

King Kusha and Pabhavati Jataka Story The Story of Kushinagar

Introduction – This Jataka story shows that living in this world, when we done Dana, we can make our wish to reap the benefit of the wholesome merit.

The sister-in-law filled the monk's bowl with fresh butter, and made this wish:

"As a result of this gift, may I be reborn beautiful, and not ever again have to live in the same household as this rude person (her brother in-law)".

The younger brother put back the cake in the monk's bowl and wished:

"And however far away she may be reborn, may I have with the power to make her my bride."

Again, if we ever come before an Arahant, we can think of what we like to wish for – Nibbana in our ultimate existence or free from misery in this existence?

Queen Silavati had realized her wishes made before the Sakka – the King of Deva –

She then spoke out, "Sire ! I would like to have a son".

Sakka said, "I grant thee two sons:

- a. one ugly with great wisdom; and
- b. the other handsome but a fool.

Choose, which one you would like to have first". She chose to have the baby with great wisdom first.

The resultant of their wishes took place in their lives that followed. One kamma (action) interact with another kamma (action) throughout their journey in this **Samsara**. That is how we all can control our own destiny.

Kushinagar or Kusinara (Pali), with the ancient name of Kusaavatii is a place of special significance in the history of the Buddhism, as Sakyamuni Gotama Buddha had his *parinibbana* there. Further, the place itself has an interesting story for its nomenclature to interest a genuine historian having some appreciation for the rich

Pali tradition of ancient India. In fact, the nomenclature of Kusinara has its origin in the legends of king Kusa (Sanskritised: Kusha).

Silavati in a mock admonition to Kusa for having hurled the elephant dung on Pabhavati's back. Pabhavati has turned her back to Kusa. Kusa-Jataka, Bharhut

Once, king Okkaka ruled the kingdom of the Mallas. He was a popular king but had no son despite the fact that he had sixteen thousand queens. When reproached several times by the citizens of his kingdom for not having an heir he sent all his queens to public, with the exception of Silavati, to bear a son for him. These queens amused the people for seven days, yet none could conceive. Again, the honorable citizens reproached him for not having an heir; and insisted that he should send Silavati, too, to participate in such festivities to bear him a son. The queen consort was a loyal and virtuous woman. So, on the seventh day the queen was adorned with best jewels and dress and was carried from the royal palace to the streets.

When the city was plunged to such festivities Sakka, the lord of the *devas* felt his throne being heated. Examining the cause, he noted that Silavati, who was not meant to be treated in an undignified way deserved his intervention as she was a chaste and virtuous lady. Sakka then decided to help her to protect her dignity. So, he descended to earth in the form of an old Brahmin and shoved his way to reach the front of the crowd where Silavati was standing to please the select citizens to bear a son for the king. Many nobles resented the Brahmin's appearance before them. But before they could speak or act to keep him off, he lifted the queen of the peerless beauty; and flew in the air. Angry and disgusted, the queen, too, made a strong protest because in her opinion the old man was not fit to help her conceive a baby. Nonetheless, Sakka took her to a house, which he built by his own magical power. There, he laid her on the heap of sticks and stroked her gently, which made her swoon instantly. When she opened her eyes, after seven days, she found herself on a soft and elegant couch in the realm of Tavatimsa; and not on those dusty heaps of sticks. When looked around she found Sakka seated on his throne on the foot of a coral tree with all his majesty. Now, she knew the real identity of the old brahmin, who was none other than the lord of the celestial beings, Sakka. She stood up and paid him obeisance. Sakka then said, "I grant thee a boon. Ask whatever you wish to have".

She then spoke out, "Sire ! I would like to have a son".

Sakka said, "I grant thee two sons:

- a. one ugly with great wisdom; and
- b. the other handsome but a fool.

Choose, which one you would like to have first". She chose to have the baby with great wisdom first.

Sakka presented her a piece of *kusa* grass, a heavenly robe, a sandal wood, a flower of the coral tree and a Kokanada lute. He then transported her to the king's chamber and laid her down on the same couch where the king was lying and touched her with his right thumb. She instantly knew that she had just conceived. She woke up the king and told her the whole story. First, the king disbelieved her but when he saw those heavenly presents he had to trust her. Soon a celebration for the unborn king began. After ten months of Silavati's conception the baby was born and was called Kusa. Further, when the baby could walk and run on his own his younger brother, too, was born. The second baby was given the name Jayampati.

By the age of sixteen the wise Kusa attained proficiency in all the liberal arts without any aid. The king in the meanwhile decided to enthrone him in his life-time along with his queen consort. This meant he was to get married. So, his mother Silavati sent the prince a message to choose a bride for himself. Wise Kusa was aware of his ugliness. He also knew that no woman was likely to love or live with him if she happened to see his ugliness. So, he declined the offer. After a few months the queen again sent the same message for his marriage and again he declined. When the queen sent the same message for the third time he thought that a flat refusal would not be proper. So, he made a golden image of a gorgeous nymph and told the messenger that he was ready for the marriage on the condition that they had to find the woman of such beauty.

Soon the king's messengers were sent all over the Indian sub-continent in search of a woman, who resembled the image.

The Malla king of Sagal, had eight princesses. Each had the surpassing beauty comparable with the heavenly nymphs. The eldest among them was Pabhavati, whose body emanated the golden hue of the rising sun. She had a personal attendant, who was an old hunch-backed woman.

