Ja 520 — Gandatindu Jātaka

English translation by H. T. Francis.

Source: https://raw.githubusercontent.com/suttacentral/sc-data/2d9ca8da858f94302ed6783e2717bf73d651881b/html_text/en/pli/sutta/kn/ja/vol5/ja520.html

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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

“Zeal is the way,” etc. This story the Master, dwelling at Jetavana, told concerning the admonition of a king. This admonition of a king has already been related in full.

Once upon a time in the kingdom of Kampilla, in a city of the Northern Pancalas, a king called Pancala, being established in evil courses and reckless, ruled his kingdom unrighteously. So all his ministers likewise became unrighteous. His subjects being oppressed by taxation took their wives and families and wandered in the forest like wild beasts. Where once stood villages, there now were none, and the people through the fear of the king’s men by day did not venture to dwell in their houses, but fencing them about with thorn branches, as soon as the day broke, they disappeared into the forest. By day they were plundered by the king’s men and by night by robbers. At that time the Bodhisatta came to life in the form of a divinity of a tinduka tree outside the city, and every year received from the king an offering worth a thousand pieces of money, and he thought, “This is a roi faineant; his whole kingdom is going to ruin; besides me there is no one that can set the king in the right way, and he is a benefactor to me and every year honours me with an offering of a thousand pieces. I will admonish him.” So in the night he entered into the royal chamber, and taking up his position at the bed’s head he stood poised in the air, emitting a bright light. The king, when he saw him thus shining like the newly-risen sun, asked him who he was and wherefore he had come. On hearing his words he said, “Great king, I am the divinity of the tinduka tree, and I come to give you good advice.” “What advice have you to give me?” said the king. “Sire,” said the Great Being, “you are careless in your rule, and so all your kingdom is going to ruin, as if it were the prey of hirelings. Kings that are careless in their rule are not masters of all their realm, but in this world they meet with destruction and in the world to come they are re-born in hell, and when they are careless both those within their domain and those outside it are careless too, and therefore a king ought to be exceedingly careful,” and so saying, to inculcate a moral lesson, he repeated these stanzas:

Zeal is the way to Nirvana, but sloth leads to death, it is said;

While vigilant souls never die, the careless are even as dead.

From pride as its root cometh sloth: from sloth cometh loss and decay:

Decay is the parent of sin. All sloth, O great king, put away.

Brave souls by their sloth many times of wealth and of realm have been shorn,

And so village lords may become like the waif, without home, all forlorn.

When a prince in his rule groweth slack, untrue to his name and his fame,

Should his wealth all at once disappear, of that prince it is counted as shame.

Thou art slack out of season, O king, from the right thou hast wandered away,

Thy realm that so flourished of old to robbers doth now fall a prey.

No son shall inherit thy realm, with its treasures of gold and of corn,

Thy realm to the spoiler a prey and thou of thy wealth liest shorn.

The prince that is stript of his realm, with its stores and its wealth manifold,

His friends and his kith and his kin esteem him no more as of old.

His guards and his charioteers, his horse and his footmen so bold,

As they see him of all dispossest, regard him no more as of old.

The fool of disorderly life is by evil advice led astray,

Soon stript is the fool of his fame, as the snake its old skin casts away.

But the man who arising betimes unwearied and orderly is,

His oxen and kine thrive apace, and riches increasing are his.

Great king, ever open thine ears, and list to what people may say,

That seeing and hearing the truth, thou mayst win to good fortune thy way.

Thus did the Great Being admonish the king in eleven stanzas, and “Go,” said he, “without delay and foster thy kingdom, and destroy it not,” and so departed to his own abode. And the king hearkened to his words and, being much moved, on the morrow he handed over

his kingdom to his ministers, and accompanied by his chaplain he left the city betimes by the eastern gate and went a furlong's distance. There an old man, a native of the village, carried branches of thorn from the forest and putting them all round his house closed the door, and with his wife and children betook himself to the forest. At eventide when the king's men had departed, he returned to his house, and by the door his foot was pierced with a thorn point, and sitting cross-legged and extracting the thorn he cursed the king in the following stanza:

Struck by an arrow in the fray,

So may Pancala mourn,

As I have cause to grieve to-day,

Thus wounded by a thorn.

This imprecation on the king came about by the power of the Bodhisatta, and it was as one possessed by the Bodhisatta that he cursed him. In this light is his action to be regarded. Now at this juncture the king and his chaplain stood before him in disguise. So the chaplain hearing his words uttered another stanza:

Thou art old, my good sir, and thy sight is too dim

To discern things aright, I'll be sworn;

As for king Brahmadatta, what is it to him,

That thy foot has been pierced by a thorn

On hearing this the old man repeated three stanzas:

'Tis due to Brahmadatta, sure, that I am racked with pain,

Just as defenceless folk are oft by their oppressors slain.

By night to thieves a prey are we, to publicans by day,

Lewd folks abound within the realm, when evil kings bear sway.

Distrest by such a fear as this, men to the forest flee,

And round their dwellings scatter thorns, for their security.

