Ja 469 — Maha-Kanha Jātaka

English translation by W. H. D. Rouse.

Source: https://raw.githubusercontent.com/suttacentral/sc-data/2d9ca8da858f94302ed6783e2717bf73d651881b/html_text/en/pli/sutta/kn/ja/vol4/ja469.html

Source revision: 2d9ca8da858f94302ed6783e2717bf73d651881b

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Edited by E. B. Cowell

Original edition: Cambridge University Press, volume 4, 1901

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

“A black, black hound,” etc. This story the Master told while dwelling at Jetavana, about living for the benefit of the world.

One day, they say, the Brethren as they sat in the Hall of Truth, were talking together. “Sirs,” one would say, “the Master, ever practising friendship towards the multitudes of the people, has forsaken an agreeable abode, and lives just for the good of the world. He has attained supreme wisdom, yet of his own accord takes bowl and robe, and goes on a journey of eighteen leagues or more. For the Five Elders he set a-rolling the Wheel of the Law; on the fifth day of the half-month he recited the Anattalakkhana Scriptures, and bestowed sainthood upon them all; he went to Uruvela, and to the ascetics with matted hair he showed miracles three thousand and half a thousand, and persuaded them to join the Order; at Gayasisa he recited the Discourse upon Fire, and bestowed sainthood upon a thousand of these ascetics; to Mahakassapa, when he had gone forward three miles to meet him, after three discourses he gave the higher Orders; all alone, after the noon-day meal, he went a journey of forty-five leagues, and then established in the Fruit of the Third Path Pukkusa (a youth of very good birth); to meet Mahakappina he went forward a space of two thousand leagues, and bestowed sainthood upon him; alone, in the afternoon he went a journey of thirty leagues, and established in sainthood that cruel and harsh man Angulimala; thirty leagues also he traversed, and established Alavaka in the Fruit of the First Path, and saved the prince; in the Heaven of the Thirty-Three he dwelt three months, and taught full comprehension of the Law to eight hundred millions of deities; to Brahma’s world he went, and destroyed the false doctrine of Baka Brahma, and bestowed sainthood on ten thousand Brahmas; every year he goes on pilgrimage in three districts, and to such men as are capable of receiving, he gives the Refuges, the Virtues, and the fruits of the different stages; he even acts for the good of snakes and garula birds and the like, in many ways.” In such words they praised the goodness and worth of the Dasabala’s life for the good of the world. The Master came in, and asked what they talked of as they sat there? They told him. “And no wonder, Brethren,” said he. “I who now in my perfect wisdom would

live for the world's good, even I in the past, in the days of passion, lived for the good of the world." So saying, he told a story of the past.

Once upon a time, in the days of the Supreme Buddha Kassapa, there reigned a king named Usinara. It was a long time after the Supreme Buddha Kassapa had declared the Four Truths, and liberated multitudes of people from bondage, and had been translated to swell the number of those who dwell in Nirvana; and the religion had fallen into decay. The Brethren gained their livelihood in the twenty-one unlawful ways; they associated with the Sisters, and sons and daughters were born to them; Brethren forsook the duties of the Brotherhood, and Sisters forsook the duties of Sisters, lay Brethren and Sisters the duties of such, brahmins did no longer the duties of a brahmin: men for the most part followed the ten paths of evil-doing, and as they died thus filled the hosts of all states of suffering.

Then Sakka, observing that no new deities came into being, looked abroad upon the world; and then he perceived how men were born into states of suffering, and that the religion of the Buddha had decayed. "What shall I do, now?" he wondered.—"Ah, I have it!" thought he: "I will scare and terrify mankind; and when I see they are terrified, I will console them, I will declare the Law, I will restore religion which has decayed, I will make it last for another thousand years!" With this resolve, he made the god Matali into the shape of a huge black hound, of pure breed, having four tusks as big as a plantain, horrible, with a hideous shape and a fat belly, as of a woman ready to be delivered of a child; him fastening with five-fold chain, and putting on him a red wreath, he led by a cord. Himself he put on a pair of yellow garments, and bound his hair behind his head, and donned a red wreath; taking a huge bow, fitted with bowstring of the colour of coral, and twirling in his fingers a javelin tipt with adamant, he assumed the aspect of a forester, and descended at a spot one league away from the city. "The world is doomed to destruction, is doomed to destruction!" he called out thrice with a loud sound, so that he terrified the people; and when he reached the entering in of the city, he repeated the cry. The people on seeing the hound were frightened, and hasted into the city, and told the king what had happened. The king speedily caused the city gates to be closed. But Sakka overleapt the wall, eighteen cubits in height, and with his hound stood within the city. The people in terror ran away into the houses, and made the doors fast. Big Blackie gave chase to every man he saw, and scared them, and finally entered into the king's palace. The people who in their fright had taken refuge in the courtyard, ran into the palace, and shut to the door. And as for the king, he with the ladies of his household went up on the terrace. Big Blackie raised his forefeet, and putting them in at the window roared a great roar The sound of his roaring reached from hell to the highest heaven: the whole universe was one great roar. The three great roars that were the loudest ever heard in India are these: the cry of king Punnaka in the Punnaka Birth, the cry of the snake-king Sudassana in the Bhuridatta Birth, and this roar in the Maha-Kanha Birth, or the story of Big Blackie. The people were terrified and horrified, and not a man of them could say a word to Sakka.

