Ja 503 — Sattigumba Jātaka

English translation by W. H. D. Rouse.

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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

“With, a great host,” etc.—This story the Master told while sojourning in the deer-park Maddakucchi, about Devadatta. When Devadatta threw the stone, and a fragment pierced the Blessed One’s foot, there was great pain in it. Numbers of the Brethren gathered to see the Tathagata. Now when the Blessed One saw the people gathered together, he said to them, “Brethren, this place is crowded: there will be a great gathering. Come now, carry me in a litter to Maddakucchi.” So then the Brethren did. Jivaka made the Tathagata’s foot well. The Brethren sitting before the Master talked of it: “Sirs, a sinner is Devadatta and sinners are all his people; the sinner keeps company with the sinful.” The Master asked, “What do ye talk of, Brethren?” They told him. Said he, “It has been so before, and this is not the first time Devadatta the sinner has kept sinful company.” Then he told them a story of the past.

Once upon a time, a king named Pancala reigned in the city of Uttara-Pancala. The Great Being was born as the son of the king of the Parrots, in a grove of silk-cotton trees which grew on a high table-land in the heart of a forest: there were two brothers. Up wind from this hill was a robber village, where five hundred robbers dwelt: under its lee was a hermitage with five hundred sages.

About the time when the parrots were moulting came a whirlwind that carried off one of the parrots, and he fell in the robber village among the robbers’ weapons: and because he fell there, they called him Sattigumba, or Bristling Spears. The other parrot fell in the hermitage, among the flowers which grew on a sandy spot, from which cause he was named Pupphaka, the Flower-bird. Sattigumba grew up amongst the robbers, Pupphaka with the sages.

One day the king in brave array, at the head of a great company, drove out in his splendid chariot to hunt the deer. Not far from the city, he entered a grove beautiful with a rich crop of flowers and fruit. He said, “If any one lets a deer go by him, he shall answer it!” Then he

descended from the chariot, and took cover, standing, bow in hand in the hut assigned him. The beaters beat the bushes to put up the game. An antelope rose and looked for a way; he saw a gap by the king, got through it, and away. Everyone asked who had let the deer go past. It was the king! Hearing this they went and made fun of him. The king in his self-conceit could not stomach the sport. “Now I’ll catch that deer!” cried he, and up into his chariot. “Full speed!” he said to the charioteer, and away he went after the deer. So quick went the king, that the others could not keep up with him: king and charioteer, these two alone, went on till midday, but saw no deer. The king then turned back; and seeing near the robber village a delightful glen, he alighted, bathed and drank, and came up from the water. Then the charioteer brought out a rug from the chariot, and spread it beneath the shade of a tree; the king lay on it, the charioteer sat at his feet chafing them: the king now dozed, now awoke. The people of the robber village, all the robbers even, had gone forth into the woods to attend the king: thus in the village no one was left but Sattigumba and the cook, a man named Patikolamba. At that moment Sattigumba coming out of the village, and seeing the king, thought, “What if we kill yon fellow as he sleeps, and take his ornaments!” So he returned to Patikolamba, and told him all about it.

To explain this the Master recited five stanzas:

“With a great host Pancala’s king went out to hunt the deer;

Deep in the woods the monarch strayed, and not a soul was near.

“Lo, he beholds within the wood a shelter thieves had made,

Out came a Parrot and forthwith these cruel words he said—

“‘A young man riding in a car, with jewels many a one,

And on his brow a golden crown shines ruddy like the sun!

“Both king and driver lie asleep there in the high midday:

Come, let us spoil them of their wealth and take it quick away!

“‘Tis quiet as the deep midnight: both king and driver sleep:

Their wealth and jewels let us take and keep,

Kill them, and pile boughs on them in a heap.”

Thus addressed, the man went out and looked, and seeing that it was a king, he was frightened, and recited this stanza:

“Why, Sattigumba, art thou mad? what words are these I hear?

Kings are like blazing bonfires, and most perilous to come near.”

The bird answered in another stanza:

“Fool’s talk, Patikolamba, this; and thou art mad, not I:

My mother’s naked; why contemn the calling we live by ?”

