Ja 45 — Rohini Jātaka

English translation by Robert Chalmers.

Source: https://raw.githubusercontent.com/suttacentral/sc-data/2d9ca8da858f94302ed6783e2717bf73d651881b/html_text/en/pli/sutta/kn/ja/vol1/ja45.html

Source revision: 2d9ca8da858f94302ed6783e2717bf73d651881b

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Edited by E. B. Cowell

Original edition: Cambridge University Press, volume 1, 1895

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

"Sense-lacking friends."—This story was told by the Master while at Jetavana, about a maid servant of the Lord High Treasurer, Anatha-pindika. For he is said to have had a maid-servant named Rohini, whose aged mother came to where the girl was pounding rice, and lay down. The flies came round the old woman and stung her as with a needle, so she cried to her daughter, "The flies are stinging me, my dear; do drive them away." "Oh! I'll drive them away, mother," said the girl, lifting her pestle to the flies which had settled on her mother. Then, crying, "I'll kill them!", she smote her mother such a blow as to kill the old woman outright. Seeing what she had done the girl began to weep and cry, "Oh! mother, mother!"

The news was brought to the Lord High Treasurer, who, after having the body burnt, went his way to the Monastery, and told the Master what had happened. "This is not the first time, layman," said the Master, "that in Rohini's anxiety to kill the flies on her mother, she has struck her mother dead with a pestle; she did precisely the same in times past." Then at Anatha-pindika's request, he told this story of the past.

Once upon a time when Brahmadatta was reigning in Benares, the Bodhisatta was born the son of the Lord High Treasurer, and came to be Lord High Treasurer himself at his father's death. And he, too, had a maid-servant whose name was Rohini. And her mother, in like manner, went to where the daughter was pounding rice, and lay down, and called out, 'Do drive these flies off me, my dear,' and in just the same way she struck her mother with a pestle, and killed her, and began to weep.

Hearing of what had happened, the Bodhisatta reflected: 'Here, in this world, even an enemy, with sense, would be preferable,' and recited these lines—

Sense-lacking friends are worse than foes with sense,

Witness the girl whose reckless hand laid low

Her mother, whom she now laments in vain.

In these lines in praise of the wise, did the Bodhisatta preach the Truth.

“This is not the first time, layman,” said the Master, “that in Rohini’s anxiety to kill flies she has killed her own mother instead.” This lesson ended, he shewed the connexion and identified the Birth by saying—“The mother and daughter of to-day were also mother and daughter of those bygone times, and I myself the Lord High Treasurer.”

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.