Ja 344 — Ambacora 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/ja344.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

“She that did thy mangoes eat,” etc.—This story was told by the Master while at Jetavana, concerning an elder who kept watch over mango fruit. When he was old, they say, he became an ascetic and built him a hut of leaves in a mango orchard on the outskirts of Jetavana, and not only himself continually ate the ripe fruit that fell from the mango trees, but also gave some to his kinsfolk. When he had set out on his round of alms-begging, some thieves knocked down his mangoes, and ate some and went off with others. At this moment the four daughters of a rich merchant, after bathing in the river Aciravati, in wandering about strayed into the mango orchard. When the old man returned and found them there, he charged them with having eaten his mangoes.

“Sir,” they said, “we have but just come; we have not eaten your mangoes.”

“Then take an oath,” he said.

“We will, Sir,” they said, and took an oath. The old man having thus put them to shame, by making them take an oath, let them go.

The Brethren, hearing of his action, raised a discussion in the Hall of Truth, how that an old man exacted an oath from the daughters of a merchant, who entered the mango orchard where he himself lived, and after putting them to shame by administering an oath to them, let them go. When the Master came and on inquiring what was the topic they sat in council to discuss, heard what it was, he said, “Not now only, Brethren, but formerly also this old man, when he kept watch over mangoes, made certain daughters of a rich merchant take an oath, and after thus putting them to shame let them go.” And so saying he told a story of the past.

Once upon a time when Brahmadatta was reigning in Benares, the Bodhisatta became Sakka. At that time a knavish ascetic built a hermitage of leaves in a mango orchard on a

river bank near Benares, and keeping watch over the mangoes, ate the ripe fruit that fell from the mango trees and also gave some to his kinsfolk, and dwelt there gaining his livelihood by various false practices.

At this time Sakka, king of heaven, thought "Who, I wonder, in this world of men support their parents, pay honour to the aged members of their family, give alms, keep the moral law and observe fast day? Which of them after adopting the religious life, continually devote themselves to the duties befitting priests, and which of them again are guilty of misconduct?" And exploring the world he spied this wicked ascetic keeping watch over his mangoes and said, "This false ascetic, abandoning his duties as a priest, such as the process by which religious ecstasy may be induced and the like, is continually watching a mango orchard. I will frighten him soundly." So when he was gone into the village for alms, Sakka by his supernatural power knocked down the mangoes, and made as if they had been plundered by thieves. At this moment four daughters of a merchant of Benares entered the orchard, and the false ascetic on seeing them stopped them and said, "You have eaten my mangoes."

They said, "Sir, we have but just come. We have not eaten them."

"Then take an oath," he said.

"But in that case may we go?" they asked. "Certainly, you may."

"Very well, Sir," they said, and the eldest of them sware an oath uttering the first stanza:

She that did thy mangoes eat,

As her lord shall own some churl,

That with dye grey hairs would cheat

And his locks with tongs would curl.

The ascetic said, "Stand thou on one side," and he made the second daughter of the merchant take an oath, and she repeated the second stanza:

Let the maid that robbed thy tree

Vainly for a husband sigh,

Past her teens though she may be

And on thirty verging nigh.

And after she had taken an oath and stood on one side, the third maiden uttered the third stanza:

She that thy ripe mangoes ate

Weary path shall tread alone,

And at trysting place too late

Grieve to find her lover gone.

When she had taken an oath and stood aside, the fourth maiden uttered the fourth stanza:

She that did thy tree despoil

Gaily dressed, with wreath on head,

And bedewed with sandal oil

Still shall seek a virgin bed.

The ascetic said, “This is a solemn oath you have taken; others must have eaten the mangoes. Do ye therefore now be gone.” And so saying, he sent them away. Sakka then presented himself in a terrible form, and drove away the false ascetic from the place.

The Master, having ended his lesson, identified the Birth: “At that time this false ascetic was the old man who watched mangoes. The four merchant’s daughters played the same part then as now. But Sakka was 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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