Ja 459 — Paniya Jātaka

English translation by W. H. D. Rouse.

Source: https://raw.githubusercontent.com/suttacentral/sc-data/2d9ca8da858f94302ed6783e2717bf73d651881b/html_text/en/pli/sutta/kn/ja/vol4/ja459.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

“The water-draught,” etc. This story the Master told, whilst dwelling in Jetavana, about the subduing of evil passions.

At one time, we learn, five hundred citizens of Savatthi, being householders and friends of the Tathagata, had heard the Law and had renounced the world, and been ordained as priests. Living in the house of the Golden Pavement, at midnight they indulged in thoughts of sin. (All the details are to be understood as in a previous story.) At the command of the Blessed One, the Brotherhood was assembled by the Venerable Ananda. The Master sat in the appointed seat, and without asking them, “Do you indulge in thoughts of sin?” he addressed them comprehensively and in general terms: “Brethren, there is no such thing as a petty sin. A Brother must check all sins as they each arise. Wise men of old, before the Buddha came, subdued their sins and attained to the knowledge of a Pacceka-Buddha.” With these words, he told there a story of the past.

Once upon a time, when Brahmadatta was king in Benares, there were two friends in a certain village in the kingdom of Kasi. These had gone afield, taking with them vessels for drinking, which they laid out of the way as they broke the clods, and when they were thirsty, went and drank water out of them. One of them, on going for a drink, husbanded the water in his own pot, and drank out of the pot of the other. In the evening, when he came out from the woodland, and had bathed, he stood thinking. “Have I done any sin to-day,” thought he, “either by the door of the body, or any other?” Then he remembered how he drank the stolen water, and grief came upon him, and he cried, “If this thirst grows upon me, it will bring me to some evil birth! I will subdue my sin.” So with this stolen draught of water for cause, he gradually acquired supernatural insight, and attained the knowledge of a Pacceka-Buddha; and there he stood, reflecting upon the knowledge which he had attained.

Now the other man, having bathed, got up, saying, “Come, friend, let us go home.” Said the other, “Go home thou, home is nothing to me, I am a Pacceka-Buddha.” “Pooh! are Pacceka-Buddhas like you?” “What are they like, then?” “Hair two fingers long, yellow robes they wear, in Nandamula cave they live high up in Himalaya.” The other stroked his head: in that very moment the marks of a layman disappeared, a pair of red cloths were wrapt round him, a waist-band yellow like a flash of lightning was about him tied, the upper robe of the colour of red lac was thrown over one shoulder, a dust-heap ragged cloth dingy as a storm-cloud lay on his shoulder, a bee-brown earthen bowl dangled from over his left shoulder; there he stood poised in mid-air, and having delivered a discourse, he rose and descended not until he came to the mountain-cave of Nandamula.

Another man, who also lived in a village of Kasi, a land-owner, was sitting in the bazaar, when he saw a man approach leading his wife. Seeing her (and she was a woman of surpassing beauty) he broke the moral principles, and looked upon her; then again he thought, “This desire, if it increases, will cast me into some evil birth.” Being exercised in mind, he developed supernatural insight, and attained the knowledge of a Pacceka Buddha; then poised in the air, he delivered a discourse, and he also went to the Nandamula cave.

Villagers of a place in Kasi were likewise two, a father and a son, who were going on a journey together. At the entering in of a forest were robbers posted. These robbers, if they took a father and son together, would keep the son with them, and send the father away, saying, “Bring back a ransom for your son”: or if two brothers, they kept the younger and sent the elder away; or if teacher and pupil, they kept the teacher and sent the pupil,—and the pupil for love of learning would bring money and release his teacher. Now when this father and son saw the robbers lying in wait, the father said, “Don’t you call me “father,” and I will not call you “son”. ”And so they agreed. So when the robbers came up, and asked how they stood to one another, they replied, “We are nothing to one another,” thus telling a premeditated lie. When they came out of the forest, and were resting after the evening bath, the son examined his own virtue, and remembering this lie, he thought, “This sin, if it increases, will plunge me in some evil birth. I will subdue my sin!” Then he developed supernatural insight, and attained to the knowledge of a Pacceka-Buddha, and poised in the air delivered a discourse to his father, and he too went to the Nandamula cave.

In a village of Kasi also lived a zemindar, who laid an interdict upon all slaughter. Now when the time came when offering was wont to be made to the spirits, a great crowd gathered, and said, “My lord! this is the time for sacrifice: let us slay deer and swine and other animals, and make offering to the Goblins,” he replied, “Do as you have done aforetime.” The people made a great slaughter. The man seeing a great quantity of fish and flesh, thought to himself, “All these living creatures the men have slain, and all because of my word alone!” He repented: and as he stood by the window, he developed supernatural insight, and attained to the knowledge of a Pacceka-Buddha, and poised in the air delivered a discourse, then he too went to the Nandamula cave.

