Ja 40 — Khadirangara Jātaka

English translation by Robert Chalmers.

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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

“Far rather will I headlong plunge.”—This story was told by the Master while at Jetavana, about Anatha-pindika.

For Anatha-pindika, who had lavished fifty-four crores on the Faith of the Buddha over the Monastery alone, and who valued naught else save only the Three Gems, used to go every day while the Master was at Jetavana to attend the Great Services,—once at daybreak, once after breakfast, and once in the evening. There were intermediate services too; but he never went empty-handed, for fear the Novices and lads should look to see what he had brought with him. When he went in the early morning , he used to have rice-gruel taken up; after breakfast, ghee, butter, honey, molasses, and the like; and in the evening, he brought perfumes, garlands and cloths. So much did he expend day after day, that his expense knew no bounds. Moreover, many traders borrowed money from him on their bonds,—to the amount of eighteen crores; and the great merchant never called the money in. Furthermore, another eighteen crores of the family property, which were buried in the river-bank, were washed out to sea, when the bank was swept away by a storm; and down rolled the brazen pots, with fastenings and seals unbroken, to the bottom of the ocean. In his house, too, there was always rice standing ready for 500 Brethren,—so that the merchant’s house was to the Brotherhood like a pool dug where four roads meet, yea, like mother and father was he to them. Therefore, even the All-Enlightened Buddha used to go to his house, and the Eighty Chief Elders too; and the number of other Brethren passing in and out was beyond measure.

Now his house was seven stories high and had seven portals; and over the fourth gateway dwelt a fairy who was a heretic. When the All-Enlightened Buddha came into the house, she could not stay in her abode on high, but came down with her children to the ground-floor; and she had to do the like whenever the Eighty Chief Elders or the other Elders came in and out. Thought she, “So long as the ascetic Gotama and his disciples keep coming into this house I can have no peace here; I can’t be eternally coming downstairs to

the ground floor. I must contrive to stop them from coming any more to this house." So one day, when the business manager had retired to rest, she appeared before him in visible shape.

"Who is that?" said he.

"It is I," was the reply; "the fairy who lives over the fourth gateway." "What brings you here?" "You don't see what the merchant is doing. Heedless of his own future, he is drawing upon his resources, only to enrich the ascetic Gotama. He engages in no traffic; he undertakes no business. Advise the merchant to attend to his business, and arrange that the ascetic Gotama with his disciples shall come no more into the house."

Then said he, "Foolish Fairy, if the merchant does spend his money, he spends it on the Faith of the Buddha, which leads to Salvation. Even it he were to seize me by the hair and sell me for a slave, I will say nothing. Begone!"

Another day, she went to the merchant's eldest son and gave him the same advice. And he flouted her in just the same manner. But to the merchant himself she did not so much as dare to speak on the matter.

Now by dint of unending munificence and of doing no business, the merchant's incomings diminished and his estate grew less and less; so that he sank by degrees into poverty, and his table, his dress, and his bed and food were no longer what they had office been. Yet, in spite of his altered circumstances, be continued to entertain the Brotherhood, though he was no longer able to feast them. So one day when he had made his bow and taken his seat, the Master said to him, "Householder, are gifts being given at your house?" "Yes, sir," said he; "but there's only a little sour husk-porridge, left over from yesterday." "Be not distressed, householder, at the thought that you can only offer what is unpalatable. If the heart be good, the food given to Buddhas, Pacceka Buddhas, and their disciples, cannot but be good too. And why?—Because of the greatness of the fruit thereof. For he who can make his heart acceptable cannot give an unacceptable gift,—as is to be testified by the following passage—

For, if the heart have faith, no gift is small

To Buddhas or to their disciples true.

'Tis said no service can be reckoned small

That's paid to Buddhas, lords of great renown.

Mark well what fruit rewarded that poor gift

Of pottage,—dried-up, sour, and lacking salt."

