Ja 458 — Udaya Jātaka

English translation by W. H. D. Rouse.

Source: https://raw.githubusercontent.com/suttacentral/sc-data/2d9ca8da858f94302ed6783e2717bf73d651881b/html_text/en/pli/sutta/kn/ja/vol4/ja458.html

Source revision: 2d9ca8da858f94302ed6783e2717bf73d651881b

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Edited by E. B. Cowell

Original edition: Cambridge University Press, volume 4, 1901

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

“Thee flawless,” etc. This story the Master told, while dwelling in Jetavana, about a backsliding Brother. The occasion will be explained under the Kusa Birth. Again the Master asked the man, “Is it true, Brother, that you have backslidden, as they say?” And he replied, “Yes, Sir.” Then he said, “O Brother, why are you backsliding from a religion such as ours, that leads to salvation, and all for fleshly lusts? Wise men of old, who were kings in Surundha, a city prosperous and measuring twelve leagues either way, though for seven hundred years they abode in one chamber with a woman beauteous as the nymphs divine, yet did not yield to their senses, and never so much as looked at her with desire.” So saying, he told a story of the past.

Once upon a time, when king Kasi was reigning over the realm of Kasi, in Surundha his city, neither son nor daughter had he. So he bade his queens offer prayer for sons. Then the Bodhisatta, passing out of Brahma’s world, was conceived in the womb of his chief queen. And because by his birth he cheered the hearts of a great multitude, he received the name of Udayabhadda, or Welcome. At the time when the lad could walk upon his feet, another being came into this world from the world of Brahma, and became a girl child in the womb of another of this king’s wives, and she was named with the same name, Udayabhadda.

When the Prince came of years, he attained a mastery in all branches of education; more, he was chaste to a degree, and knew nothing of the deeds of the flesh, not even in dream, nor was his heart bent on sinfulness. The king desired to make his son king, with the solemn sprinkling, and to arrange plays for his pleasure; and gave command accordingly. But the Bodhisatta replied, “I do not want the kingdom, and my heart is not bent on sinfulness.” Again and again he was entreated, but his reply was to have made a woman’s image of red gold, which he sent to his parents, with the message, “When I find such a woman as this, I will accept the kingdom.” This golden image they dispatched over all India, but found no woman like to it. Then they deckt out Udayabhadda very fine, and confronted her with the image; and her beauty surpassed it as she stood. Then they

wedded her to the Bodhisatta for consort, against their wills though it were, his own sister the Princess Udayabhadda, born of a different mother, and sprinkled him to be king.

These two lived together a life of chastity. In course of time, when his parents were dead, the Bodhisatta ruled the realm. The two dwelt together in one chamber, yet denied their senses, and never so much as looked upon one another in the way of desire; nay, a promise they even made, that which of them soever should first die, he should return to the other from his place of new birth, and say, “In such a place am I born again.”

Now from the time of his sprinkling the Bodhisatta lived seven hundred years, and then he died. Other king there was none, the commands of Udayabhadda were promulgated, the courtiers administered the kingdom. The Bodhisatta had become Sakka in the Heaven of the Thirty-three, and by the magnificence of his glory was for seven days unable to remember the past. So he after the course of seven hundred years, according to man’s reckoning, remembered, and said to himself, “To the king’s daughter Udayabhadda I will go, and I will test her with riches, and roaring with the roar of a lion I will discourse, and will fulfil my promise!”

In that age they say that the length of man’s life was ten thousand years. Now at that time, it being the time of night, the palace doors were fast closed, and the guard set, and the king’s daughter was sitting quiet and alone, in a magnificent chamber upon the fine terrace of her seven-storeyed mansion, meditating upon her own virtue. Then Sakka took a golden dish filled with coins all of gold, and in her very sleeping-chamber appeared before her; and standing on one side, began speech with her by reciting the first stanza:

“Thee flawless in thy beauty, pure and bright,

Thee sitting lonely on this terrace-height,

In pose most graceful, eyed like nymphs of heaven,

I pray thee, let me spend with thee this night!”

To this the princess made answer in the two stanzas following:

“To this battlemented city, dug with moats, approach is hard,

While its trenches and its towers hand and sword unite to guard.

“Not the young and not the mighty entrance here can lightly gain;

Tell me—what can be the reason why to meet me thou art fain?”

Then Sakka recited the fourth stanza:

“I, fair beauty, am a Goblin, I that now appear to thee:

Grant to me thy favour, lady, this full bowl receive from me."

On hearing which the princess replied by repeating the fifth stanza:

"I ask for none, since Udaya has died,

Nor god nor goblin, no nor man, beside:

Therefore, O mighty Goblin, get thee gone,

Come no more hither, but far off abide."

