

**Book 2 - Tales 51-100**

# **Jātaka Tales**

*Folk Tales of the Buddha's  
Previous Lives*



*As Told and Illustrated by Eric K. Van Horn*

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Volume 2



as told and illustrated by Eric K. Van Horn

originally translated by Robert Chalmers, B.A., of Oriel College, Oxford University

originally edited by Professor Edward Byles Cowell, Cambridge University

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Without whom I might never have discovered  
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# Abbreviations Used for Pāli Text References

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**AN:** *Anguttara Nikāya, The Numerical Discourses of the Buddha*

**Bv:** *Buddhavamsa, Chronicle of Buddhas*

**BvA:** *Buddhavamsatthakathā*, commentary to the *Buddhavamsa*

**Cv:** *Cullavagga*, the “smaller book,” the second volume in the *Khandhaka*, which is the second book of the monastic code (the Vinaya)

**Dhp:** *Dhammapada, The Path of Dhamma*, a collection of 423 verses

**DhpA:** *Dhammapada-atthakathā*, commentary to the *Dhammapada*

**DN:** *Digha Nikāya, The Long Discourses of the Buddha*

**Iti:** *Itivuttaka, This Was Said* (by the Buddha), a.k.a., Sayings of the Buddha

**Ja:** *Jātaka Tales*, previous life stories of the Buddha

**JaA:** *Jātaka-atthakathā*, commentary on the *Jātaka Tales*

**Khp:** *Khuddakapāṭha, Short Passages*

**MA:** *Majjhima Nikāya Atthakathā*, commentary on the *Middle Length Discourses of the Buddha* (by Buddhaghosa)

**MN:** *Majjhima Nikāya, The Middle Length Discourses of the Buddha*

**Mv:** *Mahāvagga*, the first volume in the *Khandhaka*, which is the second book of the monastic code (the Vinaya)

**Pm:** *Pātimokkha*, *The Code of Monastic Discipline*, the first book of the monastic code (the Vinaya)

**SN:** *Samyutta Nikāya*, *The Connected Discourses of the Buddha*

**S Nip:** *Sutta Nipāta*, *The Sutta Collection*, literally, “suttas falling down,” a sutta collection in the *Khuddaka Nikāya* consisting mostly of verse

**Sv:** *Sutta-vibhaṅga*: *Classification of the Suttas*, the “origin stories” for the Pātimokkha rules

**Thag:** *Theragāthā*: *Verses of the Elder Monks*

**ThagA:** *Theragāthā-atṭhakathā*, Commentary to the *Theragāthā*

**Thig:** *Therīgāthā*: *Verses of the Elder Nuns*

**ThigA:** *Therīgāthā-atṭhakathā*, Commentary to the *Therīgāthā*

**Ud:** *Udāna*, *Exclamations*, the third book of the *Khuddaka Nikāya*

**Vin:** *Vinaya Pitaka*, *Basket of Discipline*, the monastic rules for monks and nuns.

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# ***Introduction to Volume 2***

As I have worked my way through these stories, and indeed in my entire experience of reading the Pāli Canon, I have come to some understandings about this extraordinary literature that I would like to share.

I am not a scholar. There are many erudite discussions of the Jātaka Tales in books and on the Internet, and I am not trying to do what they do. This is not because I do not respect that type of effort because I most certainly do. But I am trying to make these stories more accessible. And to that end I am trying to balance the idioms of the original Pāli – which uses a lot of passive tense – the unique and sometimes quirky Victorian language of the original translations, and modern language. One advantage that we have now is that many Buddhist terms like “dharma” and “karma” have come into common use. The Victorian translators did not have that luxury, and so they tried to find terms that the people of that time would understand.

Some of the language defies translation. For example, the original texts use the term “bhikkhu.” This is normally translated as “monk.” However, the convention of that time was to address a gathering using the term that referred to the highest-ranking person in attendance. The rank order was 1) monk, 2) nun, 3) layman, and 4) laywoman. So if only laywomen were present, the Buddha would address the talk to laywomen. If both laymen and laywomen were present, the talk was addressed to laymen. And if even a single monk were present, the Buddha would address the talk to monks. Thus the term “bhikkhu” simply meant that one monk was present.

There is no way to capture this convention in English. Most of the Jātaka Tales refer to “bhikkhus.” The Victorian translations used the term “Brethren,” which mapped to their Anglican understanding. But this does not mean that only monks were present. It only means that among

the members of the Buddha's community that were present, there was at least one monk. I was tempted to simply use the word "bhikkhu," but the tradeoff is that in stories that I am trying to make accessible, this is an awkward term for most people. I use the term "monk" in my versions of the stories, but frankly, I cringe every time that I do it. I wish there was some more gender and rank neutral way to capture the flavor of the way in which the word "bhikkhu" was used.

Another issue is the as mentioned passive tense. Modern writers will probably cringe at the pervasive use of passive tense. But this is how both the original Pāli and the Victorian translations tend to be. I have also seen – since I live in the desert Southwest – that the oral traditions of Native Americans tend to be this way as well. Again, I am no expert in this area, but it may be that stories that are told around a campfire tend to use more passive tense.

So these are some of the language issues that I am trying to balance. The goal is to provide a readable rendering of the stories, one that is enjoyable and yet also maintains some of the original idioms and flavor.

And while I am on this topic, I would like to give special thanks to the Pueblo Indians of New Mexico. Before I moved here, I read a lot about the oral tradition. I experienced a little of that when I went to India. But here in New Mexico, living among Native Americans, I have gotten to experience first-hand what that is like.

Native American languages are, like Pāli, oral traditions. They have no written language. So from the time children are very young, they learn everything from stories that are told and retold.

Last year I had two wonderful experiences in how this feels. One was at Taos Pueblo, where a young University of New Mexico student and a member of the Pueblo gave a tour of the Pueblo. He told many stories. When I got home I looked up his stories on the Internet, and what I found was that the stories that the Indians tell about events can be quite a bit different from the "conventional history." For example, the Taos

Pueblo version of the Taos Revolt of 1847 is quite a bit different, and it turns out that there is a lot of evidence to support the Taos Pueblo version.

Later that summer I had a wonderful tour of Santa Clara Pueblo, which is near Los Alamos. This was also done by a member of the Pueblo. His day job was as a fire fighter. Many of the Pueblos and Reservations here have firefighting brigades, mainly to fight wildfires. It is one of the ways in which they can make a living. It is extremely dangerous work.

This man was on vacation, but instead of going away or doing nothing, he decided to give tours of the Pueblo. For over two hours he told story after story. One story went as far back as pre-Spanish times. (Coronado led the first Spanish expedition to New Mexico in 1540. Locally this is known as the *Entrada*.) Another story happened only a few years ago. He went from one story to another as if all of time were part of a single continuum. What happened 600 years ago may as well have been last Tuesday.

You could tell that these stories were embedded in his DNA, and that is probably true for most of the people from the Pueblo. It is one thing to write something down and read it in a book. It is quite another thing to grow up hearing these stories over and over again. Everyone in the community knows these stories, and they can probably all repeat them verbatim.

The issue of time in such a culture is quite different from what we normally experience. When I was in India they told me that they do not think of time as being a particular year or day or month. Time is relative. It happened *before this* or *about when that happened* and so on. Time is more fluid. It weaves together. It is more like the water in a stream than discrete events. And as for the Santa Clarans, it all blends together.

This is why for cultures like Native Americans the preservation of language is so important. Language reflects culture, and the culture can only be properly preserved in a language that reflects that culture. For

Buddhists, we are fortunate that Pāli and Sanskrit - which are the technical languages of Buddhism - did not face near cultural extinction. In fact, Pāli and Sanskrit have thrived and been preserved now for something like 3,000 years. And many times the best way to "translate" something into English is not to translate it at all, but to use the original term, and then make sure that English speakers understand the nuances of the term.

One of the advantages of reading a great deal of the Pāli Canon is that over time some of these subtle cultural nuances work their way into your own DNA. This is why I tend to emphasize quantity over detailed analysis in reading the Buddhist texts. Just read as much as you can and understand it as best as you can, and don't turn anything that isn't clear into a problem. Even the greatest scholars disagree about what some things mean. But by reading as much as you can rather than diving in as deep as you can, I think you can replicate some of the experience of the oral traditions. Then a lot of the subtle culture of Buddhism creeps into your DNA, rather than putting you in a position to write a paper about something.

But whatever you do or however you approach these texts, please do not follow what I say blindly any more than you would anyone else. The best way to approach the Pāli Canon is to work your way through it as best you can. Over time it will become personal. You will make your own observations and come to your own conclusions. The best outcome is that at some point you make it your own.

Eric K. Van Horn  
Rio Rancho, NM  
June 2018

# **51: Mahāsīlava Jātaka, The Evildoers**

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*In this story, we see a relentless belief in the power of doing good. It may seem a little naïve, but in fact we have many examples throughout history of such a devotion to good bearing fruit. But goodness is quiet. It does not make much noise, so it does not get much publicity when it happens. Violence and anger and discord are noisy, so they get a lot of attention. Of course, goodness does not always win out, at least not in this lifetime. But if you put it into the context of infinite lifetimes, there is a much greater sense of urgency about how we act in life and the implications for our actions.*

---

*"Persevere, my brother."* This story was told by the Master while at Jetavana. It is about a monk who had given up pursuing the path. Being asked by the Master whether it was true that he was a backslider, the monk said that it was so. "How can you, brother," the Master said, "grow cold in such a great enterprise? Even when the wise and good of bygone days lost their kingdom, their resolution was so unrelenting that they won back their kingdom." And so saying, he told this story of the past.

---

Once upon a time when Brahmadatta was reigning in Benares, the Bodhisatta was born as the child of the queen. On his name-day they gave him the name of Prince Goodness. At the age of sixteen his education was complete, and later he was crowned as King at his father's death. He ruled his people righteously under the title of the great King Goodness.

He built an almonry (*a place where alms were given to the poor*) at each of the four city gates, another in the heart of the city, and yet another at his own palace gates. There were six in all, and he distributed alms to poor

travelers and the needy at each one. He kept the Precepts and observed the fast-days. He overflowed with patience, loving-kindness, and mercy. He ruled the land in righteousness, cherishing all creatures alike with the fond love of a father for his baby.

Now one of the King's ministers behaved treacherously in the King's harem (*presumably he committed an act of sexual indiscretion*), and this became the subject of gossip. The ministers subsequently reported it to the King. When he investigated the matter himself, the King found the minister's guilt to be clear. So he sent for the culprit and said, "Blinded by folly, you have committed a treacherous act, and you are not worthy to live in my kingdom. Take your possessions and your wife and family and leave." Having been driven from the realm, that minister left the Kāsi country and entered the service of the King of Kosala.

Gradually he rose to be that monarch's confidential adviser. One day he said to the King of Kosala, "Sire, the kingdom of Benares is like a honeycomb untainted by flies. Its King is feebleness itself. A very small force would be able to conquer the whole country."

The King of Kosala knew that the kingdom of Benares was large. The advice that a small force could conquer it made him suspicious that his adviser was trying to lead him into a trap. "Traitor," he cried, "you are paid to say this!"

"Indeed, I am not," answered the adviser. "I speak the truth. If you doubt me, send men to attack a village just over his border. Then you will see that when they are caught and brought before him, the King will let them off scot-free. He will even give them gifts."

"That is quite a bold assertion," thought the King. "I will test his advice without delay." So he sent some of his men to attack a village across the Benares border. The thugs were captured and brought before the King of Benares. He asked them, "My children, why have you attacked my villagers?"

They replied, "Because we could not make a living."

"Then why didn't you come to me?" the King said. "See that you do not do this again." And he gave them gifts and sent them away.

They went back and told this to the King of Kosala. But this evidence was not enough to convince him to attack. A second band was sent to attack another village, this time in the heart of the kingdom. These men, too, were likewise sent away with gifts by the King of Benares. But even this evidence was not strong enough for the King, and a third party was sent to plunder the very streets of Benares! And these, like their predecessors, were sent away with gifts! Satisfied at last that the King of Benares was an entirely good King, the King of Kosala resolved to seize his kingdom, and he marched against him with soldiers and elephants.

Now in those days the King of Benares had a thousand gallant warriors who would even face the charge of a rut elephant (*rut or musth is a condition in bull elephants in which testosterone levels can be 60 times greater than normal, and they become extremely dangerous to humans*). Even the thunderbolt of Indra could not terrify this matchless band of invincible heroes who were ready to subdue all India at the King's command. These soldiers, hearing that the King of Kosala was coming to take Benares, went to their sovereign with the news. They implored him that they might be sent against the invaders. "We will defeat and capture him, sire," they said, "before he can so much as set foot over the border."

"No, my children," the King said. "No one will suffer because of me. Let anyone who covets my kingdom take it if they wish." And he refused to allow his soldiers to march against the invader.

Then the King of Kosala crossed the border and came to the middle-country. Again the ministers went to the King with a renewed sense of urgency. But still the King refused. And now the King of Kosala appeared outside the city. He sent a message to the King telling him to either give up the kingdom or engage in battle. The King of Benares replied, "I will not fight. Let him seize my kingdom."

Yet a third time the King's ministers came to him and implored him not

to allow the King of Kosala to enter but to allow them to fight and capture him outside the city. Still refusing, the King ordered the city gates to be opened. He seated himself in state on his royal throne with his thousand ministers around him.

Entering the city and finding no one to bar his way, the King of Kosala took his army to the royal palace. The doors stood open wide, and there on his gorgeous throne with his thousand ministers around him sat the great King Goodness in state. "Seize them all," cried the King of Kosala. "Tie their hands tightly behind their backs and take them to the cemetery! Dig holes there and bury them alive up to the neck so that they cannot move their hands or feet. The jackals will come at night and finish the graves!"

At the bidding of the brute King, his followers bound the King of Benares and his ministers and hauled them off. But even in this hour the great King Goodness did not harbor so much as a single angry thought against the invaders. And not a man among his ministers, even when they were being marched off in bonds, could disobey the King, so perfect was the discipline among his followers.

So King Goodness and his ministers were led off and buried up to the neck in pits in the cemetery. The King was in the middle and the others were on either side of him. The ground was packed down around them, and they were left there. Still yielding and free from anger against his oppressor, King Goodness exhorted his companions, saying, "Let your hearts be filled with nothing but love and charity, my children."

Now at midnight the jackals came stalking this banquet of human flesh. At the sight of the beasts the King and his companions shouted in unison, frightening the jackals away. The pack halted and looked back, and - seeing no one pursuing - again went forward. A second shout drove them away again, only to have them return as before. But the third time, seeing that no one pursued them, the jackals thought to themselves, "These must be men who are doomed to death." They came on boldly, even when the men shouted. This time they did not run away. On they

came, each singling out his target. The chief jackal went for the King, and the other jackals went for his companions. With cleverness and resolve, the King watched the beast's approach. He raised his throat as if to receive the bite, but instead he bit his teeth into the jackal's throat with a grip like a vice! Unable to free its throat from the mighty grip of the King's jaws, and fearing death, the jackal howled a great howl. At his cry of distress the pack realized that their leader had been caught by a man. They lost all heart to approach their own destined prey, and they scampered away for their lives.

Seeking to free itself from the King's teeth, the trapped jackal plunged madly back and forth. In so doing he loosened the earth around the King. Then the King let the jackal go, and with great effort, plunging from side to side, he got his hands free! He grabbed the edge of the pit, drew himself up, and came out of the ground like a cloud racing before the wind. Telling his companions to be of good cheer, he now started to loosen the earth around them and to get them out. Finally all of his ministers stood free once more in the cemetery.

At that time it so happened that a corpse had been exposed in a part of the cemetery that was between the respective domains of two ogres. And the ogres were arguing over who was to get the corpse.

"We can't divide it ourselves," they said. "But this King Goodness is righteous. He will divide it for us. Let us go to him." So they dragged the corpse by the foot to the King, and said, "Sire, divide this man and give us each our share." "Certainly I will, my friends," the King said. "But because I am so dirty, I must bathe first."



Figure: King Goodness and His Ogre Buddies

Using their magic power, the ogres brought scented water to the King that had been prepared for the rival ruler. And when the King had bathed, they brought him the robes that had been laid out for the rival to wear. When he had put these on, they brought his majesty a box containing the four kinds of scent. When he had perfumed himself, they brought flowers of different kinds laid out upon jeweled fans in a casket of gold. When he had decked himself with the flowers, the ogres asked whether they could be of any further service. The King told them that he was hungry. So the ogres went away and returned with rice flavored with all the choicest curries that had been prepared for the usurper's table. And the King, now bathed and scented, dressed and attired, ate the delicious food. Then the ogres brought the usurper's perfumed water for him to drink. It was in the usurper's own golden bowl. And they did not forget to bring the golden cup, too. When the King had drunk and had washed his mouth and had washed his hands, they brought him fragrant

betel nuts to chew.

Then they asked whether his majesty had any further commands. He said, "By your magic power get me the sword of state that lies by the usurper's pillow." And straightway the sword was brought to the King. Then the King took the corpse, and setting it upright, cut it in two down the spine, giving one-half to each ogre. This done, the King washed the blade and sheathed it on his side.

Having eaten their fill, the ogres were glad of heart. In their gratitude they asked the King what more they could do for him. "Use your magic power to put me in the usurper's chamber and put each of my ministers back in his own house."

"Certainly, sire," the ogres said, and it was done. Now in that hour the rival King was lying asleep on the royal bed in his chamber of state. And as he slept peacefully, the good King struck him with the flat of the sword upon the belly. Waking up in a fright, the rival King saw by the lamp-light that it was the great King Goodness. Summoning his courage, he rose from his bed and said, "Sire, it is night. A guard is set. The doors are barred, and no one may enter. How did you get to my bedside, sword in hand and wearing robes of splendor?"

Then the King told him the story of his escape. The rival King's heart was moved, and he cried, "Oh, King, even though I am blessed with human nature, I did not understand your goodness. But now, because of fierce and cruel ogres whose food is flesh and blood, I do understand. From here on, I will not plot against such virtue as you possess." So saying, he swore an oath of friendship upon his sword and begged the King's forgiveness. And he made the King lie down on the bed of state while he lay down upon a little couch.

At daybreak his whole entourage of every rank and degree was mustered by the beat of a drum at the rival King's command. He praised King Goodness in their presence, as if raising the full moon on high in the heavens. And right before them all, he again asked the King's

forgiveness. He gave him back his kingdom, saying, "From now on, let it be my responsibility to deal with rebels. Rule your kingdom with me to keep watch and defend." And so saying, he passed sentence on the slanderous traitor, and with his troops and elephants went back to his own kingdom.

Seated in majesty and splendor beneath a white canopy of sovereignty upon a throne of gold with legs of a gazelle, the great King Goodness contemplated his own glory and thought to himself, "Had I not persevered, I would not be enjoying this luxury, nor would my thousand ministers still be living. It was by perseverance that I recovered the royal state I had lost, and I saved the lives of my thousand ministers. Truly, we should strive on relentlessly with undaunted hearts, seeing that the fruit of perseverance is so abundant."

And with that the King broke into this heartfelt utterance:

*Persevere, my brother. stand fast in hope.  
Do not let your courage weaken and tire.  
I see from all my woes in the past,  
I am master of my heart's desire.*

Thus the Bodhisatta spoke in the fullness of his heart, declaring how sure it is that the earnest effort of good will ripen. After a life spent in doing good, he passed away to fare according to his karma.

---

His lesson ended, the Master preached the Four Noble Truths, at the close of which the backsliding monk won Arahatship. The Master showed the connection and identified the birth by saying, "Devadatta was the traitorous minister of those days. The Buddha's disciples were the thousand ministers, and I myself was the great King Goodness."

## **52: Cūla-janaka Jātaka, King Janaka's Story**

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*This is not so much a story so much as a tiny framework for the verse.*

---

“*Persevere, my brother.*” This story was told by the Master while at Jetavana. It is about another backsliding monk. All the incidents that are to be related here, will be given in the Mahā-janaka Jātaka (Jātaka 539).

The King, seated beneath the white canopy of sovereignty, recited this stanza:

*Persevere, my brother; stand fast in hope.  
Do not lose your strength, or tire, though hard-pressed.  
I see myself, who, with all my struggles in the past,  
Have fought my stubborn way ashore.*

Here, too, the backsliding monk won Arahatship. The All-wise Buddha was King Janaka.



Figure: King Janaka, Ahead of His Time

## **53: Puṇḍapāti Jātaka, The Liquor Bowl**

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*It is amazing that so many of these stories are about alcohol. This was, after all, roughly 450 BCE. It shows what a significant problem intoxication was then, as it is now.*

---

“What? Leave untasted?” This story was told by the Master while at Jetavana. It is about some drugged liquor.

Once upon a time some carousing ruffians of Sāvatthi got together and said, “We do not have enough money to buy a single drink. How are we going to get some?”

“Cheer up!” said one of them. “I have a little plan.”

“What is it?” they cried.

“It is Anāthapiṇḍika’s custom,” he said, “to wear his rings and richest clothing when going to see the King. Let us drug some cheap alcohol and set up a drinking booth in which we will all be sitting when Anāthapiṇḍika passes by. ‘Come and join us, Lord High Treasurer,’ we’ll cry, and we will fill him with our liquor until he loses his senses. Then we will steal his rings and clothes and get the price of a decent drink.”

The other rogues were very pleased with his plan, and it was duly carried out. As Anāthapiṇḍika was returning, they went out to meet him and invited him to come along with them. They told him that they had some extremely fine liquor, and he must taste it before he went.

“What?” he thought. “Does a follower of the Buddha, who has found the path to the end of suffering, touch alcohol? Although I have no craving

for it, I will expose these rogues." So he went into their booth where he quickly figured out that their liquor was drugged. So he resolved to make the rascals take to their heels. He accused them of doctoring their liquor in order to drug strangers and then rob them. "You sit in a booth that you have opened, and you praise the liquor," he said, "but not one of you has drunk it yourself. If it is not drugged, then drink it yourselves." This made the gang take to their heels, and Anāthapiṇḍika went home. Thinking he might as well tell the incident to the Buddha, he went to Jetavana and related the story.

"This time, layman," the Master said, "it is you who these rogues tried to trick. So too in the past they tried to trick the good and wise." So saying, at his hearer's request, he told this story of the past.

---

Once upon a time when Brahmadatta was reigning in Benares, the Bodhisatta was Treasurer of that city. And then, too, did the same gang of miscreants, conspiring together in the same way, drug liquor. They went out to meet him and tried to tempt him in the same way. The Treasurer did not want to drink at all, but nevertheless went with them, solely to expose them. Seeing what they were doing, he wanted to scare them away. So he told them that it would be an inappropriate thing for him to drink alcohol just before going to the King's palace. "Stay here," he said, "until I've seen the King and am on my way back. Then I'll think about it."



Figure: A Losing Strategy

On his return, the rascals called to him, but the Treasurer, looking at the drugged bowls, confounded them by saying, "I do not like your ways. The bowls stand here just as full now as when I left you. You loudly praise the liquor, but not a drop of it has passed your own lips. Why, if it had been good liquor, you'd have taken your own share as well. This liquor is drugged!" And he repeated this stanza:

*What? Leave untasted drink you praise as so rare?  
Nay, this is proof no honest liquor is there.*

And after a life of good deeds, the Bodhisatta passed away to fare according to his karma.

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His lesson ended, the Master identified the birth by saying, "The rascals of today were also the rascals of those bygone days and I myself was then Treasurer of Benares."

## **54: Phala Jātaka, The Fruit Story**

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*One thing that I enjoy about this story is the appreciation that the monks have for the expertise of the gardener. This is a common them in the Buddhist texts. The Buddha himself often used various trades as examples of the skills that one must develop as a meditator.*

*This seemingly simple story shows an example of three important qualities that are developed in meditation and Buddhist practice in general. These are 1) the ability to observe, 2) the resulting insights that arise, and 3) discernment. One reason that we develop a quieter mind is that a noisy mind is too distracted to observe. This quality of observation leads to the arising of insights. These insights are then analyzed. This latter quality is the Pāli word “pañña,” which is often translated as “wisdom.” But Thānissaro Bhikkhu prefers the word “discernment.” “Wisdom” sounds too much like a “thing,” something that you carry around in your head. “Discernment” is an active quality. It is the ability to practice wisdom in the present moment depending on the conditions.*

*Note also that in this story, the Bodhisatta is the only person who is able to discern the situation with the poisonous fruit. However, it is a very important point in the Buddha’s teaching that anyone can develop these qualities. The Buddha was a human being, just as we are all human beings. And whatever quality one human being can develop, another one can develop as well.*

---

“When near a village.” This story was told by the Master while at Jetavana. It is about a lay brother who was skilled in the knowledge of fruits. It appears that a certain wealthy nobleman of Sāvatthi had invited the Saṅgha with the Buddha at their head for their daily meal. He seated them in his pleasure garden, where they were regaled with fine rice and cakes. Afterwards he asked his gardener to go around with the monks

and give mangoes and other kinds of fruits to them. In response to this request, the man walked about the grounds with the monks. He could tell by a single glance up at the tree what fruit was green, what nearly ripe, and what quite ripe, and so on. And what he said always turned out to be true. So the monks went to the Buddha and told him how expert the gardener was, and how, while standing on the ground, he could accurately tell the condition of the hanging fruit. "Monks," said the Master, "this gardener is not the only one who has knowledge of fruits. A similar knowledge was shown by the wise and good of former days as well." And so saying, he told this story of the past.

---

Once upon a time when Brahmadatta was reigning in Benares, the Bodhisatta was born as a merchant. When he grew up, he traded with 500 wagons. One day he came to a place where the road led through a great forest. Halting at the outskirts, he gathered the caravan and addressed them, saying, "Poison trees grow in this forest. Do not eat any leaf, flower, or fruit with which you are unfamiliar without first consulting me." Everyone promised to be very careful, and they began the journey into the forest.

Now just within the forest border there was a village, and just outside that village there was a What-fruit tree. The What-fruit tree resembles a mango in its trunk, branch, leaf, flower, and fruit. It also resembles the mango in taste and smell, the fruit - ripe or unripe – also mimics the mango. If eaten, it is a deadly poison and causes instant death.

*(It is not clear what a "What-fruit tree" is. However, the mango is related to poison ivy, and it is possible to have an allergic reaction to mango if you eat the skin. While it is rare, it is possible for this allergic reaction to cause death.)*

Now some greedy fellows, who went on ahead of the caravan, came to this tree. Thinking it was a mango, they ate its fruit. But others said, "Let us ask our leader before we eat it." They stopped by the tree, fruit in hand, until he came up. Seeing that it was not a mango, he said, "This 'mango' is a What-fruit tree. Do not eat its fruit."

Having stopped them from eating, the Bodhisatta turned his attention to those who had already eaten. First he gave them an emetic (*something that makes you vomit*), and then he gave them the four sweet foods to eat (*raisins, cane sugar paste, sweet yogurt, and honey*) so that in the end they recovered.



Figure: The Fruits of One's Actions

Now on former occasions caravans had halted beneath this same tree, and many people died from eating the poisonous fruit that they mistook for mangoes. On the next day the villagers would come, and seeing them lying there dead, they would throw them by the heels into a secret place. Then they would take everything from the caravan, wagons and all.

And on the day of our story these villagers rushed out at daybreak to the tree for their expected spoils. "The oxen must be ours," some said. "And we'll have the wagons," others said, while still others claimed the cargo as their share. But when they came breathless to the tree, the whole caravan was there, alive and well!

"How did you know this was not a mango tree?" demanded the disappointed villagers.

"We didn't know," the members of the caravan said. "It was our leader who knew."

So the villagers went to the Bodhisatta and said, "Man of wisdom, how did you know this tree was not a mango?"

"Two things told me," the Bodhisatta replied, and he repeated this stanza:

*When a tree grows near a village  
One that is not hard to climb, it is plain to me,  
And I do not need any further proof to know,  
That no wholesome fruit can grow there!*

And having taught the Dharma to the assembled multitude, he finished his journey in safety.

---

"Thus, monks," the Master said, "in bygone days the wise and good were experts in fruit." His lesson ended, he showed the connection and identified the birth by saying, "The Buddha's followers were the people of the caravan, and I myself was the caravan leader."

## **55: Pañcāvudha Jātaka, The Five Weapons**

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*This is a story about resolve and unflagging determination. When the Bodhisatta first meets the ogre, he does battle with him, using what we might call “tough love.” But when the ogre decides to set him free, the Bodhisatta teaches how his evil actions are causing him to perpetuate his own suffering.*

---

“When no Attachment.” This story was told by the Master while at Jetavana. It is about a monk who had given up all earnest effort.

The Master said to him, “Is the report true, brother, that you are a backslider?”

“Yes, Blessed One.”

“In bygone days, brother,” said the Master, “the wise and good won a throne by their dauntless perseverance in the hour of need.”

And so saying, he told this story of the past.

---

Once upon a time when Brahmadatta was reigning in Benares, the Bodhisatta was born as the son of the queen. On his naming day, the parents asked 800 brahmins, to whom they gave their hearts’ desire in all sense pleasures, what the child’s destiny would be. Promising that he would have a glorious destiny, these clever soothsaying brahmins foretold that, coming to the throne at the King’s death, the child would be a mighty King endowed with every virtue. He would be famed and renowned for his exploits with the five weapons (*sword, spear, battle-axe, bow, and mace*). He would stand peerless in all Jambudīpa (*the inhabited world*). And because of the brahmin’s prophecy, the parents named their

son "Prince Five-Weapons."

Now, when the prince came of age when he was sixteen years old, the King told him to go away and study.

"With whom, sire, am I to study?" asked the prince.

"With the world-famed teacher in the town of Takkasilā in the Gandhāra country. Here is his fee," the King said, handing his son a thousand coins.

So the prince went to Takkasilā and was taught there. When he was leaving, his master gave him a set of five weapons. After saying good-bye to his old master, the prince set out from Takkasilā for Benares.

On his way he came to a forest haunted by an ogre named Hairy-grip. At the entrance to the forest, men who met him tried to stop him, saying, "Young brahmin, do not go through that forest. It is the haunt of the ogre Hairy-grip, and he kills every one he meets." But, bold as a lion, the self-reliant Bodhisatta pressed on until he came to the ogre in the heart of the forest. The monster made himself appear as tall as a palm tree, with a head as big as a garden trellis and huge eyes like bowls, with two tusks like turnips and the beak of a hawk. His belly was blotched with purple, and the palms of his hands and the soles of his feet were blue-black!

"Where are you going?" cried the monster. "Stop! You are my prey."

"Ogre," the Bodhisatta replied, "I knew what I was doing when entering this forest. It would be a bad idea for you to come near me, for I will kill you with a poisoned arrow right where you stand."

Defiantly he fitted an arrow into his bow. He dipped it in the deadliest poison and shot it at the ogre. But it only stuck on to the monster's shaggy coat. Then he shot another and another, until he had shot fifty arrows. All of them merely stuck on to the ogre's shaggy coat.

Then the ogre, shaking the arrows off so that they fell at his feet, came at

the Bodhisatta. The Bodhisatta, again shouting defiance, drew his sword and struck at the ogre. But, like the arrows, his sword, which was 33 inches long, merely stuck fast in the shaggy hair.

Next the Bodhisatta threw his spear, and that stuck fast also. Seeing this, he hit the ogre with his club. But like his other weapons, that too stuck fast. The Bodhisatta shouted, "Ogre, you have never heard of me, Prince Five-Weapons. When I came into this forest, I do not put my trust in my bow and other weapons, but in myself! Now will I strike you a blow that will crush you into dust."

Then the Bodhisatta hit the ogre with his right hand, but the hand just stuck to the hair. Then he hit him with his left hand and with his right foot and his left foot. But his hands and feet just stuck to the hide. Again he shouted "I will crush you into dust!" He butted the ogre with his head, and that too stuck fast.

Yet even when he was stuck and immobilized, the Bodhisatta, as he hung upon the ogre, was still fearless, still undaunted. And the monster thought to himself, "This is a lion among men, a hero without peer, and no mere man. Even though he is caught in the clutches of an ogre like me, he has not backed down one bit. Since I first started attacking travelers on this road, I have never seen a man to equal him. Why doesn't he show any fear?" Not daring to simply kill the Bodhisatta, he said, "How is it, young brahmin, that you have no fear of death?"

"Why should I?" the Bodhisatta replied. "Every life must come to an end. Moreover, within my body is a sword of resolve which you will never digest if you eat me. It will chop your insides into mincemeat, and my death will cause yours too. And that is why I have no fear."

(It is said that the Bodhisatta meant the Sword of Knowledge, which was within him.)

The ogre thought to himself, "This young brahmin is speaking the truth and nothing but the truth. I could not digest a morsel as big as a pea from such a hero. I'll let him go." And, so, in fear of his life, he let the

Bodhisatta go free, saying, "Young brahmin, you are a lion among men. I will not eat you. Go forth from my hand, even as the moon from the jaws of Rāhu (*In Indian mythology Rāhu is the god who swallows the sun or the moon causing eclipses*), and return to gladden the hearts of your kinsfolk, your friends, and your country."

"As for myself, ogre," the Bodhisatta responded, "I will go. As for you, it was your actions in the past that caused you to be reborn a voracious, murderous, flesh-eating ogre. If you continue to act in this way, you will go on from darkness to darkness. To destroy life is to ensure rebirth either in hell or as a brute or as a ghost or among the fallen spirits. Or, if the rebirth is into the world of humans, then such actions cut short the days of a person's life."

In this and other ways the Bodhisatta showed the evil consequences of the five bad courses (*breaking the Five Precepts*), and the blessing that comes from the five good courses. In this way he was able to teach the ogre to fear the consequences of evil actions. And so he converted the monster, imbuing him with self-restraint and establishing him in the Five Precepts. Then making the ogre the lord of that forest, with a right to due respect, and charging him to remain steadfast, the Bodhisatta went his way. He made sure that everyone knew about the change in the ogre's heart as he left the forest. And in the end he went, armed with the five weapons, to the city of Benares, and he presented himself before his parents. In later days when he became the King, he was a righteous ruler. And after a life spent in charity and other good works, he passed away to fare according to his karma.

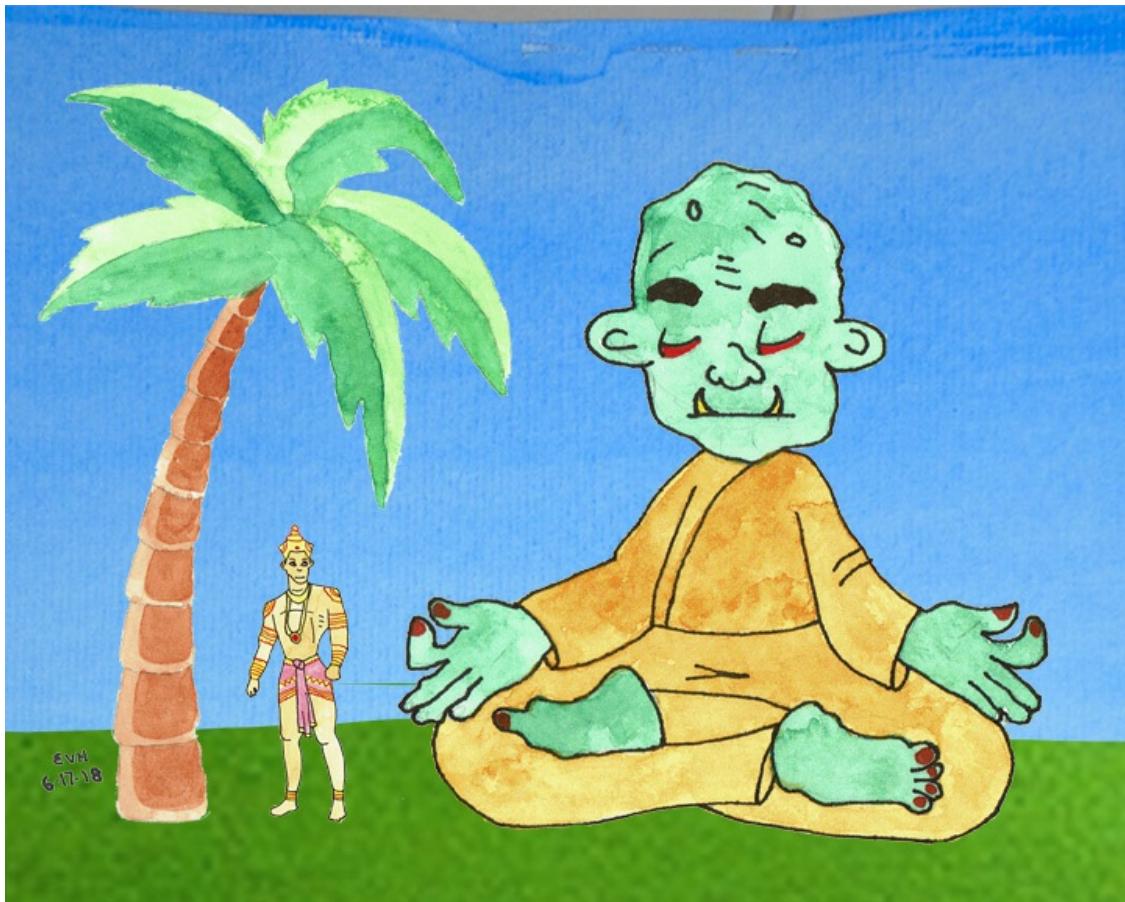


Figure: The Newest Disciple

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This lesson ended, the Master, as Buddha, recited this stanza:

*When there is no attachment to hamper the heart or mind,  
When righteousness is practiced to win peace,  
He who walks in this way, will gain the victory  
And all the fetters will be utterly destroyed.*

(*The fetters are 1. A belief in a permanent essence, or “self,” 2. doubt in the Buddha’s Dharma, 3. attachment to rites and rituals, 4. sensual desire, 5. ill will, 6. desire for material existence, 7. desire for immaterial existence, 8. conceit, 9. restlessness, and 10. ignorance.*)

When he had explained awakening up to its crowning point of Arahatship, the Master went on to preach the Four Noble Truths. At the

end of that the monk won Arahatship. And the Master showed the connection and identified the birth by saying, “Aṅgulimāla was the ogre of those days, and I myself Prince Five-Weapons.” (*During the Buddha's life, Aṅgulimāla was a serial killer who became a disciple of the Buddha and an Arahat.*)

# **56: Kañcānakkhandha Jātaka, The Gold Aggregates**

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*There are two principles described in this story. The first is the ability to take something complicated and synthesize it into something that is simpler and more understandable. This is often easier said than done. You have to work really hard at a complex problem in order to understand it enough that it becomes simple. Steve Jobs said, “Simple can be harder than complex: You have to work hard to get your thinking clean to make it simple.” This is one reason that I encourage people to read and re-read and re-read the Buddha’s discourses, so you can get to a point where his teachings become clear and simple.*

*The other principle is called “divide and conquer.” This is also a problem-solving method. You take a problem with a lot of complexity, and you break it down into smaller problems. This is what I believe the simile of the gold is. You take something big and break it into pieces that are more manageable.*

*Speaking of gold, here is a little fun fact. When gold was first being mined in the American West, there was a big problem with theft. It was much easier to steal gold than it was to mine it. The solution was to put the gold into the big bars of gold bullion that are now so famous. The bars were too big to carry away on horseback. You needed a wagon. This made stealing gold much harder.*

*Also notice how the Buddha decides to divide his new-found wealth. In the Digha Nikāya (DN 31.26) the Buddha also teaches you to divide your wealth into four parts, although the formula is somewhat different. The Buddha never turned money and wealth into something evil. He only counseled that wealth be acquired in an ethical way and that it be managed wisely and used skillfully.*

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“When gladness.” This story was told by the Master while at Sāvatthi. It is

about a monk. Tradition says that through hearing the Master preach a young gentleman of Sāvatthi gave his heart to the Three Gems (*Buddha, Dharma, and Saṅgha*), and that he became a monk. His teachers and masters taught him about the Ten Precepts of Morality (*these are the precepts taken by a novice monk or nun*). They taught him the Short, the Medium, and the Long Moralities (*These are described in the Brahmajāla Sutta in the Digha Nikāya sections 1.8-1.27. There are 26 short moralities, 13 medium ones, and 7 long ones.*). They set forth the Morality which rests on self-restraint according to the Pātimokkha (*the monastic rules*), the Morality which rests on self-restraint of the Senses, the Morality which rests on a blameless walk of life, the Morality which relates to the way a monk may use the requisites (*food, shelter, clothing, and medicine*).

The young novice thought to himself, “There is a lot to this Morality. I will undoubtedly fail to fulfill all that I have vowed. Yet what is the good of being a monk at all, if one cannot keep the rules of Morality? My best course is to go back to the world, take a wife and rear children, living a life of almsgiving and other good works.” So he told his superiors what he thought, saying that he was going to return to the lower state of a layman, and he wished to hand back his bowl and robes.

“Well, if this is what you want,” they said, “at least see the Buddha before you go.” And they brought the young man before the Master in the Dharma Hall.

“Why, monks,” the Master said, “are you bringing this brother to me against his will?”

“Sir, he said that Morality was more than he could observe, and he wants to give back his robes and bowl. So we brought him to you.”

“But why, monks,” the Master asked, “did you burden him with so much? He can do what he can, but no more. Do not make this mistake again. Leave me to decide what should be done in the case.”

Then, turning to the young monk, the Master said, “Come, brother. What concern do you have with Morality? Do you think that you could obey

just three moral rules?"

"Oh, yes, Sir."

"1) Well now, watch and guard the three types of action, those of the voice, the mind, and the body."

"2) Do no evil in thought, word, or deed."

"3) Do not stop being a monk."

"Now go and obey just these three rules."

"Yes, indeed, Sir, I will keep them," the glad young man exclaimed, and he went back to his teachers again.

And as he was keeping his three rules, he thought to himself, "I had the whole of Morality told me by my instructors. But because they were not the Buddha, they could not make me grasp even this much. Whereas the All-Enlightened One, by reason of his Buddhahood, and of his being the Lord of Truth, has expressed Morality in only three rules concerning the three types of action, and he has made me understand it clearly. What a great help the Master has been to me."

