Ja 518 — Pandara Jātaka

English translation by H. T. Francis.

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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

“No man that lets,” etc.—This was a story told by the Master, whilst sojourning at Jetavana, as to how Devadatta told a lie, and how the earth opened and swallowed him up. At that time, when Devadatta was being blamed by the Brethren, the Master said, “Not now only, Brethren, but of old too Devadatta told a lie and was swallowed up by the earth,” and so saying he told a story of the past.

Once upon a time when Brahmadatta was king in Benares, five hundred trading folk took ship and set sail, and on the seventh day when they were out of sight of land, they were wrecked in mid ocean and all save one man became food for fishes. This one by favour of the wind reached the port of Karambiya, and landing naked and destitute he went about the place, begging alms. The people thought, “Here is an ascetic, happy and contented with little,” and they showed him every hospitality. But he said, “I have enough to live upon,” and when they offered him under and upper garments, he would have none of them. They said, “No ascetic can go beyond this in the way of contentment,” and being the more exceedingly pleased with him, they built him a hermitage for a dwelling-place, and he went by the name of the Karambiya ascetic. While he was living here, he met with great honour and gain, and both a snake-king and a garuda-king came to pay their respects to him, and the name of the former was Pandara. Now one day the garuda-king came to the ascetic and after saluting him took his seat on one side and said, “Sir, our people, when they attack snakes, many of them perish. We do not know the right way to seize snakes. There is said to be some mystery in the matter. You could, perhaps, wheedle them out of the secret.” “All right,” said the ascetic, and when the garuda-king had taken his leave and departed, as soon as ever the snake-king arrived and with a respectful salutation had taken his seat, he asked him, saying, “King-snake, the garudas say that in seizing you, many of them are killed. In attacking you, how can they seize you securely?” “Sir,” he replied, “this is our secret; if I were to tell it, I should bring about the destruction of all my kinsfolk.” “What do you really suspect me of telling some one else? I’ll tell no one. I only ask to satisfy my own curiosity. You may trust and tell me without the slightest fear.” The

snake-king promised to tell him and took his leave. The next day the ascetic again asked him, and then too he did not tell him. But on the third day when the snake-king had come and taken his seat, the ascetic said, “To-day is the third day since I asked you. Why do you not tell me?” “I am afraid, Sir, you might tell some one else.” “I’ll not say a word to a creature: tell me without any fear.” Then the snake made him promise to tell no one, and said, “Sir, we make ourselves heavy by swallowing very big stones and lie down, and when the garudas come, we open our mouths wide, and show our teeth and fall upon them. They come on and seize us by the head, and while they strive to lift us up, heavy as we are, from the ground, the water streams from them, and they drop down dead in the midst of it. In this way a number of garudas perish. When they attack us, why in the world do they seize us by the head? If the foolish creatures should seize us by the tail and hold us head downwards, they could force us to disgorge the stones we have swallowed, and so, making us a light weight, they could carry us off with them.” Thus did the snake reveal his secret to this wicked fellow. Then, when the snake had gone away, up came the garuda-king, and saluting the Karambiya ascetic he asked, “Well! Sir, have you learned his secret from the snake-king?” “Yes, Sir,” he said, and told him everything just as it was told him. On hearing it, the garuda said, “The snake-king has made a great mistake. He ought not to have told another how to destroy his kinsfolk. Well, to-day I must first of all raise a garuda wind and seize him.” So, raising a wind, he seized Pandara the snake-king by the tail and held him head downmost; and having thus made him disgorge the stones he had swallowed, he flew up into the air with him. Pandaraka, as he was suspended head downwards in the air, sorely lamenting cried, “I have brought sorrow upon me,” and he repeated these stanzas:

The man that lets his secret thought be known,

Random of speech, to indiscretion prone,

Poor fool, at once is overcome by fear,

As I king-snake am by a bird o’erthrown.

The man who in his folly could betray

The thought that he should hide from light of day,

By his rash speech is overcome by fear,

As I king-snake fall to this bird a prey.