Hearing her lion's note, he stood not, but made as though to depart; and at once disappeared. Next day at the same hour, he took a silver bowl filled with golden coins and addrest her by repeating the sixth stanza:

"That chiefest joy, to lovers known completely,

Which makes men do full many an evil thing,

Despise not thou, O lady, smiling sweetly:

See, a full bowl of silver here I bring!"

Then the princess began to think, "If I allow him to talk and prate, he will come again and again. I will have nothing to say to him now." So she said nothing at all. Sakka finding that she had nothing to say, disappeared at once from his place.

Next day, at the same time, he took an iron bowl full of coins, and said, "Lady, if you will bless me with your love, I will give this iron bowl full of coins to you." When she saw him, the princess repeated the seventh stanza:

"Men that would woo a woman, raise and raise

The bids of gold, till she their will obeys.

The gods' ways differ, as I judge by thee:

Thou comest now with less than other days."

The Great Being, when he heard these words, made reply, "Lady Princess, I am a wary trader, and I waste not my substance for nought. If you were increasing in youth or beauty, I would also increase the present I offer you; but you are fading, and so I make the offering dwindle also." So saying, he repeated three stanzas

"O woman! youthful bloom and beauty fade

Within this world of men, thou fair-limbed maid.

And thou to-day art older grown than erst,

So dwindles less the sum I would have paid.

“Thus, glorious daughter of a king, before my gazing eyes

As goes the flight of day and night thy beauty fades and dies.

“But if, O daughter of a king most wise, it pleases thee

Holy and pure to aye endure, more lovely shalt thou be!”

Hereupon the princess repeated another stanza:

“The gods are not like men, they grow not old;

Upon their flesh is seen no wrinkled fold.

How is’t the gods have no corporeal frame?

This, mighty Goblin, I would now be told!”

Then Sakka explained the matter by repeating another stanza:

“The gods are not like men: they grow not old;

Upon their flesh is seen no wrinkled fold:

To-morrow and to-morrow ever more

Celestial beauty grows, and bliss untold.”

When she heard the beauty of the world of gods, she asked the way to go thither in another stanza:

“What terrifies so many mortals here?

I ask thee, mighty Goblin, to make clear

That path, in such diversity explained:

How faring heavenwards need no one fear?”

Then Sakka explained the matter in another stanza:

“Who keeps in due control both voice and mind,

Who with the body loves not sin to do,

Within whose house much food and drink we find,

Large-handed, bounteous, in all faith all true,

Of favours free, soft-tongued, of kindly cheer—

He that so walks to heaven need nothing fear.”

When the princess had heard his words, she rendered thanks in another stanza:

“Like a mother, like a father, Goblin, you admonish me:

Mighty one, O beauteous being, tell me, tell me who you be?”

Then the Bodhisatta repeated another stanza:

“I am Udaya, fair lady, for my promise come to thee:

Now I go, for I have spoken; from the promise I am free.”

The princess drew a deep breath, and said, “You are King Udayabhadda, my lord!” then burst into a flood of tears, and added, “Without you I cannot live! Instruct me, that I may live with you always!” So saying she repeated another stanza:

“If thou’rt Udaya, come hither for thy promise—truly he—,

Then instruct me, that together we, O prince, again may be!”

Then he repeated four stanzas by way of instruction:

“Youth passes soon: a moment—’Tis gone by;

No standing-place is firm: all creatures die

To new life born: this fragile frame decays:

Then be not careless, walk in piety.

“If the whole earth with all her wealth could be

The realm of one sole king to hold in fee,

A holy saint would leave him in the race:

Then be not careless, walk in piety.

“Mother and father, brother-kin, and she

(The wife) who with a price can purchased be,

They go, and each the other leave behind:

Then be not careless, walk in piety.

“Remember that this body food shall be

For others; joy alike and misery,

A passing hour, as life succeeds to life:

Then be not careless, walk in piety.”

In this manner discoursed the Great Being. The lady being pleased with the discoursing, rendered thanks in the words of the last stanza:

“Sweet the saying of this Goblin: brief the life that mortals know,

Sad it is, and short, and with it comes inseparable woe.

I renounce the world: from Kasi, from Surundhana, I go.”

Having thus discoursed to her, the Bodhisatta went back to his own place.

The princess next day entrusted her courtiers with the government; and in that very city of hers, in a delightsome park, she became a recluse. There she lived righteously, until at the end of her days she was born again in the Heaven of the Thirty-three, as the Bodhisatta’s handmaiden.

When the Master had ended this discourse, he declared the Truths and identified the Birth: (now at the conclusion of the Truths, the backsliding Brother was established in the fruit of the First Path:)—“At that time Rahula’s mother was the Princess, and 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.