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## Lumbinī

Resplendent was lustrous Lumbinī, fragrant from its exotic flowers, for  
It was here that our poet and the King of Seasons made their first  
acquaintance.

Holy is the grove between Kapilavastu and Devadaha,  
Because just there was Lord Buddha born.

The great raiment of the sky above seemed to encompass it on all sides,  
So verdant was grove beyond adorned with creepers, like a young  
lotus-eyed farm girl

Youthful, smiling, with her hair bedecked in flowers  
She displayed her tender nature.

Trembling like a young girl at the touch of her lover,  
The new buds and blossoms of the trees rustled with the passing breezes.

Like youthful maidens laden with carnal desire  
The trees bent down, heavy with fruit.

In one place, the cuckoos cooed; in another, birds chirped "*chibichibi*"  
In the flowering grove, the multicolored butterflies flitted.

As peacocks danced nimbly among the cockscomb flowers,  
Fawns scampered there to see this sight.

Parrots were chattering in the branches overhead,  
But it was the trees abloom with buds and blossoms that seemed to sing.

The black bees humming in the lush grove also pleased the ear,  
While their honey-drunken *bbunu-bbunu* buzzing stirred the mind.

Only from their fragrance could one know the yellow jasmine had  
bloomed,  
Or else one would think them to be golden flower earrings.

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The entire forest was beautiful with the flowers of its fruit trees,  
As the sight of all the colorful blossoms dazzled the eyes.

A blooming honeysuckle smiled, showing its flowers like "teeth,"  
Its fragrance was like the breath of the flowering lotus.

A flock of swallows flew together in the autumn sky,  
Like wedded daughters returning to their parents' home.

Graceful rabbits were there, too, fidgeting:  
Or were they crystals fallen from the glittering moon?

A monkey troupe jumped from branch to branch,  
Personified restlessness in material form.

In one place, the female monkeys scurried as their young ones clung  
tight,  
In another, other monkeys swung around on creeper vines.

As the wind then swept noisily through the freshly sprouted bamboo  
grove,  
Their stalks swayed sounding "*pbiri-pbiri*" in grand welcome.

The cool, clear waters flowing in the crystal stream sounded beautiful,  
To make a song pleasing to its sweetheart;

The willows along its banks seemed to bend down as if to kiss it  
But retreated a bit, chastened by the gentle breeze.

Wet were the stream banks, drenched by moisture,  
And far in the distance, wind-blown reeds also looked like a flowing river.

The force of the breeze could be read in the *pipal* leaves<sup>1</sup>  
Rustling like a beauty's basil leaf—shaped earrings.

In one corner stood a graceful banana tree, still and upright like a pillar,  
Its buds shaped like palms joined together in worship.

In the forest, nectar-bearing *koka* flowers bloomed,  
As if lovely maidens had appeared with saffron *sikas*<sup>2</sup> on their foreheads.

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<sup>1</sup> Bo tree, *ficus religiosa*, the tree under which the Buddha was enlightened.

<sup>2</sup> A mark placed on the forehead to mark the completion of a ritual; it is also a mark of beauty applied by women.

The stags there were proud of their beautiful branching antlers,  
Gently expressing their joy with smiling eyes.

Everywhere in the forest were crystal cool pools with tasty water  
That looked clear and broad like the moon freed from a cloud-filled sky,

As a youthful elephant in the water courted his beloved  
Humming black bees gathered around his honey-redolent forehead.

Geese pairs were seen playing, tugging at lotus flower stalks  
White herons were there, too, hunting fish on both sides of the stream.

Not knowing their deceit, the fish sped through the water among  
The crabs, so innumerable! The frogs, how they jumped to and fro<sup>3</sup>

In the bright reflected sunlight, the lotus blossoms seemed clad in red;  
Water lilies hid, blushing from their beloved and bending in shyness.

Geese playing in the pond caused rippling waves  
That in turn mirrored the dramatic scene of birds on the wing as

The play of sunlight made the pond like a painted canvas  
Attracting innumerable wild animals to come there for a look.

As if to advertise its beauty publicly there  
The pond sent forth lotus pollen—borne breezes.

Their buzz reverberating through earth and water  
Pairs of bees hurried to alight on the lotus blossoms.

The *sinbatymā*<sup>4</sup> tree weighed down with fruit sheltered alighting doves  
That from their branch perches cooed overhead.

The sparrows twittered “*ryū-ryū*” after eating the mustard seeds in  
the field,  
The chattering song of crickets “*piu-piu*”<sup>5</sup> also echoed through the reed  
grove.

There were aloe trees and not red but only yellow sandalwood trees  
Growing there, filling the forest with their own fragrances.

<sup>3</sup> “*Lucu-lucu*.”

<sup>4</sup> *Buddleia Asiatica*.

<sup>5</sup> We insert this second set of single quotation marks to be consistent and to highlight the internal rhyme.

The trees bearing milk-filled coconuts looked like  
Statuesque sweethearts with firm love-filled breasts.

Like the great twang of a bow string fully drawn by a gallant warrior of  
noble birth  
A lion roared, sounding like rumbling thunder from a rain cloud.

Like lightning, the striking horns of fighting buffaloes clashed  
As a herd of bears, like a black cloud above, darkened the ground

Cows with full udders caused their milk to flow down  
Giving all these signs, the spring season burst forth like the monsoon.

Thorns drowned among the new sprouting shoots  
But spring seemed to reign in the forest, overcoming all obstacles.

The grove abloom with peach blossoms seemed like one clad in a colorful  
silken sari,  
The mango trees laden with flowering buds seemed wrapped up as if in a  
soft shawl.

Indian cranes<sup>6</sup> were seen flying up on a skyward path.  
Pied cuckoos, though thirsty, cared naught for the lakes but looked skyward.<sup>7</sup>

The clever parrots capable of speaking in human tongues  
Were nowhere caged as talk masters.

In their multicolored clothes of soft gorgeous plumes  
Finches sat in pairs, like fully bloomed flowers perched on branches.

At the sight of the warbler's soft and tender crest  
The thrush lifted its tail to see if it too had such decoration.

Like gold, *bel* fruits<sup>8</sup> of tempting smell were there growing,  
So it was impossible for cawing crows in those trees to seem other than fools.

Papaya trees stood there, trunks topped with ripe sweet fruit, and half-  
hidden from view  
One would easily have mistaken them for mangos in spring had they been  
with leaves.

<sup>6</sup> *Kivānār:śatā*, also called "birds of passage."

<sup>7</sup> They are thought capable of only drinking falling rainwater.

<sup>8</sup> *Aegle marmelos*.