

Jataka Tales of the Buddha : Part II

retold by

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Illisa Jataka The Miserly Treasurer Jat 78

This story was told by the Buddha while at Jetavana Monastery, about a tremendously rich royal treasurer, who lived in a town called Sakkara near the city of Rajagaha. He had been so tightfisted that he never gave away even the tiniest drop of oil you could pick up with a blade of grass. Worse than that, he wouldn't even use that minuscule amount for his own satisfaction. His vast wealth was actually of no use to him, to his family, or to the deserving people of the land.

Moggallana, however, led this miser and his wife to Jetavana, where they served a great meal of cakes to the Buddha and five hundred bhikkhus. After hearing words of thanks from the Buddha, the royal treasurer and his wife attained stream-entry.

That evening the bhikkhus gathered together in the Hall of Truth. "How great is the power of the Venerable Moggallana!" they said. "In a moment he converted the miser to charity, brought him to Jetavana, and made possible his attainment. How remarkable is the elder!" While they were talking, the Buddha entered and asked the subject of their discussion.

When they told him, the Buddha replied, "This is not the first time, bhikkhus, that Moggallana has converted this miserly treasurer. In previous days too the elder taught him how deeds and their effects are linked together." Then the Buddha told this story of the past.

Long, long ago, when Brahmadata was reigning in Baranasi, there was a treasurer named Illisa who was worth eighty crores of wealth. This man had all the defects possible in a person. He was lame and hunchbacked, and he had a squint. He was a confirmed miser, never giving away any of his fortune to others, yet never enjoying it himself.

Interestingly enough, however, for seven generations back his ancestors had been bountiful, giving freely of their best. When this treasurer inherited the family riches, he broke that tradition and began hoarding his wealth.

One day, as he was returning from an audience with the king, he saw a weary peasant sitting on a bench and drinking a mug of cheap liquor with great gusto. The sight made the treasurer thirsty for a drink of liquor himself, but he thought, "If I drink, others will want to drink with me. That would mean a ruinous expense!" The more he tried to suppress his thirst, the stronger the craving grew.

The effort to overcome his thirst made him as yellow as old cotton. He became thinner and thinner until the veins stood out on his emaciated frame. After a few days, still unable to forget about the liquor, he went into his room and lay down, hugging his bed. His wife came in, rubbed his back, and asked, "Husband, what is wrong?"

"Nothing," he said.

"Perhaps the king is angry with you," she suggested.

"No, he is not."

"Have your children or servants done anything to annoy you?" she queried.

"Not at all."

"Well, then, do you have a craving for something?"

Because of his preposterous fear that he might waste his fortune, he still would not say a word.

"Speak, husband," she pleaded. "Tell me what you have a craving for."

"Well," he said slowly, "I do have a craving for one thing."

"What is that, my husband?"

"I want a drink of liquor," he whispered.

"Why didn't you say so before?" she exclaimed with relief. "I'll brew enough liquor to serve the whole town."

"No!" he cried. "Don't bother about other people. Let them earn their own drink!"

"Well then, I'll make just enough for our street."

"How rich you are!"

"Then, just for our household."

"How extravagant!"

"All right, only us and our children."

"Why fuss about them?"

"Very well, let it be just enough for the two of us."

"Do you need any?"

"Of course not. I'll brew a little liquor only for you."

"Wait! If you brew any liquor in the house, many people will see you. In fact, it's out of the question to drink any here at all." Producing one single penny, he sent a slave to buy a jar of liquor from the tavern.

When the slave returned, Illisa ordered him to carry the liquor out of town to a remote thicket near the river. "Now leave me alone!" Illisa commanded. After the slave had walked some distance away, the treasurer crawled into the thicket, filled his cup, and began drinking.

At that moment, the treasurer's own father, who had been reborn as Sakka, king of the devas, happened to be wondering whether the tradition of generosity was still kept up in his house and became aware of his son's outrageous behavior. He realized that his son had not only broken with the customary magnanimity of his family, but that he had also burned down the alms houses and beaten the poor to drive them away from his gate. Sakka saw that his son, unwilling to share even a drop of cheap liquor with anyone else, was sitting in a thicket drinking by himself.

When he saw this, Sakka cried, "I must make my son see that deeds always have their consequences. I will make him charitable and worthy of rebirth in the realm of the devas."