And next he won insight (*stream entry*) and in a few days attained Arahatship. When this came to the ears of the Sangha, they discussed it when they met in the Dharma Hall. They talked about how the monk was going to go back to the world because he did not think that he could fulfill Morality. He had been given three rules by the Master that embodied the whole of Morality. He had been made to understand those three rules, and so he had been enabled by the Master to win Arahatship. How marvelous, they cried, was the Buddha.

Entering the Dharma Hall at this point, and learning the subject of their discussion, the Master said, "Monks, even a heavy burden becomes light if taken piecemeal. And thus the wise and good of past times, on finding a huge mass of gold too heavy to lift, first broke it up, and then they were

able to carry their treasure away piece by piece." So saying, he told this story of the past.

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Once upon a time when Brahmadatta was reigning in Benares, the Bodhisatta was born as a farmer in a village. One day he was ploughing in a field where there had once been a village. Now, in bygone days, a wealthy merchant had died leaving a huge bar of gold buried in this field. It was as thick as a man's thigh and six feet long. The Bodhisatta's plough struck this bar head on and got stuck to it. Thinking it was the root of a tree, he dug it up. Discovering what it really was, he cleaned the dirt off the gold.

At the end of the day at sunset, he put away his plough and gear and tried to pick up his treasure-trove and walk off with it. But when he could not lift it, he sat down next to it and started about thinking how he would spend it.

"I'll have some of it to live on, some I will to bury as a treasure, I will use some for trade, and some of it I will use for charity and good works," he thought to himself.

This led him to cut the gold into four pieces. Dividing the gold into pieces made it possible to carry it, and he took the lumps of gold home. After a life of charity and other good works, he passed away to fare according to his karma.

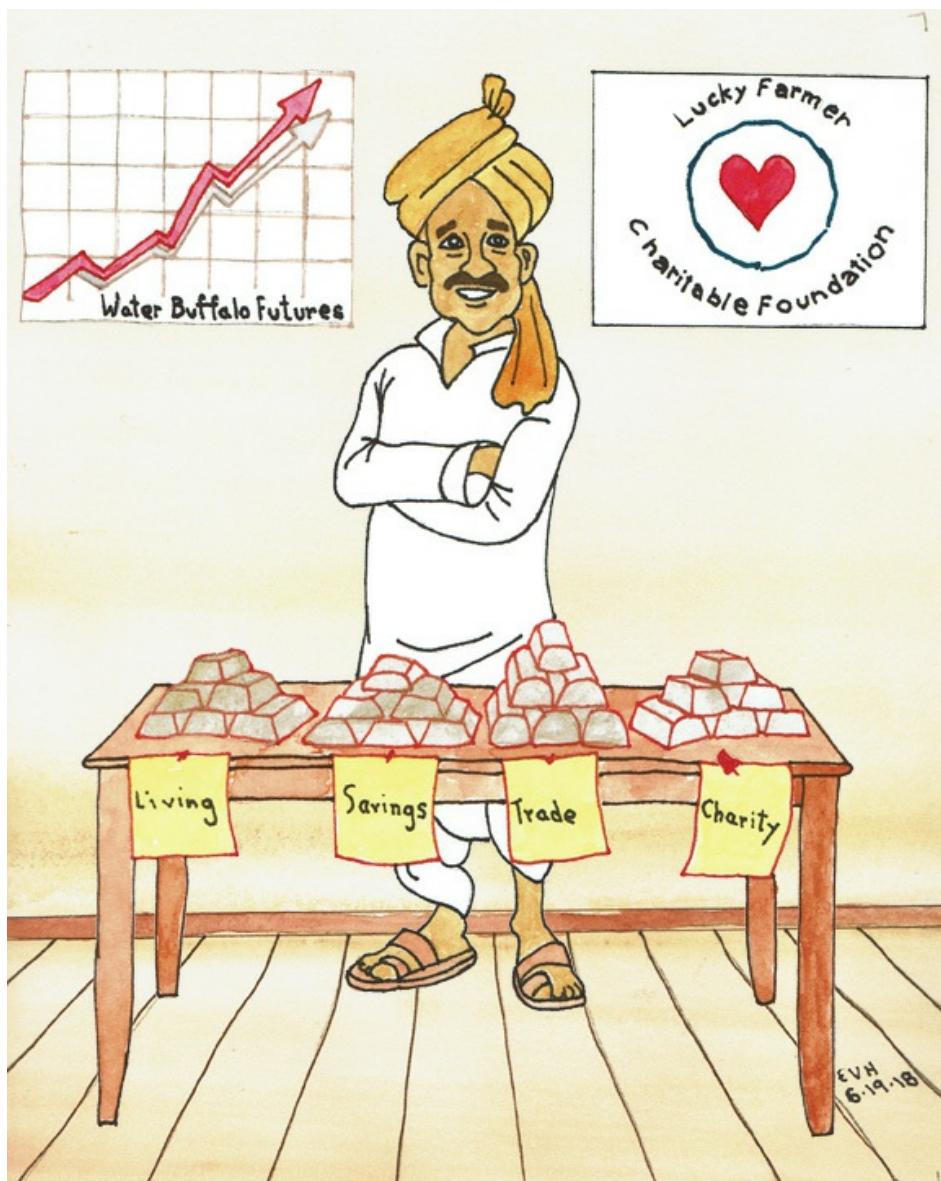


Figure: The Happy and Fortunate Farmer

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His lesson ended, the Master, as Buddha, recited this stanza:

*When gladness fills the heart and fills the mind,  
When righteousness is practiced to win peace,  
He who so walks shall gain the victory  
And all the fetters will be destroyed.*

When he had explained awakening up to its crowning point of

Arahats, he showed the connection and identified the birth by saying,  
“In those days I myself was the man who got the treasure of gold.”

## **57: Vānarinda Jātaka, The Monkey King**

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*This story is usually used as an example of wisdom, or “pañña” in Pāli. However, as I have noted elsewhere, “pañña” really means something more like “discernment,” as Thānissaro Bhikkhu prefers to translate it. It is about the active quality of using your intelligence in the moment. It is about creative problem solving. In order to do this you need a clear mind and equanimity.*

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“Who are you, oh monkey king?” This story was told by the Master while he was at the bamboo grove. It is about Devadatta’s attempt to kill him. Being informed of Devadatta’s murderous intent, the Master said, “This is not the first time, monks, that Devadatta has tried to kill me. He also did this in bygone days, but he failed to work his wicked will.” And so saying, he told this story of the past.

---

Once upon a time when Brahmadatta was reigning in Benares, the Bodhisatta was born as a monkey. When he was fully grown, he was as big as a mare’s foal and enormously strong. He lived alone on the banks of a river. In the middle of the river there was an island where mangoes and bread-fruits and other fruit trees grew.

In the middle of the stream, half way between the island and the river bank, there was a solitary rock that rose out of the water. Being as strong as an elephant, the Bodhisatta used to leap from the bank on to this rock and then on to the island. Here he would eat his fill of the fruits that grew on the island, returning in the evening by the way he came. And such was his life from day to day.

Now in those days a crocodile and his mate lived in that river. She, being with young, and seeing the Bodhisatta journeying back and forth, longed

for the monkey's heart to eat. So she begged her lord to catch the monkey for her. Promising her that he would do this, the crocodile went off and crawled onto the rock, meaning to catch the monkey on his evening journey home.

After ranging about the island all day, the Bodhisatta looked out in the evening towards the rock and wondered why the rock stood so high out of the water. For the story goes that the Bodhisatta always marked the exact height of the water in the river and of the rock in the water. So when he saw that even though the water stood at the same level, the rock seemed to stand higher out of the water. He suspected that a crocodile might be lurking there to catch him. In order to find out if that was true, he shouted, as though addressing the rock, "Hi! Rock!" And, as no reply came back, he shouted three times, "Hi! Rock!" And as the rock still kept silence, the monkey called out, "Why is it, friend rock, that you won't answer me today?"

"Oh!" thought the crocodile, "So the rock is in the habit of answering the monkey. I must answer for the rock today."

Accordingly, he shouted, "Yes, monkey, what is it?"

"Who are you?" said the Bodhisatta.

"I'm a crocodile."

"What are you sitting on that rock for?"

"To catch you and eat your heart."

As there was no other way back, the only thing to be done was to outwit the crocodile. So the Bodhisatta cried out, "There's no help for me then but to give myself up to you. Open your mouth and catch me when I jump."

Now you must know that when crocodiles open their mouths, their eyes shut. (*Note that while this is what the story says, this is not a biological fact.*)

So, when this crocodile unsuspiciously opened his mouth, his eyes shut. And there he waited with closed eyes and open jaws! Seeing this, the wily monkey jumped on to the crocodile's head, and then, with a spring like lightning, leaped to the bank. When the cleverness of this feat dawned on the crocodile, he said, "Monkey, one who in this world possesses the four virtues overcomes his foes. And I think that you possess all four." And, so saying, he repeated this stanza:

*Who so, oh monkey king, like you, combines  
Truth, foresight, fixed resolve, and fearlessness,  
Shall see his routed foe turn and flee.*



Figure: The Clever Monkey

And with this praise of the Bodhisatta, the crocodile went back to his

own place.

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The Master said, "This is not the first time then, monks, that Devadatta tried to kill me. He did the same thing in bygone days as well." And, having ended his lesson, the Master showed the connection and identified the birth by saying, "Devadatta was the crocodile of those days, the brahmin girl Ciñcā was the crocodile's wife, and I myself was the Monkey King."

(*The story of Ciñcā occurs in several places, including the Dhammapada-atṭhakathā [xiii. 9] and Jātaka 472. She falsely accused the Buddha of impregnating her.*)

## **58: Tayodhamma Jātaka, The Three Qualities**

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*Here is another story about the arch-villain Devadatta.*

*Any story with a monkey king and an ogre has got to be good.*

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*“Someone like you.”* This story was told by the Master while at the bamboo grove. It is about killing.

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Once upon a time when Brahmadatta was reigning in Benares, Devadatta was reborn as a monkey. He lived near the Himalayas as the lord of a tribe of monkeys all of whom were his own children. Afraid that his male children might grow up to oust him from his lordship, he used to castrate them all with his teeth. Now the Bodhisatta had been conceived as the son of this same monkey. His mother, in order to save her unborn child, stole away to a forest at the foot of the mountain. In due time she gave birth to the Bodhisatta. And when he was fully grown and had come to the age of understanding, he had the gift of marvelous strength.

“Where is my father?” he said one day to his mother.

“He lives at the foot of a certain mountain, my son,” She replied. “And he is the king of a tribe of monkeys.”

“Take me to see him, mother.”

“No, my son, for your father is so afraid of being removed by his sons that he castrates them all with his teeth.”

“Never mind. Take me there, mother,” the Bodhisatta said. “I will know

what to do."

So she took him with her to the old monkey. At the sight of his son, the old monkey, feeling sure that the Bodhisatta would grow up to depose him, faked an affectionate embrace to crush the life out of the Bodhisatta.

"Ah! my boy!" he cried. "Where have you been all this time?"

And making a show of embracing the Bodhisatta, he hugged him like a vice. But the Bodhisatta, who was as strong as an elephant, returned the hug so mightily that his father's ribs almost broke.

Then the old monkey thought, "This son of mine, if he grows up, he will certainly kill me." Thinking about how to kill the Bodhisatta first, he thought about a lake that was nearby. An ogre lived there who might eat him. So he said to the Bodhisatta, "I'm old now, my boy, and I would like to hand the tribe over to you. Today you will be made king. In a lake nearby there are two kinds of water lilies that grow, three kinds of blue lotus, and five kinds of white lotus. Go and some for me."

"Yes, father," the Bodhisatta answered, and off he went.

Approaching the lake with caution, he studied the footprints on its banks. He noticed that all of them led down to the water but none ever came back. Realizing that the lake was haunted by an ogre, he realized that his father, being unable to kill him himself, wanted the ogre to kill him. "But I'll get the lotuses," he said, "without going into the water at all."

So he went to a dry spot, and running, he leaped from the bank. In his jump, as he was clearing the water, he plucked two flowers which grew up above the surface of the water, and he landed with them on the opposite bank. On his way back, he plucked two more in the same way. And so he made a pile of flowers on both sides of the lake. But he always kept out of the ogre's watery domain.

When he had picked as many flowers as he thought he could carry, the

astonished ogre exclaimed, "I've lived in this lake for a long time, but I never saw even a human being so wonderfully clever! Here is this monkey who has picked all the flowers he wants, and yet he has kept safely out of range of my power." And, parting the waters aside, the ogre came up out of the lake to where the Bodhisatta stood. He said to him, "Oh king of the monkeys, he that has three qualities shall have the mastery over his enemies. And you, I think, have all three."

And, so saying, he repeated this stanza in the Bodhisatta's praise:

*Someone like you, Oh monkey king, combines  
Dexterity and Valor and Resource,  
And shall see his routed foe turn and flee.*

His praises ended, the ogre asked the Bodhisatta why he was gathering the flowers.

"My father is going to make me king of his tribe," said the Bodhisatta, "and that is why I am gathering them."

"But someone who is so peerless should not carry flowers," exclaimed the ogre. "I will carry them for you." And so he picked up the flowers and followed along behind the Bodhisatta.



Figure: Isn't that sweet?

Seeing this from afar, the Bodhisatta's father knew that his plot had failed. "I sent my son to fall prey to the ogre, and here he is returning safe and sound, with the ogre humbly carrying his flowers for him! I am undone!" cried the old monkey. And his heart exploded into seven pieces, and he died then and there. And all the other monkeys met together and chose the Bodhisatta to be their king.

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His lesson ended, the Master showed the connection and identified the birth by saying, "Devadatta was then the king of the monkeys, and I was his son."

## **59: *Bherivāda Jātaka,* *The Stubborn Drummer***

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*There are many stores in the Pāli Canon about monks and nuns who were stubborn and refused to be taught. This is one of them.*

---

“*Don’t over-do it.*” This story was told by the Master while at Jetavana. It is about a certain stubborn monk. When the Master asked him whether it was true that he was stubborn, the monk said it was true. “This is not the first time, brother,” the Master said, “that you have shown yourself to be stubborn. You were the same in bygone times as well.” And so saying, he told this story of the past.

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Once upon a time when Brahmadatta was reigning in Benares, the Bodhisatta was reborn as a drummer, and he lived in a village. Hearing that there was to be a festival at Benares and hoping to make money by playing his drum to the crowds of holiday-makers, he went to the city with his son. There he played his drum, and he made a great deal of money.

On his way home with his earnings, he had to pass through a forest that was infested with robbers. As the boy kept beating away at the drum without ever stopping, the Bodhisatta tried to stop him by saying, “Don’t behave like that. Only beat the drum now and again as if some great lord were passing by.” But in defiance of his father’s command, the boy thought the best way to frighten the robbers away was to keep beating steadily on the drum.

At the first notes of the drum, the robbers scampered away thinking some great lord was passing by. But hearing the noise continue, they saw their mistake and came back to find out who it really was. Finding only

two people, they beat and robbed them. "Alas!" cried the Bodhisatta, "by your ceaseless drumming you have lost all our hard-earned money!" And, so saying, he repeated this stanza:

*Do not go too far, but learn to avoid excess.  
For over-drumming lost what drumming had won.*



Figure: The Stubborn Drummer

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His lesson ended, the Master showed the connection and identified the birth by saying, "This stubborn monk was the son of those days, and I was the father."

# **60: Saṅkhadhamana Jātaka, The Conch Blower**

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*This is the next in a series about poorly behaved musicians. (There's a joke in there somewhere.)*

*Especially in Tibetan Buddhism you will see the Eight Auspicious Symbols, of which the conch shell is one. It represents the "deep, melodious sound of the Dharma."*

*A minor but interesting point in this story is that the Buddha here is the son and the foolish musician is his father. The Buddhist tradition holds that throughout infinite time we have all been related to each other in every way possible. We have been friends and enemies, each other's mothers and daughters and fathers and sons and siblings so on. When I told this to my daughter when she was little, she found it quite amusing that she was my mother in a previous life!*

---

*"Don't over-do it."* This story was told by the Master while at Jetavana. It is about another stubborn person.

---

Once upon a time when Brahmadatta was reigning in Benares, the Bodhisatta was reborn as a conch blower, and he went to Benares with his father to a public festival. He earned a great deal of money there by his conch blowing, and then he started for home again. On his way through a forest that was infested by robbers, he warned his father not to keep blowing his conch. But the old man thought he knew better how to keep the robbers off, and he blew away hard without a moment's pause. Accordingly, just as in the preceding story, the robbers returned and

plundered the pair. And, as above, the Bodhisatta repeated this stanza:

*Do not go too far, but learn to avoid excess.  
For over-blowing lost what blowing had won.*



Figure: The Overblown Incident

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His lesson ended, the Master showed the connection and identified the birth by saying, "This stubborn person was the father of those days, and I was the son."

# **61: Asātamanta Jātaka, The Grief Teaching**

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*The original version of this story is quite misogynistic. I have modified it to be more in line with the actual teachings of the Buddha.*

*The university at Takkasilā is mentioned frequently in the Buddhist texts. It was the best university in India at the time.*

*The word “dolor” is somewhat archaic. It means “grief” or “sorrow.”*

*This is a rather incoherent story. First of all, why a Buddhist would aspire to worship a Fire God and be reborn in the Realm of Brahma does not make any sense. And the original version, as noted, is painfully offensive. But buried in here is a story about the dangers of sense desire and the benefits of renunciation.*

*Finally, note that despite the “issues with mom,” the son treats her with dignity and respect to the last.*

---

*“In unbridled passion.”* This story was told by the Master while at Jetavana. It is about a lustful monk. The introductory story will be related in the Ummadanti Jātaka (Jātaka 527). The Master said to this monk, “Women, O monk, are objects of lust, and lust is reckless, vile, and degrading. Why let your unbridled passion subject you to such intoxicating feelings?” And so saying, he told this story of the past.

---

Once upon a time when Brahmadatta was reigning in Benares, the Bodhisatta was reborn as a brahmin in the city of Takkasilā in the Gandhāra country. By the time he had grown up, he was so proficient in the Three Vedas and all accomplishments that his fame as a teacher spread through all the world.

In those days there was a brahmin family in Benares, and they had a son. On the day of his birth they made a fire and kept it burning until the boy was sixteen. Then his parents told him how the fire, started on the day of his birth, had never been allowed to go out, and they told their son to make his choice. If he wanted to gain entrance into the Realm of Brahma, then he should take the fire into the forest. There he could carry work out his aspiration by ceaselessly worshipping the Lord of Fire. But, if he preferred the joys of the home life, they told their son he should go to Takkasilā and study there under the world-renowned teacher so that he could settle down and manage the property.

"I will surely fail in the worship of the Fire God," the young brahmin said, "so I'll be a landowner."

So he said good-bye to his father and mother, and with a thousand pieces of money for the teacher's fee, he left for Takkasilā. There he studied until his education was complete, after which he headed back home again.

During his time away, his parents increasingly wanted him to forsake the world and to worship the Fire God in the forest. Accordingly, his mother wanted to convince him to go the forest by teaching him about the dangers of sense desire. She was confident that his wise and learned teacher would be able to convince him about the trappings of lust. So she asked him whether he had finished his education.

"Oh yes," the young man said.

"Then of course you have not omitted the Dolor Texts?"

"I have not learned those, mother."

"Then how then can you say your education is finished? Go back at once, my son, to your master, and come back to us when you have learned them," his mother said.

"Very well," the young man said, and off he went to Takkasilā once

more.

Now his master had a mother who was still living. She was an old woman of a hundred and twenty years of age. He used to bathe, feed, and take care of her himself. He was ridiculed by his neighbors for doing this. The ridicule was so extreme that he decided to go to the forest and live there. He built a beautiful hut in the solitude of the forest. Water was plentiful there, and after laying in a stock of ghee and rice and other provisions, he carried his mother to her new home. He lived there respecting her and enjoying her old age.

When the young brahmin got to Takkasilā, he, of course, did not find his master. He asked around and discovered what had happened. So he set out for the forest and presented himself respectfully before his master.

"What brings you back so soon, my boy?" his master said.

"I do not think, sir, I learned the Dolor Texts when I was with you," the young man said.

"But who told you that you had to learn the Dolor Texts?"

"My mother, master," he replied.

The Bodhisatta reflected that there were no such texts as those, and he concluded that his pupil's mother must have wanted her son to learn how destructive sense desire can be. So he said to the youth that it was all right, and that he would in due course learn the texts in question.

"From today," he said, "you will take my place caring for my mother. You will wash, feed and look after her with your own hands. As you rub her hands, feet, head, and back, be careful to repeat these words, 'Ah, Madam! if you are so lovely now that you are so old, what must you have been like in the heyday of your youth!' And as you wash and perfume her hands and feet, burst into praise of their beauty. Further, tell me without shame or reserve every single word my mother says to you. Obey me in this, and you shall master the Dolor Texts. Disobey me, and

you will remain ignorant of them forever."

Obeying his master's commands, the youth did as he was told. He was so persistent in his praise of the old woman's beauty that she thought he had fallen in love with her. And even though she was blind and decrepit, passion was kindled within her. So one day she broke in on his compliments by asking, "Do you desire me?"

"I do indeed, madam," the youth answered, "but my master is so strict."

"If you desire me," she said, "kill my son!"

"But how can I, who has learned so much from him, how shall I kill my master for passion's sake?"

"Well then, if you will be faithful to me, I will kill him myself."

(So poisonous is the power of lust that even an old woman like this actually thirsted for the blood of such a dutiful son!)

Now the young brahmin told all this to the Bodhisatta, who commended him for reporting the matter. He studied how much longer his mother was destined to live (*presumably by astrology*). Finding that her destiny was to die that very day, he said, "Come, young brahmin. I will put her to the test." So he cut down a fig tree and cut a wooden figure out of it that was about his size. He wrapped it up, head and all, in a robe and put it on his bed, tying a string to it. "Now go to my mother, and bring her an axe," he said. "Give her this string as a way to guide her steps."

So the youth went to the old woman, and said, "Madam, the master is lying down indoors on his bed. I tied this string as a way to guide you. Take this axe and kill him, if you can."

"But you won't abandon me, will you?" she said.

"Why would I?" he replied.

So she took the axe, and, rising up with trembling limbs, groped her way along by the string until she thought she felt her son. Then she bared the head of the figure, and - thinking to kill her son at a single blow - brought the axe down right on the figure's throat, only to learn by the thud that it was wood!



Figure: Issues With Mom

"What are you doing, mother?" the Bodhisatta said.

With a shriek that she was betrayed, the old woman fell dead to the ground. For, says tradition, it was fated that she should die at that very moment and under her own roof.

Seeing that she was dead, her son cremated her body, and when the flames of the pile were quenched, graced her ashes with wildflowers. Then with the young brahmin he sat at the door of the hut and said, "My son, there is no such passage as the 'Dolor Text.' It is lust that is the embodiment of depravity. And when your mother sent you back to me to

learn the Dolor Texts, her object was that you should learn how dangerous lust is. You have now witnessed with your own eyes lust's wickedness, and from that you can see how vile it is." And with this lesson, he told the youth to leave.

Saying goodbye to his master, the young brahmin went home to his parents. His said mother to him, "Have you now learned the Dolor Texts?"

"Yes, mother."

"And what," she asked, "is your final choice? Will you leave the world to worship the Lord of Fire, or will you choose a family life?"

The young brahmin answered, "I have seen the wickedness of lust with my own eyes. I will have nothing to do with family life. I will renounce the world." And his convictions found expression in this stanza:

*In unbridled lust, like devouring fire,  
Passion creates an uncontrollable rage.  
Without renouncing passion, I would be unable  
To find peace in a hermitage.*

With this lesson the young brahmin took leave of his parents and renounced the world for the life of a recluse. He was able to find the peace he desired, and so he assured himself entry into the Realm of Brahma.

---

"So you see, brother," the Master said, "how vile and woeful lust is." And after declaring the wickedness of lust, he preached the Four Noble Truths, at the close of which that brother won the Fruit of the First Path (*stream entry*). The Master then showed the connection and identified the birth by saying,

"Kāpilānī was the mother of those days, Mahākassapa was the father, Ānanda the pupil, and I myself the teacher."

*(The Elder Nun Bhaddā Kāpilānī was a prominent and respected nun who was especially good at recalling her past lives. Why she is depicted as the villain here is unclear. Mahākasspa was an arahant and “foremost in ascetic practices.” He and Kāpilānī were married before they ordained as monastics. Ānanda was, of course, the Buddha’s cousin and his attendant. The Buddha gave him the title “Guardian of the Dharma”.)*

## **62: Aṇḍabhūta Jātaka, Overcome With Desire**

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*This is another story in which the original is incredibly misogynistic and offensive. It took a great deal of creative editing to make it into something palatable.*

*This story is also, like the previous story, rather incoherent, and it is not consistent with the Buddha's teachings. The basis for the story is a magical charm. The Buddha was quite critical of all types of magic, fortune telling, and so on. It is also hard to believe that the Bodhisatta would hire an unscrupulous man to seduce a young girl, especially to win at gambling.*

*The history of women in Buddhism is quite checkered. India during the Buddha's time treated women horribly. They could not own property, inherit from a deceased husband, or own a business. If they traveled, they had to go with their father, brother, or husband. Otherwise legally they were fair game and had no protection.*

*Nonetheless, the Buddha decided to ordain women in what was a very radical move for the time. This was very unpopular with many of the monks. They treated the nuns extremely poorly. This led to many monastic rules to protect the nuns from the monks. This sexist attitude persists to this day in many portions of the Sangha. This is less of a problem, for some reason, in Mahayana (Chinese) Buddhism and Vajrayana (Tibetan) Buddhism.*

*I dislike this story so much that I did not do an illustration for it!*

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*"Blindfold, eluding." This story was told by the Master while at Jetavana. It is about another person who was overcome by passion.*

The Master said, "Is the report true that you are overwhelmed by

passion, brother?"

"Quite true," was the reply.

"Brother, you must learn the danger in unbridled sexual desire. In days gone by the wise kept watch over a woman from the moment she was born, but they failed nevertheless to protect her from lust." And so saying, he told this story of the past.

---

Once upon a time when Brahmadatta was reigning in Benares, the Bodhisatta was reborn as the child of the Queen consort. When he grew up, he mastered every accomplishment. At his father's death he became King, and he proved to be a righteous King. Now he used to play dice with his priest, and as he flung the golden dice upon the silver table, he would sing this phrase for luck:

*It is nature's law that rivers wind,  
Trees grow of wood by law of kind.  
No one can keep their virginity,  
When sexual desire brings iniquity.*

As these lines always made the King win the game, the priest was about to lose all his money. In order to save himself from this, he decided to seek out a girl that had never seen another man, and then to keep her under lock and key in his own house. "For," he thought, "I couldn't manage to look after a girl who has seen another man. So I must take a new-born baby girl and keep her under my thumb as she grows up. I will keep a close guard over her so that no one will come near her and she will remain pure. Then I shall beat the King and grow rich."

Now he was skilled in prognostication, and seeing a poor woman who was about to become a mother, and knowing that her child would be a girl, he paid the woman to come live in his house. Then he sent her away after her confinement with a present. The infant was brought up entirely by women, and no men - other than himself - were ever allowed to set eyes on her. When the girl grew up, she was subject to him, and he was

her master.

Now while the girl was growing up, the priest endured losing to the King. But when she was grown up and under his own control, he challenged the King to a game. The King accepted and play began. But, when in throwing the dice the King sang his lucky catch, the priest added, "always excepting my girl." And then the luck changed. Now it was the priest who won, while the King lost.

Thinking the matter over, the Bodhisatta suspected the priest had a virtuous girl shut up in his house. His enquiry proved this suspicion true. Then, in order to affect her fall from grace, he sent for a clever rogue. He asked him whether he thought he could seduce the girl. "Certainly, sire," said the fellow. So the King gave him money and sent him away with orders to lose no time.

With the King's money the fellow bought perfumes and incense and aromatics of all sorts. He opened a perfume shop close to the priest's house.

Now the priest's house was seven stories high. It had seven gateways. There was a guard at each one of them. They were all women. No man but the brahmin was ever allowed to enter. Even the baskets that contained the dust and sweepings were examined before they were allowed in. Only the priest was allowed to see the girl, and she had only a single lady-in-waiting. This woman had money given to her to buy flowers and perfumes for her mistress. On her way she used to pass near the shop that the rogue had opened. And he, knowing that she was the girl's attendant, watched for her to pass by.

When she did, he rushing out of his shop and fell at her feet. He clasped her knees tightly with both hands and blubbered out, "O my mother! Where have you been all this long time?"

His co-conspirators, who stood by his side, cried, "What a likeness! Hand and foot, face and figure, even in style of dress, they are identical!" As they all kept talking about the marvelous likeness, the poor woman lost

her head. Crying out that it must be her boy, she, too, burst into tears. And with weeping and tears the two fell to embracing one another. Then the man said, "Where are you living, mother?"

"Up at the priest's house, my son. He has a young girl of peerless beauty, a very goddess for grace, and I am her lady-in-waiting."

"And where are you going now, mother?"

"To buy her perfumes and flowers."

"Why go elsewhere for them? Come to me for them in future," he said. And he gave the woman betel, perfume, and so forth, and all kinds of flowers, refusing all payment. Struck with the quantity of flowers and perfumes that the lady-in-waiting brought home, the girl asked why the brahmin was so pleased with her that day.

"Why do you say that, my dear?" asked the old woman.

"Because of the quantity of things you have brought home."

"No, it isn't that the brahmin was free with his money," the old woman said, "for I got them at my son's." And from that day on she kept the money the brahmin gave her, and she got her flowers and other things for free at the man's shop.

A few days later the rogue pretended to be sick, and he took to his bed. So when the old woman came to the shop and asked for her son, she was told he had been taken ill. Rushing to his side, she fondly stroked his shoulders as she asked what ailed him. But he made no reply.

"Why don't you tell me, my son?"

"Not even if I were dying could I tell you, mother."

"But, if you don't tell me, who can you tell?"

"Well then, mother, my sickness is this. Hearing the praises of your

young mistress's beauty, I have fallen in love with her. If I win her, I shall live. If not, this will be my death bed."

"Leave it to me, my boy," the old woman said cheerily, "and don't worry yourself on this account."

Then, with a heavy load of perfumes and flowers to take with her, she went home and said to the brahmin's young girl, "Alas! My son is in love with you, merely because I told him how beautiful you are! What is to be done?"

"If you can smuggle him in here," the girl replied, "you have my permission."

So the old woman started sweeping together all the dust she could find in the house from top to bottom. She put this dust into a huge basket and tried to leave with it. When the guard searched the basket, she dumped the dust all over the woman on guard, who then ran away under such bad treatment. She did the same thing to all the other watchers, smothering each one in turn in dust. And so from that time forward, no matter what the old woman took in or out of the house, there was nobody bold enough to search her. Now was the time! The old woman smuggled the rogue into the house in a huge basket and brought him to her young mistress. He succeeded in wrecking the girl's virtue. He actually stayed a day or two in the upper rooms. He hid when the priest was at home and enjoyed the company of his mistress when the priest was away.

A day or two passed and the girl said to her lover, "Sweetheart, you must go now."

"Very well. Only I must hit the brahmin first."

"Certainly," she said, and she hid the rogue.

When the brahmin came in again, she exclaimed, "Oh, my dear priest, I should so like to dance. Would you play the lute for me?"

"Dance away, my dear," the priest said.

"But I will be too ashamed if you watch. Let me hide your face with a cloth, and then I will dance."

"All right," he said, "if you're too modest to dance otherwise."

So she took a thick cloth and blindfolded the brahmin's face. And so the brahmin began to play the lute. After dancing a while she cried, "My dear, I would like to hit you on the head."

"Hit away," said the unsuspecting dotard. Then the girl signaled her lover. He softly snuck up behind the brahmin and hit him on the head.

The force of the blow was so hard that the brahmin's eyes almost popped of his head. A big bump rose up on the spot. Smarting with pain, he called to the girl to give him her hand. She placed it in his. "Ah! It's a soft hand," he said, "but it hits hard!"

Now, as soon as the rogue had struck the brahmin, he hid. When he was hidden, the girl took the blindfold off the priest's eyes and rubbed his bruised head with oil. The moment the brahmin went out, the rogue was stowed away in his basket again by the old woman and carried out of the house. Making his way at once to the King, he told him the whole adventure.

Accordingly, when the brahmin next visited, the King suggested a game with the dice. The brahmin agreed, and the dice table was brought out. As the King made his throw he sang his old verse. The brahmin - ignorant of the girl's naughtiness - added his "always excepting my girl," and nevertheless lost!

Then the King said to his chaplain, "Why except her? Her virtue has given way. Ah, you dreamed that by taking a girl in the hour of her birth and by placing a guard around her, you could keep her pure. Why, you couldn't protect anyone from their own sexual desire, even if you kept her with you always. No one is immune to the dangers of sexual desire.

As for that girl of yours, she told you she should like to dance, and having first blindfolded you as you played the lute to her, she let her lover strike you on the head. Then she smuggled him out of the house. Where, then, is your exception?" And so saying, the King repeated this stanza:

*Blindfold, eluding, this girl was beguiled,  
The brahmin sits, who tried to rear  
A paragon of virtue undefiled!  
Learn hence to hold desire in fear.*

In this way the Bodhisatta taught the brahmin. And the brahmin went home and accused the girl of indiscretion.

"My dear priest, who said this about me?" she said. "I am innocent. It was my own hand that struck you and nobody else. If you do not believe me, I will brave the ordeal of fire to prove that no man's hand has touched me but yours, and so I will make you believe me."

"So be it," said the brahmin. And he had some wood brought in and he started a fire. Then the girl was summoned. "Now," he said, "if your story is true, brave these flames!"

Now before this the girl told her lady-in-waiting, "Tell your son to be there and to seize my hand just as I am about to go into the fire." The old woman did as she was asked. The fellow came and stood among the crowd.

Then, to fool the brahmin, the girl stood before all the people and exclaimed, "No man's hand but thine, brahmin, has ever touched me. By the truth of my declaration, I call on this fire not to harm me."

So saying, she went up to the burning pile. Suddenly her lover ran up to her and grabbed her hand. He cried shame on the brahmin who could force so fair a maid to enter the flames! Shaking her hand free, the girl exclaimed to the brahmin that what she had asserted was now undone, and that she could not now brave the ordeal of fire.

"Why not?" said the brahmin.

"Because," she replied, "my declaration was that no man's hand but yours had ever touched me. But now here is a man who has seized my hand!"

The brahmin, knowing that he had been tricked, drove her away.

Such, we learn, is the danger of sexual desire. There is no crime that will not be committed. There is no claim that someone will not make. Therefore it is said:

*A mind composed of lust and desire,  
Unknowable. Uncertain as the path,  
Of fishes in the water, the lustful  
Hold truth for falsehood, falsehood for the truth!  
As greedily as cows seek new pastures,  
Desire, unsated, yearns for more and more.  
As unstable sand, cruel as the snake,  
Sexual desire craves all things. No one is safe from it.*

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"Such is the danger of sexual desire," the Master said. His lesson ended, he preached the Dharma, at the close of which the brother won the Fruit of the First Path (*stream entry*). And the Master showed the connection and identified the birth by saying, "In these days I was the King of Benares."

## **63: *Takka Jātaka,* *The Date Sage***

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*This is another in the misogyny series, although this one is much more easily edited to be in harmony with the true teachings of the Buddha.*

*An interesting point in this story is when the robber realizes that if the woman was capable of betraying the Bodhisatta, she was also capable of betraying him. This is a general lesson in life. If you know someone who is treating someone else badly, they can just as easily do it to you.*

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“*The fire of lust.*” This story was told by the Master while at Jetavana. It is about another monk who was overwhelmed by sexual desire. When he was questioned, the monk confessed that he was overwhelmed by passion. The Master said, “With sensual pleasures as the cause, people indulge in misconduct of body, speech, and mind.” And he told this story of the past.

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Once upon a time when Brahmadatta was reigning in Benares, the Bodhisatta, who had chosen to live as a recluse, built a hermitage for himself by the banks of the Ganges. There he won the Attainments (*the jhānas*) and the Higher Knowledges (*these are supernormal powers, but not awakening*), and so he lived in the bliss of Insight.

In those days the Lord High Treasurer of Benares had a fierce and cruel daughter. She was known as Lady Wicked. She used to abuse and beat her servants and slaves. One day they took their young mistress to enjoy herself in the Ganges. The girls were playing in the water when the sun set, and a great storm burst upon them. Everyone there ran away. The girl’s attendants exclaimed, “Now is the time to see the last of this creature!” They threw her into the river and ran off.

The rain poured down in torrents. The sun set, and darkness came. When the attendants reached home without their young mistress, they asked where she was. They replied that she had gotten out of the Ganges, but that they did not know where she had gone. The family searched for her, but they could not find any trace of the missing girl.

Meantime she was screaming loudly and was being swept down the swollen river. At midnight she approached where the Bodhisatta lived in his hermitage. Hearing her cries, he thought to himself, "That's a woman's voice. I must rescue her from the water." So he took a torch of grass and by its light was able to find her in the stream. "Don't be afraid! Don't be afraid!" he shouted cheerily. He waded in, and thanks to his vast strength – like that of an elephant - he brought her safely to land. Then he made a fire for her in his hermitage and set out delicious fruits of many kinds for her.

When she had eaten he asked, "Where is your home, and how did you fall in the river?" The girl told him all that had happened. "Live here for the time being," he said, and he settled her in to live in his hermitage.

For the next two or three days he lived outside in the open air. At the end of that time he told her that it was time for her to leave. However, she was determined to make the recluse fall in love with her, and she would not go.

As time went by, she so worked on him by her charm and beauty so that he lost his Insight. For some time they continued to live in the forest. But she did not like living in solitude, and she wanted to be taken back among people. So yielding to her request, he took her away with him to a border village. There he supported her by selling dates, and so he was called the "Date Sage" (*In the original Pāli this is a pun. The Pāli word for "date" is "takka," which also means "logic."*). The villagers also paid him to teach them what were lucky and unlucky seasons (*again, presumably through astrology*), and they gave him a hut to live in at the entrance to their village.

Now the border was harassed by robbers from the mountains. One day they raided the village where the pair lived and looted it. They made the poor villagers pack up their belongings, and off they went. They took the Treasurer's daughter with them. Once they arrived, they let everybody else go free. But because the girl was so beautiful, she became the wife of the chief robber.

When the Bodhisatta learned this, he thought to himself, "She will not endure living away from me. She will escape and come back to me." And so he lived on, waiting for her to return. Meantime, she was very happy with the robbers. She was afraid that the Date Sage would come to take her away. "I would feel more secure," she thought, "if he were dead. I must send a message to him pretending to love him and in that way I can entice him here to his death." So she sent a messenger to him with the message that she was unhappy, and that she wanted him to take her away.

In his faith in her, he set out immediately. He came to the entrance of the robbers' village where he sent a message to her. "To run away now, my husband," she said, "would only cause the robbers to kill us both. Let us wait until night." So she took him and hid him in a room.

When the robber came home that night and was consumed with alcohol, she said to him, "Tell me, love, what would you do if your rival were in your power?"

He said he would do this and that to him.

"Perhaps he is not as far away as you think," she said. "He is in the next room."

Seizing a torch, the robber rushed in and seized the Bodhisatta and beat him about the head and body to his heart's content. Amid the blows the Bodhisatta made no cry, only murmuring, "Cruel ingrate! Slanderous traitor!" And this was all he said. And when the Bodhisatta had been beaten, bound, and laid by the heels, the robber finished his supper and lay down to sleep.

In the morning, when he had slept off his overnight debauchery, he started to beat the Bodhisatta again. And again the Bodhisatta made no cry but kept repeating the same four words. And the robber was struck with this and asked why, even when beaten, he kept saying that.

"Listen," said the Date Sage, "and you shall hear. Once I was a recluse living in the solitude of the forest, and there I won Insight. And I rescued this woman from the Ganges. I helped her in her time of need, and by her charm and beauty I fell from my accomplishments. Then I left the forest and supported her in a village where she was carried off by robbers. Then she sent me a message saying that she was unhappy and that she wanted me to come and take her away. Now she has made me fall into your hands. That is why I say, 'Cruel ingrate! Slanderous traitor!'"

This got the robber to reflect. He thought, "If she can feel so little for someone who was so good to her and has done so much for her, what wouldn't she do to me? She must die." So having reassured the Bodhisatta and having awakened the woman, he set out, sword in hand. He pretended that he was about to kill him outside the village. Then telling her to hold the Date Sage, he drew his sword and split the woman in two. Then he bathed the Date Sage from head to foot, and for several days fed him with delicacies to his heart's content.



Figure: Explaining the Betrayal

"Where do you plan to go now?" said the robber at last.

"The world," answered the sage, "has no pleasures for me. I will become a recluse once more and go back to my hut in the forest."

"Then I, too, will become a recluse," exclaimed the robber. So both became recluses together. They lived in the hermitage in the forest,

where they both won the Higher Knowledges and the Attainments. And when life ended. they entered the Realm of Brahma.

---

After telling these two stories, the Master showed the connection, by reciting, as the Buddha, this stanza:

*Burning with the fire of lust,  
Passion is the sower of dissension and strife!  
Then, brother, tread the path of holiness,  
And you will not fail to find bliss.*

His lesson ended, the Master preached the Four Noble Truths, at the close of which the passionate monk won the Fruit of the First Path. Also, the Master identified the birth by saying, “Ānanda was the robber chief of those days, and I myself was the Date Sage.”

## **64: Durājāna Jātaka, Difficult to Understand**

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*What I think is the most important lesson in this story gets a little lost in the amount of detail about the wife's irrational behavior, and that is that when she finds out that the Bodhisatta/Buddha knows how she has been acting, she changes. In the Buddha's teaching there is the notion of healthy shame. This is not shame that you use to browbeat yourself. It is the kind of shame that encourages you to behave well.*

---

"*You think you know.*" This story was told by the Master while at Jetavana. It is about a lay follower. Tradition says that there was a lay follower who lived at Sāvatthi. He was established in the Three Gems and the Five Precepts, a devout lover of the Buddha, the Dharma, and the Saṅgha. But his wife was a sinful and wicked woman. On days when she did something wrong, she was as meek as a slave girl bought for a hundred pieces. On days when she did not do anything wrong, she played the matriarch, passionate and tyrannical. The husband did not understand her. She worried him so much that he did not go to wait on the Buddha.

