Ja 388 — Tundila Jātaka

English translation by H. T. Francis and R. A. Neil.

Source: https://raw.githubusercontent.com/suttacentral/sc-data/2d9ca8da858f94302ed6783e2717bf73d651881b/html_text/en/pli/sutta/kn/ja/vol3/ja388.html

Source revision: 2d9ca8da858f94302ed6783e2717bf73d651881b

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Edited by E. B. Cowell

Original edition: Cambridge University Press, volume 3, 1897

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

“Something strange to-day,” etc. The Master told this tale while dwelling in Jetavana, concerning a brother who feared death. He was born in Savatthi of good family and was ordained in the Faith: but he feared death and when he heard even a little moving of a bough, or falling of a stick or voice of bird or beast or any such thing, he was frightened by the fear of death, and went away shaking like a hare wounded in the belly. The Brethren in the Hall of Truth began to discuss, saying, “Sirs, they say a certain Brother, fearing death, runs away shaking when he hears even a little sound: now to beings in this world death is certain, life uncertain, and should not this be wisely borne in mind?” The Master found that this was their subject and that the Brother allowed he was afraid of death: so he said, “Brethren, he is not afraid of death for the first time,” and so he told an old tale.

Once upon a time when Brahmadatta was king in Benares, the Bodhisatta was conceived by a wild sow: in due time she brought forth two male young. One day she took them and lay down in a pit. An old woman of a village at the gate of Benares was coming home with a basket-full of cotton from the cotton field and tapping the ground with her stick. The sow heard the sound, and in fear of death left her young and ran away. The old woman saw the young pigs, and feeling towards them as to children of her own she put them in the basket and took them home: then she called the elder Mahatundila (Big-snout), the younger Cullatundila (Little-snout), and reared them like children. In time they grew up and became fat. When the old woman was asked to sell them for money, she answered, “They are my children,” and would not sell them. On a certain feast-day some lewd fellows were drinking strong drink, and when their meat was done they considered where they could get meat: finding out that there were pigs in the old woman’s house, they took money and going there, said, “Mother, take this money and give us one of those pigs.” She said, “Enough, young men: are there people who would give their children to buyers to eat their flesh?” and so refused them. The fellows said, “Mother, pigs cannot be children of men, give them to us”: but they could not get this though they asked again and again. Then they made the old woman drink strong drink, and when she was drunk, saying, “Mother, what will you do

with the pigs? take the money and spend it," they put pieces of money in her hand. She took the pieces saying, "I cannot give you Mahatundila, take Cullatundila." "Where is he?" "There he is in that bush." "Call him." "I don't see any food for him." The fellows sent for a vessel of rice at a price. The old woman took it, and filling the pig's trough which stood at the door she waited by it. Thirty fellows stood by with nooses in their hands. The old woman called him, "Come, little Cullatundila, come." Mahatundila, hearing this, thought, "All this time mother has never given the call to Cullatundila, she always calls me first; certainly some danger must have arisen for us to-day." He told his younger brother, saying, "Brother, mother is calling you, go and find out." He went out, and seeing them standing by the food-trough he thought, "Death is come upon me to-day," and so in fear of death he turned back shaking to his brother; and when he came back he could not contain himself but reeled about shaking. Mahatundila seeing him said, "Brother, you are shaking to-day and reeling and watching the entrance: why are you doing so?" He, explaining the thing that he had seen, spoke the first stanza—

Something strange to-day I fear:

The trough is full, and mistress by;

Men, noose in hand, are standing near:

To eat appears a jeopardy.

Then the Bodhisatta hearing him said, "Brother Cullatundila, the purpose for which my mother rears pigs all this time has to-day come to its fulfilment: do not grieve," and so with sweet voice and the ease of a Buddha he expounded the law and spoke two stanzas—

You fear, and look for aid, and quake,

But, helpless, whither can you flee?

We're fattened for our flesh's sake:

Eat, Tundila, and cheerfully.

Plunge bold into the crystal pool,

Wash all the stains of sweat away:

You'll find our ointment wonderful,

Whose fragrance never can decay.

As he considered the Ten Perfections, setting the Perfection of Love before him as his guide, and uttered the first line, his voice reached and extended to Benares over the whole twelve leagues. At the instant of hearing it, the people of Benares from kings and viceroys downwards came, and those who did not come stood listening in their houses. The king's

men breaking down the bush levelled the ground and scattered sand. The drunkenness left the lewd fellows, and throwing away the nooses they stood listening to the law: and the old woman's drunkenness left her also. The Bodhisatta began to preach the law to Cullatundila among the multitude.

Cullatundila hearing him, thought, "My brother says so to me: but it is never our custom to plunge into the pool, and by bathing to wash away sweat from our bodies and after taking away old stain to get new ointment: why does my brother say so to me?" So he spoke the fourth stanza—

But what is that fair crystal pool,

And what the stains of sweat, I pray?

And what the ointment wonderful,

Whose fragrance never can decay?

The Bodhisatta hearing this said, "Then listen with attentive ear," and so expounding the law with the ease of a Buddha he spoke these stanzas—

The law is the fair crystal pool,

Sin is the stain of sweat, they say:

Virtue's the ointment wonderful,

Whose fragrance never will decay.

Men that lose their life are glad,

Men that keep it feel annoy:

Men should die and not be sad,

As at mid-month's festal joy.

So the Great Being expounded the law in a sweet voice with a Buddha's charm. The multitude by thousands snapped their fingers and waved their cloths, and the air was full of the cry, "Good, good." The king of Benares honoured the Bodhisatta with royal place, and giving glory to the old woman he caused both pigs to be bathed in perfumed water, and clothed with robes, and ornamented with jewels on the neck, and put them in the position of his sons in the city: so he guarded them with a great retinue. The Bodhisatta gave the five commands to the king, and all the inhabitants of Benares and Kasi kept the commands. The Bodhisatta preached the law to them on the holy days (new and full moon), and sitting in judgment decided cases: while he lived there were no bringers of unjust suits. Afterwards the king died. The Bodhisatta did the last honours to his body:

then he caused a book of judgments to be written and said, “By observing this book ye should settle suits “: so having expounded the Law to the people and preached to them with zeal, he went to the forest with Cullatundila while they all wept and lamented. Then the Bodhisatta’s preaching went on for sixty thousand years.

After the lesson, the Master declared the Truths and identified the Birth—at the end of the Truths the Brother who feared death was established in the fruition of the first Path—“In those days the king was Ananda, Cullatundila was the Brother who fears death, the multitude was the Congregation, Mahatundila myself.”

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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