Ja 540 — Sama Jātaka

English translation by E. B. Cowell and W. H. D. Rouse.

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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

“Who, as I filled,” etc. This story the Master told at Jetavana, about a certain priest who supported his mother. They say that there was a wealthy merchant at Savatthi, who was worth eighteen crores; and he had a son who was very dear and winning to his father and mother. One day the youth went upon the terrace of the house, and opened a window and looked down on the street; and when he saw the great crowd going to Jetavana with perfumes and garlands in their hands to hear the law preached, he exclaimed that he would go too. So having ordered perfumes and garlands to be brought, he went to the monastery, and having distributed dresses, medicines, drinks, etc. to the assembly and honoured the Blessed One with perfumes and garlands, he sat down on one side. After hearing the law, and perceiving the evil consequences of desire and the blessings arising from adopting the religious life, when the assembly broke up he asked the Blessed One for ordination, but he was told that the Tathagatas do not ordain anyone who has not obtained the permission of his parents; so he went away, and lived a week without food, and having at last obtained his parents’ consent, he returned and begged for ordination. The Master sent a priest who ordained him; and after he was ordained he obtained great honour and gain; he won the favour of his teachers and preceptors, and having received full orders he mastered the law in five years. Then he thought to himself, “I live here distracted,—it is not suitable for me,” and he became anxious to reach the goal of mystic insight; so having obtained instruction in meditation from his teacher, he departed to a frontier village and dwelt in the forest, and there having entered a course of spiritual insight, he failed, however much he laboured and strove for twelve years, to attain any special idea. His parents also, as time went on, became poor, for those who hired their land or carried on merchandise for them, finding out that there was no son or brother in the family to enforce the payment, seized what they could lay their hands upon and ran away as they pleased, and the servants and labourers in the house seized the gold and coin and made off therewith, so that at the end the two were reduced to an evil plight and had not even an ewer for pouring water; and at last they sold their dwelling, and finding themselves homeless, and in extreme misery, they wandered begging for alms, clothed in

rags and carrying potsherds in their hands. Now at that time a Brother came from Jetavana to the son's place of abode; he performed the duties of hospitality and, as he sat quietly, he first asked whence he was come; and learning that he was come from Jetavana he asked after the health of the Teacher and the principal disciples and then asked for news of his parents, "Tell me, Sir, about the welfare of such and such a merchant's family in Savatthi." "O friend, don't ask for news of that family." "Why not, Sir?" "They say that there was one son in that family, but he has become an ascetic under the law, and since he left the world that family has gone to ruin; and at the present time the two old people are reduced to a most lamentable state and beg for alms." When he heard the other's words he could not remain unmoved, but began to weep with his eyes full of tears, and when the other asked him why he wept, "O Sir," he replied, "they are my own father and mother, I am their son." "O friend, thy father and mother have come to ruin through thee,—do thou go and take care of them." "For twelve years," he thought to himself, "I have laboured and striven but never been able to attain the path or the fruit: I must be incompetent; what have I to do with the ascetic life? I will become a householder and will support my parents and give away my wealth, and will thus eventually become destined for heaven." So having determined he gave up his abode in the forest to the elder, and the next day departed and by successive stages reached the monastery at the back of Jetavana which is not far from Savatthi. There he found two roads, one leading to Jetavana, the other to Savatthi. As he stood there, he thought, "Shall I see my parents first or the Buddha?" Then he said to himself, "In old days I saw my parents for a long time, from henceforth I shall rarely have the chance of seeing the Buddha; I will see the perfectly Enlightened One to-day and hear the law, and then to-morrow morning I will see my parents." So he left the road to Savatthi and in the evening arrived at Jetavana. Now that very day at daybreak, the Master, as he looked upon the world, had seen the potentialities of this young man, and when he came to visit him he praised the virtues of parents in the Matiposaka-sutta. As he stood at the end of the assembly of elders and listened, he thought, "If I become a householder I can support my parents; but the Master also says, "A son who has become an ascetic can be helpful"; I went away before without seeing the Master, and I failed in such an imperfect ordination; I will now support my parents while still remaining an ascetic without becoming a householder." So he took his ticket and his ticket-food and gruel, and felt as if he had committed a sin deserving expulsion after a solitary abode of twelve years in the forest. In the morning he went to Savatthi and he thought to himself, "Shall I first get the gruel or see my parents?" He reflected that it would not be right to visit them in their poverty empty-handed; so he first got the gruel and then went to the door of their old house. When he saw them sitting by the opposite wall after having gone their round for the alms given in broth, he stood not far from them in a sudden burst of sorrow with his eyes full of tears. They saw him but knew him not; then his mother, thinking that it was someone standing for alms, said to him, "We have nothing fit to be given to you, be pleased to pass on." When he heard her, he repressed the grief which filled his heart and remained still standing as before with his eyes full of tears, and when he was addressed a second and a third time he still continued standing. At last the father said to the mother, "Go to him; can this be thy son ?" She rose and went to him and, recognising him, fell at his feet and lamented, and the father also joined his lamentations, and there was a loud outburst of sorrow. To see his parents he could not control himself, but burst into tears; then, after yielding to his feelings, he said, "Do not grieve, I will support you"; so having

