Ja 317 — Matarodana 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/ja317.html

Source revision: 2d9ca8da858f94302ed6783e2717bf73d651881b

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Edited by E. B. Cowell

Original edition: Cambridge University Press, volume 3, 1897

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

“Weep for the living,” etc.—The Master while in residence at Jetavana told this story of a certain landowner who dwelt at Savatthi.

On the death of his brother, it is said, he was so overwhelmed with grief that he neither ate nor washed nor anointed himself, but in deep affliction he used to go to the cemetery at daybreak to weep. The Master, early in the morning casting his eye upon the world and observing in that man a capacity for attaining to the fruition of the First Path, thought, “There is no one but myself that can, by telling him what happened long ago, assuage his grief and bring him to the fruition of the First Path. I must be his Refuge.” So next day on returning in the afternoon from his round of alms-begging, he took a junior priest and went to his house. On hearing of the Master’s arrival, the landowner ordered a seat to be prepared and bade him enter, and saluting him he sat on one side. In answer to the Master, who asked him why he was grieving, he said he had been sorrowing ever since his brother’s death. Said the Master, “All compound existences are impermanent, and what is to be broken is broken. One ought not to make a trouble of this. Wise men of old, from knowing this, did not grieve, when their brother died.” And at his request the Master related this legend of the past.

Once upon a time when Brahmadatta was reigning in Benares, the Bodhisatta was reborn in the family of a rich merchant, worth eighty crores. When he was come of age, his parents died. And on their death a brother of the Bodhisatta managed the family estate. And the Bodhisatta lived in dependence on him. By and bye the brother also died of a fatal disease. His relations, friends and companions came together, and throwing up their arms wept and lamented, and no one was able to control his feelings. But the Bodhisatta neither lamented nor wept. Men said, “See now, though his brother is dead, he does not so much as pull a wry face: he is a very hard-hearted fellow. Methinks he desired his brother’s death, hoping to enjoy a double portion.” Thus did they blame the Bodhisatta. His kinsfolk too reproved him, saying, “Though your brother is dead, you do not shed a tear.” On

hearing their words he said: “In your blind folly, not knowing the Eight Worldly Conditions, you weep and cry, “Alas! my brother is dead,” but I too, and you also, will have to die. Why then do you not weep at the thought of your own death? All existing things are transient, and consequently no single compound is able to remain in its natural condition. Though you, blind fools, in your state of ignorance, from not knowing the Eight Worldly Conditions, weep and lament, why should I weep?” And so saying, he repeated these stanzas—

Weep for the living rather than the dead!

All creatures that a mortal form do take,

Four-footed beast and bird and hooded snake,

Yea men and angels all the same path tread.

Powerless to cope with fate, rejoiced to die,

Midst sad vicissitude of bliss and pain,

Why shedding idle tears should man complain,

And plunged in sorrow for a brother sigh?

Men versed in fraud and in excess grown old,

The untutored fool, e’en valiant men of might,

If worldly-wise and ignorant of right,

Wisdom itself as foolishness may hold.

Thus did the Bodhisatta teach these men the Truth, and delivered them all from their sorrow.

The Master, after he had ended his religious exposition, revealed the Truths and identified the Birth—At the conclusion of the Truths the landowner attained to fruition of the First Path: —“At that time the wise man who by his religious exposition delivered people from their sorrow 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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Prepared for SuttaCentral by Bhikkhu Sujato.