

II. A NAUGHTY JATAKA: KACCHAPA 273.

Of the 547 jataka stories of the Pali *Jātakatthavannanā*, edited and published in six volumes by Prof. V. Fausböll,¹ 546 have been rendered into English by various hands under the editorship of Prof. E.B. Cowell.² The single story which has not been put into English - and as far as I am aware, no one else has done so either - is the *Kacchapa Jataka* (No.273); it alone appears in Cowell in the pellucid Latin of W.H.D. Rouse.³

Learned though he was in both languages, Rouse's purpose in couching the *Kacchapa Jataka* in Latin was certainly not out of any intention of displaying his linguistic dexterity - though indeed you will find the rendition of the Pali into Latin absolutely delightful. What his purpose was would surely be evident to anyone acquainted with the story, whether through the Pali *Jātakatthavannanā*, or the Sinhala thereof of the *Pansiya Panas Jataka Potha*, or through some other literary or oral source. To put it blandly, it is nothing short of the lewdness thereof, which the translator has sought to veil from the casual English readership, and yet at the same time vouchsafe to the scholarly, by the use of the exclusive Latin. No doubt it was feared that the unsuspecting reader would have been embarrassed by the dirty doings of the Jataka's lecherous monkey, not to mention the equally reproachable conduct of its indignant tortoise, which put an end to the monkey's pranks.

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1. *The Jataka* London (1879 - 1896; PTS reprint 1963 - 1964) vol. VII is the Index.
 2. *The Jataka* London (1895 - 1907); PTS reprint 1957.
 3. Cowell *op.cit* vol. II, p. 246 - 247. For the Pali, see Fausboll *op.cit* vol. II, p. 359 - 361. This jataka has had the alternate title *Bhinna-Samaggi Jataka*, i.e. 'Sundered Unity Jataka'; see Pali manuscript No. 135 in *Bibliothèque Nationale*, Paris. See also Akira Yuyama, *Kacchapa-Jataka: Erzählung von der Schildkröte und der Kanzwinder*, Tokyo (1983) p. xx for references to texts and translations of our jataka under *Die Schildkröte, der Affe und der Einsiedler*.

The sad thing about this is that it has, at the same time, deprived the wider readership of the enjoyment of one of the most picturesque and dramatic of the lesser jatakas - and one which would indeed have gone a long way towards adding a mischievous dimension to the Jataka Bodhisatta's sense of humour.

Things are very different in this day and age as regards permissiveness in literature, if not also in sex itself, so much so that reference to the oral, and even aural intercourse practised by a deviant monkey is not likely to evoke in the adult readership anything more than the degree of surprised amusement, which the Bodhisatta himself felt upon seeing this and the predicament into which it had got the impudent creature. I give here, therefore, a translation into English of this jataka, done jointly with my friend and colleague Dr. K.S. Warnasuriya⁴, which should both satisfy the deficiency in Cowell as well as provide itself for the discussion of one or two points which I propose to undertake thereafter.

No. 273

KACCHAPA JĀTAKA

Who is this brahmin I see, with begging-bowl in hand etc.

This story the Master narrated during a stay in Jetavana with a view to terminating a quarrel between two high ranking ministers of the king of Kosala.⁵ The story of the present has already been told in the Second Book.

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4. Of the Department of Pali and Buddhist Studies. My contribution here is limited to the English expression. I take this opportunity to thank also Profs. A.S. Kulasuriya and Ratna Handurukande for their assistance with the translation and interpretation of the Pali on numerous occasions.
 5. The circumstances are given in full in the *Uraga Jātaka* (No. 154), according to which these two great personages, no sooner they caught sight of one another, used to fall at ill words. Neither king nor friends nor kinsmen could make them agree. The manner in which the Master reconciled them was by first going to the house of one and partaking of alms, then, after preaching the blessings of Loving-kindness and making him carry his alms-bowl, (contd.)

In days gone by, when Brahmadata was ruling in Benares, the Bodhisatta was born into a brahmin family in the kingdom of Kasi. When he grew up, he received education at Takkasila and abandoning all sensual pleasures, went forth to the foothills of the Himalayas. There, on the bank of the Ganges he built himself a hut of leaves, and developing the special insights and attainments, enjoyed the bliss of ecstasy. In this very life itself did he achieve sublime indifference of mind and attain . the perfection of equanimity.

