Ja 422 — Cetiya Jātaka

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

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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

“Injured Right can injure sorely,” etc.—The Master told this tale while dwelling at Jetavana, concerning Devadatta’s being swallowed up by the earth. On that day they were discussing in the Hall of Truth how Devadatta had spoken falsely, had sunk into the ground and become destined to the hell Avici. The Master came and, hearing the subject of their talk, said, “This is not the first time he sank into the earth,” and so he told the tale of old.

Once upon a time, in the first age, there was a king named Mahasammata, whose life was an asankheyya long. His son was Roja, his son Vararoja, and then the succession was Kalyana, Varakalyana, Uposatha, Mandhata, Varamandhata, Cara, Upacara, who was also called Apacara. He reigned over the kingdom of Ceti, in the city of Sotthivati; he was endowed with four supernatural faculties—he could walk aloft and pass through the air, he had four angels in each of the four quarters to defend him with drawn swords, he diffused the fragrance of sandalwood from his body, he diffused the fragrance of the lotus from his mouth. His family priest was named Kapila. This brahmin’s younger brother, Korakalamba, had been taught along with the king by the same teacher and was the king’s playmate. When Apacara was prince, he promised to make Korakalamba his family priest when he became king. At his father’s death he became king, but he could not depose Kapila from the position of family priest: and when Kapila came to wait on him, he shewed him special forms of honour. The brahmin observed this and considered that a king manages best with ministers of his own age, and that he himself might get leave from the king to become an ascetic, so he said, “O king, I am getting old; I have a son at home: make him family priest and I will become an ascetic.” He got the king’s leave and had his son appointed family priest: then he went to the king’s park, became an ascetic, reached transcendent knowledge and lived there, near his son. Korakalambaka felt a grudge against his brother because he had not got him his post when he became an ascetic. One day the king said to him in friendly conversation, “Korakalambaka, you are not family priest?” “No, O king: my brother has managed it.” “Has not your brother become an ascetic?” “He has, but he got the post for his son.” “Then do you manage it.” “O king, it is

impossible for me to set aside my brother and take a post which has come by descent." "If so, I will make you senior and the other your junior." "How, O king?" "By a lie." "O king, do you not know that my brother is a magician, endowed with great supernatural power? He will deceive you with magical illusions: he will make your four angels disappear, and make as it were an evil odour come from your body and mouth, he will make you come down from the sky and stand on the ground: you will be as if swallowed up by the earth, and you will not be able to abide by your story." "Do not trouble; I will manage it." "When will you do it, O king?" "On the seventh day from this." The story went round the city, "The king is going by a lie to make the senior the junior, and will give the post to the junior: what kind of a thing is a lie? is it blue or yellow or some other colour?" The multitude thought greatly about it. It was a time, they say, when the world told the truth: men did not know what the word "lie" might mean. The priest's son heard the tale and told his father, "Father, they say the king is going by a lie to make you junior and to give our post to my uncle." "My dear, the king will not be able even by a lie to take our post from us: on what day is he going to do it?" "On the seventh day from this, they say." "Let me know when the time comes." On the seventh day a great multitude gathered in the king's courtyard sitting in rows above rows, hoping to see a lie. The young priest went and told his father. The king was ready in full dress, he appeared and stood in the air in the courtyard amid the multitude The ascetic came through the air, spread his skin-seat before the king, sat on his throne in the air and said, "Is it true, O king, that you wish by a lie to make the junior senior and to give him the post?" "Master, I have done so." Then he admonished the king, "O great king, a lie is a grievous destruction of good qualities, it causes rebirth in the four evil states; a king who makes a lie destroys right, and by destroying right he is himself destroyed:" and he spoke the first stanza—

Injured Right can injure sorely, and requite with injury;

Therefore Right should ne'er be injured, lest the harm recoil on thee

Admonishing him farther he said, "Great king, if you make a lie, your four supernatural powers will disappear," and he spoke the second stanza—

The powers divine forsake and leave the man who tells a lie,

Ill smells his mouth, he cannot keep his foothold in the sky:

Whoe'er to questioning replies with falsehood wilfully.

Hearing this, the king in fear looked to Korakalambaka. He said, "Be not afraid, O king; did I not tell you so from the first?" and so forth. The king, though he heard Kapila's words, still put forward his statement, "Sir, you are the younger, Korakalambaka is the elder." At the moment when he uttered this lie, the four angels said they would guard such a liar no longer, threw their swords at his feet and disappeared; his mouth was fetid like a broken rotten egg and his body like an open drain; and falling from the air he lighted on the earth: so all his four supernatural powers disappeared. His chief priest said, "Great king, be not afraid: if you will speak the truth, I will restore you everything," and so he spoke the third

stanza—

A word of truth, and all thy gifts, O king, thou shalt regain:

A lie will fix thee in the soil of Ceti to remain.

