Ja 462 — Samvara 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/ja462.html

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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

“Your nature, mighty monarch,” etc. This story the Master told while dwelling in Jetavana, about a Brother who had ceased to strive. This, we learn, was a young man of family, who lived in Savatthi. Having heard the Master’s discoursing, he renounced the world. Fulfilling the tasks imposed by his teachers and preceptors, he learnt by heart both divisions of the Patimokkha. When five years were past, he said, “When I have been instructed in the mode of attaining the mystic trance, I will go dwell in the forest.” Then he took leave of his teachers and preceptors, and proceeded to a frontier village in the kingdom of Kosala. The people were pleased with his deportment, and he made a hut of leaves and there was attended to. Entering upon the rainy season, zealous, eager, striving in strenuous endeavour he strove after the mystic trance for the space of three months: but of this not a trace could he produce. Then he thought: “Verily I am the most devoted to worldly conditions among the four classes of men taught by the Master! What have I to do with living in the forest?” Then he said to himself, “I will return to Jetavana , and there in beholding the beauty of the Tathagata, and hearing his discourse sweet as honey, I will pass my days.” So he relaxed his striving; and setting forth he came in course of time to Jetavana. His preceptors and teachers, his friends and acquaintances asked him the cause of his coming. He informed them, and they reproved him for it, asking him why he had so done. Then they led him into the Master’s presence. “Why, Brethren,” said the Master, “do you lead hither a Brother against his will?” They replied, “This Brother has come hither because he has relaxed his striving.” “Is this true, as they tell me?” asked the Master. “Yes, Sir,” said the man. Said the Master, “Why have you ceased to strive, Brother? For a weak and slothful man there is in this religion no high fruition, no sainthood: they only who make strenuous effort accomplish this. In days long gone by you were full of strength, easy to teach: and in this way, though the youngest of all the hundred sons of the king of Benares, by holding fast to the admonition of wise men you obtained the White Umbrella.” So saying, he told a story of the past.

Once upon a time, when Brahmadatta was king in Benares, the youngest of his hundred sons was named Prince Samvara. The king gave his sons in charge each of a separate courtier, with directions to teach them each what they ought to learn. The courtier who instructed the Prince Samvara was the Bodhisatta, wise, learned, filling a father's place to the king's son. As each of the sons was educated, the courtiers brought them for the king to see. The king gave them each a province, and let them go.

When the Prince Samvara had been perfected in all learning, he asked the Bodhisatta, "Dear father, if my father sends me to a province, what am I to do?" He replied, "My son, when a province is offered you, you should refuse it, and say, My lord, I am the youngest of all: if I go too, there will be no one about your feet: I will remain where I am, at your feet." Then one day, when Prince Samvara had saluted him, and was standing on one side, the king asked him, "Well, my son, have you finished your learning?" "Yes, my lord." "Choose a province." "My lord, there will be emptiness about your feet: let me remain here at your feet, and in no other place!" The king was pleased, and consented.

After that he remained there at the king's feet; and again asked the Bodhisatta, "What else am I to do, father?" "Ask the king," said he, "for some old park." The prince complied, and asked for a park: with the fruits and flowers that there grew he made friends with the powerful men in the city. Again he asked what he was to do. "Ask the king's leave, my son," said the Bodhisatta, "to distribute the food-money within the city." So he did, and without the least neglect of any person he distributed the food-money within the city. Again he asked the Bodhisatta's advice, and after soliciting the king's consent, distributed food within the palace to the servitors and the horses and to the army, without any omission: to messengers come from foreign countries he assigned their lodging and so forth, for merchants he fixed the taxes, all that had to be arranged he did alone. Thus following the advice of the Great Being, he made friends with every body, those in the household and those without, all in the city, the subjects of the kingdom, strangers, by his winsomeness binding them to him as it were by a band of iron: to all of them he was dear and beloved.

When in due time the king lay on his deathbed, the courtiers asked him, "When you are dead, my lord, to whom shall we give the White Umbrella?" "Friends," said he, "all my sons have a right to the White Umbrella. But you may give it to him that pleases your mind." So after his death, and when the obsequies had been performed, on the seventh day they gathered together, and said: "Our king bade us give the Umbrella to him that pleases our mind. He that our mind desires is Prince Samvara." Over him therefore they uplifted the White Umbrella with its festoons of gold, escorted by his kinsmen.

