Ja 1 — Apannaka Jātaka

English translation by Robert Chalmers.

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Edited by E. B. Cowell

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Pinned source revision: https://github.com/suttacentral/sc-data/commit/2d9ca8da858f94302ed6783e2717bf73d651881b

Scope: Complete numbered source article from the traditional Jātaka commentary; canonical verses appear in story context. This is not a verse-only edition.

Changes: Converted the pinned SuttaCentral HTML article to plain text; removed inline print page-reference labels and normalized whitespace. The original source retains references.

Text

This discourse regarding Truth was delivered by the Blessed One, while he was dwelling in the Great Monastery at Jetavana near Savatthi. But who, you ask, was it that led up to this tale?

Well; it was the Treasurer’s five hundred friends, disciples of the sophists.

For, one day Anatha-pindika the Treasurer, took his friends the five hundred disciples of other schools, and went off with them to Jetavana, whither also he had a great store brought of garlands, perfumes, and unguents, together with oil, honey, molasses, cloths, and cloaks. After due salutation to the Blessed One, he made his offering to him of the garlands and the like, and handed over to the Order of the Brethren the medicinal oil and so forth together with the cloths; and, this done, he took his seat on one side eschewing the six faults in sitting down. Likewise, those disciples of other schools saluted the Buddha, and took their seats close by the side of Anatha-pindika,—gazing upon the Master’s countenance, glorious as the full moon, upon his excellent presence endowed with the signs and marks of Buddhahood and encompassed to a fathom’s length with light, and upon the rich glory that marks a Buddha, a glory which issued as it were in paired garlands, pair upon pair.

Then, though in thunderous tones as of a young lion roaring in the Red Valley or as of a storm-cloud in the rainy season, bringing down as it were the Ganges of the Heavens. and seeming to weave a chaplet of jewels,—yet in a voice of eightfold perfection, the charm of which ravished the ear, he preached to them the Truth in a discourse full of sweetness and bright with varied beauty.

They, after hearing the Master’s discourse, rose up with hearts converted, and with due salutation to the Lord of Knowledge, burst asunder the other doctrines in which they had taken refuge, and betook themselves to the Buddha as their refuge. Thenceforth without

ceasing they used to go with Anatha-pindika, carrying in their hands perfumes and garlands and the like, to hear the Truth in the Monastery; and they abounded in charity, kept the Commandments, and kept the weekly fast-day.

Now the Blessed One went from Savatthi back to Rajagaha again. As soon as the Buddha had gone, they burst asunder their new faith, and returning to the other doctrines as their refuge, reverted to their original state.

After some seven or eight months' stay, the Blessed One came back to Jetavana. Once again too did Anatha-pindika come with those friends of his to the Master, make his salutation and offering of perfumes and the like, and take his seat on one side. And the friends also saluted the Blessed One and took their seats in like manner. Then did Anatha-pindika tell the Blessed One how, when the Buddha had departed on his alms-pilgrimage, his friends had forsaken their refuge for the old doctrines again, and had reverted to their original state.

Opening the lotus of his mouth, as though it were a casket of jewels, scented with scents divine and filled with divers perfumes by virtue of his having ever spoken aright throughout myriad aeons, the Blessed One made his sweet voice come forth, as he enquired—"Is the report true that you, disciples, have forsaken the Three Refuges for the refuge of other doctrines?"

And when they, unable to conceal the fact, had confessed, saying, "It is true, Blessed One," then said the Master, "Disciples, not between the bounds of hell below and the highest heaven above, not in all the infinite worlds that stretch right and left, is there the equal, much less the superior, of a Buddha in the excellences which spring from obeying the Commandments and from other virtuous conduct."

Then he declared to them the excellences of the Three Gems as they are revealed in the sacred texts, the following amongst the number,—"Of all creatures, Brethren, whether footless etc., of these the Buddha is the chief"; "Whatsoever riches there be in this or in other worlds etc."; and "Verily the chief of the faithful etc." Thence he went on to say—"No disciples, male or female, who seek refuge in the Three Gems that are endowed with such peerless excellences, are ever reborn into hell and the like states; but, released from all rebirth into states of suffering, they pass to the Realm of Devas and there receive great glory. Therefore, in forsaking such a refuge for that offered by other doctrines, you have gone astray."