Now the king awoke, and hearing them talk together in the language of men, perceiving the danger, he recited the following stanza to arouse his charioteer:

“Up with you quick, friend charioteer, and yoke the chariot:

Seek we another shelter, since this parrot I like not.”

He rose quickly, and put to the team, then recited a stanza:

“The car is yoked, O mighty King, is yoked and ready there:

Step in, O King! and let us go seek shelter otherwhere.”

No sooner was he inside, than away flew the thoroughbreds swift as the wind. When Sattigumba saw the chariot departing, overwhelmed with excitement he repeated two stanzas:

“Now where are all the fellows gone that used to haunt this spot?

Away Pancala flies, let go because they saw him not.

“Shall he get clear away with life? Take javelin, spear, and bow:

Away Pancala flies, behold! O do not let him go!”

So he raved, fluttering to and fro: meanwhile in due course the king came to the hermitage of the sages. At that time the sages were all gone gathering fruits and roots, and only the Parrot Puppha was left in the hermitage. When he saw the king, he went to meet him, and addressed him courteously.

Then the Master recited four stanzas to explain:

The parrot with his ruddy beak right courteously did say,

“Welcome, O King! a happy chance directed thee this way!

Mighty thou art and glorious: what errand brings thee, pray?

“The tindook and the piyal leaves, and kasumari sweet,

Though few and little, take the best we have, O King, and eat.

“And this cool water, from a cave high hidden on a hill,

O mighty monarch, take of it, drink if it be thy will.

“All gleaning in the wood are they who here are wont to live:

Arise, O King, thyself and take: I have no hands to give.”

The king pleased at this courteous address, answered with a couple of stanzas:

“No better fowl was ever hatched; a very righteous bird:

But the other parrot over there said many a cruel word.

“O let him not go hence alive, O come and slay or bind!

He cried: I sought this hermitage, and safety here I find.”

Thus addressed by the king, Pupphaka uttered two stanzas:

“Brothers we are, O mighty King, of one self mother bred,

Reared both together in one tree, in different pastures fed.

“For Sattigumba to the thieves, I to the sages came;

Those bad, these good, and hence it comes our ways are not the same.”

He then explained the differences in detail, repeating a pair of stanzas:

“There wounds and bonds and trickery, cheating and shabby turns,

Raiding, and deeds of violence: such is the lore he learns.

“Here self-control, sobriety, kindness, the right and true,

Shelter and drink for strangers: these were round me as I grew.”

Next he declared the Law to the king in the following stanzas:

“To whomsoever, good or bad, a man shall honour pay,

Vicious or virtuous, that man holds him beneath his sway.

“Like as the comrade one admires, like as the chosen friend,

Such will become the man who keeps beside him, in the end.

“Friendship makes like, and touch by touch infects, you’ll find it true:

Poison the arrow, and ere long the quiver’s poisoned too.

“The wise eschews bad company, for fear of staining touch:

Wrap rotten fish in grass, you’ll find the grass stinks just as much.

And they who keep fool’s company themselves will soon be such.

“Sweet frankincense wrap in a leaf, the leaf will smell as sweet.

So they themselves will soon grow wise, that sit at wise men’s feet.

“By this similitude the wise should his own profit know,

Let him eschew bad company and with the righteous go:

Heaven waits the righteous, but the bad are doomed to hell below.”

The king was pleased with this exposition. Then the sages returned also. The king greeted the sages, saying, “Be gracious, sirs, come and take up your abode in my grounds,” and prevailed on them to accept the invitation. When he got home again, he proclaimed immunity for all parrots. The sages came thither too and visited him. And the king gave them his park to live in, and took care of them so long as he lived. When he went to swell the hosts of heaven, his son had the royal umbrella raised over him, and he also took care of the sages, and so it went on from father to son through seven generations of kings all bounteous in alms. And the Great Being dwelt in the woods, until he passed away according to his deeds.

When this lesson was ended, the Master said, “Thus, Brethren, you see that Devadatta kept bad company before, as he now does.” Then he identified the Birth: “At that time, Devadatta was Sattigumba, his followers were the robbers, Ananda was the king, the Buddha’s followers were the sages, and I myself was Parrot Pupphaka.”

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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