Ja 416 — Parantapa 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/ja416.html

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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

“Terror and fear,” etc.—The Master told this while dwelling in the Bamboo-grove, concerning Devadatta’s going about to kill him. They were discussing it in the Hall of Truth, “Sirs, Devadatta is going about to kill the Tathagata, he has hired bowmen, thrown down a rock, let loose Nalagiri, and uses special means for the destruction of the Tathagata.” The Master came and asked the subject of their discussion as they sat together: when they told him, he said, “Brethren, this is not the first time he has gone about to kill me: but he could not even make me afraid, and gained only sorrow for himself:” and so he told the tale of old.

Once upon a time when Brahmadatta was reigning in Benares, the Bodhisatta was born as the son of his chief queen. When he grew up, he learned all the arts at Takkasila, and acquired a spell for the understanding of all animals’ cries. After listening duly to his teacher, he returned to Benares. His father appointed him viceroy: but though he did so, he became anxious to kill him and would not even see him.

A she-jackal with two cubs entered the city at night by a sewer, when men were retired to rest. In the Bodhisatta’s palace, near his bed-room, there was a chamber, where a single traveller, who had taken his shoes off and put them by his feet on the floor, was lying down, not yet asleep, on a plank. The jackal-cubs were hungry and gave a cry. Their mother said in the speech of jackals, “Do not make a noise, dears: there is a man in that chamber who has taken his shoes off and laid them on the floor: he is lying on a plank, but is not asleep yet: when he falls asleep, I will take his shoes and give you food.” By the power of the spell the Bodhisatta understood her call, and leaving his bedroom he opened a window and said, “Who is there?” “I, your majesty, a traveller.” “Where are your shoes?” “On the floor.” “Lift them and bang them up.” Hearing this the jackal was angry with the Bodhisatta. One day she entered the city again by the same way. That day a drunken man went down to drink in a lotus-tank: falling in, he sank and was drowned. He possessed the two garments he was wearing, a thousand pieces in his under-garment, and a ring on his

finger. The jackal-cubs cried out for hunger, and the mother said, “Be quiet, dears: there is a dead man in this lotus-tank, he had such and such property: he is lying dead on the tank-stair, I will give you his flesh to eat.” The Bodhisatta, hearing her, opened the window and said, “Who is in the chamber?” One rose and said, “I.” “Go and take the clothes, the thousand pieces and the ring from the man who is lying dead in yonder lotus-tank, and make the body sink so that it cannot rise out of the water.” The man did so. The jackal was angry again: “The other day you prevented my children eating the shoes; to-day you prevent them eating the dead man. Very well: on the third day from this a hostile king will come and encompass the city, your father will send you to battle, they will cut off your head: I will drink your throat’s blood and satisfy my enmity: you make yourself an enemy of mine and I will see to it:” so she cried abusing the Bodhisatta. Then she took her cubs and went away. On the third day the hostile king came and encompassed the city. The king said to the Bodhisatta, “Go, dear son, and fight him.” “O king, I have seen a vision: I cannot go, for I fear I shall lose my life.” “What is your life or death to me? Go.” The Great Being obeyed: taking his men he avoided the gate where the hostile king was posted, and went out by another which he had opened. As he went the whole city became as it were deserted, for all men went out with him. He encamped in a certain open space and waited. The king thought, “My viceroy has emptied the city and fled with all my forces: the enemy is lying all round the city: I am but a dead man.” To save his life he took his chief queen, his family priest, and a single attendant named Parantapa: with them he fled in disguise by night and entered a wood. Hearing of his flight, the Bodhisatta entered the city, defeated the hostile king in battle and took the kingdom. His father made a hut of leaves on a river bank and lived there on wild fruits. He and the family priest used to go looking for wild fruits: the servant Parantapa stayed with the queen in the hut. She was with child by the king: but owing to being constantly with Parantapa, she sinned with him. One day she said to him, “If the king knows, neither you nor I would live: kill him.” “In what way?” “He makes you carry his sword and bathing-dress when he goes to bathe: take him off his guard at the bathing-place, cut off his head and chop his body to pieces with the sword and then bury him in the ground.” He agreed. One day the priest had gone out for wild fruits: he had climbed a tree near the king’s bathing-place and was gathering the fruit. The king wished to bathe, and came to the water-side with Parantapa carrying his sword and bathing-dress. As he was going to bathe, Parantapa, meaning to kill him when off his guard, seized him by the neck and raised the sword. The king cried out in fear of death. The priest heard the cry and saw from above that Parantapa was murdering him: but he was in great terror and slipping down from his branch in the tree, he hid in a thicket. Parantapa heard the noise he made as he slipped down, and after killing and burying the king he thought, “There was a noise of slipping from a branch thereabouts; who is there?” But seeing no man he bathed and went away. Then the priest came out of his hiding-place; knowing that the king had been cut in pieces and buried in a pit, he bathed and in fear of his life he pretended to be blind when he came back to the hut. Parantapa saw him and asked what had happened to him. He feigned not to know him and said, “O king, I am come back with my eyes lost: I was standing by an ant-hill in a wood full of serpents, and the breath of some venomous serpent must have fallen on me.” Parantapa thought the priest was addressing him as king in ignorance, and to put his mind at rest he said, “Brahmin, never mind, I will take care of you,” and so comforted him and gave him plenty of wild fruits. From that time it was Parantapa who gathered the fruits. The queen bore a son. As he was growing up, she said