Also, he said this further thing, “Householder, in giving this unpalatable gift, you are giving it to those who have entered on the Noble Eightfold Path. Whereas I, when in Velama’s time I stirred up all India by giving the seven things of price, and in my largesse poured then forth as though I had made into one mighty stream the five great rivers,—I yet found none who had reached the Three Refuges or kept the Five Commandments; for rare are those who are worthy of offerings. Therefore, let not your heart be troubled by the thought that your gift is unpalatable.” And so saying, he repeated the Velamaka Sutta.

Now that fairy who had not dared to speak to the merchant in the days of his magnificence, thought that now he was poor he would hearken to her, and so, entering his chamber at dead of night she appeared before him in visible shape, standing in mid-air. “Who’s that?” said the merchant, when he became aware of her presence. “I am the fairy, great merchant, who dwells over the fourth gateway.” “What brings you here?” “To give you counsel.” “Proceed, then.” “Great merchant, you take no thought for your own future or for your own children. You have expended vast sums on the Faith of the ascetic Gotama; in fact, by long-continued expenditure and by not undertaking new business you have been brought by the ascetic Gotama to poverty. But even in your poverty you do not shake off the ascetic Gotama! The ascetics are in and out of your house this very day just the same! What they have had of you cannot be recovered. That may be taken for certain. But henceforth don’t you go yourself to the ascetic Gotama and don’t let his disciples set foot inside your house. Do not even turn to look at the ascetic Gotama but attend to your trade and traffic in order to restore the family estate.”

Then he said to her, “Was this the counsel you wanted to give me?”

“Yes, it was.”

Said the merchant, “The mighty Lord of Wisdom has made me proof against a hundred, a thousand, yea against a hundred thousand fairies such as you are! My faith is strong and steadfast as Mount Sineru! My substance has been expended on the Faith that leads to Salvation. Wicked are your words; it is a blow aimed at the Faith of the Buddhas by you, you wicked and impudent witch. I cannot live under the same roof with you; be off at once from my house and seek shelter elsewhere!” Hearing these words of that converted man and elect disciple, she could not stay, but repairing to her dwelling, took her children by the hand and went forth. But though she went, she was minded, if she could not find herself a lodging elsewhere, to appease the merchant and return to dwell in his house; and in this mind she repaired to the tutelary deity of the city and with due salutation stood before him. Being asked what had brought her thither, she said, “My lord, I have been speaking imprudently to Anatha-pindika, and he in his anger has turned me out of my home. Take me to him and make it up between us, so that he may let me live there again.” “But what was it you said to the merchant?” “I told him for the future not to support the Buddha and the Order, and not to let the ascetic Gotama set foot again in his house. This is what I said, my lord.” “Wicked were your words; it was a blow aimed at the Faith. I cannot take you with me to the merchant.” Meeting with no support from him, she went to the Four Great Regents of the world. And being repulsed by them in the same manner, she went on to Sakka, king of Devas, and told him her story, beseeching him still more

earnestly, as follows, “Deva, finding no shelter, I wander about homeless, leading my children by the hand. Grant me of your majesty some place wherein to dwell.”

And he too said to her, “You have done wickedly; it was a blow aimed at the Conqueror’s Faith. I cannot speak to the merchant on your behalf. But I can tell you one way whereby the merchant may be led to pardon you.” “Pray tell me, deva.” “Men have had eighteen crores of the merchant on bonds. Take the semblance of his agent, and without telling anybody repair to their houses with the bonds, in the company of some young goblins. Stand in the middle of their houses with the bond in one hand and a receipt in the other, and terrify them with your goblin power, saying, ‘Here’s your acknowledgment of the debt. Our merchant did not move in the matter while he was affluent; but now he is poor, and you must pay up the money you owe.’ By your goblin power obtain all those eighteen crores of gold and fill the merchant’s empty treasuries. He had another treasure buried in the banks of the river Aciravati, but when the bank was washed away, the treasure was swept into the sea. Get that back also by your supernatural power and store it in his treasuries. Further, there is another sum of eighteen crores lying unowned in such and such a place. Bring that too and pour the money into his empty treasuries. When you have atoned by the recovery of these fifty-four crores, ask the merchant to forgive you.” “Very good, deva,” said she. And she set to work obediently, and did just as she had been bidden. When she had recovered all the money, she went into the merchant’s chamber at dead of night and appeared before him in visible shape standing in the air.

