Ja 66 — Mudulakkhana Jātaka

English translation by Robert Chalmers.

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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

“Till Gentle-heart was mine.”—This story was told by the Master while at Jetavana, about concupiscence. Tradition says that a young gentleman of Savatthi, [30;3] on hearing the Truth preached by the Master, gave his heart to the Doctrine of the Three Gems. Renouncing the world for the Brother’s life, he rose to walk in the Paths, to practise meditation, and never to slacken in his pondering over the theme he had chosen for thought. One day, whilst he was on his round for alms through Savatthi, he espied a woman in brave attire, and, for pleasure’s sake, broke through the higher morality and gazed upon her! Passion was stirred within him, he became even as a fig-tree felled by the axe. From that day forth, under the sway of passion, the palate of his mind, as of his body, lost all its gust; like a brute beast, he took no joy in the Doctrine, and suffered his nails and hair to grow long and his robes to grow foul.

When his friends among the Brethren became aware of his troubled state of mind, they said, “Why, sir, is your moral state otherwise than it was?” “My Joy has gone,” said he. Then they took him to the Master, who asked them why they had brought that Brother there against his will. “Because, sir, his joy is gone,” “Is that true, Brother?” “It is, Blessed One.” “Who has troubled you?” “Sir, I was on my round for alms when, violating the higher morality, I gazed on a woman; and passion was stirred within me. Therefore am I troubled.” Then said the Master, “It is little marvel, Brother, that when, violating morality, you were gazing for pleasure’s sake on an exceptional object, you were stirred by passion. Why, in bygone times, even those who had won the five Higher Knowledges and the eight Attainments, those who by the might of Insight had quelled their passions, whose hearts were purified and whose feet could walk the skies, yea even Bodhisattas, through gazing in violation of morality on an exceptional object, lost their insight, were stirred by passion, and came to great sorrow. Little recks the wind which could overturn Mount Sineru, of a bare hillock no bigger than an elephant; little recks a wind which could uproot a mighty Jambu-tree, of a bush on the face of a cliff; and little recks a wind which could dry up a vast ocean, of a tiny pond. If passion could breed folly in the supremely-enlightened and

pure-minded Bodhisattas, shall passion be abashed before you? Why, even purified beings are led astray by passion, and those advanced to the highest honour, come to shame." And so saying, he told this story of the past.

Once on a time when Brahmadatta was reigning in Benares, the Bodhisatta was born into a rich brahmin family in the Kasi country. When he was grown up and had finished his education, he renounced all Lusts, and, forsaking the world for the hermit's life, went to live in the solitudes of the Himalayas. There by due fulfilment of all preparatory forms of meditation, he won by abstract thought the Higher Knowledges and the ecstatic Attainments; and so lived his life in the bliss of mystic Insight.

Lack of salt and vinegar brought him one day to Benares, where he took up his quarters in the king's pleasaunce. Next day, after seeing to his bodily needs, he folded up the red suit of bark which he commonly wore, threw over one shoulder a black antelope's skin, knotted his tangled locks in a coil on the top of his head, and with a yoke on his back from which hung two baskets, set out on his round in quest of alms. Coming to the palace-gates on his way, his demeanour so commended him to the king that his majesty had him brought in So the ascetic was seated on a couch of great splendour and fed with abundance of the daintiest food. And when he thanked the king, he was invited to take up his dwelling in the pleasaunce. The ascetic accepted the offer, and for sixteen years abode in the pleasaunce, exhorting the king's household and eating of the king's meat.

Now there came a day when the king must go to the borders to put down a rising. But, before he started, he charged his queen, whose name was Gentle-heart, to minister to the wants of the holy man. So, after the king's departure, the Bodhisatta continued to go when he pleased to the palace.

One day Queen Gentle-heart got ready a meal for the Bodhisatta; but as he was late in coming, she betook herself to her own toilette. After bathing in perfumed water, she dressed herself in all her splendour, and lay down, awaiting his coming, on a little couch in the spacious chamber.