comforted them and made them drink some gruel, and sit down on one side, he went again and begged for some food and gave it to them, and then went and asked for alms for himself, and having finished his meal, took up his abode at a short distance off. From that day forward he watched over his parents in this manner; he gave them all the alms he received for himself, even those at the fortnightly distributions, and he went on separate expeditions for his own alms, and ate them; and whatever food he received as provision for the rainy season he gave to them, while he took their worn-out garments and dyed them with the doors fast closed and used them himself: but the days were few when he gained alms and there were many when he failed to win anything, and his inner and outer clothing became very rough. As he watched over his parents he gradually grew very pale and thin and his friends and intimates said to him, “Your complexion used to be bright, but now you have become very pale,—has some illness come upon you?” He replied, “No illness has come upon me, but a hindrance has befallen me,” and he told them the history. “Sir,” they replied, “the Master does not allow us to waste the offerings of the faithful, you do an unlawful act in giving to laymen the offerings of the faithful.” When he heard this he shrank ashamed. But not satisfied with this they went and told it to the Master, saying, “So and so, Sir, has wasted the offerings of the faithful and used them to feed laymen.” The Master sent for the young man of family and said to him, “Is it true that you, an ascetic, take the offerings of the faithful and support laymen with them?” He confessed that it was true. Then the Master, wishing to praise what he had done and to declare an old action of his own, said, “When you support laymen whom do you support?” “My parents,” he answered. Then the Master, wishing to encourage him still more said, “Well done, well done” three times; “You are in a path which I have traversed before you: I in old time, while going the round for alms, supported my parents.” The ascetic was encouraged thereby. At the request of the Brethren the Master, to make known his former actions, told them a legend of the olden time.

Once on a time, not far from Benares on the near bank of the river, there was a village of hunters, and another village on the further side; five hundred families dwelt in each. Now two hunter chiefs dwelt in the two villages who were fast friends; and they had made a compact in their youth, that if one of them had a daughter and the other a son, they would wed the pair together. In course of time a son was born to the chief in the near village and a daughter to the one in the further; the name. Dukulaka was given to the first as he was taken up when he was born in a wrapping of fine cloth, while the second was named Parika because she was born on the further side of the river. They were both fair to look at and of a complexion like gold; and though they were born in a village of hunters they never injured any living creature. When he was sixteen years old his parents said to Dukulaka, “O son, we will bring you a bride”; but he, a pure being newly come from the Brahma world, closed both his ears, saying, “I do not want to dwell in a house, do not mention such a thing”; and though they spoke three times to the same effect, he shewed no inclination for it. Parika also, when her parents said to her, “Our friend’s son is handsome and with a complexion like gold, we are going to give you to him,” made the same answer and closed her ears, for she too had come from the Brahma world. Dukulaka privately sent her a message, “If you wish to live as a wife with her husband, go into some other family, for I have no wish for such a thing,” and she too sent a similar message to him. But however unwilling they were, the parents would celebrate the marriage. But both