Instantly, Sakka disguised himself as his son, complete with his limp, hunchback, and squint, and entered the city of Baranasi. He went directly to the palace gate and asked to be announced to the king.

"Let him approach," said the king.

Sakka entered the king's chamber and paid his respects.

"What brings you here at this unusual hour, my lord high treasurer?" asked the king.

"I have come, sire, because I would like to add my eighty crores of wealth to your royal treasury."

"No, my lord high treasurer," answered the king. "I have ample treasure. I have no need of yours."

"Sire, if you will not take it, I will give it all away to others."

"By all means, treasurer, do as you wish."

"So be it, sire," Sakka said. Then, bowing again to the king, he went to the treasurer's house. None of the servants could tell that he was not their real master. He sent for the porter and ordered, "If anybody resembling me should appear and claim to be master of this house, that person should be severely beaten and thrown out." Then he went upstairs, sat down on a brocaded couch, and sent for Illisa's wife. When she arrived, he smiled and said, "My dear, let us be bountiful."

When his wife, his children, and all the servants heard this, they thought, "We have never seen the treasurer in this frame of mind! He must have drunk a lot to have become so good-natured and generous."

His wife answered, "Be as charitable as you please, my husband."

"Send for the town crier," Sakka ordered. "I want him to announce to all the citizens of the city that anybody who wants gold, silver, diamonds, pearls, or other gems should come to the house of Illisa the treasurer."

His wife obeyed him, and a large crowd of people carrying baskets and sacks soon gathered. Sakka instructed the servants to open the doors to the store rooms and announced to the people, "These are my gifts to you! Take what you like! Good luck to you!"

Townspople filled their bags and carried away all the treasure they could manage. One farmer yoked two of Illisa's oxen to a beautiful cart, filled it with valuable things, and drove out of the city. As he rode along, humming a tune in praise of the treasurer, he happened to pass near the thicket where Illisa was hiding. "May you live to be a hundred, my good lord Illisa!" sang the farmer. "What you have done for me this day will enable me to live without ever toiling again. Who owned these oxen? You did! Who gave me this cart? You did! Who gave me the wealth in the cart? Again it was you! Neither my father nor my mother gave me any of this. No, it came solely from you, my lord."

These words chilled the treasurer to the bone. "Why is this fellow mentioning my name?" he wondered to himself. "Has the king been giving away my wealth?" He peeped out of the thicket and immediately recognized his own cart and oxen.

Scrambling out of the bushes as fast as he could, he grabbed the oxen by their nose rings and cried, "Stop! These oxen belong to me!"

The farmer leaped from the cart and began beating the intruder. "You rascal!" he shouted. "This is none of your business. Illisa the treasurer is giving his wealth away to all the city." He knocked the treasurer down, climbed back on the cart, and started to drive away.

Shaking with anger, Illisa picked himself up, hurried after the cart, and seized hold of the oxen again. Once more the farmer jumped down, grabbed Illisa by the hair, and beat him severely. Then he got back on the cart and rumbled off.

Thoroughly sobered up by this rough handling, Illisa hurried home. When he arrived, he saw the people carrying away his treasure. "What are you doing?" he shouted. "How dare you do this?" He seized first one man then another, but every man he grabbed knocked him down.

Bruised and bleeding, he tried to go into his own house, claiming that he was Illisa, but the porters stopped him. "You villain!" they cried. "Where do you think you are going?" Following orders, they beat him with bamboo staves, took him by the neck, and threw him down the steps.

"Only the king can help me now," groaned Illisa, and he dragged himself to the palace.

"Sire!" he cried. "Why, oh why, have you plundered me like this?"

"I haven't plundered you, my lord high treasurer," said the king. "You yourself first offered me your wealth. Then you yourself offered your property to the citizens of the town."

"Sire, I never did such a thing! Your majesty knows how careful I am about money. You know I would never give away so much as the tiniest drop of oil. May it please your majesty to send for the person who has squandered my riches. Please interrogate him about this matter."

The king ordered his guards to bring Illisa, and they returned with Sakka. The two treasurers were so exactly alike that neither the king nor anyone else in the court could tell which was the real treasurer. "Sire!" pleaded Illisa. "I am the treasurer! This is an imposter!"

"My dear sir," replied the king. "I really can't say which of you is the real Illisa. Is there anybody who can distinguish for certain between the two of you?"

