

542. Candakumara Jataka

Khandahala

Cowell No.542

This story was narrated by the Buddha after a long preamble dealing with Devadatta attempting to kill him.

Long ago, when Varanasi was called Pupphavati, the son of king Vasavatti, named Ekaraja was reigning there. His son Canda was a Bodisdatta.

The king's chief advisor was a Brahmin named Khandahala who influenced him to rule in a bad way. He was cruel, corrupt, misjudging people, condemning and robbing them. One day a man told this to the king's son, Canda-kumara, who intended to straighten the matter with his father. When the king did find out that his people were unhappy, he was told by his minister Khandahala that, to go to save himself and heaven, he had to celebrate a huge fire sacrifice of animals and men, all his family (wives and daughters and his son Candakumar). Candakumar was known for his generosity causing great rivalry and jealousy in Khandahala, who recommended the king kill him. After hearing a series of lamentations and having doubts, King Ekaraja decided to sacrifice also his son Canda. Despite repeated pleas by his beloved sons, daughters and queens the King remained determined to fulfil the sacrifice. It was only when his grandson Vassula toddled towards the King and shouted "Grandfather spare my father! We all love you" that the King decided not to make the sacrifice anymore. But Khandahala revoked the order.

Just as Candakumar was about to be sacrificed (by fire) Sakka, king of the gods, realizing what terrible wrong was going to be committed, descended from heaven with a flaming hammer to destroy the apparel of the sacrifice (the parasols that sacrifice) set up by the king and then threatened to kill the king himself. Canda asked the crowd to forgive the king and spare his life; before going to exile the king placed Candakumar on the throne.