No comrade ought thy inmost thoughts to share,

The best of friends ofttimes most foolish are,

And if too wise, of treachery beware.

I trusted him alas! for was not he

A holy man, of strict austerity?

My secret I revealed; the deed is done

And now I weep for very misery.

Into my confidence the wretch did creep,

Nor could I any secret from him keep:

From him the danger that I dread has come,

And now for very misery I weep.

Judging his friend as faithful to the core

And moved by fear, or the strong love he bore,

To some vile wretch his secret one betrays

And is o'erthrown, poor fool, to rise no more.

Whoso proclaims in evil company

The secret thought that still should hidden lie,

'Mongst men is counted as a poison-snake:

"From such an one, pray, keep aloof," they cry.

Fair women, silken robes and sandal wood,

Garlands and perfumes, even drink and food,

Yea all desires—if only thou, O bird,

Come to our aid—shall be by us eschewed.

Thus did Pandaraka, suspended in the air head downwards, utter his lament in eight stanzas. The garuda, hearing the sound of his lamentation, reproved him and said, "King-snake, after divulging your secret to the ascetic, wherefore do you now lament?" And he uttered this stanza:

Of us three creatures living here, pray name

The one that rightly should incur the blame.

Nor priest nor bird, but foolish deed of thine,

O snake, hath brought thee to this depth of shame.

On hearing this Pandaraka repeated another stanza:

The priest, methought, must be a friend to me,

A holy man, of strict austerity:

My secret I betrayed: the deed is done,

And now I weep for very misery.

Then the garuda repeated four stanzas:

All creatures born into this world must die;

Yet Wisdom’s ways her children justify:

By knowledge, justice, self-restraint and truth

A man at length achieves his purpose high.

Parents are kind all other kin above,

No third there is to show us equal love,

Not e’en to them betray thy secret thought,

Lest peradventure they should traitors prove.

Parents and kin of every degree,

Allies and comrades all may friendly be:

To none of them entrust thy hidden thought,

Or thou wilt later rue their treachery.

A wife may youthful be and good and fair,

Own troops of friends, and children’s love may share:

Not e’en to her entrust thy hidden thought,

Or of her treachery thou must beware.

Then follow these stanzas:

His secret no man should disclose, but guard like treasure-trove:

Disclosure of a secret thing no wise man would approve.

Wise men to woman or a foe their secrets ne’er betray;

Trust not the slaves of appetite; creatures of impulse they.

Whoso reveals his secret thought to one not overwise,

Fears the betrayal of his trust and at his mercy lies.

All such as know the secret thing that thou shouldst rather hide,

Threaten thy peace of mind; to none that secret thing confide.

By day to thine own self alone the secret dare to name,

But venture not at dead of night that secret to proclaim;

For close at hand, be sure, there stand men ready to betray

The slightest word they may have heard: so trust them not, I pray.

These five stanzas will appear in the Problem of the Five Sages in the Ummagga Birth.

Then follow these stanzas:

As some huge city fenced on every side

With moat, of iron wrought, has long defied

All entrance of a foe to Fairy Land,

So e’en are they that do their counsels hide.

Who by rash speech to secrets give no clue,

But ever steadfast to themselves are true,

From them all enemies do keep aloof,

As men flee far when deadly snakes pursue.

When the Truth had been thus proclaimed by the garuda, Pandaraka said:

A tonsured, nude ascetic left his home

And seeking alms did through the country roam:

To him my secret I alas! did tell,

And straight from happiness and virtue fell.

What line of conduct should a priest pursue,

What vows take on him, and what faults eschew?

How free himself from his besetting sin,

And at the last a heavenly mansion win?

The garuda said:

By patience, self-restraint, long-suffering,

By calumny and ire abandoning,

Thus may a priest get rid of every sin,

And at the last a heavenly mansion win.

Pandaraka, on hearing the garuda-king thus declare the Truth, begged for his life and repeated this stanza:

As mother gazing on her baby boy

Is thrilled in every limb with holy joy,

So upon me, O king of birds, bestow

That pity mothers to their children show.

