Ja 76 — Asamkiya Jātaka

English translation by Robert Chalmers.

Source: https://raw.githubusercontent.com/suttacentral/sc-data/2d9ca8da858f94302ed6783e2717bf73d651881b/html_text/en/pli/sutta/kn/ja/vol1/ja76.html

Source revision: 2d9ca8da858f94302ed6783e2717bf73d651881b

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Edited by E. B. Cowell

Original edition: Cambridge University Press, volume 1, 1895

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 village breeds no fear in me.”—This story was told by the Master while at Jetavana, about a lay-brother who lived at Savatthi. Tradition says that this man, who had entered the Paths and was an earnest believer, was once journeying along on some business or other in the company of a leader of a caravan; in the jungle the carts were unyoked and a laager was constructed; and the good man began to pace up and down at the foot of a certain tree hard by the leader.

Now five hundred robbers, who had watched their time, had surrounded the spot, armed with bows, clubs, and other weapons, with the object of looting the encampment. Still unceasingly that lay-brother paced to and fro. “Surely that must be their sentry,” said the robbers when they noticed him; “we will wait till he is asleep and then loot them.” So, being unable to surprise the camp, they stopped where they were. Still that lay-brother kept pacing to and fro,—all through the first watch, all through the middle watch, and all through the last watch of the night. When day dawned, the robbers, who had never had their chance, threw down the stones and clubs which they had brought, and bolted.

His business done, that lay-brother came back to Savatthi, and, approaching the Master, asked him this question, “In guarding themselves, Sir, do men prove guardians of others?”

“Yes, lay-brother. In guarding himself a man guards others; in guarding others, he guards himself.”

“Oh, how well-said, sir, is this utterance of the Blessed One! When I was journeying with a caravan-leader, I resolved to guard myself by pacing to and fro at the foot of a tree, and by so doing I guarded the whole caravan.”

Said the Master, “Lay-brother, in bygone days too the wise and good guarded others whilst guarding themselves.” And, so saying, at the lay-brother’s request he told this story of the

past.

Once on a time when Brahmadatta was reigning in Benares, the Bodhisatta came to life as a brahmin. Arriving at years of discretion, he became aware of the evils that spring from Lusts, and so forsook the world to live as a recluse in the country round the Himalayas. Need of salt and vinegar having led him to make a pilgrimage for alms through the countryside, he travelled in the course of his wanderings with a merchant's caravan. When the caravan halted at a certain spot in the forest, he paced to and fro at the foot of a tree, hard by the caravan, enjoying the bliss of Insight.

Now after supper five hundred robbers surrounded the laager to plunder it; but, noticing the ascetic, they halted, saying, "If he sees us, he'll give the alarm; wait till he drops off to sleep, and then we'll plunder them." But all through the livelong night the ascetic continued to pace up and down; and never a chance did the robbers get! So they flung away their sticks and stones and shouted to the caravan-folk; "Hi, there! you of the caravan! If it hadn't been for that ascetic walking about under the tree, we'd have plundered the lot of you. Mind and fete him tomorrow!" And so saying, they made off. When the night gave place to light, the people saw the clubs and stones which the robbers had cast away, and came in fear and trembling to ask the Bodhisatta with respectful salutation whether he had seen the robbers. "Oh, yes, I did, sirs," he replied. "And were you not alarmed or afraid at the sight of so many robbers?" "No," said the Bodhisatta; "the sight of robbers causes what is known as fear only to the rich. As for me,—I am penniless; why should I be afraid? Whether I dwell in village or in forest, I never have any fear or dread." And therewithal, to teach them the Truth, he repeated this stanza—

The village breeds no fear in me;

No forests me dismay.

I've won by love and charity

Salvation's perfect way.

When the Bodhisatta had thus taught the Truth in this stanza to the people of the caravan, peace filled their hearts, and they shewed him honour and veneration. All his life long he developed the Four Excellences, and then was re-born into the Brahma Realm.

His lesson ended, the Master shewed the connexion and identified the Birth by saying, "The Buddha's followers were the caravan-folk of those days, and I the ascetic."

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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