"Yes, sire," answered Illisa, "my wife can."

The king sent for Illisa's wife and asked her which of the two was her husband. She smiled at Sakka and went to stand beside him. When Illisa's children and servants were brought and asked the same question, they all answered that Sakka was the real treasurer.

Suddenly, Illisa remembered that he had a wart on the top of his head, hidden under his hair, known only to his barber. As a last resort, he asked that his barber be called. The barber came and was asked if he could distinguish the real Illisa from the false.

"Of course, I can tell, sire," he said, "if I may examine their heads."

"By all means, look at both their heads," ordered the king.

The barber examined Illisa's head and found the wart. As he started to examine Sakka's head, the king of the devas quickly caused a wart to appear on his own head, so that the barber exclaimed, "Your Majesty, both squint, both limp, and both are hunchbacks, too! Both have warts in exactly the same place on their heads! Even I cannot tell which is the real Illisa!"

When Illisa heard this, he realized that his last hope was gone, and he began to quake at the loss of his beloved riches. Overpowered by his emotions, he collapsed senseless on the floor. At this, Sakka resumed his divine form and rose into the air. "O king, I am not Illisa," he announced. "I am Sakka!"

The king's courtiers quickly splashed water on Illisa's face to revive him. As soon as he had recovered his wits, the treasurer staggered to his feet and bowed before Sakka.

"Illisa!" Sakka shouted. "That wealth was mine, not yours. I was your father. In my lifetime I was bountiful towards the poor and rejoiced in doing good. Because of my charity, I was reborn in this great grandeur. But you, foolish man, are not walking in my footsteps. You have become a terrible miser. In order to hoard my riches, you burned my alms houses to the ground and drove away the poor. You are getting no enjoyment from your wealth; nor is it benefiting any other human being. Your treasury is like a pool haunted by demons, from which no one may satisfy his thirst.

"If you rebuild my alms houses, however, and show charity to the poor, you will gain great merit. If you do not, I will take away everything you have, and I will split your head with my thunderbolt."

When Illisa heard this threat, he shook with fear and cried out, "From now on I will be bountiful! I swear it!"

Accepting this promise, Sakka established his son in the precepts, preached the Dhamma to him, and returned to the realm of the devas.

True to his word, Illisa became diligent in charity and performed many good works. He even attained rebirth in heaven.

"You see, bhikkhus," the Buddha said, "this is not the first time that Moggallana has converted this miserly treasurer. At that time, the treasurer was Illisa; Moggallana was Sakka, king of the devas; Ananda was the king; and I myself was the barber."

Kalakanni Jataka

What's in a Name?

Jat 83

The Buddha told this story while at Jetavana, about one of Anathapindika's friends, a man named "Curse." The two had played together as children and had gone to the same school. As the years passed, however, the friend became extremely poor and could not make a living for himself no matter what he did. In desperation, he approached Anathapindika, who welcomed him kindly and employed him to look after his property and to manage all of his business for him. From that time on, it was a common thing to hear someone shouting, "Curse!" each time a member of the household spoke to him.

One day some of Anathapindika's friends and acquaintances came and said, "Treasurer, don't let this sort of thing go on in your house! It's enough to scare an ogre to hear such inauspicious speech as 'Come here, Curse,' 'Sit down, Curse,' or 'Have your dinner, Curse.' The man is a miserable wretch, dogged by misfortune. He's not your social equal. Why do you have anything to do with him?"

"Nonsense," replied Anathapindika, firmly rejecting their advice. "A name only denotes a man. The wise do not measure a man by his name. It is useless to be superstitious about mere sounds. I will never abandon the friend with whom I made mud-pies as a child, simply because of his name."

Not long after that, Anathapindika went with many of his servants to visit a village of which he was headman. He left his old friend in charge. Hearing of his departure, a band of robbers decided to break into the house. That night, they armed themselves to the teeth and surrounded it.

Curse had suspected that burglars might try something so he stayed awake. As soon as he knew that the robbers were outside, he ran about noisily as though he were rousing the entire household. He shouted for one person to sound the conch and for another to beat the drum. Soon it seemed that the house contained a whole army of servants.

When the robbers heard the din, they said to one another, "The house is not as empty as we thought it would be. The master must still be at home after all." They threw down their clubs and other weapons and fled.