to Parantapa one day at early morning when seated comfortably, “Some one saw you when you were killing the king?” “No one saw me: but I heard the noise of something slipping from a bough: whether it was man or beast I cannot tell: but whenever fear comes on me it must be from the cause of the boughs creaking,” and so in conversation with her he spoke the first stanza—

Terror and fear fall on me even now,

For then a man or beast did shake a bough.

They thought the priest was asleep, but he was awake and heard their talk. One day, when Parantapa had gone for wild fruits, the priest remembered his brahmin-wife and spoke the second stanza in lamentation—

My true wife’s home is near at hand: my love will make me be

Pale like Parantapa and thin, at quivering of a tree.

The queen asked what he was saying. He said, “I was only thinking:” but one day again he spoke the third stanza—

My dear wife’s in Benares: her absence wears me now

To pallor like Parantapa’s at shaking of a bough.

Again one day he spoke a fourth stanza—

Her black eye’s glow, her speech and smiles in thought do bring me now

To pallor like Parantapa’s at shaking of a bough.

In time the young prince grew up and reached the age of sixteen. Then the brahmin made him take a stick, and going with him to the bathing-place opened his eyes and looked. “Are you not blind, brahmin?” said the prince. “I am not, but by this means I have saved my life: do you know who is your father?” “Yes.” “That man is not your father: your father was king of Benares: that man is a servant of your house, he sinned with your mother and in this spot killed and buried your father”; and so saying he pulled up the bones and showed them to him. The prince grew very angry, and asked, “What am I to do?” “Do to that man what he did to your father here,” and showing him the whole matter he taught him in a few days how to handle a sword. Then one day the prince took sword and bathing-dress and said, “Father, let us go and bathe.” Parantapa consented and went with him. When he went down into the water, the prince took his top-knot in the left hand and the sword in the right, and said, “At this spot you took my father by the top-knot and killed him as he cried out: even so will I do to you.” Parantapa wailed in fear of death and spoke two stanzas—

Surely that sound has come to you and told you what befel:

Surely the man who bent the bough has come the tale to tell.

The foolish thought that once I had has reached your knowledge now:

That day a witness, man or beast, was there and shook the bough.

Then the prince spoke the last stanza—

'Twas thus you slew my father with trait'rous word, untrue;

You hid his body in the boughs: now fear has come to you.

So saying, he slew him on the spot, buried him and covered the place with branches: then washing the sword and bathing, he went back to the hut of leaves. He told the priest how he had killed Parantapa: he censured his mother, and saying, "What shall we do now?" the three went back to Benares. The Bodhisatta made the young prince viceroy and doing charity and other good works passed fully through the path to heaven.

After the lesson, the Master identified the Birth: "At that time Devadatta was the old king, I myself was the young one."

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.

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Vol. 4, translated by W.H.D. Rouse, 1901.

Vol. 5, translated by H.T. Francis, 1905.

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Prepared for SuttaCentral by Bhikkhu Sujato.