

# A Jātaka Story of the Future



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This story was related by the Lord Buddha Maitriya, when he was residing at Rasthrapathi Bhavan in what is known as New Delhi, the capital of the land of the Rose Apple tree (Jambu-dvīpa), in the presence of 84,000 of his disciples and 64 crores of celestial beings, as an illustration of his sermon on the ten fetters (dasa saṃyojana).

It all happened, so the Lord spoke, in the month of Esala 2565 years after the previous Buddha Gotama had set arolling the Wheel of Righteousness (Dharma Chakra) in the Deer park at Sarnath, near Baranasi (i.e May, 1961).

At that time the light of truth was still shining although somewhat dimmed after passing the zenith year of 2500, in the Island of the Copper Hand (Taprobane, Tambapani) that pearl in the ocean which had guarded the sacred books for two millennia. There the Wheel of Righteousness had been set up so firmly, that it had taken roots and ceased to roll, although it continued to embellish the various monuments and shrines built over the relics of the Blessed One, as numerous as the sands on the shores of the sea. There the spokes of the Wheel had broken through the rim, keeping it firmly in place and preventing its further progress. Of the original 24 spokes, as shown during the period of Asoka Chakravarti, only eight remained.

It happened in the month of Esala, when the mighty ruler of that country, Raja-gopallawa-achari Chakravarti was setting out from the winter palace near the shore in the leafy mango grove (kola-amba, Colombo) to depart for the rainy season to his hill capital Sri Senkadagala Mahanuwara. For he too, like all Chakravartis, had three palaces, one for the winter in the sunny shore, one for the rains in the

hilly mid country and one for the summer in the Town of Lights (Nuwara Eliya).

His departure had delayed somewhat, because of some upheaval in various quarters of the island. In the hill-capital itself there had been some disturbances, caused by the uprising of the Treasurer of the Nine Jewels (nava-ratna), who was defeated however by the nayaka of the local armed forces (sena). Even the Chakravartin's own niece, the uncrowned queen of the underworld, had been beaten back to her den of thieves (hora-golla). Communications between the three palaces had been disrupted; and so, when he arrived at the gate of his rainy weather palace, formally called the King's Pavilion, he and his party were not expected. The gate was closed and locked with a heavy chain and a mighty padlock with 10 levers; and there was no guard on duty. The walls were high and topped with pieces of glass. Even when someone suggested to call for the help of the fire brigade in scaling the walls, this was turned down by the Chakravarti himself, as he was not wearing trousers. It was usual for him to be dressed in a trouserless costume, for, in that age, although trousers were worn by men and women alike, this was not the custom among those who belonged to the ruling class of aristocracy.

Forcing the gate was out of the question, as the chain and the ten levered padlock were too formidable.

Just then there passed by a simple person, named Haridas, but better known as 'kusal-hora' the honest thief. He was perhaps the most clever burglar in the kingdom, so that there was no jail that could contain him for long. Yet he was so honest that he would never tell a lie and only steal what others had too much. Hence his nick-name 'kusal hora'.

When now his expert help was requested, he consented and asked only for a short piece of wire, and absolute silence. He explained that force

would only jam the lock, and that all attention should be directed at the problem at hand for which absolute silence and great patience were essential. Then he set to work by probing the mechanism of the lock. When he was satisfied with the working thereof, he inserted the wire made into a hook, and with infinite patience, utter gentleness and attentive listening he made the levers fall back one by one. In the silence one could hear the drop of each lever. Not a word was spoken, and all thought was fixed on the on the immediate problem of the lock.

Even the presence of the Chakravarti was forgotten, and the purpose of opening the gate to gain entrance into the King's Pavilion was no more considered. Then, with the final click the padlock dropped open, thus releasing the chain, opening the gate and allowing free entrance into the gardens of the King's Pavilion.

It was only then that the 'kusal hora' spoke quoting the words of Gotama Buddha, which are the words of all the Buddhas past and yet to come.

“If a man's thoughts are not dissipated,  
If his mind is not perplexed,  
If he has ceased to think of good and evil,  
Then there is no bar to watchfulness.”

(Dhammapada 3.7)

Thus having related this story of the honest thief, the Lord Buddha Maitriya made the following applications:

“The lock with ten levers represents the ten fetters which prevent a man from entering the path of holiness. And just as no force could open the lock, but only diligence, attention, silent application, patience and understanding so the entrance to the path of deliverance cannot be

forced by force of will power, by desire to enter, by motives of achievement, but by patient understanding and insight which comes through with intelligent awareness and mindfulness of the obstacles facing one.”

Then the Blessed one identified the honest burglar with himself in a previous life. None of the others was important enough to be recorded in history.

Then, all the 64 crores of celestial beings applauded the words of the Blessed One with shouts of ‘sādhu’ in their ignorance; while the 84,000 disciples who were Arahants worshipped him in silence.