Now, when he used to be seated in front of his hermitage, a bold and immoral monkey was in the habit of coming up to him and copulating in the orifice of his ear. Even so the Bodhisatta remained unperturbed, nor did he shoo him off.

One day it happened that a tortoise had come out of the water to bask in the sun and had fallen asleep with his mouth open. When the lecherous monkey saw this, he went up to the tortoise and began to copulate in his mouth. Aroused from his sleep, the tortoise clamped his jaws shut like a box upon the monkey's penis. Great pain came upon the monkey, and unable to endure it, he thought to himself: "Who is there who would relieve me of this agony? To whom shall I go? There is no other person who can release me from my suffering except the ascetic. I had better go to him." He then lifted the tortoise up with both his hands and went to the Bodhisatta.

When the Bodhisatta saw him, he teased him with the words of this first stanza:

Who is this brahmin I see with begging bowl in hand?
Where have you gone for alms? What devotee approached.

going to the house of the other. There, having done the same, he established them in the Truths and brought them together. In the *Uraga*, in their earlier birth these magnates were respectively a snake and a garula, in the *Nakula* (No. 165), which uses the same *paccuppannavatthu*, they were a snake and a mongoose.

When the immoral monkey heard this, he replied:

I am a foolish monkey, who has done what he should
not have done;
Release me, sir; and if you do, I'll go to the
mountains yonder.

Thereupon the Bodhisatta addressed the tortoise and
spoke the third stanza, saying:

Tortoises are Kassapas, monkeys Kondaññas by clan;
Kassapa, let go Kondañña; by you too has sex been had,

The tortoise heard these words of the Bodhisatta and was
pleased and released the monkey's penis. No sooner was this
done than the monkey, having saluted the Bodhisatta, fled the
place - nor did he so much as cast a backward glance once he
turned his back upon it. The tortoise too saluted the Bodhi-
satta and went his way. As for the Bodhisatta, by dint of
his undiminished practice of ecstasy, he attained birth in the
Brahma-world.

When this discourse was ended, the Master declared the
Truths and identified the Birth: "The Tortoise and the Monkey
were the two high ranking ministers, and I myself was the
ascetic."

The two points on which I wish to make observations have
already had brief comments from Rouse. The first of these is
on the first verse of the first stanza in the jātaka, upon
which the jātaka as a whole is commentarial:

Ko nu uddhitabattho va.....

Rouse observes: "The tortoise looked like a begging
bowl."⁶ Indeed so, and one that was heavy with food; but so

6. Cowell *op.cit* p. 247, n. 1.

did the monkey carrying him look like an aged, arthritic monk on his alms-rounds. It seems to me that what we have here is no accidental parallel of images, but that the idea of the former - and indeed the story built upon it in mischievous vein by our jataka author - has been inspired by the sight, common enough in the society in which the jatakas had their birth - of a mendicant ascetic on his begging rounds.

The second matter concerns the third stanza, the words spoken by the Bodhisatta to the tortoise to get him to release the penis of the monkey, upon which he had closed his teeth:

*Kacchapā kassapā honti, kondaññā honti makkatā.
muñca kassapa kondañnam, katañ methunakam taya.*

Coming as it does, when the immoral monkey, who had copulated in the Bodhisatta's ear but escaped unpunished, had been taught a lesson when he tried the same sort of thing with the tortoise, it is indeed, as Rouse says, "curious".⁷ For, the situation had been built up to a point where, in a fable or ethical story, it was poised for moral injunction or a value judgement of some sort, which would have set the misdemeanor of the offender in the desired moral perspective.

