Ja 485 — Canda-Kinnara 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/ja485.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

"'Tis passing away," etc. This is a story which the Master told, while dwelling in the banyan grove hard by Kapilapura about Rahula's mother when she was in the palace.

This Birth must be told beginning from the Distant Epoch of the Buddha's existence. But the story of the Epochs, as far as the lion's roar of Kassapa of Uruvela, in Latthivana, the Bamboo Forest, has been told before in the Apannaka Birth. Beginning from that point you will read in the Vessantara Birth the continuation of it as far as to the coming to Kapilavatthu. The Master, seated in his father's house, during the meal, recounted the Mahadhammapala Birth; and after the meal was done he said,—"I will praise the noble qualities of Rahula's mother in her own house, by telling the Canda-Kinnara Birth." Then handing his bowl to the king, with the two Chief Disciples he passed over to the house of Rahula's mother. At that time there were forty thousand dancing girls who lived in her presence, and of them a thousand and ninety were maidens of the warrior caste. When the lady heard of the Tathagata's coming she bade all these put on yellow robes, and they did so. The Master came and took his seat in a place which was assigned him. Then all the women cried out with one voice, and there was a great sound of lamentation. Rahula's mother having wept and so put away her grief, welcomed the Master, and sat down, with the deep reverence due to a king. Then the king began the tale of her goodness: "Listen to me, Sir; she heard that you wore yellow robes, and so she robed her in yellow; that garlands and such things are to be given up, and lo she has given up garlands and sits upon the ground. When you entered upon the religious life she became a widow; and refused the gifts that other kings sent her. So faithful is her heart to you." Thus he told of her goodness in many different ways. The Master said, "It is no marvel, great king! that now in my last existence the lady should love me, and should be of faithful heart and led by me alone. So also, even when born as an animal, she was faithful and mine alone." Then at the king's request he told a story of the past.

Once upon a time when Brahmadatta was king in Benares the Great Being was born in the region of the Himalaya as a fairy. His wife was named Canda. These two dwelt together on a silver mountain named Canda-pabbata, or the Mountain of the Moon. At that time the king of Benares had committed his government to his ministers, and all alone dressed in two yellow robes, and armed with the five weapons, he proceeded to the Himalayas.

Whilst eating his venison he remembered where was a little stream, and began to climb the hill. Now the fairies that live on the Mountain of the Moon in the rainy season remain on the mountain, and come down only in the hot weather. At that time this fairy Canda, with his mate, came down and wandered about, anointing himself with perfumes, eating the pollen of flowers, clothing himself in flower-gauze for inner and outer garments, swinging in the creepers to amuse himself, singing songs in a honey-voice. He too came to this stream; and at one halting-place he went down into it with his wife, scattering flowers about and playing in the water. Then they put on again their garments of flowers, and on a sandy spot white as a silver plate they spread a couch of flowers, and lay there. Picking up a piece of bamboo, the male fairy began to play upon it, and sang with a honey-voice; while his mate waving her soft hands danced hard by and sang withal. The king caught the sound, and treading softly that his footsteps might not be heard, he approached, and stood watching the fairies in a secret place. He immediately fell in love with the female fairy. "I will shoot the husband," thought he, "and kill him, and I will live here with the wife." Then he shot the fairy Canda, who lamenting in his pain uttered four stanzas:

"'Tis passing away, methinks, and my blood is flowing, flowing,

I am losing my hold on life, O Canda! my breath is going!

"'Tis sinking, I am in pain, my heart is burning, burning:

But 'Tis for thy sorrow, Canda, the heart within me is yearning.

"As grass, as a tree I perish, as a waterless river I dry:

But 'Tis for thy sorrow, Canda, my heart within me is yearning.

"As rain on a lake at the mountain foot are the tears that fall from my eye:

But 'Tis for thy sorrow, Canda, my heart within me is yearning."

Thus did the Great Being lament in four stanzas; and lying upon his couch of flowers, he lost consciousness, and turned away. The king stood where he was. But the other fairy did not know that the Great Being was wounded, not even when he uttered his lament, being intoxicated with her own delight. Seeing him lie there turned away and lifeless, she began to wonder what could be the matter with her lord. As she examined him she saw the blood oozing from the mouth of the wound, and being unable to bear the great pain of sorrow for her beloved husband, she cried out with a loud voice. "The fairy must be dead," thought the king, and he came out and showed himself. When Canda beheld him she thought, "This

must be the brigand who has slain my dear husband!" and trembling she took to flight. Standing upon the hill-top she denounced the king in five stanzas:

"Yon evil prince—ah, woe is me!—my husband dear did wound,

Who there beneath a woodland tree now lies upon the ground.

