Ja 139 — Ubhatobhattha Jātaka

English translation by Robert Chalmers.

Source: https://raw.githubusercontent.com/suttacentral/sc-data/2d9ca8da858f94302ed6783e2717bf73d651881b/html_text/en/pli/sutta/kn/ja/vol1/ja139.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

“His blinding and her beating.”—This story the Master told while at the Bamboo Grove, about Devadatta. We hear that the Brethren, meeting together in the Hall of Truth, spoke one with another, saying that even as a torch from a pyre, charred at both ends and bedunged in the middle, does not serve as wood either in forest-tree or village-hearth, so Devadatta by giving up the world to follow this saving faith had only achieved a twofold shortcoming and failure, seeing that he had missed the comforts of a-lay life yet had fallen short of his vocation as a Brother.

Entering the Hall, the Master asked and was told what the Brethren were talking of together. “Yes, Brethren,” said he, “and so too in days gone by Devadatta came to just such another two-fold failure.” So saying, he told this story of the past.

Once on a time when Brahmadatta was reigning in-Benares, the Bodhisatta was born a Tree-Sprite, and there was a certain village where line-fishermen dwelt in those days. And one of these fishermen taking his tackle went off with his little boy, and cast his hook into the most likely waters known to his fellow-fishermen. Now a snag caught his hook and the fisherman could not pull it up. “What a fine fish!” thought he. “I’d better send my boy off home to my wife and tell her to get up a quarrel and keep the others at home, so that there’ll be none to want to go shares in my prize.” Accordingly he told the lad to run off home and tell his mother what a big fish he had hooked and how she was to engage the neighbours’ attention. Then, fearing his line might break, he flung off his coat and dashed into the water to secure his prize. But as he groped about for the fish, he struck against the snag and put out both his eyes. Moreover a robber stole his clothes from the hank. In an agony of pain, with his hands pressed to his blinded eyes, he clambered out trembling in every limb and tried to find his clothes.

Meantime his wife, to occupy the neighbours by a quarrel on purpose, had tricked herself out with a palm-leaf behind one ear, and had blacked one eye with soot from the

saucepan. In this guise, nursing a dog, she came out to call on her neighbours. “Bless me, you’ve gone mad,” said one woman to her. “Not mad at all,” retorted the fisherman’s wife; “you abuse me without cause with your slanderous tongue. Come your ways with me to the zemindar and I’ll have you fined eight pieces for slander.”

So with angry words they went off to the zemindar. But when the matter was gone into, it was the fisherman’s wife who was fined; and she was tied up and beaten to make her pay the fine. Now when the Tree-Sprite saw how misfortune had befallen both the wife in the village and the husband in the forest, he stood in the fork of his tree and exclaimed, “Ah fisherman, both in the water and on land thy labour is in vain, and twofold is thy failure.” So saying he uttered this stanza—

His blinding, and her beating, clearly show

A twofold failure and a twofold woe.

His lesson ended, the Master identified the Birth by saying, “Devadatta was the fisherman of those days, and I the Tree-Sprite.”

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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Prepared for SuttaCentral by Bhikkhu Sujato.