Ja 436 — Samugga 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/ja436.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

“Whence come ye, friends,” etc.—This story the Master, while dwelling at Jetavana, told of a worldly-minded Brother. The Master, they say, asked him if it were true that he was hankering after the world, and on his confessing that it was so, he said, “Why, Brother, do you desire a woman? Verily woman is wicked and ungrateful. Of old Asura demons swallowed women, and though they guarded them in their belly, they could not keep them faithful to one man. How then will you be able to do so?” And hereupon he related an old-world tale.

Once upon a time when Brahmadatta was reigning in Benares, the Bodhisatta foregoing sinful pleasures entered the Himalayas and adopted the religious life. And he dwelt there living on wild fruits, and developed the Faculties and Attainments. Not far from his hut of leaves lived an Asura demon. From time to time he drew nigh to the Great Being and listened to the Law, but taking his stand in the forest on the high road where men gathered together, he caught and ate them. At this time a certain noble lady in the kingdom of Kasi, of exceeding beauty, settled in a frontier village. One day she went to visit her parents, and as she was returning this demon caught sight of the men that formed her escort and rushed upon them in a terrible form. The men let fall the weapons in their hands and took to flight. The demon on seeing a lovely woman seated in the chariot, fell in love with her, and carrying her off to his cave made her his wife. Thenceforth he brought her ghee, husked rice, fish, flesh, and the like, as well as ripe fruit to eat, and arrayed her in robes and ornaments, and in order to keep her safe he put her in a box which he swallowed, and so guarded her in his belly. One day he wished to bathe, and coming to the tank he threw up the box and taking her out of it he bathed and anointed her, and when he had dressed her he said, “For a short time enjoy yourself in the open air,” and without suspecting any harm he went a little distance and bathed. At this time the son of Vayu, who was a magician, girt about with a sword, was walking through the air. When she saw him, she put her hands in a certain position and signed to him to come to her. The magician quickly descended to the ground. Then she placed him in the box, and sat down on it,

waiting the approach of the Asura, and as soon as she saw him coming, before he had drawn near to the box, she opened it, and getting inside lay over the magician, and wrapped her garment about him. The Asura came and without examining the box, thought it was only the woman, and swallowed the box and set out for his cave. While on the road he thought, "It is a long time since I saw the ascetic: I will go to-day and pay my respects to him." So he went to visit him. The ascetic, spying him while he was still a long way off, knew that there were two people in the demon's belly, and uttering the first stanza, he said:

Whence come ye, friends?

Right welcome all the three!

Be pleased to rest with me awhile,

I pray: I trust you live at ease and happily;

'Tis long since any of you passed this way.

On hearing this the Asura thought, "I have come quite alone to see this ascetic, and he speaks of three people: what does he mean? Does he speak from knowing the exact state of things, or is he mad and talking foolishly?" Then he drew nigh to the ascetic, and saluted him, and sitting at a respectful distance he conversed with him and spoke the second stanza:

I've come to visit thee alone to-day,

Nor does a creature bear me company.

Why dost thou then, O holy hermit, say,

"Whence come ye, friends?

Right welcome, all the three."

Said the ascetic, "Do you really wish to hear the reason?" "Yes, holy Sir." "Hear then," he said, and spoke the third stanza:

Thyself and thy dear wife are twain, be sure;

Enclosed within a box she lies secure:

Safe-guarded ever in thy belly, she

With Vayu's son doth sport her merrily.

On hearing this the Asura thought, "Magicians surely are full of tricks: supposing his sword should be in his hand, he will rip open my belly and make his escape." And being greatly

alarmed he threw up the box and placed it before him.

The Master, in his Perfect Wisdom to make the matter clear, repeated the fourth stanza:

The demon by the sword was greatly terrified,

And from his maw disgorged the box upon the ground;

His wife, with lovely wreath adorned as if a bride,

With Vayu's son disporting merrily was found.

No sooner was the box opened than the magician muttered a spell and seizing his sword sprang up into the air. On seeing this, the Asura was so pleased with the Great Being that he repeated the remaining verses, inspired mainly with his praises:

O stern ascetic, thy clear vision saw

How low poor man, a woman's slave, may sink;

As life itself tho' guarded in my maw,

The wretch did play the wanton, as I think.

I tended her with care both day and night,

As forest hermit cherishes a flame,

And yet she sinned, beyond all sense of right:

—To do with woman needs must end in shame.

Methought within my body, hid from sight,

She must be mine—but "Wanton" was her name—

And so she sinned beyond all sense of right:

—To do with woman needs must end in shame.

Man with her thousand wiles doth vainly cope,

In vain he trusts that his defence is sure;

Like precipices down to Hell that slope,

Poor careless souls she doth to doom allure.

The man that shuns the path of womankind

Lives happily and from all sorrow free;

He his true bliss in solitude will find,

Afar from woman and her treachery.

With these words the demon fell at the feet of the Great Being, and praised him, saying, “Holy Sir, through you my life was saved. Owing to that wicked woman I was nearly killed by the magician.” Then the Bodhisatta expounded the Law to him, saying, “Do no harm to her: keep the commandments,” and established him in the five moral precepts. The Asura said, “Though I guarded her in my belly, I could not keep her safe. Who else will keep her?” So he let her go, and returned straight to his forest home.

The Master, his lesson ended, proclaimed the Truths, and identified the Birth—At the conclusion of the Truths the worldly-minded Brother attained fruition of the First Path—“In those days the ascetic with supernatural powers of sight was myself.”

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

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