Ja 74 — Rukkhadhamma Jātaka

English translation by Robert Chalmers.

Source: https://raw.githubusercontent.com/suttacentral/sc-data/2d9ca8da858f94302ed6783e2717bf73d651881b/html_text/en/pli/sutta/kn/ja/vol1/ja74.html

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Edited by E. B. Cowell

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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

“United, forest-like.”—This story was told by the Master while at Jetavana, about a quarrel concerning water which had brought woe upon his kinsfolk. Knowing of this, he passed through the air, sat cross-legged above the river Rohini, and emitted rays of darkness, startling his kinsfolk. Then descending from mid-air, he seated himself on the river-bank and told this story with reference to that quarrel. (Only a summary is given here; the full details will be related in the Kunala-jataka.) But on this occasion the Master addressed his kinsfolk, saying, “It is meet, sire, that kinsfolk should dwell together in concord and unity. For, when kinsfolk are at one, enemies find no opportunity. Not to speak of human beings, even sense-lacking trees ought to stand together. For in bygone days in the Himalayas a tempest struck a Sal-forest; yet, because the trees, shrubs, bushes, and creepers of that forest were interlaced one with another, the tempest could not overthrow even a single tree but passed harmlessly over their heads. But alone in a courtyard stood a mighty tree; and though it had many stems and branches, yet, because it was not united with other trees, the tempest uprooted it and laid it low. Wherefore, it is meet that you too should dwell together in concord and unity.” And so saying, at their request he told this story of the past.

Once on a time when Brahmadatta was reigning in Benares, the first King Vessavana died, and Sakka sent a new king to reign in his stead. After the change, the new King Vessavana sent word to all trees and shrubs and bushes and plants, bidding the tree-fairies each choose out the abode that liked them best. In those days the Bodhisatta had come to life as a tree-fairy in a Sal-forest in the Himalayas. His advice to his kinsfolk in choosing their habitations was to shun trees that stood alone in the open, and to take up their abodes all round the abode which he had chosen in that Sal-forest. Hereon the wise tree-fairies, following the Bodhisatta’s advice, took up their quarters round his tree. But the foolish ones said,—“Why should we dwell in the forest? let us rather seek out the haunts of men, and take up our abodes outside villages, towns, or capital cities. For fairies who dwell in such places receive the richest offerings and the greatest worship.” So they departed to

the haunts of men, and took up their abode in certain giant trees which grew in an open space.

Now it fell out upon a day that a mighty tempest swept over the country. Naught did it avail the solitary trees that years had rooted them deep in the soil and that they were the mightiest trees that grew. Their branches snapped; their stems were broken; and they themselves were uprooted and flung to earth by the tempest. But when it broke on the Sal-forest of interlacing trees, its fury was in vain; for, attack where it might, not a tree could it overthrow.

The forlorn fairies whose dwellings were destroyed, took their children in their arms and journeyed to the Himalayas. There they told their sorrows to the fairies of the Sal-forest, who in turn told the Bodhisatta of their sad return. “It was because they hearkened not to the words of wisdom, that they have been brought to this,” said he; and he unfolded the truth in this stanza—

United, forest-like, should kinsfolk stand;

The storm o’erthrows the solitary tree.

So spake the Bodhisatta; and when his life was spent, he passed away to fare according to his deserts.

And the Master went on to say, “Thus, sire, reflect how meet it is that kinsfolk at any rate should be united, and lovingly dwell together in concord and unity.” His lesson ended, the Master identified the Birth by saying, “The Buddha’s followers were the fairies of those days, and I myself the wise fairy.”

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.