: https://raw.githubusercontent.com/suttacentral/sc-data/2d9ca8da858f94302ed6783e2717bf73d651881b/html_text/en/pli/sutta/kn/ja/vol5/ja535.html

Source revision: 2d9ca8da858f94302ed6783e2717bf73d651881b

License: Public Domain (original English edition, published 1895–1907)

Edited by E. B. Cowell

Original edition: Cambridge University Press, volume 5, 1905

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

“No huckster I,” etc. This was a story told by the Master, while dwelling at Jetavana, concerning a liberally minded Brother. He was said to be a man of gentle birth, living at Savatthi, who after hearing the Law preached by the Master was converted and adopted the religious life. Being perfected in the moral virtues and furnished with the dhuta precepts and with a heart full of love for his fellow priests he thrice every day zealously ministered to the service of the Buddha, the Law, and the Assembly, and showed himself exemplary in conduct and devoted to charity. Fulfilling the obligations of kindly civility, whatever he received, so long as there were any recipients, he would give away till he was himself without food. And his liberality and charitable disposition were noised abroad in the Assembly of the Brethren. So one day the topic was started in the Hall of Truth, how that a certain Brother was so liberally minded and devoted to charity that if he received only sufficient drink to fill the hollow of the hand, free from all greed, he would give it to his fellow priests—his will being even as that of a Bodhisatta. The Master by his divine sense of hearing caught what they were saying, and issuing forth from his Perfumed Chamber drew nigh and asked what was the nature of their discussion. And when they answered, “It was so and so,” he said, “This Brother of old, Brethren, was far from liberal, nay, so stingy that he would not give so much as a drop of oil on the tip of a blade of grass. So I converted and made him self-denying and by praising the fruits of charity I firmly established him in almsgiving; so that on receiving water just enough to fill the hollow of the hand he would say, “I will not drink a drop without giving some away,” and he received a boon at my hands, and as a result of his almsgiving he became liberally minded and devoted to charity,” and with these words he told a story of the past.

Once upon a time when Brahmadatta was king of Benares there lived a wealthy householder possessed of eighty crores and the king conferred on him the office of Treasurer. Being thus honoured by the king and highly esteemed by citizens and country folk alike, he was one day dwelling upon his worldly prosperity, and he thought, “This glory was not won by me by slothfulness and sinful acts in a former existence but was attained

by accomplishing deeds of virtue; it behoves me to make my salvation sure in the future." So he sought the king's presence and addressed him thus, "In my house, sire, is treasure amounting to eighty crores: accept it from me." And when the king said, "I have no need of your riches; I have abundant wealth: henceforth take and do whatever you like with it," he said, "Can I, sire, bestow my money in charity?" The king said, "Do as you please": and he had six alms-halls built, one at each of the four city gates, one in the heart of the city and one at the door of his dwelling-house, and by a daily expenditure of six hundred thousand pieces of money he set on foot almsgiving on a grand scale, and so long as he lived he dispensed alms and instructed his sons, saying, "See that you do not break away from this tradition of mine, of giving alms," and at the close of his life he was reborn as Sakka. His son, in like manner giving alms, was reborn as Canda, Canda's son as Suriya, Suriya's son as Matali, Matali's son as Pancasikha. Now Pancasikha's son, the sixth in descent, was the Treasurer named Maccharikosiya (the Millionaire Miser)) and he still owned eighty crores. But he thought, "My forefathers were fools. They flung away the wealth that was so sorely scraped together, but I will guard my treasure. I will not give a penny to a soul." And he demolished and burned down the alms-hall and became a confirmed miser. So the beggars assembled at his gate and stretching forth their arms cried with a loud voice "O Lord High Treasurer, do not away with, the tradition of your forefathers, but give alms." On hearing this the people blamed him, saying, "Maccharikosiya has done away with the tradition of his family." Being ashamed he set a watch to prevent the beggars from standing at his gate, and being thus left utterly destitute they never again set eyes upon his door. Thenceforth he continued to roll money together, but he neither enjoyed it himself nor shared it with his wife and children. He lived on rice with its red powder, served with sour gruel, and wore coarse garments, being merely the filaments of roots and stalks of berries, shading his head with a parasol of leaves, and he rode upon a crazy old chariot, yoked to worn-out oxen. Thus all this wicked fellow's money was as it were a cocoa-nut found by a dog. Now one day when he was going to wait upon the king he thought he would take the sub-treasurer with him, and at the moment when he reached his house he found the sub-treasurer seated in the midst of his wife and children, and eating some rice porridge prepared with powdered sugar to sweeten it and cooked with fresh ghee. On seeing Maccharikosiya he rose from his seat and said, "Come and sit on this couch, Lord High Treasurer, and have some rice porridge with me." When he saw the rice porridge, his mouth watered and he longed to partake of it, but the thought occurred to him, "If I should take some porridge, when the sub-treasurer comes to my house I shall have to make him some return of hospitality and in this way my money will be wasted. I will not eat it." Then on being pressed again and again he refused, saying, "I have already dined; I am sated." But while the sub-treasurer was enjoying his food, he sat looking on with his mouth watering, and when the meal was ended he repaired with him to the palace. On returning home he was overwhelmed with a craving for rice porridge, but thought, "If I should say I wanted to eat rice porridge, a lot of people would also want to eat it and a quantity of husked rice and the like would be wasted. I will not say a word to a creature." So night and day he passed his time thinking of nothing but porridge, but from fear of spending his money he told no one and kept his craving to himself. But being unable to bear with it he gradually grew paler and paler, and so through fear of wasting his substance he spoke of his craving to no one, and by and bye becoming very weak he lay down, hugging his bed. Then his wife came to see him and stroking his back with her hand she inquired, "Is my

