Ja 266 — Vatagga-Sindhava 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/ja266.html

Source revision: 2d9ca8da858f94302ed6783e2717bf73d651881b

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Edited by E. B. Cowell

Original edition: Cambridge University Press, volume 2, 1895

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

“He for whose sake,” etc.—This story the Master told at Jetavana, about a certain land-owner.

At Savatthi, we learn, a handsome woman saw this man, who was also handsome, and fell in love. The passion within her was like a fire burning her body through and through. She lost her senses, both of body and of mind; she cared nothing for food; she only lay down hugging the frame of the bedstead.

Her friends and handmaidens asked her what troubled her at heart that she lay hugging the bedstead; what was the matter, they wished to know. The first few times she answered nothing; but as they continued pressing her, she told them what it was.

“Don’t worry,” said they, “we’ll bring him to you;” and they went and had a talk with the man. At first he refused, but by their much asking he at last consented. They got his promise to come at a certain hour on a fixed day, and told the woman.

She prepared her chamber, and dressed herself in her finery, and sat on the bed waiting until he came. He sat down beside her. Then a thought came into her mind. “If I accept his addresses at once, and make myself cheap, my pride will be humbled. To let him have his will the very first day he comes would be out of place. I will be capricious to-day, and afterwards I will give way.” So no sooner had he touched her, and begun to dally, she caught his hands, and spoke roughly to him, bidding him go away, as she did not want him. He shrank back angrily, and went off home.

When the women found out what she had done, and that the man had gone off, they reproached her. “Here you are,” they said, “in love with somebody, and lie down refusing to take nourishment; we had great difficulty in persuading the man, but at last we bring him; and then you’ll have nothing to say to him!” She told them why it was, and they went off;

warning her that she would get talked about.

The man never even came to look at her again. When she found she had lost him, she would take no nourishment, and soon died. When the man heard of her death, he took a quantity of flowers, scents, and perfumes, and went to Jetavana, where he saluted the Master and sat on one side.

The Master asked him, “How is it, lay brother, that we never see you here?” He told him the whole story, adding that he had avoided waiting on the Buddha all this time for shame. Said the Master, “Layman, on this occasion the woman sent for you through her passion, and then would have nothing to do with you and sent you away angry; and just so in olden days, she fell in love with wise persons, sent for them, and when they came refused to have anything to do with them, and thus plagued them and sent them to the right-about.” Then at his request the Master told an old-world tale.

Once upon a time, when Brahmadatta was king of Benares, the Bodhisatta was a Sindh horse, and they called him Swift-as-the-Wind; and he was the king’s horse of ceremony. The grooms used to take him to bathe in the Ganges. There a certain she-ass saw him, and fell in love. Trembling with passion, she neither ate grass nor drank water; but pined away and became thin, until she was nothing but skin and bone. Then a foal of hers, seeing her pining away, said, “Why do you eat no grass, mother, and drink no water; and why do you pine away, and lie trembling in this place or that? What is the matter?” She would not say; but after he had asked again and again, she told him the matter. Then her foal comforted her, saying,

“Mother, do not be troubled; I will bring him to you.”

So when Swift-as-the-Wind went down to bathe, the foal said, approaching him,

“Sir, my mother is in love with you: she takes no food, and she is pining away to death. Give her life!”

“Good, my lad, I will,” said the horse. “When my bath is over, the grooms let me go awhile to exercise on the river bank. Do you bring your mother to that place.”

So the foal fetched his mother, and turned her loose in the place; then he hid himself hard by.

The groom let Swift-as-the-Wind go for a run; he spied the she-ass, and came up to her.

Now when the horse came up and began to sniff at her, thought the ass to herself, “If I make myself cheap, and let him have his way as soon as he has come here, my honour and pride will perish. I must make as though I did not wish it.” So she gave him a kick on the lower jaw, and scampered away. It broke his jaw, and half killed him. “What does she matter to me?” thought Swift-as-the-Wind; he felt ashamed and made off.

Then the ass repented, and lay down on the spot in grief. And her son the foal came up, and asked her a question in the following lines:

“He for whose sake you thin and yellow grew,

And would not eat a bite,

That dear beloved one is come to you;

Why do you take to flight?”

Hearing her son’s voice, the ass repeated the second verse:

“If at the very first, when by her side

He stands, without delay

A woman yields, all humbled is her pride:

Therefore I ran away.”

In these words she explained the feminine nature to her son.

The Master, in his perfect wisdom, repeated the third stanza:

“If she refuse a suitor nobly born

Who by her side would stay,

As Kundali mourned Windswift, she must mourn

For many a long day.”

When this discourse was ended, the Master declared the Truths and identified the Birth—at the conclusion of the Truths, this land-owner entered on the Fruit of the First Path—“This woman was the she-ass, and I was Swift-as-the-Wind.”

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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