of them lived apart like the Archangel Brahman, without descending into the ocean of carnal passion. Dukulaka never killed fish or deer, he never even sold fish which was brought to him. At last his parents said to him, “Though you are born in a family of hunters you do not like to dwell in a house, nor kill any living creature; what will you do?” “If you will give me leave,” he replied, “I will become an ascetic this very day.” They gave them both leave at once. Having bid them farewell, they went out along the shore of the Ganges and entered the Himavat region, where the river Migasammata flows down from the mountain and enters the Ganges; then, leaving the Ganges, they went up along the Migasammata. Now at that moment Sakka’s palace grew hot. Sakka, having ascertained the reason, commanded Vissakamma, “O Vissakamma, two great beings have left the world and entered Himavat, we must find an abode for them,—go and build them a hut of leaves and provide all the necessaries of an ascetic’s life a quarter of a mile from the river Migasammata and come back hither.” So he went and prepared everything as it is described in the Mugapakkha Birth, and returned to his own home, after having driven away all beasts that caused unpleasant noises, and having made a footpath near. They saw the footpath and followed it to the hermitage. When Dukulaka went into the hermitage and saw all the necessaries for an ascetic’s life, he exclaimed, “This is a gift to us from Sakka”; so having taken off his outer garment and put on a robe of red bark and thrown a black antelope-hide over his shoulder and twisted his hair in a knot, and assumed the garb of an anchorite, and having also given ordination to Parika, he took up his abode there with her, exercising all the feelings of benevolence which belong to the world of sensual pleasure. Through the influence of their benevolent feelings all the birds and beasts felt only kindly feelings towards each other,—not one of them did harm to any other. Pari brings water and food, sweeps the hermitage, and does all that has to be done, and both collect various kinds of fruits and eat them, and then they enter their respective huts of leaves and live there fulfilling the rules of the ascetic life. Sakka ministers to their wants. One day he foresaw that a danger threatened them, “They will lose their sight,” so he went to Dukulaka; and having sat on one side, after saluting him, he said, “Sir, I foresee a danger which threatens you,—you must have a son to take care of you: follow the way of the world.” “O Sakka, why dost thou mention such a thing? Even when we lived in a house we shrank in disgust from all carnal intercourse; can we practise it now when we have come into the forest and are living an anchorite life here?” “Well, if you will not do as I say,—then at the proper season touch Pari’s navel with your hand.” This he promised to do; and Sakka, after saluting him, returned to his own abode. The Great Being told the matter to Pari, and at the proper time he touched her navel with his hand. Then the Bodhisatta descended from the heavenly world and entered her womb and was conceived there. At the end of the tenth month she bore a son of golden hue, and they called his name accordingly Suvannasama. (Now the Kinnari nymphs in another mountain had nursed Pari.) The parents washed the babe and laid it down in the hilt of leaves and went out to collect different sorts of fruit. While they were gone the Kinnaras took the child and washed it in their caves, and, going up to the top of the mountain, they adorned it with various flowers, and made the sectarial marks with yellow orpiment, red arsenic, and other paints, and then brought it back to its bed in the hut; and when Pari came home she gave the child suck. They cherished him as he grew up year after year, and when he was about sixteen they used to leave him in the hut and go out to collect forest roots and fruits. The Bodhisatta considered, “Some danger will one day happen”; he used to watch the path by

which they went. One day they were returning home at evening time after collecting roots and fruits, and not far from the hermitage a great cloud rose up. They took shelter in the roots of a tree and stood on an ant-hill; and in this ant-hill a snake lived. Now water dropped from their bodies, which carried the smell of sweat to the snake's nostrils, and, being angry, it puffed out its breath and smote them as they stood there, and they both were struck blind and neither could see the other. Dukulaka called out to Pali, "My eyes are gone, I cannot see you"; and she too made the same complaint. "We have no life left," they said, and they wandered about, lamenting and unable to find the path. "What former sin can we have committed?" they thought. Now in former times they had been born in a doctor's family, and the doctor had treated a rich man for a disease of his eyes, but the patient had given him no fee; and being angry he had said to his wife, "What shall we do?" She, being also angry, had said, "We do not want his money; make-some preparation and call it a medicine and blind one of his eyes with it." He agreed and acted on her advice, and for this sin the two eyes of both of them now became blind.

Then the Great Being reflected, "On other days my parents have always returned at this hour, I know not what has happened to them, I will go and meet them"; so he went to meet them and made a sound. They recognised the sound, and making an answering noise they said, in their affection for the boy, "O Sama, there is a danger here, do not come near." So he held out to them a long pole and told them to lay hold of the end of it, and they, seizing hold of it, came up to him. Then he said to them, "How have you lost your sight?" "When it rained we took shelter in the roots of a tree and stood on an ant-hill, and that made us blind." When he heard it, he knew what had happened. "There must have been a snake there, and in his anger he emitted a poisonous breath"; and as he looked at them he wept and also laughed. Then they asked him why he wept and also laughed. "I wept because your sight is gone while you are still young, but I laughed to think that I shall now take care of you; do not grieve, I will take care of you." So he led them back to the hermitage and he tied ropes in all directions, to distinguish the day and the night apartments, the cloisters, and all the different rooms; and from that day forwards he made them keep within, while he himself collected the forest roots and fruits, and in the morning swept their apartments, and fetched water from the Migasammata river, and prepared their food and the water for washing and brushes for their teeth, and gave them all sorts of sweet fruits, and after they had washed their mouths he ate his own meal. After eating his meal he saluted his parents and surrounded by a troop of deer went into the forest to gather fruit. Having gathered fruit with a band of Kinnaras in the mountain he returned at evening time, and having taken water in a pot and heated it, he let them bathe and wash their feet as they chose, then he brought a potsherd full of hot coals and steamed their limbs, and gave them all sorts of fruits when they were seated, and at the end ate his own meal and put by what was left. In this way he took care of his parents.