lord ill?" "Ill yourself!" he cried, "I am quite well." "My lord, you have grown pale. Have you anything on your mind? Is the king displeased or have you been treated with disrespect by your children? Or have you conceived a craving for something?" "Yes, I have a craving." "Tell me what it is, my lord." "Can you keep a secret?" "Yes, I will be silent about any cravings that ought to be kept secret." But even so, through fear of wasting his substance he had not the courage to tell her, but being repeatedly pressed by her he said, "My dear, one day I saw the sub-treasurer eating rice porridge prepared with ghee, honey, and powdered sugar, and from that day I have had a craving to eat the same kind of porridge." "Poor wretch, are you so badly off? I will cook porridge enough for all the inhabitants of Benares." Then he felt just as if he had been struck on the head with a stick. Being angry with her he said, "I am well aware that you are very rich. If it comes from your family, you may cook and give rice porridge to the whole city." "Well then I will make and cook enough for the dwellers in a single street." "What have you to do with them? Let them eat what belongs to them." "Then I will make enough for seven households taken at random here and there." "What are they to you?" "Then I will cook it for the attendants in this house." "What are they to you?" "Well, then, I will cook for our kinsfolk only." "What are they to you?" "Then I will cook, my lord, for you and me." "And pray who are you? It is not allowable in your case." "I will cook it for you only, my lord." "Pray do not cook it for me: if you cook it in the house, a lot of people will look for it. But just give me a measure of husked rice, a quartern of milk, a pound of sugar, a pot of honey and a cooking vessel, and going into the forest I will there cook and eat my porridge." She did so, and bidding a slave take it all he ordered him to go and stand in such and such a place. Then sending the slave forward, all alone he made himself a veil and in this disguise he went there and by the river side at the foot of a shrub he had an oven made and firewood and water brought to him and he said to the slave, "Go and stand in yonder road and, if you see anyone, make a sign to me, and when I call you come back to me." Sending off the slave he made a fire and cooked his porridge. At that moment Sakka, king of heaven, contemplating the splendid city of the gods, ten thousand leagues in extent, and the golden street sixty leagues long, and Vejayanta reared a thousand leagues high, and Sudhamma compassing five hundred leagues, and his throne of yellow marble, sixty leagues in extent, and his white umbrella with its golden wreath, five leagues in circumference, and his own person accompanied with a glorious array of twenty-five millions of heavenly nymphs—contemplating, I say, all this glory of his he thought, "What can I have done to have attained to such honour as this?" And he saw in his mind's eye the almsgiving he had established when he was Lord High Treasurer at Benares, and then he thought, "Where are my descendants born?" and considering the matter he said, "My son Canda was born in an angel-form, and his son was Suriya." And marking the birth of all of them, "What," he cried, "has been the fate of the son of Pancasikha?" And on reflection he saw that the tradition of the race had been done away with, and the thought occurred to him, "This wicked fellow being niggardly neither enjoys his wealth himself nor gives aught to others: the tradition of the race has been destroyed by him. When he dies he will be reborn in hell. By admonishing him and by re-establishing my tradition I will show him how to be reborn in the city of the gods." So he summoned Canda and the rest and saying, "Come, we will visit the haunts of men: the tradition of our family has been abolished by Maccharikosiya, the alms-halls have been burned down and he neither enjoys wealth himself nor gives aught to others, but now being desirous of eating porridge and thinking, "If it is cooked in the house, the porridge will have to be