Illustrations of the Candakumara Jataka in Cambodia

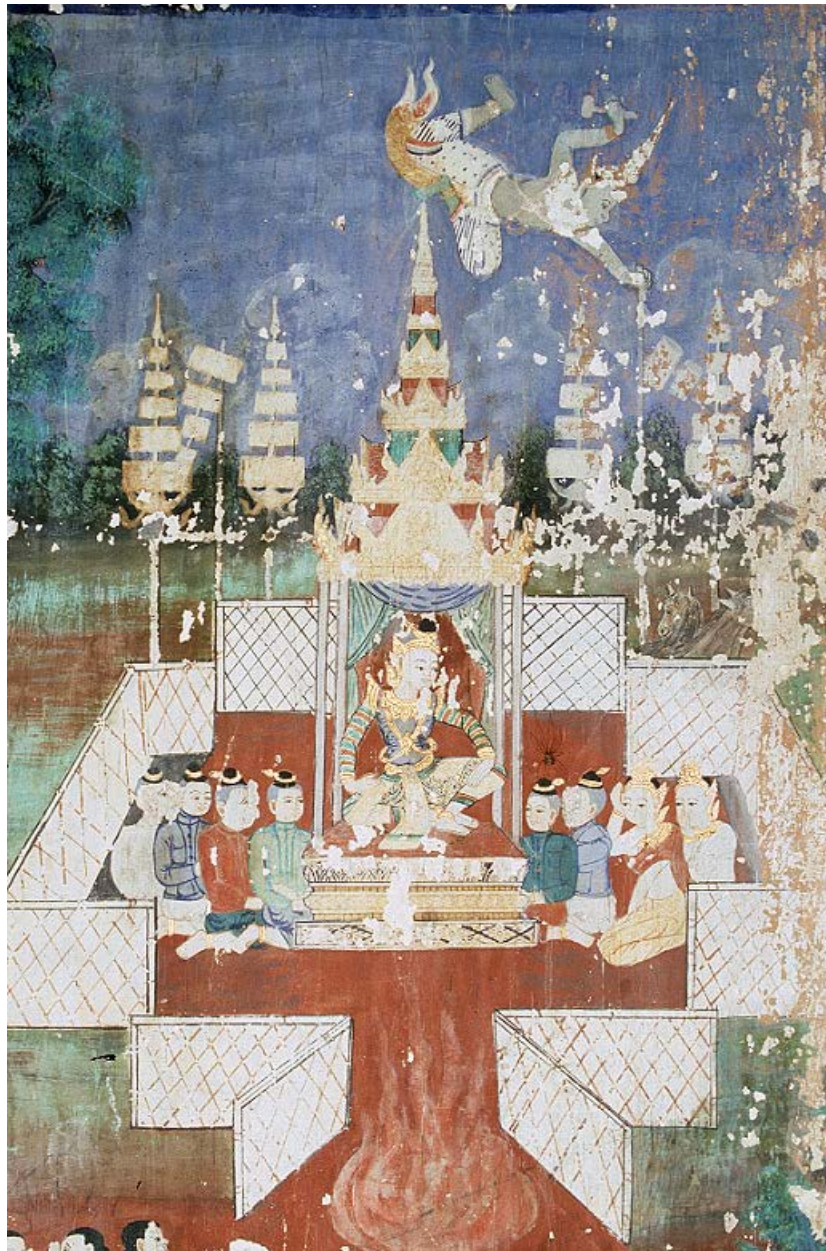


Fig.1 - **Kampong Tralach Leu.** Canda and young nobles assembled to be sacrificed by fire according to the order of Khandahala. The god Sakka (Indra) is shown demolishing the ceremonial umbrellas ending the sacrifice (20th century).



Fig.2 – **Sisowat Ratanaram** - Full explanation of the Jataka. The people of the kingdom badly ruled by a weak king advised the wicked Khandahala, had to agree to massive rituals of burning kettle and people including the young prince Canda. But the god Sakka descends from his heaven to put an end to the useless cruel sacrifice (painted around the 1920s but restored in 1984 using bright colours)



Fig.3 = Kein **Sway Krav**. A small panel condensing the story



Fig.4 – Wat **Bakong**. As part of the sacrifice, Canda has to be burned alive. In the background, Sakka is starting to cut the ceremonial umbrellas.



Fig.5 - Wat **Lolei** . The figure of a crying princess, possibly one of Cama's sisters, is usually depicted.
(Fig.3,4 probably around 1920s; fig.5 in 2002))



Fig.6 – Wat Enkosar. Canda on the sacrificial fire Fig.7- Angkor Wat South monastery.



Fig.8 – Wat Southern monastery.



Fig.9 – Wat Chikong



Fig.10 – Prei Weng



Fig.11 - Prei Dong Eum. The intervention of Sakka

(All Figures of images painted after 1975)



Fig.12 – **Wat Nokor northern vihara**. (probably painted in the 18th century, but repainted so many times that the original is irreconisable)



Fig. 13 – **Stung Trend**



Fig.14 – **Wat Prasat Andet**. Canda and nobles assembled with kettles.

(both painted after 1975)

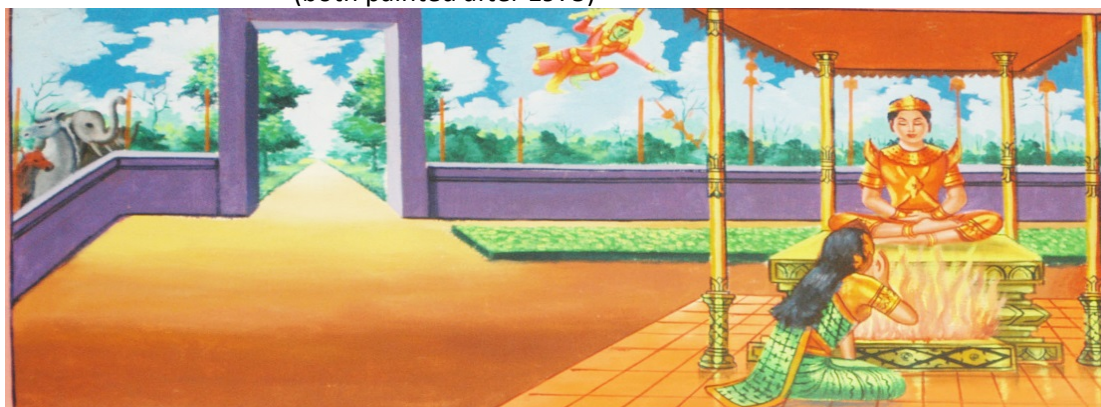


Fig.15 – **Bakong Village vihara** (around 1920s)

Illustrations of the Candakumara Jataka in Thailand



Fig.16 – **Wat Chong Nonsi.** Kettle end humans are tightly caged under the incitement of the wicket Khandahala, in view of a ceremonial fire to kill all of them. On the mural, broken parasols are visible, but the figure of Sakka breaking them has been washed away.



