Ja 504 — Bhallatiya Jātaka

English translation by W. H. D. Rouse.

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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

“Was a king Bhallatiya,” etc.—This story the Master told while dwelling at Jetavana about Mallika, the Jessamine Bride. One day we are told there was a quarrel between her and the king about conjugal rights. The king was angry and would not look at her. “I suppose,” she thought, “the Tathagata does not know that the king is wroth with me.” When the Master learnt of it, next day, he sought alms in Benares, accompanied by the Brethren, and then repaired to the gate of the king’s palace. The king came to meet him, and relieved him of his bowl, took him up on the terrace, set the Brethren down in due order, gave them the water of welcome, offered them excellent food; after the meal he sat down on one side. “Why,” asked the Master, “why does not Mallika appear?” He said, “‘Tis her own foolish pride in her prosperity.” The Master said, “O great king! long, long ago when you were a fairy, you kept apart for one night from your mate, and then went mourning for seven hundred years.” Then at his request, he told a story of the past.

Once upon a time, a king named Bhallatiya reigned in Benares. Seized with a desire to eat venison broiled on charcoal, he gave the kingdom in charge to his courtiers, girt himself with the five weapons, and with a well-trained pack of clever pedigree hounds he issued forth from the city and went to Himalaya. He travelled along the Ganges until he could get no higher, then followed a tributary stream for some distance, killing deer and pig, and eating the flesh broiled, until he had climbed to a great height. There when the pleasant stream ran full, the water was breast-high, but at other times, it was no more than knee-deep. At that time there were fish and tortoises of all sorts gambolling, sand at the water’s edge like silver, trees on both banks bending beneath a load of flowers and fruit, many a bird and bee well drunken with the juice of fruit and honey of flowers flitted about in the shade, whither herds of all manner of deer did frequent. Now on the bank of this beautiful mountain stream two fairies fondly embraced and kissed one another, then fell a weeping and wailing most pitifully.

As the king climbed Mount Gandhamadana by way of this river bank, he espied these two fairies. “What can they be weeping about in this manner?” thought he. “I will question them.” A glance to his hounds, a snap of the fingers, and at this sign the thoroughbred dogs, which knew their work well, crept into the underwood and crouched down on their bellies. As soon as he saw they were out of the way, he laid down his bow and quiver and other weapons by a tree that stood near, and without letting his footsteps be heard stole gently up to the fairies, and asked them, “Why do you weep?”

To explain this, the Master repeated three stanzas:

“Was a king Bhallatiyo

And out a-hunting he would go;

Climbs the Fragrant Mount, and finds it

Full of sprites and flowers that blow.

“Straight he quiets every hound,

Lays bow and quiver on the ground,

Forward steps, to ask a question

Where a pair of fays were found.

“‘Winter’s gone: then why return

To talk and talk beside the burn?

O you human-seeming creatures,

What men call you I would learn.”

To the king’s question, the male fairy said nothing; but his mate answered as follows:

“Malla, Three-peak, Yellow Hill

We traverse, following each cool rill.

Human-like the wild things deem us:

Huntsmen call us goblins still.”

Then the king recited three stanzas:

“Though like lovers you caress

You weep as full of deep distress.

O you human-seeming creatures,

Why this weeping? come, confess!

“Though like lovers you caress

You weep as full of deep distress.

O you human-seeming creatures,

Why this sorrowing? come, confess!

“Though like lovers you caress

You weep as full of deep distress.

O you human-seeming creatures,

Why this mourning? come, confess!”

The stanzas which follow were said by each in course of address and answer:

“We apart one night had lain,

Both loveless, full of bitter pain,

Thinking each of each: but never

Will that night come back again.”

“Why then spend that night alone

Which cost you many a sigh and groan,

O you human-seeing creatures—

Money lost? a father gone?”

“Shaded thick yon river flows

Between the rocks: a storm arose:

Then with anxious care to find me

Right across my loved one goes.

“All the while with busy feet

I gathered thyme and meadowsweet

All to make my love a garland

And myself, when we should meet.

“Clustering harebell, violet blue,

And white narcissus fresh with dew,

All to make my love a garland

And myself, when we should meet.

“Then I plucked a bunch of rose,

That is the fairest flower that grows,

All to make my love a garland

And myself, when we should meet.

“Flowers next and leaves I found,

And strewed them thickly on the ground,

Where the livelong night together

We might slumber soft and sound.

“Sandal and sweet woods anon

I pounded small upon a stone,

Perfume for my love’s limbs making,

Sweetest perfume for my own.

“By the river flowing fast

I gathered lilies to the last:

Evening came—the river swelling

Made it hopeless to get past.

“There we stood on either shore,

Each on other gazing o’er.

How we laughed and cried together!

Ah! that night we suffered sore.

“Morning came, the sun was high

And soon we saw the river dry.

Then we crossed, and close embracing

Both at once we laugh and cry.

“Seven hundred years but three

Since we were parted, I and he.

When two loving hearts are severed

Seems a whole long life to be.”

“What the limit of your years?

If this by rumour old appears.

Or the teaching of the elders,

Tell it me, and have no fears.”

“A thousand summers, strong and hale,

Never deadly pains assail,

Little sorrow, bliss abundant,

To the end love’s joys prevail.”

The king thought as he listened, “These creatures, who are less than human, go weeping for seven hundred years for one night’s parting: and here am I, lord of a realm of three hundred leagues, leaving all my magnificence and wandering about the forest. It is a great mistake.” He returned immediately. Arrived at Benares, the courtiers asked him whether he had seen any marvellous thing in the Himalayas. He told them the whole story, and thenceforward gave alms and enjoyed his wealth.

Explaining this matter, the Master repeated this stanza:

“Thus instructed by the fays

The King returned upon his ways,

Ceased to hunt, and fed the needy,

And enjoyed the fleeting days.”

Two more stanzas he added:

“Take a lesson from the fays:

And quarrel not, but mend your ways.

Lest you suffer, like the fairy,

Your own error all your days.

“Take a lesson from the fays:

And bicker not, but mend your ways.

Lest you suffer, like the fairy,

Your own error all your days.”

Now rose the Lady Mallika from her couch, when she heard the Tathagata’s admonition, and joining hands she made reverent obeisance, while she repeated the last stanza:

“Holy man, with willing mind

I hear thy words so good and kind.

Blessings on thee! thou hast spoken,

All my sorrow’s left behind.”

Ever afterwards the King of Kosala lived with her in harmony.

This discourse ended, the Master identified the Birth: “At that time the King of Kosala was the fairy, Lady Mallika was his mate, and I myself was King Bhallatiya.”

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.

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Vol. 4, translated by W.H.D. Rouse, 1901.

Vol. 5, translated by H.T. Francis, 1905.

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