given to someone else as well," he has gone into the forest and is cooking it all alone. We will go and convert him and teach him the fruits of almsgiving. If however he were asked by all of us at once to give us some food, he would fall dead on the spot. I will go first and when I have asked him for porridge and have taken my seat, then do you come, one after another, disguised as brahmins, and beg of him." So saying he himself in the likeness of a brahmin approached him and cried, "Ho! which is the road to Benares?" Then Maccharikosiya said, "Have you lost your wits? Do you not even know the way to Benares? Why are you coming this way? Get you gone from hence." Sakka, pretending not to hear what he said, came close up to him, asking him what he said. Then he bawled, "I say, you deaf old brahmin, why are you coming this way? Go yonder." Then Sakka said, "Why do you bawl so loud? Here I see smoke and a fire, and rice porridge is cooking. It must be some occasion for entertaining brahmins. I too when the brahmins are being fed will take somewhat. Why are you driving me away ?" "There is no entertainment of brahmins here. Be off with you." "Then why are you so angry? When you eat your meal, I will take a little." He said, "I will not give you even a single lump of boiled rice. This scanty food is only just enough to keep me alive, and even this was got by begging. You go and look for your food elsewhere"—and this he said in reference to the fact of his having asked his wife for the rice—and he spoke this stanza:

No huckster I to buy or vend,

No stores are mine to give or lend:

This dole of rice 'twas hard to gain,

'Tis scarce enough to serve us twain.

On hearing this Sakka said, "I too with honey-sweet voice will repeat a stanza for you; hearken to me," and though he tried to stop him, saying, "I do not want to hear your stanza," Sakka repeated a couple of stanzas:

From little one should little give, from moderate means likewise,

From much give much: of giving nought no question can arise.

This then I tell thee, Kosiya, give alms of that is thine:

Eat not alone, no bliss is his that by himself shall dine,

By charity thou mayst ascend the noble path divine.

On hearing his words he said, "This is a gracious saying of thine, brahmin; when the porridge is cooked, thou shalt receive a little. Pray, take a seat." Sakka sat down on one side. When he was seated, Canda in like manner drew nigh and starting a conversation in the same way, though Maccharikosiya kept trying to stop him, he spoke a couple of stanzas:

Vain is thy sacrifice and vain the craving of thy heart,

Shouldst thou eat food and grudge to give thy guest some little part.

This then I tell thee, Kosiya, give alms of that is thine, etc.

On hearing his words, the miser very reluctantly said, “Well, sit down, and you shall have a little porridge.” So he went and sat down near Sakka. Then Suriya in like manner drew nigh and starting a conversation in the same way, though the miser tried to stop him, he spoke a couple of stanzas:

Real thy sacrifice nor vain the craving of thy heart,

Shouldst thou not eat thy food alone, but give thy guest a part.

This then I tell thee, Kosiya, etc.

On hearing his words the miser with great reluctance said, “Well, sit down, and you shall have a little.” So Suriya went and sat by Canda. Then Matali in like manner drew nigh and starting a conversation, though the miser tried to stop him, spoke these stanzas:

Who offers gifts to lake or flood of Gaya’s stream that laves

Or Timbaru or Dona shrine with rapid-flowing waves,

Herein gains fruit of sacrifice and craving of his heart,

If with a guest he shares his food nor sits and eats apart.

This then I tell thee, Kosiya, etc.

On hearing his words also, overwhelmed as it were with a mountain peak, he reluctantly said, “Well, sit down, and you shall have a little.” Matali came and sat by Suriya. Then Pancasikha in like manner drew nigh and starting a conversation, though the miser tried to stop him, spoke a couple of stanzas:

Like fish that swallows greedily hook fastened to a line

Is he who with a guest at hand all by himself shall dine.

This then I tell thee, Kosiya, etc.