"O prince! the woe that wrings my heart may thy own mother pay,

The woe that wrings my heart to see my fairy dead this day!

"Yea, prince! the woe that wrings my heart may thy own wife repay,

The woe that wrings my heart to see my fairy dead this day!

"And may thy mother mourn her lord, and may she mourn her son,

Who on my lord most innocent for lust this deed hast done.

"And may thy wife look on and see the loss of lord and son,

For thou upon my harmless lord for lust this deed hast done."

When she had thus made her moan in these five stanzas, standing upon the mountain top the king comforted her by another stanza:

"Weep not nor grieve: the woodland dark has blinded you, I ween:

A royal house shall honour thee, and thou shalt be my queen."

"What is this word thou hast said?" cried Canda, when she heard it; and loud as a lion's roar she declaimed the next stanza:

"No! I will surely slay myself! thine I will never be,

Who slew my husband innocent and all for lust for me."

When he heard this his passion left him, and he recited another stanza:

"Live if thou wilt, O timid one! to Himalaya go:

Creatures that feed on shrub and tree the woodland love, I know."

With these words he departed indifferent. Canda so soon as she knew him gone came up and, embracing the Great Being took him up to the hill-top, and laid him on the flat land there: placing his head on her lap, she made her moan in twelve stanzas:

“Here in the hills and mountain caves, in many a glen and grot,

What shall I do, O fairy mine! now that I see thee not?

“The wild beasts range, the leaves are spread on many a lovely spot:

What shall I do, O fairy mine, now that I see thee not?

“The wild beasts range, sweet flowers are spread on many a lovely spot:

What shall I do, O fairy mine, now that I see thee not?

“Clear run the rivers down the hills, with flowers all overgrown:

What shall I do, O fairy mine, now thou hast left me lone?

“Blue are the Himalaya hills, most fair they are to see:

What shall I do, O fairy mine, now I behold not thee?

“Gold tips the Himalaya hills, most fair they are to see:

What shall I do, O fairy mine, now I behold not thee?”

The Himalaya hills glow red, most fair they are to see:

What shall I do, O fairy mine, now I behold not thee?

“Sharp are the Himalaya peaks, they are most fair to see:

What shall I do, O fairy mine, now I behold not thee?

“White gleam the Himalaya peaks, they are most fair to see:

What shall I do, O fairy mine, now I behold not thee?

“The Himalaya rainbow-hued, most fair it is to see:

What shall I do, O fairy mine, now I behold not thee?

“Hill Fragrant is to goblins dear; plants cover every spot

What shall I do, O fairy mine, now that I see thee not?

“The fairies love the Fragrant Hill, plants cover every spot:

What shall I do, O fairy mine, now that I see thee not?”

So did she make her moan; and putting the hand of the Great Being on her breast she felt that it still was warm. “Canda lives yet!” she thought: “I will taunt the gods until I bring him to life again!” Then she cried aloud, taunting them, “Are there none who govern the world? are they on a journey? or peradventure they are dead, and therefore save not my dear husband!” By the power of her pain Sakka’s throne became hot. Pondering he perceived the cause; in the form of a brahmin he approached, and from a water-pot took water and sprinkled the Great Being with it. On the instant the poison ceased to act, his colour returned, he knew not so much as the place where the wound had been: the Great Being stood up quite well. Canda seeing her well-beloved husband to be whole, in joy fell at the feet of Sakka,, and sang his praise in the following stanza:

“Praise, holy brahmin! who didst give unto a hapless wife

Her well-loved husband, sprinkling him with the elixir of life!”

Sakka then gave this advice: “From this time forth go not down from the Mountain of the Moon among the paths of men, but abide here.” Twice he repeated this, and then returned to his own place. And Canda said to her husband, “Why stay here in danger, my lord? come, let us go to the Mountain of the Moon,” reciting the last stanza:

“To the mountain let us go,

Where the lovely rivers flow,

Rivers all o’ergrown with flowers:

There for ever, while the breeze

Whispers in a thousand trees,

Charm with talk the happy hours.”

When the Master had ended this discourse, he said: “Not now only, but long ago as now, she was devoted and faithful of heart to me.” Then he identified the Birth: “At that time Anuruddha was the king, Rahula’s mother was Canda, and I myself was the fairy.”

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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