The Great King Samvara cleaving to the advice of the Bodhisatta reigned in righteousness.

The other ninety and nine princes heard that their father was dead, and that the Umbrella had been uplifted over Samvara. "But he is the youngest of all," said they; "the Umbrella does not belong to him. Let us uplift the Umbrella over the eldest of us all." They all joined forces, and sent a letter to Samvara, bidding him resign the Umbrella or fight; then they surrounded the city. The king told this news to the Bodhisatta, and asked what he was to do now. He answered: "Great King, you must not fight with your brothers. Divide the

treasure belonging to your father into a hundred portions, and to your brothers send ninety-nine of them, with this message, “Accept this share of your father’s treasure, for fight with you I will not.” So he did.

Then the eldest of all the brothers, Prince Uposatha by name, summoned the rest together, and said to them, “Friends, there is no one able to overcome the king; and this our youngest brother, though he has been our enemy, does not remain so: but he sends us his wealth, and refuses to fight with us. Now we cannot all uplift the Umbrella at the same moment; let us uplift it over one only, and let him alone be king; so when we see him, we will hand over the royal treasure to him, and return to our own provinces.” Then all these princes raised the siege of the city, and entered it, foes no longer. And the king told his courtiers to welcome them, and sent them to meet the princes. The princes with a great following entered on foot, and mounting the steps of the palace, and using all humility towards the great king Samvara, sat down in a lowly place. King Samvara was seated under the White Umbrella upon a throne: great magnificence was his, and great pomp; what place soever he looked upon, trembled and quaked. Prince Uposatha seeing the magnificence of the mighty king Samvara, thought to himself, “Our father, methinks, knew that Prince Samvara would be king after his decease, and therefore gave us provinces and gave him none;” then addressing him, repeated three stanzas:

“Your nature, mighty monarch, sure the lord of men well knew:

The other princes honoured he, but nothing gave to you.

“While the king lived was it, or when a god to heaven he went,

That seeing their own benefit, your kinsmen gave consent?

“Say by what power, O Samvara, you stand above your kin:

Why do your brethren not unite from you the place to win?”

On hearing this, King Samvara repeated six stanzas to explain his own character:

“Because, O prince, I never grudge great sages what is meet:

Ready to pay them honour due, I fall before their feet.

“Me envying none, and apt to learn all conduct meet and right,

Wise sages each good precept teach in which they take delight.

“I listen to the bidding of these sages great and wise:

My heart is bent to good intent, no counsel I despise.

“Elephant troops and chariotmen, guard royal, infantry—

I took no toll of daily dole, but paid them all their fee.

“Great nobles and wise counsellors waiting on me are found;

With food, wine, water (so they boast) Benares doth abound.

“Thus merchants prosper, and from many a realm they come and go,

And I protect them. Now the truth, Uposatha, you know.”

Prince Uposatha listened to this account of his character, and then repeated two stanzas:

“Then be above your kith and kin, and rule in righteousness,

So wise and prudent, Samvara, your brethren you shall bless.

“Your treasure-heaps your brethren will defend, and you shall be

Safe from your foes as Indra’s self from his arch enemy.”

King Samvara gave great honour to all his brothers. They remained with him a month and half a month; then they said to him, “Great King, we would go and see if there be any brigands afoot in our provinces; all happiness to your rule!” They departed each to his province. And the king abode by the admonition of the Bodhisatta, and at the end of his days went to swell the hosts of heaven.

The Master, having finished this discourse, added, “Long ago, Brother, you followed instruction, and why do you not now sustain your effort?” Then he declared the Truths and identified the Birth: (now at the conclusion of the Truths this Brother was established in the fruit of the First Path:) “At that time this Brother was the great king Samvara, Sariputta was Prince Uposatha, the Elders and secondary Elders were the other brothers, the Buddha’s followers were their followers, and I myself was the courtier who advised the king.”

The Jātaka, or Stories of the Buddha’s Former Births, edited by E.B. Cowell, published by The Cambridge University Press.

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