Ja 243 — Guttila Jātaka

English translation by W. H. D. Rouse.

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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

“I had a pupil once,” etc.—This story the Master told in the Bamboo-grove, about Devadatta.

On this occasion the Brethren said to Devadatta: “Friend Devadatta, the Supreme Buddha is your teacher; of him you learnt the Three Pitakas and how to produce the Four kinds of Ecstasy; you really should not act the enemy to your own teacher!” Devadatta replied: “Why, friends,—Gotama the Ascetic my teacher? Not a bit: was it not by my own power that I learnt the Three Pitakas, and produced the Four Ecstasies?” He refused to acknowledge his teacher.

The Brethren fell a-talking of this in the Hall of Truth. “Friend! Devadatta repudiates his teacher! he has become an enemy of the Supreme Buddha! and what a miserable fate has befallen him!” In came the Master, and enquired what they were all talking of together. They told him. “Ah, Brethren,” said he, “this is not the first time that Devadatta has repudiated his teacher, and shown himself my enemy, and come to a miserable end. It was just the same before.” And then he told the following story.

Once upon a time, when Brahmadatta was reigning in Benares, the Bodhisatta was born in a musician’s family. His name was Master Guttila. When he grew up, he mastered all the branches of music, and under the name of Guttila the Musician he became the chief of his kind in all India. He married no wife, but maintained his blind parents.

At that time certain traders of Benares made a journey to Ujjeni for trade. A holiday was proclaimed; they all clubbed together; they procured scents and perfumes and ointments, and all manner of foods and meats. “Pay the hire,” they cried, “and fetch a musician!”

It happened that at the time a certain Musila was the chief musician in Ujjeni. Him they sent for, and made him their musician. Musila was a player on the lute; and he tuned his

lute up to the highest key, to play upon. But they knew the playing of Guttila the Musician, and his music seemed to them like scratching on a mat. So not one of them showed pleasure. When Musila saw that they expressed no pleasure, he said to himself—"Too sharp, I suppose," and tuning his lute down to the middle tone, he played it so. Still they sat indifferent. Then thought he, "I suppose they know nothing about it;" and making as though he too were ignorant, he played with the strings all loose. As before, they made no sign. Then Musila asked them, "Good merchants, why do you not like my playing?"

"What! are you playing?" cried they. "We imagined that you must be tuning up."

"Why, do you know any better musician," he asked, "or are you too ignorant to like my playing?"

Said the merchants, "We have heard the music of Guttila the Musician, at Benares; and yours sounds like women crooning to soothe their babies."

"Here, take your money back," said he, "I don't want it. Only when you go to Benares, please take me with you."

They agreed, and took him back to Benares with them; they pointed out the dwelling of Guttila, and departed every man to his own house.

Musila entered the Bodhisatta's dwelling; he saw his beautiful lute where it stood, tied up: he took it down, and played upon it. At this the old parents, who could not see him because they were blind, cried out

"The mice are gnawing at the lute! Shoo! shoo! the rats are biting the lute to pieces!"

At once Musila put down the lute, and greeted the old folks. "Where do you come from?" asked they.

He replied, "I come from Ujjeni to learn at the feet of the teacher."

"Oh, all right," said they. He asked where the teacher was.

"He is out, father; but he will be back to-day," came the answer. Musila sat down and waited until he came; then after some friendly words, he told his errand. Now the Bodhisatta was skilled in divining from the lineaments of the body. He perceived that this was not a good man; so he refused. "Go, my son, this art is not for you." Musila clasped the feet of the Bodhisatta's parents, to help his suit, and prayed them—"Make him teach me!" Again and again his parents besought the Bodhisatta to do so; until he could not stand it any longer, and did as he was asked. And Musila went along with the Bodhisatta into the king's palace.

"Who is this, master?" asked the king, on seeing him.

“A pupil of mine, great king!” was the reply.

By and bye he got the ear of the king.

Now the Bodhisatta did not stint his knowledge, but taught his pupil everything which he knew himself. This done, he said, “Your knowledge is now perfect.”

Thought Musila, “I have now mastered my art. This city of Benares is the chief city in all India. My teacher is old; here therefore must I stay.” So he said to his teacher, “Sir, I would serve the king.” “Good, my son,” replied he, “I will tell the king of it.”

He came before the king, and said, “My pupil is wishful to serve your Highness. Fix what his fee shall be.”

The king answered, “His fee shall be the half of yours.” And he came and told it to Musila. Musila said, “If I receive the same as you, I will serve; but if not, then I will not serve him.”

“Why?” “Say: do I not know all that you know?” “Yes, you do.” “Then why does he offer me the half?”