The king plucked up heart, and approaching the window, cried out to Sakka—"Ho, huntsman! why did your hound roar?" Quoth he, "The hound is hungry." "Well," said the king, "I will order some food to be given him." So he told them to give him his own food, and the food of all his household. The hound seemed to make but one mouthful of the

whole, then roared again. Again the king put his question. “My hound is still hungry,” was the reply. Then he had all the food of his elephants and horses and so forth brought and given to him. This also he finished off all at once; and then the king had all the food in the city given him. He swallowed this in like manner, and roared again. Said the king, “This is no hound. Beyond all doubt he is a goblin. I will ask him wherefore he is come.” So terrified with fear, he asked his question by repeating the first stanza:

“A black, black hound, with five cords bound, with fangs all white of hue,

Majestic, awful—mighty one! what makes he here with you?”

On hearing this, Sakka repeated the second stanza:

“Not to hunt game the Black Hound came, but he shall be of use

To punish men, Usinara, when I shall let him loose.”

Then said the king, “What, huntsman! will the hound devour the flesh of all men, or of your enemies only?” “Only my enemies, great king.” “And who are your enemies?” “Those, O king, who love unrighteousness, and walk wickedly.” “Describe them to us,” he asked. And the king of the gods described them in the stanzas:

“When the false Brethren, bowl in hand, in one robe clad, shall choose

Tonsured the plough to follow, then the Black Hound I will loose.

“When Sisters of the Order shall in single robe be found,

Tonsured, yet walking in the world, I will let loose the Hound.

“What time ascetics, usurers, protruding the upper lip,

Foul-toothed and filthy-haired shall be—the Black Hound I’ll let slip.

“When brahmins, skilled in sacred books and holy rites, shall use

Their skill to sacrifice for pelf, the Black Hound shall go loose.

“Whoso his parents now grown old, their youth now come to an end,

Would not maintain, although he might, gainst him the Hound I’ll send.

“Who to his parents now grown old, their youth now come to an end,

Cries, Fools are ye! gainst such as he the Black Hound I will send.

“When men go after others’ wives, of teacher, or of friend,

Sister of father, uncle's wife, the Black Hound I will send.

"When shield on shoulder, sword in hand, full-armed as highway men

They take the road to kill and rob, I'll loose the Black Hound then.

"When widows' sons, with skin groomed white, in skill all useless found,

Strong-armed, shall quarrel and shall fight, then I will loose the Hound.

"When men with hearts of evil full, false and deceitful men,

Walk in and out the world about, I'll loose the Black Hound then."

When he had thus spoken, "These," said he, "are my enemies, O king!" and he made as though he would let the hound leap forth and devour all those who did the deeds of enemies. But as all the multitude was terror-struck, he held in the hound by the leash, and seemed as it were to fix him to the spot;. then putting off the disguise of a hunter, by his power he rose and poised himself in the air, all blazing as it appeared, and said: "O great king, I am Sakka king of the gods! Seeing that the world was about to be destroyed, I came hither. Now indeed men as they die are filling the states of suffering, because their deeds are evil, and heaven is become empty. From henceforth I will know how to deal with the wicked, but do you be vigilant." Then having in four stanzas well worth remembering declared the Law, and established the people in the virtues of liberality, he strengthened the waning power of religion so that it lasted for yet another thousand years, and then with Matali returned to his own place.

When the Master had ended this discourse, he added: "Thus, Brethren, in former times as now I have lived for the good of the world;" and then he identified the Birth: "At that time Ananda was Matali, 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.

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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