Ja 498 — Citta-Sambhuta Jātaka

English translation by W. H. D. Rouse.

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Edited by E. B. Cowell

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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

“Every good deed,” etc.—This story the Master told while dwelling in Jetavana, about two fellow-priests of the reverend Maha-kassapa, who lived happily together. This pair, we are told, were most friendly, and had share for share in all things with the utmost fairness: even when they walked for alms, together they went out and together came in, nor could they endure to be apart. In the Hall of Truth sat the Brethren, praising their friendship, when the Master came in, and asked what they talked of as they sat there. They told him; and he replied, “Their friendship in one existence, Brethren, is nothing to wonder at; for wise men of old kept friendliness unbroken throughout three or four different existences.” So saying, he told them a story of the past.

Once upon a time, in the realm of Avanti, and the city of Ujjeni, reigned a great king named King Avanti. At that time, a Candala village lay outside Ujjeni, and there the Great Being was born. Another person was born the son of his mother’s sister. The one of these two was named Citta, and the other Sambhuta.

These two when they grew up, having learnt what is called the art of sweeping in the Candala breed, thought one day they would go and show off this art at the city gate. So one of them showed off at the north gate, and one at the east. Now in this city were two women wise in the omens of sight, the one a merchant’s daughter and the other a chaplain’s. These went forth to make merry in the park, having ordered food to be brought hard and soft, garlands and perfumes; and it so happened that one went out by the northern gate and one the eastern. Seeing the two young Candalas showing their art, the girls asked “Who are these?” Candalas, they were informed. “This is an evil omen to see!” they said, and after washing their eyes with perfumed water, they returned back. Then the multitude cried, “O vile outcasts, you have made us lose food and strong drink which would have cost us nothing!” They belaboured the two kinsmen, and did them much misery and mischief. When they recovered their senses, up they got and joined company, and told each the other what woe had befallen him, weeping and wailing, and wondering

what to do now. “All this misery has come upon us,” they thought, because of our birth. We shall never be able to play the part of Candalas; let us conceal our birth, and go to Takkasila in the disguise of young brahmins, and study there.” Having made this decision, they went thither, and followed their studies in the law under a far-famed master. A rumour was blown abroad over India, that two young Candalas were students, and had concealed their birth. The wise Citta was successful in his studies, but Sambhuta not so.

One day a villager invited the teacher, intending to offer food to the brahmins. Now it happened that rain fell in the night, and flooded all the hollows in the road. Early in the morning the teacher summoned wise Citta, and said, “My lad, I cannot go, do you go with the young men, and pronounce a blessing, eat what you get for yourself and bring home what there is for me.” Accordingly he took the young brahmins, and went. While the young men bathed, and rinsed their mouths, the people prepared rice porridge, which they set ready for them, saying, “Let it cool.” Before it was cool, the young men came and sat down. The people gave them the water of offering, and set the bowls in front of them. Sambhuta’s wits were somewhat muddled, and imagining it to be cool, took up a ball of the rice and put it in his mouth, but it burnt him like a red-hot ball of metal. In his pain he forgot his part altogether, and glancing at wise Citta, he said, in the Candala dialect; “Hot, aint it?” The other forgot himself too, and answered in their manner of speech, “Spit it out, spit it out.” At this the young men looked at each other, and said, “What kind of language is this?” Wise Citta pronounced a blessing.

When the young men came home, they gathered in little knots and sat here and there discussing the words used. Finding that it was the dialect of the Candalas, they cried out on them, “O vile outcasts! you have been tricking us all this while, and pretending to be brahmins!” And they beat them both. One good man drove them out, saying, “Away! the blot’s in the blood. Be off! Go somewhere and become ascetics.” The young brahmins told their teacher that these two were Candalas.

The pair went out into the woods, and there took up the ascetic life, and after no long time died, and were born again as the young of a doe on the banks of the Neranjara. From the time of their birth they always went about together. One day, when they had fed, a hunter espied them under a tree ruminating and cuddling together, very happy, head to head, nozzle to nozzle, horn to horn. He cast a javelin at them, and killed them both by one blow.

After this they were born as the young of an osprey, on the bank of Nerbudda. There too, when they grew up, after feeding they would cuddle together, head to head and beak to beak. A bird snarer saw them, caught them together, and killed them both.

