

## Yashodhara Theri



Tumetta aspires to be Sumedha soul-mate at the time of Dipankara Buddha

*Introduction – At the time of Dipankara Buddha, Sumetta over heard the Buddha definite prophecy given to Sumedha to be the Gotama Buddha at some future time. She then aspired to be his consort in the supporting role in his quest for perfections through the Samsara. She was born as Yashodhara, prince Siddhatta's cousin. Since her first aspiration she had been her consort throughout the 100,000 world cycles and four infinite periods.*

*According to Candakinnara Jaataka - Once the bodhisatta, born as a kinnara(1) named Canda, lived with his mate Candaa in the Canda mountain of the Himavanta forest. One day, while the kinnaras were enjoying themselves near a little stream, the king of Benares, seeing Candaa fell in love with her. The king shot Canda with an arrow, and when Candaa lamented aloud for her dead husband, the king revealed himself and offered her his love and his kingdom. Candaa scorned the offer and protested to the gods they shouldn't have allowed harm to befall her husband. Sakka's throne was heated by her great loyalty and coming in the guise of a brahmin, he restored Canda to life. The king was*

*Anuruddha and Candaa was Rahulamata. The Jataka was related by the Buddha when he visited his father's palace at Kapilavatthu and heard from Suddhodana how devotedly Rahulamata continued to love the Buddha. He said it was not the first time that she had shown such undying affection. Her love and devotion to the Buddha started some 100, 000 world cycles and four infinite periods, in the past. Imagine the Pathan set between two persons?*

*She attained the supernatural power to recall supernormal powers (Maha Abhijana) to recall infinite eras of the past. She excels the supernatural power of Ven. Anuruddha who can recall 100,000 world cycles.*

*We must first aspire and strive hard to bring our aspiration to fruition. Yasodhara is a very good role model for all of us. "Make your aspiration before an arahant, it will come to fruition" We have this saying in Myanmar...*

**Yashodhara** was the daughter of King Suppabuddha and Queen Pamita. As King Suppabuddha was one of King Shuddhodana's younger brothers, she was one of Prince Siddhartha's cousins. Yashodhara was born on the same day as Prince Siddhartha. She was exquisitely beautiful, with golden skin and blue-black hair that cascaded down to her feet.

Prince Siddhartha was sixteen when His parents decided that it was a suitable time for Him to marry. As was the custom at that time, a great celebration was held and princesses from all over the country were brought in procession for the Prince to choose from. None of them attracted His attention. The Prince treated them with gifts but refused them all. The procession was almost finished when Yashodhara came rushing in, to inquire if there were any gifts left for her. The Prince then arose from His throne, and taking the pearl necklace that adorned His person, gently placed it around her neck. Prince Siddhartha chose His cousin, Yashodhara, to be His bride.

At first King Suppabuddha was against the marriage. He knew that the wise men had foretold that Siddhartha would leave the palace and His crown to become a Buddha. He also felt that the gentle, compassionate Prince might not be skilled in warfare, and as such, not be suitable for his daughter. The princess, however, wanted to marry no one else but Siddhartha.

Wishing to test Prince Siddhartha, King Suppabuddha, arranged a tournament for Him to display His skills in archery, riding and swordsmanship. Sportsmen from all over the country gathered to challenge the Prince. Siddhartha, however, was an excellent sportsman. He excelled in all the events and ousted the best men in the country. King Suppabuddha therefore relented and gave his daughter in marriage to Prince Siddhartha.

The relationship between Yashodhara and Prince Siddhartha was long and deep-rooted. It had started many, many years ago at the time of the Dîpankara Buddha. At that time, the Prince (Bodhisatta) was born as an ascetic by the name of *Sumedha*. After an exceedingly long period of practicing the ten virtues, the Bodhisatta Sumedha had finally completed the eight requirements to receive the definite proclamation of Buddhahood from the *Dîpankara Buddha*. Yashodhara, at that time, was born as a noble lady by the name of *Sumitta*. She saw the Buddha Dîpankara give the Bodhisattva eight handfuls of white jasmine flowers and the definite proclamation that He would be a Buddha by the name of Gotama, of the Sakyan caste, in the distant future. Cutting off her hair, she aspired to be His consort and helpmate and to support Him actively in His quest for Buddhahood. This strong aspiration and the meritorious deeds that she performed over a long period of time resulted in her being the Bodhisattva's consort and supporter throughout many births. During this very long period in which the Bodhisattva completed the virtues she actively supported His quest for perfection.

In fact, her dying words reflected this devotion. She referred to the fact that she had been the wife of no other but Him during the entire period and had helped Him to achieve in 100,000 world cycles and four infinite periods what other Buddhas take eight and sixteen infinite periods to achieve.

When the Buddha visited the palace in Kapilavatthu for the first time, all but Princess Yashodhara came to pay homage to Him. She held back, thinking, "Certainly if there is any virtue in me, the Noble Lord Himself will come to my presence." After the meal the Buddha, accompanied by His two male chief disciples, entered her chamber and sat down on the seat prepared for Him. He then said, "Let the king's daughter reverence me as she likes." On seeing the Buddha, Yashodhara came forward

quickly, and clasping His ankles, placed her head on His feet and paid reverence to Him as she wished.