Now at that time a king named Piliyakkha reigned in Benares. He in his great desire for venison had entrusted the kingdom to his mother, and armed with the five kinds of weapons had come into the region of Himavat, and while there had gone on killing deer and eating their flesh, till he came to the river Migasammata, and at last reached the spot where Sama used to come and draw water. Seeing there the footsteps of deer he erected his shelter with boughs of the colour of gems, and taking his bow and fitting a poisoned

arrow on the string he lay there in ambush. In the evening the Great Being having collected his fruits and put them in the hermitage made his salutation to his parents, and saying, “I will bathe and go and fetch some water,” took his pot, and surrounded by his train of deer, singled out two deer from the herd surrounding, and putting the jar on their backs, leading them with his hand, went to the bathing-place. The king in his shelter saw him coming, and said to himself, “All the time that I have been wandering here I have never seen a man before; is he a god or a naga? Now if I go up and ask him, he will fly up into heaven if he is a god, and he will sink into the earth if he is a naga. But I shall not always live here in Himavat, and one day I shall go back to Benares, and my ministers will ask me whether I have not seen some new marvel in the course of my rambles in Himavat. If I tell them that I have seen such and such a creature, and they proceed to ask me what its name was, they will blame me if I have to answer that I do not know; so I will wound it and disable it, and then ask it.” In the meantime the animals went down first and drank the water and came up from the bathing-place; and then the Bodhisatta went slowly down into the water like a great elder who was perfectly versed in the rules, and, being intent on obtaining absolute calm, put on his bark garment and threw his deer-skin on one shoulder and, lifting up his water-jar, filled it and set it on his left shoulder. At this moment the king, seeing that it was the time to shoot, let fly a poisoned arrow and wounded the Great Being in the right side, and the arrow went out at the left side. The troop of deer, seeing that he was wounded, fled in terror, but Suvannasama, although wounded, balanced the water jar as well as he could, and, recovering his recollection, slowly went up out of the water. He dug out the sand and heaped it on one side and, placing his head in the direction of his parents’ hut, he laid himself down like a golden image on the sand which was in colour like a silver plate. Then recalling his memory he considered all the circumstances; “I have no enemies in this district of Himavat, and I have no enmity against anyone.” As he said these words, blood poured out of his mouth and, without seeing the king, he addressed this stanza to him:

“Who, as I filled my water-jar, has from his ambush wounded me,—

Brahman or Khattiya, Vessa,—who can my unknown assailant be?”

Then he added another stanza to shew the worthlessness of his flesh as food:

“Thou canst not take my flesh for food, thou canst not turn to use my skin;

Why couldst thou think me worth thine aim; what was the gain thou thought’st to win?”

And again another asking him his name, etc.:

“Who art thou, say,—whose son art thou? and what name shall I call thee by?

Why dost thou lie in ambush there? Answer my questions truthfully.”

When the king heard this, he thought to himself, “Though he has fallen wounded by my poisoned arrow, yet he neither reviles me nor blames me; he speaks to me gently as if

soothing my heart,—I will go up to him"; so he went and stood near him, saying:

"I of the Kasis am the lord, King Piliyakkha named; and here,

Leaving my throne for greed of flesh, I roam to hunt the forest deer.

Skilled in the archer's craft am I, stout is my heart nor given to change;

No Naga can escape my shaft if once he comes within my range."

Thus praising his own merits, he proceeded to ask the other his name and family:

"But who art thou? Whose son art thou? How art thou called? Thy name make known;

Thy father's name and family,—tell me thy father's and thine own."

The Great Being reflected, "If I told him that I belonged to the gods or the Kinnaras, or that I was a Khattiya or of similar race, he would believe me; but one must only speak the truth," so he said:

"They called me Sama while I lived,—an outcast hunter's son am I;

But here stretched out upon the ground in woful plight thou see'st me lie.

Pierced by that poisoned shaft of thine, I helpless lie like any deer,

The victim of thy fatal skill, bathed in my blood I wallow here.

Thy shaft has pierced my body through, I vomit blood with every breath,—

Yet, faint and weak, I ask thee still, why from thy ambush seek my death?

Thou canst not take my flesh for food, thou canst not turn to use my skin;

Why could'st thou think me worth thy aim; what was the gain thou thought'st to win?"