One day he went to see the Buddha with perfumes and flowers, and he took his seat after due salutation. The Master said to him, "Why is it, lay brother, that you have not come to see the Buddha for seven or eight days?"

"My wife, sir, is like a slave girl bought for a hundred pieces one day, while on another day she is a passionate and tyrannical mistress. I cannot make her out. It is because she has worried me so that I have not been to wait upon the Buddha."

Now, when he heard these words, the Master said, "Why, lay brother,

you have already been told by the wise and good of bygone days that it is hard to understand the nature of the untrained mind." And he went on to think "but his previous existences have come to be confused in his mind, so that he cannot remember." And so saying, he told this story of the past.

---

Once upon a time when Brahmadatta was reigning in Benares, the Bodhisatta was reborn as a teacher of worldwide fame. He had 500 young brahmins studying under him. One of these pupils was from a foreign land. He fell in love with a woman and made her his wife. Though he continued to live in Benares, two or three times he failed to attend to his master. His wife was a sinful and wicked woman who was as meek as a slave on days when she had done something wrong. But on days when she had not done anything wrong, she acted like a matriarch, passionate and tyrannical. Her husband could not understand her at all. He worried about her, and he was harassed by her, and that is why he did not attend to his master. After seven or eight days he renewed his visits. The Bodhisatta asked him why he had not been seen of late.

"Master, my wife is the cause," he said. And he told the Bodhisatta how she was meek one day like a slave girl and tyrannical the next. He could not make her out at all. And he had been so worried and harassed by her shifting moods that he had stayed away.

"Precisely so, young brahmin," the Bodhisatta said. "On days when they have done wrong, people with untrained minds humble themselves and become as meek and submissive as a slave. But on days when they have not done anything wrong, then they become stubborn and insubordinate. In this way the untrained worldling is unskillful and unreliable, and their nature is hard to know. No attention should be given to their likes or to their dislikes." And so saying, the Bodhisatta repeated for the edification of his pupil this stanza:

*If you think someone loves you, do not be glad.  
If you think someone does not love you, do not grieve.*

*Unknowable, uncertain as the path of fishes in the water,  
The wild mind proves capricious.*

Such was the Bodhisatta's instruction to his pupil, who paid no heed to his wife's mood changes after that. And she, hearing that her misconduct had come to the ears of the Bodhisatta, stopped her unwholesome behavior from that time forward.

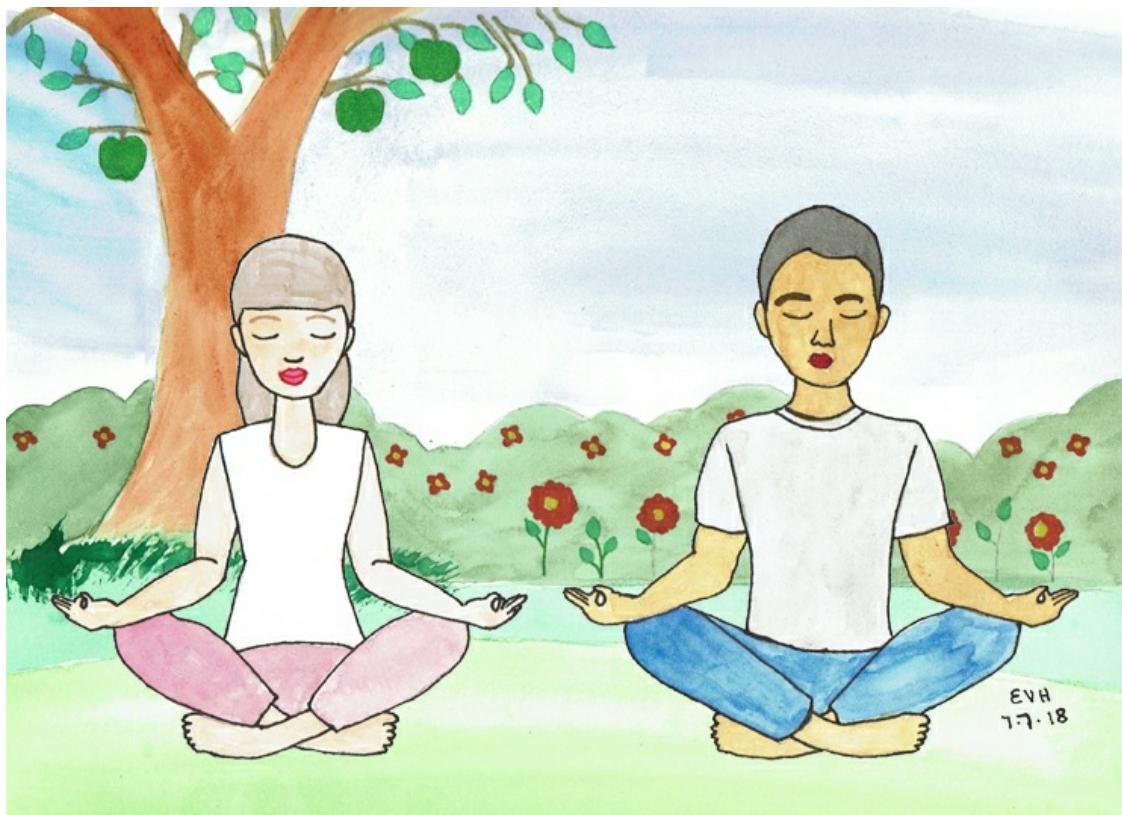


Figure: The Now Happy Couple

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So, too, this lay brother's wife said to herself, "The Perfect Buddha himself knows, they tell me, of my misconduct," and from then on she stopped misbehaving.

His lesson ended, the Master preached the Four Noble Truths, at the close of which the lay brother won the Fruit of the First Path. Then the Master showed the connection and identified the birth by saying, "This husband and wife were also the husband and wife of those days, and I

was the teacher."

## **65: Anabhirati Jātaka, The Tale of Discontent**

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*This story also has the detail of someone reforming out of shame. But it also gives the lesson of the futility of becoming upset with people whose minds are wild and untrained. It is to be expected that they will behave foolishly. So rather than getting upset, treat such cases with equanimity.*

---

“Like highways.” This story was told by the Master while at Jetavana. It is about another layman similar to the last story. This man, when he discovered his wife’s misconduct, argued with her. As a result, he was so upset that for seven or eight days he did not visit the Buddha. One day he came to the monastery, bowed to the Blessed One and took his seat. Being asked why he had been absent for seven or eight days, he replied, “Sir, my wife has misbehaved, and I have been so upset about her that I did not come.”

“Lay brother,” the Master said, “long ago the wise and good told you not to be angry when a fool misbehaves. But you have forgotten this lesson in equanimity because you have forgotten that rebirth.” At the lay brother’s request, he told this story of the past.

---

Once upon a time when Brahmadatta was reigning in Benares, the Bodhisatta was a teacher of worldwide reputation, just as in the previous story. And a pupil of his, finding his wife unfaithful, was so upset by this discovery that he stayed away for some days. One day he was asked by his teacher why he had been away, and he confessed what had happened. Then his teacher said, “My son, there is refuge in the wild mind. And therefore wise men, knowing this uncertainty, avoid fellowship with fools.” And so saying, he repeated this stanza for his

pupil's sake:

*Like highways, rivers, courtyards, hostceries,  
Or taverns, which to all alike extend  
One universal hospitality,  
Is the untrained mind, and wise people never stoop  
To anger at the frailty in a fool's wickedness.*

Such was the instruction that the Bodhisatta gave to his pupil, who after that grew equanimous to what fools did. As for his wife, she was so shamed by hearing that the teacher knew how she had behaved, that she stopped her misconduct.



Figure: The Reformed Lay Follower

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So too that layman's wife, when she heard that the Master knew what she was, stopped her misconduct.

His lesson ended, the Master preached the Four Noble Truths, at the close of which the lay disciple won the Fruit of the First Path. Also the Master showed the connection and identified the birth by saying, "This husband and wife were also the husband and wife of those days, and I was the brahmin teacher."

## **66: Mudulakkhaṇa Jātaka, The Delicate Quality**

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*This is a lovely tale. It is one in which our hero, the Bodhisatta, is overcome by sexual desire and falls from grace. However, his benefactor, the King, and the Queen set him back on the proper path. The real hero of this story is the Queen who finds a way to restore the recluse's virtue by essentially annoying him back into his senses!*

---

*"Until Gentle-heart was mine."* This story was told by the Master while at Jetavana. It is about overwhelming sexual desire. Tradition says that a young gentleman of Sāvatthi, on hearing the Dharma preached by the Master, gave his heart to the Buddha, the Dharma, and the Saṅgha. Renouncing the world for the life of a monk, he trained in the Noble Eightfold Path, practiced mindfulness, and never failed to keep in mind the theme he had chosen for meditation.

One day, while he was on his alms round in Sāvatthi, he saw a beautiful woman in provocative clothing. For the sake of sensual pleasure, he lost his mindfulness and stared at her. Passion was stirred within him. He became like a fig tree felled by the axe. From that day on, under the spell of passion, he lost all of his resolve in the training of his mind and his body. Like a brutal beast, he took no joy in the Dharma, and as a result his nails and hair grew long and his robes began to grow foul.

When his friends in the Saṅgha became aware of his troubled state of mind, they said, "Why, sir, has your commitment to the path changed?"

"My joy is gone," he said. Then they took him to the Master who asked them why they had brought that monk there against his will. "Because, sir, his joy in the practice is gone,"

“Is that true, brother?”

“It is, Blessed One.”

“What has troubled you?”

“Sir, I was on my alms round when, losing my mindfulness, I saw a woman, and passion was stirred within me. Therefore am I troubled.”

Then the Master said, “It is not surprising, brother, that when you lost your mindfulness, you were stirred by passion by looking at a beautiful woman. Why, in bygone times, even those who had won the five Higher Knowledges (*supernormal powers*) and the eight Attainments (*jhānas*), those who by the might of Insight had quelled their passions, whose hearts were purified and whose feet could walk the skies, yes, even Bodhisattas, through losing their mindfulness and looking at a beautiful woman, lost their insight, were stirred by passion and came to great sorrow.

“Passion is like a wind that can overturn Mount Sineru (*the mythological center of the earth*), much less a bare hillock no bigger than an elephant, or a wind that can uproot a mighty apple tree like a bush on the face of a cliff, or a wind that can dry up a vast ocean, much less a tiny pond.

“If passion can breed folly in the supremely enlightened and pure-minded Bodhisattas, you should not be ashamed of being overcome by it. Why, even purified beings are led astray by passion, and those advanced to the highest honor come to shame.” And so saying, he told this story of the past.

---

Once upon a time when Brahmadatta was reigning in Benares, the Bodhisatta was born into a rich brahmin family in the Kāsi country. When he was grown up and had finished his education, he renounced all sense desire. Forsaking the world for a hermit’s life, he went to live in the solitude of the Himalayas. There by due fulfilment of all preparatory forms of meditation, he attained the Higher Knowledges and the ecstatic

Attainments, and so lived his life in the bliss of mystic Insight.

Lack of salt and vinegar brought him one day to Benares, where he took up his quarters in the King's pleasure garden. On the next day, after seeing to his bodily needs, he folded up the red suit of bark which he commonly wore, threw a black antelope's skin over one shoulder, knotted his tangled hair in a coil on the top of his head, and with a yoke on his back from which hung two baskets, he set out on his alms round. Coming to the palace gates on his way, the King was so impressed by his demeanor that his majesty invited him in. So the recluse was seated on a couch of great splendor and fed with abundance of the finest food. And when he thanked the King, he was invited to live in the pleasure garden. The recluse accepted the offer, and for sixteen years he lived there, inspiring the King's household and accepting the King's generosity.

Now one day the King went to the border to put down an uprising. But before he started, he told his Queen, whose name was Gentle-heart, to tend to the needs of the holy man. So after the King's departure, the Bodhisatta continued to go to the palace when he pleased.

One day Queen Gentle-heart got a meal ready for the Bodhisatta. But because he was late, she tended to her personal grooming. After bathing in perfumed water, she dressed herself in all her splendor and lay down, awaiting his coming, on a little couch in the spacious chamber.

Waking from the rapture of Insight and seeing how late it was, the Bodhisatta transported himself through the air to the palace. Hearing the rustling of his bark-robe, the queen got up quickly to receive him. In her hurry to rise, her tunic slipped down so that her beauty was revealed to the ascetic as he entered the window. At the sight, in violation of his virtue, he looked with pleasure at the marvelous beauty of the queen. Lust was kindled within him. He was like a tree felled by an axe. At once all Insight deserted him, and he became like a crow with its wings clipped. Clutching his food, still standing, he did not eat. He went back to his hut in the pleasure garden, trembling with desire. He sat down on his wooden couch and lay for seven whole days, ignoring his hunger and

thirst, enslaved by the queen's beauty. His heart was burning with lust.

On the seventh day the King came back from pacifying the border. After passing in a triumphant procession around the city, he entered his palace. Then, wishing to see the recluse, he went to the pleasure garden. There he found the Bodhisatta lying on his couch in the hut. Thinking the holy man had been taken ill, the King, after first having the hut cleaned out, asked as he stroked the sufferer's feet, what ailed him.

"Sire, my heart is shackled by lust. That is my ailment."

"Lust for whom?"

"For Gentle-heart, sire."

"Then she is yours. I give her to you," the King said.

Then he went with the recluse to the palace. He told the Queen to dress herself in all her splendor, and he gave her to the Bodhisatta. But as he was giving her away, the King implored the Queen to put forth her best effort to save the holy man.

"Fear not, sire," said the Queen. "I will save him."

So the recluse left the palace with the Queen. But when he had passed through the great gate, the Queen cried out that they must have a house to live in, and that he must go to the King to ask for one. So he went back to ask the King for a house to live in. The King gave them a tumble-down hut that travelers used as a latrine. The ascetic took the Queen to this hut, but she flatly refused to enter it because of its filthy state.



Figure: The Clever Queen

"What am I to do?" he cried.

"Why, clean it out!" she said. And she sent him to the King for a shovel and a bucket and made him remove all the filth and dirt. She also made him plaster the walls with cow dung, which he had to go find. This done, she made him get a bed and a stool and a rug and a water pot and a cup, sending him for only one thing at a time. Next, she sent him to get water and a thousand other things. So off he started for the water. He filled up

the water pot and set out the water for the bath. He made the bed. And, as he sat with her upon the bed, she took him by the whiskers and drew him towards her until they were face to face, saying, "Have you forgotten that you are a holy man and a brahmin?"

Suddenly he came to his senses after his interval of witless folly.

So when he came to his senses, he thought how as his desire grew stronger and stronger, this fatal craving would condemn him to the Four States of Punishment (*the hell realm, the hungry ghost realm, the animal realm, and the realm of inferior beings*). "This very day," he cried, "I will restore this woman to the King and fly to the mountains!" So he stood before the King with the Queen and said, "Sire, I do not want your Queen any longer. My craving was only for her." And so saying, he repeated this stanza:

*Until Gentle-heart was mine, my only desire  
Was to win her. When her beauty owned  
Me, lord, desire came crowding on desire.*

Immediately his power of Insight returned to him. Rising from the earth and seating himself in the air, he preached the Dharma to the King. And without touching the earth he passed through the air to the Himalayas. He never came back to the world of men. He grew in love and charity until, with Insight unbroken, he passed to a new birth in the Realm of Brahma.

---

His lesson ended, the Master preached the Four Noble Truths, at the close of which that brother won Arahatship itself. And the Master showed the connection and identified the birth by saying, "Ānanda was the King of those days, Uppalavaṇṇā was Gentle-heart, and I was the hermit."

(*Uppalavaṇṇā was an elder nun, foremost among the nuns in supernormal powers. She was the daughter of a wealthy merchant and was known for her great beauty.*)

## **67: *Ucchanga Jātaka,* *The Tale of Logic***

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*This is another of these somewhat confused stories. But I think that ultimately we get the point. The woman in the story is praised for her logic and wisdom. There may also be overtones of Indian values, where the family is the most important thing in your life, although the son might be wondering about mother issues.*

---

“A son’s an easy find.” This story was told by the Master while at Jetavana. It is about a certain country woman.

Once in Kosala there were three men ploughing a field on the outskirts of a forest. There were robbers there who plundered people in that forest and managed to escape. In the course of a fruitless search for the rascals, the victims came to where the three men were ploughing. “Here are the forest robbers, disguised as farmers!” they cried, and they hauled the trio off as prisoners to the King of Kosala.

Now there was a woman who came to the King’s palace repeatedly who cried loud lamentations begging for “the means to be covered.” Hearing her cry, the King ordered some clothing to be given to her. But she refused it, saying this was not what she meant. So the King’s servants went back to his majesty and said that what the woman wanted was not clothes but a husband. Then the King had the woman brought into his presence and asked her whether she really did mean a husband.

“Yes, sire,” she answered, “for a husband is a woman’s real covering, and a woman that lacks a husband - even though she wears garments that cost a thousand pieces - goes bare and naked indeed.”

Pleased with the woman’s answer, the King asked what relation the three

prisoners were to her. And she said that one was her husband, one was her brother, and one was her son. "Well, to mark my favor," said the King, "I will release one of the three. Which one will it be?"

"Sire," she answered, "if I live, I can get another husband and another son. But as my parents are dead, I can never get another brother. So give me my brother, Sire." Pleased with the woman, the King set all three men free. And so this one woman was the reason that the men were saved.

When the matter came to the attention of the Sangha, they were praising the woman in the Dharma Hall when the Master entered. Learning the topic of their conversation, he said, "This is not the first time, brothers, that this woman saved those three from peril. She did the same in days gone by." And, so saying, he told this story of the past.

---

Once upon a time when Brahmadatta was reigning in Benares, three men were ploughing on the outskirts of a forest and everything came to pass as above.

Being asked by the King which of the three she would take, the woman said, "Cannot your majesty give me all three?"

"No," the King said, "I cannot."

"Well, if I cannot have all three, give me my brother."

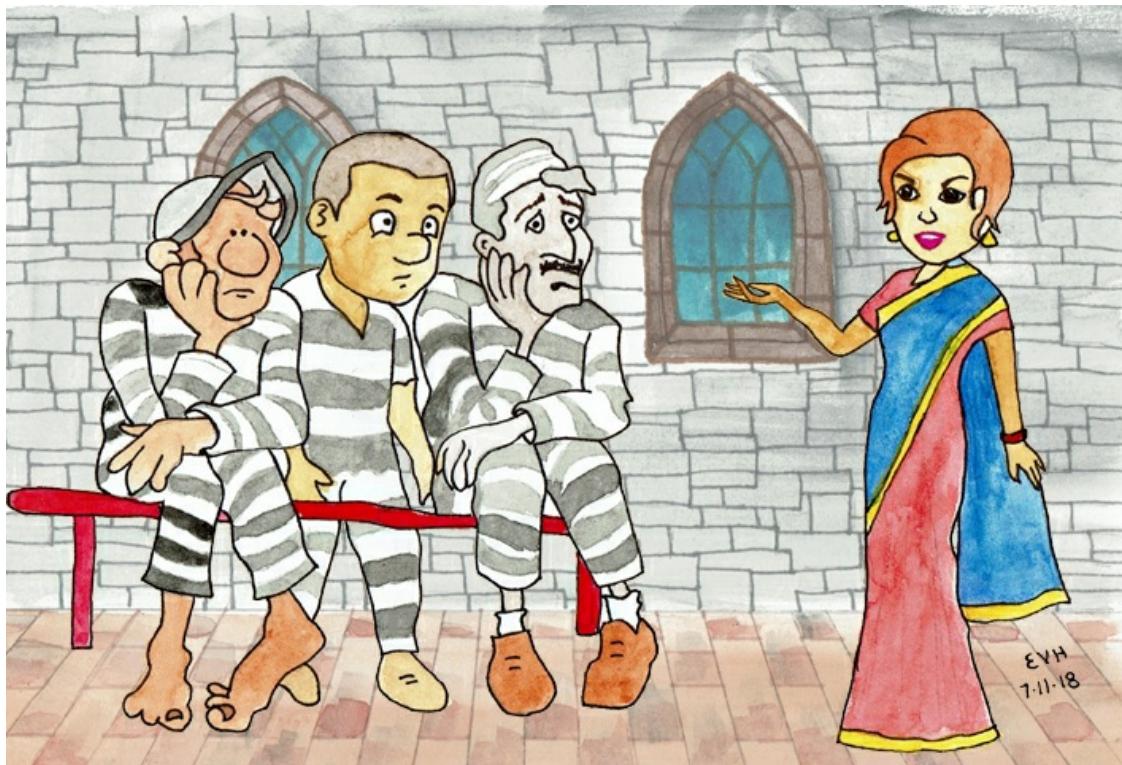


Figure: The Clever Woman and the Unfortunate Farmers

"Take your husband or your son," said the King. "What does a brother matter?"

"I can readily replace a husband and a son," the woman answered, "but I cannot replace a brother." And so saying, she repeated this stanza:

*A son is an easy find, a husband, too.  
An ample choice throngs public ways. But how  
Will all my efforts help me replace a brother?*

"She is quite right," said the King, well-pleased. And he ordered that all three men be released from the prison and given to the woman. She took all three of them and went her way.

---

"So you see, brothers," the Master said, "that this woman saved these same three men from peril once before." His lesson ended, he made the connection and identified the birth by saying, "The woman and the three

men of today were also the woman and men of those bygone days, and I was the King."

## **68: Sākata Jātaka, The City of Sākata Story**

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*This is somewhat curious yet tender story about the Buddha and an old couple. The Buddha spoke often about the importance of respecting and revering your parents. Now of course, there are cases where parents treat their children badly. But sadly, there are probably just as many cases where adult children abuse their aging parents. Perhaps our culture could do with a little more of the kind of parent-child respect demonstrated in the story. The tender way in which the Buddha treats the apparently delusional old couple is quite touching.*

*There is also a lesson in here about our instincts. We are sometimes inexplicably drawn to certain people. We have an instant connection and ease with some people. It does not happen often, but it does happen. I think the story is suggesting that we trust those instincts. They may be karmic bonds from previous lives, and such bonds should be honored.*

*The final touch in this story is that after hearing the Buddha teach, the elderly couple attains the second stage of awakening as once-returners. His debt to them is complete.*

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*“The man on whom you rest your mind.”* This story was told by the Master while he was at Añjanavana. It is about a certain brahmin. Tradition says that when the Blessed One entered the city of Sāketa with his disciples, an old brahmin of that place, who was going out, met him at the gate. Falling at the Buddha’s feet and clasping him by the ankles, the old man cried, “Son, is it not the duty of children to cherish the old age of their parents? Why have you not let us see you all this long time? At last I have seen you. Come, let your mother see you too.”

So saying, he took the Master with him to his house. There the Master sat on the seat prepared for him with his disciples seated around him. Then

the brahmin's wife came, and she too fell at the feet of the Blessed One, crying, "My son, where have you been all this time? Is it not the duty of children to comfort their parents in their old age?" Then she called to her sons and daughters that their brother had come, and they saluted the Buddha as well. In their joy the aged couple showed great hospitality to their guests. After his meal, the Master recited the "Sutta on Old Age" (*The Jāra Sutta*, which is discourse 4.6 in the *Sutta Nipāta*) to the old people. When he finished, both the husband and the wife won the fruition of the Second Path (*once-returner*). Then rising up from his seat, the Master went back to Añjanavana.

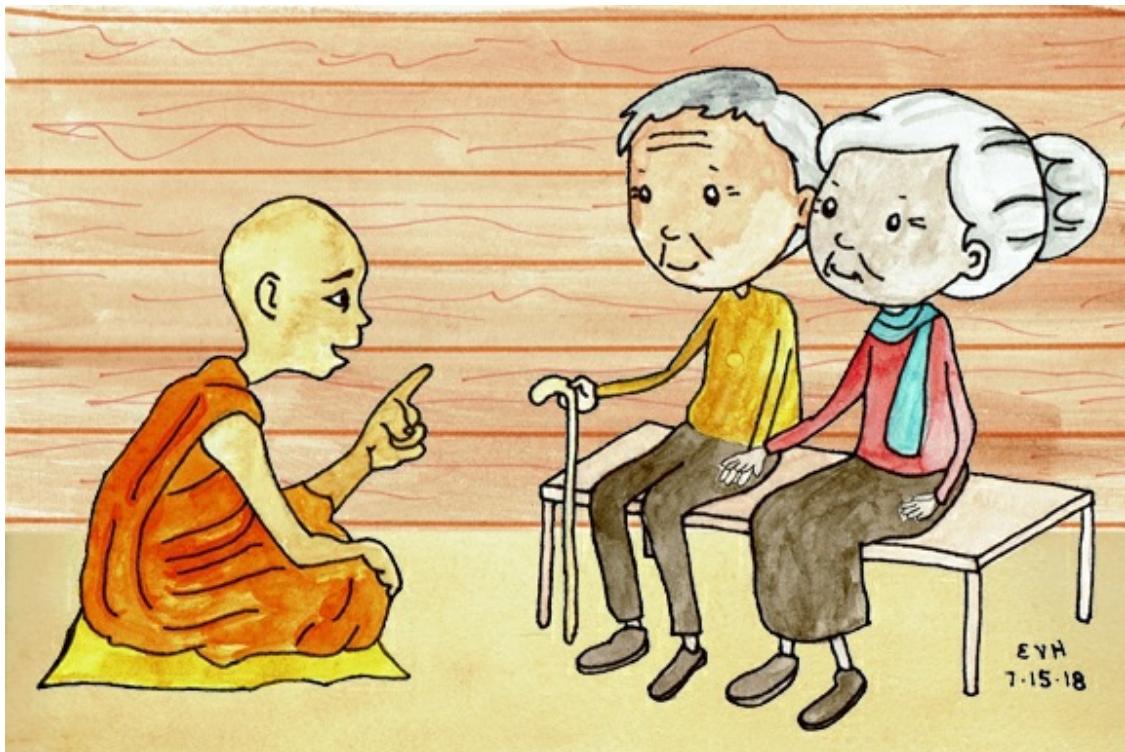


Figure: The Buddha Teaches the Elderly Couple

Meeting together in the Dharma Hall, the monks fell to talking about this event. It was urged that the brahmin must have been well aware that Suddhodana was the father and Mahāmāyā the mother of the Buddha. Yet none-the-less, he and his wife had claimed the Buddha as their own son, and they did so with the Master's consent. What could it all mean? Hearing their talk, the Master said, "Monks, the aged pair were right in claiming me as their son." And so saying, he told this story of the past.

---

Brothers, in ages past this brahmin was my father in 500 successive births. He was my uncle for the same number of rebirths, and in 500 more he was my grandfather. And in 1500 successive births his wife was respectively my mother, my aunt, and my grandmother. So I was brought up in 1500 births by this brahmin and in 1500 by his wife.

Having told of these 3000 births, the Master, as Buddha, recited this Stanza:

*The man on whom your mind rests, with whom your heart  
Is pleased at first sight, place your trust in him.*

---

His lesson ended, the Master showed the connection and identified the birth by saying, "This brahmin and his wife were the husband and wife in all those existences, and I was the child."

# **69: Visavanta Jātaka, The Viper**

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*In many of these stories we are reminded that these are events that took in previous lives while the Buddha and his disciples were still working their way up the path to awakening. In this story we see what can be a commendable quality, and that is resolve. But we also see Sāriputta as a poisonous snake using his resolve to do great harm. Most people are like that. We have a combination of qualities. Some of these qualities can be either useful or harmful. The object is to use these qualities in a beneficial way, then to also cultivate good qualities like compassion and wisdom and to abandon our unwholesome qualities.*

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“*May shame.*” This story was told by the Master while at Jetavana. It is about Sāriputta, the Commander of the Dharma. Tradition says that there was a time when the Elder used to eat a certain kind of cakes. As a result, people came to the monastery with many of them for the Sangha. After the monks had all eaten their fill, there were still many left over. The givers of the cakes said, “Sirs, take some for the monks who are away in the village.”

Just then a youth, who was the Elder’s co-resident, was away in the village. They saved a portion for him. But when he did not return, and they felt that it was getting very late (*monastics are not allowed to eat after noon or to store food for the next day*), this portion was given to the Elder. When Sāriputta ate this portion, the youth finally arrived. Accordingly, the Elder explained what had happened to him, saying, “Sir, I have eaten the cakes that were set aside for you.”

“Ah!” was the rejoinder, “we all have a sweet tooth.” The Great Elder was very troubled by this.

"From this day forward," Sāriputta exclaimed, "I vow never to eat these cakes again." And from that day forward, so tradition says, the Elder Sāriputta never touched those cakes again! This abstention became a matter of common knowledge in the Saṅgha, and the monks talked about it in the Dharma Hall. The Master said, "What are you talking about, brothers, as you sit here?" When they told him, he said, "Brothers, when Sāriputta gives something up, he never goes back to it again, even if his life is at stake." And so saying, he told this story of the past.

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Once upon a time, when Brahmadatta was reigning in Benares, the Bodhisatta was born into a family of doctors skilled in curing snake bites. And when he grew up, he practiced this for a livelihood.

One day someone was bitten by a snake, and his relatives quickly fetched the doctor. The Bodhisatta said, "Shall I extract the venom with the usual antidotes, or should we catch the snake and make it suck its own poison out of the wound?"

"Have the snake caught and make it suck the poison out," they said. So, he had the snake caught. He asked the creature, "Did you bite this man?"



Figure: The Physician and the Stubborn Snake

"Yes, I did," was the answer.

"Well then, suck your own poison out of the wound."

"What? Take back the poison I have once shed!" the snake cried. "I have never done this, and I never will."

Then the doctor made a fire with wood, and he said to the snake, "Either you suck the poison out or into the fire you go."

"Even though I will be doomed by the flames, I will not take back the poison I shed," the snake said, and he repeated the following stanza:

*May shame be on the poison which, once shed,  
To save my life, I swallow down again!*

*More welcome death than life bought with weakness!*

With these words, the snake moved towards the fire! But the doctor barred its way and drew out the poison with medicines and charms so that the man was well again. Then he taught the Precepts to the snake and set it free, saying, "From here on, do not harm anyone."

---

And the Master went on to say, "Brothers, when Sāriputta has once parted with anything, he never takes it back again, even though his life is at stake." His lesson ended, he showed the connection and identified the birth by saying, "Sāriputta was the snake of those days, and I was the doctor."

## **70: Kuddāla Jātaka, The Spade**

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*As noted in the text, this story probably came well after the Buddha died. The Abhidhamma was composed well after the Buddha's time. (The Abhidhamma is the third set of texts in the Pāli Canon after the Sutta Piṭaka and the Vinaya.) It is only part of the Theravada tradition, and that distinction only came in the first millennium. Also, the notion that a monk could disrobe and then re-ordain came much later, and was also only part of the Theravada tradition. In most schools of Buddhism, you cannot re-ordain if you disrobe. However in places like Thailand, temporary ordination is the norm among young men there. It is something of a rite of passage. Re-ordination is also common in Thailand.*

---

*“The conquest.”* This story was told by the Master while at Jetavana. It is about the Elder Cittahattha Sāriputta. (*This is not the Elder Sāriputta.*) He is said to have been a young man from a good family in Sāvatthi. One day when he was on his way home from ploughing, he went into the monastery. Here an Elder monk gave him some wonderful food - rich and sweet - from his bowl. This made him think to himself, “Day and night I am working away with my hands at many different tasks, yet I never taste food so sweet. I must become a monk myself!”

So he joined the Saṅgha. But after spending six weeks of applying himself diligently to meditation and study, he was seduced by the power of sensual desire and off he went. However, his belly again proved too much for him, and back he went to join the Saṅgha once more. This time he studied the Abhidhamma. In this way, six times he left and came back again. But when he joined the Saṅgha for the seventh time, he mastered the whole seven books of the Abhidhamma. And by frequent chanting of the Dharma, he won discernment and attained to Arahatship. Now his friends among the Sangha scoffed at him, saying, “Can it be, sir, that

craving has ceased to spring up within your heart?"

"Sirs," he replied, "I have transcended mundane existence forevermore."

His having won Arahatship, a discussion arose in the Dharma Hall as follows: "Sirs, while all the time he was destined to attain the glories of Arahatship, six times Cittahattha Sāriputta renounced the Saṅgha. Truly, the unconverted state is very enticing."

Returning to the Dharma Hall, the Master asked what they were discussing. Being told, he said, "Monks, the worldling's heart is light and hard to curb. Material things attract it and hold it fast. When it is held so fast, it cannot be easily released. The mastery of the heart is excellent. Once mastered, it brings joy and happiness:

*It is good to tame a headstrong and frail heart,  
One swayed by passion. Once tamed, the heart brings bliss.*

It was because of this stubbornness of the heart, however, that, for the sake of a pretty spade that they could not bring themselves to throw away, the wise and good of bygone days reverted six times to the world out of sheer greed. However, on the seventh occasion they won Insight and subdued their craving." And so saying, he told this story of the past.

---

Once upon a time when Brahmadatta was reigning in Benares, the Bodhisatta was reborn as a gardener and grew to manhood. They called him the "Spade Sage." He cleared a patch of ground with his spade and grew herbs, pumpkins, gourds, cucumbers, and other vegetables. He made a meager living by selling them. And except for that one spade, he had nothing in the world.

One day he decided to forsake the world for the holy life. He hid his spade away and became a recluse. But thoughts of that spade rose in his heart and the passion of craving overcame him, so that for the sake of his blunt spade he reverted to the world. Again and again this happened. Six times he hid the spade and became a recluse, only to renounce his vows

again.

But the seventh time he thought about how that blunt spade had caused him to backslide again and again. He made up his mind to throw it into a great river before he became a recluse again. So he took the spade to the riverside. Afraid that if he saw where it fell he would come back and fish it out again, he swung the spade three times around his head by the handle and with the strength of an elephant threw it right into the middle of the stream, shutting his eyes tight as he did so. Then he yelled in exultation a shout like a lion's roar, "I have conquered! I have conquered!"

Now at just that moment the King of Benares, on his way home from suppressing an uprising on the border, had just finished bathing in that very river. He was riding along in splendor on the back of his elephant when he heard the Bodhisatta's shout of triumph. "Here's a man," the King said, "who is proclaiming that he has conquered. I wonder who he has conquered. Go and bring him before me."

So the Bodhisatta was brought before the King, who said to him, "My good man, I am a conqueror myself. I have just won a battle and am on my way home victorious. Tell me who you have conquered."

"Sire," the Bodhisatta said, "a thousand, yea, a hundred thousand such victories as yours are in vain if you have not conquered the craving inside of yourself. It is by conquering greed within myself that I have conquered my craving." And as he spoke, he looked at the great river, and by concentrating his mind upon the idea of water, he won Insight. Then by virtue of his newly-won transcendent powers, he rose in the air, and, seated there, instructed the King in the Dharma in this stanza:

*The conquest that must be upheld  
by further victories or eventual defeat  
Is vain! True conquest lasts for evermore!*

As he listened to the Dharma, light shone in on the King's darkness. The craving of his heart was extinguished. His heart determined to renounce

the world. His lust for royal power left him.

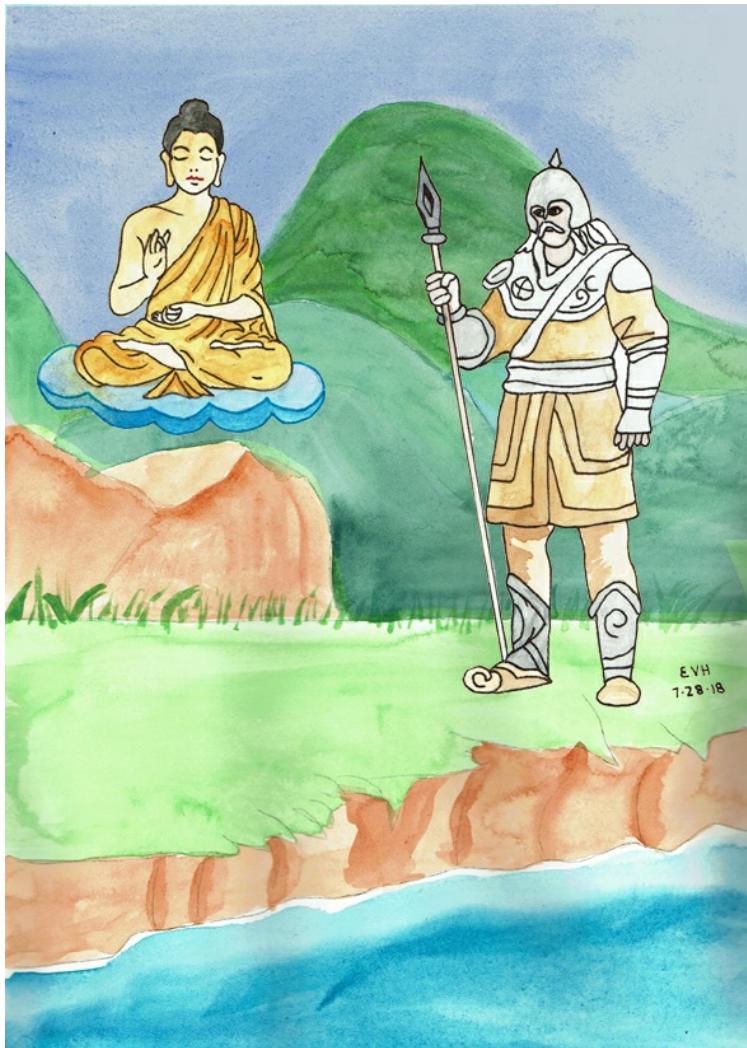


Figure: Teaching the King About True Victory

"And where will you go now?" said the King to the Bodhisatta.

"To the Himalayas, sire. There I will live the life of a recluse."

"Then I, too, will become a recluse," the King said. And with that he went with the Bodhisatta. And the whole army went with him, too. And so did all the brahmins and householders and all the common folk. In a word, everyone who was with the King went with him.

Word made it back to Benares that their King, on hearing the Dharma

preached by the Spade Sage, decided to live the life of a recluse, and that his entire entourage had gone forth with him. "What shall we do here?" cried the people of Benares. And from out of that city which was seven miles long, all the inhabitants went forth. So there was a procession seven miles long with whom the Bodhisatta went to the Himalayas.

Then the throne of Sakka, King of Devas, became hot beneath him. (*The struggle of a man facing adversity could appeal to the King of Devas, thus making his "seat hot."*) Looking out, he saw that the Spade Sage was engaged upon a Great Renunciation. (*When a future Buddha renounces the world for the religious life, this "going forth" is called a Great Renunciation.*) Seeing the great number of people who had followed the Bodhisatta, Indra thought about how to house them all. He sent for Vissakamma, the architect of the Devas, and said, "The Spade Sage is engaged upon a Great Renunciation and living quarters must be found for him. Go to the Himalayas, and use your divine power to create a hermit's estate 100 miles long and 15 miles wide on level ground."

"It will be done, sire," Vissakamma said. And away he went and did as he was asked.

Vissakamma built a hermitage in the recluse's estate. He drove away all the noisy beasts and birds and fairies. He built a path in each cardinal direction just broad enough for one person to pass along it at a time. This done, he went back to his own home. The Spade Sage went to the Himalayas with his host of people and entered the estate that Indra had created. He took possession of the house and furniture that Vissakamma had created for the recluses. First, he renounced the world, and afterwards he made the people renounce it. Then he portioned out the vast estate among them. They abandoned all their power and status - which rivalled that of Sakka himself - and the whole 100 miles of the estate was filled.

By performing the other rites that conduce to Insight, the Spade Sage developed perfect loving-kindness within himself, and he taught the people how to meditate. Hereby they all won the Attainments (*jhānas*).

This assured their rebirth into the Brahma Realm. And all who attended to them qualified for rebirth into the Realm of Devas.

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"Thus, monks," the Master said, "when passion holds it fast, the heart is hard to release. When the attributes of greed spring up within it, they are hard to chase away, and even persons who are wise and good are rendered foolish." His lesson ended, he preached the Dharma, at the close of which some won the First, some the Second, and some the Third Path, while others attained to Arahatship. Further, the Master showed the connection and identified the birth by saying, "Ānanda was the King of those days, the Buddha's followers were the followers, and I was the Spade Sage."

## **71: Varanā Jātaka, The Tree**

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*One of the most interesting aspects of this story is how in the story in the present, the monk tries to compensate for his laziness by pushing himself too hard. As a result, he falls and breaks his hip. Over-striving is a common problem among Buddhist practitioners. There are people who want to push very hard in order to attain meditative accomplishments. But the mind – like the body – can only develop at an appropriate pace. It is always a balance between not pushing hard enough and pushing too hard.*

*There are a number of details in this story that make it sound like it was from a later time. The monks meditate “in their cells” which sounds more like they were in a Buddhist university. The story in the past refers to a maid who made their breakfast. This would not have been done during the Buddha’s time. Also, the style of practice sounds like a more formalized, later style.*

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“Learn from him.” This story was told by the Master while at Jetavana. It is about an Elder named Tissa the Squire’s Son. Tradition says that one day thirty young gentlemen of Sāvatthi, who were all friends of one another, took perfumes and flowers and robes, and set out with a large following to Jetavana in order to hear the Master preach.

Arriving at Jetavana, they sat awhile in several enclosures, including the enclosure of the Iron-wood trees, the enclosure of the Sal-trees, and so forth. They waited until evening when the Master passed from his fragrant sweet-smelling perfumed chamber to the Dharma Hall where he sat down on the gorgeous Buddha seat. Then, with their following, these young men went to the Dharma Hall. They made an offering of perfumes and flowers, bowed down at his blessed feet that were glorious as full-blown lotus-flowers and bore the Wheel of the Dharma imprinted on his

soles! (*In Indian lore, a Buddha has a Dharma Wheel imprinted on the soles of his feet.*)

Taking their seats, they listened to the Dharma. Then the thought came into their minds, "Let us take the vows, so far as we understand the Dharma preached by the Master." Accordingly, when the Blessed One left the hall, they approached him, and with due respect they asked to be admitted to the Sangha. And the Master did admit them to the Sangha.