Next the wise Citta was born at Kosambi, as a chaplain’s son; the wise Sambhuta was born as the son of the king of Uttarapancala. From their name-days they could remember their former births. But Sambhuta was not able to remember all without breaks, and all he could remember was the fourth or Candala birth; Citta however remembered all four in due order. When Citta was sixteen years old, he went away and became an ascetic in Himalaya, and developed the Faculty of the religious ecstasy, and dwelt in the bliss of ecstatic trance. Wise Sambhuta after his father’s death had the Umbrella spread over him, and on the very

day of the umbrella ceremony, in the midst of a great concourse, made a ceremonial hymn, and uttered two stanzas in aspiration. When they heard this, the royal wives and the musicians all chanted then, saying, “Our king’s own coronation hymn!” and in course of time all the citizens sang it, as the hymn which their king loved. Wise Citta, in his dwelling place in Himalaya, wondered whether his brother Sambhuta had assumed the Umbrella, or not. Perceiving that he had, he thought, “I shall never be able to instruct a young ruler; but when he is old, I will visit him, and persuade him to be an ascetic.” For fifty years he went not, and by that time the king was increased with sons and daughters; then by his supernatural power, he went, and alighted in the park, and sat down on the seat of ceremony like an image of gold. Just then a lad was picking up sticks, and as he did so he sang that hymn. Wise Citta called him to approach; he came up with an obeisance, and waited. Citta said to him, “Since early morning you have been singing that hymn; do you know no other?”—“Oh yes, sir, I know many more, but these are the verses the king loves, that is why I sing no others.”—“Is there any one who can sing a refrain to the king’s hymn?”—“No, Sir.”—“Could you?”—“Yes, if I am taught one.”—“Well, when the king chants these two verses, you sing this by way of a third,” and he recited a hymn. “Now,” said he, “go and sing this before the king, and the king will be pleased with you, and make much of you for it.” The lad went to his mother quickly, and got himself drest up spick and span; then to the king’s door, and sent in word that a lad would sing him a refrain to his hymn. The king said, “Let him approach.” When the lad had come in, and saluted him, quoth the king, “They say you will sing me an answering refrain to my hymn?” “Yes, my lord,” said he, “bring in the whole court to hear.” As soon as the court had assembled, the lad said, “Sing your hymn, my lord, and I will answer with mine.” The king repeated a pair of stanzas:

“Every good deed bears fruit or soon or late,

No deed without result, and nothing vain:

I see Sambhuta mighty grown and great,

Thus do his virtues bear him fruit again.

“Every good deed bears fruit or soon or late,

No deed without result, and nothing vain.

Who knows if Citta also may be great,

And like myself, his heart have brought him gain?”

At the end of this hymn, the lad chanted the third stanza:

“Every good deed bears fruit or soon or late,

No deed without result, and nothing vain.

Behold, my lord, see Citta at thy gate,

And like thyself, his heart has brought him gain.”

On hearing this the king repeated the fourth stanza:

“Then art thou Citta, or the tale didst hear

From him, or did some other make thee know?

Thy hymn is very sweet: I have no fear;

A village and a bounty I bestow.”

Then the lad repeated the fifth stanza:

“I am not Citta, but I heard the thing.

It was a sage laid on me this command—

Go and recite an answer to the king,

And be rewarded by his grateful hand.”

Hearing this, the king thought, “It must be my brother Citta; now I’ll go and see him”; then he laid his bidding upon his men in the words of these two stanzas:

“Come, yoke the royal chariots, so finely wrought and made:

Gird up with girths the elephants, in necklets bright arrayed.

“Beat drums for joy, and let the conchs be blown,

Prepare the swiftest chariots I own:

For to that hermitage I will away,

To see the sage that sits within, this day.”

So he spoke; then mounting his fine chariot, he went swiftly to the park gate. There he checked his chariot, and approached wise Citta with an obeisance, and sat down on one side; greatly pleased, he recited the eighth stanza:

“A precious hymn it was I sang so sweet

While thronging multitudes around me pressed;

For now this holy sage I come to greet

And all is joy and gladness in my breast."

