



THE AESOPIC CONSTITUENTS OF THE GŪTHA-PĀNA JĀTAKA

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The *jātaka* numbered 227 in the *Jātaka Book* is the *Gūtha-Pāna Jātaka*, or, as it translates into English, *The Dung-Beetle Beetle*. It was, according to the *paccuppannavatthu* thereof, narrated by the Buddha when he was at Jetavana about a monk, who assaulted and then defecated upon the face of a lout, who was in the habit of humiliating young men and novices, who came to collect their ticket-meals at a particular village. By and bye the incident reached the ears of the Brotherhood. One day one of them was saying to another at the Hall of Truth, "Friend, I hear Brother so-and-so shat upon the face of that loafer and left him"; when it happened that the Buddha overheard him and wanted to know what it was that they were talking about. Then, upon learning of the affair, the Master observed, "Brethren, this is not the first time that this brother attacked the man with his ordure; he did the same thing before" - and went on to narrate 'the story of the past' as follows:

Once upon a time those citizens of the kingdoms of Anga and Magadha, who were travelling from one land to the other, used to stay in a house on the marches of the two kingdoms, and there they drank liquor and ate the flesh of fishes, and early in the morning they yoked their carts and went away. At the time when they came, a certain dung-beetle, led by the odour of dung, came to the place where they had drunken, and saw some liquor shed upon the ground, and for thirst he drank it and returned to his lump of dung intoxicated. When he climbed upon it, the moist dung gave way a little. "The world cannot bear my weight!" he bawled out. At that very instant a maddened Elephant came to the spot, and smelling the dung went back in disgust. The Beetle saw it. "Yon creature," he thought, "is afraid of me and see how he runs away! I must fight with him!" and so he challenged him in the first stanza :-

"Well matched! for we are heroes both: here let us issue try.
Turn back, turn back, friend Elephant! Why would you fear and fly?
Let Magadha and Anga see how great our bravery!"

The Elephant listened, and heard the voice; he turned back towards the Beetle, and said the second stanza by way of rebuke :-

"With foot or tusks or trunk to kill you I refuse;
Since dung's your love, it's dung that I will use."