Ja 264 — Maha-Panada Jātaka

English translation by W. H. D. Rouse.

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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

"'Twas king Panada," etc.—This story the Master told when he was settled on the bank of the Ganges, about the miraculous power of Elder Bhaddaji.

On one occasion, when the Master had passed the rains at Savatthi, he thought he would show kindness to a young gentleman named Bhaddaji. So with all the Brethren who were with him, he made his way to the city of Bhaddiya, and stayed three months in Jatiya Grove, waiting until the young man should mature and perfect his knowledge. Now young Bhaddaji was a magnificent person, the only son of a rich merchant in Bhaddiya, with a fortune of eight hundred millions. He had three houses for the three seasons, in each of which he stayed four months; and after spending this period in one of them, he used to migrate with all his kith and kin to another in the greatest pomp. On these occasions all the town was a-flutter to see the young man's magnificence; and between these houses used to be erected seats in circles on circles and tiers above tiers.

When the Master had been there three months, he informed the townspeople that he intended to leave. Begging him to wait until the morrow, the townsfolk on the following day collected magnificent gifts for the Buddha and his attendant Brethren; and set up a pavilion in the midst of the town, decorating it and laying out seats; then they announced that the hour had come. The Master with his company went and took their seats there. Everybody gave generously to them. After the meal was over, the Master in a voice sweet as honey returned thanks to them.

At this moment, young Bhaddaji was passing from one of his residences to another. But that day not a soul came to see his splendour; only his own people were about him. So he asked his people how it was. Usually all the city was in aflutter to see him pass from house to house; circles on circles and tiers above tiers the seats were built; but just then there was nobody but his own followers! What could be the reason?

The reply was, “My lord, the Supreme Buddha has been spending three months near the town, and this day he leaves. He has just finished his meal, and is holding a discourse. All the town is there listening to his words.”

“Oh, very well, we will go and hear him too,” said the young man. So, in a blaze of ornaments, with his crowd of followers about him, he went and stood on the skirt of the crowd; as he heard the discourse, he threw off all his sins, and attained to high fruition and sainthood.

The Master, addressing the merchant of Bhaddiya, said, “Sir, your son, in all his splendour, while hearing my discourse has become a saint; this very day he should either embrace the religious life, or enter Nirvana.”

“Sir,” replied he, “I do not wish my son to enter Nirvana. Admit him to the religious order; this done, come with him to my house to-morrow.”

The Blessed One accepted this invitation; he took the young gentleman to the monastery, admitted him to the brotherhood, and afterward to the lesser and greater orders. For a week the youth’s parents showed generous hospitality to him.

After remaining these seven days, the Master went on alms-pilgrimage, taking the young man with him, and arrived at a village called Koti. The villagers of Koti gave generously to the Buddha and his followers. At the end of this meal, the Master began to express his thanks. While this was being done, the young gentleman went outside the village, and by a landing-place of the Ganges he sat down under a tree, and plunged in a trance, thinking that he would rise as soon as the Master should come. When the Elders of greatest age approached, he did not rise, but he rose as soon as the Master came. The unconverted folk were angry because he behaved as though he were a Brother of old standing, not rising up even when he saw the eldest Brethren approach.

The villagers constructed rafts. This done, the Master asked where Bhaddaji was. “There he is, Sir.” “Come, Bhaddaji, come aboard my raft.” The Elder rose, and followed him to his raft. When they were in mid-river, the Master asked him a question.

“Bhaddaji, where is the palace you lived in when Great Panada was king?” “Here, under the water,” was the reply. The unconverted said one to the other, “Elder Bhaddaji is showing that he is a saint!” Then the Master bade him disperse the doubt of his fellow-students.

In a moment, the Elder, with a bow to his Master, moving by his mysterious power, took the whole pile of the palace on his finger, and rose in the air bearing the palace with him (it covered a space of twenty-five leagues); then he made a hole in it and showed himself to the present inhabitants of the palace below, and tossed the building above the water first one league, then two, then three. Then those who had been his kinsfolk in this former existence, who had now become fish or tortoises, water-snakes or frogs, because they loved the palace so much, and had come to life in the very same place, wriggled out of it when it rose up, and tumbled over and over into the water again. When the Master saw

this, he said, “Bhaddaji, your relations are in trouble.” At his Master’s words the Elder let the palace go, and it sank to the place where it had been before.

The Master passed to the further side of the Ganges. Then they prepared him a seat just on the river bank. On the seat prepared for the Buddha, he sat, like the sun fresh risen pouring forth his rays. Then the Brethren asked him when it was that Elder Bhaddaji had lived in that palace. The Master answered, “In the days of king Great Panada,” and went on to tell them an old-world tale.

Once upon a time, a certain Suruci was king of Mithila, which is a town in the kingdom of Videha. He had a son, named Suruci likewise, and he again had a son, the Great Panada. They obtained possession of that mansion. They obtained it by a deed done in a former existence. A father and son made a hut of leaves with canes and branches of the fig-tree, as a dwelling for a Paccekabuddha.

The rest of the story will be told in the Suruci Birth, Book 14.

The Master, having finished telling this story, in his perfect wisdom uttered these stanzas here following—

“‘Twas king Panada who this palace had,

A thousand bowshots high, in breadth sixteen.

A thousand bowshots high, in banners clad;

An hundred storeys, all of emerald green.

“Six thousand men of music to and fro

In seven companies did dance withal:

As Bhaddaji has said, ’twas even so:

I, Sakka, was your slave, at beck and call.”

At that moment the unconverted people became resolved of their doubt.

When the Master had ended this discourse, he identified the Birth—“Bhaddaji was the Great Panada, and I was Sakka.”

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

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