Ja 420 — Sumangala 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/ja420.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

“Conscious of an angry frown,” etc.—The Master told this tale while dwelling at Jetavana, concerning the admonition of a king. On this occasion the Master, at the king’s request, told the tale of old.

Once on a time when Brahmadatta was reigning in Benares, the Bodhisatta was born as the son of his chief queen. When he grew up, he became king on his father’s death and gave abundant alms. He had a park-keeper named Sumangala. A certain paccekabuddha left the Nandamula cave on a pilgrimage for alms, and coming to Benares stayed in the park. Next day he went into the town to beg. The king saw him with favour, made him come up into the palace and sit on the throne, waited on him with various delicate kinds of food, both hard and soft, and received his thanks: being pleased that the paccekabuddha should stay in his park, he exacted a promise and sent him back thither: after his morning meal he went there in person, arranged the places for his habitation by night and day, gave him the park-keeper Sumangala as attendant, and went back to the town. After that the paccekabuddha had meals constantly in the palace and lived there a long time: Sumangala respectfully attended on him. One day he went away, saying to Sumangala, “I am going to such and such a village for a few days, but will come back: inform the king.” Sumangala informed the king. After a few days’ stay in that village the paccekabuddha came back to the park in the evening after sunset. Sumangala, not knowing of his arrival, had gone to his own house. The paccekabuddha put away his bowl and robe, and after a little walk sat down on a stone-slab. That day some strange guests had come to the park-keeper’s house. To get them soup and curry he had gone with a bow to kill a tame deer in the park: he was there looking for a deer when he saw the paccekabuddha and thinking he was a great deer, he aimed an arrow and shot him. The paccekabuddha uncovered his head and said, “Sumangala.” Greatly moved Sumangala said, “Sir, I knew not of your coming and shot you, thinking you were a deer: forgive me.” “Very well, but what will you do now? Come, pull out the arrow.” He made obeisance and pulled it out. The paccekabuddha felt great pain and passed into nirvana then and there. The park-keeper

thought the king would not pardon him if he knew: he took his wife and children and fled. By supernatural power the whole city heard that the paccekabuddha had entered nirvana, and all were greatly excited. Next day some men entered the park, saw the body and told the king that the park-keeper had fled after killing the paccekabuddha. The king went with a great retinue and for seven days paid honour to the body: then with all ceremony he took the relics, built a shrine, and doing honour to it went on ruling his kingdom righteously. After a year, Sumangala determined to find out what the king thought: he came and asked a minister whom he saw to find out what the king thought of him. The minister praised Sumangala before the king: but he was as if he heard not. The minister said no more, but told Sumangala that the king was not pleased with him. After another year he came, and again in the third year he brought his wife and children. The minister knew the king was appeased , and setting Sumangala at the palace-door told the king of his coming. The king sent for him, and after greeting said, “Sumangala, why did you kill that paccekabuddha, through whom I was gaining merit?” “O king, I did not mean to kill him, but it was in this way that I did the deed,” and he told the story. The king bade him have no fear, and reassuring him made him park-keeper again. Then the minister asked, “O king, why did you make no answer when you heard Sumangala’s praises twice, and on the third hearing why did you send for him and forgive him?” The king said, “Dear sir, it is wrong for a king to do anything hastily in his anger: therefore I was silent at first and the third time when I knew I was appeased I sent for Sumangala”: and so he spoke these stanzas to declare the duty of a king—

Conscious of an angry frown,

Ne’er let king stretch out his rod:

Things unworthy of a crown

Then would follow from his nod.

Conscious of a milder mood,

Let him judgments harsh decree,

When the case is understood,

Fix the proper penalty:

Self nor others will he vex,

Clearly parting right from wrong:

Though his yoke is on men’s necks,

Virtue holds him high and strong.

Princes reckless in their deed

Ply the rod remorselessly,

Ill repute is here their meed,

Hell awaits them when they die.

They who love the saintly law,

Pure in deed and word and thought,

Filled with kindness, calm and awe,

Pass through both worlds as they ought.

King am I, my people's lord;

Anger shall not check my bent:

When to vice I take the sword,

Pity prompts the punishment.

So the king declared his own good qualities in six stanzas: his whole court were pleased and declared his merits in the words, "Such excellence in moral practices and qualities is worthy of your majesty." Sumangala, after the court had finished speaking, saluted the king, and after obeisance spoke three stanzas in the king's praise—

Such thy glory and thy power;

Ne'er resign them for an hour:

Free from anger, free from fears,

Reign in joy a hundred years.

Prince, whom all those virtues bless,

Mild and bland, but firm in worth,

Rule the world with righteousness,

Pass to heaven when freed from earth.

True in word, in action good,

Take the means thy end to gain:

Calm the troubled multitude,

As a cloud with genial rain.

After the lesson connected with the admonition of the Kosala king, the Master identified the Birth: “At that time the paccekabuddha passed into nirvana, Sumangala was Ananda, the king 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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