One day, when the Malla soldiers were moving about the city of Sagala, they found a pond and placed the image on its bank. That day the hunch-backed also came to the pond after conveying the king's message to Pabhatati that she had to stay in the palace. When she saw the image of Pabhavati standing there, she thought that the princess had not obeyed her father and had sneaked outside. So, she slapped the face of the image, which in turn got damaged.

When the soldiers demanded an explanation for her action, she told them that the image resembled her mistress. The soldiers then quickly approached the Sagala king and apprised him of their mission. The king of Sagala was very happy to receive the proposal of Kusa's marriage with Pabhavati. Soon, they sent messengers to the Malla king to convey the success of the mission.

Before the marriage was finalized, Silavati, anticipated the most emergent problem after the marriage. She knew that no bride was likely to live with her ugly son, Kusa. So, she asked the bride not to see her husband until she conceived to follow their

family custom. Thus, the two were married and by and by Kusa was enthroned as the king.

One day, Kusa expressed his desire to the queen mother to have a glimpse of his consort in a broad day-light. Silavati, then organized Pabhavati's visit to the elephant stall, where the king was hiding. When the two royal ladies were walking, the king, who was then dressed like a *mahout*, playfully, hurled the elephant dung on Pabhavati's back. Incensed, at the ill-behavior of the *mahout*, Pabhavati recommended the death-penalty on him but with the intervention of her mother-in-law she was pacified.

Dazzled by her beauty, Kusa's desire to see her became more intense. Again, the queen mother organized a similar set up in the royal stable. Having seen the gracious look of Pabhavati, the king playfully, this time, threw the horse dung on her back. Again the queen was furious and again was she pacified by her mother-in-law.

One day, Pabhavati, too, had a strong wish to see the king in person. So, she requested the queen mother to show her a glimpse of the king. Silavati then organized a royal procession where the king was seated behind his handsome younger brother Jayampati on a majestic elephant. When Pabhavati was looking at the procession through the palace window, Kusa caught hold of her glimpse. Again, he playfully made some amorous gesticulations at her to make her fret and fume. But soon it occurred to her that the person was the king as none could act so boldly. So, to ascertain the truth, she sent the hunch backed maid to examine the matter. When Kusa saw the maid approaching close to the procession he sensed something fishy. So, he called her and ordered her not to reveal his identity to her mistress. Upon return, the maid lied to Pabhavati. Thus, Pabhavati believed that she was married to Jayampati, the handsomest among all kings; and was proud of her luck.

One day, Kusa again asked his mother to show him his bride. So, the queen mother organized her visit to the royal lotus pond, where Kusa lay chin-deep behind a large lotus flower. When Pabhavati saw the laughing lotus flowers in the resplendent pond she shed all her clothes and jumped into the pond. Soon she swam to the large lotus behind which the king was hiding. As she looked irresistible with her exuberating and splashing beauty, the latter could not restrain him longer and caught her by hand. He then whispered, "I am king Kusa, your husband". The queen thought that she was caught by a goblin and swooned. The king then let her go.

Pabhavati was not a fool. When she regained consciousness and recalled the words of Kusa in the pond, she could easily correlate all the events ever since her first encounter with Kusa in the elephant stall; the stable; the royal procession; and finally in the lotus pond. Now, she knew the identity of the ugly man, who she met several times, and who was none other than her husband. She was terribly shocked. She felt beguiled and cheated. She was married to a man who looked most repulsive.

Now, she discovered why she was forbidden to see the ugly man in the day-light. She sobbed but soon she thought that because she was young and pretty; and also a princess why not she should find a better suitor for herself. So, she soon organized a trip to her father's kingdom and resolved never to return.

But Kusa followed her and finally won her back by his wisdom and prowess.

King Kusa and Princess Pabhavati

Their Aspirations – *Su Taung*

(Min Kuta and Papawati)

TO illustrate the working of kamma, we present the one previous life story of King Kusa, the Bodhisatta, and Princess Pabhavati (Papawati), who was in a later life to be Princess Yasodhara.

In one previous lifetime, the Bodhisatta was the younger of two brothers, and lived with his elder brother. One day, he returned home late to find a cake meant for him had just been put into the bowl of a Pacceka-Buddha (solitary Buddha) by his sister-in-law.

He therefore spoke angrily to her, and snatched back his cake from the monk's bowl. Thereupon, his sister-in-law filled the monk's bowl with fresh butter, and made this wish:

"As a result of this gift, may I be reborn beautiful, and not ever again have to live in the same household as this rude person (her brother in-law)".

Not to be outdone, the younger brother put back the cake in the monk's bowl and wished: "And however far away she may be reborn, may I have with the power to make her my bride."

The sister-in-law was reborn as Princess Pabhavati, the eldest and most beautiful daughter of a king. The younger brother was reborn as King Kusa.

King Kusa - Resultant Kamma action –

For first angrily snatching back the cake from the monk's bowl, he was born ugly, but as a result of giving back his cake, his wishes bore fruit, for he was exceedingly wise.

Princess Pabhavati Resultant Kamma action –

Princess Pabhavati was betrothed to King Kusa by her parents, but upon discovering later how ugly he was, she ran away back to her parents' palace. King Kusa followed, and for many months undertook all kinds of menial work to be near Princess Pabhavati, unrecognized by all except Princess Pabhavati . She however spurned his love, saying: "As well to catch the wind within a net, as woo unwilling maid."

Eventually, her father angered at her refusal to accept King Kusa, and her father's palace surrounded by enemies, she had no choice but to turn to King Kusa for help. There upon, King Kusa over came all their enemies and won the Princess' heart through his magnanimity, courage and skills.