King Shuddhodana heralded Yashodhara devotion to the Buddha. He informed the Buddha of her devotion by saying: "When my daughter heard that you had taken to wearing simple yellow robes, she too gave up her jewels and wore yellow robes. When she heard that you had only one meal a day, she too had only one meal a day. When she heard that you slept on low, hard beds, she too gave up the luxurious palace couches and beds. And when she heard that you had given up garlands and perfume, she too gave up garlands and perfume. When her relatives sent messages of young men who wanted to support her she did not even look at a single one."

The Buddha acknowledged this devotion by saying that it was not only in this birth that she had been devoted to him. He then dispensed the *Candakinnara Jataka*, where Yashodhara had given her life to save His by jumping in front of a hunter's arrow.



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*Princess Yasodhara came to pay her reverence to the Buddha. Yasodhara thought, "Certainly if there is any virtue in me, the Noble Lord Himself will come to my presence. Then will I reverence Him as much as I like".*

However, her love and devotion are best seen in the poem "The Lion of Men". Pointing out the Buddha and His retinue of monks to their son from the palace balcony, with adoration she described the Buddha and introduced Him to little Rahula. The following are the words she used to describe the Buddha:

### **The Lion of Men**

*His red, sacred feet are marked with an excellent wheel;  
His long heels are decked with characteristic marks;  
His feet are adorned with the chowrie (camara) and parasol;  
That indeed, is your father, lion of men.  
He is a delicate and noble Sakya Prince;  
His body is full of characteristic marks;  
Intent on the welfare of the world;  
That indeed, is your father, lion of men.  
Like the full moon is His face;  
He is dear to gods and men;  
His gait is as graceful as that of an elephant of noble breed;  
That indeed, is your father, lion of men.  
He is of noble lineage, sprung from the warrior caste;  
His feet have been honored by gods and men;  
His mind is well established in morality and concentration;  
That, indeed, is your father, lion of men.  
Long and prominent is His well-formed nose;  
His eyelashes are long like those of a heifer;  
His eyes are exceedingly blue and like a rainbow are His blue-black brows;  
That indeed, is your father, lion of men.  
Round and smooth is His well-formed neck;  
His jaws are strong like that of a lion;  
His body is golden like that of the king of beasts;  
That indeed, is your father, lion of men.  
Soft and deep is His sweet voice;  
His tongue is as red as vermilion;  
His white teeth like pearls are twenty, each row;  
That indeed, is your father, lion of men.  
Like the color of collyrium is His blue-black hair;  
Like a polished golden plate is His smooth forehead;  
White as the morning star is His beautiful tuft of hair*

*(between the brows);  
That, indeed, is your father, lion of men.  
Just as the moon, surrounded by the multitude of stars;  
Follows the sky's path;  
Even so goes the Lord, accompanied by His monks;  
That, indeed, is your father, lion of men.*

**Yashodhara gave up the household life and entered the order of nuns at the same time as Maha Pajapati Gotami. She attained Arahantship and was declared the chief disciple among the nuns who attained supernormal powers (Maha Abhijana) to recall infinite eras of the past. Only four of the Buddha's disciples had such powers. In general, the Buddha's disciples could only recall up to 100,000 world cycles. Yashodhara, the Buddha's two chief male disciples and the Elder Bakkula, however, had supernormal powers and could recall incalculable eras. The nun Yashodhara passed away at the age of 78, prior to the Lord Buddha.**

Towards the end of His life, the Buddha's aunt-and-foster-mother, **Mahaprajapati**, and **Yasodhara** (formerly His wife), who were both nuns and had attained enlightenment, came to see Him, knowing they were about to die. Mahaprajapati—who was, of course, a very old lady—came first, and thanked him for having given her the happiness of the Dharma, for her having been spiritually born through Him; for the Dharma having grown in her through Him; for her having drunk the Dharma milk from him; for her having plunged in and crossed over the Ocean of Becoming through Him—what a glorious thing it has been to be known as the mother of the Buddha, she said.

She went on: “I desire to die finally having put away this corpse. O Sorrow-ender, permit me”. The Buddha cheered her with Dharma and didn't try to dissuade this grand old lady with false comfort, saying empty things like: “Oh, don't talk like that. You are not going to die, but will live for many more years yet”. At that stage, fear of living and dying no longer exists.

Yasodhara later came for the same purpose: to take her leave of the Buddha. Addressing Him respectfully, she said she was seventy eight years old. The Buddha replied, “Yes, I know, and I'm eighty”.

She told Him she would die that night. But her tone was more self-reliant than that of Mahaprajapati. She didn't ask His permission to die nor did she go to Him as her refuge. Instead, she said: “me saranam atthano” (“I am my own refuge”).

She came to thank Him because it was He who had shown her the way and given her the power. She had found what was in her mind, and which could be found only there.

1. **Kinnaras** - The Kinnaras are the musicians of Vaisravana, also known as **Kuvera** (God of Wealth), **with men's bodies & horses' heads**. They are the same as the Kentauros (Centaur) of Greek mythology - in fact the words Kinnaras and Kentauros have the same Indo-European origin. They are called the 'doubtful (mythical) spirits' and 'human but not human'. **The males have horns & play on lutes, and the females sing & dance**. They rank below Gandharvas - the music of the Kinnaras is like popular ('pop') music compared to the classical, heavenly music of the Gandharvas. The Kinnaras are first of all entertainers.



**Kinnari and Kinnara**  
**(Half Human and Half Animal)**

**Reference - Relatives and Disciples of the Buddha** by Radhika Abeysekera