Maccharikosiya on hearing this, with a painful effort and groaning aloud, said, “Well, sit down, and you shall have a little.” So Pancasikha went and sat by Matali. And when these five brahmins had just taken their seats, the porridge was cooked. Then Kosiya taking it from the oven told the brahmins to bring their leaves. Remaining seated as they were they

stretched forth their hands and brought leaves of a creeper from the Himalayas. Kosiya on seeing them said, “I cannot give you any porridge in these large leaves of yours: get some leaves of the acacia and similar trees.” They gathered such leaves and each one was as big as a warrior’s shield. So he helped all of them to some porridge with a spoon. By the time he had helped the last of all, there was still plenty left in the pot. After serving the five brahmins he himself sat down, holding the pot. At that moment Pancasikha rose up and putting off his natural form was changed into a dog and came and stood in front of them and made water. Each of the brahmins covered up his porridge with a leaf. A drop of the dog’s water fell on the back of Kosiya’s hand. The brahmins fetched water in their jars and mixing it with the porridge pretended to eat it. Kosiya said, “Give me too some water and after washing my hand I will take some food.” “Fetch water for yourself,” they said, “and wash your hand.” “I gave you porridge; give me a little water.” “We do not make a business of exchanging alms.” “Well then guard this cooking pot and, after I have washed my hand, I will come back,” and he descended to the river side. At that moment the dog filled the pot with urine. Kosiya on seeing him make water took a big stick and drew nigh, threatening him. The dog was now transformed into a spirited blood horse and, as it pursued him, it assumed various colours. Now it was black, now white, now gold-coloured, now dappled. At one time high, at another time low of stature. Thus in many different appearances it pursued Maccharikosiya, who frightened with the fear of death drew nigh to the brahmins, while they flew up and stood fixed in the air. On seeing their supernatural power he said:

Ye noble brahmins, standing in mid air,

Why does this hound of yours thus strangely wear

A thousand varied forms, though one he be,

And tell me truly, brahmins, who are ye?

On hearing this, Sakka, the king of heaven, said:

Canda and Suriya lo! both are here,

And Matali the heavenly charioteer,

I Sakka am, chief god of Thirty-Three,

And Pancasikha there is chasing thee.

And celebrating Pancasikha’s fame Sakka spoke this stanza:

With tabour, drum, and tambourine they rouse him from his sleep,

And as he wakes, glad music makes his heart with joy to leap.

On hearing his words Kosiya asked, “By what acts do men attain to heavenly glory such as this’?” “They that do not practise charity, evil doers and misers reach not the angel-world, but are reborn in hell.” And by way of showing this Sakka said:

Whoe’er are miserly niggards born,

Or priests and holy brahmins scorn,

Their earthly frame now laid aside,

In hell, dissolved by death, abide.

And speaking the following stanza, to show how those that are steadfast in righteousness attain to the angel-world, he said:

Steadfast in right who heaven would win

Give alms and keep themselves from sin,

And, with their body laid aside

By death’s decay, in heaven abide.

After these words Sakka said, “Kosiya, we have not come to you for the sake of the porridge, but from a feeling of pity and compassion for you are we come,” and to make it clear to him he said:

Thou, though to us in former births akin,

A miser art, a man of wrath and sin;

’Tis for thy sake we have come down to earth,

To avert from thee sin’s doom—in hell rebirth.

Hearing this Kosiya thought, “They tell me they are my well-wishers; plucking me out of hell they would fain establish me in heaven.” And being highly pleased he said:

In that ye thus admonish me, ye doubtless seek my good,

I too will follow your advice, so far as understood.

Henceforth I’ll cease from stingy ways, from sinful deed abstain,

Give alms of all, nor e’en a cup, unshared, of water drain.

Thus ever giving, Sakka, soon my wealth will minished be,

Then will I orders take, and lusts of every kind will flee.

Sakka after converting Maccharikosiya taught him the fruits of alms-giving and made him self-denying, and when by preaching the law he had established him in the five moral virtues, together with his attendant gods he returned to the angel-city. Maccharikosiya too went into the city of Benares and having asked the king's permission he bade them take and fill all the vessels they could lay hands on with his treasure and gave it to the beggars. And now he started from the Himavat upon the right-hand side and on a spot between the Ganges and a natural lake he built a hut of leaves and becoming an ascetic he lived on roots and wild berries. There he dwelt a long time till he reached old age. At that time Sakka had four daughters, Hope, Faith, Glory, and Honour, who taking with them many a heavenly scented garland came to lake Anotatta, to disport themselves in the water, and after amusing themselves there seated themselves on mount Manosila. Just at that moment Narada, a brahmin ascetic, went to the palace of the Thirty-Three to rest during the heat of the day and constructed a dwelling-place for the day in the bowers of Cittakuta in the Nanda grove. And holding in his hand the flower of the coral tree, to serve as a sunshade, he repaired to Golden Cave, the place where he dwelt on the top of Manosila. The nymphs on seeing this flower in his hand begged it from him.

