Ja 262 — Mudu-Pani 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

“A soft hand,” etc. This story the Master told at Jetavana, about a back-sliding Brother. They brought him to the Hall of Truth, and the Master asked him if he were really a backslider? He replied, yes, he was. Then said the Master, “O Brethren! It is impossible to keep women from going after their desires. In olden days, even wise men could not guard their own daughters; while they stood holding their fathers’ hand, without their fathers’ knowing, they went away wrong-doing with a paramour”; and he told them an old-world tale.

Once upon a time, while king Brahmadatta reigned in Benares, the Bodhisatta was horn as the son of his Queen Consort. Growing up, he was educated at Takkasila, and on his father’s death he became king in his stead, and reigned righteously.

There dwelt with him a daughter and a nephew, both together in his house. One day as he sat with his court, he said,

“When I am dead my nephew will be king, and my daughter will be his chief queen.”

Afterwards, when they were grown up, he was sitting again amidst his court; and he said to them,

“I will bring home some other man’s daughter for my nephew, and my own daughter will I marry into another king’s family. In this way I shall have many relations.” The courtiers agreed. Then the king assigned to the nephew a house outside the palace, and forbade his coming to the palace.

But these two were in love with each other. Thought the youth, “How shall I get the king’s daughter outside the house?—Ah, I have it.” He gave a present to the nurse.

“What am I to do for this, master?” she asked.

“Well, mother, I want to get a chance of bringing the princess out of doors.”

“I will talk it over with the princess,” said she, “and then tell you.” “Very good, mother,” he replied.

To the princess she came. “Let me pick the insects out of your head,” said she.

She sat the princess upon a low stool, and herself sitting on a higher one, she put the princess’s head upon her lap, and in looking for the insects, she scratched the princess’s head. The princess understood. She thought, “She has scratched me with my cousin the prince’s nail, not her own.—Mother,” asked she, “have you been with the prince?”

“Yes, my daughter.”

“And what did he say?”

“He asked how he could find a way of getting you out of doors.”

“If he is wise, he will know,” said the princess; and she recited the first stanza, bidding the old woman learn it and repeat it to the prince—

“A soft hand, and a well-trained elephant,

And a black rain-cloud, gives you what you want.”

The woman learnt it, and returned to the prince.

“Well, mother, what did the princess say?” he asked.

“Nothing, but only sent you this stanza,” replied she; and she repeated it. The prince took it in, and dismissed her.

The prince understood exactly what was meant. He found a beautiful and soft-handed page lad, and prepared him. He bribed the keeper of a state elephant, and having trained the elephant to be impassive, he bided his time. Then, one fast-day of the dark fortnight, just after the middle watch, rain fell from a thick black cloud. “This is the day the princess meant,” thought he; he mounted the elephant, and placed the lad of the soft hands on its back, and set out. Opposite the palace he fastened the elephant to the great wall of an open courtyard, and stood before a window getting drenched.

Now the king watched his daughter, and let her rest nowhere but upon a little bed, in his presence. She thought to herself, “To-day the prince will come!” and lay down without going to sleep.

“Father,” said she, “I want to bathe.”

“Come along, my daughter,” said the king. Holding her hands, he led her to the window; he lifted her, and placed her on a lotus ornament outside it, holding her by one hand. As she bathed herself, she held out a hand to the prince. He loosed off the bangles from her arm, and fastened them on the arm of his page boy; then he lifted the lad, and placed him upon the lotus beside the princess. She took his hand, and placed it in her father’s, who took it, and let go his daughter’s hand. Then she loosed the ornaments from her other arm, and fastened them on the other hand of the lad, which she placed in her father’s, and went away with the prince. The king thought the lad to be his own daughter; and when the bathing was over, he put him to sleep in the royal bedchamber, shut to the door, and set his seal on it; then setting a guard, he retired to his own chamber, and lay down to rest.

When the daylight came, he opened the door, and there he saw this lad. “What’s this?” cried he. The lad told how she was fled along with the prince. The king was cast down. “Not even if one goes along and holds hands,” thought the king, “can one guard a woman. Thus women it is impossible to guard;” and he uttered these other two stanzas—

“Though soft of speech, like rivers hard to fill,

Insatiate, nought can satisfy their will:

Down, down they sink: a man should flee afar

From women, when he knows what kind they are.

Whomso they serve for gold or for desire,

They burn him up like fuel in the fire.”

So saying, the great Being added, “I must support my nephew;” so with great honour he gave his daughter to this very man, and made him viceroy. And the nephew at his uncle’s death became king himself.

When the Master had ended this discourse, he declared the Truths and identified the Birth—at the conclusion of the Truths, the backsliding Brother was firmly established in the Fruit of the First Path: “In those days, I was the king.”

“‘Where women rule, the seeing lose their sight,

The strong grow weak, the mighty have no might.

Where women rule, virtue and wisdom fly:

Reckless the prisoners in durance lie.

Like highway robbers, all they steal away

From their poor victims, careless come what may—

Reflection, virtue, truth, and reasoning

Self-sacrifice, and goodness—everything.

As fire burns fuel, for each careless wight

They burn fame, glory, learning, wit, and might.”

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.

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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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