He said, “Look, O great king: those four supernatural powers of yours disappeared first by your lie: consider, for it is possible now to restore them.” But the king answered, “You wish to deceive me in this,” and so telling a second lie he sank in the earth up to the ankles. Then the brahmin said once more, “Consider, O great king,” and spoke the fourth stanza—

Drought comes on him in time of rain, rain when it should be dry,

Whoe’er to questioning replies with falsehood wilfully.

Then once again he said, “Owing to your lying you are sunk in the earth up to the ankles: consider, O great king,” and spoke the fifth stanza—

One word of truth, and all thy gifts, O king, thou shalt regain:

A lie will sink thee in the soil of Ceti to remain.

But for the third time the king said, “You are junior and Korakalambaka is elder,” and at this lie he sank in the ground up to the knees. Once more the brahmin said, “Consider, O great king,” and spoke two stanzas—

O king, the man is forked of tongue, and like a serpent sly,

Whoe’er to questioning replies with falsehood wilfully.

One word of truth, and all thy gifts, O king, thou shalt regain:

A lie will sink thee deeper still in Ceti to remain.

adding, “Even now all may be restored.” The king, not heeding his words, repeated the lie for the fourth time, “You are junior, Sir, and Korakalambaka is elder,” and at these words he sank up to the hips. Again the brahmin said, “Consider, O great king,” and spoke two stanzas—

O king, that man is like a fish, and tongueless he shall be,

Whoe’er to questioning replies with falsehood wilfully.

One word of truth, and all thy gifts, O king, thou shalt regain:

A lie will sink thee deeper still in Ceti to remain.

For the fifth time the king repeated the lie, and as he did so he sank up to the navel. The brahmin once more appealed to him to consider, and spoke two stanzas—

Girls only shall be born of him, no man-son shall he see,

Whoe’er to questioning replies with falsehood wilfully.

One word of truth, and all thy gifts, O king, thou shalt regain:

A lie will sink thee deeper still in Ceti to remain.

The king paid no heed, and repeating the lie for the sixth time sank up to the breast. The brahmin made his appeal once more and spoke two stanzas—

His children will not stay with him, on every side they flee,

Whoe’er to questioning replies with falsehood wilfully.

One word of truth, and all thy gifts, O king, thou shalt regain:

A lie will sink thee deeper still in Ceti to remain.

Owing to association with a wicked friend, he disregarded the words and repeated the same lie for the seventh time. Then the earth opened and the flames of Avici leapt up and seized him.

Cursed by a sage, the king who once could walk the air, they say,

Was lost and swallowed by the earth on his appointed day.

Wherefore the wise do not approve at all

When that desire into the heart doth fall:

He that is free from guile, whose heart is pure,

All that he says is ever firm and sure.

These are two stanzas inspired by Perfect Wisdom.

The multitude said in fear, “The king of Ceti reviled the sage, and told a lie; so he has entered Avici.” The king’s five sons came to the brahmin and said, “Be thou our helper.” The brahmin answered, “Your father destroyed Right, he lied and reviled a sage: therefore he has entered Avici. If Right is destroyed, it destroys. You must not dwell here.” To the eldest he said, “Come, dear: leave the city by the eastern gate and go straight on: you will see a white royal elephant prostrate, touching the earth in seven places : that will be a sign for you to lay out a city there and dwell in it: and the name of it will he Hatthipura.” To the

second prince he said, “You leave by the south gate and go straight on till you see a royal horse pure white: that will be a sign that you are to lay out a city there and dwell in it: and it shall be called Assapura.” To the third prince he said, “You leave by the west gate and go straight on till you see a maned lion; that will be a sign that you are to lay out a city there and dwell in it: and it shall be called Sihapura.” To the fourth prince he said, “You leave by the north gate and go straight on till you see a wheel-frame all made of jewels: that will be a sign that you are to lay out a city there and dwell in it: and it shall be called Uttarapancala.” To the fifth he said, “You cannot dwell here: build a great shrine in this city, go out towards the north-west, and go straight on till you see two mountains striking against each other and making the sound of daddara: that will be a sign that you are to lay out a city there and dwell in it: and it shall be called Daddarapura.” All the five princes went, and following the signs laid out cities there and dwelt in them.

After the lesson, the Master said, “So, Brethren, this is not the first time that Devadatta has told a lie and sunk in the earth,” and then he identified the Birth: “At that time the king of Ceti was Devadatta, and the brahmin Kapila was 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.

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