Ja 258 — Mandhatu Jātaka

English translation by W. H. D. Rouse.

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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

“Wherever sun and moon,” etc. This story the Master told during a stay at Jetavana, about a backsliding brother.

We are told that this brother, in traversing Savatthi for his alms, saw a finely dressed woman and fell in love with her. Then the Brethren led him to the Hall of Truth, and informed the Master that he was a backslider. The Master asked whether it were true; and was answered, yes, it was.

“Brother,” said the Master, “when will you ever satisfy this lust, even while you are a householder? Such lust is as deep as the ocean, nothing can satisfy it. In former days there have been supreme monarchs, who attended by their retinue of men held sway over the four great continents encircled by two thousand isles, ruling even in the heaven of the four great kings, even when they were kings of the gods in the Heaven of the Thirty Three, even in the abode of the Thirty Six Sakkas,—even these failed to satisfy their lust, and died before they could do so; when will you be able to satisfy it?” And he told an old-world tale.

Long ago, in the early ages of the world, there lived a king named Mahasammata, and he had a sun Roja, who had a son Vararoja, who had a son Kalyana, who had a son Varakalyana, and Varakalyana had a son named Uposatha, and Uposatha had a son Mandhata. Mandhata was endowed with the Seven Precious Things and the Four Supernatural Powers; and he was a great monarch. When he clenched his left hand, and then touched it with his right, there fell a rain of seven kinds of jewels, knee-deep, as though a celestial rain-cloud had arisen in the sky; so wondrous a man was he. Eighty-four thousand years he was a prince, the same number he took some share in ruling the kingdom, and even so many years he ruled as supreme king; his life lasted for countless ages.

One day, he could not satisfy some desire, so he showed signs of discontent.

“Why are you cast down, my lord?” the courtiers asked him.

“When the power of my merit is considered, what is this kingdom? Which place seems worth desiring?”

“Heaven, my lord.”

So rolling along the Wheel of Empire, with his suite he went to the heaven of the four great kings. The four kings, with a great throng of gods, came to meet him in state, bearing celestial flowers and perfumes; and having escorted him into their heaven, gave him rule over it. There he reigned in state, and a long time went by. But not there either could he satisfy his craving; and so he began to look sick with discontent.

“Why, mighty king,” said the four monarchs, “are you unsatisfied? “And the king replied,

“What place is more lovely than this heaven?”

They answered, “My lord, we are like servants. The Heaven of the Thirty-three is more lovely than this!”

Mandhata set the Wheel of Empire a-rolling, and with his court all round him turned his face to the Heaven of the Thirty-three. And Sakka, king of the Gods, bearing celestial flowers and perfumes, in the midst of a great throng of gods, came to meet him in state, and taking charge of him showed him the way he should go. At the time when the king was marching amidst the throng of gods, his eldest son took the Wheel of Empire, and descending to the paths of men, came to his own city. Sakka led Mandhata into the Heaven of the Thirty-three, and gave him the half of his own kingdom. After that the two of them ruled together. Time went on, until Sakka had lived for sixty times an hundred thousand years, and thirty millions of years, then was born on earth again; another Sakka grew up, and he too reigned, and lived his life, and was born on earth. In this way six and thirty Sakkas followed one after another. Still Mandhata reigned with his crowd of courtiers round him. As time went on, the force of his passion and desire grew stronger and stronger.

“What is half a realm to me?” said he in his heart; “I will kill Sakka, and reign alone!” But kill Sakka he could not. This desire and greed of his was the root of his misfortune. The power of his life began to wane; old age seized upon him; but a human body does not disintegrate in heaven. So from heaven he fell, and descended in a park. The gardener made known his coming to the royal family; they came and appointed him a resting-place in the park; there lay the king in lassitude and weariness. The courtiers asked him,

“My lord, what word shall we take from you?”

“Take from me,” quoth he, “this message to the people: Mandhata, king of kings, having ruled supreme over the four quarters of the globe, with all the two thousand islands round about, for a long time having reigned over the people of the four great kings, having been

king of Heaven during the lifetime of six and thirty Sakkas, now lies dead." With these words he died, and went to fare according to his deserts.

This tale ended, the Master became perfectly enlightened and uttered the following stanzas—

"Wherever sun and moon their courses run

All are Mandhata's servants, every one:

Where'er earth's quarters see the light of day,

There king Mandhata holds imperial sway.

"Not though a rain of coins fall from the sky

Could anything be found to satisfy.

Pain is desire, and sorrow is unrest:

He that knows this is wise, and he is blest.

"Where longing is, there pleasure takes him wings,

Even though desire be set on heavenly things.

Disciples of the Very Buddha try

To crush out all desire eternally."

When the Master had ended this discourse, he declared the Four Truths, and identified the Birth—at the conclusion of the Truths the back-sliding Brother and many others attained to the Fruit of the First Path—"At that time, I was the great king Mandhata."

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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