

The Chickduck

by Piya Tan

The Jataka are full of stories of wit and wisdom. Most of these stories are ancient folk tales. In SE Asia we even have new Jataka tales written probably in northern Myanmar or northern Thailand (the area was the same in ancient times). Now I'm going to write (or rewrite) one such story which talks of true love.

One day, in Tavatimsa, when Sakra, lord of the devas, felt really bored with the devas and devis, he decided to spend some quiet time on earth. He went down to a beautiful park, something like the McRitchie reservoir area.

He was just beginning to relax under a jambu tree when he saw a couple walking together nearby. As Sakra was often in love himself before, he was curious whether the couple really loved one another. (He was invisible to earthlings, so the couple could not see him.)

So Sakra projected a hologram of a divine chickduck, which looked like a chicken but quacked like a duck! It waddled along far in front of the couple, just enough for them to see and hear it.

The wife, who had good eyes, said, "It's chicken!"

"No!" said the husband, who had good ears, "It's a duck!"

They went on arguing: every time the chickduck flapped its wings, the wife said, "It's a chicken!" Every time the chickduck quacked, the husband said, "It's a duck!"

But every time the couple were silent, they saw the chickduck slowing down, so that they had a better view of it. So they became more silent, and finally, they clearly saw this most wonderful bird that Sakra had projected in virtual reality.

"You're right, dear," said the wife, hearing it quacked, "It's a duck!"

"You're right, too, dear," said the husband, seeing it more clearly, "It's a chicken!"

Lord Sakra was delighted with the couple. Disguising himself as a National Parks guide, he, sternly but with a smile, told the couple that night was falling, and that they should go home right away and spend quality time together. As soon as they turned their back, he vanished and reappeared in Tavatimsa, happy with his good deed for the day. (Note: Sakra's next good deed will only happen in about 80 years' time. Well, that's how long a Tavatimsa day is compared to the earthly one.)

MORAL:

Love grows when one spouse tries to see things from other other's viewpoint, seriously.

Or, you can try your luck taking a walk in McRitchie Reservoir Park.

But beware, when Sakra is not around, it could be Mara who has projected a shape-shifting bird. It becomes whatever you want it to be. So if you think it is a duck, it IS a duck. If you think it is a CHICKEN, it is a chicken. This leads to endless quarrels, separations and divorces. The sad thing is that BOTH are right, but we do not appreciate the other loved one's viewpoint. The other problem is that, unlike Sakra, Mara is always around, especially when we are angry or suspicious of our loved one!