The Master, to make the matter clear, said:

In Gandhamadana's lordly height,

These nymphs, great Sakka's care, delight;

To them a saint of world-wide fame

With goodly bough in hand there came.

This bough with flowers so pure and sweet

Is deemed for gods and angels meet:

No demon, none of mortal birth

Can claim this flower of priceless worth.

Then Faith, Hope, Glory, Honour, those

Four maids with skins like gold, arose,

And, peerless 'midst all nymphs confessed,

The brahmin Narada addressed,

"Give us, O sage, this coral flower,

If still to give is in thy power,

As Sakka's self we'll honour thee,

And thou in all things blest shalt be."

When Narada their prayer had heard,

He straight a mighty quarrel stirred:

"I need it not; whom ye allow

To be your queen shall claim the bough."

The four nymphs on hearing what he said spoke this stanza:

O Narada, supreme art thou,

On whom thou wilt the boon bestow:

Whom thou shalt with such gift invest,

Amongst us shall be counted best.

Narada, on hearing their words, addressing them said:

Fair one, such counsel is not right;

What brahmin strife would dare excite?

Take to the lord of sprites your quest,

If ye would know who's worst or best.

Then the Master spoke this stanza:

With pride of beauty mad and rage

Excited by the cunning sage,

To Sakka, lord of sprites, they go,

Who 'mongst them all is best to know.

As they stood asking this question,

These nymphs so earnest in their quest

Sakka with due respect addressed,

Ye all in beauty equal are,

Who thus with strife your peace would mar?"

Being thus addressed by him they said:

Narada, world-traversing, a sage of might,

Truth-piercing, steadfast ever in the right,

Thus spake to us on Gandhamadana's height;

"To Sakka, lord of spirits, straightway go,

If who is first or last ye fain would know."

Hearing this Sakka thought, "If I shall say that one of these four daughters of mine is virtuous beyond the others, the rest will be angry. This is a case impossible for me to decide; I will send them to Kosiya, the ascetic in the Himalayas: he shall decide the question for them.". So he said, "I cannot decide your case. In the Himalayas is an ascetic called Kosiya: to him I will send a cup of my ambrosia. He eats nothing without sharing it with another, and in giving he shows discrimination by bestowing it upon the virtuous. Whichsoever of you shall receive food at his hand, she must be the best amongst you." And so saying he repeated this stanza:

The sage that dwells in yon vast wood

Will not unshared touch any food;

Kosiya with judgment gifts confers,

To whom he gives, first place is hers.

So he summoned Matali and sent him to the ascetic, and in sending him he repeated the following stanza:

On Himavat slopes where Ganges glides

Towards the south a saint resides:

Ambrosia, Matali, take to the saint,

For food and drink he's waxing faint.

Then the Master said:

At the god’s behest went Matali,

On a car with a thousand steeds rode he;

Unseen he soon by the hermitage stood

And offered the sage ambrosial food.

Kosiya took it and even as he stood spoke a couple of stanzas:

A flame of sacrifice while I did raise,

The sun that drives away all gloom to praise,

Sakka supreme o’er spirit-world that stands—

Who else?—ambrosia placed within my hands.

White like a pearl was it, beyond compare,

Fragrant and pure, and marvellously fair,

Never before seen by these eyes of mine;

What god puts in my hands this food divine?

Then Matali said:

I come, O mighty sage, by Sakka sent,

In haste to bring thee heavenly nutriment:

This best of food, pray, eat without all fear,

Thou seest here Matali, heaven’s charioteer.

By eating this twelve evil things are slain,

Thirst, hunger, discontent, fatigue, and pain,

Cold, heat, rage, enmity, strife, slander, sloth—

This heavenly essence eat thou, nothing loth.

Hearing this Kosiya, to make it clear that he had taken a vow upon him, spoke this stanza:

’Twas wrong to eat alone I thought, so took a vow one day

To touch no food, unless I gave some part of it away.

To eat alone is ne’er approved by men of noble mind,

Whoso with others does not share no happiness may find.

And when Matali questioned him, saying, “Holy sir, what did you discover was wrong in eating without giving a portion to others that you took this vow upon you?” he answered:

All who commit adultery or womenkind do slay,

Who holy men curse and revile or friendly souls betray,

And misers, worst of all—that I may ne’er be ranked with such,

Not e’en a drop of water I unshared will ever touch.

