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(Sahampati) Deva,datta Sutta

The (Sahampati) Discourse on Deva,datta | S 6.12

Theme: Honour destroys a false person

Translated & annotated by Piya Tan ©2014

1 Introduction

1.1 THE SUTTA VERSE

1.1.1 According to the Saṃyutta Commentary, the event recounted here occurs not long after Deva,-datta has caused a schism,¹ and has left the Bamboo Grove to Gaya,sīsa.² Both **the Vinaya** (Cv 7.2.5) and **Pakkanta Sutta** (S 17.35) accounts, however, record the Buddha as uttering the well known verse below (which recurs in almost all the references above), not after Devadatta's schism, but when he wins Ajāta,-sattu's patronage, and also without this homily on gain, honour and praise:

Truly, the plantain's fruit destroys the plantain;
so, its fruit, the bamboo; so, its fruit, the reed—
honour destroys the false person,
just as the she-mule is destroyed by her foetus. [§4; 1.1.2]

(Cv 7.2.5 @ V 2:188 = S 597/6.12/1:154 = S 17.35,11*/2:241 = A 4.68/2:73 =
Netti §775/130; qu at DhA 3:156; cf Miln 166)

1.1.2 According to the Saṃyutta Commentary, when a she-mule mates with a horse, and becomes pregnant, she is unable to deliver when the time comes. She stands striking the ground with her hoofs. Then, they tie her feet to four stakes, cut her belly open to remove the foal, and she dies right there. (SA 2:211)

1.1.3 The Sutta verse (S 597) should be reflected on along with **Dh 164**, which runs as follows:

<p><i>Yo sāsanaṃ arahataṃ ariyānaṃ dhamma,jīvinam paṭikkosati dummedho diṭṭhiṃ nissāya pāpikam phalam kaṭṭhakass'eva atta,ghañṇāya phallati</i></p>	<p>³The one lacking wisdom who, on account of wrong view, scorns the teaching [dispensation] of the arhats, the noble ones who live the Dharma bears fruit to his own destruction, like a bamboo shoot.⁴ (Dh 164; Dh:G 258)⁵</p>
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There is a problem with translating the Pali word **kaṭṭhaka**, which is often wrongly rendered as “reed,” which does not “fruit.” In **the Gāndhārī Dharmapada**, the form is *kaḍaka*, which, says John Brough, “agrees in form with the normal Sanskrit *kaṇṭaka*, in the recognized sense of ‘bamboo’” (Dh:G 255 n258). He notes that, the Śivakośa,⁶ a 17th-century specialist dictionary of plant-names, gives *kaṇṭakah korake veṇau*, “*kaṇṭaka* and *koraka* are both bamboo” (verse 19), and **the Pali Commentary** takes the word in the same sense: “The *kaṭṭhaka*, which is normally called ‘bamboo’” (*veḷu,sañkhātassa kaṭṭhakassa*). Obviously, Brough notes, this is to prevent the reader from mistaking the word for *kaṇṭaka*, “thorn.” (id).

¹ Cf DhA 12.6/3:151-154; 12.7/3:154.

² SA 2:211; on Deva,datta's schism, see Cv 8.4-5 @ V 2:199-206; also **Saṅgha,bheda S** (It 18) + SD 46.19 (1.2).

³ This tr is not interlinear, but follows the natural flow of ideas.

⁴ Cf S 597 (S 6.12 @ SD 46.23). On the problem of the meaning of *kaṭṭhaka*, see John Brough, *Gāndhārī Dharmapada*, London, 1962:255 n258 (on Gāndhārī Dharmapada verse 258).

⁵ The Gāndhārī Dharmapada version which is practically identical, runs thus: *Ye śāsana arahadu | ari'āṇa dhama-jīvino | paḍik'sadi drumedho | diṭhi niṣa'i pavi'a | phalaṇi kaḍakas'eva | atva-kaṇa'i phaladi* (Dh:G 258). See also SD 47.3 (1.3.2.4) (2).

⁶ Śivakośa, ed R G Harshe, Poona, 1952.

The **Udāna,varga** version,⁷ in fact, adds the word *veṇu* (a variant of *veḷu*, “bamboo”), *kaṇṭaka,veṇur vā*. The last word, Brough points out, “is naturally not ‘or’,” but merely the replacement or scribal alteration which not infrequently appears for *va* when the metre will not allow *iva*, “like, compared to.” If we agree to this interpretation, then we can surmise that the Pali *kaṇṭhaka* is probably a miscopying or scribal error for *kaṇṭaka*, possibly through the intermediate stage of *kaṇṭhaka* (id).⁸

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The (Sahampati) Discourse on Deva,datta

S 6.12

1 Thus have I heard.

At one time, the Blessed One was staying on Mount Vulture Peak, outside Rāja,gāha, not long after Deva,datta had left.

2 Now, late in the night,⁹ Brahmā Sahampati, of exceeding beauty, lighting up the whole of Mount Vulture Peak, approached the Blessed One.

Having approached the Blessed One, he saluted him and stood at one side. [154]

3 Standing thus at one side, Brahmā Sahampati uttered this verse before the Blessed One in reference to Deva,datta:¹⁰

4 *Phalaṃ ve kadalim hanti
phalaṃ veḷum phalaṃ naḷam
sakkāro kāpurisaṃ hanti
gabbho assatarim yathā'ti.*

Just as the fruit destroys the plantain plant,¹¹
so, too, its fruit, the bamboo; its fruit, the reed.
Honour destroys the false person,¹²
just as the womb destroys the she-mule. **597**

— evaṃ —

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⁷ *Yaḥ śāsanam hy arhatām, āryānam dharmā,jīvinām | pratikrośati durmedhā, dṛṣṭim niḥśritya pāpikan | phalam kaṇṭaka,venura vā, phalaty ātma,vadhāya saḥ ||* (Uv 8.7).. For the Patna Dh version, see 94. Anandajoti Bhikkhu (ed), *A Comparative Edition of the Dhammapada*, Peradeniya, 2007:94.

⁸ For the death of the *kaṇṭaka* after fruiting, see W Rau, “Bermerkungen un nicht-buddhistische Sanskrit-Parallelen zum Pāli-Dhammapada,” in Claus Vogel (ed) *Jñānamuktāvali, Commemorative Volume in honour of Johannes Nobel on the occasion of his 70th birthday offered by pupils and colleagues*, New Delhi, 1959:167 (159-175). At UA 358,11 *kaṇṭaka* is tr by P Masefield as “needle,” in *kaṇṭaka,phala,sadisa*, “similar to the points of needles” (UA:M 901).

⁹ “Late in the night” (*abhikkantāya rattiyā*), or “when the night was far advanced,” ie in the middle watch: see **Suppati S** (S 4.7) @ SD 32.13 (1.1.7.2).

¹⁰ On this stanza, see (1.1).

¹¹ For other plantain imageries, see **Cūḷa Saccaka S** (M 15.22), SD 26.5; **Anatta Udāyī S** (S 35.234,10), SD 26.4. See also **Keṇiya Vatthu** (Mv 1.6.35,6 n), SD 45.7b.

¹² *Kāpurisa* = *ka* (a prefix connoting contempt) + *purisa* (BHS *kāpurusa*), a worthless or contemptible man; a bad or inferior person (V 2:188; S 1:91; Pv 21.31; Tha 1018; J 2:42 ×2). Cf *akāpurisa,sevita* (mfn), practised or cultivated by superior persons or true individuals; not practised by inferior or false persons (D 3:279; A 3:24; Tha 649; Thī 189; MA 2:231; ThaA 2:274; ThīA 162).