Ja 283 — Vaddhaki-Sukara Jātaka

English translation by W. H. D. Rouse.

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Source revision: 2d9ca8da858f94302ed6783e2717bf73d651881b

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Edited by E. B. Cowell

Original edition: Cambridge University Press, volume 2, 1895

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

“The best, the best you always,” etc.—This story the Master told in Jetavana about the Elder Dhanuggahatissa. Mahakosala, the father of king Pasenadi, when he married his daughter, the Lady Kosala, to king Bimbisara, gave a village of Kasi, producing a revenue of a hundred thousand, for bath and perfume money. When Ajatasattu murdered the king his father, the lady Kosala died of grief. Then thought king Pasenadi, “Ajatasattu has killed his father, my sister has died from sympathy with her husband’s misfortune; I will not give the Kasi town to the parricide.” So he refused to give it to Ajatasattu. About this village there was war betwixt these two from time to time. Ajatasattu was fierce and strong, and Pasenadi was a very old man, so he was beaten again and again, and the people of Mahakosala were generally conquered. Then the king asked his courtiers, “We are constantly being beaten; what is to be done?” “My lord,” said they, “the reverend fathers are skilled in incantations. We must hear the word of the Brothers who dwell in the Jetavana monastery.” Then the king despatched couriers, bidding them listen to the converse of the Brothers at a suitable time. Now at the time there were two old Elders living in a leaf-hut close to the monastery, whose names were Elder Utta and Elder Dhanuggahatissa. Dhanuggahatissa had slept through the first and second watch of the night; and awaking in the last watch, he broke some sticks, lit a fire, and sitting down said, “Utta, my friend!” “What is it, friend Tissa?” “Are you not asleep?” “Now we are awake, what’s to do?” “Get up, now, and sit by me.” So he did, and began to talk to him. “That stupid, pot-bellied Kosala never has a jar full of boiled rice without letting it spoil; how to plan a war he knows not a bit. He is always being beaten and forced to pay.” “But what should he do?” Now just then the couriers stood listening to their talk. The Elder Dhanuggahatissa discussed the nature of war. “War, Sir,” said he, “consists of three kinds: the lotus army, the wheel army, and the waggon army. If those who wish to capture Ajatasattu will post garrisons in two hill-forts right away in the hills, and pretend that they are weak, and watch till they get him among the hills, and bar his passage, leap out from the two forts and take him in front and in the rear, and shout aloud, they will quickly have him like a landed fish, like a frog in the fist; and so they will be able to secure him.” All this

the couriers told their king. The king caused the drum to be beaten for the attack, arranged his army waggon-wise, took Ajatasattu alive; his daughter, Princess Vajira he gave in marriage to his sister's son, and dismissed her with the Kasi village for her bath-money.

This event became known among the Brotherhood. One day, they were all talking about it in the Hall of Truth; "Friend, I hear that the king of Kosala conquered Ajatasattu through the instructions of Dhanuggahatissa." The Master came in; "What do you sit here talking about now, Brothers?" asked he. They told him. He said, "This is not the first time that Dhanuggahatissa was clever in discussing war": and he told them an old-world tale.

Once upon a time, when Brahmadatta was reigning in Benares, the Bodhisatta came to life as a tree-spirit. At that time there were some carpenters settled in a village near Benares. One of them, on going into the forest to get wood, found a young boar fallen in a pit, which he took home and kept. He grew big, with curved tusks, and was a well-mannered creature. Because the carpenter kept him, he went by the name of Carpenter's Boar. When the carpenter was chopping up a tree, the boar used to turn the tree over with his snout, and with his teeth fetch hatchet and adze, chisel and mallet, and pull along the measuring line by the end. The carpenter was afraid somebody might eat him up; so he took him and let him go in the forest. The Boar ran into the forest, looking for a safe and pleasant place to live in; and at last he espied a great cave up in a mountain side, with plenty of bulbs, and roots, and fruits, a pleasant living-place. Some hundreds of other boars saw him and approached him.

Said he to them, "You are just what I am looking for, and here I have found you. This seems a nice place; and here I mean to live now with you."

"A nice place it certainly is," said they, "but dangerous."

"Ah," said he, "as soon as I saw you, I wondered how it was that those who dwell in so plentiful a place could be so meagre in flesh and blood. What is it you are afraid of?"

"There is a tiger comes in the morning, and every one he sees he seizes and carries off."

"Does this always happen, or only now and then?"

"Always."

"How many tigers are there?"

"Only one."

"What—one alone too many for all of you!"

"Yes, Sir."

“I’ll catch him, if you only do what I tell you. Where does this tiger live?”

“On that hill yonder.”