Fig.17 – **Wat Nai Rong** – a large scene of the ceremony interruption by Sakka(Indra). Canda is probably represented in the Royal Palace with his mother or sister.



Fig18 – Wat Dararam. The chaotic scene when the just started sacrifice is cancelled by Sacca, who has started to break a ceremonial umbrella. Canda and nobles are still in pavilions built for the occasion.



Fig.19 – Detail of next page panel. Notice that Sacca (the god Indra) is shown within a special cloud, typical of Thai painting.



Fig.20 Wat Saket – Large scene with the main part of the story.



Fig.21 – **Wat Nai Rong** . The full scene with Cama isolated in a white pavilion witnessing the arrival of Indra and his destruction of the ceremonial parasols. The terrified farmers have invaded the city but the king talks to his assembly.



Fig.22 – Bangkok National Library. Candacumara Jataka.

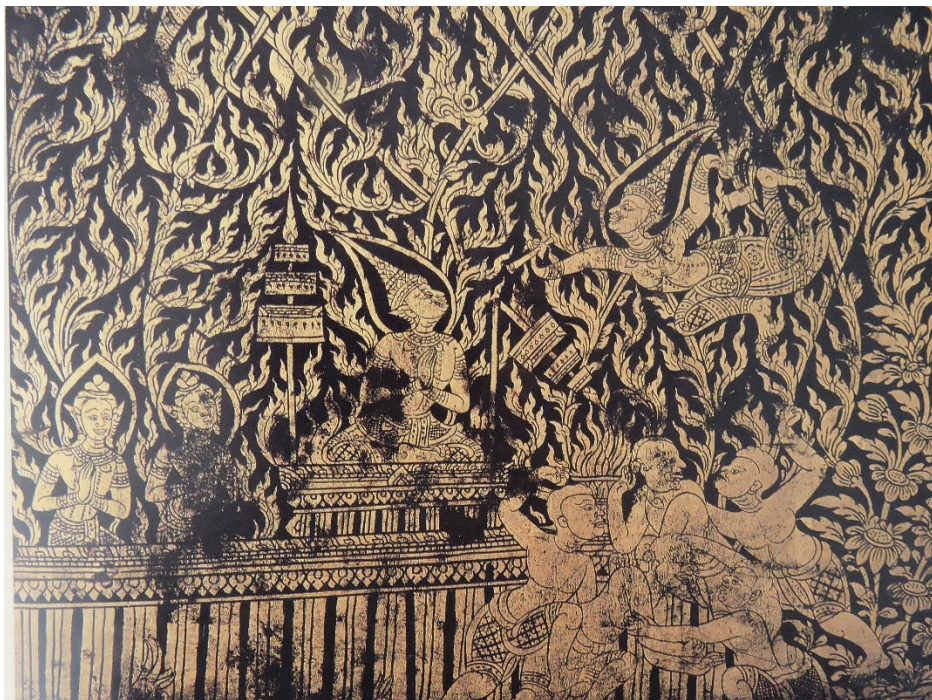


Fig.23 – Bangkok National Library. Candacumar Jataka.

Illustrations of the Candakumar jataka in Burma

The Canda Kumara Jataka is locally named Sandakumara, with narratives noticeable different s from the Pali edition. The king of the Nats supported the idea Kandahala continuing the massacre. It was thanks to Sakka intervening to disrupt the sacrifice by breaking the ceremonial umbrellas.



Fig.24 – **Golden Palace monastery. Mandalay.** To the left of the carved panel, we can see rooms of the royal palace in which presumably King Ekarit and his evil advisor Kandahala are preparing a dice game. At the centre, soldiers force Candakumara to go to the sacrificial pit, followed by an elephant and two horses (in the text are four and four). On the middle register, members of the royalty are aligned to the sacrificial pit with Canda nearest to the edge. Then, out from the forest appears the king of the nats. He poised a red-hot iron spear and threatened the king's life if he would not kill the innocent *kumara* (youth). Another figure holding a big hammer flies over the royal palace.



fig.25 – When Candakumara and his sister were going to be immolated by the fire set by the minister of their father, Khandhahala, Sakka intervenes to destroy the symbols of the sacrifice putting an end to the useless sacrifice. Modern postcards are available in Yangon.