Ja 263 — Culla-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/vol2/ja263.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

“Not through the sea,” etc. This story the Master told at Jetavana, also about a backsliding Brother. The Master had him brought into the Hall of Truth, and asked if it were true that he was a backslider. Yes, said he, it was. “Women,” said the Master, “in olden days made even believing souls to sin.” Then he told a story.

Once on a time Brahmadatta, the king of Benares, was childless. He said to his queen, “Let us offer prayer for a son.” They offered prayer. After a long time, the Bodhisatta came down from the world of Brahma, and was conceived by this queen. So soon as he was born, he was bathed, and given to a serving woman to nurse. As he took the breast, he cried. He was given to another; but while a woman held him, he would not be quiet. So he was given to a man servant; and as soon as the man took him, he was quiet. After that men used to carry him about. When they suckled him, they would milk the breast for him, or they gave him the breast from behind a screen. Even when he grew older, they could not show him a woman. The king caused to be made for him a separate place for sitting or what not, and a separate room for meditation, all by himself.

When the lad was sixteen years old, the king thought thus within himself. “Other son have I none, and this one enjoys no pleasures. He will not even wish for the kingdom. What’s the good of such a son?”

And there was a certain dancing girl, clever at dance and song and music, young, able to gain ascendancy over any man she came across. She approached the king, and asked what he was thinking about; the king told her what it was.

“Let be, my lord,” said she: “I will allure him, I will make him love me.”

“Well, if you can allure my son, who has never had any dealings whatsoever with women, he shall be king, and you shall be his chief queen!”

“Leave that to me, my lord,” said she; “and don’t be anxious.” So she came to the people of the guard, and said, “At dawn of day I will go to the sleeping place of the prince, and outside the room where he meditates apart I will sing. If he is angry, you must tell me, and I will go away; but if he listens, speak my praises.” This they agreed to do.

So in the morning time she took her stand in that place, and sang with a voice of honey, so that the music was as sweet as the song, and the song as sweet as the music. The prince lay listening. Next day, he commanded that she should stand near and sing. The next day, he commanded her to stand in the private chamber, and the next, in his own presence; and so by and bye desire arose in him; he went the way of the world, and knew the joy of love. “I will not let another have this woman,” he resolved; and taking his sword, he ran amuck through the street, chasing the people. The king had him captured, and banished him from the city along with the girl.

Together they journeyed to the jungle, away down the Ganges. There, with the river on one side and the sea on the other, they made a hut, and there they lived. She sat indoors, and cooked the roots and bulbs; the Bodhisatta brought wild fruits from the forest.

One day, when he was away in search of fruits, a hermit from an island in the sea, who was going his rounds to get food, saw smoke as he passed through the air, and alighted beside this hut.

“Sit down until it is cooked,” said the woman; then her woman’s charms seduced his soul, and brought it down from his mystic trance, making a breach in his purity. And he, like a crow with broken wing, unable to leave her, sat there the whole day till he saw the Bodhisatta coming, and then ran off quickly in the direction of the sea. “This must be an enemy,” thought he, and drawing his sword set off in chase.

But the ascetic, making as though he would rise in the air. fell down into the sea. Then thought the Bodhisatta,

“Yon man is doubtless an ascetic who came hither through the air; and now that his trance is broken, he has fallen into the sea. I must go help him.” And standing on the shore he uttered these verses:

“Not through the sea, but by your magic power,

You journeyed hither at an earlier hour;

Now by a woman’s evil company

You have been made to plunge beneath the sea.

“Full of seductive wiles, deceitful all,

They tempt the most pure-hearted to his fall.

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.”

When the ascetic heard these words which the Bodhisatta spake, he stood up in the midst of the sea, and resuming his interrupted trance, he rose through the air, and went away to his dwelling place. Thought the Bodhisatta, “Yon ascetic, with so great a burden, goes through the air like a fleck of cotton. Why should not I like him cultivate the trance, and pass through the air!” So he returned to his hut, and led the woman among mankind again; then he told her to be gone, and himself went into the jungle, where he built him a hut in a pleasant spot, and became an ascetic; he prepared for the mystic trance, cultivated the Faculties and the Attainments, and became destined for the world of Brahma.

When this discourse was ended, the Master declared the Truths: (now at the conclusion of the Truths the backsliding Brother became established in the Fruit of the First Path:) “At that time,” said he, “I was myself the youth that had never had anything to do with women.”

Hallucination, sorrow, and disease,

Mirage, distress (and solid bonds are these),

The snare of death, deep-seated in the mind—

Who trusts in these is vilest of his kind.

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.

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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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