Ja 385 — Nandiyamiga Jātaka

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

Source: https://raw.githubusercontent.com/suttacentral/sc-data/2d9ca8da858f94302ed6783e2717bf73d651881b/html_text/en/pli/sutta/kn/ja/vol3/ja385.html

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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

“Will you go to the King’s Park,” etc.—The Master told this in Jetavana, of a Brother who supported his mother. He asked the Brother, “Is it true that you support lay folk?” “Yes, lord.” “What are they?” “My father and mother, lord.” “Well done, well done, Brother: you keep up the rule of the wise men of old, for they too even when born as beasts gave their life for their parents,” and so he told an old tale.

Once upon a time when the Kosala king was reigning over the Kosalas in Saketa (Oudh), the Bodhisatta was born as a deer; when he grew up he was named Nandiyamiga, and being excellent in character and conduct he supported his father and mother. The Kosala king was intent on the chase, and went every day to hunt with a great retinue, so that his people could not follow farming and their trades. The people gathered together and consulted, saying, “Sirs, this king of ours is destroying our trades, our home-life is perishing; what if we were to enclose the Anjanavana park, providing a gate, digging a tank and sowing grass there, then go into the forest with sticks and clubs in our hands, beat the thickets, and so expelling the deer and driving them along force them into the park like cows into a pen? then we would close the gate, send word to the king and go about our trades.” “That is the way,” they said, and so with one will they made the park ready, and then entering the wood enclosed a space of a league each way. At the time Nandiya had taken his father and mother into a little thicket and was lying on the ground. The people with various shields and weapons in their hands encircled the thicket arm to arm; and some entered it looking for deer. Nandiya saw them and thought, “It is good that I should abandon life to-day and give it for my parents,” so rising and saluting his parents he said, “Father and mother, these men will see us three if they enter this thicket; you can survive only in one way, and your life is best: I will give you the gift of your life, standing by the skirts of the thicket and going out as soon as they beat it: then they will think there can be only one deer in this little thicket and so will not enter: be heedful”: so he got their permission and stood ready to run. As soon as the thicket was beaten by the people standing at its skirts and shouting he came out, and they thinking there would be only one

deer there did not enter. Nandiya went among the other deer, and the people drove them along into the park; then closing the gate they told the king and went to their own homes. From that time the king always went himself and shot a deer; then he either took it and went away, or sent for it and had it fetched. The deer arranged their turns, and he to whom the turn came stood on one side: and they take him when shot. Nandiya drank water from the tank, and ate the grass, but his turn did not come yet. Then after many days his parents longing to see him thought, "Our son Nandiya, king of deer, was strong as an elephant and of perfect health: if he is alive he will certainly leap the fence and come to see us; we will send him word": so they stood near the road and seeing a brahmin they asked in human voice, "Sir, where are you going?" "To Saketa," he said; so sending a message to their son they spoke the first stanza:

Will you go to the King's Park, brahmin, when Oudh you're travelling through?

Find out our dear son Nandiya and tell him our message true,

"Your father and mother are stricken in years and their hearts are fain for you."

The brahmin, saying, "It is well," accepted, and going to Saketa next day entered the park, and asked "Which is Nandiya?" The deer came near him and said, "I." The brahmin told his message. Nandiya, hearing it, said, "I might go, brahmin; I might certainly leap the fence and go: but I have enjoyed regular food and drink from the king, and this stands to me as a debt: besides I have lived long among these deer, and it is improper for me to go away without doing good to this king and to them, or without showing my strength: but when my turn comes I will do good to them and come gladly": and so explaining this, he spoke two stanzas:

I owe the King my daily drink and food:

I cannot go till I have made it good.

To the King's arrows I'll expose my side:

Then see my mother and be justified.

The brahmin hearing this went away. Afterwards on the day when his turn came, the king with a great retinue came into the park. The Bodhisatta stood on one side: and the king saying, "I will shoot the deer," fitted a sharp arrow to the string. The Bodhisatta did not run away as other animals do when scared by the fear of death, but fearless and making his charity his guide he stood firm, exposing his side with mighty ribs. The king owing to the efficacy of his love could not discharge the arrow. The Bodhisatta said, "Great king, why do you not shoot the arrow? shoot!" "King of deer, I cannot." "Then see the merit of the virtuous, O great king." Then the king, pleased with the Bodhisatta, dropped his bow and said, "This senseless length of wood knows your merit: shall I who have sense and am a man not know it? forgive me; I give you security." "Great king, you give me security, but what will this herd of deer in the park do?" "I give it to them too." So the Bodhisatta, having

gained security for all deer in the park, for birds in the air and fishes in the water, in the way described in the Nigrodha Birth, established the king in the five commands and said, “Great king, it is good for a king to rule a kingdom by forsaking the ways of wrongdoing, not offending against the ten kingly virtues and acting with just righteousness.

Alms, morals, charity, justice and penitence,

Peace, mildness, mercy, meekness, patience:

These virtues planted in my soul I feel,

Thence springs up Love and perfect inward weal.”

With these words he showed forth the kingly virtues in the form of a stanza, and after staying some days with the king he sent a golden drum round the town, proclaiming the gift of security to all beings: and then saying, “O king, be watchful,” he went to see his parents.

Of old in Oudh a king of deer I hight,

By name and nature, Nandiya, Delight.

To kill me in his deer-park came the King,

His bow was bent, his arrow on the string.

To the King’s arrow I exposed my side;

Then saw my mother and was justified.

These were the stanzas inspired by Perfect Wisdom.

At the end, the Master declared the Truths, and identified the Birth—At the end of the Truths, the Brother who supported his mother was established in the First Path—“At that time the father and mother were members of the royal family, the brahmin was Sariputta, the king Ananda, the deer myself.”

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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