Ja 301 — Cullakalinga Jātaka

English translation by H. T. Francis and R. A. Neil.

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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

“Open the gate,” etc.—This story was told by the Master while living at Jetavana, about the admission of four female ascetics to the religious life.

Tradition says that Licchavis of the ruling family to the number of seven thousand seven hundred and seven had their abode at Vesali. And all of them were given to argument and disputation.

Now a certain Jain, skilled in maintaining five hundred different theses, arrived at Vesali and met with a kind reception there. A female Jain too of a similar character also came to Vesali And the Licchavi chiefs got up a disputation between them. And when they proved well matched as disputants, the Licchavis were struck with the notion that such a pair would be sure to have clever children. So they arranged a marriage between them, and as the issue of this union in due course four daughters and a son were born. The daughters were named Sacca, Lola, Avavadaka, and Patacara, and the boy was called Saccaka. These five children when they reached years of discretion learned a thousand different theses, five hundred from the mother and five hundred from the father. And the parents schooled their daughters after this manner: “If any layman refutes your thesis, you are to become his wives, but if a priest refutes you, you must take orders at his hands.”

After a time their parents died. And when they were dead, the Jain Saccaka lived on in the same place at Vesali, studying the lore of the Licchavis. But his sisters took in their hands a branch of the rose-apple tree, and in the course of their wanderings from city to city for purposes of disputation, at last reached Savatthi. There they planted the rose-apple branch at the city gate and said to some boys who were there, “If any man, be he layman or priest, is equal to maintaining a thesis against us, let him scatter with his foot this heap of dust and trample under foot this branch.” And with these words they went into the city to collect alms.

Now the venerable Sariputta, after sweeping up wherever it was necessary, and putting water into the empty pots and tending the sick, later on in the day went into Savatthi for alms. And when he had seen and heard about the bough, he ordered the boys to throw it down and trample upon it. “Let those,” said he, “by whom this bough has been planted, as soon as they have finished their meal, come and see me in the gable-chamber over the gate of Jetavana.”

So he went into the city, and when he had ended his meal, he took his stand in the chamber over the monastery gate. The female ascetics too, after going their rounds for alms, returned and found the branch had been trampled on. And when they asked who had done this, the boys told them it was Sariputta, and if they were anxious for a disputation, they were to go to the chamber over the gate of the monastery.

So they returned to the city, and followed by a great crowd went to the gate-tower of the monastery, and propounded to the priest a thousand different theses. The priest solved all their difficulties and then asked them if they knew any more.

They replied, “No, my Lord.”

“Then I,” said he, “will ask you something.”

“Ask on, my Lord,” they said, “and if we know it, we will answer you.”

So the priest propounded just one question to them, and when they had to give it up, the priest told them the answer.

Then said they, “We are beaten, the victory rests with you.”

“What will you do now?” he asked.

“Our parents,” they replied, “admonished us thus: “if you are refuted in disputation by a layman, you are to become his wives, but if by a priest, you are to receive orders at his hands. Therefore,” said they, “admit us to the religious life.”

The priest readily assented and ordained them in the house of the Nun called Uppalavanna. And all of them shortly attained to Sainthood.

Then one day they started this topic in the Hall of Truth, how that Sariputta proved a refuge to the four female ascetics, and that through him they all attained to Sainthood. When the Master came and heard the nature of their discourse, he said, “Not now only, but in former times too, Sariputta proved a refuge to these women. (3) On this occasion he dedicated them to the religious life, but formerly he raised them to the dignity of queen consort.” Then he told them an old-world story.

Once upon a time when Kalinga was reigning in the city of Dantapura in the Kalinga kingdom, Assaka was king of Potali in the Assaka country. Now Kalinga had a fine army

and was himself as strong as an elephant, but could find no one to fight with him. So being eager for a fray he said to his ministers: " I am longing to fight but can find no one to war with me."

His ministers said, "Sire, there is one way open to you. You have four daughters of surpassing beauty. Bid them adorn themselves with jewels, and then seated in a covered carriage let them be driven to every village, town and royal city with an armed escort. And if any king shall be desirous of taking them into his harem, we will get up a fight with him."

The king followed their advice. But the kings of the various countries, wherever they came, were afraid to let them enter their cities, but sent them presents and assigned them quarters outside the city walls. Thus they passed through the length and breadth of India till they reached Potali in the Assaka country. But Assaka too closed his gates against them and merely sent them a present. Now this king had a wise and able minister named Nandisena, who was fertile in expedients. He thought to himself: "These princesses, men say, have traversed the length of India without finding any to fight for their possession. If this is the case, India is but an empty name. I myself will do battle with Kalinga."

Then he went and bade the guards open the city gate to them, and spake the first stanza:

Open the gate to these maidens: thro' Nandisena's might,

King Aruna's sage lion, our city is guarded aright.

With these words he threw open the gate, and brought the maidens into the presence of king Assaka, and said to him, "Fear not. If there is to be a fight, I will see to it. Make these fair princesses your chief queens." Then he installed them as queens by sprinkling them with holy water, and dismissed their attendants, bidding them go and tell Kalinga that his daughters had been raised to the dignity of queen-consorts. So they went and told him, and Kalinga said, "I presume he does not know how powerful I am," and at once set out with a great army. Nandisena heard of his approach and sent a message to this effect; "Let Kalinga abide within his own marches, and not encroach upon ours, and the battle shall be fought on the frontiers of the two countries." On receiving this message, Kalinga halted within the limits of his own territory and Assaka also kept to his.

