Ja 479 — Kalinga-Bodhi Jātaka

English translation by W. H. D. Rouse.

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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

“King Kalinga,” etc.—This story the Master told while dwelling at Jetavana about worship of the bo-tree performed by Elder Ananda.

When the Tathagata had set forth on pilgrimage, for the purpose of gathering in those who were ripe for conversion, the citizens of Savatthi proceeded to Jetavana, their hands full of garlands and fragrant wreaths, and finding no other place to show their reverence, laid them by the gateway of the perfumed chamber and went off. This caused great rejoicings. But Anathapindika got to hear of it; and on the return of the Tathagata visited Elder Ananda and said to him,—“This monastery, Sir, is left unprovided while the Tathagata goes on pilgrimage, and there is no place for the people to do reverence by offering fragrant wreaths and garlands. Will you be so kind, Sir, as to tell the Tathagata of this matter, and learn from him whether or no it is possible to find a place for this purpose.” The other, nothing loth, did so, asking, “How many shrines are there?”—“Three, Ananda.”—“Which are they?”—“Shrines for a relic of the body, a relic of use or wear, a relic of memorial “—“Can a shrine be made, Sir, during your life?”—“No, Ananda, not a body-shrine; that kind is made when a Buddha enters Nirvana. A shrine of memorial is improper because the connection depends on the imagination only. But the great bo-tree used by the Buddhas is fit for a shrine, be they alive or be they dead.”—“Sir, while you are away on pilgrimage the great monastery of Jetavana is unprotected, and the people have no place where they can show their reverence. Shall I plant a seed of the great bo-tree before the gateway of Jetavana?”—“By all means so do, Ananda, and that shall be as it were an abiding place for me.”

The Elder told this to Anathapindika, and Visakha, and the king. Then at the gateway of Jetavana he cleared out a pit for the bo to stand in, and said to the chief Elder, Moggallana, “I want to plant a bo-tree in front of Jetavana. Will you get me a fruit of the great bo-tree?” The Elder, well willing, passed through the air to the platform under the bo-tree. He placed in his robe a fruit that was dropping from its stalk but had not reached the ground,

brought it back, and delivered it to Ananda. The Elder informed the King of Kosala that he was to plant the bo-tree that day. So in the evening time came the King with a great concourse, bringing all things necessary; then came also Anathapindika and Visakha and a crowd of the faithful besides.

In the place where the bo-tree was to be planted the Elder had placed a golden jar, and in the bottom of it was a hole; all was filled with earth moistened with fragrant water. He said, "O king, plant this seed of the bo-tree," giving it to the king. But the king, thinking that his kingdom was not to be in his hands for ever, and that Anathapindika ought to plant it, passed the seed to Anathapindika, the great merchant. Then Anathapindika stirred up the fragrant soil and dropt it in. The instant it dropt from his hand, before the very eyes of all, up sprang as broad as a plough-head a bo-sapling, fifty cubits tall; on the four sides and upwards shot forth five great branches of fifty cubits in length, like the trunk. So stood the tree, a very lord of the forest already; a mighty miracle! The king poured round the tree jars of gold and of silver, in number eight hundred, filled with scented water, beauteous with a great quantity of blue water-lilies. Ay, and caused to be set there a long line of vessels all full, and a seat he had made of the seven precious things, golden dust he had sprinkled about it, a wall was built round the precincts, he erected a gate chamber of the seven precious things. Great was the honour paid to it.

The Elder approaching the Tathagata, said to him, "Sir, for the people's good, accomplish under the bo-tree which I have planted that height of Attainment to which you attained under the great bo-tree." "What is this you say, Ananda?" replied he. "There is no other place can support me, if I sit there and attain to that which I attained in the enclosure of the great bo-tree." "Sir," said Ananda, "I pray you for the good of the people, to use this tree for the rapture of Attainment, in so far as this spot of ground can support the weight." The Master used it during one night for the rapture of Attainment.

The Elder informed the king, and all the rest, and called it by the name of the Bo Festival. And this tree, having been planted by Ananda, was known by the name of Ananda's Bo-Tree.

At that time they began to talk of it in the Hall of Truth. "Brother, while yet the Tathagata lived, the venerable Ananda caused a bo-tree to be planted, (230) and great reverence to be paid to it. Oh, how great is the Elder's power!" The Master entering asked what they were talking of. They told him. He said, "This is not the first time, Brethren, that Ananda led captive mankind in the four great continents, with all the surrounding throngs, and caused a vast quantity of scented wreaths to be brought, and made a bo-festival in the precinct of the great bo-tree." So saying, he told a story of the past.

