Ja 328 — Ananusociya Jātaka

English translation by H. T. Francis and R. A. Neil.

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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

“Why should I shed tears,” etc.—This story was told by the Master while living at Jetavana, of a certain landowner who had lost his wife. On her death, they say, he neither washed himself nor took food, and neglected his farm duties. Overcome with grief he would wander about the cemetery lamenting, while his predestination to enter the First Path blazed forth like a halo about his head. The Master, early one morning, casting his eye upon the world and beholding him said, “Save me there is no one that can remove this man’s sorrow and bestow upon him the power of entering the First Path. I will be his refuge.” So when he had returned from his rounds and had eaten his meal, he took an attendant priest and went to the door of the landowner’s house. And he on hearing that the Master was coming went out to meet him, and with other marks of respect seated him in the prescribed seat and came and sitting on one side saluted him.

The Master asked, “Wherefore, lay brother, are you silent?”

“Reverend Sir,” he replied, “I am grieving for her.”

The Master said, “Lay brother, that which is breakable is broken, but when this happens, one ought not to grieve. Sages of old, when they lost a wife, knew this truth, and therefore sorrowed not.” And then at his request the Master told an old-world tale.

The old legend will be found set forth in the Cullabodhi Birth in the Tenth Book. Here follows a short summary of it.

Once upon a time when Brahmadatta was reigning in Benares, the Bodhisatta was born into a brahmin family. And when he grew up, he studied all the arts at Takkasila and then returned to his parents. In this Birth the Great Being became a holy young student. Then his parents told him they would look out a wife for him.

“I have no desire for a married life,” said the Bodhisatta. “When you are dead, I will adopt the religious life of an ascetic.”

And being greatly importuned by them, he had a golden image made, and said, “If you can find me a maiden like unto this, I will take her to wife.” His parents sent forth some emissaries with a large escort, and bade them place the golden image in a covered carriage and go and search through the plains of India, till they found just such a young brahmin girl, when they were to give this golden image in exchange, and bring the girl back with them. Now at this time a certain holy man passing from the Brahma world was born again in the form of a young girl in a town in the kingdom of Kasi, in the house of a brahmin worth eighty crores, and the name given her was Sammillabhasini. At the age of sixteen she was a fair and gracious maiden, like to an Apsara, endued with all the marks of female beauty. And since no thought of evil was ever suggested to her by the power of sinful passion, she was perfectly pure. So the men took the golden image and wandered about till they reached this village. The inhabitants on seeing the image asked, “Why is Sammillabhasini, the daughter of such and such a brahmin, placed there?” The messengers on hearing this found the brahmin family, and chose Sammillabhasini for the prince’s bride. She sent a message to her parents, saying, “When you are dead, I shall adopt the religious life; I have no desire for the married state.” They said, “What art thou thinking of, maiden?” And accepting the golden image they sent off their daughter with a great retinue. The marriage ceremony took place against the wishes of both the Bodhisatta and Sammillabhasini. Though sharing the same room and the same bed they did not regard one another with the eye of sinful passion, but dwelt together like two holy men or two female saints.

By and bye the father and mother of the Bodhisatta died. He performed their funeral rites and calling to him Sammillabhasini, said to her, “My dear, my family property amounts to eighty crores, and yours too is worth another eighty crores. Take all this and enter upon household life. I shall become an ascetic.”

“Sir,” she answered, “if you become an ascetic, I will become one too. I cannot forsake you.”

“Come then,” he said. So spending all their wealth in almsgiving and throwing up their worldly fortune as it were a lump of phlegm, they journeyed into the Himalaya country and both of them adopted the ascetic life. There after living for a long time on wild fruits and roots, they at length came down from the Himalayas to procure salt and vinegar, and gradually found their way to Benares, and dwelt in the royal grounds. And while they were living there, this young and delicate female ascetic, from eating insipid rice of a mixed quality, was attacked by dysentery and not being able to get any healing remedies, she grew very weak. The Bodhisatta at the time for going his rounds to beg for alms, took hold of her and carried her to the gate of the city and there laid her on a bench in a certain hall, and himself went into the city for alms. He had scarce gone out when she expired. The people, beholding the great beauty of this female ascetic, thronged about her, weeping and lamenting. The Bodhisatta after going his round of begging returned, and hearing of her death he said, “That which has the quality of dissolution is dissolved. All impermanent existences are of this kind.” With these words he sat down on the bench whereon she lay

and eating the mixture of food he rinsed out his mouth. The people that stood by gathered round him and said, “Reverend Sir, what was this female ascetic to you?”

“When I was a layman,” he replied, “she was my wife.”

“Holy Sir,” they said, “while we weep and lament and cannot control our feelings, why do you not weep?”

The Bodhisatta said, “While she was alive, she belonged to me in some sort. Nothing belongs to her that is gone to another world.: she has passed into the power of others. Wherefore should I weep?” And teaching the people the Truth, he recited these stanzas:

Why should I shed tears for thee,

Fair Sammillabhasini?

Passed to death’s majority

Thou art henceforth lost to me.

Wherefore should frail man lament

What to him is only lent?

He too draws his mortal breath

Forfeit every hour to death.

Be he standing, sitting still,

Moving, resting, what he will,

In the twinkling of an eye,

In a moment death is nigh.

Life I count a thing unstable,

Loss of friends inevitable.

Cherish all that are alive,

Sorrow not shouldst thou survive.

Thus did the Great Being teach the Truth, illustrating by these four stanzas the impermanence of things. The people performed funeral rites over the female ascetic. And the Bodhisatta returned to the Himalayas, and entering on the higher knowledge arising

from mystic meditation was destined to birth in the Brahma-world.

The Master, having ended his lesson, revealed the Truths and identified the Birth—At the conclusion of the Truths, the landowner attained to fruition of the First Path—“At that time the mother of Rahula was Sammillabhasini, and I myself was the ascetic.”

The Jātaka, or Stories of the Buddha’s Former Births, edited by E.B. Cowell, published by The Cambridge University Press.

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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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Prepared for SuttaCentral by Bhikkhu Sujato.