Waking from rapture of Insight, and seeing how late it was, the Bodhisatta transported himself through the air to the palace. Hearing the rustling of his bark-robe, the queen started up hurriedly to receive him. In her hurry to rise, her tunic slipped down, so that her beauty was revealed to the ascetic as he entered the window; and at the sight, in violation of Morality he gazed for pleasure's sake on the marvellous beauty of the queen. Lust was kindled within him; he was as a tree felled by the axe. At once all Insight deserted him, and he became as a crow with its wings clipped. Clutching his food, still standing, he ate not, but took his way, all a-tremble with desire, from the palace to his hut in the pleasaunce, set it down beneath his wooden couch and thereon lay for seven whole days a prey to hunger and thirst, enslaved by the queen's loveliness, his heart aflame with lust.

On the seventh day, the king came back from pacifying the border. After passing in solemn procession round the city, he entered his palace. Then, wishing to see the ascetic, he took his way to the pleasaunce, and there in the cell found the Bodhisatta lying on his couch.

Thinking the holy man had been taken ill, the king, after first having the cell cleaned out, asked, as he stroked the sufferer's feet, what ailed him. "Sire, my heart is fettered by lust; that is my sole ailment." "Lust for whom?" "For Gentle-heart, sire." "Then she is yours; I give her to you," said the king. Then he passed with the ascetic to the palace, and bidding the queen array herself in all her splendour, gave her to the Bodhisatta. But, as he was giving her away, the king privily charged the queen to put forth her utmost endeavour to save the holy man.

"Fear not, sire," said the queen; "I will save him." So with the queen the ascetic went out from the palace. But when he had passed through the great gate, the queen cried out that they must have a house to live in; and back he must go to the king to ask for one. So back he went to ask the king for a house to live in, and the king gave them a tumble-down dwelling which passers-by used as a jakes. To this dwelling the ascetic took the queen; but she flatly refused to enter it, because of its filthy state.

"What am I to do?" he cried. "Why, clean it out," she said. And she sent him to the king for a spade and a basket, and made him remove all the filth and dirt, and plaster the walls with cowdung, which he had to fetch. This done, she made him get a bed, and a stool, and a rug, and a water-pot, and a cup, sending him for only one thing at a time. Next, she sent him packing to fetch water and a thousand other things. So off he started for the water, and filled up the water-pot, and set out the water for the bath, and made the bed. And, as he sat with her upon the bed, she took him by the whiskers and drew him towards her till they were face to face, saying, "Hast thou forgotten that thou art a holy man and a brahmin?"

Hereon he came to himself after his interval of witless folly.

(And here should be repeated the text beginning, "Thus the hindrances of Lust and Longing are called Evils because they spring from Ignorance, Brethren; that which springs from Ignorance creates Darkness.")

So when he had come to himself, he bethought him how, waxing stronger and stronger, this fatal craving would condemn him hereafter to the Four States of Punishment." This self-same day," he cried, "will I restore this woman to the king and fly to the mountains!" So he stood with the queen before the king and said, "Sire, I want your queen no longer; and it was only for her that cravings were awakened within me." And so saying, he repeated this Stanza—

Till Gentle-heart was mine, one sole desire

I had,—to win her. When her beauty owned

Me lord, desire came crowding on desire.

Forthwith his lost power of Insight came back to him. Rising from the earth and seating himself in the air, he preached the Truth to the king; and without touching earth he passed

through the air to the Himalayas. He never came back to the paths of men; but grew in love and charity till, with Insight unbroken, he passed to a new birth in the Realm of Brahma.

His lesson ended, the Master preached the Truths, at the close whereof that Brother won Arahatship itself. Also the Master shewed the connexion and identified the Birth by saying, “Ananda was the King of those days, Uppala-vanna was Gentle-heart, and I the hermit.”

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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