Ja 222 — Cula-Nandiya 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

“I call to mind,” etc.—This story the Master told whilst dwelling in the Bamboo Grove, about Devadatta.

One day the brethren fell a-talking in the Hall of Truth: “Friend, that man Devadatta is harsh, cruel, and tyrannical, full of baneful devices against the Supreme Buddha. He flung a stone, he even used the aid of Nalagiri; pity and compassion there is none in him for the Tathagata.”

The Master came in, and asked what they were talking about as they sat there. They told him. Then he said, “This is not the first time, Brethren, that Devadatta has been harsh, cruel, merciless. He was so before.” And he told them an old-world tale.

Once upon a time, when Brahmadatta was king of Benares, the Bodhisatta became a Monkey named Nandiya, or Jolly; and dwelt in the Himalaya region; and his youngest brother bore the name of Jollikin. They two headed a band of eighty thousand monkeys, and they had a blind mother in their home to care for.

They left their mother in her lair in the bushes, and went amongst the trees to find sweet wild fruit of all kinds, which they sent back home to her. The messengers did not deliver it; and, tormented with hunger, she became nothing but skin and bone. Said the Bodhisatta to her,

“Mother, we send you plenty of sweet fruits: then what makes you so thin?”

“My son, I never get it!”

The Bodhisatta pondered. “While I look after my herd, my mother will perish! I will leave the herd, and look after my mother alone.” So calling his brother, “Brother,” said he, “do

you tend the herd, and I will care for our mother."

"Nay, brother," replied he, "what care I for ruling a herd? I too will care for only our mother!" So the two of them were of one mind, and leaving the herd, they brought their mother down out of Himalaya, and took up their abode in a banyan tree of the border-land, where they took care of her.

Now a certain Brahmin, who lived at Takkasila, had received his education from a famous teacher, and afterward he took leave of him, saying that he would depart. This teacher had the power of divining from the signs on a man's body; and thus he perceived that his pupil was harsh, cruel, and violent. "My son," said he, "you are harsh, and cruel, and violent. Such persons do not prosper at all seasons alike; they come to dire woe and dire destruction. Be not harsh, nor do what you will afterwards repent." With this counsel, he let him go.

The youth took leave of his teacher, and went his way to Benares. There he married and settled down; and not being able to earn a livelihood by any other of his arts, he determined to live by his bow. So he set to work as a huntsman; and left Benares to earn his living. Dwelling in a border village, he would range the woods girt with bow and quiver, and lived by sale of the flesh of all manner of beasts which he slew.

One day, as he was returning homewards after having caught nothing at all in the forest, he observed a banyan tree standing on the verge of an open glade. "Perhaps," thought he, "there may be something here." And he turned his face towards the banyan tree. Now the two brothers had just fed their mother with fruits, and were sitting behind her in the tree, when they saw the man coming. "Even if he sees our mother," said they, "what will he do?" and they hid amongst the branches. Then this cruel man, as he came up to the tree and saw the mother monkey weak with age, and blind, thought to himself, "Why should I return empty-handed? I will shoot this she-monkey first!" and lifted up his bow to shoot her. This the Bodhisatta saw, and said to his brother, "Jollikin, my dear, this man wants to shoot our mother! I will save her life. When I am dead, do you take care of her." So saying, down he came out of the tree, and called out,

"O man, don't shoot my mother! she is blind, and weak for age. I will save her life; don't kill her, but kill me instead!" and when the other had promised, he sat down in a place within bowshot. The hunter pitilessly shot the Bodhisatta; when he dropped, the man prepared his bow to shoot the mother monkey. Jollikin saw this, and thought to himself, "Yon hunter wants to shoot my mother. Even if she only lives a day, she will have received the gift of life; I will give my life for hers." Accordingly, down he came from the tree, and said,

"O man, don't shoot my mother! I give my life for hers. Shoot me—take both us brothers, and spare our mother's life!" The hunter consented, and Jollikin squatted down within bowshot. The hunter shot this one too, and killed him—"It will do for my children at home," thought he—and he shot the mother too; hung them all three on his carrying pole, and set his face homewards. At that moment a thunderbolt fell upon the house of this wicked man, and burnt up his wife and two children with the house: nothing was left but the roof and the bamboo uprights.

A man met him at the entering in of the village, and told him of it. Sorrow for his wife and children overcame him: down on the spot he dropped his pole with the game, and his bow, threw off his garments, and naked he went homewards, wailing with hands outstretched. Then the bamboo uprights broke, and fell upon his head, and crushed it. The earth yawned, flame rose from hell. As he was being swallowed up in the earth, he thought upon his master's warning: "Then this was the teaching that the Brahmin Parasariya gave me!" and lamenting he uttered these stanzas:

"I call to mind my teacher's words: so this was what he meant!

Be careful you should nothing do of which you might repent.

"Whatever a man does, the same he in himself will find;

The good man, good; and evil he that evil has designed;

And so our deeds are all like seeds, and bring forth fruit in kind."

Lamenting thus, he went down into the earth, and came to life in the depths of hell.

When the Master had ended this discourse, by which he showed how in other days, as then, Devadatta had been harsh, cruel, and merciless, he identified the Birth in these words: "In those days Devadatta was the hunter, Sariputta was the famous teacher, Ananda was Jollikin, the noble Lady Gotami was the mother, and I was the monkey Jolly."

The Jātaka, or Stories of the Buddha's Former Births, edited by E.B. Cowell, published by The Cambridge University Press.

Vol. 1, translated by Robert Chalmers, 1895.

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Vol. 4, translated by W.H.D. Rouse, 1901.

Vol. 5, translated by H.T. Francis, 1905.

Vol. 6, translated by E.B. Cowell and W.H.D. Rouse, 1907.

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