They were able to win the favor of their teachers and directors, and so they received full ordination. After five years' residence with their teachers and directors, by which time they had learned by heart the two Abstracts (*Dharma texts*), they knew what was proper and what was improper, had learned the three modes of expressing thanks, and had stitched and dyed robes.

At this stage, wishing to embrace the ascetic life, they obtained the consent of their teachers and directors and approached the Master. (*It seems from this that they had learned the proper way to behave as monks, but had not yet learned to meditate.*) Bowing before him they took their seats, saying, "Sir, we are troubled by the round of existence, dismayed by birth, decay, disease, and death. Give us a meditation theme that will free us from the elements that perpetuate existence." The Master turned over in his mind the 38 themes of meditation, and from them he selected a suitable one which he taught them. (*In the Theravada text "The Visuddhimagga" there are actually 40 subjects for meditation. Here they only reference 38 of them.*) And then, after getting their theme from the Master, they bowed, and with a ceremonious farewell passed from his presence to their cells. And after gazing on their teachers and directors, they went forth with bowl and robe to embrace the ascetic life.

Now among them was a monk named the Elder Tissa the Squire's Son. He was a weak and irresolute man, a slave to the pleasures of food. He thought to himself, "I will never be able to live in the forest, to strive with strenuous effort, and to subsist on scanty portions of alms food. What is the point of my going? I will turn back." And so he gave up, and after

accompanying those monks for a while, he turned back.

As for the other monks, they came in the course of their alms-pilgrimage through Kosala to a certain border village. There they stayed in a wooded spot for the rainy season. After three months' striving and wrestling, they got the germ of Discernment and won Arahatship, making the earth shout for joy. At the end of the rainy season, after celebrating the Pavāraṇā festival (*the celebration held at the end of the rains retreat*), they set out to tell the Master the attainments they had won.

Coming in due course to Jetavana, they laid aside their bowls and robes, paid a visit to their teachers and directors, and being anxious to see the Blessed One, they went to him. With due respect they took their seats. The Master greeted them kindly, and they announced to the Blessed One the attainments they had won, receiving praise from him. Hearing the Master speaking in their praise, the Elder Tissa the Squire's Son was filled with a desire to live the life of a recluse all by himself. At that same time, those other monks asked and received the Master's permission to return to live in that same place in the forest. And with due respect they went to their cells.

That night, the Elder Tissa the Squire's Son was inspired to begin his quest at once. He practiced the method of sleeping in an upright posture by the side of his plank bed with excessive zeal and ardor. Soon after the middle watch of the night, he turned around and fell down, breaking his thigh bone. He had such severe pain that the other monks had to care for him, and as a result they were prevented from leaving.

Accordingly, when they appeared at the appropriate hour to wait on the Buddha, he asked them whether they had not just yesterday asked his permission to leave that day.

"Yes, sir, we did, but our friend the Elder Tissa the Squire's Son, while practicing the methods of a recluse with excessive vigor, dropped off to sleep and fell, breaking his thigh. That is why our departure has been prevented."

"This is not the first time, monks," the Master said, "that this man's backsliding has caused him to strive with excessive zeal and to delay your departure. He delayed your departure in the past also." And hereupon, at their request, he told this story of the past.

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Once upon a time at Takkasīlā University in the kingdom of Gandhāra, the Bodhisatta was a teacher of world renown. He had 500 young brahmins as pupils. One day these students set out for the forest to gather firewood for their master. Among them was a lazy fellow who came upon a huge forest tree which he presumed to be dry and rotten. So he thought that he could safely indulge in a nap first, and later he could climb up and break some branches off to carry home. And so he spread out his outer robe and fell asleep, snoring loudly.

All the other young brahmins were on their way home with their wood tied up in bundles when they came upon the sleeper. They kicked him in the back until he woke up. Then they left him and went their way. He sprang to his feet and rubbed his eyes. Then, still half asleep, he began to climb the tree. But one branch, which he was tugging, snapped off, and as it sprang up, the end struck him in the eye. Clapping one hand over his wounded eye, he gathered green limbs with the other. Then climbing down, he bundled his wood, and after hurrying home with it, flung his green wood on the top of the others' bundles.

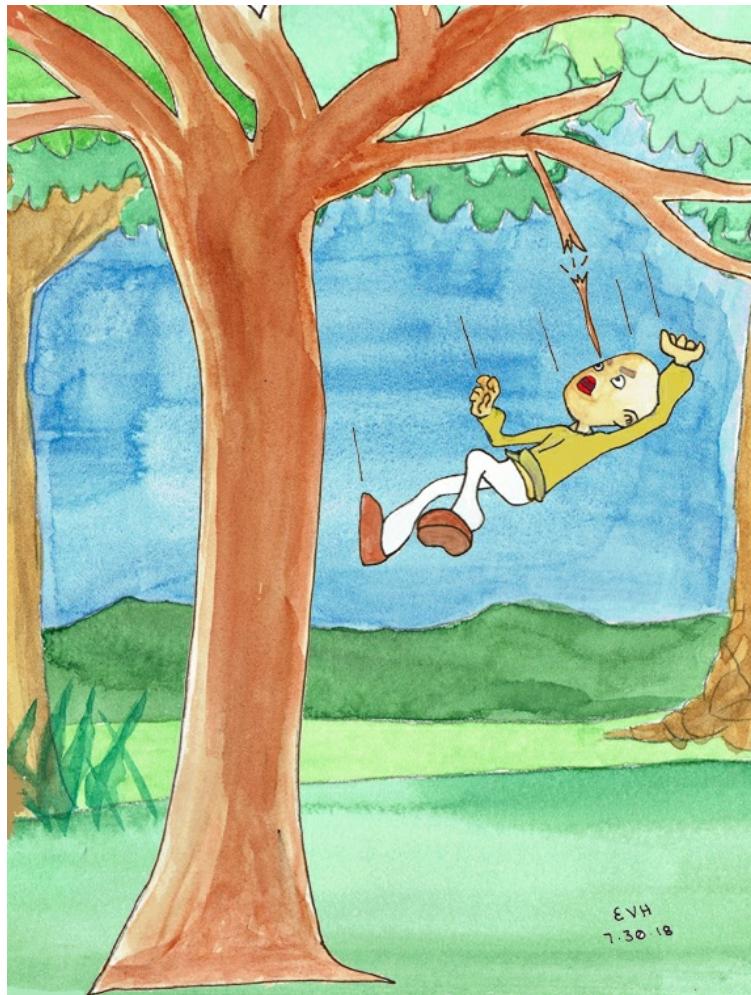


Figure: The Lazy Brahmin

That same day it so happened that a country family invited the master to visit them on the next day so that they might give him a brahmin feast. The master called his pupils together, and telling them of the trip they would make to the village on the next day, said they could not go fasting. (*This was apparently so they would have the strength to make the journey.*) "So have some rice gruel made early in the morning," he said, "and eat it before starting out. There you will have food given to you for yourselves and a portion for me. Bring it all back with you."

So they got up early next morning and roused a maid to get them their breakfast ready earlier than usual. She went off to get wood to light the fire. The green wood lay on the top of the stack, and she laid her fire with it. She blew and blew but could not get her fire to burn, and at last the

sun came up. "It's broad daylight now," they said, "and it's too late to start." And they went off to their master.

"What, you are not yet on your way, my sons?" he said.

"No, sir, we have not started."

"Why"

"Because that lazy so-and-so, when he went wood gathering with us, lay down to sleep under a tree. And to make up for lost time, he climbed up the tree in such a hurry that he hurt his eye and brought home a lot of green wood which he threw on the top of our dried wood. So, when the maid who was to cook our rice gruel went to the stack, she took his wood, thinking it would of course be dry. And she could not light the fire before the sun came up. And this is what prevented us from leaving."

Hearing what the young brahmin had done, the master exclaimed that a fool's doings had caused all the mischief and repeated this stanza:

*Learn from him who tore green branches down,  
That tasks deferred are brought to tears at last.*

Such was the Bodhisatta's comment on the matter to his pupils. And at the close of a life of charity and other good works, he passed away to fare according to his karma.

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The Master said, "This is not the first time, monks, that this man has thwarted you. He did so in the past as well." His lesson ended, he showed the connection and identified the birth by saying, "The monk who broke his thigh was the young brahmin of those days who hurt his eye. The Buddha's followers were the rest of the young brahmins, and I myself was their brahmin master."

## 72: *Sīlavanāga Jātaka,* *The Ingrate*

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*The theme of this story is gratitude, or the lack thereof.*

*The Buddha talked quite a lot about the importance of gratitude. In the Anguttara Nikāya, he said this:*

*“These two people are hard to find in the world. Which two? The one who is first to do a kindness, and the one who is grateful and thankful for a kindness done.” – [AN 2:118]*

*And in this passage the Buddha equates the quality of gratitude with integrity itself:*

*The Blessed One said, “Now what is the level of a person of no integrity? A person of no integrity is ungrateful and unthankful. This ingratitude, this lack of thankfulness, is advocated by rude people. It is entirely on the level of people of no integrity. A person of integrity is grateful and thankful. This gratitude, this thankfulness, is advocated by civil people. It is entirely on the level of people of integrity.” – [AN 2.31]*

*In the following story we see the great compassion of the Bodhisatta, who in this life is a resplendent elephant. We also see the old nemesis, Devadatta, who is such an ingrate that the forces of nature themselves are offended, and he is swallowed up into hell!*

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*“Ingratitude lacks more.”* This story was told by the Master while at the

Bamboo Grove. It is about Devadatta. The monks sat in the Dharma Hall saying, "Sirs, Devadatta is an ingrate and does not recognize the virtues of the Blessed One." Returning to the hall, the Master asked what topic they were discussing, and they told him. "This is not the first time, monks," he said, "that Devadatta has proven to be an ingrate. He was just the same in bygone days also, and he has never known my virtues." And so saying, at their request he told this story of the past.

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Once upon a time when Brahmadatta was reigning in Benares, the Bodhisatta was conceived by an elephant in the Himalayas. When he was born, he was white all over like a mighty mass of silver. His eyes were like diamond balls, like a manifestation of the five brightnesses. His mouth was red like scarlet cloth. His trunk was like silver flecked with red gold, and his four feet were as if polished with lacquer. Thus he was of consummate beauty, adorned with the ten perfections.

When he grew up, all the elephants of the Himalayas followed him as their leader. While he was living in the Himalayas with a following of 80,000 elephants, he became aware that an act of evil had occurred in the herd. So, detaching himself from the rest, he went to live in solitude in the forest, and the goodness of his life won him the name of Good King Elephant.

Now a forester of Benares came to the Himalayas and made his way into that forest to practice his craft. Losing his bearings and his way, he roamed to and fro. He stretched out his arms in despair and cried with the fear of death before his eyes. Hearing the man's cries, the Bodhisatta was moved with compassion and resolved to help him in his need. So he approached the man. But at the sight of an elephant, the forester ran off in great terror. (*Elephants who lived alone were considered dangerous.*) Seeing him run away, the Bodhisatta stood still, and this brought the man to a standstill as well. Then the Bodhisatta again advanced, and again the forester ran away. Once again the Bodhisatta halted, and likewise, once more the forester halted. Seeing that the elephant stood still when he ran and only advanced when he himself was standing still, he concluded that

the creature did not mean to hurt him, only to help him. So he courageously stood his ground this time. And the Bodhisatta drew near and said, "Why, friend man, are you wandering about here lamenting?"

"My lord," the forester replied, "I have lost my bearings and my way, and I am afraid that I will die."

Then the elephant took the man back to his home. There he entertained him for some days, regaling him with fruits of every kind. Then, saying, "Fear not, friend man, I will bring you back to the haunts of men," the elephant seated the forester on his back and brought him to where men lived. But the ingrate thought to himself that he should remember where the elephant lived. So, as he travelled along on the elephant's back, he noted the landmarks of tree and hill. At last the elephant brought him out of the forest and set him down on the high road to Benares, saying, "There lies your road, friend man. Tell no one, whether you are questioned or not, where I live." And with that, the Bodhisatta made his way back to his own home.

Arriving at Benares, the man came - in the course of his walks through the city - to the ivory workers' bazaar. There he saw ivory being worked into various forms and shapes. He asked the craftsmen what they would pay for the tusk of a living elephant.

"What makes you ask such a question?" they replied. "A living elephant's tusk is worth a great deal more than a dead one's."

"Oh, then, I'll bring you some ivory," he said, and off he went to the Bodhisatta's dwelling. He took with him provisions for the journey and a sharp saw. Being asked what had brought him back, he whined that he was in so sorry and wretched a state that he could not make a living. So he had come to ask for a bit of the kind elephant's tusk to sell for a living. "Certainly, I will give you a whole tusk," the Bodhisatta said. "If you have a saw to cut it off with."

"Oh, I brought a saw with me, sir."

"Then saw my tusks off, and take them away with you," the Bodhisatta said. And he crouched down on his knees on the earth like an ox. Then the forester sawed off a large portion of the Bodhisatta's tusks! When they were off, the Bodhisatta took them in his trunk and said to the man, "Do not think, friend man, that it is because I do not value or prize these tusks that I give them to you. But a thousand times, a hundred thousand times, dearer to me are the tusks of compassion and the wisdom that can comprehend all things. And therefore, may my gift of these to you bring me wisdom." With these words, he gave the pair of tusks to the forester as the price of wisdom.

And the man took them and sold them. And when he had spent the money, he went back to the Bodhisatta, saying that the two tusks had only brought him enough to pay his old debts, and he begged for the rest of the Bodhisatta's ivory. The Bodhisatta consented, and gave up the rest of his ivory after having it cut off as before. And the forester went away and sold this also. Returning again, he said, "It's no use, my lord. I can't make a living anyhow. So give me the stumps of your tusks."

"So be it," the Bodhisatta answered, and he lay down as before. Then that vile wretch, trampling upon the trunk of the Bodhisatta, that sacred trunk that was like corded silver, and clambering upon the future Buddha's temples which were as white as the snowy crest of Mount Kelāsa, kicked at the roots of the tusks until he had cleared the flesh away. Then he sawed out the stumps and went on his way. But scarcely had the wretch passed out of the sight of the Bodhisatta, when the solid earth, inconceivable in its vast extent, earth that can support the mighty weight of Mount Sineru and its encircling peaks, with all the world's unsavory filth and excrement, now burst apart in a yawning chasm, as though unable to bear the burden of all that wickedness!



Figure: Even Hell is Offended by an Ingrate!

And straightway flames from the lowest Hell enveloped the ingrate,  
wrapping around him in a shroud of doom, and they took him away.  
And as the wretch was swallowed up in the bowels of the earth, the tree  
fairy that lived in that forest made the region echo with these words,  
“Not even the gift of worldwide empire can satisfy the thankless and  
ungrateful!” And in the following stanza the fairy taught the Dharma:

*Ingratitude lacks more, the more it gets.  
Not all the world can satisfy its appetite.*

With such teachings the tree fairy made that forest re-echo. As for the Bodhisatta, he lived out his life, passing away at last to fare according to

his karma.

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The Master said, "This is not the first time, monks, that Devadatta has proved an ingrate. He was the same in the past also." His lesson ended, he identified the birth by saying, "Devadatta was the ungrateful man of those days, Sāriputta was the tree fairy, and I was the Good King Elephant."

## **73: *Saccaṃkira Jātaka,* *The True Parrot***

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*Oh, dear. Once again we see Devadatta fed to the literary wolves.*

*This story has a number of interesting characters. There is the Bodhisatta, as usual, who is a hermit at the beginning. Then there is Prince Wicked (great name, huh?) who - of course - has to be Devadatta.*

*We also meet a rat and a snake, both of whom had been very wealthy in their previous lives. But because they were stingy, they were reborn as lowly animals. However, to their credit, they undergo a personal transformation.*

*Then there is a lovely parrot. He is kind from beginning to end.*

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*"They knew the world."* This story was told by the Master while at the Bamboo Grove. It is about killing. Seated in the Dharma Hall, the monks were talking about Devadatta's wickedness, saying, "Sirs, Devadatta does not comprehend the Master's excellence. He actually tries to kill him!" Then the Master entered the Hall and asked what they were discussing. Being told, he said, "This is not the first time, monks, that Devadatta has tried to kill me. He did the same thing in bygone days as well." And so saying, he told this story of the past.

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Once upon a time Brahmadatta was reigning in Benares. He had a son named Prince Wicked. He was fierce and cruel like a wounded snake. He spoke to nobody without abuse or striking them. The prince was like sand in the eye to everyone inside and outside the palace. He was like a ferocious ogre, so dreaded and savage was he.

One day, wishing to amuse himself in the river, he went to the water

with a large entourage. A great storm formed, and utter darkness set in. "Hi there!" he cried to his servants. "Take me into the middle of the stream, bathe me there, and then bring me back again." So they took him into midstream and there they discussed their situation, saying, "What will the King do to us? Let us kill this wicked wretch here and now! So in you go, you pest!" they cried as they flung him into the water.

When they made their way ashore, they were asked where the prince was. They replied, "We don't see him. With the storm brewing, he must have come out of the river and gone home ahead of us."

The courtiers went to the King, and he asked where his son was. "We do not know, sire," they said. "A storm came on, and we left thinking that he must have gone on ahead." At once the King had the gates thrown open. He went down to the riverside and searched diligently for the missing prince. But no trace of him could be found. For in the darkness of the storm, he had been swept away by the current. Coming across a tree trunk, he had climbed on to it and floated down stream, crying loudly from his fear of drowning.

Now there had been a rich merchant living in those days at Benares. He died, leaving 400 million rupees buried in the banks of that same river. And because of his craving for riches, he was reborn as a snake in the same spot as his dear treasure. Also in the same spot, another man had hidden 300 million rupees. And because of his craving for riches, he was reborn as a rat at that same spot.

The water rushed into their dwelling place. The two creatures escaped through the same route the water rushed in. They were making their way across the stream when they came upon the tree trunk to which the prince was clinging. The snake climbed up on one end and the rat on the other, and so both of them ended up on the trunk with the prince.

There was a silk cotton tree that grew on the bank of the river. There was a young parrot who lived there. This tree was uprooted by the swollen waters, and it fell into the river. The heavy rain beat down the parrot

when it tried to fly, and it landed on this same tree trunk. And so there were now these four floating down stream together on the tree.

Now the Bodhisatta had been reborn in those days as a brahmin in the northwest country. Renouncing the world for the life of a recluse on reaching manhood, he had built a hermitage for himself at a bend in the river, and he was now living there. As he was pacing back and forth at midnight, he heard the loud cries of the prince. He thought to himself, "This fellow creature must not perish before the eyes of a merciful and compassionate hermit like me. I will rescue him from the water and save his life."

So he shouted cheerily, "Do not be afraid! Do not be afraid!" He plunged into stream, seized hold of the tree by one end, and - being as strong as an elephant - pulled it back to the bank with one long pull. Then he set the prince safe and sound on the shore.

Then becoming aware of the snake and the rat and the parrot, he carried them to his hermitage as well. He lit a fire, and he warmed the animals first because they were weaker. Then he warmed the prince. This done, he brought fruits of various kinds and gave them to his guests, looking after the animals first and the prince afterwards. This enraged the young prince who said to himself, "This rascally hermit pays no respect to my royal birth, but actually gives brute beasts more importance than me." And he formed a great hatred against the Bodhisatta!

A few days later, when all four had recovered their strength and the waters had subsided, the snake said goodbye to the hermit with these words, "Father, you have done me a great service. I am not poor, for I have 400 million rupees of gold hidden at a certain spot. If you ever want money, all of it will be yours. You only have to come to the spot and call 'Snake.'"

Next the rat said goodbye with a similar promise to the hermit as to his treasure, telling the hermit to come and call out "Rat." Then the parrot said goodbye, saying, "Father, I do not have any silver or gold, but if you

ever want choice rice, come to where I live and call out ‘Parrot.’ And with the help of my family, I will give you many wagon-loads of rice.”

Last came the prince. His heart was filled with shameful ingratitude and with a determination to put his benefactor to death if the Bodhisatta should come to visit him. But, concealing his intent, he said, “Come to me, father, when I am King, and I will give you the Four Requisites.” (*food, shelter, medicine, clothing*) So saying, he left, and not long after he succeeded to the throne.

The Bodhisatta decided to put their declarations to the test. First he went to the snake. Standing by its home, called out “Snake.” At the word the snake darted forth, and with every mark of respect he said, “Father, in this place there are 400 million rupees in gold. Dig them up and take them all.”

“It is well,” the Bodhisatta said. “When I need them, I will not forget.”

Then saying goodbye to the snake, he went to where the rat lived and called out “Rat.” And the rat did as the snake had done. Going next to the parrot and calling out “Parrot,” the bird flew down at once from the tree top. He respectfully asked whether it was the Bodhisatta’s wish that he and his family should gather rice for the Bodhisatta from the region round the Himalayas. The Bodhisatta dismissed the parrot also with a promise that, if needed, he would not forget the bird’s offer.

Last of all, in order to test the King, the Bodhisatta went to the royal pleasure garden. On the day after his arrival, he made his way, carefully dressed, into the city on his alms round. Just at that moment, the ungrateful King, seated in all his royal splendor on his elephant of state, was passing in a solemn procession around the city followed by a vast entourage. Seeing the Bodhisatta from afar, he thought to himself, “Here’s that rascally hermit come to house himself and burden me with his appetite. I will cut his head off before he can tell the world the service he rendered me.”

With this intent, he signaled to his attendants. When they asked what he

wanted, he said, "I think that rascally hermit is here to beg from me. See that the pest does not come near me. Seize and bind him. Beat him at every street corner, then march him out of the city, chop off his head at the place of execution, and impale his body on a stake."

Obedient to their King's command, the attendants put the innocent Great Being in bonds and beat him at every street corner on the way to the place of execution. But all their beatings failed to move the Bodhisatta or to wring from him a single cry of "Oh, my mother and father!" All he did was to repeat this stanza:

*They knew the world, who framed this true proverb —  
"A log repays a kindness better than some men."*

He repeated these lines wherever he was beaten, until at last the wise among the bystanders asked the hermit what service he had rendered to their King. Then the Bodhisatta told the whole story, ending with the words, "So it comes to pass that by rescuing him from the torrent I brought all this woe upon myself. And when I think how I have left unheeded the words of the wise of old, I exclaim the verses you have heard."

Filled with indignation, the nobles and brahmins and all classes cried out with one accord, "This ungrateful King does not recognize even the virtue of this good man who saved his majesty's life. How can we gain any benefit from this King? Seize the tyrant!" And in their anger, they rushed upon the King from every side and killed him right then and there as he rode on his elephant. They pelted him with arrows and javelins and stones and clubs and any weapons that came to hand. They dragged the corpse by the heels to a ditch and threw it in. Then they anointed the Bodhisatta King and set him to rule over them.

As he was ruling in righteousness, one day he decided to once again try the snake and the rat and the parrot. Followed by a large entourage, he went to where the snake lived. At the call of "Snake," out came the snake from his hole. With every mark of respect he said, "Here, my lord, is

your treasure. Take it." Then the King delivered the 400 million rupees of gold to his attendants.

Proceeding to where the rat lived, he called, "Rat." Out came the rat. He saluted the King and gave his 300 million rupees. He placed this treasure in the hands of his attendants as well. Then the King went to where the parrot lived and called "Parrot." And in the same way the bird came. Bowing down at the King's feet, he asked whether he should collect rice for his majesty. "We will not trouble you," the King said, "until rice is needed. Now let us be going."

So with the 700 million rupees of gold, and with the rat, the snake, and the parrot as well, the King journeyed back to the city. Here, in a noble palace, he had the treasure stored and guarded. He had a golden tube made for the snake to live in, a crystal casket to house the rat, and a cage of gold for the parrot. Every day by the King's command food was served to the three creatures in vessels of gold: sweet parched corn for the parrot and snake, and scented rice for the rat. And the King abounded in charity and all good works. Thus in harmony and goodwill with one another, these four lived their lives, and when their end came, they passed away to fare according to their karma.

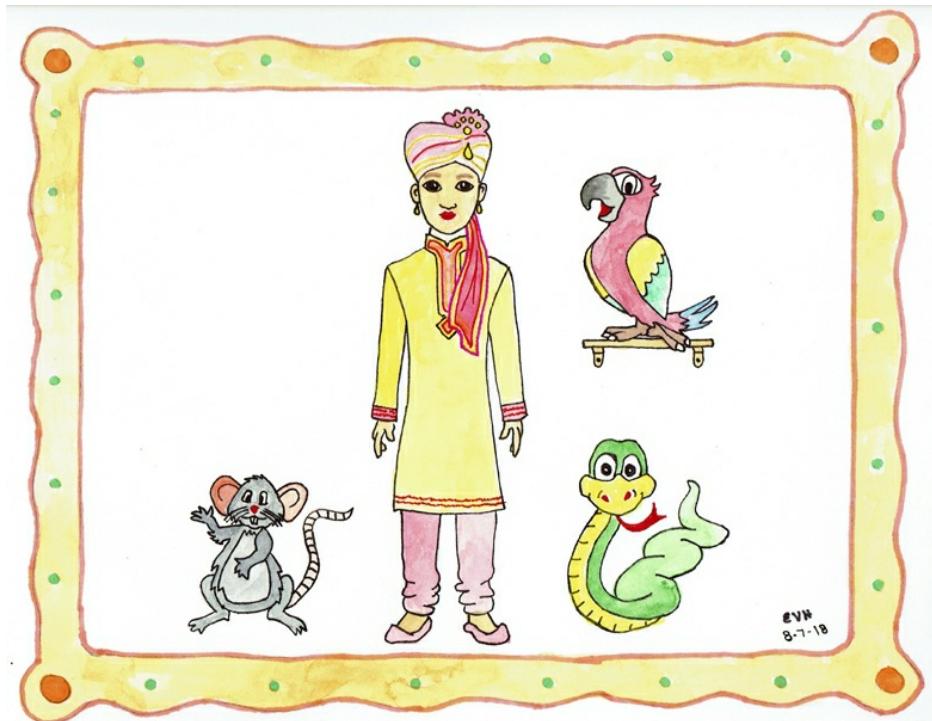


Figure: Family Portrait

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The Master said, "This is not the first time, monks, that Devadatta has tried to kill me. He did this in the past also." His lesson ended, he showed the connection and identified the birth by saying, "Devadatta was King Wicked in those days, Sāriputta the snake, Moggallāna the rat, Ānanda the parrot, and I was the righteous King who won a kingdom."

*(Sāriputta and Moggallāna were the Buddha's two chief disciples, and Ānanda was his attendant.)*

## **74: Rukkhadhamma Jātaka, The Tree Dharma**

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*This is a story about how families and communities should stick together and support each other. There are a number of Jātaka Tales with this theme.*

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“United, like a forest.” This story was told by the Master while at Jetavana. It is about a disagreement about water that had brought misfortune to his family. Knowing about the dispute, the Buddha passed through the air, sat cross-legged above the river Rohinī, and emitted rays of darkness, startling his family. Then, descending from midair, he seated himself on the river bank and told this story with reference to that dispute. (Only a summary is given here. The full details will be related in the Kuṇāla Jātaka [Jātaka 536].)

But on this occasion the Master addressed his family, saying, “It is proper, sire, that families should live together in concord and unity. For, when families are united, enemies cannot harm them. This is not just true for human beings. Even trees lacking sense should stand together. For in bygone days in the Himalayas a storm struck a Sāl forest, yet, because the trees, shrubs, bushes, and creepers of that forest were interlaced with one another, the storm could uproot even a single tree. (*The Buddha died underneath a Sāl tree.*) It passed harmlessly over their heads. But a mighty tree stood alone in a courtyard, and although it had many stems and branches, because it was not united with other trees, the storm uprooted and destroyed it. Therefore, it is proper that you too should live together in concord and unity.” And so saying, at their request he told this story of the past.

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Once upon a time when Brahmadatta was reigning in Benares, the first

King Vessavaṇa (*also known as Kuvera, Kubera, or Kuber, the Lord of Wealth*) died, and Sakka sent a new king to reign in his stead. After the change, the new King Vessavaṇa sent word to all trees and shrubs and bushes and plants, bidding the tree fairies to each choose the dwelling place that they liked the best.

In those days the Bodhisatta was reborn as a tree fairy in a Sāl forest in the Himalayas. His advice to his family in choosing their homes was to avoid trees that stood out in the open, and to take up residence around the home which he had chosen in that Sāl forest. The wise tree fairies, following the Bodhisatta's advice, took up their living quarters around his tree. But the foolish ones said, "Why should we live in the forest? Let us rather seek out places where humans live, and live outside villages, towns, or capital cities. For fairies who live in such places receive the richest offerings and the greatest worship." So they left for the places where humans lived and took up living in giant trees that grew in the open space.

Now one day a mighty storm swept over the country. It did not avoid the solitary trees that for many years had rooted deep in the soil and were the mightiest trees that grew. Their branches snapped, their stems were broken, and they themselves were uprooted and flung to earth by the storm. But when it broke on the Sāl forest of interlacing trees, its fury was in vain. For no matter where it attacked, it could not uproot a single tree.



Figure: The Foolish Tree Fairies

The forlorn fairies whose homes were destroyed took their children in their arms and went to the Himalayas. There they told their sorrows to the fairies of the Sāl forest. They in turn told the Bodhisatta of their sad return. "It was because they did not heed the words of wisdom that this has happened to them," he said, and he unfolded the truth in this stanza:

*Families should stand together, united like a forest.  
The storm overthrows the solitary tree.*

So spoke the Bodhisatta, and when his life was over, he passed away to fare according to his karma.

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And the Master went on to say, "Thus, sire, reflect how proper it is that families should be united, and lovingly live together in concord and unity." His lesson ended, the Master identified the birth by saying, "The Buddha's followers were the fairies of those days, and I was the wise fairy."

## **75: Maccha Jātaka, The Fish Story**

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*Over the centuries, as religions competed with each other, many stories were told to prove the worthiness of their founders. This is probably one of them. And this is not the only story in the Buddhist canon in which the Buddha is said to have brought rain to a drought ridden community.*

*There is one part of this story that seems out of character. While it makes sense that the Bodhisatta would try to save living beings, it does not make sense for him to call upon a god to make others – in this case the crows – suffer.*

*Note that in India, Pajjunna is the god of rain.*

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*“Pajjunna, thunder!”* The Master told this story while at Jetavana. It is about a rainfall that he caused. For in those days, so it is said, no rain fell in Kosala. The crops withered, and the ponds, tanks, and lakes dried up. Even the pool of Jetavana by the embattled gateway was dry. The fish and tortoises buried themselves in the mud. Then the crows and hawks came with their lance-like beaks, and they busily picked them out from the mud, writhing and wriggling, and devoured them.

As he saw how the fish and the tortoises were being destroyed, the Master's heart was moved with compassion. He exclaimed, “This day I must cause rain to fall.” So, when the night grew into day, after attending to his bodily needs, he waited until it was the proper hour to go on alms round. And then, surrounded by members of the Sangha, and perfect with the perfection of a Buddha, he went into Sāvatthi for alms. On his way back to the monastery in the afternoon, he stopped at the steps leading down to the tank of Jetavana and addressed the Elder Ānanda.

“Bring me a bathing robe, Ānanda, for I will bathe in the tank of

Jetavana."

"But surely, sir," the Elder replied, "the water is all dried up and there is only mud."

"A Buddha's power is great, Ānanda. Go, bring me the bathing robe," the Master said.

So the Elder went and brought the bathing robe which the Master put on, using one end to go around his waist, and covering up his body with the other. So dressed, he stood on the tank steps and exclaimed, "I would gladly bathe in the tank of Jetavana."

That instant the golden throne of Sakka grew hot beneath him, and Sakka looked to see why. Realizing what was the matter, he summoned the King of the Storm Clouds and said, "The Master is standing on the steps of the tank of Jetavana and wishes to bathe. Quickly pour down rain in a single torrent all over the kingdom of Kosala." Obedient to Sakka's command, the King of the Storm Clouds dressed himself in one cloud as an under garment and another cloud as an outer garment, and chanting the rain song, he dashed eastward. And lo! He appeared in the east as a cloud as big as a threshing floor (*a floor where rice was threshed*). It grew and grew until it was as big as a hundred, as a thousand, threshing floors. There was thunder and lightning, and bending down his face and mouth, he deluged all Kosala with torrents of rain. The downpour was constant, quickly filling the tank of Jetavana and stopping only when the water was level with the topmost step.

Then the Master bathed in the tank, and coming up out of the water, he put on his orange colored robes. He adjusted his Buddha robe around him, leaving one shoulder bare. Dressed like this, he set forth, surrounded by the Saṅgha. He went into his Perfumed Chamber, fragrant with sweet-smelling flowers. Here he sat on the Buddha seat. And when the monks had performed their duties, he rose and exhorted them from the jeweled steps of his throne, and then dismissed them from his presence. Passing now within his own sweet-smelling chamber, he

stretched himself, lion-like, on his right side.

Later the monks gathered together in the Dharma Hall. They said, "When the crops were withering, when the pools were drying up and the fish and tortoises were in a terrible plight, in his compassion he came forth as a savior. Dressed in a bathing robe, he stood on the steps of the tank of Jetavana and made the rain pour down from the heavens until it seemed like it would overwhelm all Kosala. And by the time he returned to the monastery, he had freed all the fish and tortoises from their suffering both of mind and body."

This was their conversation when the Master came out of his Perfumed Chamber into the Dharma Hall. He asked them what they were discussing, and they told him. "This is not the first time, monks," the Master said, "that the Blessed One has made the rain fall in the hour of need. He did the same thing when born into the animal realm, in the days when he was King of the Fish." And so saying, he told this story of the past.

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Once upon a time, in that same kingdom of Kosala (and at Sāvatthi too), there was a pond where the tank of Jetavana now is. This pond was fenced in by a tangle of climbing plants. The Bodhisatta lived there. He had been born as a fish. And then, as now, there was a drought. The crops withered. Water gave out in the tank and pool, and the fish and tortoises buried themselves in the mud. Likewise, when the fish and tortoises of this pond had buried themselves in its mud, the crows and other birds, flocking to the spot, picked them out with their beaks and devoured them.

Seeing the fate of his kin, and knowing that no one but he could save them in their hour of need, the Bodhisatta resolved to make a solemn Profession of Goodness. By its power he would make a rain fall from the heavens in order to save his kin from certain death. So, pulling back the black mud, he came up, a mighty fish, blackened with mud like a casket of the finest sandalwood that has been smeared with oil. Opening his

eyes which were like sparkling rubies, and looking up to the heavens, he thus implored Pajjunna, King of Devas, "My heart is heavy for my kin's sake, my good Pajjunna. Why is it that when I, who am virtuous, am distressed for my kin, you do not send rain from the heavens? For even though I have been born where it is customary to prey on one's kin (*the animal realm*), I have never eaten any fish from the time of my youth, even one the size of a grain of rice. Nor have I ever robbed a single living creature of its life. By the truth of this, my declaration, I call upon you to send rain and help my kin." Then he called to Pajjunna, King of Devas, as a master might call to a servant, in this stanza:

*Pajjunna, thunder! Baffle and thwart the crow!  
Breed sorrow on him. Ease me from woe!*

In this way, as a master might call to a servant, the Bodhisatta called to Pajjunna. This caused heavy rains to fall and relieved many from the fear of death. And when his life closed, he passed away to fare according to his karma.



Figure: The Muddy Fish Implores the Rain God

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"So this is not the first time, monks," the Master said, "that the Blessed One has caused the rain to fall. He did so in bygone days as well, when he was a fish." His lesson ended, he identified the birth by saying, "The Buddha's disciples were the fish of those days, Ānanda was Pajjunna, King of Devas, and I was the King of the Fish."

## **76: Asaṅkiya Jātaka, The Guardian**

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*Buddhism is sometimes criticized as being self-centered because of the emphasis on personal liberation. But in this story, we see one of the Buddha's fundamental teachings, and that is that by developing our own minds, we also protect those around us. We underestimate the amount of harm we do because of our untrained and undisciplined minds, and we do not appreciate the amount of good that comes from a mind that is free from greed, hatred, and ignorance.*

*We also see another lesson of the Buddha's, and that is that when we have little, we have little to fear and we suffer less. Sharon Salzberg tells the story about being in a wealthy person's home when a very expensive vase broke. They were distraught about the loss. But as the saying goes, when you have nothing, you have nothing to lose, and with that can come incredible freedom. This is the freedom of a life of simplicity and a mind that does not crave.*

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*"The village breeds no fear in me."* This story was told by the Master while at Jetavana. It is about a lay brother who lived at Sāvatthi. Tradition says that this man, who had entered the path and was an earnest believer, was once traveling on business in the company of the leader of a caravan. They were in the jungle when the carts were unyoked and a camp was constructed, and the good man began to pace up and down at the foot of a tree near the leader.

Now 500 robbers, who had bided their time, had surrounded the spot armed with bows, clubs, and other weapons. They were intent on looting the encampment. But unceasingly that lay brother paced back and forth. "That must be their sentry," the robbers said when they saw him. "We will wait until he is asleep, and then we will rob them."

But because that lay brother kept pacing back and forth all through the

first watch, all through the middle watch, and all through the last watch of the night, they were unable to surprise the camp. When day dawned, the robbers, who had never had their chance, threw down the stones and clubs and ran away.

His business done, that lay brother came back to Sāvatthi, and approaching the Master, asked him this question, "In guarding themselves, sir, do men also guard others?"

"Yes, lay brother. In guarding himself a man guards others. In guarding others, he guards himself."

"Oh, how well said, sir, is this utterance of the Blessed One! When I was traveling with a caravan leader, I resolved to guard myself by pacing back and forth at the foot of a tree, and by so doing I guarded the whole caravan."

The Master said, "Lay brother, in bygone days too the wise and good guarded others while guarding themselves." And, so saying, at the lay brother's request he told this story of the past.

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Once upon a time when Brahmadatta was reigning in Benares, the Bodhisatta was born as a brahmin. When he came of age, he became aware of the evil that comes from lust, and so he forsook the world to live as a recluse in the country round the Himalayas.

Needing salt and vinegar, he went on a pilgrimage for alms through the countryside. In the course of his wanderings, he came to travel with a merchant's caravan. When the caravan halted at a certain spot in the forest, he paced back and forth at the foot of a tree, near the caravan, enjoying the bliss of Insight.

Now after supper 500 robbers surrounded the camp to plunder it. But seeing the ascetic, they halted, saying, "If he sees us, he'll give the alarm. Wait until he drops off to sleep, and then we'll plunder them." But all through the night the ascetic continued to pace back and forth, and the

robbers never got their chance. So they threw away their sticks and stones and shouted to the people in the caravan, "Hi, there! You of the caravan! If it hadn't been for that ascetic walking about under the tree, we'd have plundered the lot of you. Mind and honor him tomorrow!" And so saying, they left.



Figure: In Guarding Yourself, You Also Guard Others

When the night gave way to day, the people saw the clubs and stones that the robbers had cast away. They came in fear and trembling to ask the Bodhisatta with respectful salutation whether he had seen the robbers.

"Oh, yes, I did, sirs," he replied.

"And were you not alarmed or afraid at the sight of so many robbers?"

"No," said the Bodhisatta. "The sight of robbers causes fear only to the rich. As for me, I am penniless. Why should I be afraid? Whether I live in a village or in a forest, I never have any fear or dread." And then, to teach

them the Dharma, he repeated this stanza:

*The village breeds no fear in me,  
No forests dismay me.  
I've won by love and charity  
Liberation's perfect way.*

When the Bodhisatta had taught the Dharma in this stanza to the people of the caravan, peace filled their hearts, and they showed him honor and veneration. All his life long he developed the Four Excellences (1. *Impermanence*, 2. *Dukkha*, 3. *Non-self*, and 4. *Nirvana*), and then he was reborn into the Brahma Realm.

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His lesson ended, the Master showed the connection and identified the birth by saying, "The Buddha's followers were the members of the caravan of those days, and I was the ascetic."

## **77: Mahāsupina Jātaka, The Great Dreams**

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*This is an unusual Jātaka Tale because a) it is relatively long and b) it includes many prophecies.*

*This story begins with two of the most important people from the Buddha's time: King Pasenadi, who was the King of Kosala, and his Queen Mallikā. Here we see them completely in character. King Pasenadi was an intelligent and educated man. An entire section of the Saṃyutta Nikāya is devoted to conversations between him and the Buddha. But he is also somewhat erratic, and tends to backslide from the Buddha's Dharma to the Brahmin religion. That is what he does in this story.*

*Queen Mallikā has just a small role in this story, but it is a pivotal one. Unlike her husband, Mallikā was deeply loyal to the Buddha. She often – as she does in this story – puts King Pasenadi back on the proper path.*

*This story has many prophecies that have eerie parallels to modern day politics. There is also an interesting passage in which the Buddha warns of a time when people teach the Dharma for money. He says that when this happens, it means that the Dharma has become corrupted. Sadly, this is the way that the Dharma has come to the West, as a sort of commercial enterprise.*

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*"Bulls first, and trees."* This story was told by the Master while at Jetavana. It is about sixteen great dreams. For in the last watch of one night (so tradition says) the King of Kosala, who had been asleep all night long, dreamed sixteen great dreams. Then he woke up in fear and alarm as to what they might mean for him. His fear of death was so strong that he could not move. He just lay there huddled up in his bed. Now when the night grew light, his brahmins and priests came to him, and with due respect they asked whether his majesty had slept well.

"How could I sleep well, my courtiers?" answered the King. "For at daybreak I dreamed sixteen great dreams, and I have been in terror ever since! Tell me, my advisors, what does it all mean?"

"We will be able to judge once we have heard them."

Then the King told them his dreams, and he asked what those visions meant.

The brahmins started to wring their hands. "Why wring your hands, brahmins?" the King asked.

"Because, sire, these are evil dreams."

"What will come of them?" the King asked.