Happy from the instant he saw wise Citta, he gave all necessary directions, bidding prepare a seat for his brother, and repeated the ninth

stanza:

"Accept a seat, and for your feet fresh water: it is right

To offer gifts of food to guests: accept, as we invite."

After this sweet invitation, the king repeated another stanza, offering him the half of his kingdom:

"Let them make glad the place where thou shalt dwell,

Let throngs of waiting women wait on thee;

O let me show thee that I love thee well,

And let us both kings here together be."

When he had heard these words, wise Citta discoursed to him in six stanzas:

"Seeing the fruit of evil deeds, O king,

Seeing what profit deeds of goodness bring,

I fain would exercise stern self-control,

Sons, wealth, and cattle cannot charm my soul.

"Ten decades has this mortal life, which each to each succeed:

This limit reached, man withers fast like to a broken reed.

"Then what is pleasure, what is love, wealth-hunting what to me?

What sons and daughters? know, O king, from fetters I am free.

"For this is true, I know it well—death will not pass me by:

And what is love, or what is wealth, when you must come to die?

"The lowest race that go upon two feet

Are the Candalas, meanest men on earth,

When all our deeds were ripe, as guerdon meet

We both as young Candalas had our birth.

“Candalas in Avanti land, deer by Neranjara,

Ospreys by the Nerbudda, now brahmin and Khattiya.”

Having thus made clear his mean births in time past, here also in this birth he declared the impermanency of things created, and recited four stanzas to arouse an effort:

“Life is but short, and death the end must be:

The aged have no hiding where to flee.

Then, O Pancala, what I bid thee, do:

All deeds which grow to misery, eschew.

“Life is but short, and death the end must be:

The aged have no hiding where to flee.

Then, O Pancala, what I bid thee, do:

All deeds whose fruit is misery, eschew.

“Life is but short, and death the end must be:

The aged have no hiding where to flee.

Then, O Pancala, what I bid thee, do:

All deeds that are with passion stained, eschew.

“Life is but short, and death the end must be:

Old age will sap our strength, we cannot flee.

Then, O Pancala, what I bid thee, do:

All deeds that lead to lowest hell, eschew.”

The king rejoiced as the Great Being spoke and repeated three stanzas:

“True is that word, O Brother! which you say,

You like a holy saint your words dictate:

But my desires are hard to cast away,

By such as I am; they are very great.

“As elephants deep sunken in the mire

Cannot climb out, although they see the land:

So, sunken in the slough of strong desire

Upon the Brethren’s Path I cannot stand.

“As father or as mother would their son

Admonish, good and happy how to grow:

Admonish me how happiness is won,

And tell me by which way I ought to go.”

Then the Great Being said to him:

“O lord of men! thou canst not cast away

These passions which are common to mankind:

Let not thy people unjust taxes pay,

Equal and righteous ruling let them find.

“Send messengers to north, south, east, and west

The brahmins and ascetics to invite:

Provide them food and drink, a place to rest,

Clothes, and all else that may be requisite.

“Give thou the food and drink which satisfies

Sages and holy brahmins, full of faith:

Who gives and rules as well as in him lies

Will go to heaven all blameless after death.

“But if, surrounded by thy womankind

Thou feel thy passion and desire too strong,

This verse of poetry then bear in mind

And sing it in the midst of all the throng:

“No roof to shelter from the sky, amid the dogs he lay,

His mother nursed him as she walked: but he’s a king to-day.”

Such was the Great Being’s advice. Then he said, “I have given you my counsel. And now do you become an ascetic or not, as you think fit; but I will follow up the result of my own deeds.” Then he rose up in the air, and shook off the dust of his feet over him, and departed to Himalaya. And the king saw it, and was greatly moved; and relinquishing his kingdom to his eldest son, he called out his army, and set his face in the direction of Himalaya. When the Great Being heard of his coming, he went with his attendant sages and received him, and ordained him to the holy life, and taught him the means of inducing mystic ecstasy. He developed the Faculty of mystical meditation. Thus these two together became destined for Brahma’s world.

When the Master had ended his discourse, he said: “Thus, Brethren, wise men of old continued firm friends through the course of three or four existences.” Then he identified the Birth: “At that time Ananda was the wise Sambhuta, and I myself was the wise Citta.”

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.

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Vol. 6, translated by E.B. Cowell and W.H.D. Rouse, 1907.

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