Ja 477 — Culla-Narada 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

“No wood is chopt,” etc.—This story the Master told, while dwelling at Jetavana, about the allurements of a coarse girl.

There was then, we learn, a girl of about sixteen, daughter of a citizen of Savatthi, such as might bring good luck to a man, yet no man chose her. So her mother thought to herself: “This my daughter is of full age, yet no one chooses her. I will use her as a bait for a fish, and make one of those Sakiya ascetics come back to the world, and live upon him.” At the time there was a young man of good birth living in Savatthi, who had given his heart to religion and joined the Brotherhood. But from the time when he had received full Orders he had lost all desire for learning, and lived devoted to the adornment of his person. The lay Sister used to prepare in her house rice gruel, and other food hard or soft, and standing at the door, as the Brethren walked along the streets, looked out for some one who could be tempted by the craving for delicacies. Streaming by went a crowd of men who kept the Tepitaka, Abhidhamma, and Vinaya; but among them she saw none ready to rise to her bait. Among the figures with bowl and robe, preachers of the Truth with honey-sweet voice, moving like fleecy scud before the wind, she saw not one. But at last she perceived a man approaching, the outer corners of his eyes anointed, hair hanging down, wearing an under-robe of fine cloth, and an outer robe shaken and cleansed, bearing a bowl coloured like some precious gem, and a sunshade after his own heart, a man who let his senses have their own way, his body much bronzed. “Here is a man I can catch!” thought she; and greeting him, she took his bowl, and invited him into the house. She found him a seat, and provided rice gruel and all the rest; then after the meal, begged him to make that house his resort in future. So he used to visit the house after that, and in course of time became intimate.

One day, the lay Sister said in his hearing, “In this household we are happy enough, only I have no son or son-in-law capable of keeping it up.” The man heard it, and wondering what reason she could have for so saying, in a little while was as it were pierced to the heart. She

said to her daughter, “Tempt this man, and get him into your power.” So the girl after that time decked herself and adorned herself, and tempted him with all women’s tricks and wiles. (You must understand that a “coarse” girl does not mean one whose body is fat, but be she fat or be she thin, by power of the five sensual passions she is called “coarse.”) Then the man, being young and under the power of passion, thought in his heart, “I cannot now hold to the Buddha’s religion”; and he went to the monastery, and laying down bowl and robe, said to his spiritual teachers, “I am discontented.” Then they conducted him to the Master, and said, “Sir, this Brother is discontented.” “Is this true which they say,” asked he, “that you are discontented, Brother?” “Yes, Sir, true it is.” “Then what made you so?” “A coarse girl, Sir.” “Brother,” said he, “long, long ago, when you were living in the forest, this same girl was a hindrance to your holiness, and did you great harm; then why are you again discontented on her account?” Then at the request of the Brethren he told a story of the past.

Once upon a time, when Brahmadatta was king in Benares, the Bodhisatta was born into a brahmin family of great wealth, and after his education was finished managed the estate. Then his wife brought forth a son, and died. He thought, “As in my beloved wife, so in me death shall not be ashamed; what is a home to me? I will become an ascetic.” So forsaking his lusts, he went with his son to Himalaya; and there with him entered upon the ascetic life, developed the mystic Trance and transcendent Knowledge, and dwelt in the woods, supporting life on fruits and roots.

At that time the borderers raided the countryside; and having assailed a town, and taken prisoners, laden with spoil they returned to the border. Amongst them was a maiden, beautiful, but endowed with all a hypocrite’s cunning. This girl thought to herself, “These men, when they have carried us off home, will use us as slaves; I must find some way to escape.” So she said, “My lord, I wish to retire; let me go and stay away for a moment.” Thus she deceived the robbers, and fled.

Now the Bodhisatta had gone out to fetch fruits and the like, leaving his son in the hut. While he was away, this girl, as she wandered about in the forest, came to the hut, in the morning; and tempting the son of the ascetic with desire of love, destroyed his virtue, and got him under her power. She said to him, “Why dwell here in the forest? Come, let us go to a village and make a home for ourselves. There it is easy to enjoy all the pleasures and passions of sense.” He consented, and said, “My father is now out in the woods looking for wild fruits. When we have seen him, we will both go away together.” Then the girl thought, “This young innocent knows nothing; but his father must have become an ascetic in his old age. When he comes in, he will want to know what I do here, and beat me, and drag me out by the feet, and throw me into the forest. I will get clear away before he comes.” So she said to the lad, “I will go first, and you may follow”; then pointing out the landmarks, she departed. After she had gone, the lad became sorrowful, and did none of his duties as he was used; but wrapt himself up head and all, and lay down within the hut, fretting.

When the Great Being came in with his wild fruits, he observed the girl’s footmark. “That is a woman’s footprint,” thought he; “my son’s virtue must have been lost.” Then he entered the hut, and laid down the wild fruit, and put the question to his son by repeating the first

stanza:

“No wood is chopt, and you have brought no water from the pool,

No fire is kindled: why do you lie mooning like a fool?”

Hearing his father’s voice, the lad rose, and greeted him; and with all respect made known that he could not endure a forest life, repeating a couple of stanzas:

“I cannot live in forests: this, O Kassapa, I swear;

Hard is the woodland life, and back to men I would repair.

“Teach me, O brahmin, when I leave, that wheresoe’er I go,

The customs of the countryside I may most fully know.”

“Very good, my son,” said the Great Being, “I will tell you the customs of the country.” And he repeated this couple of stanzas:

“If ’Tis your mind to leave behind the woodland fruits and roots

And dwell in cities, hear me teach the way which that life suits:

“Keep clear of every precipice, from poison keep afar,

Sit never in the mud, and walk with care where serpents are.”

The ascetic’s son, not understanding this pithy counsel, asked:

“What has your precipice to do with the religious way,

Your mud, your poison, and your snake? Come tell me this, I pray.”

The other explained—

“There is a liquor in the world, my son, that men call wine,

Fragrant, delicious, honey-sweet, and cheap, of flavour fine:

This, Narada, for holy men is poison, say the wise.

“And women in the world can set fools’ wits a whirling round,

They catch young hearts, as hurricanes catch cotton from the ground:

The precipice I mean is this before the good man lies.

“High honours shown by other men, respect and fame and gain,

This is the mud, O Narada, which holy men may stain.

“Great monarchs with their retinue have in that world dwelling,

And they are great, O Narada, and each a mighty king:

“Before the feet of sovereign lords and monarchs walk not thou,

For, Narada, these are the snakes of whom I spake just now.

“The house thou comest to for food, when men sit down to meat,

If thou see good within that house, there take thy fill, and eat.

“When by another entertained with food or drink, this do:

Eat not too much, nor drink too much, and fleshly lusts eschew.

“From gossip, drink, lewd company, and shops of goldsmith’s ware,

Keep thou afar as those who by the uneven pathway fare.”

As his father went on talking and talking, the lad came to his senses, and said, “Enough of the world for me, dear father!” Then his father instructed him how to develop kindliness and other good feelings. The son followed his father’s instruction, and ere long caused the ecstasy of mystic meditation to spring up within him. And both of them, father and son, without a break in the trance, were born again in the world of Brahma.

When the Master had ended this discourse, he identified the Birth: “At that time this coarse girl was the young woman, the discontented Brother was the ascetic’s son, and I was the father.”

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.

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