Ja 305 — Silavimamsana Jātaka

English translation by H. T. Francis and R. A. Neil.

Source: https://raw.githubusercontent.com/suttacentral/sc-data/2d9ca8da858f94302ed6783e2717bf73d651881b/html_text/en/pli/sutta/kn/ja/vol3/ja305.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

“In sooth there is,” etc.—This story the Master told while dwelling at Jetavana, about the rebuking of sin. The circumstances will be set forth in the Paniya Birth in the Eleventh Book. The following is a brief summary of it.

Five hundred Brethren living in Jetavana, at the close of the middle watch of the night, entered into an argument on the pleasures of sense. Now the Master through all the six divisions of night and day keeps a continual watch over the Brethren, even as a one-eyed man carefully guards his eye, a father his only son, or a yak its tail. In the night time, with his supernatural vision regarding Jetavana, he beheld these Brethren, as it were, like robbers that had found their way into some great king’s palace. And opening his perfumed chamber he summoned Ananda and bade him assemble the Brethren in the Home of the Golden Pavement, and prepare a seat for him at the door of the perfumed chamber. Ananda did as he was commanded and told the Master. Then the Master, sitting down on the seat prepared for him, addressed the Brethren collectively and said, “Brethren, wise men of old thought there was no such thing as secrecy in wrong-doing and so refrained from it,” and he told them a story of the olden time.

Once upon a time when Brahmadatta was reigning in Benares, the Bodhisatta came to life in a brahmin family, and when he was of age, he was taught science by a world-renowned professor of that city, being at the head of a class of five hundred students. Now his teacher had a grown-up daughter. And he thought: “I will test the virtue of these youths and will give her in marriage to him that most excels in virtue.”

So one day he thus addressed his pupils: “ My friends, I have a grown-up daughter, and I intend to give her in marriage, but I must have proper dresses and ornaments for her. Do you then steal some without your friends discovering it, and bring them to me. Whatever no one has seen you take I will accept, but if you allow anything you bring to be seen, I shall refuse it.” They assented, saying, “Very well,” and from that day they stole dresses and

ornaments without their friends' knowledge and brought them to him. And the teacher arranged whatever each pupil brought in a separate place. But the Bodhisatta stole nothing.

Then the teacher said, "But you, my friend, bring me nothing." "True, Master," he replied. "Why is this, my friend?" he asked. "You accept nothing," he answered, "unless it is taken secretly. But I find there is no such thing as secrecy in wrong-doing."

And to illustrate this truth he repeated these two stanzas:

In sooth there is no act of sin, that in this world may hidden lie,

That which the fool a secret deems, the spirits of the wood espy.

Concealment nowhere may be found, nor can a void exist for me,

E'en where no being is in sight, while I am there, no void can be.

The Master, being pleased with his words, said, "Friend, there is no lack of wealth in my house, but I was anxious to marry my daughter to a virtuous man, and I acted thus to prove these youths. But you alone are worthy of my daughter." Then he adorned his daughter and gave her in marriage to the Bodhisatta, but to his other pupils he said, "Take back all that you brought me to your several homes again."

Then the Master said, "It was thus, Brethren, that the wicked pupils by their dishonesty failed to win this woman, while this one wise youth by his virtuous conduct obtained her as his wife." And in his Perfect Wisdom he gave utterance to yet two other stanzas:

Masters Bastard and Low and Easy and Gay,

With Bravo and Frail, for a wife, went astray;

But our Brahmin, well seen in the Law from his youth,

Won a bride by his courage in holding the Truth.

The Master, having brought this solemn lesson to an end, declared the Truths and identified the Birth—At the conclusion of the Truths these five hundred Brethren attained to Sainthood—"At that time Sariputta was the Teacher, and I myself was the Wise Youth."

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.

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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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