When the king heard this, he did not tell the real truth, but made up a false story and said:

"A deer had come within my range, I thought that it my prize would be,

But seeing thee it fled in fright,—I had no angry thought for thee."

Then the Great Being replied, "What say'st thou, O king? In all this Himavat there is not a deer which flies when he sees me":

"Since my first years of thought began, as far as memory reaches back,

No quiet deer or beast of prey has fled in fear to cross my track.

Since I first donned my dress of bark and left behind my childish days

No quiet deer or beast of prey has fled to see me cross their ways.

Nay, the grim goblins are my friends, who roam with me this forest's shade,

Why should this deer then, as you say, at seeing me have fled afraid?"

When the king heard him, he thought to himself, "I have wounded this innocent being and told a lie,—I will now confess the truth." So he said:

"Sama, no deer beheld thee there, why should I tell a needless lie?

I was o'ercome by wrath and greed and shot that arrow,—it was I."

Then he thought again, "Suvannasama cannot be dwelling alone in this forest, his relations no doubt live here; I will ask him about them." So he uttered a stanza:

"Whence didst thou come this morning, friend,—who bade thee take thy water-jar

And fill it from the river's bank and bear the burden back so far?"

When he heard this, he felt a great pang and uttered a stanza, as the blood poured from his mouth:

"My parents live in yonder wood, blind and dependent on my care,—

For their sakes to the river's bank I came to fill my water-jar."

Then he went on, bewailing their condition:

"Their life is but a flickering spark, their food at most a week's supply,—

Without this water which I bring blind, weak, and helpless they will die.

I reek not of the pain of death, that is the common fate of all;

Ne'er more to see my father's face—'Tis this which doth my heart appall.

Long, long, a sad and weary time my mother there will nurse her woe,

At midnight and at early morn her tears will like a river flow.

Long, long, a sad and weary time my father there will nurse his woe,

At midnight and at early morn his tears will like a river flow.

They will go wandering through the wood and of their tarrying son complain,

Expecting still to hear my step or feel my soothing touch—in vain.

This thought is as a second shaft which pierces deeper than before,

That I, alas! lie dying here, fated to see their face no more."

The king, on hearing his lamentation, thought to himself, "This man has been fostering his parents in his excessive piety and devotion to duty, and even now amidst all his pain he only thinks of them,—I have done evil to such a holy being,—how can I comfort him? When I find myself in hell what good will my kingdom do me? I will watch over his father and mother as he watched over them; thus his death will be counteracted to them." Then he uttered his resolution in the following stanzas:

"O Sama of auspicious face, let not despair thy soul oppress,

Lo I myself will wait upon thy parents in their lone distress.

I am well practised with the bow,—my promise is a surety good,—

I'll be a substitute for thee and nurse thy parents in the wood.

I'll search for leavings of the deer, and roots and fruits to meet their need;

I'll wait myself upon them both, their household slave in very deed.

Which is the forest where they are? Tell me, O Sama, for I vow

I will protect and foster them as thou thyself hast done till now."

The Great Being replied, "It is well, O king, then do thou foster them," so he pointed out the road to him:

"Where my head lies there runs a path two hundred bow lengths through the trees,

'Twill lead thee to my parents' hut,—go, nurse them there if so thou please."

Having thus shewn the path and borne the great pain patiently in his love for his parents, he folded his hands respectfully, and made his last request that he would take care of them:

"Honour to thee, O Kasi king, as thus thou goest upon thy way;

Helpless my parents are and blind,—O guard and nurse them both, I pray.

Honour to thee, O Kasi king,—I fold my hands respectfully,

Bear to my parents in my name the message I have given to thee."

The king accepted the trust, and the Great Being, having thus delivered his final message, became unconscious. Explaining this, the Master said:

"When Sama of auspicious face thus to the king these words had said,

Faint with the poison of the shaft he lay unconscious as if dead."

Up to this point when he uttered his words he had spoken as one out of breath; but here his speech was interrupted, as his form, heart, thoughts, and vital powers were successively affected by the violence of the poison, his mouth and his eyes closed, his hands and feet became stiffened, and his whole body was wet with blood. The king exclaimed, "Till just this moment he was talking to me, what has suddenly stopped his inhaling and exhaling his breath? These functions have now ceased, his body has become stiff, surely Sama is now dead"; and being unable to control his sorrow, he smote his head with his hands and bewailed in a loud voice.

Here the Master, to make the matter clearer, spoke these stanzas:

"Bitterly did the king lament, "I knew not until this befell.