On hearing this the king addressing his chaplain said, "Master, the old man speaks truly: it is our fault. Come, let us return and rule the kingdom righteously." Then the Bodhisatta, taking possession of the body of the chaplain, stood before him and said, "Great king, let us investigate the matter." And passing from that village to another one they listened to

the words spoken by an old woman. She was, it is said, a poor woman and had two grown up daughters under her care, whom she would not allow to enter the forest. But she herself brought fire-wood and leaves of trees and ministered to her daughters. One day she climbed up a bush to gather leaves and falling rolled upon the ground, and she cursed the king, threatening him with death, and uttered this stanza:

Oh! when will Brahmadatta die, for long as he shall reign,

Our daughters live unwedded and for husbands sigh in vain?

Then the priest checking her spoke this stanza:

Evil and profitless withal these words of thine, O jade,

Whence shall the king find in his realm a husband for each maid?

The old woman on hearing this repeated two stanzas:

Not evil are these words of mine, nor spoken all in vain,

So long as thy defenceless folk are by oppressors slain.

By night to thieves a prey are we, to publicans by day,

Lewd folks abound within the realm, when evil kings bear sway,

When times are bad, poor maids are sad, for husbands none have they.

Hearing her words they thought, “She speaks to the point,” and going farther on they listened to what a ploughman was saying. As he was ploughing, they say, his ox called Saliya was laid low, being struck by the ploughshare, and its owner cursed the king and repeated this stanza:

So may Pancala fall to earth by spear-thrust of his foe,

As Saliya by ploughshare hurt, poor wretch, here lieth low.

Then the priest, to check him, spoke this stanza:

With Brahmadatta thou art wroth, though no good cause is shown,

And while thou dost revile the king, the guilt is all thine own.

Hearing this the ploughman replied in three stanzas:

With Brahmadatta I am wroth, and rightly I maintain;

Defenceless folk are ever thus by their oppressor slain.

By night to thieves a prey are we etc.

The slave had twice to cook the food and brought it late to me;

While all agape for her, my ox was wounded fatally.

Going on still further they stayed in a certain village. Next day early in the morning a vicious cow kicked a milkman and upset him, milk and all. The man cursed Brahmadatta and repeated this stanza:

By stroke of sword Pancala's lord shall fall amidst the fray,

As I'm laid low by kick of cow, milk-pail and all, to-day.

The brahmin in a stanza said:

A cow, say, kicks against the pricks, or pail of milk upsets—

What's this to Brahmadatta that all this abuse he gets?

On hearing this the milkman repeated three stanzas:

Pancala's king, O brahmin, is to blame, for in his reign

Defenceless folk are seen to be by their oppressors slain.

By night etc.

A wild and savage cow that we had never milked before

We milked to-day: demands for milk grow ever more and more.

They said, "He speaks the truth," and going forth from that village they climbed into the highway and started towards the city. And in a certain village tax-collectors killed a young dappled calf and stripped off its skin to make a sword-sheath, and the mother of the calf was so grieved for the loss of her young one that she neither ate grass nor drank water but roamed to and fro, lamenting. On seeing her the village boys cursed the king and spoke this stanza:

So let Pancala pine away and childless weep in vain,

As this poor cow distracted seeks the calf that men have slain.

Then the priest spoke another stanza:

When from its herd some beast escapes, and roars to ease its pain,

Herein what cause hast thou of Brahmadatta to complain?

Then the village boys repeated two stanzas:

King Brahmadatta's sin in this, brahmin, to me is plain,

Defenceless folk are ever thus by their oppressors slain.

By night to thieves a prey are we, to publicans by day,

Lewd folks abound within the realm, when evil kings bear sway.

Why should a tender calf be killed, just for a sheath, I pray?

"You speak truth," they said and departed. Then, going on their way, in a certain dry tank crows were striking frogs with their beaks and devouring them. When they reached this spot, the Bodhisatta by the exercise of his power cursed the king by the mouth of a frog, saying,

So may Pancala killed in fight be eaten, sons and all,

As woodland frog to village crows a prey this day I fall.

Hearing this the priest conversing with the frog repeated this stanza:

Kings cannot, frog, as you must know,

Guard every creature here below,

In this no wicked king is he,

That crows eat living things like thee.

On hearing this the frog repeated two stanzas:

The priest with words too flattering

Thus wickedly deceives the king;

The king, though people are oppressed,

Deems the priest's policy the best.

If blest with all prosperity

This realm should glad and peaceful be,

Crows richest offerings might enjoy,

Nor need aught living to destroy.

On hearing this the king and the priest thought, “All creatures, including the frog that lives in the forest, curse us,” and going thence to the city they ruled their kingdom righteously, and abiding in the admonition of the Great Being they devoted themselves to charity and other good works.

The Master here ended his discourse to the king of Kosala in these words, “A king, Sire, must forsake evil courses, and rule his kingdom righteously,” and he identified the Birth: “At that time the divinity of the tinduka tree 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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