Then the garuda in granting him his life repeated another stanza:

O snake, to-day from death I set thee free;

Of kinds of children there are only three,

Pupil, adopted child and true-born son:

Of these rejoice that thou art surely one.

So saying, he alighted from the air and placed the snake upon the ground.

The Master, to make the matter clear, repeated two stanzas:

The bird, so saying, straight released his foe

And gently bore him to the earth below;

“Set free to-day, go, safe from danger dwell

In water or on land. I’ll guard thee well.

As a skilled leech to men with sickness curst,

Or a cool tank to those that are athirst,

As house that shelters from a chilling frost,

So I a refuge prove to thee, when lost.”

And saying, “Be off,” he let him go. And the snake disappeared in the abode of the nagas. But the bird, returning to the dwelling-place of the garudas, said, “The snake Pandaraka has won my confidence under oath and has been let loose by me. I will now put him to the test, to see what his feelings are towards me,” and repairing to the abode of the nagas, he raised a garuda wind. On seeing him the snake-king thought the garuda-king must have come to seize him, so he assumed a form that stretched to a thousand fathoms and making himself heavy by swallowing stones and sand he lay down, keeping his tail beneath him and raising the hood upon his head, as if minded to bite the garuda-king. On seeing this the garuda repeated another stanza:

O snake, thou madest peace with thine old enemy;

But now thou showst thy fangs. Whence comes this fear to thee?

On hearing this the snake-king repeated three stanzas:

Ever suspect a foe, nor trust thy friend as staunch;

Security breeds fear, to kill thee root and branch.

What! trust the man with whom one quarrelled long ago!

Nay, stand upon thy guard. No one can love his foe.

Inspire a trust in all, but put thy trust in none,

Thyself suspected not, be to suspicion prone.

He that is truly wise ought every nerve to strain

That his true nature ne’er may be to others plain.

Thus did they talk one with another, and becoming reconciled and friendly they repaired together to the hermitage of the ascetic.

The Master, to make the matter clear, said,

The godlike graceful pair of them now see,

Breathing an air of holy purity;

Like steeds well matched neath equal yoke they ran,

To seek the dwelling of that saintly man.

With regard to this the Master uttered another stanza:

Then to the ascetic straight king-snake did go,

And thus Pandaraka addressed his foe,

“Know that to-day, all danger past, I’m free,

But ’Tis not due to love of thine for me.”

Then the ascetic repeated another stanza:

To that bird-king, I solemnly declare,

I greater love than e’er to thee did bear,

Moved by affection for that royal bird,

I of set purpose, not through folly, erred.

On hearing this, the snake-king repeated two stanzas:

The man that looks at this world and the next,

Ne’er finds himself with love or hatred vext,

‘Neath garb of self-restraint thou fain wouldst hide

But lawless acts that holy garb belied.

Thou, seeming noble, art with meanness stained,

And, as ascetic clad, art unrestrained;

By nature with ignoble thoughts accurst,

Thou in all kinds of sinful act art versed.

So to reprove him, he uttered this stanza, reviling him:

Informer, traitor, that wouldst slay

A guileless friend, be thy head riven

By this my Act of Truth, I pray,

Piecemeal, all into fragments seven.

So before the very eyes of the snake-king, the head of the ascetic was split into seven pieces, and at the very spot where he was sitting the ground was cleft asunder. And, disappearing into the Earth, he was re-born in the Avici hell, and the snake-king and the garuda-king returned each to his own abode.

The Master, to make clear the fact that he had been swallowed up by the earth, repeated the last stanza:

Therefore I say, friends ne'er should treacherous be;

Than a false friend worse man is none to see.

Buried in earth the venomous creature lies,

And at the snake-king's word the ascetic dies.

The Master here ended his discourse and said, "Not now only, Brethren, but of old too, Devadatta told a lie and was swallowed up by the earth," and he identified the Birth: "At that time the ascetic was Devadatta, the snake-king Sariputta, and the garuda-king 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.

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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