That I should e'er grow old or die,—I know it now, alas! too well.

All men are mortal, now I see; for even Sama had to die,

Who gave good counsel to the last, yea in his dying agony;

Hell is my sure and certain doom,—that murdered saint lies speechless there;

In every village all I meet will with one voice my guilt declare.

But in this lone unpeopled wood who will there be to know my name?

Here in this desert solitude who will remind me of my shame?"

Now at this time a daughter of the gods, named Bahusodari, who dwelt in the Gandhamadana mountain and who had been a mother to the Great Being in his seventh existence before this one, was continually thinking of him with a mother's affection; but on that day in the enjoyment of her divine bliss she did not remember him as usual; and her friends only said that she had gone to the assembly of the gods (and so remained silent). Suddenly thinking of him at the very moment when he became unconscious, she said to herself; "What has become of my son?" and then she saw that King Piliyakkha had wounded him with a poisoned arrow on the bank of the Migasammata and that he was

lying on a sandbank, while the king was loudly lamenting. “If I do not go to him, my son Suvannasama will perish there and the king’s heart will break, and Sama’s parents will die of hunger and thirst. But if I go there, the king will carry the jar of water and go to his parents, and after hearing their words, will take them to their son, and I and they will make a solemn asseveration which shall overpower the poison in Sama’s body, and my son shall then regain his life and his parents their sight, and the king, after hearing Sama’s instruction, will go and distribute great gifts of charity and become destined for heaven; so I will go there at once.” So she went, and standing unseen in the sky, by the bank of the river Migasammata, she discoursed with the king.

Here the Master, to make the matter clearer, spoke these stanzas:

“The goddess, hidden out of sight upon the Gandhamadan mount,

Uttered these verses in his ears, by pity moved on his account;

“A wicked action hast thou done,—heavy the guilt which rests on thee;

Parents and son all innocent, thy single shaft hath slain the three;

Come, I will tell thee how to find a refuge from thy guilt and rest;

Nurse the blind pair in yonder wood, so shall thy sinful soul be blest.”

When he heard her words, he believed what she said,—that, if he went and supported the father and mother, he would attain to heaven; so he made a resolve, “What have I to do with a kingdom? I will go and devote myself to nursing them.” After an outburst of weeping he conquered his sorrow, and thinking that Sama was indeed dead, he paid homage to his body with all kinds of flowers and sprinkled it with water, and thrice went round it, turning his right side towards it, and made his obeisance at the four several points. Then he took the jar which had been consecrated by him, he turned his face to the south and went on his way with a heavy heart.

Here the Master added this verse of explanation:

“After a burst of bitter tears, lamenting for the hapless youth,

The king took up the water-jar and turned his face towards the south.”

Strong as he was by nature, the king took up the water jar and resolutely forced his way to the hermitage and at last reached the door of wise Dukula’s hut. The wise man, seated inside, heard the sound of approaching footsteps, and, as he pondered doubtfully, he uttered these two lines:

“Whose are these footsteps which I hear? someone approaches by this way;

’Tis not the sound of Sama’s steps,—who art thou,—tell me, Sir, I pray.”

When the king heard him, he thought to himself; “If I tell him that I have killed his son and do not reveal my royal character, they will be angry and speak roughly to me, and then my anger will be roused against them and I shall do them some outrage, and this would be sinful; but there is no one who does not feel afraid when he hears that it is a king, I will therefore make myself known to them”; so he placed the jar in the enclosure where the water jar should be put, and standing in the doorway of the hut, exclaimed:

“I of the Kasis am the lord, King Piliyakkha named; and here,

Leaving my throne for greed of flesh, I roam to hunt the forest deer.

Skilled in the archer’s craft am I, stout is my heart nor given to change;

No Naga can escape my shaft if once he comes within my range.”

The wise man gave him a friendly greeting, and replied :

“Welcome, O king, a happy chance directed thee this way:

Mighty thou art and glorious: what errand brings thee, pray?

The tindook and the piyal leaves, and kasumari sweet,

Though few and little, take the best we have, O king, and eat.

And this cool water from a cave high hidden on a hill,

O mighty monarch, take of it, drink if it be thy will.”

When the king heard his welcome he thought to himself, “It would not be right to address him at once with the bare statement that I have just killed his son; I will begin to talk with him as if I knew nothing about it and then tell him”; so he said to him

“How can a blind man roam the woods? These fruits,—who brought them to your door?

He must have had good eyes y-wis, who gathered such a varied store.”

The old man repeated two stanzas to shew the king that he and his wife did not gather the fruit, but that their son had brought it to them:

“Sama our son is young in years, not very tall but fair to the eye,

The long black hair that crowns his head curls like a dog’s tail naturally.