At this time the Bodhisatta was following the ascetic life and was living in a hermitage on a spot lying between the two kingdoms. Said Kalinga, "These monks are knowing fellows. Who can tell which of us will gain the victory, and which will be defeated? I will ask this ascetic." So he came to the Bodhisatta disguised, and sitting respectfully on one side, after the usual kindly greetings he said, "Your Reverence, Kalinga and Assaka have their threes drawn up each within his own territory, eager for a fight. Which of them will be victorious, and which will be defeated?"

"Your Excellency," he replied, "the one will conquer, the other will be beaten. I can tell you no more. But Sakka, the King of Heaven, is coming here. I will ask him and let you know, if you come back again to-morrow."

So when Sakka came to pay his respects to the Bodhisatta, he put this question to him, and Sakka replied, “Reverend Sir, Kalinga will conquer, Assaka will be defeated, and such and such omens will be seen beforehand.” Next day Kalinga came and repeated his question, and the Bodhisatta gave Sakka’s answer. And Kalinga, without inquiring what the omens would be, thought to himself: “ They tell me I shall conquer,” and went away quite satisfied. This report spread abroad. And when Assaka heard it, he summoned Nandisena and said, “Kalinga, they say, will be victorious and we shall be defeated. What is to be done?”

“Sire,” he replied, “who knows this? Do not trouble yourself as to who shall gain the victory and who shall suffer defeat.”

With these words he comforted the king. Then he went and saluted the Bodhisatta, and sitting respectfully on one side he asked, “Who, Reverend Sir, will conquer, and who will be defeated?”

“Kalinga,” he replied, “will win the day and Assaka will be beaten.” “And what, Reverend Sir,” he asked, “will be the omen for the one that conquers, and what for the one that is defeated.”

“Your Excellency,” he answered, “the tutelary deity of the conqueror will be a spotless white bull, and that of the other king a perfectly black bull, and the tutelary gods of the two kings will themselves fight and be severally victorious or defeated.”

On hearing this Nandisena rose up and went and took the king’s allies—they were about one thousand in number and all of them great warriors—and led them up a mountain close at hand and asked them saying, “Would you sacrifice your lives for our king?”

“Yes, Sir, we would,” they answered.

“Then throw yourselves from this precipice,” he said.

They essayed to do so, when he stopped them, saying, “No more of this. Show yourselves staunch friends of our king and make a gallant fight for him.”

They all vowed to do so. And when the battle was now imminent, Kalinga came to the conclusion in his own mind that he would be victorious, and his army too thought “The victory will be ours.” And so they put on their armour, and forming themselves into separate detachments, they advanced just as they thought proper, and when the moment came for making a great effort, they failed to do so.

But both the kings, mounted on horseback, drew nigh to one another with the intention of fighting. And their two tutelary gods moved before them, that of Kalinga in the shape of a white bull, and that of the other king as a black bull. And as these drew nigh to one another, they too made every demonstration of fighting. But these two bulls were visible to the two kings only, and to no one else. And Nandisena asked Assaka, saying, “Your Highness, are the tutelary gods visible to you?”

“Yes,” he answered, “they are.”

“In what guise?” he asked.

“The guardian god of Kalinga appears in the shape of a white bull, while ours is in the form of a black bull and looks distressed.”

“Fear not Sire, we shall conquer and Kalinga will be defeated. Only dismount from your well-trained Sindh horse, and grasping this spear, with your left hand give him a blow on the flank, and then with this body of a thousand men advance quickly and with a stroke of your weapon fell to the ground this god of Kalinga, while we with a thousand spears will smite him and so shall Kalinga’s tutelary deity perish, and then shall Kalinga be defeated and we shall be victorious.”

“Good,” said the king, and at a given signal from Nandisena he smote with his spear and his courtiers too smote with their thousand spears, and the tutelary god of Kalinga died then and there.

Meanwhile Kalinga was defeated and fled. And at the sight all those thousand councillors raised a loud cry, saying, “Kalinga is fled.” Then Kalinga with the fear of death upon him, as he fled, reproached that ascetic and uttered the second stanza:

“Kalingas bold shall victory claim,

Defeat crowns Assakas with shame.”

Thus did your reverence prophesy,

And honest folk should never lie.

Thus did Kalinga, as he fled, revile that ascetic. And in his flight to his own city he durst not so much as once look back. And a few days afterwards Sakka came to visit the hermit. And the hermit conversing with him uttered the third stanza:

The gods from lying words are free,

Truth should their chiefest treasure be.

In this, great Sakka, thou didst lie;

Tell me, I pray, the reason why.

On hearing this, Sakka spoke the fourth stanza:

Hast thou, O brahmin, ne’er been told

Gods envy not the hero bold?

The fixed resolve that may not yield,

Intrepid prowess in the field,

High courage and adventurous might

For Assaka have won the fight.

And on the flight of Kalinga, king Assaka returned with his spoils to his own city. And Nandisena sent a message to Kalinga, that he was to forward a portion for the dowry of these four royal maidens. “Otherwise,” he added, “I shall know how to deal with him.” And Kalinga, on hearing this message, was so alarmed that he sent a fitting portion for them. And from that day forward the two kings lived amicably together.

His discourse ended, the Master identified the Birth— “In those days these Young female ascetics were the daughters of king Kalinga, Sariputta was Nandisena and I myself was the hermit.”

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