Ja 90 — Akatannu Jātaka

English translation by Robert Chalmers.

Source: https://raw.githubusercontent.com/suttacentral/sc-data/2d9ca8da858f94302ed6783e2717bf73d651881b/html_text/en/pli/sutta/kn/ja/vol1/ja90.html

Source revision: 2d9ca8da858f94302ed6783e2717bf73d651881b

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

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 man ungrateful.”—This story was told by the Master while at Jetavana, about Anatha-pindika.

On the borders, so the tale goes, there lived a merchant, who was a correspondent and a friend of Anatha-pindika’s, but they had never met. There came a time when this merchant loaded five hundred carts with local produce and gave orders to the men in charge to go to the great merchant Anatha-pindika, and barter the wares in his correspondent’s shop for their value, and bring back the goods received in exchange. So they came to Savatthi, and found Anatha-pindika. First making him a present, they told him their business. “You are welcome,” said the great man, and ordered them to be lodged there and provided with money for their needs. After kindly enquiries after their master’s health, he bartered their merchandise and gave them the goods in exchange. Then they went back to their own district, and reported what had happened.

Shortly afterwards, Anatha-pindika similarly despatched five hundred carts with merchandise to the very district in which they dwelt; and his people, when they had got there, went, present in hand, to call upon the border merchant. “Where do you come from?” said he. “From Savatthi,” replied they; “from your correspondent, Anatha-pindika.” “Anyone can call himself Anatha-pindika,” said he with a sneer; and taking their present, he bade them begone, giving them neither lodging nor douceur. So they bartered their goods for themselves and brought back the wares in exchange to Savatthi, with the story of the reception they had had.

Now it chanced that this border merchant despatched another caravan of five hundred carts to Savatthi; and his people came with a present in their hands to wait upon Anatha-pindika. But, as soon as Anatha-pindika’s people caught sight of them, they said, “Oh, we’ll see, sir, that they are properly lodged, fed, and supplied with money for their needs.” And they took the strangers outside the city and bade them unyoke their carts at a

suitable spot, adding that rice and a douceur would come from Anatha-pindika's house. About the middle watch of the night, having collected a baud of serving-men and slaves, they looted the whole caravan, carried off every garment the men had got, drove away their oxen, and took the wheels off the carts, leaving the latter but removing the wheels. Without so much as a shirt among the lot of them, the terrified strangers sped away and managed to reach their home on the border. Then Anatha-pindika's people told him the whole story. "This capital story," said he, "shall be my gift to the Master to-day;" and away he went and told it to the Master.

"This is not the first time, sir," said the Master, "that this border merchant has shewn this disposition; he was just the same in days gone by." Then, at Anatha-pindika's request, he told the following story of the past.

Once on a time when Brahmadatta was reigning in Benares, the Bodhisatta was a very wealthy merchant in that city. And he too had as a correspondent a border merchant whom he had never seen and all came to pass as above.

Being told by his people what they had done, he said, "This trouble is the result of their ingratitude for kindness shewn them." And he went on to instruct the assembled crowd in this stanza—

The man ungrateful for a kindly deed,

Thenceforth shall find no helper in his need.

After this wise did the Bodhisatta teach the truth in this stanza. After a life spent in charity and other good works, he passed away to fare according to his deserts.

His lesson ended, the Master identified the Birth by saying, "The border merchant of to-day was the border merchant of those days also; and I was the merchant of Benares."

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.