Tha Ap 392 — 387. {390.} The Rags of Previous Karma

English translation by Jonathan S. Walters.

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Text

Therāpadāna

The Legends of the Theras

387. {390.} The Rags of Previous Karma

Walt 3341 Near the lake called Anotatta,

on the lovely level rock ground,

where sparkled gems of different sorts

and varied perfumes filled the woods, Verse 1

Walt 3342 surrounded by the Assembly

of monks, the Leader of the World,

while seated there, did then explain

the former deeds done by himself: Verse 2

Walt 3343 Hear from me, O monks, the karma

which formerly was done by me,

and how those karma rags' effects

ripen in the Buddha himself. Verse 3

Walt 3344 Among my other, former births
I was a jerk named Munāli.
I told lies about Sarabhu,
an innocent Lonely Buddha. Verse 4

Walt 3345 As a result of that karma,
a long time I circled through hell.
I experienced suffering
for numerous thousands of years. Verse 5

Walt 3346 As its final karmic effect,
here in my final existence,
I received some nasty slander
connected with Sundarīkā. Verse 6

Walt 3347 I was Nanda, a follower
of the Buddha Sabbābhibhu.
My transmigration was in hell
for long after I slandered him. Verse 7

Walt 3348 My long transmigration in hell
continued for ten thousand years.
When I again got human birth,
I also got lots of slander. Verse 8

Walt 3349 Through what remained of that karma,
Lady Ciñca did slander me
in front of a group of people
without any grounding in fact. Verse 9

Walt 3350 I was an erudite brahmin,
attended on, given worship.
In a large wood, I was teaching
mantras to five hundred young men. Verse 10

Walt 3351 To that place had come Sage Gīma,
who possessed vast superpowers.
After having seen him coming,
I slandered that blameless person. Verse 11

Walt 3352 I said this to my students then:
“this sage delights in the pleasures!”
The young men there took that to heart
when I made that declaration. Verse 12

Walt 3353 Then all the young men, my students,
begging for alms from clan to clan,
repeated to a lot of folks,
“this sage delights in the pleasures!” Verse 13

Walt 3354 As a result of that karma,
these five hundred monks now with me
all received some nasty slander
connected with Sundarīkā. Verse 14

Walt 3355 One time eying wealth I murdered
brothers by a second mother.
I put them on a mountain road
and crushed them in an avalanche. Verse 15

Walt 3356 As a result of that karma,
Devadatta threw a boulder
and a splinter off that boulder
then crushed the big toe on my foot. Verse 16

Walt 3357 One time I was a little boy,
playing by the great thoroughfare.
Having seen a Lonely Buddha,
I threw a clod of dirt at him. Verse 17

Walt 3358 As a result of that karma,
here in my final existence,
Devadatta hired some killers
for the sake of murdering me. Verse 18

Walt 3359 Once, while I was on my tusker,
I saw a supreme Lonely Sage,
wandering about for alms food—
with elephant I attacked him. Verse 19

Walt 3360 As a result of that karma,
the elephant Nāḷāgiri,
agitated, cruel, approached me
in the fine town at Vulture's Peak. Verse 20

Walt 3361 I was the king, named Patthiva;
I killed a man with a dagger.
As a result of that karma,
I roasted in hell a long time. Verse 21

Walt 3362 Through what remained of that karma,
the skin on my foot got all cracked
and caused me a lot of trouble—
karma sure doesn't just vanish! Verse 22

Walt 3363 I once lived as a fisher-boy,
in a village of fishermen.
Having seen the fish getting killed,
pleasurable thoughts filled my mind. Verse 23

Walt 3364 As a result of that karma,
I suffered a headache one time;
all of the Śākyans were murdered,
when Viḍuḍabha murdered them. Verse 24

Walt 3365 I reviled the holy words and
followers of Phussa Buddha,
“chomp and eat inferior grain
you all, and don’t eat any rice.” Verse 25

Walt 3366 As a result of that karma,
I had to eat grain for three months
when, invited by a brahmin,
I lived in various kingdoms. Verse 26

Walt 3367 In the midst of a wrestling match,
a wrestler’s son, I blocked the fight;
as a result of that karma,
one time I suffered a backache. Verse 27

Walt 3368 I was a practicing doctor
and purged the son of a rich man;
as a result of that karma,
I contracted dysentery. Verse 28

Walt 3369 One time I, Jotipāla, said
to Kassapa, the Well-Gone-One,
“Whence then this baldy’s Waking Up,
Awakening so hard to reach?” Verse 29

Walt 3370 As a result of that karma,
I practiced great austerities
in Uruvela, six long years,
and then achieved Awakening. Verse 30

Walt 3371-72 “Along that path I did not reach
supreme Awakening,” I thought,
“along which path then should I search,
hindered by previous karma?

Exhausting good and bad karma

and avoiding every torment

free of grief, troubles and outflows,

I shall realize nirvana." Verse 31-32

Walt 3373 Thus did he explain, the Victor,

Endowed with All Superpowers,

in front of the monks' Assembly,

at the great Lake Anotatta. Verse 33

Thus indeed the Blessed One spoke this short discourse on dharma revealing his own previous conduct, the Buddha-apadāna named "The Rags of Previous Karma".

The Buddha-apadāna named "The Rags of Previous Karma" is finished.

The Summary:

Avaṇṭa and Labuja too,

Udumbara and Pilakkhu,

Phāru, Valli and Kadali,

Panasa, Koṭivīsaka

and the Rags of Former Karma,

the legend of the Sage so Great:

verses numbering ninety-one

are counted by those who are wise.

The Avaṇṭaphala Chapter, the Thirty-Ninth

Translated by Jonathan S. Walters.

Whitman College, 2017

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