The Bodhisatta informed the king what had passed. The king said,

“If he is as perfect in his art as you, he shall receive the same as you do.” This saying of the king the Bodhisatta told to his pupil. The pupil consented to the bargain; and the king, being informed of this, replied—“Very good. What day will you compete together?” “Be it the seventh day from this, O king.”

The king sent for Musila. “I understand that you are ready to try issue with your master?”

“Yes, your Majesty,” was the reply.

The king would have dissuaded him. “Don’t do it,” said he, “there should be never rivalry between master and pupil.”

“Hold, O king!” cried he—“yes, let there be a meeting between me and my teacher on the seventh day; we shall know which of us is master of his art.”

So the king agreed; and he sent the drum beating round the city with this notice—“Oyez! on the seventh day Guttila the Teacher, and Musila the Pupil, will meet at the door of the royal palace, to show their skill. Let the people assemble from the city, and see their skill!”

The Bodhisatta thought within himself, “This Musila is young and fresh, I am old and my strength is gone. What an old man does will not prosper. If my pupil is beaten, there is no great credit in that. If he beats me, death in the woods is better than the shame which will be my portion.” So to the woods he went, but he kept returning through fear of death and going back to the wood through fear of shame. And in this way six days passed by. The grass died as he walked, and his feet wore away a path.

At that time, Sakka's throne became hot. Sakka meditated, and perceived what had happened. "Guttila the Musician is suffering much sorrow in the forest by reason of his pupil. I must help him!" So he went in haste and stood before the Bodhisatta. "Master," said he, "why have you taken to the woods?"

"Who are you?" asked the other.

"I am Sakka."

Then said the Bodhisatta, "I was in fear of being worsted by my pupil, O king of the gods; and therefore did I flee to the woods." And he repeated the first stanza —

"I had a pupil once, who learnt of me

The seven-stringed lute's melodious minstrelsy;

He now would fain his teacher's skill outdo.

O Kosiya ! do thou my helper be!"

"Fear not," said Sakka, "I am your defence and refuge: "and he repeated the second stanza—

"Fear not, for I will help thee at thy need;

For honour is the teacher's rightful meed.

Fear not! thy pupil shall not rival thee,

But thou shalt prove the better man indeed."

"As you play, you shall break one of the strings of your lute, and play upon six; and the music shall be as good as before. Musila too shall break a string, and he shall not be able to make music with his lute; then shall he be defeated. And when you see that he is defeated, you shall break the second string of your lute, and the third, even unto the seventh, and you shall go on playing with nothing but the body; and from the ends of the broken strings the sound shall go forth, and fill all the land of Benares for a space of twelve leagues." With these words he gave the Bodhisatta three playing-dice, and went on: "When the sound of the lute has filled all the city, you must throw one of these dice into the air; and three hundred nymphs shall descend and dance before you. While they dance throw up the second, and three hundred shall dance in front of your lute; then the third, and then three hundred more shall come down and dance within the arena. I too will come with them; go on, and fear not!"

In the morning the Bodhisatta returned home. At the palace door a pavilion was set up, and a throne was set apart for the king. He came down from the palace, and took his seat

upon the divan in the gay pavilion. All around him were thousands of slaves, women beauteously apparelled, courtiers, brahmins, citizens. All the people of the town had come together. In the courtyard they were fixing the seats circle on circle, tier above tier. The Bodhisatta, washed and anointed, had eaten of all manner of finest meats; and lute in hand he sat waiting in his appointed place. Sakka was there, invisible, poised in the air, surrounded by a great company. However, the Bodhisatta saw him. Musila too was there, and sat in his own seat. All around was a great concourse of people.

First the two played each the same piece. When they played, both the same, the multitude was delighted, and gave abundant applause. Sakka spoke to the Bodhisatta, from his place in the air: “Break one of the strings!” said he. Then the Bodhisatta brake the bee-string; and the string, though broken, gave out a sound from its broken end; it seemed like music divine. Musila too broke a string; but after that no sound came out of it. His teacher broke the second, and so on to the seventh string: he played upon the body alone, and the sound continued, and filled the town—the multitude in thousands waved and waved their kerchiefs in the air, in thousands they shouted applause. The Bodhisatta threw up one of the dice into the air, and three hundred nymphs descended and began to dance. And when he had thrown the second and third in the same manner, there were nine hundred nymphs a-dancing as Sakka had said. Then the king made a sign to the multitude; up rose the multitude, and cried—“You made a great mistake in matching yourself against your teacher! You know not your measure!’ Thus they cried out against Musila; and with stories and staves, and anything that came to hand, they beat and bruised him to death, and seizing him by the feet, they cast him upon a dustheap.