In the morning, the discarded weapons were found lying scattered outside the house. When the townspeople realized what had happened, they lauded Curse to the skies. "If such a wise man hadn't been guarding the house," they said, "those robbers would have walked in and plundered as they pleased. Anathapindika owes this good luck to his staunch friend, Curse." As soon as Anathapindika returned from his trip, they told him the whole story.

"My friends," Anathapindika answered, "this is the trusty guardian I was urged to get rid of. If I had taken your advice and sent him away, I would be a poorer man

today. It's not the name but the heart within that makes the man!" In appreciation of his friend's services, he even raised his wages. Thinking that this was a good story to tell the Buddha, Anathapindika went to the Master and gave him a complete account.

"This is not the first time, sir," the Buddha said, "that a man named Curse has saved his friend's wealth from robbers. The same thing happened in bygone days as well." Then, at Anathapindika's request, the Buddha told this story of the past.

Long, long ago, when Brahmadata was reigning in Baranasi, the Bodhisatta was the treasurer. He was very famous and had a friend named Curse. At that time everything was the same as in the story of Anathapindika. When the treasurer returned from the village and heard the news, he said to his friends, "If I had taken your advice and had gotten rid of my trusty friend, I would have been a beggar today. A friend is one who goes seven steps to help. He who goes twelve can be called a comrade. Loyalty for a fortnight or a month makes one a relative; long and steady dependability, a second self. How could I forsake my friend Curse who has always been so true?"

His lesson ended, the Buddha identified the Birth by saying, "At that time Ananda was Curse, and I myself was the treasurer of Baranasi."

Mahasara Jataka The Queen's Necklace Jat 92

The Buddha told this story at Jetavana Monastery about the Venerable Ananda.

One day the wives of the King of Kosala were talking together, saying, "It is very rare for a Buddha to appear in the world," they said. "It is also rare to be born a human being. We have been born humans during a Buddha's lifetime, but we are not free to go to the monastery to pay our respects, to hear his teaching, and to make offerings to him. We might as well be living in a cage as in this palace. Let's ask the king to allow someone to come here to teach us the Dhamma. We should learn what we can, be charitable, and do good works. In that way we will truly benefit from living at this happy time!" They went to the king and made their request. The king listened and gave his consent.

That same morning, the king decided to enjoy himself in the royal gardens, so he gave orders that the grounds should be prepared. As the gardener was finishing, he saw the Buddha seated at the foot of a tree. He immediately went to the king and reported that everything was ready, but that the Buddha was there sitting under a tree.

"Very good," said the king, "we will go and hear the Master." Then he went to the garden by royal chariot.

When he got there, he found a lay disciple, Chattapani, sitting at the Buddha's feet, listening to his words. When the king saw this lay disciple, he hesitated. Realizing, however, that this must be a virtuous man, or he would not be sitting by the Buddha for instruction, the king approached, bowed, and seated himself on one side.

Out of his profound respect for the Buddha, Chattapani neither rose to honor the king nor saluted him. This made the king very angry.

Aware of the king's displeasure, the Buddha praised the merits of the layman, who had, in fact, entered the path of nonreturning. "Sire," the Buddha said, "this lay disciple knows by heart the scriptures that have been handed down, and he has set himself free from the bondage of passion."

"Surely," the king thought, "this can be no ordinary person who is being so praised by the Buddha." He turned to Chattapani and said, "Let me know if you are in need of anything."

"Thank you," Chattapani replied.

The king listened to the Master's teaching. When it was time, he rose and left ceremoniously.

A few days later, the king met Chattapani again as he was on his way to Jetavana and had him summoned. "I hear, sir, that you are a man of great learning. My wives are eager to hear the truth. I would be very glad to have you teach them."

"It would not be proper, sire, for a layman to expound the truth in the king's harem. That is the prerogative of the bhikkhus."

The king immediately realized that this was correct, so he called his wives together and announced that he would ask the Buddha to appoint one of the elders to become their instructor in the Doctrine. He asked them which of the eighty chief disciples they would prefer. The women unanimously chose Ananda, the Treasurer of the Doctrine.

The king went to the Buddha, greeted him courteously, sat down, and stated his wives' wish that Ananda might be their teacher. The Buddha assented, and the Venerable Ananda began teaching the king's wives regularly.