(And here the following sacred texts should be cited to make it clear that none who, to find release and the supreme good, have sought refuge in the Three Gems, shall be reborn into states of suffering—

Those who have refuge in the Buddha found,

Shall not pass hence to states of suffering;

Straightway, when they shall quit their human frame,

A Deva-form these faithful ones shall fill.

Those who have refuge in the Doctrine found

etc., etc.

Those who have refuge in the Order found

etc., etc.

They're manifold the refuges men seek,

—The mountain peak, the forest's solitude,

(and so on down to)

When he this refuge shall have sought and found,

Entire release is his from every pain.)

But the Master did not end his teaching to them at this point; for he went on to say—"Disciples, meditation on the thought of the Buddha, meditation on the thought of the Truth, meditation on the thought of the Brotherhood, this it is that gives Entry to and Fruition of the First, the Second, the Third, and the Fourth Paths to Bliss." And when he had preached the Truth to them in these and other ways, he said, "In forsaking such a refuge as this, you have gone astray."

(And here the gift of the several Paths to those who meditate on the thought of the Buddha and so forth, should be made clear by such scriptures as the following—"One thing there is, Brethren, which, if practised and developed, conduces to utter loathing of the world's vanities, to the cessation of passion, to the end of being, to peace, to insight, to enlightenment, to Nirvana. What is this one thing?—The meditation on the thought of the Buddha.")

When he had thus exhorted the disciples, the Blessed One said,—"So too in times past, disciples, the men who jumped to the fatuous conclusion that what was no refuge was a real refuge, fell a prey to goblins in a demon-haunted wilderness and were utterly destroyed; whilst the men who clave to the absolute and indisputable truth, prospered in the selfsame wilderness." And when he had said this, he became silent.

Then, rising up from his seat and saluting the Blessed One, the layman Anatha-pindika burst into praises, and with clasped hands raised in reverence to his forehead, spoke thus—"It is clear to us, Sir, that in these present days these disciples were led by error into forsaking the supreme refuge. But the bygone destruction of those opinionated ones in the demon-haunted wilderness, and the prospering of the men who clave to the truth, are

hidden from us and known only to you. May it please the Blessed One, as though causing the full moon to rise in the sky, to make this thing clear to us."

Then said the Blessed One—"It was solely to brush away the world's difficulties that by the display of the Ten Perfections through myriad aeons I won omniscience. Give ear and hearken, as closely as if you were filling a tube of gold with lion's marrow."

Having thus excited the Treasurer's attention, he made clear the thing that re-birth had concealed from them, as though he were releasing the full moon from the upper air, the birthplace of the snows.

Once on a time in the city of Benares in the Kasi country there was a king named Brahmadatta. In those days the Bodhisatta was born into a merchant's family, and growing up in due course, used to journey about trading with, five hundred carts, travelling now from east to west and now from west to east. There was also at Benares another young merchant, a stupid blockhead, lacking resource.

Now at the time of our story the Bodhisatta had loaded five hundred carts with costly wares of Benares and had got them all ready to start. And so had the foolish young merchant too. Thought the Bodhisatta, "If this foolish young merchant keeps me company all along, and the thousand carts travel along together, it will be too much for the road; it will be a hard matter to get wood, water, and so forth for the men, or grass for the oxen. Either he or I must go on first." So he sent for the other and laid his view before him, saying, "The two of us can't travel together; would you rather go first or last?" Thought the other, "There will be many advantages if I go on first. I shall have a road which is not yet cut up; my oxen will have the pick of the grass; my men will have the pick of the herbs for curry; the water will be undisturbed; and, lastly, I shall fix my own price for the barter of my goods." Accordingly he replied, "I will go first, my dear sir."

The Bodhisatta, on the other hand, saw many advantages in going last, for he argued thus to himself—"Those who go first will level the road where it is rough,. whilst I shall travel along the road they have already travelled; their oxen will have grazed off the coarse old grass, whilst mine will pasture on the sweet young growth which will spring up in its place; my men will find a fresh growth of sweet herbs for curry where the old ones have been picked; where there is no water, the first caravan will have to dig to supply themselves, and we shall drink at the wells they dug. Haggling over prices is killing work; whereas I, following later, shall barter my wares at the prices they have already fixed." Accordingly, seeing all these advantages, he said to the other, "Then go you first, my dear sir."

