Ja 507 — Maha-Palobhana 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/ja507.html

Source revision: 2d9ca8da858f94302ed6783e2717bf73d651881b

License: Public Domain (original English edition, published 1895–1907)

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

“From Brahma’s heaven,” etc.—This story the Master told while dwelling in Jetavana, about the defilement of the sanctified. The circumstances have already been given. Here again said the Master, “Women cause defilement even in sanctified souls,” and then told this story of the past.

Once upon a time in Benares—here the story of the past is to be expanded as in the Culla-palobhana Birth. Now once again the Great Being came down from Brahma’s world as the King of Kasi’s son, and his name was Prince Anitthi-gandha, the Woman-hater. In the hands of a woman he would not be; they must needs dress as men to give him the breast; he dwelt in a closet of meditation, and never a woman he saw.

To explain this, the Master repeated four stanzas.

“From Brahma’s heaven a god came down, and here upon this earth

As a King’s son whose every wish was law, he had his birth.

“To Brahma’s heaven no deed of lust, no mention, ever came:

So born into this world, the prince now loathed its very name.

“Within the palace he had made a closet all his own,

Where deep in meditation plunged he passed his days alone.

“The King, grown anxious for his son, laments to know him there:

One only son I have, and he for pleasures will not care.”

The fifth stanza describes the king's lamentation:

"O who can tell me what to do! O is there no device?

Who'll teach him joys of love to crave, and who can him entice?"

The next stanza and half a stanza, are those of perfect wisdom:

"A girl there was, of graceful shape, of fair and lovely skin:

She knew a world of pretty songs, and well could dance and spin.

This maiden sought his majesty, and thus she did begin."

The other line is spoken by the young girl:

"I will entice him, if thou wilt in marriage grant him me."

The king made answer to the maid, and thus and thus said he:

"Do but succeed in tempting him, thy husband he shall be."

The king now gave orders that all opportunity should be afforded her, and sent her to attend upon the prince. In the morning, taking her lute she went and stood just without the prince's sleeping chamber, and touching the lute with her finger-tips tried to tempt him by singing in a sweet voice.

To explain this, the Master said:

"The maiden went within the house, and where she stood apart,

Sang ditties sweet and languishing, to pierce a lover's heart.

"There as the maiden stood and sang, the prince, who heard the sound,

Straight fell in fancy, and he asked the servants waiting round—

"What is that sound of melody that comes to me so clear,

Piercing the heart with thoughts of love, delightful to my ear?"

"A maid, your highness, fair to see, of dalliance infinite:

Wouldst thou enjoy the sweets of love, yield, yield to this delight."

"Ho, hither, nearer let her come, and let her sing yet more,

Here let her sing before my face within my closet door!’

“She who had sung without the wall stood in the chamber there:

She caught him, as an elephant is caught in woodland snare.

“He felt the joy of love, and lo! see jealousy full-grown:

“No other man shall love!” cries he, “but I will love alone!”

“No other man, but I alone!” he cries; and then away—

Seizes a sword, and runs amuck all other men to slay!

“The people shouting in alarm all to the palace fly:

“Thy son is slaying every one all unprovoked!” they cry.

“Him did the warrior King arrest, and banish from his face:

“Within the boundaries of my realm thou shalt not find a place.”

“He took his wife and travelled on till by the sea he stood

There built a hut of leaves, and lived on gleanings from the wood.

“A holy hermit flying came over the ocean high,

Entered the hut what time the meal was standing ready by.

“The woman tempted him— now see how vile a thing was done!

He fell from chastity, and all his magic power was gone!

“The evening came; the prince returns, and from his gleaning brings

Hung to his pole a plenteous store of roots and wild-wood things.

“The hermit sees the prince approach: down to the shore goes he,

Thinking to travel through the air, but sinks into the sea!

“But when the prince beheld the sage down-sinking in the sea,

Pity sprang up within him, and these verses then said he—

“Hither not sailing on the sea, by magic power you came,

But now you sink; an evil wife has brought you to this shame.

“Seducing traitresses, they tempt the holiest to his fall:

Down—down they sink: who women know should flee afar from all.

“Soft-speaking, hard to satisfy, as rivers hard to fill;

Down—down they sink: who women know should flee far from them still.

“And whomsoever they may serve for gold or for desire,

They burn him up, as fuel burns cast in a blazing fire.”

“The hermit heard the prince’s word; he loathed the world so vain:

Turned to his former Path, and rose up in the air again.

“No sooner had the prince beheld how in the air he rose,

He grieved and with a purpose firm the holy life he chose;

“Then, turned religious, wholly quelled his lust and hot desire;

And passion quelled, to Brahma’s world henceforth he did aspire.”

This discourse ended, the Master said, “Thus, Brethren, for woman’s sake even sanctified souls do sin;” then he declared the Truths: (now at the conclusion of the Truths, the backsliding Brother achieved sainthood:) after which he identified the Birth, saying, “At that time I myself was Prince Anitthigandha.”

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.

These translations are in the public domain. You are free to do whatever you like with them.

Scanned, proofed and formatted at sacred-texts.com, January 2006–February 2010, by John Bruno Hare and others. Thanks to the Sacred Texts Archive for making these texts available in digital form.

Prepared for SuttaCentral by Bhikkhu Sujato.