Once upon a time, in the kingdom of Kalinga, and in the city of Dantapura, reigned a king named Kalinga. He had two sons, named Maha-Kalinga and Culla-Kalinga, Kalinga the Greater and the Less. Now fortune-tellers had foretold that the eldest son would reign after his father's death; but that the youngest would live as an ascetic, and live by alms, yet his son would be an universal monarch.

Time passed by, and on his father's death the eldest son became king, the youngest viceroy. The youngest, ever thinking that a son born of him was to be an universal monarch, grew arrogant on that account. This the king could not brook, so sent a messenger to arrest Kalinga the Less. The man came and said, "Prince, the king wishes to have you arrested, so save your life." The prince showed the courtier charged with this mission his own signet ring, a fine rug, and his sword: these three. Then he said, "By these tokens you shall know my son, and make him king." With these words, he sped away into the forest. There he built him a hut in a pleasant place, and lived as an ascetic upon the bank of a river.

Now in the kingdom of Madda, and in the city of Sagala, a daughter was born to the King of Madda. Of the girl, as of the prince, fortunetellers foretold that she should live as an ascetic, but her son was to be an universal monarch. The Kings of India, hearing this rumour, came together with one accord, and surrounded the city. The king thought to himself, "Now, if I give my daughter to one, all the other kings will be enraged. I will try to save her." So with wife and daughter he fled disguised away into the forest; and after building him a hut some distance up the river, above the hut of Prince Kalinga, he lived there as an ascetic, eating what he could pick up.

The parents, wishing to save their daughter, left her behind in the hut, and went out to gather wild fruits. While they were gone she gathered flowers of all kinds, and made them into a flower-wreath. Now on the bank of the Ganges there is a mango tree with beautiful flowers, which forms a kind of natural ladder. Upon this she climbed, and playing managed to drop the wreath of flowers into the water.

One day, as Prince Kalinga was coming out of the river after a bath, this flower-wreath caught in his hair.

He looked at it, and said, "Some woman made this, and no full-grown woman but a tender young girl. I must make search for her." So deeply in love he journeyed up the Ganges, until he heard her singing in a sweet voice, as she sat in the mango tree. He approached the foot of the tree, and seeing her, said, "What are you, fair lady?" "I am human, Sir," she replied. "Come down, then," quoth he. "Sir, I cannot; I am of the warrior caste." "So am I also, lady: come down!" "No, no, Sir, that I cannot do. Saying will not make a warrior; if you are so, tell me the secrets of that mystery." Then they repeated to each other these guild secrets. And the princess came down, and they had connexion one with the other.

When her parents returned she told them about this son of the King of Kalinga, and how he came into the forest, in all detail. They consented to give her to him. While they lived together in happy union, the princess conceived, and after ten months brought forth a son with the signs of good luck and virtue; and they named him Kalinga. He grew up, and learnt all arts and accomplishments from his father and grandfather.

At length his father knew from conjunctions of the stars that his brother was dead. So he called his son, and said, "My son, you must not spend your life in the forest. Your father's brother, Kalinga the Greater, is dead; you must go to Dantapura, and receive your

hereditary kingdom." Then he gave him the things he had brought away with him, signet, rug, and sword, saying, "My son, in the city of Dantapura, in such a street, lives a courtier who is my very good servant. Descend into his house and enter his bedchamber, and show him these three things and tell him you are my son. He will place you upon the throne."

The lad bade farewell to his parents and grandparents; and by power of his own virtue he passed through the air, and descending into the house of that courtier entered his bedchamber. "Who are you?" asked the other. "The son of Kalinga the Less," said he, disclosing the three tokens. The courtier told it to the palace, and all those of the court decorated the city and spread the umbrella of royalty over his head. Then the chaplain, who was named Kalinga-bharadvaja, taught him the ten ceremonies which an universal monarch has to perform, and he fulfilled those duties. Then on the fifteenth day, the fast-day, came to him from Cakkadaha the precious Wheel of Empire, from the Uposatha stock the precious Elephant, from the royal Valaha breed the precious Horse, from Vepulla the precious Jewel; and the precious wife, retinue, and prince made their appearance. Then he achieved sovereignty in the whole terrestrial sphere.

One day, surrounded by a company which covered six-and-thirty leagues, and mounted upon an elephant all white, tall as a peak of Mount Kelasa, in great pomp and splendour he went to visit his parents. But beyond the circuit around the great bo-tree, the throne of victory of all the Buddhas, which has become the very navel of the earth, beyond this the elephant was unable to pass: again and again the king urged him on, but pass he could not.