The merchant asking who was there, she replied, “It is I, great merchant, the blind and foolish fairy who lived over your fourth gateway. In the greatness of my infatuate folly I knew not the virtues of a Buddha, and so came to say what I said to you some days ago. Pardon me my fault! At the instance of Sakka, king of Devas, I have made atonement by recovering the eighteen crores owing to you, the eighteen crores which had been washed down into the sea, and another eighteen crores which were lying unowned in such and such a place,—making fifty-four crores in all, which I have poured into your empty treasure-chambers. The sum you expended on the Monastery at Jetavana is now made up again. Whilst I have nowhere to dwell, I am in misery. Bear not in mind what I did in my ignorant folly, great merchant, but pardon me.”

Anatha-pindika, hearing what she said, thought to himself, “She is a fairy, and she says she has atoned, and confesses her fault. The Master shall consider this and make his virtues. known to her. I will take her before the All-Enlightened Buddha.” So he said, “My good fairy, if you want me to pardon you, ask me in the presence of the master.” “Very good,” said she, “I will. Take me along with you to the Master.” “Certainly,” said he. And early in the morning, when night was just passing away, he took her with him to the Master, and told the Blessed One all that she had done.

Hearing this, the Master said, “You see, householder, how the sinful man regards sin as excellent before it ripens to its fruit. But when it has ripened, then he sees sin to be sin. Likewise the good man looks on his goodness as sin before it ripens to its fruit; but when it ripens, he sees it to be goodness.” And so saying, he repeated these two stanzas from the Dhammapada—

The sinner thinks his sinful deed is good,

So long as sin has ripened not to fruit.

But when his sin at last to ripeness grows,

The sinner surely sees "'twas sin I wrought."

The good man thinks his goodness is but sin,

So long as it has ripened not to fruit.

But when his goodness unto ripeness grows,

The good man surely sees "'twas good I wrought."

At the close of these stanzas that fairy was established in the Fruit of the First Path. She fell at the Wheel-marked feet of the Master, crying, "Stained as I was with passion, depraved by sin, misled by delusion, and blinded by ignorance, I spoke wickedly because I knew not your virtues. Pardon me!" Then she received pardon from the Master and from the great merchant.

At this time Anatha-pindika sang his own praises in the Master's presence, saying, "Sir, though this fairy did her best to stop me from giving support to the Buddha and his following, she could not succeed; and though she tried to stop me from giving gifts, yet I gave them still! Was not this goodness on my part?"

Said the Master, "You, householder, are a converted man and an elect disciple; your faith is firm and your vision is purified. No marvel then that you were not stopped by this impotent fairy. The marvel was that the wise and good of a bygone day, when a Buddha had not appeared, and when knowledge had not ripened to its full fruit, should from the heart of a lotus-flower have given gifts, although Mara, lord of the Realm of Lusts, appeared in mid-heaven, shouting, 'If you give gifts, you shall be roasted in this hell,'—and showing them therewithal a pit eighty cubits deep, filled with red-hot embers." And so saying, at the request of Anatha-pindika, he told this story of the past.

Once on a time when Brahmadatta was reigning in Benares, the Bodhisatta came to life in the family of the Lord High Treasurer of Benares, and was brought up in the. lap of all luxury like a royal prince. By the time he was come to years of discretion, being barely sixteen years old, he had made himself perfect in all accomplishments. At his father's death he filled the office of Lord High Treasurer, and built six almonries, one at each of the four gates of the city, one in the centre of the city, and one at the gate of his own mansion. Very bountiful was he , and he kept the commandments, and observed the fast-day duties.