"One of three calamities: harm to your kingdom, harm to your life, or harm to your wealth."

"Is there a remedy?"

"Undoubtedly these dreams in themselves are so fierce that they are very dangerous. Nonetheless we will find a remedy for them. Otherwise, what good is our study and learning?"

"What do you propose to do to avoid the evil?"

"Wherever four roads meet, we will offer a sacrifice, sire."

"My directors," the King cried in terror, "my life is in your hands. Work quickly and for my safety."

"We will be paid a large sum of money and get food of every kind," the jubilant brahmins thought. Telling the King to have no fear, they left the palace.

Outside the town they dug a sacrificial pit and gathered many four-footed creatures, perfect and without blemish, and a multitude of birds.

But still they kept discovering that they were missing something or other, and they kept going back to the King to ask for this, that, and the other thing. Now their actions were being watched by Queen Mallikā who went to the King and asked why these brahmins kept coming to him.

"I envy you," the King said. "A snake in your ear, and you do not know about it!"

"What do you mean, your majesty?"

"I have dreamed such unlucky dreams! The brahmins tell me they point to one of three calamities, and they are anxious to offer sacrifices to avoid the evil. And this is what brings them here so often."

"But has your majesty consulted the Chief Brahmin both of this world and of the world of devas?"

"Who would that be, my dear?" asked the King.

"Do you not know the greatest person in all the world, the all-knowing and pure, the spotless master brahmin? Surely, he, the Blessed One, will understand your dreams. Go, ask him."

"And so I will, my Queen," said the King. And away he went to the monastery, where he saluted the Master and sat down.

"What, pray tell, brings your majesty here so early in the morning?" asked the Master in his sweet tones.

"Sir," said the King, "just before daybreak I dreamed sixteen great dreams that so terrified me that I told them to the brahmins. They told me that my dreams foretold evil, and that to avoid the threatened calamity they must offer a great sacrifice wherever four roads met. And so they are busy with their preparations, and many living creatures have the fear of death before their eyes. But I pray you, who are the greatest person in the world of men and devas, you into whose sight comes all possible knowledge of things past and present and to be, I pray you to

tell me what will come of my dreams, Oh Blessed One."

"It is true, sire, that there is no one other than me who can tell what your dreams mean or what will come of them. I will tell you. Only first you have to tell me about your dreams as they appeared to you."

"I will, sir," said the King, and at once he began this list, following the order of the dreams' appearance:

*Bulls first, and trees, and cows, and calves,  
Horse, dish, she-jackal, waterpot,  
A pond, raw rice, and sandal-wood,  
And gourds that sank, and stones that swam,  
With frogs that gobbled up black snakes,  
A crow with gay-plumed retinue,  
And wolves in panicked fear of goats!*

"How was it, sir, that I had the following dream? Four black bulls, like collyrium (*a black eye shadow*) in hue, came from the four cardinal directions to the royal courtyard with a vow to fight. People flocked together to see the bull fight until a great crowd had gathered. But the bulls only made a show of fighting. They roared and bellowed and finally they went off without fighting at all. This was my first dream. What does this mean?"

"Sire, that dream will not manifest in your days or in mine. But hereafter, when rulers are stingy and unrighteous, and when people are not righteous, in days when the world is corrupt, when good is waning and evil waxing, in those days of the world's backsliding, no rain will fall from the heavens. The feet of the storm will be crippled, the crops will wither, and famine will be on the land. Then the clouds will gather as if to rain from the four quarters of the heavens. People will hurriedly carry the rice and crops indoors so that the women can spread them out to dry for fear the harvest will get wet. Then with shovels and baskets in hand, the men will go to bank up the dikes. As a sign of coming rain, the thunder will bellow, the lightning will flash from the clouds. But just

likes the bulls in your dream that did not fight, the clouds will pass by without raining. This is what will come of this dream. But no harm will come to you from it, for it was in regard to the future that you dreamed this dream. What the brahmins told you they only said to get money and food from you."

And when the Master had told the meaning of this dream, he said, "Tell me your second dream, sire."

"Sir," the King said, "my second dream was this. Little tiny trees and shrubs burst through the soil, and when they had barely grown the size of a hand high, they flowered and bore fruit! This was my second dream. What does this mean?"

"Sire," the Master said, "this dream will manifest in days when the world has fallen into decay and when men are short lived. In times when passions are strong, quite young girls will go to live with men. These women will conceive and bear children. The flowers of this union will typify their origins, and the fruit their offspring. But you, sire, have nothing to fear from this. Tell me your third dream, Oh great King."

"I saw cows sucking the milk of calves who were born that same day. This was my third dream. What does this mean?"

"This dream, too, will manifest only in days to come, when respect is no longer given to elders. For in the future men, showing no reverence for parents or parents-in-law, shall control the family wealth, and if they so desire, will give food and clothing to their elders, but if they do not wish to do so, they will withhold their gifts. Then the elders, destitute and dependent, will exist only by favor of their own children, like big cows suckled by calves a day old. But you have nothing to fear from this. Tell me your fourth dream."

"I saw men unyoking a team of draught oxen, sturdy and strong, and harnessing young steers to draw the load. And the steers were not up to the task. They refused and stood still so that the wagons did not move. This was my fourth dream. What does this mean?"

"Here again the dream will not manifest until the future, in the days of unrighteous rulers. For in days to come, unrighteous and stingy rulers will show no honor to wise people skilled in knowledge, fertile in virtue, and able to conduct business. They will not appoint aged councilors of wisdom and of learning to the courts of law and justice. Instead they will honor the very young and the very foolish, and appoint them to preside in the courts. And these latter, ignorant of both diplomacy and practical knowledge, will not be able to handle the burden of their honors or to govern. And because of their incompetence, they will throw off the yoke of office. Meanwhile, the aged and wise people, who are properly able to cope with all the difficulties, will remember how they were passed over. And they will refuse to help, saying, 'It is no business of ours. We are outsiders. Let the people of the inner circle see to it.' They will stand aside, and ruin will fall upon those rulers in every way. It will be like when the yoke was put on the young steers who were not strong enough for the burden instead of the team of sturdy and strong draught-oxen, who alone were able to do the work. However, you have nothing to fear from this dream. Tell me your fifth dream."

"I saw a horse with a mouth on either side to which fodder was given on both sides, and it ate with both its mouths. This was my fifth dream. What does this mean?"

"This dream, too, will only manifest in the future, in the days of unrighteous and foolish rulers. These rulers will appoint unrighteous and covetous people to be judges. These base ones, fools, despising the good, will take bribes from both sides as they sit in the seat of judgment, and they will be filled with this two-fold corruption, just as the horse ate the fodder with two mouths at once. However, you have nothing to fear from this. Tell me your sixth dream."

"I saw people holding out a polished, golden bowl worth a hundred thousand pieces, and begging an old jackal to get into the bowl where it would atrophy and grow weak. And I saw the beast do it. This was my sixth dream. What does this mean?"

"This dream, too, will only manifest in the future. For in the days to come, unrighteous rulers, even though they come from a race of rulers, will mistrust the descendants of the noble and will not honor them. Instead they will appoint fools. The noble will be brought low and the fools will be put in power. Then the great families will be forced to live in dependence on the upstarts. They will offer them their daughters in marriage. And the union of the noble maidens with the foolish will be like the atrophying of the old jackal in the golden bowl. However, you have nothing to fear from this. Tell me your seventh dream."

"A man was weaving rope, sir, and as he wove, he threw it down at his feet. There was a hungry female jackal under his bench. She kept eating the rope as he wove, but the man did not know it. This is what I saw. This was my seventh dream. What does this mean?"

"This dream, too, will not manifest until the future. For in days to come, women will lust after men and alcohol and fine clothes, and they will travel abroad seeking the joys of this world. In their wickedness and extravagance these women will get drunk with their lovers. They will parade about in clothes and jewelry and perfumes. They will be heedless of even the most pressing of their family duties. They will keep watching for their lovers, even at crevices high up in the outer wall. They will crush the seed corn that should be sown so they can make liquor. In all these ways they will plunder the stores won by the hard work of their husbands in the fields and barns, devouring the poor men's substance just as the hungry jackal under the bench ate the rope of the rope maker as he wove it. However, you have nothing to fear from this. Tell me your eighth dream."

"I saw a big pitcher at a palace gate that was full to the brim and stood among a number of empty ones. And from the four cardinal points, and from the four intermediate points as well, a constant stream of people of all four castes kept coming. They carried water in pots and poured it into the full pitcher. The water overflowed and spilled away. But they kept pouring more and more water into the over-flowing vessel without a single man giving so much as a glance at the empty pitchers. This was

my eighth dream. What does this mean?"

"This dream, too, will not manifest until the future. For in days to come the world will decay. Countries will grow weak. Its rulers will grow poor and stingy. The richest of them will have no more than 100,000 pieces of money in his treasury. Then these rulers will make their people only work for them. The working people, leaving their own work, will sow grain and seedlings. They will keep watch and reap and thresh and harvest for the ruler's sake. They will plant sugar cane, make and operate sugar mills, and boil down the molasses for the ruler's sake. They will lay out flower gardens and orchards, and gather in the fruits for the ruler's sake. And as they gather in all the different kinds of produce, they will fill the ruler's granaries to overflowing, not giving so much as a glance at their own empty barns. Thus, it will be like filling up the full pitcher, heedless of the empty ones. However, you have nothing to fear from this. Tell me your ninth dream."

"I saw a deep pool with steep banks all around. It was over-grown with the five kinds of lotuses. Two-footed creatures and four-footed creatures from every side flocked there to drink its water. The middle of the pond was muddy, but the water was clear and sparkling at the edges where the creatures went down into the pool. This was my ninth dream. What does this mean?"

"This dream, too, will not manifest until the future. For in days to come rulers will grow unrighteous. They will rule after their own will and pleasure, and they will not execute judgment with righteousness. These rulers will lust after riches and grow fat on bribes. They will not show mercy, love, and compassion toward their people. They will be fierce and cruel, amassing wealth by crushing their subjects like sugar-canies in a mill and by taxing them even to their last penny. Unable to pay the oppressive tax, the people will flee from villages and towns and cities and take refuge at the borders of the realm. The heart of the land will be a wilderness, while the borders will be full of people, just as the water was muddy in the middle of the pool and clear at the margin. However, you have nothing to fear from this. Tell me your tenth dream."

"I saw rice boiling in a pot without getting done. By 'not getting done' I mean that it looked as though it was divided into three parts. One part was wet, one part hard and raw, and one part cooked properly. This was my tenth dream. What does this mean?"

"This dream, too, will not manifest until the future. For in days to come rulers will grow unrighteous. The people surrounding the rulers will grow unrighteous as well, as will the noble and the householders, townsmen, and countryfolk. Yes, all people will grow unrighteous, even including sages and brahmins. Next, their very guardian deities - the spirits to whom they offer sacrifice, the spirits of the trees, and the spirits of the air - will become unrighteous as well. The very winds that blow over the realms of these unrighteous rulers will grow cruel and lawless. They will shake the mansions of the skies and kindle the anger of the spirits that live there so that they will not allow rain to fall. And if it does rain, it will not fall on everywhere at once. And any kind shower will not fall on tilled or sown lands to help them in their need. In each district and village and over each separate pool or lake, the rain will not fall at the same time on the whole area. If it rains on the upper part, it will not rain on the lower. Some crops will be ruined by a heavy downpour. Some will wither from drought. And some will thrive with friendly showers to water them. So the crops sown in a single place, like the rice in the one pot, will have no uniform character. However, you have nothing to fear from this. Tell me your eleventh dream."

"I saw sour buttermilk bartered for precious sandal-wood worth 100,000 pieces of money. This was my eleventh dream. What does this mean?"

"This dream, too, will not manifest until the future, in the days when the Dharma is becoming corrupt and losing its influence. For in days to come many greedy and shameless Dharma teachers will arise. They will preach the very words where I lamented against greed for their own personal gain! In pursuit of personal gain and taking their stand on the side of religious sectarians, they will fail to make their teaching lead to Nirvana. Their only thought, as they preach, will be to induce men and women by fine words and sweet voices to give them their money and to be given

gifts. Others, seated in the highways, at the street corners, at the doors of rulers' palaces, will stoop to preaching for money. And as they barter the Dharma - my doctrine that leads to the riches of Nirvana - away for food or money, they will be like those who bartered away precious sandalwood worth 100,000 pieces of money for sour buttermilk. However, you have nothing to fear from this. Tell me your twelfth dream."

"I saw empty pumpkins sinking in the water. What does this mean?"

"This dream will also manifest in the future, in the days of unrighteous rulers, when the world is corrupt. For in those days, rulers will not show favor to the noble, but to the foolish only. These fools will become powerful and wealthy, while the noble will sink into poverty. In the government, in the palace gates, in the council chamber, and in the courts of justice, the words of the foolish alone (who the empty pumpkins typify) will be established, as though they had sunk down until they rest on the bottom. So, too, in the assemblies of the Sangha, in the greater and lesser councils, and in conduct regarding bowls, robes, lodging, and the like, only the words of the wicked and the vile will be considered to have power, not that of the modest monks and nuns. Thus, everywhere it will be like when the empty pumpkins sank. However, you have nothing to fear from this. Tell me your thirteenth dream."

Hereupon the King said, "I saw huge blocks of solid rock, as big as houses, floating like ships upon the waters. What does this mean?"

"This dream will also not manifest before such times as those of which I have spoken. For in those days unrighteous rulers will honor the foolish, who will become powerful while the noble sink into poverty. The upstarts alone shall have respect, not the noble. In the halls of government, in the council chamber, or in the courts of justice, the words of the those learned in the law (and it is they who the solid rocks typify) will drift idly by. Their wisdom will not sink deep into the hearts of men when they speak. The upstarts will merely laugh at them scornfully, saying, 'What is this these fellows are saying?' So too in the assemblies of

the Sangha, as said before, the excellent among the Sangha will not be deemed worthy of respect. Their words will not sink deep. They will drift idly by, even as the rocks floated upon the waters in your dream. However, you have nothing to fear from this. Tell me your fourteenth dream."

"I saw tiny frogs, no bigger than tiny wildflowers, swiftly pursuing huge black snakes, chopping them up like so many lotus-stalks and gobbling them up. What does this mean?"

"This dream, too, will not manifest until those days to come such as those of which I have spoken, when the world is decaying. For then men's passions will be so strong and their lusts so hot, that they will use their power to control the very youngest of their wives as well as their slaves and hired servants, oxen, buffalos and all cattle, gold and silver, and everything that is in the house.

"As for the poor husband, if he should ask where the money or a robe is, he will be told at once that 'it is where it is,' that he should mind his own business and not be so inquisitive as to what is, or is not, in *her* house. And so in different ways the wives will establish their power over their husbands with abuse and goading taunts just as they would with slaves and servants. Thus, it will be like the tiny frogs, no bigger than tiny wildflowers, gobbling up the big black snakes. However, you have nothing to fear from this. Tell me your fifteenth dream."

"I saw a village crow in whom was embodied the whole of the Ten Vices (*killing, stealing, adultery, slandering, reviling, lying, flattery, jealousy, hatred, and 'folly'*, the last of which includes not believing in the Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha, and holding wrong views.). He was escorted by a flock of those birds who, because of their golden sheen, are called Royal Golden Mallards. What does this mean?"

"This dream, too, will not manifest until the future in the reign of weak rulers. In days to come rulers will arise who will know nothing about elephants or the arts, and they will be cowards in the field. Fearing to be

deposed and cast from their high status, they will put their footmen, bath attendants, barbers, and such - and not the noble - into power. Thus, shut out from favor and unable to support themselves, the noble will be reduced to attending on the upstarts, just as when the crow had the Royal Golden Mallards for an entourage. However, you have nothing to fear from this. Tell me your sixteenth dream."

"Before this, sir, it always used to be panthers that preyed on goats. But I saw goats chasing panthers and devouring them - munch, munch, munch! - while at the mere sight of the goats far away, terror-stricken wolves fled - quaking with fear - and hid themselves in their refuge in the thicket. This was my dream. What does it mean?"

"This dream, too, will not manifest until the future, in the reign of unrighteous rulers. In those days the foolish will be raised to ministers and be made favorites, while the noble will sink into obscurity and distress. Gaining influence in the courts of law because of their favor with the ruler, these upstarts will claim the great estates, the clothing, and all the property of the noble. And when the noble plead their rights before the courts, the ruler's followers will have them beaten and punished and taken by the throat and cast out with words of scorn, such as: 'Know your place, fools! What? Do you oppose us? The ruler will know of your insolence, and we will have your hands and feet chopped off and other tortures applied!' The terrified noble ones will be forced to affirm that their own belongings really belong to the overbearing upstarts, and they will tell the favorites to take them. And they will hurry home and cower in an agony of fear. Likewise, evil monks and nuns will harass good and worthy monks and nuns, until these latter, finding no one to help them, will flee to the jungle. And this oppression of the noble and of the good monks and nuns by the foolish and by the evil will be like the scaring of wolves by goats. However, you have nothing to fear from this. For this dream, too, only has meaning for the future.

"It was not truth, it was not love for you, that prompted the brahmins to prophesy as they did. No, it was greed and the mind that is fed by covetousness that shaped all their self-seeking words."

Thus the Master explained the meaning of these sixteen great dreams, adding, "You, sire, are not the first to have these dreams. They were dreamed by kings of bygone days as well. And then, as now, the brahmins used them as a pretext for sacrifices. But at the insistence of the wise and good, the Bodhisatta was consulted, and the dreams were explained in the same manner in past times as they have just now been explained." And so saying, at the King's request, he told this story of the past.

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Once upon a time when Brahmadatta was reigning in Benares, the Bodhisatta was born as a brahmin in the North country. When he came of age, he renounced the world for the life of a recluse. He won the higher Knowledges (*supernormal powers*) and the Attainments (*eight jhānas*), and he lived in the Himalaya country in the bliss that comes from Insight.

In those days, in just the same way, Brahmadatta dreamed these dreams at Benares, and he asked the brahmins about them. And the brahmins, then as now, started preparing a sacrifice. There was a young brahmin of learning and wisdom among them. He was a student of the King's chaplain. He said to the chaplain, "Master, you have taught me the Three Vedas. Isn't there a text that says 'The killing of one creature does not give life to another'?"

"My son," the chaplain replied, "this means money to us, a great deal of money. You only seem to want to spare the King's treasury!"

"Do as you will, master," the young brahmin said. "But as for me, there is no point in staying here with you." And so saying, he left him, and went to the royal pleasure garden.

That same day the Bodhisatta, knowing all this, thought to himself, "If I visit the realm of men today, I will be able to save a great many beings from suffering." So, passing through the air, he landed in the royal pleasure garden and seated himself, radiant as a statue of gold, upon the Ceremonial Stone.

The young brahmin went to him and with due respect seated himself by the Bodhisatta in all friendliness. They had a sweet conversation. The Bodhisatta asked whether the young brahmin thought the King ruled righteously. "Sir," the young man answered, "the King is righteous himself, but the brahmins make him do things that are evil. The brahmins were asked about the meaning of 16 dreams that the King had, and they leaped at the opportunity to perform a sacrifice. Oh, sir, it would be a good thing if you would tell the King the real meaning of his dreams and in so doing save a great many creatures from their death?"

"But, my son, I do not know the King, and he does not know me. Still, if he should come here and ask me, I will tell him."

"I will bring the King, sir," the young brahmin said, "if you will only be so good as to wait here a minute until I come back." And having gotten the Bodhisatta's consent, he went before the King. He told the King that an air-travelling recluse had appeared in the royal pleasure garden. The recluse said he would explain the King's dreams. Would his majesty describe them to this man?

When the King heard this, he left at once to the pleasure garden with a large entourage. Saluting the recluse, he sat down by the holy man's side. He asked him whether it was true that he knew what his dreams meant. "Certainly, sire," the Bodhisatta said, "but first describe the dreams to me."

"Readily, sir," answered the King, and he began as follows:

*Bulls first, and trees, and cows, and calves,  
Horse, dish, she-jackal, waterpot,  
A pond, raw rice, and sandal-wood,  
And gourds that sank, and stones that swam,*

and so forth, ending up with

*And wolves in panicked fear of goats.*

And his majesty went on to tell his dreams in just the same manner as that in which King Pasenadi had described them.

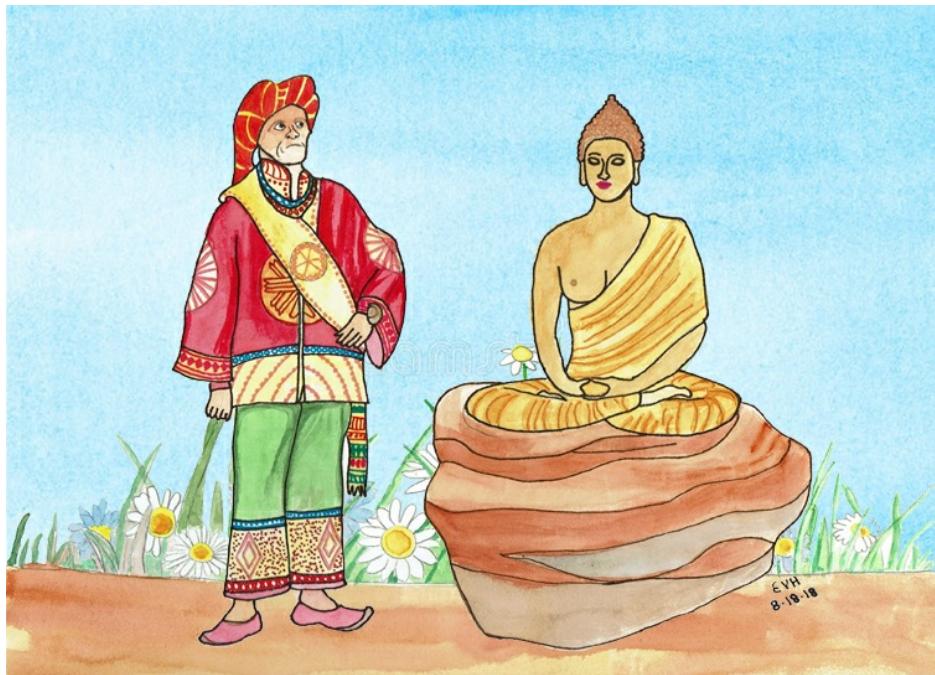


Figure: The King Meets the Wise Recluse

"Enough," said the Great Being. "You have nothing to fear or dread from all this." Having thus reassured the King, and having freed many animals from bondage, the Bodhisatta again took up his position in midair. From there he exhorted the King and established him in the Five Precepts, ending with these words, "Henceforth, Oh King, do not align with the brahmins in slaughtering animals for sacrifice." His teaching ended, the Bodhisatta passed straight through the air to his own home. And the King, remaining faithful to the teaching he had heard, passed away after a life of alms-giving and other good works to fare according to his karma.

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His lesson ended, the Master said, "You have nothing to fear from these dreams. Away with the sacrifice!" Having had the sacrifice dismissed, and having saved the lives of many creatures, he showed the connection and identified the birth by saying, "Ānanda was the King of those days, Sāriputta was the young Brahmin, and I was the recluse."

## **78: Illīsa Jātaka, The Story of Illīsa**

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*This is a rich and wonderful story. The situation with the miser is quite funny, especially in the Jātaka Tale itself. It has a little bit of A Christmas Carol feel to it. The fact that the barber turns out to be the Bodhisatta is particularly amusing.*

*One of the main characters in the Jātaka is Sakka, Lord of the Devas. In the Buddhist cosmology, Sakka is a very high-ranking god. Only an extremely virtuous being can be reborn as Sakka. Curiously there are three suttas in the Samyutta Nikāya that actually give instructions on how to become Sakka (!). Unfortunately, the bar is set very high, as you would expect. The suttas that give these instructions are [SN I.11.11-13](#). Most people have violated at least one of the criteria by the time they are about three years old.*

*And of course, pitting yourself against a god with supernatural powers is not a good choice. Good luck with that.*

*As for the Treasurer's wife? Pure sainthood!*

*Note also a very important teaching of the Buddha, and that is non-contention. The Buddha taught that we should never enter into debates or arguments with others. We should simply explain what we believe to be true, and to always do so in harmony.*

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*"Both squint."* This story was told by the Master while at Jetavana. It is about a miserly Lord High Treasurer. We are told that there was a town named Jagghery near the city of Rājagaha. And in Jagghery a certain Lord High Treasurer lived. He was known as the Millionaire Miser, and he was worth eighty million rupees. He would not give away or use for his own enjoyment so much as the tiniest drop of oil that a blade of grass

will soak up. So he made no use of his wealth either for his family or for sages and brahmins. It remained unenjoyed, like a pool haunted by demons.

Now, one day the Master arose at dawn, and he was moved with a great compassion. As he reviewed those ripe for conversion throughout the universe, he became aware that this Treasurer with his wife some 400 miles away were destined to follow the Noble Eightfold Path.

Now the day before, the Lord High Treasurer had gone to the palace to wait upon the King. When he was on his way home, he saw a peasant who was very hungry eating a cake stuffed with gruel. The sight provoked a craving in him. But, arriving at his own house, he thought to himself, "If I say I want a stuffed cake, a whole bunch of people will want to share my meal, and that means going through a lot of my rice and ghee and sugar. I mustn't say a word to anyone." So he walked around wrestling with his craving. As hour after hour passed, he grew yellower and yellower, and the veins stood out like cords on his emaciated frame. Finally, unable to bear it any longer, he went to his room and lay down hugging his bed. But still he would not say a word to anyone for fear of wasting his stores! Finally, his wife went to him, and, stroking his back, she said, "What is the matter, my husband?"

"Nothing," he said.

"Perhaps the King is angry with you?"

"No, he is not."

"Have your children or servants done anything to annoy you?"

"Nothing of that kind, either."

"Well, then, do you have a craving for anything?"

Still he did not say a word, all because of his preposterous fear that he might waste his stores. He just lay there speechless on his bed.

"Say something, husband," his wife said. "Tell me what you have a craving for."

"All right," he said with a gulp. "I have a craving for one thing."

"And what is that, my husband?"

"I would like a stuffed cake to eat!"

"Now why didn't you say so at once? You're rich enough! I'll cook enough cakes to feed the whole town of Jagghery."

"Why worry about them? They must work to earn their own meal."

"Well then, I'll cook only enough for our street."

"How extravagant you are!"

"Then, I'll cook just enough for our own household."

"How lavish you are!"

"Very well. I'll cook only enough for our children."

"Why bother with them?"

"Very well then, I'll only provide for our two selves."

"Why should you have them?"

"Then I'll cook just enough for you alone," his wife said.

"Do it quietly," the Lord High Treasurer said. "There are a lot of people looking for signs of cooking in this place. Pick out any broken rice, being careful to leave the whole grain, and take a portable cook stove and cooking pots and just a very little milk and ghee and honey and molasses. Then go to the seventh story of the house and do the cooking up there. I will sit there alone and undisturbed to eat."

Obedient to his wishes, the wife had all the necessary things carried up, climbed all the way up herself, sent the servants away, and sent word to the Treasurer to come. Up he climbed, shutting and bolting door after door as he ascended, until at last he came to the seventh floor. He also shut and bolted this door. Then he sat down. His wife lit the fire in the stove, put her pot on, and set about cooking the cakes.

Now in the early morning, the Master had said to the Elder Great Moggallāna, "Moggallāna, this Miser Millionaire in the town of Jaggery near Rājagaha, wanting to eat cakes himself, is so afraid of letting others know, that he is having them cooked for him right up on the seventh story. Go there, and by using your supernatural power transport the husband and wife, cakes, milk, ghee and all, here to Jetavana. I and the 500 monks will stay here today, and I will make the cakes and give them a meal."

Obeying the Master's request, the Elder used his supernatural powers to go to the town of Jaggery. There he rested in midair in front of the chamber window, duly clad in his under and outer robes, bright as a jeweled image. The unexpected sight of the Elder made the Lord High Treasurer shake with fear. He thought to himself, "I climbed up here to get away from visitors, and now there's one of them at the window!" And failing to understand what was really going on, he sputtered with rage, like sugar and salt thrown on the fire, and he burst out with "What will you get, sage, by simply standing in midair? Why, you may pace up and down until you've made a path in the pathless air, and yet you'll still get nothing."

The Elder began to pace back and forth in his place in the air!

"What will you get by pacing back and forth?" the Treasurer said. "You may sit cross-legged in meditation in the air, but still you'll get nothing."

Then the Elder sat down with legs crossed! Then the Treasurer said, "What will you get by sitting there? You may come and stand on the window sill, but even that won't get you anything!"

The Elder went and stood on the window sill. "What will you get by standing on the window sill? Why, you may belch smoke, and yet you'll still get nothing!" the Treasurer said.

Then the Elder belched smoke until the whole palace was filled with it. The Treasurer's eyes began to smart as though pricked with needles. Finally, out of fear that his house might catch on fire, he stopped himself from adding, "You won't get anything even if you burst into flames." He thought to himself, "This Elder is incredibly persistent! He simply won't go away empty-handed! I must give just one cake to him." So he said to his wife, "My dear, cook one little cake and give it to the sage so he will go away."

So she mixed a tiny amount of dough in a crock. But the dough swelled and swelled until it filled the whole crock, and it grew to be a great big cake! "What a lot you must have used!" the Treasurer exclaimed at the sight. And he took a very little piece of the dough with the tip of a spoon and put it into the oven to bake. But that tiny piece of dough grew larger than the first lump, and one after another, every piece of dough he took became huge! Then he lost heart and said to his wife, "You give him a cake, dear." But, as soon as she took one cake from the basket, at once all the other cakes stuck fast to it. So she cried out to her husband that all the cakes had stuck together, and that she could not pry them apart.

"Oh, I'll soon get them apart," he said, but he could not!

Then the husband and wife both grabbed on to the mass of cakes at the corner and tried to get them apart. But no matter how hard they pulled, they were no more successful together than they were by themselves on the mass.

Now as the Treasurer was pulling at the cakes, he started to sweat and his craving left him. Then he said to his wife, "I don't want the cakes. Give them, basket and all, to this monk." And she approached the Elder with the basket in her hand. Then the Elder preached the Dharma to them and proclaimed the excellence of the Three Gems (*Buddha, Dharma,*

*and Sangha*). And, teaching that giving brought true happiness, he made the fruits of charity and other good works shine forth even as the full moon in the heavens. Deeply moved by the Elder's words, the Treasurer said, "Sir, come here and sit on this couch to eat your cakes."

"Lord High Treasurer," the Elder said, "the All-Wise Buddha with 500 monks sits in the monastery waiting for a meal of cakes. If it would be your good pleasure, I ask you to bring your wife and the cakes with you, and let us go see the Master."

"But where, sir, is the Master right now?"

"150 miles away, in the monastery at Jetavana."

"How are we going to get there, sir, without spending a long time on the road?"

"If it be your pleasure, Lord High Treasurer, I will take you there using my supernatural powers. The head of the staircase in your house will stay where it is, but the bottom will be at the main gate of Jetavana. In this way I will transport you to the Master in the time that it takes to go downstairs."

"So be it, sir," the Treasurer said.

Then the Elder, keeping the top of the staircase where it was, proclaimed, "Let the foot of the staircase be at the main gate of Jetavana." And so it came to pass! In this way the Elder transported the Treasurer and his wife to Jetavana quicker than they could get down the stairs.

Then the husband and wife went before the Master and said that meal time had come. And the Master, going into the Dharma Hall, sat down on the Buddha seat prepared for him with the Sangha gathered round. Then the Lord High Treasurer poured the Water of Donation over the hands of the Sangha with the Buddha at its head, while his wife placed a cake in the alms bowl of the Blessed One. Of this he took only enough to support life, as did the 500 monks.

Next the Treasurer went around offering milk mixed with ghee and honey and brown sugar, and the Master and the Saṅgha brought their meal to a close. Lastly the Treasurer and his wife ate their fill, but still there seemed no end to the cakes. Even when all the monks and the scrap eaters throughout the monastery had all had a share, still there was no sign of the end approaching. So they told the Master, saying, "Sir, the supply of cakes grows no smaller."

"Then throw them down by the great gate of the monastery."

So they threw them away in a cave not far from the gateway, and to this day they call that spot "The Pot Cake."

The Lord High Treasurer and his wife approached and stood before the Blessed One who returned thanks, and at the close of his words the pair attained stream entry. Then, taking their leave of the Master, the two mounted the stairs at the great gate and found themselves in their own home once more. Afterwards, the Lord High Treasurer spent all of his money solely on the Buddha and his Dharma.

On the next day the Perfect Buddha, returning to Jetavana after his alms round in Sāvatthi, delivered a discourse to the monks before retiring to the seclusion of the Perfumed Chamber. In the evening, the monks gathered together in the Dharma Hall and exclaimed, "How great is the power of the Elder Moggallāna! In a moment he converted a miser to charity, brought him with the cakes to Jetavana, set him before the Master, and established him in liberation. How great is the power of the Elder!" As they sat talking about the goodness of the Elder, the Master entered, and, upon asking, was told about the subject of their discussion. "Monks," he said, "a monk who wants to convert a household should approach that household without causing it annoyance or aggravation, just like a bee when it sucks the nectar from a flower. This is how he should declare the excellence of the Buddha." And in praise of the Elder Moggallāna, he recited this stanza:

*Just as a bee in a flower*

*harming neither hue nor scent  
gathers nectar, then flies away,  
so in towns a Wise One fares.*

(This verse is in the Dhammapada. It is verse 49.)

Then, to emphasize the Elder's goodness, he said, "This is not the first time, monks, that the miserly Treasurer was converted by Moggallāna. In other days, too, the Elder converted him and taught him how actions and their results are linked together." So saying, he told this story of the past.

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Once upon a time when Brahmadatta was reigning in Benares, there was a Lord High Treasurer named Illīsa. He was worth eighty million rupees, and he had all the defects that a man can have. He was lame, he had a crooked back, and he had a squint. He was a skeptic and a miser, never giving of his wealth to others or enjoying it himself. His house was like a pool haunted by demons. Yet, for seven generations his ancestors had been prosperous, giving freely of their wealth. But when he became Treasurer, he broke with the traditions of his house. He burned down the house where they had given alms. He drove the poor from his gates, and he hoarded his wealth.

One day, when he was returning from attendance on the King, he saw a peasant who had traveled a long way and was very tired. He was sitting on a bench filling a mug from a jar of poor spirits, He drank it all, garnishing it with a dainty morsel of stinking dried fish. The sight made the Treasurer thirsty for spirits, but he thought to himself, "If I drink, others will want to drink with me, and that would cost me a great deal of money." So he walked about, keeping his thirst under control. But, as time wore on, he could do so no longer. He grew as yellow as old cotton, and the veins stood out on his sunken frame. One day, retiring to his chamber, he lay down hugging his bed. His wife came to him and rubbed his back as she asked, "What is the problem with my lord?"

(What follows is to be told in the words of the former story.) But, when

she said, "Then I'll only brew enough liquor for you," he said, "If you make the brew in the house, there will be many people watching, and to send out for the spirits and sit and drink it here is out of the question." So he took one single rupee and sent a slave to get him a jar of spirits from the tavern. When the slave came back, he made him go from the town to the riverside and put the jar down in a remote thicket. "Now be off!" he said, and he waited until the slave was some distance off before he filled his cup and started to drink.

Now the Treasurer's father, who had been reborn as Sakka in the Realm of Devas because of his charity and other good works, was wondering at that moment whether his generosity was continuing or not. He saw that his tradition of generosity had stopped and learned of his son's behavior. He saw how his son, breaking the traditions of his house, had burned the alms house to the ground, had driven the poor from his gates, and how, in his miserliness and fearing to share with others, had snuck away to a thicket to drink by himself. Moved by the sight, Sakka cried, "I will go to him and make my son see that actions have their consequences. I will convert him and make him charitable and worthy of rebirth in the Realm of Devas."

So he came down to earth and once more walked in the world of men. He pretended to be the Treasurer Illīsa with the latter's lameness and crooked back and squint. In this way he entered the city of Rājagaha and made his way to the palace gate. There he asked for his arrival to be announced to the King. "Let him come," said the King. And so he entered and stood with proper respect before his majesty.

"What brings you here at this unusual hour, Lord High Treasurer?" the King asked.

"I have come, sire, because I have eighty million rupees of treasure in my house. I humbly ask you to take them to fill the royal treasury."

"I will not do that, my Lord Treasurer. The treasure within my palace is greater than this."

"If you will not have it, sire, I will give it away to someone else."

"By all means, do so, Treasurer," the King said.

"So be it, sire," said the pretend Illīsa. And with proper respect he left to go the Treasurer's house. The servants all gathered around him, but not one could tell that this was not their real master. Entering, he stood on the threshold and sent for the porter. He gave him orders that if anybody who looked like him should appear and claim to be master of the house, they should be soundly beaten and thrown out of the house. Then, climbing up the stairs to the upper story, he sat down on a beautiful couch and sent for Illīsa's wife. When she came he said with a smile, "My dear, let us be generous."

At these words, the wife, the children, and the servants all thought, "It has been a long time since he was like this. He must have been drinking to be so good-natured and generous today." And his wife said to him, "Be as generous as you please, my husband."

"Send for the crier," he said, "and ask him to proclaim by the beat of a drum all throughout the city that everyone who wants gold, silver, diamonds, pearls, and the like, should come to the house of Illīsa the Treasurer."

His wife did as he asked, and a large crowd soon assembled at the door carrying baskets and sacks. Then Sakka asked that the treasure chambers be thrown open, and he cried, "This is my gift to you. Take whatever you want and go your way."

The crowd grabbed the riches that were stored there and piled them in heaps on the floor. They filled the bags and sacks they had brought and went off loaded down with the spoils. Among them was a peasant who yoked Illīsa's oxen to Illīsa's carriage, filled it with the many things of value, and went out of the city along the highroad. As he traveled along, he went near the thicket and sang the Treasurer's praises in these words: "May you live to be a hundred, my good lord Illīsa! What you have done for me this day will enable me to live without doing another stroke of

work. Whose were these oxen? - yours. Whose was this carriage? - yours. Whose was the wealth in the carriage? - yours again. It was no father or mother who gave me all this. No, it came to me solely from you, my lord."

These words filled the Lord High Treasurer with fear and trembling. "Why, the fellow is saying my name in his chatter," he said to himself. "Can the King have distributed my wealth to the people?" With that thought he leaped from the bush, and, recognizing his own oxen and cart, seized the oxen by the yoke, crying, "Stop, fellow. These oxen and this cart belong to me."

The man leaped down from the cart, angrily exclaiming, "You rascal! Illīsa, the Lord High Treasurer, is giving away his wealth to everyone in the city. What is your problem?" He sprang at the Treasurer and struck him on the back like a falling thunderbolt, and then he went off with the cart.

Illīsa picked himself up, trembling in every limb. He wiped off the mud and hurried after his cart, seizing hold of it. Again the countryman got down, and seizing Illīsa by the hair, doubled him up and beat him on the head for some time. Then he took him by the throat, threw him back the way he had come and drove off.

Sobered by this rough treatment, Illīsa hurried home. There, seeing people making off with the treasure, he fell to grabbing this man and that man, yelling, "Hey! What's this? Is the King robbing me?" And every man he grabbed knocked him down.

Bruised and smarting, he sought to take refuge in his own house, but the porters stopped him saying, "Hey, you rascal! Where are you going?" Beating him soundly with bamboo, they took their master by the throat, and threw him out the door.

"No one but the King can set this right," Illīsa groaned, so he went to the palace. "Why, oh why, sire," he cried, "have you plundered me like this?"

"It was not I, my Lord Treasurer," the King said. "Did not you yourself come and state your intention of giving your wealth away if I would not accept it? And did you not then send the crier around and carry out your promise?"

"Oh, sire, it was not I who came to you and said such a thing. Your majesty knows how frugal I am, and how I never give away so much as the tiniest drop of oil which a blade of grass will soak up. May it please your majesty to send for the one who gave away my wealth and to question him on the matter."

Then the King sent for Sakka, and the two men were so exactly alike that neither the King nor his court could tell which was the real Lord High Treasurer. The miser Illīsa said, "Who, and what, sire, is this Treasurer? I am the Treasurer."

"Well, really I can't say which is the real Illīsa," the King said. "Is there anyone who can tell them apart for certain?"

"Yes, sire, my wife."

So they sent for his wife, and they asked her which of the two was her husband. And she said Sakka was her husband and went to his side. Then in turn Illīsa's children and servants were brought in and asked the same question. All unanimously declared that Sakka was the real Lord High Treasurer. Here it occurred to Illīsa that he had a wart on his head, but it was hidden by his hair. The existence of the wart was only known to his barber. So, as a last resource, he asked that his barber be asked to identify him.

Now at this time the Bodhisatta was his barber. Accordingly, the barber was sent for and asked if he could distinguish the real from the false Illīsa. "I could tell, sire," he said, "if I can examine their heads."

"Then look at both their heads," the King said. Instantly Sakka caused a wart to rise on his head! After examining the two, the Bodhisatta

reported that, as both of them had warts on their heads, he couldn't for the life of him say which was the real Treasurer. And then he uttered this stanza:

*Both squint. Both halt. Both men are hunchbacks, too.  
And both have warts alike!  
I cannot tell which of the two is the real Illīsa.*

Hearing that his last hope had failed him, the Lord High Treasurer started to tremble. Such was his intolerable anguish at the loss of his beloved riches that he fell down in a swoon. It was then that Sakka showed his supernatural powers, and, rising in the air, he addressed the King in these words: "I am not Illīsa, Oh King, but Sakka." Then those around Illīsa wiped his face and splashed water over him. Recovering, he rose to his feet and bowed to the ground before Sakka, King of the Devas.



Figure: Sakka Shows His Power

Then Sakka said, “Illīsa, the wealth was mine, not yours. I am your father, and you are my son. In my lifetime I was generous to the poor and rejoiced in doing good. Because of that I was reborn to this lofty state and have been reborn as Sakka. But you, who are not walking in my footsteps, have grown stingy, and you are a miser. You burned my alms house to the ground, drove the poor from the gate, and hoarded your riches. You do not enjoy them yourself, nor has any other human being. But your wealth has become like a pool haunted by demons where no man may quench his thirst. However, if you rebuild my alms house and show generosity to the poor, the goodness of your actions will bear fruit. But if you will not, then will I strip you of everything you have, I will split your head with the thunderbolt of Indra, and you will die.”