The king in his delight showered gifts upon the Bodhisatta, and so did they of the city. Sakka likewise spake pleasantly to him, and said, “Wise Sir, I will send anon my charioteer Matali with a car drawn by a thousand thoroughbreds; and you shall mount upon my divine car, drawn by a thousand steeds, and travel to heaven”; and he departed.

When Sakka was returned, and sat upon his throne, made all of a precious stone, the daughters of the gods asked him, “Where have you been, O king?” Sakka told them in full all that had happened, and praised the virtues and good parts of the Bodhisatta. Then said the daughters of the gods,

“O king, we long to look upon this teacher; fetch him hither!”

Sakka summoned Matali. “The nymphs of heaven,” said he, “desire to look upon Guttila the Musician. Go, seat him in my divine car, and bring him hither.” The charioteer went and brought the Bodhisatta. Sakka gave him a friendly greeting. “The maidens of the gods,” said he, “wish to hear your music, Master.”

“We musicians, O great king,” said he, “live by practice of our art. For a recompense I will play.”

“Play on, and I will recompense you.”

“I care for no other recompense but this. Let these daughters of the gods tell me what acts of virtue brought them here; then will I play.”

Then said the daughters of the gods, “Gladly will we tell you after of the virtues that we have practised; but first do you play to us, Master.”

For the space of a week the Bodhisatta played to them, and his music surpassed the music of heaven. On the seventh day he asked the daughters of the gods of their virtuous lives, beginning from the first. One of them, in the time of the Buddha Kassapa, had given an upper garment to a certain Brother; and having renewed existence as an attendant of Sakka, had become chief among the daughters of the gods, with a retinue of a thousand nymphs: of her the Bodhisatta asked—“What did you do in a previous existence, that has brought you here?” The manner of his question and the gift she had given have been told in the Vimana story: they spoke as follows—

“O brilliant goddess, like the morning star,

Shedding thy light of beauty near and far,

Whence springs this beauty? whence this happiness?

Whence all the blessings that the heart can bless?

I ask thee, goddess excellent in might,

Whence comes this all-pervading wondrous light?

When thou wert mortal woman, what didst thou

To gain the glory that surrounds thee now?”

“Chief among men and chief of women she

Who gives an upper robe in charity.

She that gives pleasant things is sure to win

A home divine and fair to enter in.

Behold this habitation, how divine!

As fruit of my good deeds this home is mine

A thousand nymphs stand ready at my call;

Fair nymphs—and I the fairest of them all.

And therefore am I excellent in might;

Hence comes this all-pervading wondrous light!”

Another had given flowers for worship to a Brother who craved an alms. Another had been asked for a scented wreath of five sprays for the shrine, and gave it. Another had given sweet fruits. Another had given fine essences. Another had given a scented five-spray to the shrine of the Buddha Kassapa. Another had heard the discourse of Brethren or Sisters in wayfaring, or such as had taken up their abode in the house of some family. Another had stood in the water, and given water to a Brother who had eaten his meal on a boat. Another living in the world had done her duty by mother-in-law and father-in-law, never losing her temper. Another had divided even the share that she received, and so did eat, and was virtuous. Another, who had been a slave in some household, without anger and without pride had given away a share of her own portion, and had been born again as an attendant upon the king of the gods. So also all those who are written in the story of Guttila-vimana, thirty and seven daughters of the gods, were asked by the Bodhisatta what each had done to come there, and they too told what they had done in the same way by verses.

On hearing all this, the Bodhisatta exclaimed: “’Tis good for me, in sooth, truly ’Tis very good for me, that I came here, and heard by how very small a merit great glory has been attained. Henceforward, when I return to the world of men, I will give all manner of gifts, and perform good deeds.” And he uttered this aspiration

“O happy dawn! O happy must I be!

O happy pilgrimage, whereby I see

These daughters of the gods, divinely fair,

And hear their sweet discourse! Henceforth I swear

Full of sweet peace, and generosity,

Of temperance, and truth my life shall be,

Till I come there where no more sorrows are.”

Then after seven days had passed, the king of heaven laid his commands upon Matali the charioteer, and he seated Guttila in the chariot and sent him to Benares. And when he came to Benares, he told the people what he had seen with his own eyes in heaven. From that time the people resolved to do good deeds with all their might.

When this discourse was ended, the Master identified the Birth: “In those days Devadatta was Musila, Anuruddha was Sakka, Amanda was the king, and I was Guttila the Musician.”

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