So at night he drilled the Boars and prepared them for war; explaining to them the science. “War is of three kinds—the lotus army, the wheel army, and the waggon army:” and he arranged them after the lotus pattern. He knew the place of vantage; so, says he, “Here we must set our battle.” The mothers and their suckling brood he placed in the middle; around these he put the sows that had no young; around these, the little boars; around these, those which were rather young; around these, all whose tusks were grown; around these, the boars fit for battle, strong and powerful, by tens and by twenties; thus he placed them in serried ranks. Before his own position he had a round hole dug; behind it, a pit getting gradually deeper and deeper, shaped like a winnowing basket. As he moved about amongst them, followed by sixty or seventy Boars, bidding them be of good courage, the dawn broke.

The Tiger awoke. “Time now!” thought he. He trotted up till he caught sight of them; then stopped still upon the plateau, glaring at the crowd of Boars. “Glare back!” cried the Carpenter’s Boar, with a signal to the rest, They all glared. The Tiger opened his mouth, and drew a long breath: the Boars all did the same. The Tiger relieved himself: so did the Boars. Thus whatever the Tiger did, the Boars did after him.

“Why, what’s this!” the Tiger wondered. “They used to take to their heels as soon as they saw me—indeed, they were too much frightened even to run. Now so far from running, they actually stand up against me! Whatever I do, they mimic. There’s a fellow yonder on a commanding position: he it is who has organised the rabble. Well, I don’t see how to get the better of them.” And he turned away and went back to his lair.

Now there was a sham hermit, who used to get a share of the Tiger’s prey. This time the Tiger returned empty-handed. Noticing this, the hermit repeated the following stanza.

“The best, the best you always brought before

When you went hunting after the wild boar.

Now empty-handed you consume with grief,

To-day where is the strength you had of yore?”

At this address, the Tiger repeated another stanza:

“Once they would hurry-scurry all about

To find their holes, a panic-stricken rout.

But now they grunt in serried ranks compact:

Invincible, they stand and face me out."

"Oh, don't be afraid of them!" urged the hermit. "One roar and one leap will frighten them out of their wits, and send them pell-mell." The Tiger yielded to this insistence. Plucking up his courage, he went back and stood upon the plateau.

Carpenter's Boar stood between the two pits. "See Master! here's the scoundrel again! "cried the Boars. "Oh, don't be afraid," said he, "we have him now."

With a roar the Tiger leapt upon Carpenter's Boar. At the very instant he sprang, the Boar dodged and dropped straight into the round hole. The Tiger could not stop, but tumbled over and over and fell all of a heap in the jaws of the other pit, where it got very narrow. Up jumps the Boar out of his hole, and quick as lightning ran his tusk into the Tiger's thighs, tore him about the kidneys, buried his fangs in the creature's sweet flesh, and wounded his head. Then he tosses him out of the pit, crying aloud—"Here's your enemy for you!" They who came first had tiger to eat; but they who came after went about sniffing at the others' mouths, and asking what tiger's flesh tasted like!

But the Boars were still uneasy. "What's the matter now?" asked our Hog, who had noticed their movements.

"Master," said they, "it's all very well to kill one tiger, but the sham hermit can bring ten tigers more!"

"Who is he?"

"A wicked ascetic."

"The tiger I have killed; do you suppose a man can hurt me? Come along, and we'll get hold of him." So they all set forth.

Now the man had been wondering why the Tiger was so long in coming. Could the Boars have caught him? he thought. At last he started to meet him on the way; and as he went, there came the Boars! He snatched up his belongings, and off he ran. The Boars tore after him. He threw away his encumbrances, and with all speed climbed up a fig-tree.

"Now, Master, it's all up!" cried the herd. "The man has climbed a tree!"

"What tree?" their leader asked.

They replied, "A fig-tree."

"Oh, very well," said the leader. "The sows must bring water, the young ones dig about the tree, the tuskers tear at the roots, and the rest surround it and watch." They did their several tasks as he bade them; he meanwhile charged full at a great thick root, —'twas like an axe-blow; and with this one blow he felled the tree to the ground. The Boars who were

waiting for the man, knocked him down, tore him to pieces, gnawed the bones clean in a moment!

Now they perched Carpenter's Boar on the tree-trunk. They filled the dead man's shell with water, and sprinkled the Boar to consecrate him for their king; a young sow they consecrated to be his Consort.

This, the saying goes, is the origin of the custom still observed. When people make a king now-a-days, he is placed on a fine chair of fig-wood, and sprinkled out of three shells.

A sprite that dwelt in that forest beheld this marvel. Appearing before the Boars in a cleft of his tree-trunk, he repeated the third stanza:

"Honour to all the tribes assembled be!

A wondrous union I myself did see!

How tuskers once a tiger overcame

By federal strength and tusked unity!"

After this discourse the Master identified the Birth: "Dhanuggaha the Elder was the Carpenter's Boar, and I was the tree-sprite."

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.

Vol. 2, translated by W.H.D. Rouse, 1895.

Vol. 3, translated by H.T. Francis and R.A. Neil, 1897.

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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Scanned, proofed and formatted at sacred-texts.com, January 2006–February 2010, by John Bruno Hare and others. Thanks to the Sacred Texts Archive for making these texts available in digital form.

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