Ja 182 — Samgamavacara Jātaka

English translation by W. H. D. Rouse.

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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

“O Elephant, a hero thou,” etc.—This story the Master told while staying at Jetavana, about Elder Nanda.

The Master, on his first return to Kapila city, had received into the Community Prince Nanda, his younger brother, and after returned to Savatthi and stayed there. Now Father Nanda, remembering how as he was leaving his home, after taking the Bowl, in the Master’s company, Janapadakalyani was looking out of a window, with her hair half combed, and she said—“Why, Prince Nanda is off with the Master!—Come back soon, dear lord!”—remembering this, I say, grew downcast and despondent, yellower and yellower, and the veins stood knotted over his skin.

When the Master learnt, of this, he thought, “What if I could establish Nanda in sainthood!” To Nanda’s cell he went, and sat on the seat which was offered him. “Well, Nanda,” he asked, “are you content with our teaching “Sir,” replied Nanda, “I am in love with Janapadakalyani, and I am not content.” “Have you been on pilgrimage in the Himalaya, Nanda?” “No, Sir, not yet.” “Then we will go.” “But, Sir, I have no miraculous power; how can I go?” “I will take you, Nanda.” So saying, the Master took him h, the hand, and thus passed through the air.

On the way they passed over a burnt field. There, upon the charred stump of a tree, with nose and tail half gone, hair scorched off, and hide a cinder, nothing but skin, all covered with blood, sat a she-monkey. “Do you see that monkey, Nanda?” the Master asked. “Yes, Sir.” “Take a good look at her,” said he. Then he pointed out, stretching over sixty leagues, the uplands of Manosila, the seven great lakes, Anotatta and the rest, the five great rivers, the whole Himalaya highlands, with the magnificent hills named of Gold, of Silver, and of Gems, and hundreds of other lovely spots. Next he asked, “Nanda, have you ever seen the abode of the Thirty-three Archangels?” “No, Sir, never,” was the reply. “Come along, Nanda,” said he, “and I will show you the abode of the Thirty-three.” Therewith he brought

him to the Yellowstone Throne, and made him sit on it. Sakka, king of the gods in two heavens, came with his host of gods, gave greeting and sat down on one side. His handmaids to the number of twenty-five million, and five hundred nymphs with doves' feet, came and made greeting, then sat down on one side. The Master made Nanda look at these five hundred nymphs again and again, with desire after them. "Nanda" said he, "do you see these dove's-foot nymphs? "Yes, Sir." "Well, which is prettiest—they or Janapadakalyani?" "Oh, Sir! as that wretched ape was in comparison with Janapadakalyani, so is she compared with these!" "Well, Nanda, what are you going to do?" "How is it possible, Sir, to win these nymphs?" "By living as an ascetic, Sir," said the Master, "one may win these nymphs." The lad said, "If the Blessed One pledges his word that an ascetic life will win these nymphs, an ascetic life I will lead." "Agreed, Nanda, I pledge my word. Well, Sir," said he, "don't let us make a long business of it. Let us be off, and I will become an ascetic."

The Master brought him to Jetavana back again. The Elder began to follow the ascetic life.

The Master recounted to Sariputta, the Captain of the Faith, how his younger brother had made him pledge himself in the midst of the gods in the heaven of the Thirty-three about the nymphs. In the same manner, he told the story to Elder Mahamoggallana, to Elder Mahakassapa, to Elder Anuruddha, to Elder Ananda, the Treasurer of the Faith, eighty great disciples in all; and then, one after the other, he told it to the other Brethren. The Captain of the Faith, Elder Sariputta, asked Elder Nanda, "Is it true, as I hear, friend, that you have the Buddha's pledged word that you shall win the nymphs of the gods in the heaven of the Thirty-three, by passing your life as an ascetic? Then," he went on, "is not your holy life all bound up with womankind and lust? If you live chaste just for the sake of women, what is the difference between you and a labourer who works for hire?" This saying quenched all the fire in him and made him ashamed of himself. In the same way all the eighty chief disciples, and all the rest of the Brethren, made this worthy father ashamed. "I have been wrong," thought he; in all shame and remorse, he screwed up his courage, and set to work to develope his spiritual insight. Soon he attained to sainthood. He came to the Master, and said, "Sir, I release the Blessed One from his promise." The Master said, "If you have attained sainthood, Nanda, I am thereby released from my promise."

When the Brethren heard of this, they began to talk it over in their Hall of Truth. "How docile yon Elder Nanda is, to be sure! Why, friend, one word of advice awakened his sense of shame; at once he began to live as an ascetic and now he is a Saint!" The Master came in, and asked what they were talking about together. They told him. "Brethren," said he, "Nanda was just as docile in former days as he is now;" and then he told them a story.

Once upon a time when Brahmadatta was reigning in Benares, the Bodhisatta was born as an elephant-trainer's son. When he grew up, he was carefully taught all that pertains to the training of elephants. He was in the service of a king who was an enemy to the king of Benares. He trained this king's elephant of state to perfection.

The king determined to capture Benares. Mounting upon his state elephant, he led a mighty host against Benares, and laid siege to it. Then he sent a letter to the king of the city: “Fight, or yield:” The king chose to fight. Walls and gates, towers and battlements he manned with a great host, and defied the foe.

The hostile king armed his state elephant, and clad himself in armour, took a sharp goad in his hand, and drove his beast city-wards; “Now,” said he, “I’ll storm this city, and kill my enemy, and get his realms into my hands:” But at sight of the defenders, who cast boiling mud, and stones from their catapults, and all kinds of missiles, the elephant was scared out of his wits and would not come near the place. Thereupon up came the trainer, crying, “Son, a hero like you is quite at home in the battle-field! in such a place it is disgraceful to turn tail!” And to encourage his elephant, he uttered these two verses:

“O Elephant, a hero thou, whose home is in the field:

There stands the gate before thee now: why dost thou turn and yield?

“Make haste! break through the iron bar, and beat the pillars down!

Crash through the gates, made fast for war, and enter in the town!”

The Elephant listened; one word of advice was enough to turn him. Winding his trunk about the shafts of the pillars, he tore them up like so many toadstools: he beat against the gateway, broke down the bars, and forcing his way through entered the city and won it for his king.

When the Master had finished this discourse, he identified the Birth—“In those days Nanda was the Elephant, Ananda was the king, and the trainer was I myself.”

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