

REVIEW ARTICLES

APROPOS THE NAUGHTY JATAKA

Dr. Warnasuriya, when translating the *Kacchapa Jataka* (No. 273) into English in Volume XI, nos. 1 & 2 (pp. 83-90) of this journal, has omitted to take notice of a variant reading in the third stanza of the Jataka, which changes the tone of the ending considerably. He has followed Fausböll's text of the Jataka. The third stanza in that text runs thus:

*Kacchapā kassapā honti, kondaññā honti makkatā.
muñca kassapa kondaññaṃ, kāmā methunakām taya*

He translates the verses thus:

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

The variant reading, included by Fausböll as a footnote and designated as Bⁱ, C^k, C^s is *katham*. According to this reading the translation would be:

Tortoises are Kassapas, monkeys Kondaññas by clan.
Kassapa, let go Kondañña; how sex by you?

According to the Fausböll text, which Dr. Warnasuriya has followed, the Bodhisatta rather unconcernedly makes a statement to the tortoise "Sex has been had by you", and the matter ends there. This sounds even frivolous.

If, however, the variant reading *katham* is followed, the third stanza sounds more conclusive. The Bodhisatta asks the tortoise "How sex by you?" There is an argumentative tone in the ending here. There is a social evaluation also - "Tortoises are Kassapas and monkeys, are Kondaññas, so how can there be sex between you?" - indirectly implying that the two belong to two different species.

The Bodhisatta is cast in a serious pose; he is reprimanding the tortoise, since it is the tortoise who was perpetuating the unnatural congress. Of course, the shade of humour is not to be missed even so.

The implications of this reading go against the elucidation provided of the other reading by the scholiast in the *Jatakatthakatha* on this stanza. The scholiast states that since the laws of marriage permit alliance between Kassapas and Kondaññas, and since the monkey and the tortoise belong respectively to the Kondañña and Kassapa clans, a sinful sexual act, but yet one that is in accordance with the clan laws of marriage, has taken place (*gottasadisatasaṅkatassa methunadhhammassa anuechavikaṃ dussīlyakāraṇasaṅkhātam pi methunakāṃ katam*). If the reading *katham* is accepted, the gloss is misleading.

The variant reading *katham*, according to Fausböll, occurs in the Burmese mss. of the India office (B¹). Dr. Warnasuriya has followed Fausböll in using the mss. of the 'Cingalese Redaction'. Fausboll himself states in the 'Preliminary Remarks' at the beginning of his edition (*The Jataka*, London, Trübner and Co., 1879) that the Burmese mss. in fact represents a redaction different from the 'Cingalese' and "*in some cases have most likely preserved the true reading* but notwithstanding this, I shall, as I have once resolved, still continue to give the Cingalese Redaction in the text and put the Burmese readings in the footnotes".

Thus, in view of the importance given by Fausböll to the Burmese reading, *katham* deserves special notice.

The Buddha Jayanthi Tripitaka Granthamāla No. 30 in the *Jataka Pali*, Part I, published by the Government of Sri Lanka, treats the text of the *Kacchapa Jataka* on pages 138 and 139. The Venerable Madihe Pannasiha Maha Nayaka Thera translates the third verses of the *Kacchapa Jataka*, which is under discussion here,

ඉදිබුටෝ කාශ්‍යප ගෝත්‍රය අත්තෝ වෙති. වජ්‍රරෝ
 කෝඨිඤ්ඤ ගෝත්‍ර අත්තෝ වෙති. කාශ්‍යපය, කෝඨිඤ්ඤ
 මුදව, කාශ්‍යප ගෝත්‍රයෙහි උපාංගු විසින් කෝඨිඤ්ඤ
 ගෝත්‍රයෙහි උපාංගු හා කොසම මෙවුනු කාශ්‍යපයෝ
 කරන ලදි.

The translator has used the words කොසම මෙවුනු *anugamañ* (i.e. 'an unequal act of sex') in his translation. The text offers no basis for කොසම 'unequal'). The text followed by the translator is the same as that adopted by Fausboll and used by Dr. Warnasuriya - not the reading with *katham*.

When I approached the Venerable Mahanayaka Thera for an elucidation of this point, he declared that he 'probably' translated *methunakam* as කොසම මෙවුනු කාශ්‍යපයෝ because the suffix *ka* added to a noun gave a pejorative sense to the word. The noun here is *methuna*, which means 'coitus'.

The PTS Dictionary (1966) gives *methuna* (nt) as 'sexual intercourse', and *methunaka* (i.e. *methuna* with suffix *ka*) as 'one concerned with illicit intercourse', 'a fornicator'. The pejorative sense is there in the agent noun *methunaka*, and so far the Mahanayaka Thera is right. But under the entry "nt" (i.e. *methunakam*) it gave the meaning 'coitus' (*methunadhamma*). There is no pejorative sense attached.

Therefore, despite the Venerable translator's explanation (give at a busy moment), it appears that the Sinhala reading කොසම මෙවුනු කාශ්‍යපයෝ cannot be allowed by the text. The gloss to the *Jatakatthakatha* too does not permit it (*gottasadisatasamkhatassa methunadhammassa anucchavikam dussilyakammasamkhatam pi methunakam katham*). In view of the fact that the Sinhala කොසම is insupportable on all grounds, it is not proposed to discuss its implication here.

The confusion of commentators on this Jataka must to a large extent have owed itself to (a) the immorality of the action (whence the monkey is called *dussilo*), (b) the happiness of the tortoise with the Bodhisatta's observation

(in the third stanza, whence he is said to have left *pasanno*) and (c) the need for the same judgement to have settled the hostility that there had been between the participants (which is only to be expected by the parallel in the *paccupannavatthu*). Interpretation based on the reading *katham* is not more successful in satisfying all these items than is the reading *katam*.

On the other hand, it must be noted that in the version of the story found in the Sinhalese *Pansiya Panas Jataka Potha* the tortoise is found to be equally reprehensible (if at least for his folly), and to that extent the writer there appears to have justified the reading *katam* as against *katham*. Thus, between the two, Dr. Warnasuriya's preference (for all its awkwardness in projecting the Bodhisatta as making light of the sinful and unnatural congress of monkey and tortoise) may stand - and with it a likelihood of an attitude of condescending humour on the Bodhisatta's part at the little jungle drama enacted between these two stupid creatures.

GNANASIRI GUNARATNE