He brought the fruit, and then went off, hastening to fill our water jar;

He will be back here presently,—the way to the river is not far."

The king replied:

"Sama, that duteous son of yours, whom you describe so fair, so good,—

I have slain him: those black curls of his are lying yonder, drenched in blood."

Parika's hut of leaves was close by, and as she sat there she heard the king's voice, and went out anxious to learn what had happened, and, having gone near Dukula by the aid of a rope, she exclaimed:

"Tell me, Dukula, who is this who says that Sama has been slain?

"Our Sama slain,"—such evil news seem to have cleft my heart in twain.

Like a young tender pepul shoot torn by the blast from off the tree,—

Our Sama slain,—to hear such news my heart is pierced with agony."

The old man gave her words of counsel:

"It is the king of Kasi land, his cruel bow has slain, I wot,

Our Sama by the river's bank, but let us pause and curse him not."

Parika replied:

"Our darling son, our life's sole stay, longed for and waited for so long,—

How shall my heart contain its wrath against the man who did this wrong?"

The old man exclaimed:

"A darling son, our life's sole stay, longed for and waited for so long!

But all the wise forbid our wrath against the doer of the wrong."

Then they both uttered their laments, beating their breasts and praising the Bodhisatta's virtues. Then the king tried to comfort them:

"Weep not, I pray you, overmuch, for your loved Sama's hapless fate;

Lo I will wait upon you both,—mourn not as wholly desolate;

I am well practised with the bow, my promise is a surety good,

Lo I will wait upon you both and nurse you in this lonely wood.

I'll search for leavings of the deer, and roots and fruits for all your need;

Lo I will wait upon you both, your household slave in very deed."

They remonstrated with him:

"This is not right, O king of men, this would be utterly unmeet;

Thou art our lord and rightful king: here we pay homage to thy feet."

When the king heard this he was glad. "A wonderful thing," he thought, "they do not utter one harsh word against me who have committed such a sin, they only receive me kindly"; and he uttered this stanza:

"Ye foresters, proclaim the right, this welcome is true piety;

Thou art a father from henceforth, and thou a mother unto me."

They respectfully raised their hands and made their petition, "We have no need of any act of service from thee, but guide us, holding out the end of a staff; and show us our Sama," and they uttered this couplet of stanzas:

"Glory to thee, O Kasi-king who art thy realm's prosperity,

Take us and lead us to the spot where Sama, our loved son, doth lie.

There fallen prostrate at his feet, touching his face, eyes, every limb,

We will await the approach of death, patient so long as near to him."

While they were thus speaking, the sun set. Then the king thought, "If I take them there now, their hearts will break at the sight; and if three persons thus die through me I shall certainly lie down in hell, —therefore I will not let them go thither"; so he said these stanzas:

"A region full of beasts of prey, as though the world's extremest bound,—

'Tis there where Sama lies, as if the moon had fallen on the ground.

A region full of beasts of prey, as though the world's extremest bound,—

'Tis there where Sama lies, as if the sun had fallen on the ground.

At the world's furthest end he lies, covered with dust and stained with blood;

Stay rather in your cottage here nor tempt the dangers of the wood."

They answered in this stanza to shew their fearlessness:

"Let the wild creatures do their worst,—by thousands, millions, let them swarm,

We have no fear of beasts of prey, they cannot do us aught of harm."

So the king, being unable to stop them, took them by the hand and led them there.

When he had brought them near, he said to them, "This is your son." Then his father clasped his head to his bosom and his mother his feet, and they sat down and lamented.

The Master, to make the matter clear, spoke these stanzas :

"Covered with dust and pierced to th' heart, beholding thus their Sama lie

Prostrate as if a sun or moon had fallen earthward from the sky,

The parents lifted up their arms, lamenting with a bitter cry.

"O Sama, art thou fast asleep? art angry? or are we forgot?

Or say, has something vexed thy mind, that thou liest still and answerest not?

Who will now dress our matted locks and wipe the dirt and dust away,

When Sama is no longer here, the poor blind couple's only stay?

Who now will sweep the floor for us, or bring us water, hot or cold?

Who fetch us forest roots and fruits, as we sit helpless, blind, and old?"

After long lamentation the mother smote her bosom with her hand, and considering her sorrow carefully, she said to herself, "This is all mere grief for my son,—he has swooned through the violence of the poison, I will perform a solemn asseveration of truth to take the poison from him"; so she performed an act of truth and repeated the following stanzas:

"If it be true that in old days Sama lived always virtuously,

Then may this poison in his veins lose its fell force and harmless be.