Explaining this, the Master recited the first stanza:

"King Kalinga, lord supreme,

Ruled the earth by law and right,

To the bo-tree once he came

On an elephant of might."

Hereupon the king's chaplain, who was travelling with the king, thought to himself, "In the air is no hindrance; why cannot the king make his elephant go on? I will go, and see." Then descending from the air, he beheld the throne of victory of all Buddhas, the navel of the earth, that circuit around the great bo-tree. At that time, it is said, for the space of a royal karisa was never a blade of grass, not so big as a hare's whisker; it seemed as it were a smooth-spread sand bright like a silver plate; but on all sides were grass, creepers, mighty trees like the lords of the forest, as though standing in reverent wise all about with their faces turned towards the throne of the bo-tree. When the brahmin beheld this spot of earth, "This," thought he, "is the place where all the Buddhas have crushed all the desires of the flesh; and beyond this none can pass, no not if he were Sakka himself." Then approaching the king, he told him the quality of the bo-tree circuit, and bade him descend.

By way of explaining this the Master recited these stanzas following:

“This Kalinga-bharadvaja told his king, the ascetic’s son,

As he rolled the wheel of empire, guiding him, obeisance done:

“This the place the poets sing of; here, O mighty king, alight!

Here attained to perfect wisdom perfect Buddhas, shining bright.

“In the world, tradition has it, this one spot is hallowed ground,

Where in attitude of reverence herbs and creepers stand around.

“Come, descend and do obeisance; since as far as the ocean bound

In the fertile earth all-fostering this one spot is hallowed ground.

“All the elephants thou ownest thorobred by dam and sire,

Hither drive them, they will surely come thus far, but come no nigher.

“He is thorobred you ride on; drive the creature as you will,

He can go not one step further: here the elephant stands still.”

“Spake the soothsayer, heard Kalinga; then the King to him, quoth he,

Driving deep the goad into him—“Be this truth, we soon shall see.”

“Pierced, the creature trumpets loudly, shrill as any heron cries,

Moved, then fell upon his haunches neath the weight, and could not rise.”

Pierced and pierced again by the king, this elephant could not endure the pain, and so died; but the king knew not he was dead, and sat there still on his back. Then Kalingabharadvaja said, “O great king! your elephant is dead; pass on to another.”

To explain this matter, the Master recited the tenth stanza:

“When Kalinga-bharadvaja saw the elephant was dead,

He in fear and trepidation then to king Kalinga said:

“Seek another, mighty monarch: this thy elephant is dead.”

By the virtue and magical power of the king, another beast of the Uposatha breed appeared and offered his back. The king sat on his back. At that moment the dead elephant fell upon the earth.

To explain this matter, the Master repeated another stanza:

“This heard, Kalinga in dismay

Mounted another, and straightway

Upon the earth the corpse sank down,

And the soothsayer’s word for very truth was shown.”

Thereupon the king came down from the air, and beholding the precinct of the bo-tree, and the miracle that was done, he praised Bharadvaja, saying—

“To Kalinga-bharadvaja king Kalinga thus did say:

“All thou know’st and understandest, and thou seest all alway.”

Now the brahmin would not accept this praise; but standing in his own humble place, he extolled the Buddhas, and praised them.

To explain this, the Master repeated these stanzas:

“But the brahmin straight denied it, and thus spake unto the king:

“I know sooth of marks and tokens: but the Buddhas, every thing.

“Though all-knowing and all-seeing, yet in marks they have no skill:

They know all, but know by insight: I a man of books am still.”

The king, hearing the virtues of the Buddhas, was delighted in heart; and he caused all the dwellers in the world to bring fragrant wreaths in plenty, and for seven days he made them do worship at the circuit of the Great Bo-tree.

By way of explanation, the Master recited a couple of stanzas:

“Thus worshipt he the great bo-tree with much melodious sound

Of music, and with fragrant wreaths: a wall he set around,

“and after that the king went on his way—

“Brought flowers in sixty thousand carts an offering to be;

Thus king Kalinga worshipped the Circuit of the Tree."

Having in this manner done worship to the Great Bo-tree, he visited his parents, and took them back with him again to Dantapura; where he gave alms and did good deeds, until he was born again in the Heaven of the Thirty-Three.

The Master, having finished this discourse, said: "It is not now the first time, Brethren, that Ananda did worship the bo-tree, but aforetime also;" and then he identified the Birth—"At that time Ananda was Kalinga, and I myself was Kalinga-bharadvaja."

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