At this threat Illīsa, quaking for his life, cried out, “From here on I will be generous.” Sakka accepted his promise, and, still seated in midair, established his son in the Precepts and preached the Dharma to him, departing afterwards to his own home. And true to his promise, Illīsa was diligent in almsgiving and other good works, and so assured his rebirth in heaven.

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“Monks,” the Master said, “this is not the first time that Moggallāna converted the miserly Treasurer. In bygone days as well the same man was converted by him.” His lesson ended, he showed the connection and identified the birth by saying, “This miserly Treasurer was the Illīsa of those days. Moggallāna was Sakka, King of the Devas. Ānanda was the King, and I was the barber.”

## **79: Kharassara Jātaka, The Minister's Treachery**

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*So many of these stories tell us how little has changed in 2500 years. From a Buddhist perspective that is not surprising. Beings are born into the human realm because they have a certain kind of karma. Having said that, the human realm does go through periods when things are better and periods when things are worse. Within the parameters of the realm, there is some latitude for change.*

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*"He gave the robbers time."* This story was told by the Master while at Jetavana. It is about a certain minister. This minister, it is said, ingratiated himself with the King. And after collecting the royal revenue in a border village, he conspired with a band of robbers to march the men of the village into the jungle, leaving the village for the rascals to plunder. This agreement was made on the condition that they give him half of the plunder.

Accordingly, at daybreak when the place was left unprotected, down came the robbers. They killed and ate the cattle, looted the village, and were off with their plunder before he came back in evening with his followers. But it was a very short time before his mischief leaked out and came to the ears of the King. So the King sent for him, and, as his guilt was obvious, he was disgraced, and another man was put in his place.

Then the King went to the Master at Jetavana and told him what had happened. "Sire," the Blessed One said, "the man has only shown the same character now that he showed in bygone days." Then at the King's request he told this story of the past.

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Once upon a time when Brahmadatta was reigning in Benares, he

appointed a certain minister to be in charge of a border village, and everything came to pass as in the above case. Now in those days the Bodhisatta was making the rounds of the border villages in the way of trade, and he had taken up residence in that very village. And when the headman was marching his men back at evening with drums beating, he exclaimed, "This scoundrel, who conspired with the robbers to loot the village, waited until they went off to the jungle. And now back he comes with drums beating, pretending to be ignorant of anything having gone wrong." And, so saying, he uttered this stanza:

*He gave the robbers time to drive and slay  
The cattle, burn the houses, capture people.  
And then with drums beating, home he marched,  
A son no more, for such a son is dead.*

(*A son who is so shamed ceases to be a son, and his mother is sonless even while her son is still alive.*)

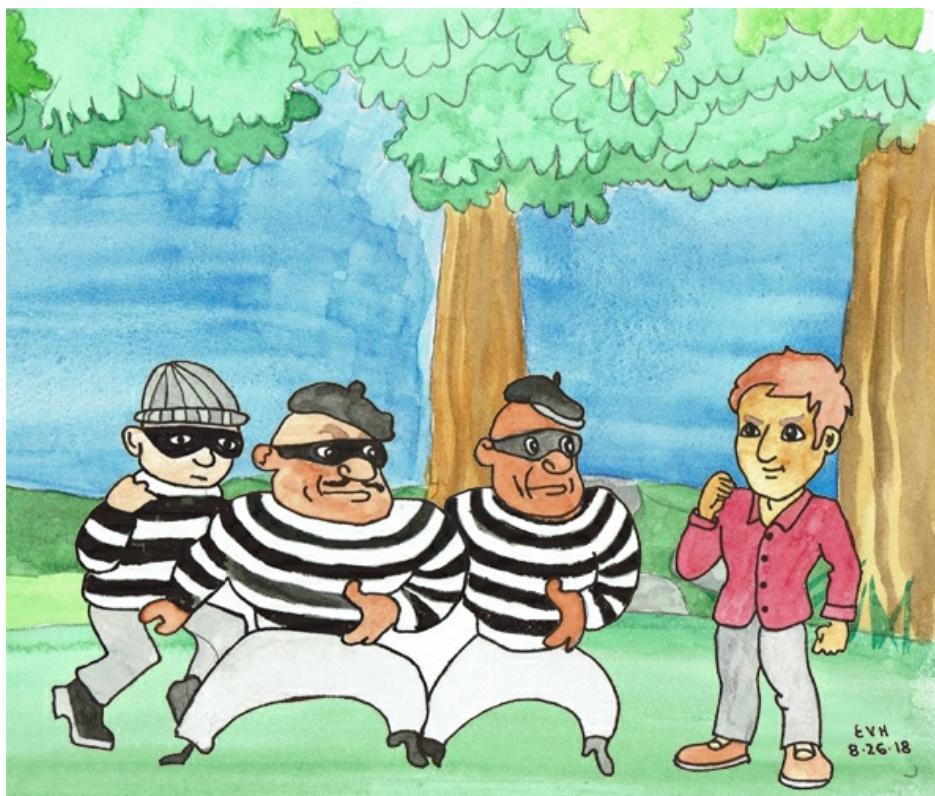


Figure: The Conspirators!

In such a way the Bodhisatta condemned the headman. Not long after his treachery was discovered, the rascal was punished by the King as his wickedness deserved.

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"This is not the first time, sire," the Master said, "that he has been of this character. He was the same in bygone days as well." His lesson ended, the Master showed the connection and identified the birth by saying, "The headman of today was also the headman of those days, and I was the wise and good man who recited the stanza."

## **80: Bhīmasena Jātaka, The Frightful Army**

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*This is an interesting story about a life in which the Bodhisatta is born as a physically deformed dwarf. But he still manages to show his intelligence, courage, and physical ability.*

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“You flaunted your prowess.” This story was told by the Master while at Jetavana. It is about a braggart in the Saṅgha. Tradition says that he used to gather monks of all ages around him and then delude everyone with lying boasts about his noble descent. “Ah, brothers,” he would say, “there is no family as noble as mine, no lineage so peerless. I am a descendent of the highest of princely lines. No man is my equal in birth or ancestral estate. There is absolutely no end to the gold and silver and other treasures we possess. Our slaves and servants are fed on rice and meat stews and are clothed in the best Benares cloth. They have the best Benares perfumes with which to anoint themselves, while I, because I have joined the Saṅgha, have to content myself with this vile fare and this vile robe.”

But another monk, after enquiring into his family’s status, exposed the emptiness of this boast to the Saṅgha. So the monks met in the Dharma Hall and talked about how that brother, in spite of his vows to leave worldly things and devote himself only to the Dharma, was going about deluding the Saṅgha with his lying boasts. While the fellow’s shameful ness was being discussed, the Master entered and asked what they were discussing, and they told him. “This is not the first time, monks,” the Master said, “that he has gone about boasting. In bygone days he also went about boasting and deluding people.” And so saying, he told this story of the past.

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Once upon a time when Brahmadatta was reigning in Benares, the Bodhisatta was born as a brahmin in a market town in the North country. When he was grown up, he studied under a teacher of worldwide fame at Takkasila University. There he learned the Three Vedas and the Eighteen Branches of knowledge, and he completed his education. He became known as the sage Little Bowman. Leaving Takkasila, he came to the Andhra country in search of practical experience. Now, it happened that in this birth the Bodhisatta was somewhat of a crooked little dwarf, and he thought to himself, "If I make my appearance before any king, he is sure to ask what a dwarf like me is good for. I will find a tall broad fellow to act as my proxy, and I will earn my living in the shadow of his more imposing presence."

So he went to the weavers' quarter where he saw a huge weaver named Bhimasena. He greeted him and asked him his name. "My name is Bhimasena," said the weaver.

(*In the Indian epic poem the Māhabhārata, Bhimasena is the second son of the warrior King Panda. The name Bhimasena means "one who leads a terrible army." The name may have been borrowed from there.*)

"And what makes a fine big man like you work at so sorry a trade?"

"Because I cannot make a living any other way."

"Weave no more, my friend. There is no better archer on the whole continent than me. But kings would scorn me because I am a dwarf. And so you, friend, must be the man to show your prowess with the bow. Then the King will hire you and use your skills regularly. Meantime I will be behind you to perform whatever you are asked to do. In that way I will earn my living in your shadow. In this manner we will both thrive and prosper. You only have to do as I tell you."

"Very well," said the weaver.

So the Bodhisatta took the weaver with him to Benares, acting as his little page boy. Putting the weaver in the front, when they were at the gates of

the palace, he sent word of his coming to the King. Being summoned into the royal presence, the pair entered together, bowed, and stood before the King.

"What brings you here?" said the King.

"I am a mighty archer," said Bhīmasena. "There is no other archer like me on the whole continent."

"What pay would you want to enter my service?"

"A thousand pieces every two weeks, sire."

"Who is this man of yours?"

"He's my little page boy, sire."

"Very well, enter my service."

So Bhīmasena entered the King's service, but it was the Bodhisatta who did all of his work for him.

Now in those days there was a tiger in a forest in Kāsi that blocked a busy high-road. He had killed many people. When this was reported to the King, he sent for Bhīmasena and asked whether he could catch the tiger.

"How could I call myself an archer, sire, if I cannot catch a tiger?"

The King gave him a large sum of money and sent him on the errand. Bhīmasena then went home to give the news to the Bodhisatta.

"All right," said the Bodhisatta. "Off you go, my friend."

"But aren't you coming too?"

"No, I won't go, but I'll give you a little plan."

"Please do, my friend."

"Well don't be rash and approach the tiger's lair alone. What you will do is to organize a strong band of countryfolk to march to the spot with a thousand or two thousand bows. When you have the tiger's attention, you run into the thicket and lie down flat on your face. The countryfolk will beat the tiger to death. Then as soon as he is dead, you bite off a vine with your teeth, and go up to the dead tiger holding the vine in your hand. At the sight of the dead body of the brute, you will burst out with, 'Who killed the tiger? I meant to lead it by a vine, like an ox, to the King. I had just stepped into the thicket to get a vine. I must know who killed the tiger before I could get back with my vine!' Then the countryfolk will be very frightened and bribe you heavily not to report them to the King. You will get credit for killing the tiger, and the King will give you lots of money."

"Very good," said Bhīmasena, and off he went. He got the tiger killed just as the Bodhisatta had told him. Having made the road safe for travelers, he came back with a large following to Benares. He said to the King, "I have killed the tiger, sire. The forest is safe for travelers now." The King was very pleased, and he showered him with gifts.

On another day, word came that a certain road was harassed by a buffalo. Once more the King sent Bhīmasena to kill it. Following the Bodhisatta's directions, he had the buffalo killed in the same way as the tiger. He then returned to the King, who once more gave him lots of money. He was a great lord now. Intoxicated by his high status, he treated the Bodhisatta with contempt. He stopped following his advice, saying, "I can get along without you. Do you think there's no man but yourself?" He said this and many other harsh things to the Bodhisatta.

A few days later, a hostile King marched on Benares and laid siege to it. He sent a message to the King telling him to either surrender his kingdom or to do battle. The King immediately ordered Bhīmasena out to fight him. So Bhīmasena was armed from head to foot. He mounted a war elephant sheathed in full armor. And the Bodhisatta, who was

seriously alarmed that Bhīmasena might get killed, armed himself from head to foot as well and seated himself modestly behind Bhīmasena.

Surrounded by soldiers, the elephant passed through the gates of the city and arrived at the front of the battle. At the first sound of the martial drum Bhīmasena started shaking with fear.

"If you fall off now, you'll get killed," the Bodhisatta said. Accordingly he tied a rope around him. He held tightly to the rope to prevent him from falling off the elephant. But the sight of the battle proved too much for Bhīmasena. The fear of death was so strong in him that he defecated on the elephant's back.

"Ah," the Bodhisatta said. "The present does not tally with the past. You pretended to be a warrior. Now your skill is confined to fouling the elephant you ride on." And so saying, he uttered this stanza:

*You vaunted your prowess, and boasted loudly.*

*You swore you would rout the foe!*

*But is it consistent, when faced with their numbers,*

*To vent your emotion, sir, so?*

When the Bodhisatta had ended these taunts, he said, "But don't you be afraid, my friend. I am here to protect you." Then he made Bhīmasena get off the elephant and told him to go wash himself and then go home. "And now to win fame this day," the Bodhisatta said, yelling a battle cry as he dashed into the fight. Breaking through the King's camp, he dragged the enemy King out and took him back alive to Benares. In great joy at his bravery in battle, his royal master loaded him with honors, and from that day forward all India was loud with the fame of the sage Little Bowman. To Bhīmasena he gave a large sum of money and sent him back to his own home. Then he excelled in charity and good works, and at his death passed away to fare according to his karma.

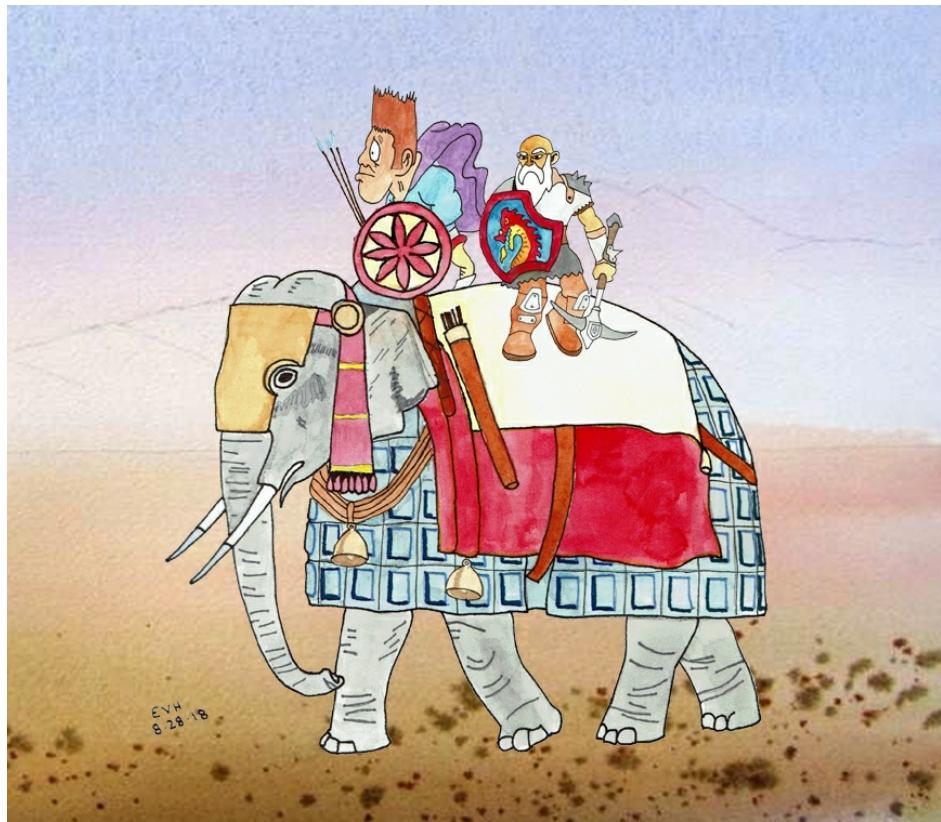


Figure: The Brave Dwarf and the Cowardly Bhīmasena

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"Thus, monks," the Master said, "this is not the first time that this monk has been a braggart. He was the same in bygone days as well." His lesson ended, the Master showed the connection and identified the birth by saying, "This braggart monk was the Bhīmasena of those days, and I was the sage Little Bowman."

## **81: *Surāpāna Jātaka, Drinking Alcohol***

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*This story takes place in Kosambi which is one of the more notorious monasteries of the Buddha's time. There is a famous story that appears several times in the Pāli Canon where there was a conflict between two monks, and when the Buddha tried to intervene, they basically blew him off. The monastery/park in Kosambi was named after Ghosita, who was a devoted lay follower of the Buddha. Ghosita donated the park to the Sangha.*

*In this story we see the Elder Sāgata who has supernormal powers. Yet still he is subject to drunkenness. This shows how even someone who is developed enough to have these powers has still not found peace, liberation, and freedom. This is why supernormal powers do not carry much weight in the Buddha's Dharma. Many Arahants never developed supernormal powers, yet they were free from unnecessary suffering and the rounds of rebirth.*

*This story gives the context for the monastic rule against intoxication. In the Vinaya – the monastic code – there is a story for each of the rules. This is so monks and nuns understand not just the rule, but the context and the spirit of the rule. In the early days of the Sangha, as the Buddha himself once noted, there was no need for any rules. But as the Sangha grew, this became necessary, and rules were added when incidents such as the one described here occurred.*

*The rule against intoxication is not just in the monastic code, it is a Precept for lay people, as well. This is very unpopular in the West. But the Precept exists not so much because there is anything inherently immoral about intoxication, it is because – as we see in the story – it predisposes us to very unskillful and harmful behavior.*

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*"We drank."* This story was told by the Master about the Elder Sāgata,

while he was living in the Ghosita Park near Kosambī.

After spending the rainy season at Sāvatthi, the Master went on an alms pilgrimage to a market town named Bhaddavatikā. There cowherds and goatherds and farmers and wayfarers respectfully advised him not to go down to the Mango Ferry. "For," they said, "in the Mango Ferry, in the property of the naked ascetics, a poisonous and deadly Naga (*a demi-god who is part human and part cobra*) lives. He is known as the Naga of the Mango Ferry, and he might harm the Blessed One."

The Blessed One pretended not to hear them even though they repeated their warning three times, and he continued on his way. While the Blessed One was living near Bhaddavatikā in a certain grove there, the Elder Sāgata, a servant of the Buddha who had won what supernormal powers a human can possess, went to the property of the naked ascetics. There he built a pile of leaves at the spot where the Naga king lived, and he sat down cross-legged on them.

Being unable to conceal his evil nature, the Naga raised a great smoke. So did the Elder. Then the Naga sent forth flames. So too did the Elder. But while the Nāga's flames did not hurt the Elder, the Elder's flames did harm the Naga. And so in a short time he conquered the Naga king and established him in the Refuges and the Precepts. Having done this, he went back to the Master. And the Master, after staying as long as it pleased him at Bhaddavatikā, went on to Kosambī.

Now the story of the Nāga's conversion by Sāgata spread all over the countryside. The townsfolk of Kosambī went out to meet the Blessed One and saluted him, after which they greeted the Elder Sāgata and saluted him, saying, "Tell us, sir, what you need and we will provide it."

The Elder himself remained silent, but the followers of the Wicked Six (*The Wicked Six are mentioned in Jātaka 28. They were notorious monks who were always breaking the monastic rules.*) said, "Sirs, to those who have renounced the world, white liquor is very rare. Do you think you could get the Elder some clear white liquor?"

"To be sure we can," the townsfolk said, and they invited the Master to take his meal with them next day. Then they went back to their town, and each one of them made arrangements to offer clear white liquor to the Elder. Accordingly, they subsequently invited the Elder in and plied him with the liquor, house by house. He drank so much that on his way out of town, the Elder fell down in the gateway and lay there hiccupping. On his way back from his meal in the town, the Master came on the Elder lying in this state and told the monks to carry Sāgata home. Then he went to the park.

The monks laid the Elder down with his head at the Buddha's feet, but he turned around so that he came to lie with his feet pointing towards the Buddha. (*In Asia, pointing your feet toward someone or a statue of the Buddha is very disrespectful.*) Then the Master asked, "Monks, does Sāgata show respect to me like he used to?"

"No, sir."

"Tell me, monks, who was it that overcame the Naga king of the Mango Ferry?"

"It was Sāgata, sir."

"Do you think that in his present state Sāgata could overcome even a harmless water snake?"

"That he could not, sir."

"Well now, monks, is it proper to drink anything that steals away a man's senses?"

"It is improper, sir."

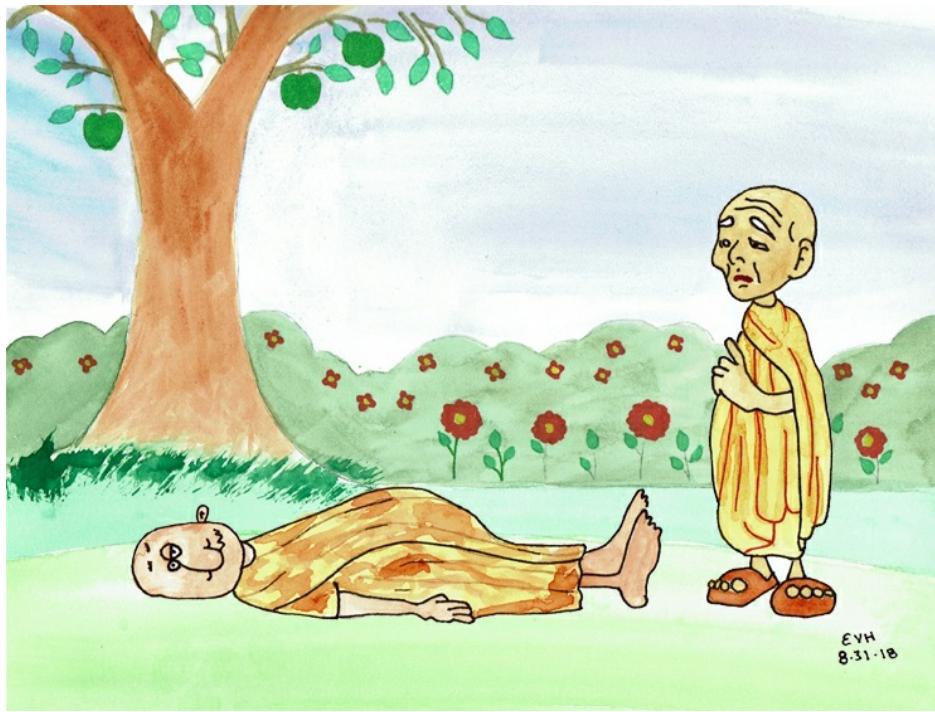


Figure: The Drunken Sot Sāgata Disrespecting the Bodhisatta

Now, after speaking to the monks in criticism of the Elder, the Blessed One created the rule that drinking intoxicants was an offense requiring confession and absolution. (*In the Vinaya there are eight categories of offenses. Ones that require confession are “pacittiya offenses,” and are the fifth most serious.*) After that he got up and passed into his perfumed chamber.

Gathering together in the Dharma Hall, the monks discussed the offense of becoming intoxicated, saying, “Becoming intoxicated does such harm that it has blinded even one as wise and gifted as Sāgata to the Buddha’s excellence.” Entering the Dharma Hall at that point, the Master asked what they were discussing, and they told him. “Monks,” he said, “this is not the first time that a renunciate lost his senses through intoxication. The very same thing happened in bygone days.” And so saying, he told this story of the past.

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Once upon a time when Brahmadatta was reigning in Benares, the Bodhisatta was born into a northern brahmin family in Kāsi. When he grew up, he renounced the world for the life of a recluse. He won the

Higher Knowledges (*supernormal powers*) and the Attainments (*jhānas*), and he lived in the bliss of Insight in the Himalayas with 500 pupils around him.

Once, during the rainy season, his pupils said to him, "Master, may we go to the world of men and bring back salt and vinegar?"

"For my own part, sirs, I will remain here. But you may go for your health's sake. Come back when the rainy season is over."

"Very good," they said. And taking respectful leave of their Master, they went to Benares.

On the next day they went to a village just outside the city gates to gather alms. They had plenty to eat, and on the following day they went into the city itself. The kindly citizens gave alms to them, and the King was soon informed that 500 recluses from the Himalayas had taken up residence in the royal pleasure garden. He was told that they were recluses of great austerity, had overcome sensual desire, and that they were of great virtue.

Hearing this good report about them, the King went to the garden and graciously welcomed them, and he invited them to stay there for the rainy season. They promised that they would, and afterwards they were fed in the royal palace and lodged in the pleasure garden.

But one day a drinking festival was held in the city, and the King gave the 500 recluses a large supply of the best spirits, knowing that such things rarely come to those who renounce the world. The recluses drank the liquor and went back to the pleasure garden. There, in drunken hilarity, some danced, some sang, and others - who were tired of dancing and singing - trampled their rice baskets and other belongings. After that they lay down to sleep.

When they had slept off their drunkenness and awoke to see the results of their revelry, they wept and lamented, saying, "We have behaved badly. We have done this evil because we are away from our Master." So

they left the pleasure garden and returned to the Himalayas. Laying aside their bowls and other belongings, they saluted their Master and took their seats. "Well, my sons," he said, "were you comfortable amid the world of men, and were you able to easily obtain alms? Did you live in harmony with one another?"

"Yes, Master, we were comfortable. But we drank strong spirits, and losing our senses and forgetting ourselves, we danced and sang." And to illustrate what had happened, they composed and repeated this stanza:

*We drank, we danced, we sang, we wept.  
We were lucky that when we drank what steals away  
The senses, we were not transformed into apes.*

"This is what will certainly happen to those who are not living under a Master's care," the Bodhisatta said, rebuking those recluses. And he urged them on, saying, "From now on, never do such a thing again." Living on with unbroken wisdom, he was later reborn in the Brahma Realm.

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His lesson ended, the Master identified the birth and showed the connection by saying, "My disciples were the band of recluses of those days, and I was their teacher."

## **82: *Mittavindika Jātaka,* *Mittavindika's Story***

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*This brief story has two themes in it. One is the effect of cruelty on your karmic fate, and the other is the particularly extreme effects of being cruel to a parent.*

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"No more to dwell." This story was told by the Master while at Jetavana. It is about a stubborn monk. The incidents of this birth, which took place in the days of the Buddha Kassapa (*the 27th of the previous 29 Buddhas named in the Canon*), will be related in the Tenth Book in the Mahā-Mittavindaka Jātaka (*Jātaka 439. This story is similar to the one in Jātaka 41*).

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Then the Bodhisatta uttered this stanza:

*No more to dwell in island palaces  
Of crystal, silver, or of sparkling gems,  
With flinty headgear you are invested now.  
Nor shall its gashing torture ever cease  
Until your misdeed is purged and life shall end.*

(*In Jātaka 439, Mittavindika committed the offense of striking and mistreating his mother. He then went on a sea voyage and subsequently was put on a raft at sea. From the raft, he first landed on a blessed paradise of an island, but then he went on to another island that was a hell realm disguised as a place of beauty. There he was tricked into putting a "razor wheel" on his head. He was condemned to wear this razor wheel until the karma from his misdeed was exhausted.*)



Figure: OI' Razor Head. Ouch.

So saying, the Bodhisatta returned to his home among the Devas. And Mittavindaka, having donned that headgear, suffered great torment until the effects of his cruelty was exhausted, and he passed away to fare according to his remaining karma.

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His lesson ended, the Master identified the birth by saying, "This stubborn monk was the Mittavindaka of those days, and I was the King of the Devas."

## **83: Kālakanṇī Jātaka, The Mud Pie Friend**

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*This is a wonderful story about judging someone by the strength of their character rather than the family or status from which they come. This is a common theme in the Buddha's teaching:*

*I call him not a brahmin  
Because of his origin and lineage.  
If impediments still lurk in him,  
He is just one who says 'Sir.' [He is ordinary.]  
[One] Who is unimpeded and clings no more:  
He is the one I call a brahmin. – [MN 98.27]*

*In this case, the Buddha is referencing the original meaning of the word "brahmin," which is someone of high status.*

*Also note in this story the charming details that Anāthapindika and his childhood friend made mud pies together, and that his friend has the rather unfortunate name "Curse"!*

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"A friend is he." This story was told by the Master while at Jetavana. It is about a friend of Anāthapindika's. Tradition says that the two had made mud pies together and had gone to the same school. But as the years went by, the friend, whose name was "Curse," fell on hard times and could not make a living. So he went to the rich man, who was kind to him, and he gave him a job looking after his property. So the poor friend was employed under Anāthapindika and did all his business for him.

After he started working for the rich man, it was a common thing to hear in the house "Stand up, Curse," or "Sit down, Curse," or "Have your dinner, Curse." One day the Treasurer's friends and acquaintances called

on him and said, "Lord Treasurer, don't let this sort of thing go on in your house. It's enough to scare an ogre to hear such ill-omened words as 'Stand up, Curse,' or 'Sit down, Curse,' or 'Have your dinner, Curse.' The man is not your equal. He's a miserable wretch, dogged by misfortune. Why do you have anything to do with him?"

"This is not so," replied Anāthapiṇḍika. "A name only serves to identify a man. The wise do not measure a man by his name, nor is it proper to create meaning from mere sounds. I will never betray, just because of his name, a friend with whom I made mud pies as a child." And he rejected their advice.

One day the great man went to visit a village where he was the head man. This left the other man in charge of the house. Hearing he had left, some robbers made up their minds to break into the house. Arming themselves to the teeth, they surrounded it in the night time. But Curse had a suspicion that burglars might be coming, and he was waiting for them. And when he knew that they were there, he ran around to arouse his people. He sounded a horn and beat a drum until he had filled the whole house with noise. It was as though he were rousing a whole army of servants. The robbers said, "The house is not as empty as we thought. The master must be at home." Throwing away their stones, clubs and other weapons, they bolted for their lives.



Figure: Curse's Quick Thinking Saves the House

On the next day a great alarm was caused by the sight of all the discarded weapons lying around the house. Curse was lauded to the skies by such praises as this, "If the house had not been patrolled by so wise a man, the robbers would have simply walked in at their own pleasure and plundered the house. The Treasurer owes this stroke of good luck to his staunch friend." And the moment the merchant came back from his village they hurried to tell him the whole story. "Ah," he said, "this is the trusty guardian of my home who you wanted me to get rid of. If I had taken your advice and gotten rid of him, I would be a beggar today. It's not the name but the heart within that makes the person."

So saying he raised his wages. And thinking that here was a good story to tell, he went to the Master and gave him a complete account of all that had happened. "This is not the first time, sir," the Master said, "that a friend named Curse has saved his friend's wealth from robbers. The same thing happened in bygone days as well." Then, at Anāthapindika's request, he told this story of the past.

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Once upon a time when Brahmadatta was reigning in Benares, the Bodhisatta was a Treasurer of great fame, and he had a friend whose name was Curse, just as in the foregoing story. He was on his way back from collecting taxes when the Bodhisatta heard what had happened. He said to his friends, "If I had taken your advice and gotten rid of my trusted friend, I would be a beggar today." And he repeated this stanza:

*A friend is one who goes the extra step  
To help us. This attests the true comrade.  
A week or a month's true loyalty  
Makes us family, a longer time a brother true.  
-- Then how shall I, who has known so many years  
My friend, be wise in driving Curse away?*

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His lesson ended, the Master identified the birth by saying, "Ānanda was the Curse of those days, and I was the Treasurer of Benares."

## **84: Atthassadvāra Jātaka, The Six Paths to Peace**

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*There are many discourses in the Pāli Canon that have the Buddha teaching children, especially his own son Rāhula. They are particularly endearing, and because these teachings are to children, they are sometimes more accessible.*

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“Seek health.” This story was told by the Master while at Jetavana. It is about a boy who was wise in matters relating to spiritual welfare. When he was only seven years old, the boy, who was the son of a very wealthy Treasurer, showed great intelligence about and concern for his spiritual welfare. One day he went to his father to ask about the paths leading to spiritual welfare. The father could not answer, but he thought to himself, “This is a very difficult question. From the highest heaven to the lowest hell there is no one who can answer it except for the All-knowing Buddha.”

So he took the child with him to Jetavana along with a gift of perfumes and flowers and ointments. Arriving there, he paid respect to the Master. He bowed down before him and then sat down on one side. He said to the Blessed One, “Sir, this boy of mine, who is intelligent and concerned for his spiritual welfare, has asked me what are the paths leading to spiritual welfare. As I do not know, I came to you. Please, Oh Blessed One, resolve this question.”

“Lay brother,” the Master said, “this same question was asked of me by this very child in former times, and I answered it for him. He knew the answer in bygone days, but now he has forgotten because of this new birth.” Then, at the father’s request, he told this story of the past.

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Once upon a time when Brahmadatta was reigning in Benares, the

Bodhisatta was a very wealthy Treasurer. He had a son who, when he was only seven years old, showed great intelligence about and concern for his spiritual welfare. One day the child went to his father to ask about the paths leading to spiritual welfare. And his father answered him by repeating this stanza:

*Seek Health, the supreme good. Be virtuous.  
Listen to elders. Learn from the scriptures.  
Conform to the Dharma, and break attachment's bonds.  
For it is these six paths that lead to peace.*



Figure: Explaining the Paths That Lead to Peace

In this way the Bodhisatta answered his son's question as to the paths

that lead to spiritual welfare. And the boy followed those six rules from that time forward. After a life spent in charity and other good works, the Bodhisatta passed away to fare thereafter according to his karma.

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His lesson ended, the Master identified the birth by saying, "This child was also the child of those days, and I was the Lord Treasurer."

## **85: Kimpakka Jātaka, The Poisonous Fruit**

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*This story is almost identical to Jātaka 54, but in Jātaka 54 the moral is more about listening to a person of wisdom. In this story, the moral is about the dangers inherent in sense desire.*

*The Buddha's teachings on sense desire are not very popular. But this is not a teaching about denial. It is about self-indulgence and addiction. Our craving for sense desire is at the heart of our problem. You can still enjoy a beautiful view or good food without craving them when you do not have them. The craving causes suffering.*

*Thanissaro Bhikkhu tells a story about a European who explored the far northern reaches of Canada. He was traveling with Inuit, who were the only people who could lead such an expedition. He noticed that on days when they could not find food, they made a particular effort to be cheerful. That is a very healthy response to managing sense desire.*

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*"As they who ate."* This story was told by the Master while at Jetavana. It is about a lustful monk. Tradition says there was an heir of a good family who gave his heart to the Buddha's Dharma and joined the Sangha. But one day as he was going on his alms round in Sāvatthi, he was aroused by the sight of a beautifully dressed woman. Being brought by his teachers and directors before the Master, he admitted to the Blessed One that lust had overcome him. Then the Master said, "Truly the lusts of the five senses are sweet in the hour of actual enjoyment, brother. But this enjoyment of them, in that it entails the miseries of rebirth in hell and the other evil states, is like the eating of the fruit of the What-fruit tree. (*The What-fruit resembles a mango but is poisonous.*) The What-fruit is very pleasant to look at, and it is very fragrant and sweet. But when eaten, it

racks the stomach and brings death. In other days, ignorant of its evil nature, a multitude of men, seduced by the beauty, fragrance and sweetness of the fruit, ate it and they died." So saying, he told this story of the past.

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Once upon a time when Brahmadatta was reigning in Benares, the Bodhisatta was born as the leader of a caravan. Once when journeying with 500 carts from east to west, he came to the outskirts of a forest. Assembling his men, he said to them, "In this forest grow trees that bear poisonous fruit. Let no man eat any unfamiliar fruit without first asking me." When they had passed through the forest, they came at the other end on a What-fruit tree with its boughs bending low with their burden of fruit. In form, smell, and taste, its trunk, boughs, leaves and fruit resembled a mango. Taking the tree, from its misleading appearance, to be a mango, some picked the fruit and ate. But others said, "Let us speak to our leader before we eat." And these latter, picked the fruit but waited for him to come up. When he came, he ordered them to throw away the fruit they had picked, and had an emetic (*a medicine that causes vomiting*) administered to those who had already eaten. Of these latter, some recovered, but ones who had been the first to eat, died. The Bodhisatta reached his destination safely, and sold his merchandise at a profit. After that he travelled home again. After a life spent in charity and other good works, he passed away to fare according to his karma.



Figure: The Seductive Fruit Tree

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After he told this story, the Master, as Buddha, uttered this stanza:

*As they who ate the What-fruit died, so lust,  
When ripe, kills one who does not know the pain  
It produces hereafter, stooping to lustful deeds.*

Having shown that five lusts, which are so sweet in the hour of fruition, end by killing their victims, the Master preached the Four Noble Truths. At the close of this teaching the lustful monk was converted and won the fruit of stream entry. Of the rest of the Buddha's following some won the first, some the second, and some the third stage of awakening, while others became Arahats.

His lesson ended, the Master identified the birth by saying, "My disciples were the people of the caravan in those days, and I was their leader."

## **86: *Silavimamsana Jātaka,* *The Test of Virtue***

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*The importance of virtue in the Buddha's teaching cannot be overstated. In the poetic "[Ākankheyya Sutta: If a Bhikkhu Should Wish](#)" [MN 6], the Buddha outlines all of the attainments in the Noble Eightfold Path, saying that for each one of them "If a monk should wish" to attain them, "let him fulfill the Precepts." This is – yet again – why it is so inexplicable that some "Buddhist" teachers commit acts of impropriety, most notable sexually abusing their female students.*

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"*Nothing can compare.*" This story was told by the Master while at Jetavana. It is about a brahmin who tested his reputation for virtue. This brother, who was supported by the King of Kosala, had taken refuge in the Three Jewels. He kept the Five Precepts and was well-versed in the Three Vedas. "This is a good man," the King thought, and he showed him great honor.

But that brother thought to himself, "The King honors me above other brahmins, and he has shown great regard by making me his spiritual director. But is his favor due to my virtue or only to my birth, lineage, family, country, and accomplishments? I must test this without delay."

Accordingly, one day when he was leaving the palace, he took a coin from a treasurer's desk and then left. Such was the treasurer's respect for the brahmin that he sat perfectly still and did not say a word. On the next day the brahmin took two coins, but still the official did not say anything. On the third day the brahmin took a whole handful of coins. "This is the third day," the treasurer cried, "that you have robbed his Majesty," and he shouted out three times, "I have caught a thief who robs the treasury."

A crowd of people rushed in from every side, crying, "Ah, you've long

been pretending to be a model of virtue!" And striking him two or three times, they led him before the King. In great sorrow the King said to him, "What led you, brahmin, to do, such a wicked thing?" And he ordered the brahmin to be taken away for punishment.

"I am no thief, sire," said the brahmin.

"Then why did you take money from the treasury?"

"Because you showed me such great honor, sire, and because I wanted to find out whether that honor was due to my birth, status, and family, or solely because of my virtue. That was my motive, and now I know for certain, since you have ordered me off to punishment, that it was my virtue and not my birth and other advantages that won me your majesty's favor. I know virtue to be the chief and supreme good. I know, too, that I can never attain the virtue in this life to which I aspire while I remain a layman, living in the midst of seductive pleasures. Therefore, this very day I will go to the Master at Jetavana and renounce the world for the Saṅgha. Grant me your leave, sire."

The King consented and the brahmin set out for Jetavana.

His friends and relations tried as a group to change his mind. But their efforts were of no avail, and he left.

He went to the Master and asked to be admitted to the Saṅgha. After admission to the lower and higher orders (*novice and then full ordination*), he attained liberating insight and became an Arahat. Having achieved his goal, he went to the Master, saying, "Sir, my joining the Saṅgha has borne the Supreme Fruit," signifying that he had won Arahatship.

Hearing this, the monks assembled in the Dharma Hall. They spoke with one another about the virtues of the King's chaplain who tested his own reputation for virtue and who, leaving the King, had now risen to be an Arahat. Entering the Dharma Hall, the Master asked what the monks were discussing, and they told him. He said, "It is not without precedent, monks, for this brahmin to test his reputation for virtue and to renounce the world. The same thing was done by the wise and good of bygone

days as well." And so saying, he told this story of the past.

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Once upon a time when Brahmadatta was reigning in Benares, the Bodhisatta was his chaplain. He was a man given to charity and other good works. His mind was set on righteousness, always keeping the Five Precepts. And the King honored him above the other brahmins, and everything came to pass as above.

But, as the Bodhisatta was being brought in bonds before the King, he came to a place where some snake charmers were displaying a snake, which they held by the tail and the throat and had it tied around their necks. Seeing this, the Bodhisatta begged the men to stop for the snake might bite them and cut their lives short. "Brahmin," replied the snake charmers, "this is a good and well-behaved cobra. He's not wicked like you, who because of your wickedness and misconduct are being hauled off in custody."

The Bodhisatta thought to himself, "Even cobras, if they do not bite or wound, are called 'good.' How much more must this be the case with those who are human beings! Truly, it is virtue that is the most excellent thing in all the world, nothing can surpass it."



Figure: The Good Cobra

Then he was brought before the King. "What is this, my friends?" asked the King.

"Here's a thief who has been robbing your majesty's treasury."

"Away with him to execution."

"Sire," the brahmin said, "I am no thief."

"Then why did you take the money?"

The Bodhisatta answered just as above, ending by saying, "This is why I have concluded that it is virtue that is the highest and most excellent thing in all the world. But be that as it may, seeing that the cobra, when it

does not bite or wound, must simply be called ‘good’ and nothing more. For this reason, too, it is virtue alone that is the highest and most excellent of all things.”

Then in praise of virtue he uttered this stanza:

*Nothing can compare with virtue.  
All the world cannot show its equal.  
If men know the cobra is ‘good,’  
They are saved from death.*

After preaching the Dharma to the King in this stanza, the Bodhisatta, abandoning all lust and renouncing the world for the hermit’s life, set off for the Himalayas. There he attained the Five Knowledges (*presumably the “five trainee’s powers”, i.e., the power of faith, the power of moral shame, the power of moral dread, the power of energy, and the power of wisdom*) and the Eight Attainments (*jhānas*), earning for himself the sure hope of rebirth in the Brahma Realm.

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His lesson ended, the Master identified the birth by saying, “My disciples were the King’s followers in those days, and I was the King’s chaplain.”