If in old days he spoke the truth and nursed his parents night and day,

Then may this poison in his veins be overpowered and ebb away.

Whatever merit we have gained in former days, his sire and I,

May it o’erpower the poison’s strength and may our darling son not die.”

When his mother had thus made the solemn asseveration, Sama turned as he lay there. Then his father also made his solemn asseveration in the same words; and while he was still speaking, Sama turned round and lay on the other side.

Then the goddess made her solemn asseveration. The Master in explanation uttered these stanzas:

“The goddess hidden out of sight upon the Gandhamadan mount

Performed a solemn act of truth, by pity moved on Sama’s count;

“Here in this Gandhamadan mount long have I passed my life alone,

In forest depths where every tree beareth a perfume of its own,

And none of earth’s inhabitants is dearer to my inmost heart,—

As this is true so from his veins may all the poison’s power depart.”

While thus in turn by pity moved they all their solemn witness bore,

Lo in their sight up Sama sprang, young, fair, and vigorous as before.”

Thus the Great Being’s recovery from his wound, the restoration of both his parents’ sight, and the appearance of dawn,— all these four marvels were produced in the hermitage at the same moment by the goddess’s supernatural power. The father and mother were beyond measure delighted to find that they had regained their sight and that Sama was restored to health. Then Sama uttered these stanzas:

“I am your Sama, safe and well,—see me before you and rejoice:

Dry up your tears and weep no more, but greet me with a happy voice.

Welcome to thee too, mighty king, may fortune wait on thy commands;

Thou art our monarch: let us know what thou desirest at our hands.

Tindukas, piyals, madhukas, our choicest fruits we bring our guest,—

Fruits sweet as honey to the taste,—eat whatsoe’er may please thee best.

Here is cold water, gracious lord, brought from the caves in yonder hill,

The mountain-stream best quenches thirst,—if thou art thirsty, drink thy fill."

The king also beholding this miracle exclaimed:

"I am bewildered and amazed, which way to turn I cannot tell,

An hour ago I saw thee dead,—who now stand here alive and well!"

Sama thought to himself, "This king looked upon me as dead, I will explain to him my being alive"; so he said:

"A man possessed of all his powers, with not one thought or feeling fled,

Because a swoon has stopped their play, that living man they think is dead."

Then being desirous to lead the king into the real meaning of the whole matter, he added two stanzas to teach him the Law:

"Those mortals who obey the Law and nurse their parents in distress,

The gods observe their piety and come to heal their sicknesses.

Those mortals who obey the Law and nurse their parents in distress,

The gods in this world praise their deed and in the next with heaven them bless."

The king, on hearing this, thought to himself; "This is a wonderful miracle: even the gods heal him who cherishes his parents when he falls into sickness; this Sama is exceeding glorious"; then he said:

"I am bewildered more and more, which way to turn I cannot see,

Sama, to thee I fly for help, Sama, do thou my refuge be."

Then the Great Being said, "O king, if thou wishest to reach the world of the gods and enjoy divine happiness there, thou must practise these ten duties," and he uttered these stanzas concerning them:

"Towards thy parents first of all fulfil thy duty, warrior king;

Duty fulfilled in this life here to heaven hereafter thee shall bring.

Towards thy children and thy wife, fulfil thy duty, warrior king;

Duty fulfilled in this life here to heaven hereafter thee shall bring.

Duty to friends and ministers, thy soldiers with their different arms,

To townships and to villages, thy realm with all its subject swarms,

To ascetics, Brahman holy men, duty to birds and beasts, O king,

Duty fulfilled in this life here to heaven hereafter thee shall bring.

Duty fulfilled brings happiness,—yea Indra, Brahma, all their host,

By following duty won their bliss: duty pursue at any cost."

The Great Being, having thus declared to him the ten duties of a king, gave him some still further instruction, and taught him the five precepts. The king accepted the teaching with bended head, and, having reverentially taken his leave, went to Benares, and, after giving many gifts and performing many other virtuous actions, passed away with his court to swell the host of heaven. The Bodhisatta also, with his parents, having attained the supernatural faculties and the various degrees of ecstatic meditation, went to the Brahma world.

After the lesson, the Master said, "O Brethren, it is an immemorial custom with the wise to support their parents." He then declared the truths (after which the Brother attained to the Fruit of the First Path) and identified the Birth: "At that time the king was Ananda, the goddess was Uppalavanna, Sakka was Anuruddha, the father was Kassapa, the mother was Bhaddakapilani, and Suvannasama was I myself."

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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