"Very well, I will," said the foolish merchant. And he yoked his carts and set out. Journeying along, he left human habitations behind him and came to the outskirts of the wilderness. (Now wildernesses are of the five following kinds—robber wildernesses, wild-beast wildernesses, drought wildernesses, demon wildernesses, and famine wildernesses. The first is when the way is beset by robbers; the second is when the way is beset by lions and other wild beasts; the third is when there is no bathing or water to be got; the fourth is when the road is beset by demons; and the fifth is when no roots or other food are to be

found. And in this fivefold category the wilderness in question was both a drought, and a demon, wilderness.) Accordingly this young merchant took great big water-jars on his carts, and filling them with water, set out to cross the sixty leagues of desert which lay before him. Now when he had reached the middle of the wilderness, the goblin who haunted it said to himself, “I will make these men throw away their stock of water, and devour them all when they are faint.” So he framed by his magic power a delightful carriage drawn by pure white young bulls. With a retinue of some ten or twelve goblins bearing bows and quivers, swords and shields, he rode along to meet them like a mighty lord in this carriage, with blue lotuses and white water-lilies wreathed round his head, with wet hair and wet clothes, and with muddy carriage-wheels. His attendants, too, in front and rear of him went along with their hair and clothes wet, with garlands of blue lotuses and white water-lilies on their beads, and with bunches of white lotuses in their hands, chewing the esculent stalks, and dripping with water and mire. Now the leaders of caravans have the following custom: whenever the wind blows in their teeth, they ride on in front in their carriage with their attendants round them, in order to escape the dust; but when the wind blows from behind them, then they ride in like fashion in the rear of the column. And, as on this occasion the wind was blowing against them, the young merchant was riding in front. When the goblin became aware of the merchant’s approach, he drew his carriage aside from the track and greeted him kindly, asking him whither he was going. The leader of the caravan too caused his carriage to be drawn aside from the track so as to let the carts pass by, whilst he stayed by the way and thus addressed the goblin: “We are just on our way from Benares, sir. But I observe that you have lotuses and water-lilies on your heads and in your hands, and that your people are chewing the esculent stalks, and that you are all muddy and dripping with wet. Pray did it rain while you were on the road, and did you come on pools covered with lotuses and water-lilies?”

Hereon the goblin exclaimed, “What did you say? Why, yonder appears the dark-green streak of the forest, and thence onward there is nothing but water all through the forest. It is always raining there; the pools are full; and on every side are lakes covered with lotuses and water-lilies.” Then as the line of carts passed by, he asked where they were bound for. “To such and such a place,” was the reply. “And what wares have you got in this cart and in this?” “So and so.” “And what might you have in this last cart which seems to move as if it were heavily laden?” “Oh, there’s water in that.” “You did well to carry water with you from the other side. But there is no need for it now, as water is abundant on ahead. So break the jars and throw the water away, that you may travel easier.” And he added, “Now continue on your way, as we have stopped too long already.” Then he went a little way further on, till he was out of sight, when he made his way back to the goblin-city where he dwelt.

Such was the folly of that foolish merchant that he did the goblin’s bidding, and had his jars broken and the water all thrown away,—without saving so much even as would go in the palm of a man’s hand. Then he ordered the carts to drive on. Not a drop of water did they find on. ahead, and thirst exhausted the men. All day long till the sun went down they kept on the march; but at sunset they unyoked their carts and made a laager, tethering the oxen to the wheels. The oxen had no water to drink, and the men none to cook their rice with; and the tired-out band sank to the ground to slumber. But as soon as night fell, the goblins came out from their city, and slew every single one of those men and oxen; and

when they had devoured their flesh, leaving only the bare bones, the goblins departed. Thus was the foolish young merchant the sole cause of the destruction of that whole band, whose skeletons were strewn in every conceivable direction, whilst the five hundred carts stood there with their loads untouched.