This is just what we find in the Sinhala version of this *Kacchapa Jataka* in the *Pansiya Panas Jataka Potha*, which is at the same time totally innocent of any talk of Kassapas and Kondaññas.⁸ For there, when the monkey comes to the Bodhisatta, pleads to having done what he should not have done and

7. Cowell *loc.cit* n. 2. Rouse translates:
*Cassapa testudo genus est: Condannus at ille:
Cassapa Condannum mitte fututa precor.*
8. *Pansiya Panas Jataka Poth Vahanse* ed. Weerasingha Pathiraja vol. III (1955) p. 525.

begs to be freed from his suffering, the Bodhisatta addresses the tortoise thus:⁹

"ලෙහින වජ්ජරා ගෙලිටුන ත්‍රියාවෙහි තෘෂ්ණාව බලවත් හෙයින්,
ලොහු පිත පිතා දුෂ්ඨතථි තෙජේය. තොපිත් උ ජේථ
අඤ්ඤායෙත්ඤ? අප්පියව!"

(This here monkey, out of desire for the sexual act, was fully aware of the deed he was going. Are you too such a fool? - let go!)

If the tortoise too is reprimanded here as a fool, it is for the way in which he had reacted to the monkey's act i.e. in contrast to the Bodhisatta himself (whose unperturbedness of mind had made him impassive to such things).

What the third stanza in the Pali, which is replaced by this admonition in the Sinhala version, implies, on the other hand, is that, the tortoise also has been party to this act with the monkey (*katam methunakam taya*) and that (to go by the Pali commentator) to that extent he too is sinful.¹⁰ But the startling thing is that, having granted this to be so, the action of the monkey and the alleged collusion of the tortoise are both condoned on the grounds that (since Kassapas and Koṇḍaññas intermarry, and our tortoise is a Kassapa and our monkey Kondañña) nothing out of the way has taken place! all is in accord with the laws of marriage of these clans (*gottasadisatasamkhatassa methunadhammassa anucchavikam*).

9. *ibid.*

10. The gloss on this reads:

Tass' attho : kacchapā nāma kassapagottā honti makkatā koṇḍañṇagotta, kassapakonḍañṇānāni ca añṇāmanānāni avāhavivāhasambandho atthi, tay' idaṃ lolena dussīlamakkatena saddhiṃ taya ca dussīlen' eva imina makkatena saddhiṃ gottasadisatasamkhā-tassa methunadhammassa anucchavikam dussīlyakammasamkhātāni pi methunakam katam, tasma miñca kassapa koṇḍañṇāni ti.

Hence "Kondañña, let go Kassapa!"¹¹

To me this seems a highly specious way for the Bodhisatta to have got over the difficulty of making the tortoise release the monkey, even if it achieved that end. For, it gives the monkey (repeatedly called *dussilo*) umbrage for what he had done, and at the same time converts the (righteous) indignation of the tortoise into a pleased acceptance (note *passano*). A monkey has sexually assaulted a tortoise - and from the wrong end at that; yet the deed is laughed off on the strength of a name and pun (*kacchapa-kassapa*). Romeo rapes Juliet - but all is well, since the Capulets have intermarriage with the Montagues!

It is little wonder, then, that the author of the Sinhala adaptation is baffled by all this and replaces this social solution with an ethical one (also, however, implicit in the Pali) in which the Bodhisatta reprimands both monkey and tortoise. But he does so at the expense of leaving the jātaka at variance with the *paccuppannavatthu* thereof. The monkey and the tortoise are not reconciled beyond being equally reprimand. Thus, the jātaka, as found in Sinhala, may be used to explain the *hostility* of the two high-ranking ministers of the king of Kosala, but not their eventual tolerance of each other through the intermediation of the Master.

On the other hand, the Pali rendition achieves this - though, as pointed out, at the expense of the moral evaluation. However, I doubt very much whether either of the ministers, who had quarreled with each other, would have been flattered by this past-life reminiscence of the Master. Instead - and rightly - they would have suspected that, when the Buddha was narrating this jātaka, he was all the while silently enjoying a broad joke at their expense!

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11. Kondañña as a clan name was common among brahmins (e.g. Buddha Kondañña) and khattiyas (e.g. Buddhas Vipassi, Sikhī and Sarabhaṅga). See G.P. Malalasekera *Dict. of Pali Proper Names*, London (1937) p. 683. The Kassapagotta was also well known. See *op.cit.* (Kassapa 28) p. 552, (Kassapagotta I) p. 553.