Ja 380 — Asanka 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/ja380.html

Source revision: 2d9ca8da858f94302ed6783e2717bf73d651881b

License: Public Domain (original English edition, published 1895–1907)

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

“In heavenly garden,” etc.—The Master told this tale while dwelling at Jetavana, concerning the temptation of a Brother by his former wife. The occasion will appear in the Indriya Birth. The Master found that the brother was backsliding owing to thoughts of his wife, so he said, “Sir, this woman does you harm: formerly also for her sake you sacrificed an army of the four divisions and dwelt in the Himalaya three years in much misery”: so he told an old tale.

Once upon a time when Brahmadatta was king in Benares, the Bodhisatta was born in a brahmin family at a village of that country. When he grew up, he learned the arts at Takkasila, became an ascetic and reaching the Faculties and Attainments lived on roots and fruits in the Himalaya. At that time a being of perfect merit fell from the Heaven of the Thirty-three and was conceived as a girl inside a lotus in a pool: and when the other lotuses grew old and fell, that one grew great and stood. The ascetic coming to bathe saw it and thought, “The other lotuses fall, but this one is grown great and stands; why is this?” So he put on his bathing-dress and crossed to it, then opening the lotus he saw the girl. Feeling towards her as to a daughter he took her to his hut and tended her. When she came to sixteen years, she was beautiful, and in her beauty excelled the hue of man, but attained not the hue of gods. Sakka came to wait on the Bodhisatta. He saw the maiden, asked and was told the way in which she was found, and then asked, “What ought she to receive?” “A dwelling-place and supply of raiment, ornament and food, O sir.” He answered, “Very well, lord,” and created a crystal palace for her dwelling, made for her a bed, raiment and ornament, food and drink divine. The palace descended and rested on the ground when she was going up; when she had gone up it ascended and stayed in the air. She did various services to the Bodhisatta as she lived in the palace. A forester saw this and asked, “What is this person to you, lord?” “My daughter.” So he went to Benares and told the king, “O king, I have seen in the Himalaya a certain ascetic’s daughter of such beauty.” The king was caught by hearing this, and making the forester his guide he went with an army of the four divisions to that place, and pitching a camp he took the forester and his retinue of

ministers and entered the hermitage. He saluted the Bodhisatta and said, “Lord, women are a stain to the religious life; I will tend your daughter.”

Now the Bodhisatta had given the maiden the name Asanka because she was brought to him by his crossing the water owing to his doubt (asanka), “What is in this lotus?” He did not say to the king directly, “Take her and go,” but said, “If you know this maiden’s name, O great king, take her and go.” “Lord, if you tell it, I shall know.” “I shall not tell it, but when you know it take her and depart.” The king agreed, and thenceforth considered along with his ministers, “What may be her name?” He put forward all names hard to guess and talked with the Bodhisatta, saying, “Such and such will be her name”: but the Bodhisatta said nay and refused him. So a year passed while the king was considering. Lions and other beasts seized his elephants and horses and men, there was danger from snakes, danger from flies, and many died worn out with cold. The king said to the Bodhisatta, “What need have I of her?” and took his way. The maiden Asanka stood at an open crystal window. The king seeing her said, “We cannot find your name, live here in the Himalaya, we will depart.” “Great king, if you go you will never find a wife like me. In the Heaven of the Thirty-three, in the Cittalata garden, there is a creeper named Asavati: in its fruit a divine drink is born, and they who drink of it once are intoxicated for four months and lie on a divine couch: it bears fruit once in a thousand years and the sons of the gods, though given to strong drink, bear with their thirst for that divine drink saying, “We shall reap fruit from this,” and come constantly throughout the thousand years to watch the plant saying, “Is it well?” But you grow discontented in one year: he who wins the fruit of his hope is happy, be not discontented yet,” and so she spoke three stanzas:

In heavenly garden grows Asavati;

Once in a thousand years, no more, the tree

Bears fruit: for it the gods wait patiently.

Hope on, O king, the fruit of hope is sweet:

A bird hoped on and never own’d defeat.

His wish, though far away, he won complete:

Hope on, O king: the fruit of hope is sweet.

The king was caught by her words: he gathered his ministers again and guessed at the name, making ten guesses each time till another year was past. But her name was not among the ten, and so the Bodhisatta refused him. Again the king said, “What need have I of her?” and took his way. She showed herself at the window: and the king said, “You stay, we will depart.” “Why depart, great king?” “I cannot find your name.” “Great king, why can you not find it? Hope is not without success; a crane staying on a hill-top won his wish: why can you not win it? Endure, great king. A crane had its feeding-ground in a lotus-pool, but flying up lit on a hill-top: he stayed there that day and next day thought, “I am happily

settled on this hill-top: if without going down I stay here finding food and drinking water and so dwell this day, Oh it would be delightful." That very day Sakka, King of heaven, had crushed the Asuras and being now lord in the heaven of the Thirty-three was thinking, "My wishes have come to the pitch of fulfilment, is there any one in the forest whose wishes are unfulfilled?" So considering, he saw that crane and thought, "I will bring this bird's wishes to the pitch of fulfilment": not far from the crane's place of perch there is a stream, and Sakka sent the stream in full flood to the hill-top: so the crane without moving ate fish and drank water and dwelt there that day: then the water fell and went away: so, great king, the crane won fruition of that hope of his, and why will you not win it? Hope on," she said, with the rest of the verse. The king, hearing her tale, was caught by her beauty and attracted by her words: he could not go away, but gathering his ministers, and getting a hundred names spent another year in guessing with these hundred names. At the end of three years he came to the Bodhisatta and asked, "Will that name be among the hundred, lord?" "You do not know it, great king." He saluted the Bodhisatta, and saying, "We will go now," he took his way. The maiden Asanka again stood by a crystal window. The king saw her and said, "You stay, we will depart." "Why, great king?" "You satisfy me with words, but not with love: caught by your sweet words I have spent here three years, now I will depart," and he uttered these stanzas:

You please me but with words and not in deed:

The scentless flower, though fair, is but a weed.

Promise fair without performance on his friends one throws away,

Never giving, ever hoarding: such is friendship's sure decay.

Men should speak when they will act, not promise what they cannot do:

If they talk without performing, wise men see them through and through.

My troops are wasted, all my stores are spent,

I doubt my life is spoilt: 'Tis time I went.

The maiden Asanka hearing the king's words said, "Great king, you know my name, you have just said it; tell my father my name, take me and go," so talking with the king, she said:

Prince, you have said the word that is my name:

Come, king: my father will allow the claim.

The king went to the Bodhisatta, saluted and said, "Lord, your daughter is named Asanka." "From the time you know her name, take her and go, great king." He saluted the Bodhisatta, and coming to the crystal palace he said, "Lady, your father has given you to

me, come now." "Come, great king, I will get my father's leave," she said, and coming down from the palace she saluted the Bodhisatta, got his consent and came to the king. The king took her to Benares and lived happily with her, increased with sons and daughters. The Bodhisatta continued in unbroken meditation and was born in the Brahma world.

After the lesson, the Master declared the Truths and identified the Birth: After the Truths, the Brother was established in the Fruition of the First Path—"Asanka was the former wife, the king was the discontented Brother, the ascetic 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.

These translations are in the public domain. You are free to do whatever you like with them.

Scanned, proofed and formatted at sacred-texts.com, January 2006–February 2010, by John Bruno Hare and others. Thanks to the Sacred Texts Archive for making these texts available in digital form.

Prepared for SuttaCentral by Bhikkhu Sujato.