On men and women both alike my gifts shall ever flow,

Sages will praise all such as shall their goods in alms bestow;

All that are generous in this world and niggard ways eschew,

Approved by all, will ever be esteemed good men and true.

On hearing this Matali stood before him in a visible form. At that moment these four heavenly nymphs stood at the four points of the compass. Glory at the east, Hope at the south, Faith at the west, Honour at the north.

The Master; to clear up the matter, said:

Four nymphs with golden forms so bright,

Hope, Glory, Faith, and Honour hight,

At Sakka’s bidding earthward sent,

To Kosiya’s cell their footsteps bent.

The maids with forms that glowed like flame

To each of earth’s four quarters came;

‘Fore Matali (now god confest)

The sage o’erjoyed one thus addressed,

“Who art thou, nymph, like morning star,

Illuming Eastern skies afar?

Thy form in robe of gold arrayed

Tell me thy name, O heavenly maid.”

“I Glory am, man’s honoured friend,

The sinless soul prompt to defend:

To claim this food, lo! here am I;

With this my prayer, great sage, comply.

I bliss confer on whom I will

And all his heart’s desire fulfil;

High priest, my name is Glory, know,

On me thy heavenly food bestow.”

On hearing this Kosiya said:

Men may be skilful, virtuous, wise,

Excel in all their wits devise,

Yet without thee they ne’er succeed;

In this I blame thy evil deed.

Another slothful, greedy, see,

Low-born and ugly as may be:

Blest by thy care and rich withal

He makes one nobly born his thrall.

Thee then as false and dull, Glory, I recognise,

Reckless in courting fools and laying low the wise;

No claim hast thou in sooth to seat or water-pot,

Much less ambrosial food. Begone, I like thee not.

So did she straightway vanish from sight. Then holding converse with Hope he said:

Who art thou, maiden fair, with teeth so pure and white,

With rings of burnished gold and spangled bracelets dight,

In robe of watered sheen and wearing on thy head

A sprig like ruddy flame by tufts of kusa fed?

Like a wild doe all but by hunter's arrow grazed,

Thou lookst dull-eyed around as 'twere some creature dazed,

O softly-glancing maid, what comrade hast thou here,

That through lone forest glade thou strayst without a fear?

Then she spoke this stanza:

No comrade have I here; from Sakka's heavenly home

Masakkasara called, angelic-born I come:

To claim ambrosial food Hope now appears to thee;

O hearken, noble sage, and grant this boon to me.

On hearing this Kosiya. said, "They tell me that whosoever pleases you, to him by accomplishing the fruition of hope you grant hope, and whosoever pleases you not, to him you grant it not. Success does not come to him through you in this case, but you bring about his destruction," and by way of illustration he said:

Merchants through hope seek treasure far and wide,

And taking ship on ocean's billows ride:

There sometimes do they sink to rise no more,

Or else escaping their lost wealth deplore.

In hope their fields the farmers plough and till,

Sow seeds and labour with their utmost skill;

But should some plague, or drought afflict the soil

No harvest will they reap for all their toil.

Ease-loving men, led on by hope, take heart

And for their lord's sake play a manly part,

Oppressed by foes on every side they fall

And fighting for their lord lose life and all.

Grain-stores and wealth renouncing for their kin,

Through hope aspiring heavenly bliss to win,

Long time harsh penances they undergo,

And by bad ways attain to state of woe.

Deceiver of mankind, thy suit is vain,

Thy idle craving for this boon restrain,

No claim hast thou to seat or water-pot:

Much less to heavenly food. Begone, I like thee not.

She too on being rejected straightway vanished from sight. Then holding converse with Faith he spoke this stanza:

Famed nymph in blaze of glory drest,

Standing towards the ill-omened West,

Thy form in robe of gold arrayed,

Tell me thy name, illustrious maid.

Then she repeated a stanza:

My name is Faith, man's honoured friend,

The sinless soul prompt to defend:

To claim this food, lo! here am I;

With this my prayer, great sage, comply.

Then Kosiya said, “Those mortals that in believing the words of first one and then another do this or that, do that which they ought not to do more often than that which they ought to do, and verily it is all done through you,” and he repeated these stanzas:

Through faith at times men freely alms dispense,

Show self-control, restraint and abstinence:

At times again through thee from grace they fall,

Slander and lie and cheat and steal withal.

