# Ja 410 — Somadatta 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/ja410.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

“Deep in the wood,” etc.—The Master told this while dwelling at Jetavana, about a certain old Brother. The story was that this Brother ordained a novice, who waited on him but soon died of a fatal disease. The old man went about weeping and wailing for his death. Seeing him, the Brethren began to talk in the Hall of Truth, “Sirs, this old Brother goes about weeping and wailing for the novice’s death: he must surely have neglected the meditation on death.” The Master came, and hearing the subject of their talk, he said, “Brethren, this is not the first time this man is weeping for the other’s death,” and so he told the old tale.

Once upon a time when Brahmadatta was reigning in Benares, the Bodhisatta was Sakka. A certain wealthy brahmin, living in Benares, left the world, and became an ascetic in the Himalaya, living by picking up roots and fruits in the forest. One day, searching for wild fruits, he saw an elephant-calf, and took it to his hermitage: he made as if it were his own son, calling it Somadatta, and tended it with food of grass and leaves. The elephant grew up to be great: but one day he took much food and fell sick of a surfeit. The ascetic took him inside the hermitage, and went to get wild fruits: but before he came back the young elephant died. Coming back with his fruits, the ascetic thought, “On other days my child comes to meet me, but not to-day; what is the matter with him?” So he lamented and spoke the first stanza—

Deep in the wood he’d meet me: but to-day

No elephant I see: where does he stray?

With this lament, he saw the elephant lying at the end of the covered walk and taking him round the neck he spoke the second stanza in lamentation—

’Tis he that lies in death cut down as a tender shoot is shred;

Low on the ground he lies: alas, my elephant is dead.

At the instant, Sakka, surveying the world, thought, “This ascetic left wife and child for religion, now he is lamenting the young elephant whom he called his son, I will rouse him and make him think,” and so coming to the hermitage he stood in the air and spoke the third stanza—

To sorrow for the dead doth ill become

The lone ascetic, freed from ties of home.

Hearing this, the ascetic spoke the fourth stanza—

Should man with beast consort, O Sakka, grief

For a lost playmate finds in tears relief.

Sakka uttered two stanzas, admonishing him—

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.

Hearing Sakka’s words, the ascetic took thought and comfort, dried his tears, and uttered the remaining stanzas in praise of Sakka—

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.

These were given above.

After admonishing the ascetic, Sakka went to his own place.

The Master, after the lesson, identified the Birth: “At that time the young elephant was the novice, the ascetic the old Brother, Sakka 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.