## **87: *Mamgala Jātaka,* *Superstition***

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*Over the centuries, Buddhists have had to deal with a lot of superstition. It is a common theme in the Buddha's teachings. And in fact, this is not just an ancient problem, there is still a lot of superstition in Buddhist countries. In Thailand they still believe in fortune telling, and so forth.*

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"Whoever renounces." This story was told by the Master while at the Bamboo Grove. It is about a brahmin who was skilled in telling fortunes using pieces of cloth. Tradition says that a brahmin lived at Rājagaha. He was superstitious and held false views. He did not believe in the Three Jewels. This brahmin was very rich and wealthy. But a female mouse gnawed a suit of clothes of his that were lying in a chest. One day after bathing himself, he called for this suit, and then he was told of the mischief that the mouse had done. "If these clothes stay in the house," he thought, "they will bring bad luck. This bad omen is sure to bring a curse. It is out of the question to give them to any of my children or servants. Whoever has them will bring misfortune on anyone who is around him. I must have them thrown away in a charnel ground, but how will I do that? (*A charnel ground is an open area where the corpses of people who cannot afford a cremation are left.*) I cannot hand them to servants. They might want them and keep them to the ruin of my house. My son must take them."

So he called his son. Telling him the situation, he asked him to take the clothes on a stick - without touching them with his hand - and throw them away in a charnel ground. Then the son should wash himself all over and return.

Now that morning just at dawn the Master looked around to see if there

were any people who could be led to the truth. He saw that the father and son were destined to attain liberation. So he disguised himself as a hunter on his way to hunt, and he went to the charnel ground. He sat down at the entrance, emitting the six-colored rays that mark a Buddha.

Soon the young brahmin came to that spot, carefully carrying the clothes on the end of his stick just as his father had told him, as if he were carrying a snake.

"What are you doing, young brahmin?" the Master asked.

"My good Gotama," he replied, "this suit of clothes, having been gnawed by mice, is bad luck and as deadly as if it were steeped in venom. So my father, fearing that a servant might want and keep the clothes, sent me with them. I promised that I would throw them away and bathe afterwards, and that is the errand that has brought me here."

"Throw the suit away, then," said the Master, and the young brahmin did so.

"They will suit me just fine," the Master said. He picked up the cursed clothes right before the young man's eyes despite the latter's earnest warnings and repeated pleas to him not to take them. And then the Master went off to the Bamboo Grove.



Figure: The Cursed Suit

The young brahmin ran home to tell his father how the Sage Gotama had declared that the clothes would suit him, and that despite all of his warnings to the contrary, he took the suit away with him to the Bamboo Grove. "Those clothes," the brahmin thought to himself, "are bewitched and cursed. Even the Sage Gotama cannot wear them without catastrophe coming to him, and that would damage my reputation. I will give the Sage other clothing and get him to throw that suit away."

So he started out with his son to the Bamboo Grove carrying a large number of robes. When he came upon the Master he stood respectfully on one side and said, "Is it true, as I hear, that you, my good Gotama, picked up a suit of clothes in the charnel ground?"

"Quite true, brahmin."

"My good Gotama, that suit is cursed. If you use it, it will destroy you. If you need clothes, take these and throw that suit away."

"Brahmin," the Master replied, "I have renounced the world and am

content with the rags that lie by the roadside or bathing places or are thrown away on dust heaps or in charnel grounds. Whereas you have held your superstitions in bygone days as well as in the present." So saying, at the brahmin's request, he told this story of the past.

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Once upon a time a righteous king reigned in the city of Rājagaha in the kingdom of Magadha. In those days the Bodhisatta was reborn as a brahmin of the Northwest. Growing up, he renounced the world for the life of a recluse. He won the Knowledges (*as in the previous Jātaka the power of faith, the power of moral shame, the power of moral dread, the power of energy, and the power of wisdom*) and the Attainments (jhānas) and went to live in the Himalayas.

On one occasion he returned from the Himalayas and went to live in the King's pleasure garden. On his second day there he went into the city to collect alms. Seeing him, the King had him summoned into the palace. There he provided him with a seat and some food, making him promise that he would stay in the pleasure garden. So the Bodhisatta used to get his food at the palace and he lived on the royal grounds.

Now in those days a brahmin known as Cloth-prophet lived in that city. He had a suit of clothes in a chest that was gnawed by mice, and everything came to pass just as in the foregoing story. But when the son was on his way to the charnel ground the Bodhisatta got there first and took his seat at the gate. Picking up the suit that the young brahmin threw away, he returned to the pleasure garden. When the son told this to the old brahmin, the latter exclaimed, "It will be the death of the King's recluse." He begged the Bodhisatta to throw the suit away for fear that he might perish. But the ascetic replied, "Rags that are thrown away in charnel grounds are good enough for us recluses. We have no belief in superstitions about luck that is not approved by Buddhas, Pacceka ("solitary" or non-teaching Buddha) Buddhas, or Bodhisattas. No wise man should believe in luck." Hearing the truth thus expounded, the brahmin abandoned his errors and took refuge in the Bodhisatta. And the Bodhisatta, preserving his wisdom unbroken, was reborn in the Brahma

Realm.

Having told this story, the Master, as Buddha, taught the Dharma to the brahmin in this stanza:

*Whoever renounces omens, dreams and signs,  
That man is free from superstition's errors.  
He will triumph over the mind's corruption  
And over attachments to the end of time.*

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When the Master had thus preached his doctrine to the brahmin in the form of this stanza, he proceeded to teach the Four Noble Truths. At the close of his teaching that brahmin, with his son, attained stream entry. The Master identified the birth by saying, "The father and son of today were also the father and son of those days, and I was the recluse."

## **88: Sārambha Jātaka, Abusive Speech**

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*In the Jātaka that is referenced here (28), the Bodhisatta is born as a very strong bull. His owner makes a bet that he can pull 100 carts. But when it comes time to settle the bet, the owner berates the bull and calls him names. This causes the bull to refuse to pull the 100 carts, thus losing his owner the bet.*

*But the story has a happy ending. The bull agrees to win another bet for his owner, but his owner must agree to treat the bull with respect. He does so, and the owner wins the second bet.*

“*Speak kindly.*” This story was told by the Master while at Sāvatthi. It is about right speech and abstaining from abusive language. The introductory story and the story of the past are the same as in the Nandivisāla Jātaka (*Jātaka 28 – The Bull Who Won the Bet*).

But in this case, instead of a bull, the Bodhisatta was an ox named Sārambha. He belonged to a brahmin of Takkasilā in the kingdom of Gandhāra. After telling the story of the past, the Master, as Buddha, uttered this stanza:

*Speak kindly, do not disparage your fellow.  
Love kindness. Speaking abusively breeds sorrow.*

When the Master had ended his lesson he identified the birth by saying, “Ānanda was the brahmin of those days, (*the Elder Nun*) Uppalavaṇṇā his wife, and I was Sārambha.”



Figure: Abusing an Ox... Such a Bad Idea

## **89: Kuhaka Jātaka, The Deceiver**

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*This story is about a member of the Ājīvika sect of wandering ascetics. The Ājīvikas continued to exist until about the 14th century BCE. None of their texts survive, so the only accounts of their beliefs come from the Buddhists and the Jains (another sect of wandering ascetics who still exist). Because the Buddhists and the Jains were competitors of the Ājīvikas, scholars are skeptical about these accounts of their doctrines. Nonetheless, it appears that the Ājīvikas did not believe in free will, but that everything is pre-ordained.*

*And in the true spirit of propoganda, of course, the Ājīvika is the bad guy in this story (!).*

*“How predictable.” This story was told by the Master while at Jetavana. It is about a deceitful man. The details of his deceit will be related in the Uddāla Jātaka (Jātaka 487).*

*(Jātaka 487 does not really give a lot of details about the “man in the present” other than to say that he was a monk who – despite having ordained – used deceit and manipulation for material gain.)*

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Once upon a time when Brahmadatta was reigning in Benares, a shifty rascal of an ascetic lived near by a certain little village. He was the type of ascetic that wears long, matted hair. (A “matted hair ascetic” is another name for an Ājīvika.) The landowner of the village built a hermitage in the forest for him to live in, and he used to provide excellent food for him in his own house. Taking the matted-haired rascal to be a model of goodness, and living as he did in fear of robbers, the squire brought a hundred pieces of gold to the hermitage and buried them there. He asked the ascetic to watch over them.

"There is no need to say that, sir, to a man who has renounced the world. We recluses never crave other peoples' possessions."

"Very well, sir," the man said, and he went off with full confidence in the ascetic's assurances. Then the rascally ascetic thought to himself, "there is enough here to keep a man secure and comfortable for his entire life."

After letting a few days go by, he removed the gold and buried it by the side of a road. After that he went back to live just as he had before in his hermitage.

On the next day, after a meal of rice at the landowner's house, the ascetic said, "You have supported me for a long time, sir. And to live in one place for very long is like living in the world. This is forbidden to avowed ascetics. Therefore, I must leave." And even though the landowner tried to convince him to stay, nothing could overcome this determination.

"Well, then, if it must be so, go your way, sir," the landowner said, and he escorted the ascetic to the outskirts of the village to see him off. After walking a short way, the ascetic thought that it would be a good thing to further deceive the landowner. So he put a straw in his matted hair and turned back again.

"What brings you back?" asked the landowner.

"A straw from your roof, sir, had stuck in my hair. And, as we ascetics may not take anything which is not given to us, I have brought it back to you."

"Throw it down, sir, and go your way," the landowner said. And he thought, to himself, "Why, he won't take so much as a straw which does not belong to him! What a sensitive nature!" Highly delighted with the ascetic, the landowner bade him farewell.

Now at that time it so happened that the Bodhisatta, who was on his way to a border town for trading purposes, had stopped for the night at that village. Hearing what the ascetic said, he was immediately suspicious

that the rascally ascetic must have robbed the squire of something. So he asked the landowner whether he had left anything in the ascetic's care.

"Yes, a hundred pieces of gold."

"Well, just go and see if it is safe."

The landowner went back to the hermitage and looked, and he found that his money was gone. Running back to the Bodhisatta, he cried, "It's not there!"



Figure: The Money Is Gone!

"The thief is none other than that long-haired rascal of an ascetic," the Bodhisatta said. "let us go after him and catch him."

So away they ran in hot pursuit. When they caught the rascal they tied him up and kicked him until he told them where he had hidden the money. When he retrieved the gold, the Bodhisatta looked at it and scornfully remarked to the ascetic, "So a hundred pieces of gold didn't bother your conscience as much as that straw!" And he rebuked him in

this stanza:

*How plausible the story that the rascal told!  
How heedful of the straw! How heedless of the gold!*

When the Bodhisatta had rebuked the fellow in this way he added, “And now take care, you sanctimonious liar, that you don’t play such a trick again.” When his life ended, the Bodhisatta passed away to fare according to his karma.

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His lesson ended, the Master said, “So you see, brothers, that this monk was as deceitful in the past as he is today.” And he identified the birth by saying, “This deceitful monk was the deceitful ascetic of those days, and I was the honest and good man.”

# **90: Akataññu Jātaka, Ungrateful**

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*The intended message in this story is about being grateful. Gratitude, as Thānissaro Bhikkhu says, is the basis for the whole practice. It is only with gratitude that you can practice generosity. If you are grateful, you will have a feeling of sufficiency, and when you feel sufficient – that you have enough – then you are happy to share. And likewise, generosity is the basic for virtue, meditative absorption, and wisdom.*

*Stories like this have to be treated with some care. It may sound a little tit for tat. Sometimes people think, well, so-and-so did something bad to me, and it is their karma that I then do something bad to them. That is definitely not what the Buddha taught. One of the factors of the karmic result of an action is your motivation. So unless your motivation is wholesome, the karmic result will be unwholesome.*

*“The ungrateful man.”* This story was told by the Master while at Jetavana. It is about Anāthapiṇḍika.

On the borders, so the tale goes, there lived a merchant. He was a correspondent and a friend of Anāthapiṇḍika’s. However, they had never met. There came a time when this merchant loaded 500 carts with local produce and gave orders to the men in charge to go to the great merchant Anāthapiṇḍika. There they were instructed to negotiate a trade for the merchandise in his correspondent’s shop for a fair value and bring back the goods that they received in exchange.

So they went to Sāvatthi and found Anāthapiṇḍika. First they gave him a gift, and then they told him their business.

“You are welcome,” said the great man, and he ordered that they be lodged there and provided with money for their needs. After kind

inquiries into their master's health, he bartered for their merchandise and gave them the goods in exchange. Then they went back to their own district and reported what had happened.

Shortly afterwards, Anāthapindika similarly sent 500 carts with merchandise to the very district in which they lived. And his people, when they had got there, went to call upon the border merchant with a gift in their hands.

"Where do you come from?" he said.

"From Sāvatthi," they replied, "from your correspondent, Anāthapindika."

"Anyone can call himself Anāthapindika," he said with a sneer. And taking their gift, he sent them away. He did not give them any lodging or money. So they bartered their goods for themselves and brought back the wares in exchange to Sāvatthi, along with the story of the reception they got.

Now it so happened that this border merchant sent another caravan of 500 carts to Sāvatthi. As before, his people went with a present in their hands to wait upon Anāthapindika. But, as soon as Anāthapindika's people saw them, they said, "We'll see, sir, that they are properly lodged, fed, and supplied with money for their needs." And they took the strangers outside the city and told them to unyoke their carts at a suitable spot, telling them that rice and a money would come from Anāthapindika's house.

At the middle watch of the night, they assembled a band of male servants and slaves and looted the whole caravan. They took every piece of clothing that the men had and drove away their oxen. They took the wheels off the carts, leaving the carts but taking the wheels. Without so much as a shirt among the lot of them, the terrified strangers ran away and managed to reach their home on the border. Then Anāthapindika's people told him the whole story. "This excellent story," he said, "will be my gift to the Master today." And off he went and told it to the Master.

"This is not the first time," the Master said, "that this border merchant has acted in this way. He was the same in days gone by." Then, at Anāthapiṇḍika's request, he told the following story of the past.

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Once upon a time when Brahmadatta was reigning in Benares, the Bodhisatta was a very wealthy merchant in that city. And he, too, had a correspondent border merchant who he had never seen. And everything came to pass as told above.

Being told by his people what they had done, he said, "This trouble is the result of their ingratitude for the kindness that was shown to them." And he went on to instruct the assembled crowd in this stanza:

*The man ungrateful for a kind deed,  
Shall find no helper when in need.*



Figure: The Price of Ingratitude

In this way the Bodhisatta taught the Dharma in this stanza. And after a life spent in charity and other good works, he passed away to fare according to his karma.

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His lesson ended, the Master identified the birth by saying, "The border merchant of today was the border merchant of those days as well, and I was the merchant of Benares."

# **91: Litta Jātaka, The Poison Dice**

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*This is a story about mindfulness, specifically being mindful of how we use material items. Buddhists have always used material things as sparingly as possible. This is because everything that we consume comes with a cost. That should not make us feel guilty; that is how the system works. But when we consume too much, we show disrespect to the disruption we cause through the over-consumption of food and other material things.*

*The original translation makes an interesting point about this story, and that is that the “bad guy” in the story does not appear in the story in the beginning, so we never know who he is when the Buddha tells it. It is possible that “in the present” he was reborn in a non-human realm.*

“He swallows the die.” This story was told by the Master while at Jetavana. It is about using things thoughtlessly.

Tradition says that most of the monks of that day were in the habit of using robes and so forth that were given to them in a thoughtless manner. And their thoughtless use of the Four Requisites (*food, clothing, shelter, and medicine*) would prevent their escape from the doom of rebirth in hell and the animal world. Knowing this, the Master taught the importance of virtue and showed the danger of the thoughtless use of material things. He urged them to be careful in the use of the Four Requisites, and he established this rule, “The thoughtful monk has only one thing in mind when he wears a robe, namely, to keep off the cold.” After laying down similar rules for the other Requisites, he concluded by saying, “Such is the thoughtful way in which the Four Requisites should be used. To use them thoughtlessly is like taking deadly poison. And there were those in bygone days who did inadvertently take poison through their thoughtlessness, to their extreme dismay.” So saying, he

told this story of the past.

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Once upon a time when Brahmadatta was reigning in Benares, the Bodhisatta was born into a prosperous family. When he grew up, he became a gambler who played with dice.

There was a dishonest gambler who used to play with him. He would keep on playing while he was winning. But when his luck turned, this gambler broke up the game by putting one of the dies in his mouth and pretending it was lost. Then he would leave.

"Very well," said the Bodhisatta when he realized what was happening.  
"We'll take care of this."

So he took some dice, infused them at home with poison and dried them carefully. Then he took them with him to the gambler who he challenged to a game. The gambler agreed. The dice board was made ready and play began. No sooner did the gambler begin to lose than he popped one of the dies into his mouth. Catching him in the act, the Bodhisatta remarked, "Swallow away. You will find out what it really is soon enough." And he uttered this stanza of rebuke:

*He swallows the die quite boldly, not knowing  
What burning poison lurks unseen.  
Aye, swallow it, gambler! Soon you'll burn within.*

But while the Bodhisatta was speaking, the poison began to work on the gambler. He grew faint, rolled his eyes, and doubled over with pain, he fell to the ground.

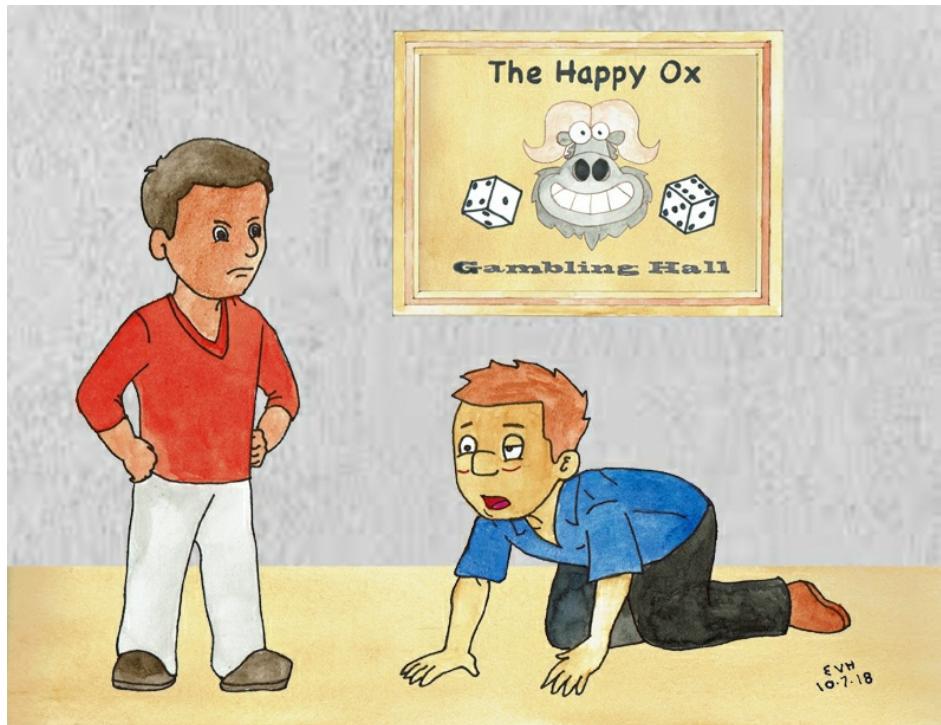


Figure: The Pain of Thoughtlessness

"Now," said the Bodhisatta, "I will save the rascal's life." So he mixed some medicinal herbs and administered them until vomiting ensued. Then he administered a drink of ghee with honey and sugar and other ingredients, and this made the fellow well again. Then he warned him not to do such a thing ever again. After a life spent in charity and other good works, the Bodhisatta passed away to fare thereafter according to his karma.

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His lesson ended, the Master said, "Monks, the thoughtless use of material things is like the thoughtless taking of deadly poison." So saying, he identified the birth in these words, "I myself was the wise and good gambler of those days."

## **92: Mahāsāra Jātaka, The Great Essence**

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*This story features two of the most wonderful people from the Buddha's time, his personal attendant Ānanda and King Pasenadi, who is only identified in this story as the "King of Kosala." It is noteworthy that King Pasenadi's wives, which included the wise and endearing Queen Mallikā, wanted to learn the Dharma. It is equally noteworthy that in an extremely sexist society, that the King agreed.*

*In the story in the present, the layman, who has attained the very high goal of non-returning, does not agree to teach the King's wives because he is not a monk. This shows the high regard that he has for the monastics, even if his attainment might be greater than theirs.*

*The stories themselves ramble and are a little confused, but I think you can see that their purpose is to extol the virtues of Ānanda.*

*"The wise monk."* This story was told by the Master while at Jetavana. It is about the venerable Ānanda.

The King of Kosala's wives once thought to themselves, "The coming of a Buddha is very rare, and birth in a human form with all one's faculties in perfection is very rare. Yet, although we have attained human form in a Buddha's lifetime, we cannot go when we want to the monastery to hear the Dharma from his own lips, to pay our respects, and to make offerings to him. We live here like we are locked in a box. Let us ask the King to send for an appropriate monk to come here and teach us the Dharma. Let us learn what we can from him and be charitable and do good works so that we may profit by our having been born at this happy time." So they went as a group to the King and told him what was on their minds, and the King gave his consent.

Now one day the King decided to enjoy himself in the royal pleasure garden. He gave orders that the grounds should be prepared for his arrival. As the gardener was working away, he saw the Master sitting at the foot of a tree. So he went to the King and said, "The pleasure garden is ready, sire, but the Blessed One is sitting there at the foot of a tree."

"Very well," the King said, "we will go and hear the Master." Mounting his chariot of state, he went to the Master in the pleasure garden.

Now a lay-brother named Chattapāṇi was seated at the Master's feet listening to his teaching. Chattapāṇi had attained the fruit of the Third Path, non-returning. Seeing this lay-brother, the King hesitated. But he reflected that this must be a virtuous man or he would not be sitting by the Master for instruction. So he approached and with a bow sat down on one side of the Master.

Out of reverence for the supreme Buddha, the lay-brother neither rose in the King's honor nor saluted his majesty. This made the King very angry. Noticing the King's displeasure, the Master proceeded to praise the merits of that lay-brother, saying, "Sire, this lay-brother is a master of all tradition. He knows the scriptures that have been handed down by heart, and he has set himself free from the bondage of passion." (*Non-returners have overcome sense desire.*)

"Surely," the King thought, "anyone who has earned the praise of the Master is no ordinary person." And he said to him, "Let me know, lay-brother, if you need anything."

"Thank you," said the man. Then the King listened to the Master's teaching, and at its close he arose and ceremoniously withdrew.

On another day, after breakfast, the King met that same lay-brother going, umbrella in hand, to Jetavana. The King summoned him to his presence and said, "I hear, lay-brother, that you are a man of great learning. My wives are very anxious to hear and learn the Dharma. I would be glad if you would teach them."

"It is not appropriate, sire, that a layman should expound or teach the Dharma in the King's harem. That is the prerogative of the Sangha."

Recognizing the force of this remark, the King, after dismissing the layman, called his wives together. He announced his intention to ask the Master to send one of the monks to come as their instructor in the Dharma. Which of the 80 chief disciples would they have? After talking it over together, the ladies unanimously chose Ānanda the Elder, the Guardian of the Dhamma. (*Ānanda was particularly sensitive to women's issues, having convinced the Buddha to ordain women.*)

So the King went to the Master and with a courteous greeting sat down by his side. He proceeded to state his wives' wish - and his own hope - that Ānanda might be their teacher. The Master consented to sending Ānanda, and the King's wives now began to be regularly taught by the Elder and to learn from him.

One day the jewel in the King's turban went missing. When the King heard of the loss he sent for his ministers and ordered them to seize everyone who had access to the grounds and find the jewel. So the Ministers searched everybody, women and all, for the missing jewel, until they had worried everybody almost out of their minds. Yet they could find no trace of it.

That day Ānanda came to the palace, only to find the King's wives as dejected as they had previously been delighted when he taught them. "What has made you like this today?" the Elder asked.

"Oh, sir," they said, "the King has lost the jewel from his turban. By his orders the ministers are worrying everybody, women and all, out of their minds, in order to find it. We can't say what might happen to anyone of us, and that is why we are so sad."

"Don't think any more about it," the Elder said cheerfully, and he went to find the King. Taking the seat set for him, the Elder asked whether it was true that his majesty had lost his jewel.

"Quite true, sir," the King said.

"And it cannot be found?"

"I have had all the residents of the palaces worried out of their minds, and yet I still can't find it."

"There is one way, sire, to find it, without worrying people out of their minds."

"What way is that, sir?"

"By bunch-giving, sire."

"Bunch-giving? What is that?"

"Call everyone together, sire, all the persons you suspect, and privately give each one of them a bunch of straw - a lump of clay will do also - saying, 'Take this and put it in such and such a place tomorrow at daybreak.' The man that took the jewel will put it in the straw or clay, and so return it. If it is brought back the very first day, well and good. If not, the same thing must be done on the second and third days. In this way, a large number of persons will escape worry, and you will get your jewel back." With these words the Elder left.

Following this advice, the King caused the straw and clay to be dealt out for three successive days. But the jewel was still not recovered. On the third day the Elder came again. He asked whether the jewel had been brought back.

"No, sir," the King said.

"Then, sire, you must have a large water pot put in a secluded corner of your courtyard, and you must have the pot filled with water and put a screen in front of it. Then give orders that all who visit the grounds, men and women alike, are to take off their outer garments, and one by one wash their hands behind the screen and then come back." With this

advice the Elder departed. And the King did as he was told.

The thief thought, “Ānanda has taken this matter seriously. And if he does not find the jewel, he'll keep trying until he does. I better return the jewel.”

So he hid the jewel on his body, went behind the screen, and dropped it in the water before he left. When everyone had gone, the pot was emptied, and the jewel was found.

“It's all because of the Elder,” the King exclaimed in his joy, “that I have my jewel back, and that happened without worrying a lot of people out of their minds.”

All the people were grateful to Ānanda for the trouble from which he had saved them. The story about how Ānanda's wisdom had found the jewel spread throughout the city until it reached the Saṅgha. The monks said, “The great knowledge, learning, and cleverness of the Elder Ānanda enabled recovery of the lost jewel and saved many people from being worried out of their minds.”

As they sat together in the Dharma Hall singing the praises of Ānanda, the Master entered and asked what was the topic of their conversation. Being told, he said, “Monks, this is not the first time that something stolen was found, and Ānanda is not the only one who brought this about. In bygone days, too, the wise and good discovered what had been stolen, and also saved many people from trouble, restoring lost property that had fallen into the hands of animals.” So saying, he told this story of the past.

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Once upon a time when Brahmadatta was reigning in Benares, the Bodhisatta, having completed his education, became one of the King's ministers. One day the King and a large following went into his pleasure garden. After going for a walk in the woods, he decided to go into the water. So he went down to the royal pond and sent for his harem. The women of the harem, removing the jewels from their heads and necks

and so forth, put them aside with their upper garments in boxes under the charge of female slaves and then went down into the water.

Now, as the queen was taking off her jewels and ornaments and laying them with her upper robe in a box, a female monkey who was hidden in the branches of a nearby tree watched her. Longing to wear the queen's pearl necklace, this monkey watched for the slave in charge to be off her guard. At first the girl kept looking all about her in order to keep the jewels safe. But as time went by, she began to doze off. As soon as the monkey saw this, she jumped down as quick as the wind. And as quick as the wind she was back up the tree again with the pearls around her neck. Then, for fear the other monkeys would see it, she hid the string of pearls in a hole in the tree and sat guard over her spoils as demurely as though nothing had happened.

By and by the slave awoke, and, terrified at finding the jewels gone, saw nothing else to do but to scream out, "A man has run off with the queen's pearl necklace." The guards ran up from every side, and hearing this story they told it to the King.

"Catch the thief!" his majesty said, and off went the guards searching high and low for the thief in the pleasure garden.

Hearing the uproar, a poor, superstitious peasant farmer ran away in alarm. "There he goes," the guards cried, catching sight of the runaway. They followed him until they caught him, and with blows demanded what he meant by stealing such precious jewels.

He thought, "If I deny the charge, they will beat me to death. I'd better say I took it." So he confessed to the theft and was hauled off to the King as a prisoner.

"Did you take those precious jewels?" the King asked.

"Yes, your majesty."

"Where are they now?"

"Please your majesty, I'm a poor man. I've never owned anything in my life of any value, not even a bed or a chair, much less a jewel. It was the Treasurer who made me take that valuable necklace. I took it and gave it to him. He knows all about it."

Then the King sent for the Treasurer. He asked whether the peasant had passed the necklace on to him.

"Yes, sire," was the answer.

"Where is it then?"

"I gave it to your majesty's priest."

Then the priest was sent for. He was interrogated in the same way. And he said he had given it to the Chief Musician, who in his turn said he had given it to a courtesan as a present. But she, being brought before the King, denied ever having received it.

While the five were being questioned, the sun set. "It's too late now," the King said. "We will look into this tomorrow." So he handed the five over to his ministers and went back into the city.

It was at about that time that the Bodhisatta started thinking. "These jewels," he thought, "were lost inside the grounds, but the peasant was outside. There was a strong guard at the gates, and it was impossible for anyone inside to get away with the necklace. I do not see how anyone, whether inside or out, could have managed to secure it. The truth is this poor wretched fellow must have said he gave it to the Treasurer in order to save his own skin. And the Treasurer must have said he gave it to the priest in the hope that he would get off if he could get the priest mixed up in the affair. Further, the priest must have said he gave it to the Chief Musician, because he thought the latter would make the time pass merrily in prison. Then the Chief Musician implicated the courtesan simply to console himself with her company during imprisonment. Not one of the five has anything to do with the theft. On the other hand, the ground is swarmed with monkeys, and the necklace must have got into

the hands of one of them."

Once he arrived at this conclusion, the Bodhisatta went to the King and asked for the suspects to be handed over to him so he could look into the matter personally. "By all means, my wise friend," the King said. "Look into it."

The Bodhisatta sent for his servants and told them where to keep the five prisoners, saying, "Keep strict watch over them. Listen to everything they say and report it all to me." And his servants did as he told them. As the prisoners sat together, the Treasurer said to the peasant, "Tell me, you wretch, where you and I ever met before this day. Tell me when you gave me that necklace."

"Esteemed sir," said the man, "I have never owned anything as valuable as even a stool or bedstead that wasn't rickety. I thought that with your help I would get out of this trouble, and that's why I said what I did. Do not be angry with me, my lord."

In turn, the priest said to the Treasurer, "Why did you pass on to me what this fellow never gave you?"

"I only said that because I thought that if you and I, both high officers of state, stand together, we can soon put things right."

"Brahmin," the Chief Musician then said to the priest, "when did you give the jewel to me?"

"I only said I did," answered the priest, "because I thought you would help to make the time in prison pass more agreeably."

Lastly the courtesan said, "Oh, you wretch of a musician, you know you never visited me, nor I you. So when could you have given me the necklace, as you say?"

"Why be angry, my dear?" the musician said. "We five have got to be together for a bit, so let us put a cheerful face on it and be happy

together."

This conversation was reported to the Bodhisatta by his agents. He was convinced the five were all innocent of the robbery, and that a female monkey had taken the necklace. "And I must find a way to make her drop it," he said to himself.

So he had a number of bead necklaces made. Next he had a number of monkeys caught and turned loose again, with strings of beads on their necks, wrists, and ankles. Meantime, the guilty monkey kept sitting in the trees watching her treasure. The Bodhisatta ordered a number of men to carefully watch every monkey in the grounds until they saw one wearing the missing pearl necklace. Then they could frighten her into dropping it.

Tricked out in their new splendor, the other monkeys strutted about until they came to the real thief, before whom they flaunted their finery. Jealousy overcame her good judgment. She exclaimed, "They're only beads!" and she put on her own necklace of real pearls. The watchers saw this at once. They promptly made her drop the necklace which they picked up and brought to the Bodhisatta. He took it to the King, saying, "Here, sire, is the necklace. The five prisoners are innocent. It was a female monkey in the pleasure garden that took it."



Figure: One Frightened Monkey!

"How did you figure that out?" asked the King. "And how did you manage to get it back again?"

Then the Bodhisatta told the whole story. The King thanked the Bodhisatta, saying, "You are the right man in the right place." And he uttered this stanza in praise of the Bodhisatta:

*Men crave the hero's might for war,  
For counsel sage sobriety,  
Comrades for their revelry,  
But judgment when in desperate plight.*

In addition to these words of praise and gratitude, the King showered the Bodhisatta with treasures like a storm cloud pouring rain from the heavens. After following the Bodhisatta's advice through a long life spent in charity and good works, the King passed away to fare according to his karma.

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His lesson ended, the Master, after praising the Elder's merits, identified

the birth by saying, “Ānanda was the King of those days, and I was his wise counsellor.”

## **93: Vissāsabhojana Jātaka, The Great Essence**

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*This is a story about good judgment. The meditation teacher Larry Rosenberg says that he is amazed at how many otherwise intelligent, capable, competent people check their common sense at the door when it comes to their spiritual practice. You can expand that observation to other parts of our lives as well. The Buddha here is not saying to be unnecessarily skeptical or paranoid; he is simply saying that in all situations of our lives we should use good judgment.*

“*Trust not the trusted.*” This story was told by the Master while at Jetavana. It is about taking things on trust.

Tradition tells us that in those days the monks, for the most part, used to rest content if anything was given to them by their mothers or fathers, brothers or sisters, or uncles or aunts, or other family members. Arguing that in their lay state they had routinely received things from the same hands, they, as monks, showed no reservations or caution before using food, clothing, and other requisites that their relations gave them. Observing this the Master felt that he must teach the monks a lesson. So he called them together, and said, “Monks, whether the giver is a relation or not, you must still use good judgment. The monk who uses the requisites that are given to him without good judgment may condemn himself to a subsequent existence as an ogre or as a ghost. Use without good judgment is like taking poison, and poison kills just the same, whether it is given by a relative or by a stranger. There were those in bygone days who actually did take poison because it was offered by those near and dear to them, and thereby they met their end.” So saying, he told the following story of the past.

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Once upon a time when Brahmadatta was reigning in Benares, the

Bodhisatta was a very wealthy merchant. He had a herdsman who, when the corn was growing thick, drove his cows to the forest and kept them there in a barn, bringing the produce from time to time to the merchant.

Now near to the barn in the forest there lived a lion. The cows were so afraid of the lion that they gave very little milk. So when the herdsman brought in his ghee one day, the merchant asked why there was so little milk. Then the herdsman told him the reason. "Well, has the lion formed an attachment to anything?"

"Yes, master. He is fond of a doe."

"Could you catch that doe?"

"Yes, master."

"Well, catch her, and rub her all over with poison and sugar and let her dry. Keep her a day or two and then turn her loose. Because of his affection for her, the lion will lick her all over with his tongue and die. Take his hide with the claws and teeth and fat and bring them back to me."

So saying, he gave deadly poison to the herdsman and sent him off. With the aid of a net which he made, the herdsman caught the doe and carried out the Bodhisatta's orders.

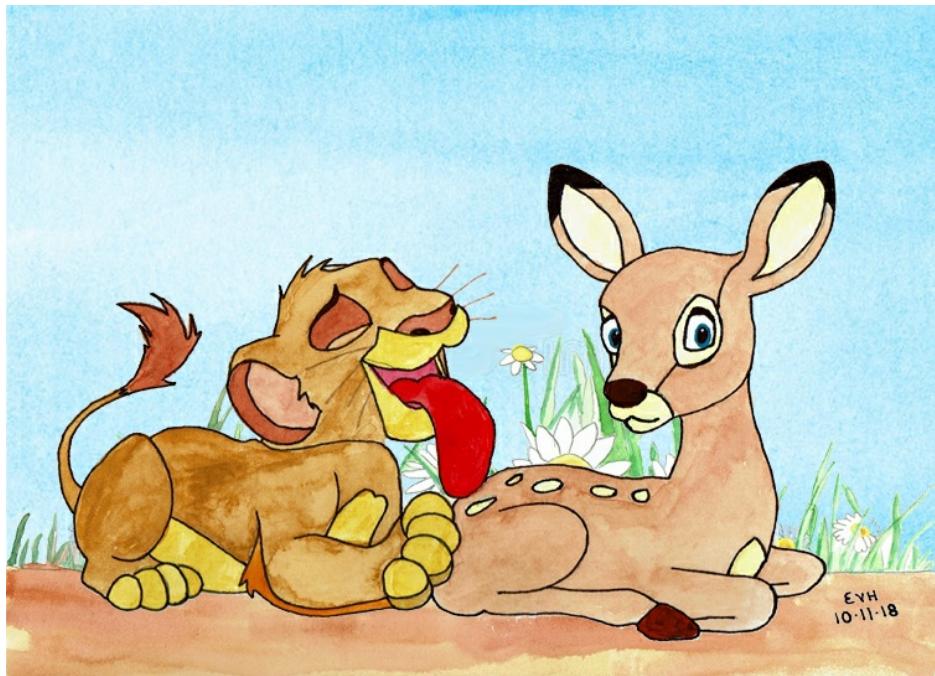


Figure: Fawning Over the Poison Deer

As soon as he saw the doe again, the lion, in his great love for her, licked her with his tongue so that he died. And the herdsman took the lion's hide and the rest and brought them to the Bodhisatta, who said, "Affection for others should be shunned. Mark how, for all his strength, the king of beasts, the lion, was led by his sinful love for a doe to poison himself by licking her, causing him to die." So saying, he uttered this stanza for the instruction of those gathered round:

*Trust not the trusted, nor the untrusted trust;  
Trust kills; through trust the lion bit the dust.*

Such was the lesson that the Bodhisatta taught to those around him. After a life spent in charity and other good works, he passed away to fare according to his karma.

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His lesson ended, the Master identified the birth by saying, "I was the merchant of those days."

## **94: Lomahāmsa Jātaka, The Naked Ascetic**

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*This story is probably hard to relate to for most Westerners. But in India – and this is true even now – there is a tradition of asceticism. (There are some parallels in Western Christianity.) The theory is that you can liberate yourself from the rounds of rebirth through self-mortification. While the Buddhadharma does teach simplicity and restraint, the Buddha also spoke out against such extreme practices. It is the famous “middle way,” the path that lies between self-indulgence and self-torture.*

“Now scorched.” The Master told this story while at Pālikārāma near Vesāli. It is about Sunakkhatta.

Sunakkhatta was a follower of the Master. He was travelling around the country as a monk with bowl and robes, but he was converted to the tenets of Kora the Kshatriya. (*Kora was an ascetic who “crept on his hands and feet; touched nothing with his hands, but took all things up with his mouth, even drank without using his hand; and lay in ashes.”* – [Hardy’s Manual of Buddhism, p. 330]. According to the story, Kora thought he was an arahant. The Buddha warned him that this was not so, that he was going to die in six days, and if he did not correct his error, he would be reborn as an “asura” with a body 12 miles high but without flesh and blood and with eyes on top of his head like a crab!) So Sunakkhatta returned his bowl and robes to the Blessed Buddha and reverted to lay life as a follower of Kora the Kshatriya.

It was at about that time when Kora was reborn as the child of the Kālakañjaka Asura. Sunakkhatta went around Vesāli defaming the Master by affirming that there was nothing superhuman about the sage Gotama. He said that the Master was not distinguished from other men by teaching a liberating faith. He said that he had simply worked out a

system that was the outcome of his own thought and study, and that his doctrine did not lead to the destruction of sorrow in those who followed it. (*This is a quote from the Majjhima Nikāya 12.2. The criticism here is that the Buddha taught a doctrine that he had worked out by thinking rather than one he had experienced directly.*)

Now the reverend Sāriputta was on his alms round when he heard Sunakkhatta's affronts. When he returned from his round, he reported this to the Blessed One. The Master said, "Sunakkhatta is a reckless person, Sāriputta, and he speaks idle words. His recklessness has led him to talk like this and to deny the liberating wisdom of my doctrine. He has no knowledge of my attainment. In me, Sāriputta, the Six Knowledges live. (*These are supernormal powers. Part of the implication of Sunakkhatta's criticism is that the Buddha does not have any supernormal powers.*) Therefore I am more than human. I have within me the Ten Powers (*the powers of knowledge that are attained by all Buddhas*), and the Four Grounds of Confidence (*also features of a Buddha*). I know the limits of the four types of earthly existence and the five states of possible rebirth after earthly death (*hell, hungry ghost, animal, human, and heaven*). This, too, is a superhuman quality in me. Whoever denies it must take back his words, change his belief, and renounce his heresy, or he will be cast into hell."

Having declared his superhuman nature and the power that existed within him, the Master went on to say, "Sāriputta, I hear that Sunakkhatta took delight in the misguided self-mortifications of the asceticism of Kora the Kshatriya. Therefore, he could take no pleasure in me. Ninety-one eons ago I lived the higher life in all its four forms (*"learner", householder, religious person, and recluse*). I examined that false asceticism to discover whether there is any truth in it. I was an ascetic, the chief of ascetics. I was worn and emaciated beyond all others. I loathed comfort. My loathing surpassed that of all others. I lived apart, and my passion for solitude was unapproachable." Then, at the Elder's request, he told this story of the past.

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Once upon a time, ninety-one eons ago, the Bodhisatta decided to

examine false asceticism. So he became a recluse, a Naked Ascetic (*an Ājīvika*). He was naked and covered with dust, solitary and lonely, fleeing like a deer from the faces of men. He ate small fish, cow dung, and other refuse. In order to keep his vigil undisturbed, he lived in a dreaded dense grove of trees in the jungle. He came out at night from the sheltering thicket into the open air and winter snow. He returned at sunrise to his thicket again. He was wet with the driving snows at night. In the day time he was drenched by the drizzle from the branches of the thicket. Day and night he endured the extremity of cold. In summer, he lived in the open air during the day, and at night he lived in the forest. He was scorched by the blazing sun during the day, but he was not cooled by breezes by night. The sweat streamed from him. And a poem came into his mind. It was new and had never been uttered before:

*Now scorched, now frozen, alone in the lonesome woods,  
Beside no fire, but all afire within,  
Naked, the hermit wrestles for the truth.*

But after a life spent in the rigors of this asceticism, the vision of hell rose before the Bodhisatta as he lay dying. He realized the worthlessness of all his austerities. In that supreme moment he broke away from his delusion. He laid hold of the real truth and was reborn in the Heaven of Devas.