With wives, chaste, faithful, and of high degree,

A man may circumspect and prudent be,

May curb his passions well in such a case,

Yet in some harlot his whole trust may place.

Through thee, O Faith, adultery is rife,

Forsaking good thou lead’st a sinful life.

No claim hast thou to seat or water-pot:

Much less ambrosial food. Begone, I like thee not.

She too straightway vanished from sight. But Kosiya holding converse with Honour, as she stood on the north side, repeated these two stanzas:

Like Dawn that gilds the skirts of hateful Night,

So doth thy beauty burst upon my sight;

O heavenly nymph in form so passing fair,

Tell me thy name and who thou art declare.

Like to a tender plant whose roots are fed

On soil o’er which devouring flames have spread,

Its wealth of scarlet leaves by summer breezes shed,

Why dost thou look at me with bashful air,

Fain as it were to speak, yet standing silent there?

Then she uttered this stanza:

Honour am I, man's cherished friend,

Who aid to righteous mortals lend;

Lo here am I this food to claim,

Yet scarcely dare my wish to frame;

To woman suing counts as shame.

On hearing this the ascetic repeated two stanzas:

No need for thee to beg and sue,

Receive what is thy right and due:

I grant the boon thou durst not crave,

Accept the food thou fain wouldst have.

Deign, nymph, all golden clad, I pray,

To feast within my cell this day:

First honouring thee with dainties rare,

I too this heavenly food would share.

Then follow some stanzas inspired by divine wisdom:

Thus Honour, glorious nymph, at his behest

In Kosiya's home was welcomed as a guest:

Fruits and perennial streams therein abound,

And thronging saints are in its precincts found.

Here flowering shrubs in a dense mass we see,

The mango, piyal, bread-fruit, Judas-tree;

Here sal and bright rose-apple deck the glade,

There fig and banyan cast their holy shade.

Here many a flower with fragrance scents the wind,

Here peas and beans, panic and rice we find:

Bananas everywhere rich clusters show,

And bamboo reeds in thickest tangle grow.

On the north side, hemmed in by smooth and level bank,

And fed by purest streams, behold a sacred tank.

There happy fish in peace disport themselves at will,

And ‘midst abundant food enjoy to take their fill.

There happy birds in peace enjoy abundant fare,

Swans, herons, ospreys too, peacocks with plumage rare,

Cuckoos and pheasants eke with ruddy geese are there.

Hither do lions, tigers, boars resort their thirst to slake.

This bears, hyenas, wolves are wont their drinking-place to make.

The buffalo, rhinoceros and gayal too are here,

With antelope, elk, herds of swine, and red and other deer,

And cats with ears like to a hare’s in numbers vast appear.

The mountain slopes are gaily pranked with flowers of varied shade

And echo to the song of birds that haunt each forest glade.

Thus did the Blessed One sing the praises of Kosiya’s hermitage. And now to show forth the manner of the goddess Honour’s entrance therein he said:

The fair one leaning on a branch, all clothed with foliage green,

Like lightning front a thunder-cloud straight flashed upon the scene.

For her was set a dainty couch , rich drapings at its head,

All wrought of fragrant kusa grass, with deer-skin overspread.

And thus to Honour, heavenly nymph, the holy hermit spake:

“For thy delight the couch is set; be pleased a seat to take.”

The ascetic then pure water from the spring

In freshly gathered leaves with haste did bring,

And knowing what her inmost soul would crave

The ambrosial food to her he gladly gave.

As in her hands the welcome gift she pressed,

The nymph thus overjoyed the saint addressed:

“Worship to me and victory thou hast given,

Lo! now once more I’ll seek my native heaven.”

The maid intoxicate with pride of fame,

With Kosiya’s blessing, back to Indra came,

“And see,” she cried, “god of the thousand eyes,

The ambrosia’s here—to me award the prize.”

Then Sakka and his host of angels paid

Due honour to the peerless heavenly maid,

And as she sat on her new seat enthroned,

Her presence gods and men adoring owned.

While thus honouring her this thought occurred to Sakka, “What can be the reason why Kosiya refusing it to the others gave the ambrosia to this one alone?” To ascertain the reason of this he again sent Matali.

The Master, in making the matter clear, repeated this stanza:

So Sakka, lord of the Thirty-Three,

Once more addressing Matali,

Said, “Go and bid the saint explain

Why Honour should the ambrosia gain.”

In obedience to his word Matali, mounting the car called Vejayanta, departed thither.

