Ja 392 — Bhisapuppha 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/ja392.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

“You were never,” etc.—The Master told this tale while dwelling in Jetavana, concerning a certain Brother. The story is that the Brother had left Jetavana and dwelt in the Kosala kingdom near a certain wood: one day he went down into a lotus-pool , and seeing a lotus in flower he stood to leeward and smelt it. Then the goddess who dwelt in that part of the forest frightened him saying, “Sir, you are a thief of odours, this is a kind of theft.” He went back in a fright to Jetavana, and saluted the Master and sat down. “Where have you been staying, Brother?” “In such and such a wood, and the goddess frightened me in such and such a way.” The Master said, “You are not the first who have been frightened by a goddess when smelling a flower; sages of old have been frightened in like manner,” and at the Brother’s request he told an old tale.

Once upon a time when Brahmadatta was reigning in Benares, the Bodhisatta was born in a brahmin family of a village in Kasi: when he grew up he learned the arts at Takkasila, and afterwards became an ascetic and lived near a lotus-pool. One day he went down into the pool and stood smelling a lotus in full flower. A goddess who was in a hollow in a trunk of a tree alarming him spoke the first stanza—

You were never given that flower you smell, though it’s only a single bloom;

’Tis a species of larceny, reverend sir, you are stealing its perfume.

Then the Bodhisatta spoke the second stanza—

I neither take nor break the flower: from afar I smell the bloom.

I cannot tell on what pretence you say I steal perfume.

At the same moment a man was digging in the pool for lotus-fibres and breaking the lotus-plants. The Bodhisatta seeing him said, “You call a man thief if he smells the flower from afar: why do you not speak to that other man?” So in talk with her he spoke the third stanza—

A man who digs the lotus-roots and breaks the stalks I see:

Why don’t you call the conduct of that man disorderly?

The goddess, explaining why she did not speak to him, spoke the fourth and fifth stanzas—

Disgusting like a nurse’s dress are men disorderly:

I have no speech with men like him, but I deign to speak to thee.

When a man is free from evil stains and seeks for purity,

A sin like a hair-tip shows on him like a dark cloud in the sky.

So alarmed by her the Bodhisatta in emotion spoke the sixth stanza—

Surely, fairy, you know me well, to pity me you deign:

If you see me do the like offence, pray speak to me again.

Then the goddess spoke to him the seventh stanza—

I am not here to serve you, no hireling folk are we:

Find, Brother, for yourself the path to reach felicity.

So exhorting him she entered her own abode. The Bodhisatta entered on high meditation and was born in the Brahmaloka world.

The lesson ended, the Master declared the Truths, and identified the Birth—at the end of the Truths, the Brother was established in the fruit of the First Path—“At that time the goddess was Uppalavanna, the ascetic 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.