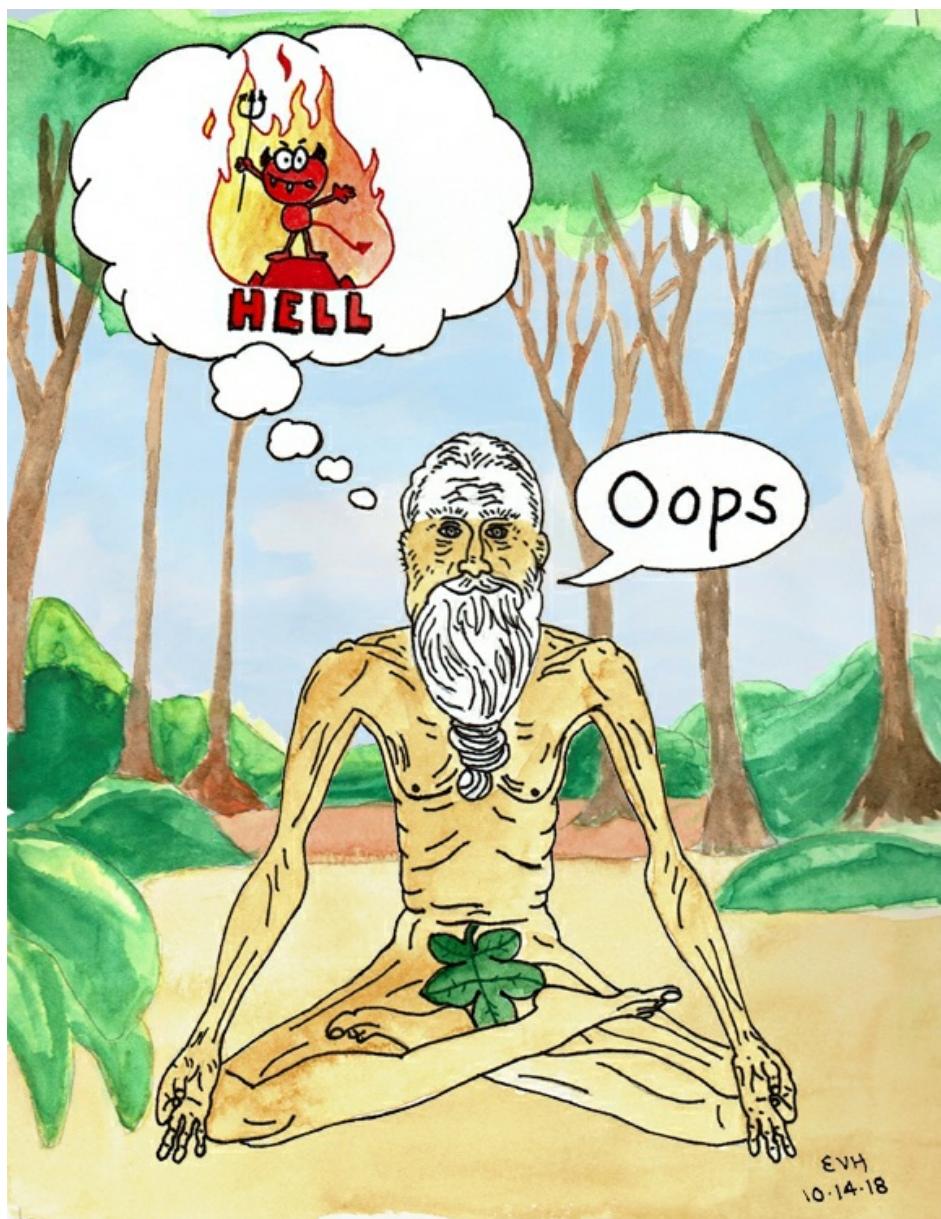


Figure: Just In Time

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His lesson ended, the Master identified the birth by saying, "I was the naked ascetic of those days."

# **95: Mahāsudassana Jātaka, The Great Sudassana**

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*This Jātaka is drawn at least partially from the lengthy treatment of the end of the Buddha's life in the Parinibbāna Sutta [DN.1].*

*The locations of Kusinārā – where the Buddha died - was lost for centuries. It was rediscovered by the British archeologist Alexander Cunningham in the late 19th century. It is one of the destinations for Buddhists who go to India on pilgrimage. It is more commonly known by the name "Kushinagar." This is also where the Buddha was cremated. There is a stupa at the cremation site.*

*This Jātaka quotes a common catch phrase in the Pāli Canon and one of the Buddha's most succinct and important teachings, "All compounded things are impermanent."*

*"How transient."* This story was told by the Master as he lay on his death bed. It is about Ānanda's words, "Oh Blessed One, do not pass away in this sorry little town." (A similar passage occurs in the Digha Nikāya: "Lord, may the Blessed Lord not pass away in this miserable little town of wattle-and-daub, right in the jungle in the back of beyond!" [DN 16.5.7])

When the Buddha was living at Jetavana, the Master thought, "The Elder Sāriputta, who was born in Nāla village, died at Varaka in the month of Kattika (the 8th lunar month, October-November) when the moon was full. In the same month, when the moon was on the wane, the great Moggallāna died. My two chief disciples being dead, I too will pass away, in Kusinārā."

So thought the Blessed One.

On his alms pilgrimage, he subsequently came to Kusinārā. There he lay down upon the Northward bench between twin Sāl trees, never to rise

again. Then the Elder Ānanda said, “O Blessed One, do not pass away in this sorry little town, this rough little town in the jungle, this little suburban town. Should not Rājagaha or some other large city be the death place of the Buddha?” (*Rājagaha was the capital city of the kingdom of Magadha.*)

“No, Ānanda,” the Master said. “Do not call this a sorry little town, a little town in the jungle, a little suburban town. In bygone days, in the days of Sudassana’s universal monarchy, I lived in this town. Then it was a mighty city surrounded by jeweled walls 40 miles around.” Then, at the Elder’s request, he told this story of the past and uttered the Mahāsudassana Sutta (DN 17).

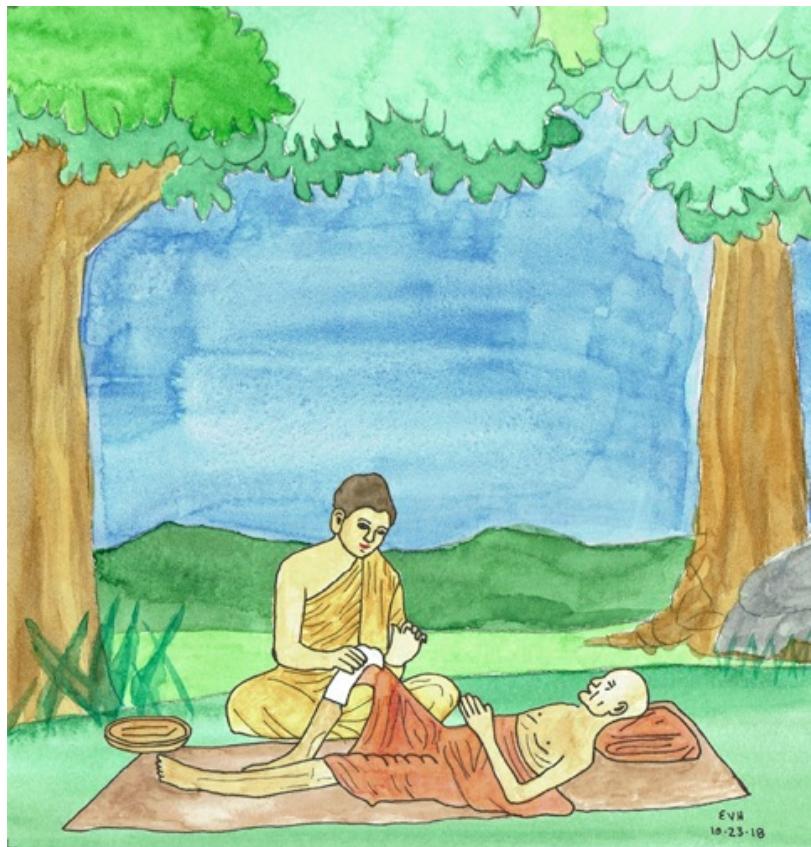


Figure: Ānanda and the Dying Buddha

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Then it was that Sudassana’s queen Subhaddā, after coming down from the Palace of Truth, saw her lord lying on his right side on the couch

prepared for him in the Palm Grove. The couch from which he was not to rise again was covered in gold and jewels. And she said, "There are eighty-four thousand cities, chief of which is the royal city of Kusāvatī, over which you have sovereignty, sire. Set your heart on them."

"Do not say that, my queen," Sudassana said. "rather encourage me, saying, 'Keep your heart set on this town and do not yearn for those others.'"

"Why so, my lord?"

"Because I shall die today," answered the king.

In tears, wiping her streaming eyes, the queen managed to sob out the words the King told her to say. Then she broke into weeping and lamentation. And the other women of the harem, to the number of 84,000, also wept and wailed. None of the courtiers could bear it, either. All alike joined in one universal lament.

"Peace!" said the Bodhisatta, and at his word their lamentation was stilled. Then, turning to the queen, he said, "Do not weep or wail, my queen. For, even down to the tiniest seed, there is no such thing as a compounded thing that is permanent. All is impermanent. All must decay." Then, for the queen's benefit, he uttered this stanza:

*How impermanent are all compounded things!  
It is their nature to decay.  
They arise, and they dissolve again.  
And then it is best, when they have sunk to rest.*

Thus did the great Sudassana give his discourse with divine Nirvana as its goal. Moreover, to the rest of the multitude he gave the exhortation to be charitable, to obey the Precepts, and to observe the Uposatha days. (*Uposatha days are special practice days for both monastics and lay people. They occur on the days of the new moon and full moon.*) And when he passed away, he was reborn in the Realm of Devas.

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His lesson ended, the Master identified the birth by saying, “The mother of Rāhula was the Queen Subhaddā of those days. Rāhula was the King’s eldest son. The disciples of the Buddha were his courtiers, and I myself the great Sudassana.” (*Before he was the Buddha, Siddhārtha Gotama was married to a woman named “Yasodharā.” In the Pāli Canon she is simply identified as the “mother of Rāhula.” We know her real name from the Pāli commentaries.*)

## **96: Telapatta Jātaka, The Hungry Ogres**

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*This is quite a story. Imagine how mindful we would be if the penalty for failing to be mindful was that we would be eaten by ogres!*

*There is a minor technical inconsistency here, in that at any one time, there is only supposed to be one Buddha. It may be that having more than one Buddha is possible because they were “pacceka” or “solitary, non-teaching” Buddhas.*

“As one with care.” This story was told by the Master while he was living in a forest near the town of Desaka in the Sumbha country. It is about the Janapadakalyāṇī Sutta (*This is in the Saṃyutta Nikāya in section 17, “Lābhasakkārasaṃyutta Connected Discourses on Gains and Honor”, passages 13-20*). On that occasion the Blessed One said, “Just as if, monks, a great crowd were to gather together, crying ‘Hail to the most desirable woman of the land! Hail to the most desirable woman of the land!’ And then a greater crowd gathered, crying ‘The most desirable woman of the land is singing and dancing!’ And then suppose a man who was fond of life arrived, afraid of death, fond of pleasure, and averse to pain. And suppose he was told, ‘Hi, there! You must carry this pot of oil, which is full to the brim, through the crowd and the most desirable woman of the land. A man with a drawn sword will follow in your footsteps. And if you spill a single drop, he will cut off your head.’ What do you think, monks? Would that man, under these circumstances, be careless, and take no pains in carrying that pot of oil?”

“By no means, sir.”

“This is a parable that I framed to make my meaning clear, monks, and here is its meaning: The brimming pot of oil typifies a concentrated state of mind with regard to the body. The lesson to be learned is that such mindfulness should be practiced and perfected. Do not fail in this,

monks." So saying, the Master gave a discourse concerning the most seductive and desirable woman of the land, with both text and interpretation.

Then, in order to show its practical application, the Blessed One went on to say, "A monk who wants to practice right mindfulness in regard to the body should be as careful not to let his mindfulness drop as the man in the parable who was not to let a single drop of oil spill from the pot."

When they had heard the discourse and its meaning, the monks said, "It was a hard task, sir, for the man to pass by with the pot of oil without gazing on the charms of the most desirable woman of the land."

"It was not hard at all, monks. It was quite an easy task. It was easy for the very good reason that he was escorted by one who threatened him with a drawn sword. But it was a truly hard task for the wise and good of bygone days to preserve right mindfulness and to curb their passions so as not to look at celestial beauty in all its perfection. Still they triumphed, and as a result, they won a kingdom."

So saying, he told this story of the past.

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Once upon a time when Brahmadatta was reigning in Benares, the Bodhisatta was the youngest of the King's 100 sons, and he grew up to manhood. Now in those days there were Pacceka Buddhas (*non-teaching, or "silent" Buddhas*) who used to come to take their meals at the palace, and the Bodhisatta took care of them.

One day, the Bodhisatta was thinking about the great number of brothers he had. He wondered whether there was any chance of his coming to the throne of his father in that city. He decided to ask the Pacceka Buddhas to tell him what would happen.

On the next day the Buddhas came. They took the water pot that was consecrated for holy uses. They filtered the water, washed and dried their feet, and sat down to their meal. As they sat, the Bodhisatta came

and sat down by them with a courteous salutation. Then he asked his question.

They answered and said, "Prince, you will never become the King in this city. But in Gandhāra, 7,000 miles away, there stands the city of Takkasilā. If you can reach that city, in seven days you will become the King there. But there is danger on the road. You will have to travel through a great forest. It is twice as far to go around the forest as it is to pass through it. Ogres live there, and ogresses have villages and houses along the way. When the sky is embroidered with stars overhead, their magic creates a seductive couch that is covered by a magical dye. Arranged in celestial splendor, the ogresses sit in their houses seducing travelers with sweet words. 'You seem tired,' they say. 'Come here and eat and drink before you continue your journey.' Those that do their bidding are given seats and fired to lust by the charm of their wanton beauty. But before anything can happen, the ogresses kill them and eat them while their blood is still warm. They tempt men's senses, captivating the sense of beauty with utter loveliness, the ear with sweet music, the nostrils with heavenly odors, the taste with heavenly foods of exquisite flavors, and the touch with red-cushioned couches that are divinely soft. But if you can subdue your senses and be strong in your resolve not to look at them, then on the seventh day you will become the King of the city of Takkasilā."

"Oh, sirs, how could I look at the ogresses after your advice to me?"

So saying, the Bodhisatta asked the Pacceka Buddhas to give him something to keep him safe on his journey. They gave him a charmed thread and some charmed sand. He said farewell to the Pacceka Buddhas and to his father and mother. Then, after going to his own home, he addressed his household as follows, "I am going to Takkasilā to make myself the King there. You will stay behind here." But five of them said, "Let us go too."

"You may not come with me," the Bodhisatta answered, "for I am told that the way is plagued by ogresses who captivate men's senses. They

destroy those who give in to their charms. The danger is great, but I will rely on myself and go."

"If we go with you, Prince, we promise not to look at their malevolent charms. We, too, will go to Takkasilā."

"Then be steadfast," the Bodhisatta said, and he took those five with him on his journey.

The ogresses sat waiting by the road in their villages. One of the five, the lover of beauty, looked upon the ogresses. Being ensnared by their beauty, he lagged behind the rest.

"Why are you dropping behind?" the Bodhisatta asked.

"My feet hurt me, prince. I'll just sit down for a bit in one of these pavilions, and then I will catch up to you."

"My good man, these are ogresses. Don't be seduced by them."

"Be that as it may, prince, I can't go any further."

"Well, you will soon show your true character," the Bodhisatta said, as he went on with the other four.

Yielding to his sense desire, the lover of beauty drew near to the ogresses who tempted him, and they killed him then and there. Then they left, and further down the road they raised a new pavilion using their magic. They sat there singing to the music of many different instruments. And now the lover of music dropped behind and was eaten. Then the ogresses went on further and sat waiting in a bazaar stocked with sweet scents and perfumes. And here the lover of sweet-smelling things fell behind. And when they had eaten him, they went on further and sat in a stand where a profusion of heavenly foods of exquisite taste was offered for sale. And here the gourmet fell behind. And when they had eaten him, they went on further and sat on heavenly couches created by using their magic. And here the lover of comfort fell behind. And he, too, was eaten.

The only one left now was the Bodhisatta. One of the ogresses followed him, promising herself that for all his stern resolution that she would succeed in eating him. Further on in the forest, woodsmen and others, seeing the ogress, asked her who the man was that walked on ahead.

"He is my husband, good gentlemen," she said.

"Hi, there!" they said to the Bodhisatta. "When you have got a sweet young wife, as fair as the flowers, who leaves her home and puts her trust in you, why don't you walk with her instead of letting her trudge wearily behind you?"

"She is no wife of mine, but an ogress. She has eaten my five companions."

"Alas! good gentlemen," she said, "anger will drive men to say their wives are ogresses and ghouls."

Next, she used her magic to make it appear that she was pregnant. And then she created the look of a woman who has borne one child. She conjured a child on her hip. She kept following the Bodhisatta. Everyone they met asked the same questions about them, and the Bodhisatta gave the same answer as he traveled on.

At last he came to Takkasilā. There the ogress made the child disappear, and she followed alone. At the gates of the city the Bodhisatta entered a rest house and sat down. Because of the Bodhisatta's potency and power, she could not enter, so she adorned herself in divine beauty and stood on the threshold.

The King of Takkasilā was at that moment passing by on his way to his pleasure garden and was captivated by her beauty. "Go, find out," he said to an attendant, "whether she has a husband with her." When the messenger came and asked whether she had a husband with her, she said, "Yes, sir. My husband is sitting inside the rest house."

"She is no wife of mine," the Bodhisatta said. "She is an ogress and has

eaten my five companions."

And as before she said, "Alas! Good gentlemen, anger will drive men to say anything that comes into their heads."

Then the man went back to the King and told him what each of them had said. "Great wealth is a sign of high birth," the King said. And he sent for the ogress and had her seated on the back of his elephant. After a solemn procession around the city, the King came back to his palace and had the ogress lodged in the apartments reserved for a queen.

After bathing and perfuming himself, the King ate his evening meal and then lay down on his royal bed. The ogress, too, prepared herself a meal. Then she dressed in all her splendor. As she lay by the side of the delighted King, she turned on to her side and burst into tears. Being asked why she wept, she said, "Sire, you found me by the side of the road, and there are many women in your harem. Living here among enemies I will feel crushed when they say 'Who knows who your father and mother are, or anything about your family? You were picked up by the side of the road.' But if your majesty would give me power and authority over the whole kingdom, nobody would dare to annoy me with such taunts."

"Sweetheart, I have no power over those who live in my kingdom. I am not their lord and master. I only have jurisdiction over those who rebel or commit immoral acts. (*This was the custom in India. Kings had limited power.*) So I cannot give you power and authority over the whole kingdom."

"Then, sire, if you cannot give me authority over the kingdom or over the city, at least give me authority within the palace. Then I can rule over those who live here."

He was so captivated by her charms that the King gave her authority over everyone in the palace. Contented, she waited until the King was asleep. She then made her way to the city of the ogres and returned with the whole crew of ogres to the palace. She herself killed the King and ate

him, skin, tendons, and flesh, leaving only the bare bones. And the rest of the ogres entered the gate and ate everything that came in their way. They did not leave even a bird or a dog alive.



Figure: Dining at the Palace

On the next day when people came and found the gate shut, they beat on it with impatient cries. Finally they were able to get into the city. All they found was the whole palace strewn with bones. And they exclaimed, "So the man was right in saying she was not his wife but an ogress. In his foolishness the King brought her home to be his wife, and doubtless she has gathered the other ogres, eaten everybody, and then left."

Now on that day the Bodhisatta, with the charmed sand on his head and the charmed thread twisted around his brow, was standing in the rest house, sword in hand, waiting for the dawn. Those others, meantime, cleaned the palace, garnished the floors, sprinkled perfumes on them, scattered flowers, hanging bouquets from the roof and decorating the walls with garlands, and burning incense in the place. Then they met

together and said, "The man who could control his senses to not look at the ogress as she followed him in her divine beauty is a noble and steadfast man filled with wisdom. With someone like that as King, it would benefit the whole kingdom. Let us make him our King."

And all the courtiers and all the citizens of the kingdom agreed. So the Bodhisatta was chosen King. He was escorted into the capital and decked in jewels and coronated as the King of Takkasilā. Shunning the four evil paths (*the realms of "asuras," hell, the animal realm, and the hungry ghost realm*), and following the ten paths of kingly duty (1. Not killing, 2. not stealing, 3. abstaining from sexual misconduct, 4. not lying, 5. abstaining from divisive speech, 6. abstaining from abusive speech, 7. abstaining from gossip, 8. not coveting another person's wealth 9. kindness, and 10. generosity), he ruled his kingdom in righteousness. And after a life spent in charity and other good works, he passed away to fare according to his karma.

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His story told, the Master, as Buddha, uttered this stanza:

*As one will bear a pot of oil with care,  
Full to the brim, that none will spill,  
So he who travels to foreign lands  
Should show control over his own heart.*

When the Master had given the highest teaching, which is Arahatship, he identified the birth by saying, "The Buddha's disciples were the king's courtiers in those days, and I was the prince that won a kingdom."

## **97: *Namāsiddhi Jātaka,* *The Lucky Name***

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*This is another story that addresses the issue of superstition.*

*I heard a great story about this topic from Ajahn Brahm. Superstition is still very much a part of some Asian cultures. When the great Thai forest master Ajahn Chah was at his monastery one day, a man came up to him and asked Ajahn Chah to tell him his fortune. Fortune telling is still all the rage in Thailand.*

*Ajahn Chah at first refused, because – of course – he could not tell anyone their future. But the man complained. He said that he had always been a big supporter of the monastery. He was always there for the special events. Now he just wanted one simple thing from Ajahn Chah, and he was refusing.*

*So finally Ajahn Chah agreed. He made a big show of it. He took the man's hand and used his finger to follow every line in it. He grunted and grumbled, and then he finally started to speak. "Your future," he began – just as the man looked with great anticipation – "your future," he said, "is very uncertain."*

*"Seeing Lively dead." This story was told by the Master while at Jetavana. It is about a monk who thought that luck was determined by your name. For we hear that a young man named "Shoddy," who was from a good family, had given his heart to the Dharma and joined the Saṅgha. The monks used to call to him, "Here, Brother Shoddy!" and "Stay, Brother Shoddy," until he resolved that, because the name "Shoddy" indicated wickedness and bad luck, he would change his name to one that would bring him good fortune.*

*Accordingly he asked his teachers and preceptors to give him a new name. But they said that a name only served to indicate a person but did not define qualities. They tried to convince him to be contented with the*

name he had. Time after time he renewed his request, until the whole Sangha knew how much importance he attached to a mere name.

One day they sat discussing the matter in the Dharma Hall, and the Master entered and asked what they were discussing. Being told, he said "This is not the first time this monk has believed that luck was determined by a name. He was just as dissatisfied with the name he had in a former age." So saying he told this story of the past.

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Once upon a time the Bodhisatta was a teacher of worldwide fame at Takkasila University, and 500 young brahmins learned the Vedas from him. One of these young men was named "Shoddy." And from constantly hearing his fellow students say, "Go, Shoddy" and "Come, Shoddy," he longed to get rid of his name and to take one that had a less ominous ring to it. So he went to his master and asked to be given a new name, one that would give him a respectable character. His master said, "Go, my son, and travel through the land until you have found a name you like. Then come back and I will change your name for you."

The young man did as he was told. Taking provisions for the journey, he wandered from village to village until he came to a certain town. Here a man named "Lively" had died. The young brahmin saw him being taken to the cemetery, and he asked what his name was.

"Lively," was the reply.

"What, can Lively be dead?"

"Yes, Lively is dead. No matter what, someone named 'Lively' will die just the same. A name only serves to mark who's who. You seem like a fool."

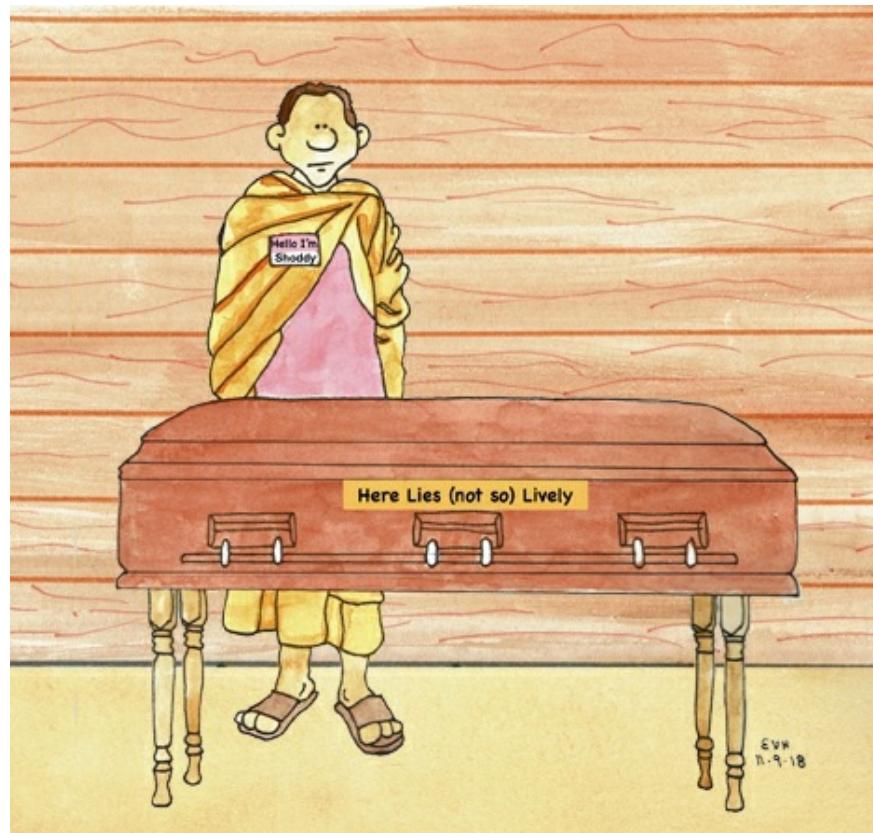


Figure: Not So Lively

Hearing this he went on into the city, feeling neither satisfied nor dissatisfied with his own name.

Now a servant girl had been thrown down at the door of a house while her master and mistress beat her with a rope because she had not brought home her wages. The girl's name was Rich. Seeing the girl being beaten as he walked along the street, he asked why she was being beaten. He was told that it was because she had no wages to show for her work.

"And what is the girl's name?"

"Rich," they said.

"And cannot Rich make good on a paltry day's pay?"

"Whether she is called Rich or Poor, the money is not there. A name only serves to mark who's who. You seem like a fool."

Becoming more reconciled to his name, the young brahmin left the city. On the road he found a man who had lost his way. Having learned that he was lost, the young man asked what his name was. "Guide," was the reply.

"And have you lost your way, Guide?"

"With a name like Guide or even Misguide, you can lose your way just the same. A name only serves to mark who's who. You seem a fool."

Quite reconciled now to his name, the young brahmin went back to his master.

"Well, what name have you chosen?" the Bodhisatta asked.

"Master," he said, "I found that death comes to 'Lively,' that 'Rich' and 'Poor' may both be poor, and that 'Guide' and 'Misguide' alike can lose their way. I know now that a name serves only to tell who is who, and does not determine its owner's destiny. So I am satisfied with my own name, and I do not want to change it."

Then the Bodhisatta uttered this stanza, combining what the young brahmin had done with the sights he had seen:

*Seeing Lively dead, Guide lost, Rich poor,  
Shoddy became content and traveled no more.*

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His story told, the Master said "So you see, monks, that in former days as now this monk imagined there was a great deal in a name." And he identified the birth by saying, "This monk who is discontented with his name was the discontented young brahmin of those days. The Buddha's disciples were the pupils, and I myself was their master."

## **98: Kūṭavāṇija Jātaka, The Dishonest Trader**

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*There is a lot of subtle humor in the Pāli Canon, and this story is a good example of that. The Bodhisatta in this story is no man with whom to triflē, as the father of the cheating merchant finds out as he scrambles to avoid being roasted!*

“Wise rightly, Wisest wrongly.” This story was told by the Master while at Jetavana. It is about a cheating merchant. There were two merchants who were partners at Sāvatthī, we are told, who travelled with their merchandise and came back with their profit. The cheating merchant thought to himself, “My partner has been badly fed and badly housed for so many days that he will die of indigestion now that he is home again and can eat to his heart’s desire on rich foods. I will divide our profit into three portions, giving one to his children and keeping two for myself.” And with this plan he made an excuse day after day for delaying the distribution of the profits.

Finally realizing that it was a waste of time to try and get his money, the honest partner went to the Master at the monastery. He saluted him, and he was received kindly. “It is a very long time,” the Buddha said, “since you last came to see me.” And thereupon the merchant told the Master what had happened.

“This is not the first time, lay follower,” the Master said, “that this man has been a cheating merchant. He was a cheat in times past. As he tries to defraud you now, he also tried to defraud the wise and good of other days.” So saying, at the merchant’s request the Master told this story of the past.

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Once upon a time when Brahmadatta was reigning in Benares, the

Bodhisatta was born into a merchant's family. On his naming day he was named 'Wise.' When he grew up he became partners with another merchant who was named 'Wisest,' and he traded with him.

Those two took 500 wagons of merchandise from Benares to the country districts. There they sold their wares, and then they returned with their profits to the city. When the time for dividing came, Wisest said, "I should have a double share."

"Why?" asked Wise.

"Because while you are only named 'Wise,' I am named 'Wisest.' And Wise should only get one share to Wisest's two."

"But," Wise said, "we both had an equal interest in the stock-in-trade and in the oxen and wagons. Why should you get two shares?"

"Because I am Wisest."

And so they talked and talked until they started to quarrel.

"Ah!" Wisest thought, "I have a plan."

He got his father to hide in a hollow tree. He told the old man that when the two merchants came that he should say, "Wisest should have a double portion." Having arranged this, he went to the Bodhisatta and proposed to him to settle the issue of the double share by asking the Tree Sprite. He made his appeal with the words, "Lord Tree Sprite, decide our cause!" The father, who was hidden in the tree, disguised his voice, and he asked them to state their cases. The cheat addressed the tree as follows, "Lord, here stands Wise, and here stand I Wisest. We have been partners in trade. Declare what share each should receive."

"Wise should receive one share, and Wisest two," was the response.

Hearing this decision, the Bodhisatta resolved to find out whether it was indeed a Tree Sprite or not. So he filled the hollow trunk with straw and

set fire to it. Wisest's father was half roasted by the rising flames. He clambered up the tree by clutching hold of a limb. Falling to the ground, he uttered this stanza:

*Wise rightly, Wisest wrongly got his name.  
Through Wisest, I nearly roasted in the flame.*



Figure: The Toast of the Town

Then the two merchants divided the profits and each took half, and at their deaths passed away to fare according to their karma.

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"So you see," the Master said, "that your partner was as great a cheat in the past as he is now." Having ended his story, he identified the birth by saying, "The cheating merchant of today was the cheating merchant in the story, and I was the honest merchant named Wise."

## **99: Parosahassa Jātaka, Misunderstood**

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*This story is a tribute to Sāriputta, who is generally regarded to have the greatest intellect among the Buddha's followers. It shows a common occurrence in the Pāli Canon, and that is when the Buddha gave a very terse statement on something and then retired to his hut. Many times the monks would then go to Sāriputta to get a fuller explanation.*

*"Far better than a thousand fools."* This story was told by the Master when at Jetavana. It is about the question of the unconverted.

(The incidents will be related in the Sarabhaṅga Jātaka [Jātaka 522].)

On a certain occasion the monks met in the Dharma Hall and praised the wisdom of Sāriputta, the Commander of the Dharma, who had expounded the meaning of the Buddha's concise statement. Entering the hall, the Master asked what the monks were discussing, and they told him. "This is not the first time, monks," he said, "that the meaning of a concise statement of mine has been explained by Sāriputta. He did so likewise in times gone by." So saying, he told this story of the past.

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Once upon a time when Brahmadatta was reigning in Benares, the Bodhisatta was born into the family of a northern brahmin. He subsequently completed his education at Takkasilā University. Abandoning sensual desire and renouncing the world for the life of a recluse, he won the Five Knowledges (*the power of faith, the power of moral shame, the power of moral dread, the power of energy, and the power of wisdom*) and the Eight Attainments (*the eight jhānas*). He lived in the Himalayas where 500 recluses gathered round him.

One rainy season, his chief disciple went with half the recluses to the

domain of men to get salt and vinegar. That was the time when the Bodhisatta was about to die. His disciples, wishing to know his spiritual attainment, said to him, "What excellence have you won?"

"Won?" he said. "I have won Nothing." (*He is referring to the 7th jhāna, the base of no-thingness.*) So saying, he died. He was reborn in the Brahma Realm of Radiant Devils. (For Bodhisattas, even though they may have attained to the immaterial jhānas, are never reborn in the Formless World because they are incapable of passing beyond the Realm of Form.)

(*In the Buddhist Cosmology, there are four immaterial realms into which you are born if you can master the four immaterial jhānas. According to this text, however, a Bodhisatta will not be reborn into those realms.*)

However, his disciples misunderstood him. They thought that he meant that he did not have any spiritual attainments. As a result, they did not pay the customary honors at his cremation.

When he returned, the chief disciple learned that the master was dead. He asked the monks whether they had asked him about his spiritual attainments. "He said he had won nothing," they said, "So we did not pay him the usual honors at cremation."

"You did not understand his meaning," that chief disciple said. "Our master meant that he had attained insight into the Base of No-thingness." But even though he explained this again and again to the disciples, they did not believe him.

Knowing their disbelief, the Bodhisatta cried, "Fools! they do not believe my chief disciple. I will make this thing plain unto them." And he came from the Brahma Realm and by virtue of his mighty powers rested in midair above the hermitage and uttered this stanza in praise of the wisdom of the chief disciple:

*Far better than a thousand fools, though they  
Cry out a hundred years unceasingly,  
Is one who, hearing, straightway understands.*

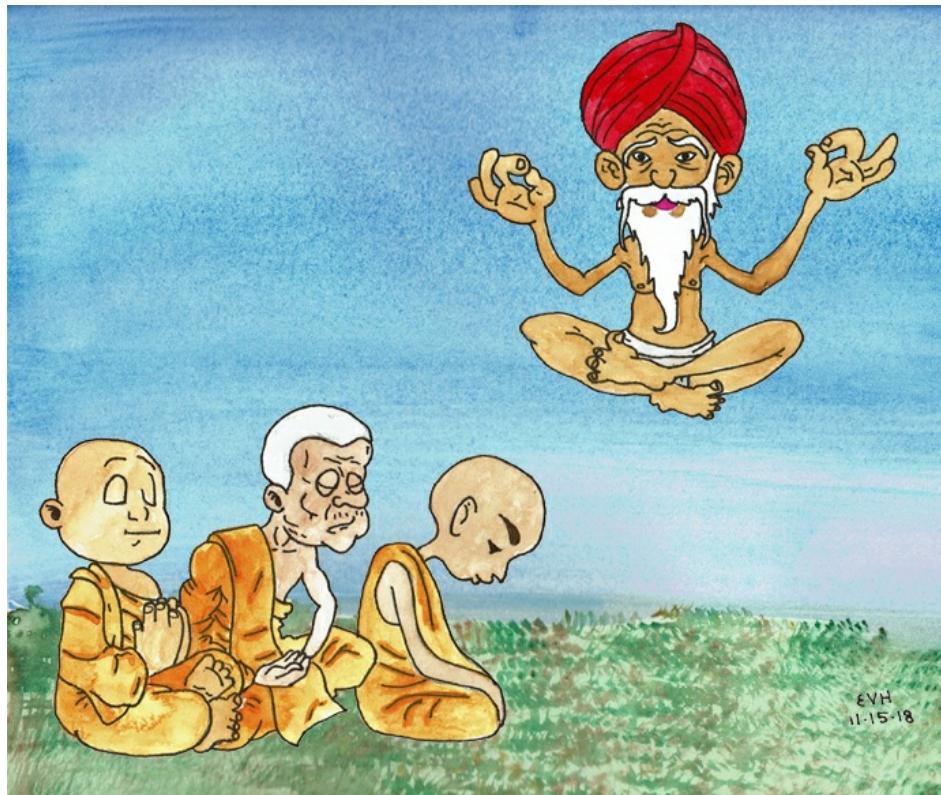


Figure: Remedial Dharma Class

Thus did the Great Being - from midair - proclaim the Dharma and chastise the band of recluses. Then he passed back to the Brahma Realm, and all those hermits, too, qualified themselves for rebirth in the same Realm.

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His lesson ended, the Master identified the birth by saying, “Sāriputta was the chief disciple of those days, and I was Mahā-Brahma.”

# **100: Asātarūpa Jātaka, The Suffering Body**

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*This story is clearly about karma and the fruits thereof. But there are also a couple of interesting points here. First, the prince who blockades Benares is doing what I think most people would do in his situation. Yet - presumably because of the harm that he did - this becomes a karmic burden for him. This shows the extreme consequences of doing harm of any kind.*

*The other interesting tidbit is that the father of the prince – who dies before all this happens – was the Bodhisatta. This is the second story in a row where the Bodhisatta dies before the main events occur.*

“*Disguised as joy.*” This story was told by the Master while at Kuṇḍadṛhānavana near the city of Kuṇḍiya. It is about Suppavāsā, a lay sister, who was the daughter of King Koliya. At that time she had been carrying a child for seven years in her womb. She was in the seventh day of her labor, and her pains were torment. In spite of all her agony, she thought, “The Blessed One who is All-Enlightened preaches the Dharma so that suffering may end. The disciples of the Blessed One are blessed that they may walk the path so that suffering may end. Blessed is Nirvana where such suffering ends.” These three thoughts consoled her in her pains. And she sent her husband to the Buddha to tell him her condition and to send her greetings to him.

Her message was given to the Blessed One, who said, “May Suppavāsā, daughter of the King of the Koliyas, grow strong and well again and bear a healthy child.” And at the word of the Blessed One, Suppavāsā, daughter of the King of the Koliyas, became well and strong, and she bore a healthy child. Finding on his return that his wife had been safely delivered, the husband marveled greatly at the exalted powers of the Buddha. Now that her child was born, Suppavāsā was eager to give alms

for seven days to the Sangha with the Buddha at its head. She sent her husband back to invite them.

Now it so happened that at that time the Saṅgha - with the Buddha at its head - had received an invitation from a layman who supported the Elder Moggallāna the Great. But the Master, wishing to gratify Suppavāsā's charitable desires, sent word to the Elder to explain the matter. And so the Sangha accepted the hospitality of Suppavāsā for seven days.

On the seventh day she dressed up her little boy, whose name was Sīvali, and made him bow before the Buddha and the Saṅgha. When in due course he was brought to Sāriputta, the Elder greeted the infant with kindness. He said, "Well, Sīvali, is all well with you?"

"How could it be, sir?" the infant said. "I had to wallow in blood for seven long years."

Then in joy Suppavāsā exclaimed, "My child, only seven days old, is actually discussing religion with the apostle Sāriputta, the Captain of the Faith."

"Would you like another such a child?" the Master asked.

"Yes, sir," said Suppavāsā. "I would like seven more, if I could have them like him."

In solemn words the Master gave thanks for Suppavāsā's hospitality and departed.

When he was seven years of age, the child Sīvali gave his heart to the Dharma. He renounced the world to join the Saṅgha. When he was twenty, he was given full ordination. He was so virtuous that he won the Fruit of the Dharma which is Arahatship, and the earth shouted aloud for joy.

So one day the assembled monks talked with one another in the Dharma

Hall with respect to this story, saying, "The Elder Sīvali, who is now a shining light, was the child of many prayers. For seven long years he was in the womb and his mother was in labor for seven days. How great the pains of the mother and child must have been! What was the cause of this great pain?"

Entering the hall, the Master asked what they were discussing. "Monks," he said, "the righteous Sīvali was in the womb for seven years and the labor took seven days because of his own past deeds. And similarly, Suppavāsā's pregnancy of seven years and her labor of seven days resulted from her own past deeds." So saying, he told this story of the past.

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Once upon a time when Brahmadatta was reigning in Benares, the Bodhisatta was the child of the queen consort. He grew up and was educated at Takkasilā University, and at his father's death he became King, and he ruled righteously.

Now in those days the King of Kosala came up with a great army against Benares and killed the King and took his queen to be his own wife.

When the King was killed, his son made his escape through the sewer. Afterwards he collected a mighty army and went back to Benares. Making camp nearby, he sent a message to the King to either surrender the kingdom or give battle. And the King sent back the answer that he would give battle. But the mother of the young prince, hearing of this, sent a message to her son, saying, "There is no need to do battle. Let every approach to the city on every side be blocked and barred until a lack of firewood and water and food wears out the people. Then the city will fall into your hands without any fighting."

Following his mother's advice, the prince besieged the city for seven days with a blockade that was so fierce that on the seventh day the citizens cut off their King's head and brought it to the prince. Then he entered the city and made himself King, and when his life ended he passed away to

fare according to his karma.

Thus did the Great Being - from midair - proclaim the Dharma and chastise the band of recluses. Then he passed back to the Brahma Realm, and all those hermits, too, qualified themselves for rebirth in the same Realm.

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Figure: The Ill-conceived Siege

The result and consequence of his acts in blockading the city for those seven days was that for seven years he lived in the womb and the labor lasted seven days. However, in a previous life he had fallen at the feet of the Buddha Padumuttara (*13th of the documented 28 Buddhas*) and had prayed with many gifts that the crown of Arahatship might be his. And in the days of the Buddha Vipassī (*the 22nd Buddha*) he had offered up the same prayer. As a result, he and his townsfolk, with gifts of great value, won the crown of Arahatship by his merit. And because Suppavāsā sent the message telling her son to blockade the city, she was doomed to a seven-year pregnancy and to a seven days labor.

His story ended, the Master, as Buddha, repeated these verses:

*Disguised as joy and blessings, sorrow comes  
And trouble, the low-life's heart to overwhelm.*

And when he had taught this lesson, the Master identified the birth by saying, "Sīvali was the prince who blockaded the city and became King. Suppavāsā was his mother, and I was his father, the King of Benares."