One day, when Ananda arrived at the palace as usual, he found that the women, who had always before been so attentive, were all troubled and agitated. "What's wrong?" he asked. "Why do you seem anxious today?"

"Oh, venerable sir," they replied, "the jewel from the king's turban is missing. He has called his ministers and ordered them to apprehend the thief and to find the jewel without fail. They are interrogating and searching everybody, even all of us women. The entire court is in an uproar, and we have no idea what might happen next to any of us. That is why we are so unhappy."

"Don't worry," said Ananda cheerfully, as he went to find the king.

Taking the seat which the king prepared for him, Ananda asked if it was true that his majesty had lost his jewel.

"Quite true, venerable sir," said the king. "I have had everyone in the palace searched and questioned, but I can find no trace of the gem."

"There is a way to find it, sire," Ananda said, "without upsetting people unnecessarily."

"What way is that, venerable sir?"

"By wisp-giving, sire."

"Wisp-giving?" asked the king. "What do you mean?"

"Call everyone you suspect," Ananda instructed, "and give him or her a wisp of straw. Say to each of them, 'Take this and put it in a certain place before daybreak tomorrow.' The person who took the jewel will be afraid of getting caught and will give the gem back with the straw. If it is not returned on the first day, the same thing must be done for one or two more days. You will undoubtedly get your jewel back." With these words, the elder departed.

Following Ananda's advice, the king distributed straw and designated the place where it was to be returned. Even though he did this for three days, the jewel was not recovered. On the third day the elder came again and asked whether the jewel had been returned.

"No, venerable sir," replied the king, "it has not."

"In that case, sire," Ananda said, "have a large waterpot filled with water and placed in a secluded corner of your courtyard. Put a screen around it, and give orders that all who frequent the palace, both men and women, are to take off their outer garments and, one by one, to step behind the screen and wash their hands." Again the king did exactly as Ananda had suggested.

"Ananda has seriously taken charge of the matter," thought the thief. "He is not going to stop until the jewel is found. The time has come to give it up." He concealed the jewel in his underclothes, went behind the screen, and dropped it in the water. After everyone had finished, the pot was emptied, and the jewel was found.

"Because of the Elder Ananda," exclaimed the king joyfully, "I have gotten my jewel back!"

"Because of the Elder Ananda," exclaimed all the residents of the palace, "we have been saved from a lot of trouble!"

The story of how his wisdom had returned the jewel spread throughout the city and reached Jetavana Monastery.

A few days later, while the bhikkhus were talking together in the Hall of Truth, one of them said, "The great wisdom of the Elder Ananda led to recovering the lost jewel and restoring calm to the palace." While all of them were singing the praises of Ananda, the Buddha entered and asked the subject of their conversation.

"Monks," he said after they had told him, "this is not the first time that stolen gems have been found, nor is Ananda the only one who has brought about such a discovery. In bygone days, too, the wise and good discovered stolen valuables and saved a lot of people from trouble." Then he proceeded to tell this story of the past.

Long, long ago, when Brahmadata was reigning in Baranasi, the Bodhisatta completed his education and became one of the king's ministers. One day the king went with a large retinue to his pleasure garden. After walking about the woods for a while, he decided to enjoy himself in the water and sent for his harem. The women removed their jewels and outer garments, laid them in boxes for their attendants to look after, and joined the king in the royal tank.

As the queen was taking off her jewels and ornaments, a female monkey that was hiding in the branches of a nearby tree watched her intently. The monkey conceived a longing to wear the queen's pearl necklace and waited for a chance to snatch it. At first the queen's attendant stayed alert, looking all around to protect the jewels, but after a while she began to nod. As soon as the monkey saw this, she jumped down as swift as the wind. Then just as swiftly she leaped up into the tree with the pearls around her neck. Fearing that other monkeys would see her treasure, she hid the string of pearls in a hole in the tree and sat demurely keeping guard as though nothing had happened.

By and by the girl awoke and saw that the jewels were gone. Terrified at her own negligence, she shouted, "A man has run off with the queen's pearl necklace!"

Sentries ran up from every side and questioned her. The king ordered his guards to catch the thief, and they rushed around the pleasure garden, searching high and low. A poor timid peasant who happened to be nearby became frightened when he heard the uproar and started to run away.

"There he goes!" cried the guards. They chased the poor man, caught him, began beating him, and asked why he stole such precious jewels.

