Ja 360 — Sussondi Jātaka

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

Source: https://raw.githubusercontent.com/suttacentral/sc-data/2d9ca8da858f94302ed6783e2717bf73d651881b/html_text/en/pli/sutta/kn/ja/vol3/ja360.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

“I scent the fragrance,” etc.—This story the Master, while living at Jetavana, told concerning a backsliding Brother. The Master asked if it were true that he longed for the world, and what he had seen to make him regret having taken orders. The Brother answered, “It was all owing to the charms of a woman.” The Master said, “Verily, Brother, there is no possibility of being on one’s guard against womenfolk. Sages of old, though they took the precaution to dwell in the abode of the Garudas, failed to be on their guard against them.” And being urged by him, the Master related a story of the past.

Once upon a time king Tamba reigned in Benares, and his queen-consort named Sussondi was a woman of surpassing beauty. At that time the Bodhisatta came to life as a young Garuda. Now the Naga island was then known as Seruma island, and the Bodhisatta lived on this island in the abode of the Garudas. And he went to Benares, disguised as a youth, and played at dice with king Tamba. Remarking his beauty they said to Sussondi, “Such and such a youth plays at dice with our king.” She longed to see him, and one day she adorned herself and repaired to the dice-chamber. There taking her stand amongst the attendants, she fixed her gaze on the youth. He too gazed on the queen, and the pair fell in love with one another. The Garuda king by an act of supernatural power stirred up a storm in the city. The people, through fear of the house falling, fled out of the palace. By his power he caused it to be dark, and carrying off the queen with him in the air, he made his way to his own abode in Naga island. But no one knew of the coming or going of Sussondi. The Garuda took his pleasure with her, and still came to play at dice with the king. Now the king had a minstrel named Sagga, and not knowing where the queen had gone, the king addressed the minstrel and said, “Go now and explore every land and sea, and discover what has become of the queen.” And so saying he bade him begone.

He took what was necessary for his journey, and beginning the search from the city gate, at last came to Bharukaccha. At that time certain merchants of Bharukaccha were setting sail for the Golden Land. He approached them and said, “I am a minstrel. If you remit my

passage money, I will act as your minstrel. Take me with you." They agreed to do so, and putting him on board weighed anchor. When the ship was fairly off, they called him and bade him make music for them. He said, "I would make music, but if I do, the fish will be so excited that your vessel will be wrecked." "If a mere mortal," they said, "make music, there will be no excitement on the part of the fish. Play to us." "Then do not be angry with me," he said, and tuning his lute and keeping perfect harmony between the words of his song and the accompaniment of the lute string, he made music for them. The fish were maddened at the sound and splashed about. And a certain sea monster leaping up fell upon the ship and broke it in two. Sagga lying on a plank was carried along by the wind till he reached a banyan tree in the Naga island, where the Garuda king lived. Now queen Sussondi, whenever the Garuda king went to play at dice, came down from her place of abode, and as she was wandering on the edge of the shore, she saw and recognized the minstrel Sagga, and asked him how he got there. He told her the whole story. And she comforted him and said, "Do not be afraid," and embracing him in her arms, she carried him to her abode and laid him on a couch. And when he was greatly revived, she fed him with heavenly food, bathed him in heavenly scented-water, arrayed him in heavenly raiment, and adorned him with flowers of heavenly perfume, and made him recline upon a heavenly couch. Thus did she watch over him, and whenever the Garuda king returned, she hid her lover, and so soon as the king was gone, under the influence of passion she took her pleasure with him. At the end of a month and a half from that time some merchants, who dwelt at Benares, landed at the foot of the banyan tree in this island, to get fire-wood and water. The minstrel went on board ship with them, and on reaching Benares, as soon as he saw the king, while he was playing at dice, Sagga took his lute, and making music recited the first stanza—

I scent the fragrance of the timira grove,

I hear the moaning of the weary sea:

Tamba, I am tormented with my love,

For fair Sussondi dwells afar from me.

On hearing this the Garuda king uttered the second stanza—

How didst thou cross the stormy main,

And Seruma in safety gain?

How didst thou Sagga, tell me, pray,

To fair Sussondi win thy way?

Then Sagga repeated three stanzas—

With trading-folk from Bharukaccha land

My ship was wrecked by monsters of the sea;

I on a plank did safely gain the strand,

When an anointed queen with gentle hand

Upbore me tenderly upon her knee,

As though to her a true son I might be.

She food and raiment brought, and as I lay

With love-lorn eyes hung o'er my couch all day.

Know, Tamba, well; this word is sooth I say.

The Garuda, while the minstrel thus spake, was filled with regrets and said: "Though I dwelt in the abode of the Garudas, I failed to guard her safely. What is this wicked woman to me?" So he brought her back and presented her to the king and departed. And thenceforth he came not there any more.

The Master, his lesson ended, declared the Truths and identified the Birth—At the conclusion of the Truths the worldly-minded Brother attained fruition of the First Path—"At that time Ananda was the king of Benares, and I myself was the Garuda king."

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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