

The Ass in the Lion's Skin

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Indian

Intermediate

2 min read

At the same time, when Brahma-datta was reigning in Benares, the future Buddha was born one of a peasant family; and when he grew up, he gained his living by tilling the ground.

At that time a hawker used to go from place to place, trafficking in goods carried by an ass. Now at each place he came to, when he took the pack down from the ass's back, he used to clothe him in a lion's skin, and turn him loose in the rice and barley fields. And when the watchmen in the fields saw the ass, they dared not go near him, taking him for a lion.

So one day the hawker stopped in a village; and whilst he was getting his own breakfast cooked, he dressed the ass in a lion's skin, and turned him loose in a barley-field. The watchmen in the field dared not go up to him; but going home, they published the news. Then all the villagers came out with weapons in their hands; and blowing chanks, and beating drums, they went near the field and shouted. Terrified with the fear of death, the ass uttered a cry—the bray of an ass!

And when he knew him then to be an ass, the future Buddha pronounced the First Verse:

“This is not a lion's roaring,

Nor a tiger's, nor a panther's;

Dressed in a lion's skin,

"Tis a wretched ass that roars!"

But when the villagers knew the creature to be an ass, they beat him till his bones broke; and, carrying off the lion's skin, went away. Then the hawker came; and seeing the ass fallen into so bad a plight, pronounced the

Second Verse:

"Long might the ass,

Clad in a lion's skin,

Have fed on the barley green.

But he brayed!

And that moment he came to ruin."

And even whilst he was yet speaking the ass died on the spot!

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