Ja 439 — Catu-Dvara Jātaka

English translation by W. H. D. Rouse.

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Source revision: 2d9ca8da858f94302ed6783e2717bf73d651881b

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Edited by E. B. Cowell

Original edition: Cambridge University Press, volume 4, 1901

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

“Four gates,” etc.—This story the Master told at Jetavana, about a certain unruly person. The circumstances have been already set forth in the first Birth of the Ninth Book. Here again the Master asked this brother, “Is it true, as they say, that you are disobedient?” “Yes, Sir.” “Long ago,” said he, “when by disobedience you refused to do the bidding of wise men, a razor-wheel was given to you.” And he told a story of the past.

Once upon a time, in the days of the Buddha Kassapa, there dwelt in Benares a merchant, whose wealth was eighty crores of money, having a son named Mittavindaka. The mother and father of this lad had entered upon the First Path, but he was wicked, an unbeliever.

When by and bye the father was dead and gone, the mother, who in his stead managed their property, thus said to her son—“My son, the state of man is one hard to attain; give alms, practise virtue, keep the holy day, give ear to the Law.” Then said he, “Mother, no almsgiving or such like for me; never name them to me; as I live, so shall I fare hereafter.” On a certain full-moon holy day, as he spoke in this fashion, his mother answered, “Son, this day is set apart as a high holy day. To-day take upon you the holy day vows; visit the cloister, and all night long listen to the Law, and when you come back I will give you a thousand pieces of money.”

For desire of this money the son consented. As soon as he had broken his fast he went to the cloister, and there he spent the day; but at night to the end that not one word of the Law should reach his ear he lay down in a certain place, and fell asleep. On the next day, very early in the morning, he washed his face, and went to his own house and sat down.

Now the mother thought within herself, “To-day my son after hearing the Law will come back early in the morning, bringing with him the Elder who has preached the Law.” So she made ready gruel, and food hard and soft, and prepared a seat, and awaited his coming. When she saw her son coming all alone, “Son,” quoth she, “why have you not brought the

preacher with you?"—"No preacher for me, mother!" says he. "Here then," quoth the woman, "you drink this gruel." "You promised me a thousand pieces, mother," he says, "first give this to me, and afterward I will drink." "Drink first, my son, and then you shall have the money." Quoth he, "No, I will not drink till I get the money." Then his mother laid before him a purse of a thousand pieces. And he drank the gruel, took the purse with a thousand pieces, and went about his business; and so thereafter, until in no long time he had gained two millions.

Then it came into his mind that he would provide a ship, and do business with it. So he provided a ship, and said to his mother, "Mother, I mean to do business in this ship." Said she, "You are my only son, and in this house there is plenty of wealth; the sea is full of dangers. Do not go!" But he said, "Go I will, and you cannot prevent me." "Yes, I will prevent you," she answered, and took hold of his hand; but he thrust her hand away, and struck her down, and in a moment he was gone, and under way.

On the seventh day, for cause of Mittavindaka, the ship stood immovable upon the deep. Lots were cast, and thrice was the lot found in the hand of Mittavindaka. Then they gave him a raft; and saying—"Let not many perish for the sole sake of this one," they cast him adrift upon the deep. In an instant the ship sprang forth with speed over the deep.

And he upon his raft came to a certain island. There in a crystal palace he espied four female spirits of the dead. They used to be in woe seven days and seven in happiness. In their company he experienced bliss divine. Then, when the time came for them to undergo their penance, said they, "Master, we are going to leave you for seven days; while we are gone, bide here, and be not distressed." So saying they departed.

But he, full of longing, again embarked upon his raft, and passing over the ocean came to another isle; there in a palace of silver he saw eight other spirits. In the same way, he saw upon another island, sixteen in a palace all of jewels, and on yet another, thirty-two that were in a golden hall. With these, as before, he dwelt in divine blessedness, and when they went away to their penance, sailed away once more over the ocean; till at last he beheld a city with four gates, surrounded by a wall. That, they say, is the Ussada Hell, the place where many beings, condemned to hell, endure their own deeds: but to Mittavindaka it appeared as though a city all beautiful. Thought he, "I will visit yon city, and be its king." So he entered, and there he saw a being in torment, supporting a wheel sharp as a razor; but to Mittavindaka it seemed as though that razor-wheel upon his head were a lotus bloom; the five-fold fetters upon his breast seemed as it were a splendid and rich vesture; the blood dripping from his head seemed to be the perfumed powder of red sandal wood; the sound of groaning was as the sound of sweetest song. So approaching he said, "Ho, man! Long enough you have been carrying that flower of lotus; now give it to me!" He replied, "My lord, no lotus it is, but a razor-wheel." "Ah," quoth the first, "so you say because you do not wish to give it" Thought the condemned wretch: "My past deeds must be exhausted. No doubt this fellow, like me, is here for smiting a mother. Well, I will give him the razor-wheel." Then he said, "Here then, take the lotus," and with those words cast the razor-wheel upon his head; and on his head it fell, crushing it in. In an instant Mittavindaka knew that it was a razor-wheel, and says he, "Take your wheel, take back your wheel!"

groaning aloud in his pain; but the other had disappeared.

At that moment the Bodhisatta with a great following was making a round through the Ussada Hell, and arrived at that spot. Mittavindaka, espying him, cried out, “Lord king of the Gods, this razor-wheel is piercing and tearing me like a pestle crushing mustard seeds! what sin have I committed?” and in asking this question he repeated these two stanzas:

“Four gates this iron city hath, where I am trapt and caught:

A rampart girds me round about: what evil have I wrought?

“Now fast are closed the city gates: this wheel destroyeth me:

Why like a caged bird am I caught? why, Goblin, should it be?”

Then the King of the Gods, to explain the matter to him, uttered these stanzas:

“An hundred thousand thou, good Sir, didst own, and twenty eke:

Yet to a friend thou wouldst not lend thine ear, when he would speak.

“Swift didst thou flee across the sea, a perilous thing, I ween;

The four, the eight, didst visit straight, and with the eight, sixteen,

“And with sixteen the thirty-two; and lust didst ever feel:

See now, the meed of utter greed upon thy head, this wheel.

“Who tread the highway of desire that spacious thoroughfare,

That highway great, insatiate,—’Tis theirs this wheel to bear.

“Who will not sacrifice their wealth, nor to the Path repair,

Who do not know this should be so,—’Tis theirs this wheel to bear.

“Ponder the issue of thy deeds, and see

How great thy wealth, and do not crave to be

Master of ill-got gains; what friends advise

Do,—and the wheel shall never come nigh thee.”

Hearing this, Mittavindaka thought to himself, “This son of the gods has explained exactly what I have done. No doubt he knows also the measure of my punishment.” And he

repeated the ninth stanza:

“How long, O Goblin, shall this wheel upon my head remain?

How many thousand years? reveal, nor let me ask in vain!”

Then the Great Being declared the matter in the tenth stanza:

“The wheel shall roll, and on shall roll, no saviour shall appear,

Fixt on thy head till thou be dead—O Mittavinda, hear!

Thus saying, the Divine Being returned to his own place, and the other fell into great misery.

The Master, having ended this discourse, identified the Birth—“At that time the unruly Brother was Mittavindaka, and I myself was the king of the gods.”

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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