Ja 166 — Upasalha Jātaka

English translation by W. H. D. Rouse.

Source: https://raw.githubusercontent.com/suttacentral/sc-data/2d9ca8da858f94302ed6783e2717bf73d651881b/html_text/en/pli/sutta/kn/ja/vol2/ja166.html

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Edited by E. B. Cowell

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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

"Fourteen thousand Upasalhas," etc.—This story the Master told whilst at Jetavana, about a brahmin named Upasalha, who was fastidious in the matter of cemeteries.

This man, we learn, was rich and wealthy; but, though he lived over against the monastery, he showed no kindness to the Buddhas, being given to heresy. But he had a son, wise and intelligent. When he was growing old, the man said to his son, "Don't let my body be burnt in a cemetery where any outcast can be burnt, but find some uncontaminated place to burn me in." "Father," said the young fellow, "I know no cemetery fit to burn your body in. Good my father, take the lead and yourself point out the place where I shall have you burnt." So the brahmin consenting led his son out of the city to the top of Vulture Peak, and then said he, "Here, my son, no outcast is ever burnt; here I would have you burn me." Then he began to descend the hill in his son's company.

On that day, in the evening, the Master was looking around to see which of his friends was ripe for Release, and perceived that this father and son were ready to enter upon the First Path. So he took their road, and came to the hill-foot, like a hunter waiting for his quarry; there he sat till they should cone down from the top. Down they came, and noticed the Master. He gave them greeting, and asked, "Where are you bound, brahmins?" The young man told him their errand. Come along, then," said the Master, "show me the place your father pointed out." So he and they two together climbed up the mountain. "Which place?" he asked. "Sir," said the lad, "the space between these three hills is the one he showed me." The Master said, "This is not the first time, my lad, that your father has been nice in the matter of cemeteries; he was the same before. Nor is it now only that he has pointed you out this place for his burning; long ago he pointed out the very same place." And at his request the Master told them a tale of long ago.

Once upon a time, in this very city of Rajagaha, lived this same brahmin Upasalhaka, and he had the very same son. At that period the Bodhisatta had been born in a brahmin family

of Magadha land; and when his education was finished, he embraced a religious life, cultivated the Faculties and the Attainments, and lived a long time in the region of Himalaya, plunged in mystic exaltation.

Once he left his hermitage on Vulture Peak to go buy salt and seasoning. While he was away, this brahmin spoke in just the same way to his son, as now. The lad begged him to point out a proper place, and he came and pointed out this very place. As he was descending, with his son, he observed the Bodhisatta, and approached him, and the Bodhisatta put the same question as I did just now, and received the son's answer. "Ah," said he, "we'll see whether this place which your father has shown you is contaminated or not," and made them go with him up the hill again. "The space between these three hills," said the lad, "is pure." "My lad," the Bodhisatta replied, "there is no end to the people who have been burned in this very spot. Your own father, born a brahmin, as now, in Rajagaha, and bearing the very same name of, has been burnt on this hill in fourteen thousand births. On the whole earth there's not a spot to be found where a corpse has not been burnt, which has not been a cemetery, which has not been covered with skulls."

This he discerned by the faculty of knowing all previous lives: and then he repeated these two stanzas—

"Fourteen thousand Upasalhas have been burnt upon this spot,

Nor is there the wide world over any place where death is not.

"Where is kindness, truth, and justice, temperance and self-control,

There no death can find an entrance; thither hies each saintly soul."

When the Bodhisatta had thus discoursed to father and son, he cultivated the Four Excellences and went his way to Brahma's heaven.

When this discourse was ended, the Master declared the Truths and identified and the Birth—at the conclusion of the Truths father and son were established in the Fruit of the First Path—"The father and son were the same then as they are now, and the ascetic was I myself."

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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