Ja 306 — Sujata 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/ja306.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

“What is this egg-shaped fruit,” etc.—This story was told by the Master while dwelling at Jetavana, about queen Mallika. One day, they say, there was a dispute at court between her and the king. The king was so enraged that he ignored her existence. Mallika thought: “The Master, I fancy, knows not how angry the king is with me.” But the Master knew all about it and resolved to make peace between them. So early in the morning he put on his inner garment and taking his bowl and robes he entered Savatthi with a following of five hundred brethren and came to the palace gate. The king took his bowl from him, brought him into the house, and placing him on the seat prepared for him, poured the Water of Donation on the hands of the Brotherhood with Buddha at their head, and brought them rice and cakes to eat. But the Master covered up his bowl with his hand and said, “Sire, where is the queen?”

“What have you to do with her, Reverend Sir?” he answered. “Her head is turned, she is intoxicated with the honour she enjoys.”

“Sire,” he said, “after you yourself bestowed this honour on the woman, it is wrong of you now to get rid of her, and not to put up with the offence she has committed against you.”

The king hearkened to the words of the Master and sent for the queen.

And she ministered to the Master. “You ought,” he said, “to live together in peace,” and singing the praises of the sweets of concord he went his way. And from that day they lived happily together.

The Brethren raised a discussion in the Hall of Truth, how that the Master had reconciled the king and queen by a single word. The Master, when he came, inquired what the Brethren were discussing, and on being told said, “Not now only, Brethren, but formerly too I reconciled them by a single word of admonition.” And he told an old story.

Once upon a time when Brahmadatta was king at Benares, the Bodhisatta was his minister and his temporal and spiritual adviser.

Now one day the king stood at an open window looking into the palace court. And at this very moment the daughter of a fruiterer, a beautiful girl in the flower of her youth, stood with a basket of jujubes on her head crying, “Jujubes, ripe jujubes, who’ll buy my jujubes?” But she did not venture into the royal court.

And the king no sooner heard her voice than he fell in love with her, and when he learned that she was unmarried he sent for her and raised her to the dignity of chief queen, and bestowed great honour upon her. Now she was dear and pleasing in the king’s eyes. And one day the king sat eating jujubes in a golden dish. And the queen Sujata, when she saw the king eating jujubes, asked him, saying, “My lord, what in the world are you eating? “ And she uttered the first stanza:

What is this egg-shaped fruit, my lord, so pretty and red of hue,

In a gold dish set before thee? Pray tell me, where they grew.

And the king was wroth and said, “O daughter of a greengrocer, dealer in ripe jujubes, do you not recognise the jujubes, the special fruit of your own family?” And he repeated two stanzas:

Bare-headed and meanly clad, my queen, thou once didst feel no shame,

To fill thy lap with the jujube fruit, and now thou dost ask its name;

Thou art eaten up with pride, my queen, thou findest no pleasure in life,

Begone and gather thy jujubes again. Thou shalt be no longer my wife.

Then the Bodhisatta thought, “No one, except myself, will be able to reconcile this pair. I will appease the king’s anger and prevent him from turning her out of doors.” Then he repeated the fourth stanza:

These are the sins of a woman, my lord, promoted to high estate:

Forgive her and cease from thine anger, O king, for ’twas thou didst make her great.

So the king at his word put up with the offence of the queen and restored her to her former position. And thenceforth they lived amicably together.

The Master, his lesson ended, identified the Birth: “At that time the king of Kosala was king of Benares, Mallika was Sujata and I myself was the Minister.”

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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Prepared for SuttaCentral by Bhikkhu Sujato.