Ja 372 — Migapotaka 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/ja372.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

“To sorrow for the dead,” etc.—This story the Master, whilst dwelling at Jetavana, told about a certain elder. It is said that he admitted a youth to orders, and that this novice, after ministering to him zealously, by and bye fell sick and died. The old man overcome with grief at the youth’s death went about loudly lamenting. The Brethren, failing to console him, raised a discussion in the Hall of Truth, saying, “A certain old man on the death of his novice goes about lamenting. By dwelling on the thought of death, he will surely become a castaway.” When the Master came, he inquired of the Brethren what was the subject they had met to discuss, and on hearing what it was he said, “Not now only, but formerly also, the old man went about lamenting, when this youth died.” And with this he related a story of the past.

Once upon a time in the reign of Brahmadatta, king of Bewares, the Bodhisatta was born in the form of Sakka. At that time a man, who lived in the kingdom of Kasi, came into the Himalaya region, and adopting the life of an ascetic lived on wild fruits. One day he found in the forest a young deer that had lost its dam. He took it home to his hermitage, and fed and cherished it. The young deer grew up a handsome and comely beast, and the ascetic took care of it and treated it as his own child. One day the young deer died of indigestion from a surfeit of grass. The ascetic went about lamenting and said, “My child is dead.” Then Sakka, king of heaven, exploring the world, saw that ascetic, and thinking to alarm him, he came and took his stand in the air and uttered the first stanza:

To sorrow for the dead doth ill become

The lone ascetic, free from ties of home.

The ascetic no sooner heard this than he uttered the second stanza:

Should man with beast consort, O Sakka, grief

For a lost playmate finds in tears relief.

Then Sakka repeated two stanzas:

Such as to weep are fain may still lament the dead,

Weep not, O sage, ’Tis vain to weep the wise have said.

If by our tears we might prevail against the grave,

Thus would we all unite our dearest ones to save.

While Sakka was thus speaking, the ascetic recognising that it was useless to weep, and singing the praises of Sakka, repeated three stanzas :

As ghee-fed flame that blazes out amain

Is quenched with water, so he quenched my pain.

With sorrow’s shaft my heart was wounded sore:

He healed my wound and did my life restore.

The barb extracted, full of joy and peace,

At Sakka’s words I from my sorrow cease.

After thus admonishing the ascetic, Sakka departed to his own place of abode.

The Master here ended his lesson and identified the Birth—“At that time the old man was the ascetic, the novice was the deer, and I myself was Sakka.”

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.