The peasant thought, "If I deny the charge, these brutes will beat me to death. I'd better say I took them." He immediately confessed to the theft and was hauled off in chains to the king.

"Did you take those precious jewels?" asked the king.

"Yes, your majesty."

"Where are they now?"

"Your majesty, I'm a poor man," he explained. "I've never owned anything of any value, not even a bed or a chair, much less a jewel. It was the treasurer who made me take that expensive necklace. I took it and gave it to him. He knows all about it."

The king sent for the treasurer, and asked whether the peasant had passed the necklace on to him.

Also afraid to deny the charge, the treasurer answered, "Yes, sire."

"Where is it then?"

"I gave it to your majesty's high priest."

The high priest was sent for, and interrogated in the same way. He said he had given it to the chief musician, who in his turn said he had given it as a present to a courtesan. The courtesan, however, utterly denied having received it and the questioning continued until sunset.

"It's too late now," said the king, "we will look into this tomorrow." He handed the suspects over to his officers and went back into the city.

The Bodhisatta began thinking, "These jewels were lost inside the grounds, but the peasant was outside. There was a strong guard at the gate. It would have been impossible for anyone inside to have gotten away with the necklace. I don't see how a person, inside or out, could have stolen it. I don't believe that any of these five had anything to do with it, but I understand why they falsely confessed and implicated the others. As for the necklace, these grounds are swarming with monkeys. It must have been one of the female monkeys that took it."

Having arrived at this conclusion, the minister went to the king and requested that the suspects be handed over to him so that he could look into the matter personally.

"By all means, my wise friend," said the king, "go ahead."

The minister ordered his servants to take charge of the five prisoners. "Keep strict watch over them," he said. "I want you to listen to everything they say and report it all to me."

As the prisoners sat together, the treasurer said to the peasant, "Tell me, you wretch, where you and I have ever met before today. How could you have given me that necklace?"

"Honorable sir," said the peasant, "I have never owned anything valuable. Even the stool and the cot I have are rickety. I said what I did because I thought that with your help I would get out of this trouble. Please don't be angry with me, sir."

"Well then," the high priest indignantly asked the treasurer, "how did you pass on to me what this fellow never gave to you?"

"I said that," explained the treasurer, "because I thought that you and I, both being high ranking officials, would be able to get out of trouble together."

"Brahman," the chief musician asked the high priest, "when do you think you gave the jewel to me?"

"I only said I did," answered the chaplain, "because I thought you would help to make the time in prison pass more agreeably."

Finally the courtesan complained, "You wretch of a musician, you have never visited me, and I have never visited you. When could you have given me the necklace?"

"Don't be angry, my dear," said the musician. "I just wanted you to be here to keep us company. Cheer up! Let's all be lighthearted together for a while."

As soon as his servants had reported this conversation to the Bodhisatta, he saw that all his suspicions were correct. He was convinced that a female monkey had taken the necklace.

"Now I must find a way to make her drop it," he said to himself. He ordered his servants to catch some monkeys, to deck them out with strings of beads, and then to release them again in the pleasure garden. The men were to carefully watch every monkey in the grounds. As soon as they saw one wearing the missing pearl necklace, they were to frighten her into dropping it.

The monkeys strutted about with their beads strung around their necks, their wrists, and their ankles. They flaunted their splendor in front of the guilty monkey, who sat quietly guarding her treasure. At last, jealousy overcame her prudence. "Those are only beads!" she screeched, and foolishly put on her own necklace of real pearls. As soon as the servants saw this, they began making loud noises and throwing things at her. The monkey became so frightened that she dropped the necklace and scampered away. The men took it to their master.

The minister immediately took it to the king. "Here, sire," he said, "is the queen's necklace. The five prisoners are innocent. It was a female monkey in the pleasure garden that took it."

"Wonderful!" exclaimed the king. "But, tell me, how did you find that out? And how did you manage to get it back?"

When he had heard the whole story, the king praised his minister. "You certainly are the right man in the right place!" he proclaimed. In appreciation, the king showered the minister with immeasurable treasure.

The king continued to follow the Bodhisatta's advice and counsel. After a long life of generosity and meritorious acts, he passed away to fare according to his deserts.

His lesson ended, the Buddha again praised Venerable Ananda's merits, and identified the birth. "Ananda was the king of those days," he said, "and I was his wise counselor."