Now the Bodhisatta allowed some six weeks to pass by after the starting of the foolish young merchant, before he set out. Then he proceeded from the city with his five hundred carts, and in due course came to the outskirts of the. wilderness. Here he had his water-jars filled and laid in an ample stock of water; and by beat of drum he had his men assembled in camp , and thus addressed them—"Let not so much as a palmful of water be used without my sanction. There are poison trees in this wilderness; so let no man among you eat any leaf, flower, or fruit which he has not eaten before, without first asking me." With this exhortation to his men, he pushed on into the wilderness with his 500 carts. When he had reached the middle of the wilderness, the goblin made his appearance on the Bodhisatta's path as in the former case. But, as soon as he became aware of the goblin, the Bodhisatta saw through him; for he thought to himself, "There's no water here, in this 'Waterless Desert.' This person with his red eyes and aggressive bearing, casts no shadow. Very likely he has induced the foolish young merchant who preceded me, to throw away all his water, and then, waiting till they were worn out, has eaten up the merchant with all his men. But he doesn't know my cleverness and ready wit." Then he shouted to the goblin, "Begone! We're men of business, and do not throw away what water we have got, before we see where more is to come from. But, when we do see more, we may be trusted to throw this water away and lighten our carts."

The goblin rode on a bit further till he was out of sight, and then betook himself back to his home in the demon city. But when the goblin had gone, the Bodhisatta's men said to him, "Sir, we heard from those men that yonder is the dark-green streak of the forest appearing, where they said it was always raining. They had got lotuses on their heads and water-lilies in their hands and were eating the stalks, whilst their clothes and hair were wringing wet, with water streaming off them. Let us throw away our water and get on a bit quicker with lightened carts." On hearing these words, the Bodhisatta ordered a halt and had the men all mustered. "Tell me," said he; "did any-man among you ever hear before today that there was a lake or a pool in this wilderness?" "No, sir," was the answer, "why it's known as 'the Waterless Desert'."

"We have just been told by some people that it is raining just on ahead, in the belt of forest; now how far does a rain-wind carry?" "A league, sir." "And has this rain-wind reached any one man here?" "No, sir." "How far off can you see the crest of a storm-cloud?" "A league, sir." "And has any one man here seen the top of even a single storm-cloud?" "No, sir." "How far off can you see a flash of lightning?" "Four or five leagues, sir." "And has any one man here seen a flash of lightning?" "No, sir." How far off can a man hear a peal of thunder?" "Two or three leagues, sir." "And has any man here heard a peal of thunder?" "No, sir." "These are not men but goblins. They will return in the hope of devouring us when we are weak and faint after throwing away our water at their bidding. As the young merchant who went on before us was not a man of resource, most likely he has been fooled into throwing his water away and has been devoured when exhaustion ensued. We may expect to find

his five hundred carts standing just as they were loaded for the start; we shall come on them today. Press on with all possible speed, without throwing away a drop of water."

Urging his men forward with these words, he proceeded on his way till he came upon the 500 carts standing just as they had been loaded and the skeletons of the men and oxen lying strewn in every direction. He had his carts unyoked and ranged in a circle so as to form a strong laager; he saw that his men and oxen had their supper early, and that the oxen were made to lie down in the middle with the men round them; and he himself with the leading men of his band stood on guard, sword in hand, through the three watches of the night, waiting for the day to dawn. On the morrow at daybreak when he had had his oxen fed and everything needful done, he discarded his own weak carts for stronger ones, and his own common goods for the most costly of the derelict goods. Then he went on to his destination, where he bartered his stock for wares of twice or three times their value, and came back to his own city without losing a single man out of all his company.

This story ended, the Master said, "Thus it was, layman, that in times past the fatuous came to utter destruction, whilst those who clave to the truth, escaping from the demons' hands, reached their goal in safety and came back to their homes again." And when he had thus linked the two stories together, he, as the Buddha, spoke the following stanza for the purposes of this lesson on the Truth:

Then some declared the sole, the peerless truth;

But otherwise the false logicians spake.

Let him that 's wise from this a lesson take,

And firmly grasp the sole, the peerless truth.

Thus did the Blessed One teach this lesson respecting Truth. And he went on to say: "What is called walking by truth, not only bestows the three happy endowments, the six heavens of the realms of sense, and the endowments of the higher Realm of Brahma, but finally is the giver of Arahatship ; whilst what is called walking by untruth entails re-birth in the four states of punishment or in the lowest castes of mankind." Further, the Master went on to expound in sixteen ways the Four Truths, at the close of which all those five hundred disciples were established in the Fruit of the First Path.

Having delivered his lesson and his teaching, and having told the two stories and established the connexion linking them together, the Master concluded by identifying the Birth as follows—"Devadatta was the foolish young merchant. of those days; his followers were the followers of that merchant; the followers o the Buddha were the followers of the wise merchant, who was myself."

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