Another zemindar who lived in the kingdom of Kasi, prohibited the sale of strong drink. A crowd of people cried out to him, “My lord, what shall we do? It is the time-honoured

drinking festival!" He replied, "Do as you have always done aforetime." The people made their festival, and drank strong drink, and fell a-quarrelling; there were broken legs and arms, and cracked crowns, and ears torn off, and many a penalty was inflicted for it. The zemindar seeing this, thought to himself, "If I had not permitted this, they would not have suffered this misery." Even for this trifle he felt remorse: then he developed supernatural insight, and attained the knowledge of a Pacceka-Buddha, poised in the air he discoursed, and bade them be vigilant, then he too went to the Nandamula cave.

Some time afterwards, the five Pacceka-Buddhas all alighted at the gate of Benares, seeking for alms. Their upper robe and lower robe neatly arranged, with gracious address they went on their rounds, and came to the gate of the King's palace. The King was much pleased to behold them; he invited them into his palace, and washed their feet, anointed them with fragrant oil, set before them savoury food both hard and soft, and sitting on one side, thus addressed them: "Sirs, that you in your youth have embraced the ascetic life, is beautiful; at this age, you have become ascetics, and you see the misery of evil lusts. What was the cause of your action?" They replied as follows:

"The water-draught of my own friend, although a, friend, I stole:

Loathing the sin which I had done, I afterwards was fain

To leave the world, an eremite, lest I should sin again."

"I looked upon another's wife; lust rose within my soul:

Loathing the sin which I had done, I afterwards was fain

To leave the world, an eremite, lest I should sin again."

"Thieves caught my father in a wood: to whom I did forth tell

That he was other than he was—a lie, I knew it well:

Loathing the sin," etc.

"The people at a drinking-feast full many beasts did kill,

And not against my will:

Loathing the sin," etc.

"Those persons who in former times of liquors drank their fill,

Now carried out a drinking-bout, whence many suffered ill,

And not against my will.

Loathing the sin which I had done, I afterwards was fain

To leave the world, an eremite, lest I should sin again."

These five stanzas they repeated one after the other.

When the king had heard the explanation of each, he uttered his praise, saying, "Sirs, your asceticism becomes you well."

The king was delighted at the discourse of these men. He bestowed upon them cloth for outer and inner garments, and medicines, then let the Pacceka-Buddhas go away. They thanked him, and returned to the place whence they came. Ever after that the king loathed the pleasures of sense, was free from desire, ate his choice and dainty food, but to women he would not speak, would not look at them, rose up disgusted at heart and retired to his magnificent chamber, and there he sat: stared at a white wall until he fell into a trance, and conceived within him the rapture of mystic meditation. In this rapture rapt, he recited a stanza in dispraise of desire:

"Out on it, out on lust, I say, unsavoury, thorn-beset!

Never, though long I followed wrong, such joy as this I met!"

Then his chief queen thought to herself, "That king heard the discoursing of the Pacceka-Buddhas, and now he never speaks to us, but buries himself despondent in his magnificent chamber. I must take him in hand." So she came to the door of that lordly chamber, and standing at the door, heard the king's rapturous utterances, in dispraise of desire. She said, "O mighty king, you speak ill of desire! but there is no joy like the joy of sweet desire!" Then in praise of desire she repeated another stanza:

"Great is the joy of sweet desire: no greater joy than love:

Who follow this attain the bliss of paradise above!"

Hearing this, the king made reply: "Perish, vile jade! What sayst thou? Whence comes the joy of desire? There are miseries which come to pay for it" : with which he uttered the remaining stanzas in dispraise:

"Ill-tasting, painful is desire, there is no worser woe:

Who follow sin are sure to win the pains of hell below.

"Than sword well whetted, or a blade implacable, athirst,

Than knives deep driven in the heart, desires are more accurst.

"A pit as deep as men are tall, where live coals blazing are,

A ploughshare heated in the sun,—desires are worser far.

“A poison very venomous, an oil of little ease,

Or that vile thing to copper clings —desires are worse than these.”

Thus the Great Being discoursed to his consort. Then he gathered his courtiers, and said, “O courtiers, do you manage the kingdom: I am about to renounce the world.” Amidst the wailing and lamentation of a great multitude, he rose before them, and poised in the air, delivered a discourse. Then along the path of the wind he past to furthest Himalaya, and in a delightsome spot builded a hermitage; there he lived the life of a sage, until at the end of his days he became destined for the world of Brahma.

The Master, having ended this discourse, added, “Brethren, there is no such thing as a petty sin: the very smallest must be checked by a wise man.” Then he declared the Truths, and identified the Birth (now at the conclusion of the Truths the five hundred Brethren became established in sainthood)—“At that time the Pacceka-Buddhas attained Nirvana, Rahula’s mother was the queen consort, and I myself was the king.”

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

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