The Master, to explain the matter, said:

So Matali then launched a car to voyage through the air,

With fittings all to match itself, in splendour wondrous fair,

Its pole of gold, gold well refined, and all its framework built

With ornament elaborate and overlaid with gilt.

Peacocks in gold depicted were in numbers not a few,

Horses and cows and elephants, tigers and panthers too,

Here antelopes and deer are seen as if prepared for fight,

Here wrought in precious stones are jays and other birds in flight.

To it they yoked a thousand royal steeds of golden hue,

Each strong as youthful elephant, a splendid sight to view;

Their breasts in golden network clad, with wreaths begarlanded,

With loosened trace, at a mere word, swift as the wind they sped.

As Matali this lordly car ascended with a bound

The firmament in all ten points re-echoed to the sound:

And as he journeyed through the air, he made the world to quake,

And sky and sea and earth with all its rocks and woods did shake.

Right soon he gained the hermitage and wishing to declare

Due reverence for the holy man he left one shoulder bare,

And speaking to this brahmin sage, a wise and learned man,

Well trained in holy lore, ’twas thus that Matali began:

Hear now, O Kosiya, the words of Indra, heavenly king,

As to what he is fain to learn, this message, lo! I bring,

“While Hope and Faith and Glory’s claims thou wilt not recognise,

Pray, why should Honour at thy hands alone receive the prize?”

On hearing his words the ascetic spoke this stanza:

Glory to me, O Matali, appears a partial jade,

While Faith, thou charioteer of gods, proves an inconstant maid,

Hope ever a deceiver loves its promise to betray,

Honour alone is stablished firm in holy virtue’s way.

And now in praise of her virtue he said:

Maidens that still within their homes live, ever guarded well,

Women now past their prime, and such as still with husbands dwell,

In one and all should fleshly lust within their heart arise,

At Honour’s voice they check the thought and sinful passion dies.

Where shafts and spears in battle’s van are hurtling fast and free,

And in the rout when comrades fall or turn them round and flee,

At Honour’s voice they check their flight e’en at the cost of life,

And panic-stricken as they were once more renew the strife.

Just as the shore will stem the rush of billows from the main,

So Honour too will oft the course of wicked folk restrain.

Then, Matali, to Indra quick return and make it clear,

That saints throughout the whole wide world all Honour’s name revere

On hearing this Matali repeated this stanza:

Who was it, Kosiya, that did suggest this view to thee,

Was it great Indra, Brahma, or Pajapati maybe?

This Honour, mighty sage, be sure, to Indra owes her birth,

And in the angel-world she ranks foremost of all in worth.

While he was still speaking, at that very instant Kosiya became subject to re-birth. Then Matali said to him, “Kosiya, thy aggregate of life is passing from thee: thy practice of charity is ended. What hast thou to do with the world of men? We will now go to the angel-world,” and being minded to conduct him thither he spoke this stanza:

Come now, O saint, and straightway mount the car so dear to me,

And let me lead thee to the heaven where reign the Thirty-Three.

Indra is longing sore for thee, to Indra’s self akin,

To-day thy way to fellowship with Indra thou shalt win.

While Matali was yet still speaking, Kosiya passing away came into existence in the ranks of the gods without the intervention of parents and mounting up took his stand upon the celestial car. Then Matali conducted him into the presence of Sakka. Sakka on seeing him was glad at heart and gave him his own daughter Honour to wife, as his chief consort, and conferred on him a boundless sovereignty.

On perceiving the state of things the Master said, “It is the merit of some illustrious beings that is thus purified,” and he repeated the final stanza:

’Tis thus the acts of holy men to happy issue lead,

And evermore abides the fruit of meritorious deed.

Whose beheld the ambrosial food to Honour that was given,

Straight passed away to fellowship with Indra, lord of heaven.

The Master here ended his discourse with these words, “Not now only, Brethren, but of old also I converted this niggardly fellow who was a confirmed miser,” and so saying he identified the Birth thus: “At that time Uppalavanna was the nymph Honour, a Brother of lordly generosity was Kosiya, Anuruddha was Pancasikha, Ananda Matali, Kassapa Suriya, Moggallana Canda, Sariputta Narada, and I myself was Sakka.

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.

These translations are in the public domain. You are free to do whatever you like with them.

Scanned, proofed and formatted at sacred-texts.com, January 2006–February 2010, by John Bruno Hare and others. Thanks to the Sacred Texts Archive for making these texts available in digital form.

Prepared for SuttaCentral by Bhikkhu Sujato.