Ja 285 — Manisukara 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

“To hell shall go he” etc.—This story the Master told at Jetavana, about the murder of Sundari. At that time we learn that the Bodhisatta was honoured and respected. The circumstances were the same as in the Kandhaka; this is an abstract of them. The brotherhood of the Blessed One had received gain and honour like five rivers pouring in a mighty flood; the heretics, finding that gain and honour came to them no longer, becoming dim like fireflies at sunrise, they collected together, and took counsel: “Ever since the priest Gotama appeared, our gain and glory has gone from us. Not a soul ever knows that we exist. Who will help us to bring reproach on Gotama, and prevent him from getting all this?” Then an idea occurred to them. “Sundari will make us able to do it.” So when one day Sundari visited the heretics’ grove, they gave her greeting, but said nothing more. She addressed them again and again, but received no answer. “Has anything annoyed the holy fathers?” she asked. “Why, sister,” said they, “do not you see how the priest Gotama annoys us, depriving us of alms and honour?” “What can I do about it?” she said. “You, sister, are fair and lovely. You can bring disgrace upon Gotama, and your words will influence a great many, and you can thus restore our gains and good repute.” She agreed, and took her leave. After this she used to take flowers and scents and perfumes, camphor, condiments and fruits, and at evening time, when a great crowd had entered the city after hearing the Master’s discourse, she would set her face towards Jetavana. If any asked where she was going, she would say, “To the Priest Gotama; I live with him in one perfumed chamber.” Then she spent the night in a heretical settlement, and in the morning entered the road which led from Jetavana into the city. If any asked her where she was going, she replied, “I have been with the priest Gotama in one perfumed chamber, and he made love to me.” After the lapse of some days they hired some ruffians to kill Sundari before Gotama’s chamber and throw her body into the dust-heap. And so they did. Then the heretics made a hue and cry after Sundari, and informed the king. He asked where their suspicions pointed. They answered that she had gone the last few days to Jetavana, but what happened afterwards they did not know. He sent them to search for her. Acting on this permission, they took his own servants, and went to Jetavana, where

they hunted about till they found her in the dust-heap. Calling for a litter, they brought the body into the town, and told the king that the disciples of Gotama had killed Sundari, and thrown her in the dust-heap, in order to cloak the sin of their Master. The king bade them scour the city. All through the streets they went, crying, “Come and see what has been done by the priests of the Sakya prince!” and came back to the palace door. The king had placed the body of Sundari upon a platform, and had it watched in the cemetery. All the populace, except the holy disciples, went about inside the town, outside the town, in the parks and in the woods, abusing the Brethren, and crying out, “Come and see what the priests of the Sakya prince have done!” The Brethren told all this to the Buddha. Said the Master, “Well, go and reprove these people in these words:

“To hell shall go he that delights in lies,

And he who having done a thing, denies:

Both these, when death has carried them away,

As men of evil deeds elsewhere shall rise.”

The king directed some men to find out whether Sundari had been killed by anybody else. Now the ruffians had drunk the blood-money, and were quarrelling together. Said one to another, “You killed Sundari with one blow, and then threw her in the dust-heap, and here you are, buying liquor with the blood-money!” “All right, all right,” said the king’s messengers; and they caught the ruffians and dragged them before the king. “Did you kill herd” asked the king. They said, yes, they did. “Who bade you?” “The heretics, my lord.” The king had the heretics summoned. “Lift up Sundari,” said he, “and carry her round the city, crying as you go: ‘This woman Sundari wanted to bring disgrace upon the priest Gotama; we had her murdered; the guilt is not Gotama’s, nor his disciples’; the guilt is ours!’” They did so. A multitude of the unconverted believed, and the heretics were kept out of mischief by receiving the punishment for murder. Thenceforward the Buddha’s reputation grew greater and greater. And then one day they began to gossip in the Hall of Truth: “Friend, the heretics thought to blacken the Buddha, and they only blackened themselves: ever since, our gains and glory have increased!” The Master came in, and asked what they were talking about? They told him. “Brethren,” said he, “it is impossible to make the Buddha impure. Trying to stain the Buddha, is like trying to stain a gem of the first water. In bygone ages people have wished to stain a fine jewel, and no matter how they tried, they failed to do it.” And he told them an old-world tale.

Once upon a time, when Brahmadatta was king of Benares, the Bodhisatta was born into a Brahmin family. When he grew up, perceiving the suffering that arises from desire, he went away, and traversed three ranges of Himalaya, where he became a hermit, and lived in a hut of leaves.

Near his hut was a crystal cave, in which lived thirty Boars. Near the cave a Lion used to range. His shadow used to be reflected in the crystal. The Boars used to see this reflection, and terror made them lean and thin-blooded. Thought they, “We see the reflection

because this crystal is clear. We will make it dirty and discolour it." So they got some mud from a pool close by, and rubbed and rubbed the crystal with it. But the crystal, being constantly polished by the boars' bristles, got brighter than ever.

They did not know how to manage it; so they determined to ask the hermit how they might sully the crystal. To him therefore they came, and after respectful greeting, they sat down beside him, and gave utterance to these two verses:

"Seven summers we have been

Thirty in a crystal grot.

Now we are keen to dull the sheen—

But dull it we can not.

"Though we try with all our might

To obscure its brilliancy,

Still more bright shines forth the light,

What can the reason be?"

The Bodhisatta listened. Then he repeated the third stanza:

"'Tis precious crystal, spotless, bright, and pure;

No glass—its brilliancy for ever sure.

Nothing on earth its brightness can impair.

Boars, you had best betake yourselves elsewhere."

And so they did, on hearing this answer. The Bodhisatta lost himself in rapturous ecstasy, and became destined to Brahma's world.

After this discourse was ended, the Master identified the Birth: "At that time, I was the hermit."

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. 4, translated by W.H.D. Rouse, 1901.

Vol. 5, translated by H.T. Francis, 1905.

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Prepared for SuttaCentral by Bhikkhu Sujato.