Now one day at breakfast-time when dainty fare of exquisite taste and variety was being brought in for the Bodhisatta, a Pacceka Buddha rising from a seven days' trance of mystic

ecstasy, and noticing that it was time to go his rounds, bethought him that it would he well to visit the Treasurer of Benares that morning. So he cleaned his teeth with a tooth-stick made from the betel-vine, washed his mouth with water from Lake Anotatta, put on his under-cloth as he stood on the tableland of Manosila, fastened on his girdle, donned his outer-cloth; and, equipped with a bowl which he called into being for the purpose, he passed through the air and arrived at the gate of the mansion just as the Bodhisatta's breakfast was taken in.

As soon as the Bodhisatta became aware of his presence there, he rose at once from his seat and looked at the attendant, indicating that a service was required. "What am I to do, my lord?" "Bring his reverence's bowl," said the Bodhisatta.

At that very instant Mara the Wicked rose up in a state of great excitement, saying, "It is seven days since the Pacceka Buddha had food given him; if he gets none to-day, he will perish. I will destroy him and stop the Treasurer too from giving." And that very instant he went and called into being within the mansion a pit of red-hot embers, eighty cubits deep, filled with Acacia-charcoal, all ablaze and aflame like the great hell of Avici. When he had created this pit, Mara himself took his stand in mid-air.

When the man who was on his way to fetch the bowl became aware of this, he was terrified and started back. "What makes you start back, my man?" asked the Bodhisatta. "My lord," was the answer, "there's a great pit of red-hot embers blazing and flaming in the middle of the house." And as man after man got to the spot, they all were panic-stricken, and ran away as fast as their legs would carry them.

Thought the Bodhisatta to himself, "Mara, the Enthraller, must have been exerting himself to-day to stop me from alms-giving. I have yet to learn, however, that I am to be shaken by a hundred, or by a thousand, Maras. We will see this day whose strength is the stronger, whose might is the mightier, mine or Mara's." So taking in his own hand the bowl which stood ready, he passed out from the house, and, standing on the brink of the fiery pit, looked up to the heavens. Seeing Mara, he said, "Who are you?" "I am Mara," was the answer.

"Did you call into being this pit of red-hot embers?" "Yes, I did." "Why?" "To stop you from alms-giving and to destroy the life of that Pacceka Buddha." "I will not permit you either to stop me from my alms-giving or to destroy the life of the Pacceka Buddha. I am going to see to-day whether your strength or mine is the greater." And still standing on the brink of that fiery pit, he cried, "Reverend Pacceka Buddha, even though I be in act to fall headlong into this pit of red-hot embers, I will not turn back. Only vouchsafe to take the food I bring." And so saying he repeated this stanza—

Far rather will I headlong plunge amain

Full in this gulf of hell, than stoop to shame!

Vouchsafe, sir, at my hands to take this alms!

With these words the Bodhisatta, grasping the bowl of food, strode on with undaunted resolution right on to the surface of the pit of fire. But even as he did so, there rose up to the surface through all the eighty cubits of the pit's depth a large and peerless lotus-flower, which received the feet of the Bodhisatta! And from it there came a measure of pollen which fell on the head of the Great Being, so that his whole body was as it were sprinkled from head to foot with dust of gold! Standing right in the heart of the lotus, he poured the dainty food into the bowl of the Pacceka Buddha.

And when the latter had taken the food and returned thanks, he flung his bowl aloft into the heavens, and right in the sight of all the people he himself rose bodily into the air likewise, and passed away to the Himalayas again, seeming to tread a track formed of clouds fantastically shaped.

And Mara, too, defeated and dejected, passed away back to his own abode.

But the Bodhisatta, still standing in the lotus, preached the Truth to the people, extolling alms-giving and the commandments; after which, girt round by the escorting multitude, he passed into his own mansion once more. And all his life long he shewed charity and did other good works, till in the end he passed away to fare according to his deserts.

Said the Master, "It was no marvel, layman, that you, with your discernment of the truth, were not overcome now by the fairy; the real marvel was what the wise and good did in bygone days." His lesson ended, the Master shewed the connexion, and identified the Birth by saying, "The Pacceka Buddha of those days passed away, never to be born again. I was myself the Treasurer of Benares who, defeating Mara, and standing in the heart of the lotus, placed alms in the bowl of the Pacceka Buddha."

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