Ja 492 — Taccha-Sukara 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

“I wandered, searching far,” etc.—This story the Master told while dwelling at Jetavana, about two ancient Elders.

Maha-Kosala, they say, in giving his daughter to King Bimbisara, allotted her a village of Kasi for bath-money. After Ajatasattu had murdered his father, King Pasenadi destroyed that village. In the battles betwixt them for it, victory at the first lay with Ajatasattu. And the King of Kosala, having the worst, asked his councillors, “What can we devise to take Ajatasattu?” They answered, “Great king, the Brethren have great skill of magical charms. Send messengers to them, and get the opinion of the Brethren at the monastery.” This pleased the king. Accordingly, he caused men to be sent, bidding them go thither, and hiding themselves, overhear what the Brethren should say. Now at Jetavana are many king’s officers who have renounced the world. Two among these, a pair of old Elders, dwelt in a leaf hut on the outskirts of the monastery: the name of one of them was Elder Dhanuggaha-tissa, of the other the Elder Mantidatta. These had slept all the night through, and awoke at peep of day. The Elder Dhanuggaha-tissa said, as he kindled the fire, “Elder Datta, Sir.” “Well, Sir?” “Are you asleep?” “No, I am not asleep: what’s to do now?” “A born fool that King of Kosala is; all he knows is how to eat a mess of food.” “What do you mean, Sir?” “He lets himself be beaten by Ajatasattu, who is no better than a worm in his own belly.” “What should he do, then?” “Why, Elder Datta, you know the order of battle is of three kinds: Waggon Battle, Wheel Battle, and Lotus Battle. It is the Waggon Battle he ought to use in order to catch Ajatasattu. Let him post valiant men on his two flanks on the hill-top, and then show his main battle in front: once he gets in between, out with a shout and a leap, and they have him like a fish in a lobster-pot. That is the way to catch him.” Now all this the messengers heard; and then went back and told the king. He immediately set out with a great host, and took Ajatasattu prisoner, and bound him in chains. After punishing him thus for some days, he released him, advising him not to do it again, and by way of consolation gave him his own daughter, the Princess Vajira, in marriage, and finally dismissed him with great pomp.

There was much gossip about it among the Brethren indoors: “Ajatasattu was caught by the King of Kosala, through following the directions of Elder Dhanuggaha-tissa!” They talked of the same in the Hall of Truth, and the Master entering, asked them what the talk was. They told him. Then he said, “This is not the first time, Brethren, that Dhanuggaha-tissa has shown himself expert in strategy.” And he told them a story of the past.

Once upon a time, a carpenter, who dwelt in a village hard by the city gate of Benares, went into the forest to cut wood. He found a young Boar fallen into a pit, which he brought home and reared, naming him Carpenter’s Boar. The Boar became his servant: trees he turned over with his snout, and brought to him: he hitched the measuring-line around his tusk and pulled it along, fetched and carried adze, chisel, and mallet in his teeth.

When he grew up, he was a monstrous burly beast. The carpenter, who loved him as his own son, and feared lest some one might do him a mischief there, let him go free in the forest. The Boar thought, “I cannot live alone by myself in this forest: what if I search out my kindred, and live in their midst?” So he sought all through that multitude of trees for Boars, until seeing a herd of them, he was glad, and recited three stanzas—

“I wandered, searching far and wide the woods and hills around:

I wandered, searching for my kin: and lo, my kin are found!

“Here are abundant roots and fruits, with plenteous store of food;

What lovely hills and pleasant rills! to dwell here will be good.

“Here will I dwell with all my kin, not anxious, at my ease,

Having no trouble, fearing nought from any enemies.”

The Boars on hearing this verse responded with the fourth stanza—

“A foe is here! some otherwhere take refuge, go thy ways:

Ever the choicest of the herd, O Carpenter, he slays!”

“Who is that foe? Come tell me true, my kindred, so well met,

Who is’t destroys you? though he has not quite destroyed you yet.”

“A king of beasts! striped up and down he is, with teeth to bite:

Ever the choicest of the herd he slays—a beast of might!”

“And have our bodies lost their strength? have we no tusks to show?

We shall o'ercome him if we work together: only so."

"Sweet words to hear, O Carpenter, of which my heart is fain:

Let no Boar flee! or he shall be after the battle slain!"

Carpenter's Boar now having made them all of one mind asked, "At what time will the tiger come?" "To-day he came early in the morning and took one, to-morrow he will come early in the morning." The Boar was skilled in warfare, and knew the place of advantage to take, so that victory might be won. He searched about for a place, and made them take food while it was yet night; then very early in the morning, he explained to them how the order of battle is of three kinds, the Waggon Battle, and so forth; after which he arranged the Lotus Battle in this manner. In the midst he placed the sucking pigs, and around them their mothers, next to these the barren sows, next a circle of young porkers, next the young ones with tusks just a-budding, next the big tuskers, and the old Boars outside all. Then he posted smaller squads of ten, twenty, thirty apiece here and there. He made them dig a pit for himself, and for the tiger to fall into a hole of the shape of a winnowing basket: between the two holes was left a spit of ground for himself to stand on. Then he with the stout fighting-boars went around everywhere encouraging the Boars.

As he was thus engaged the sun rose. The Tiger, coming forth from the hermitage of a sham ascetic, appeared upon the hill-top. The Boars cried, "Our enemy is come, Sir!" "Fear not," said he, "whatever he does, you do the same." The Tiger gave himself a shake, and as though about to depart, made water; the Boars did the same. The Tiger looked at the Boars and roared a great roar; they did the same. Observing what they were at, he thought, "They have changed somehow; to-day they face me out as enemies, in orderly bands: some warrior has been mustering them; I must not go near them to-day." In fear of death he turned tail, and fled to the sham ascetic; and he, seeing the Tiger empty-handed, recited the ninth stanza—

"Hast thou abjured all killing? hast thou sworn

Safety for every living creature born ?

Surely thy teeth their wonted virtue lack.

You find a herd, and come a beggar back!"

The Tiger thereupon repeated three stanzas—

"My teeth no longer bite,

My strength exhausted quite:

Brother by brother all together stood:

Therefore I wander lonely in the wood.

“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.

“They all agree together now, a leader they have got;

When all agree they may hurt me: therefore I want them not.”

To this the sham ascetic replied with the following stanza—

“Alone the hawk subdues the birds, alone

The Titans are by Indra overthrown:

And when a herd of beasts the mighty tiger sees,

Ever the best he picks, and kills them at his ease.”

Then the Tiger recited one—

“No hawk, no tiger lord of beasts, not Indra can command

A kindred host that tiger-like combine to make a stand.”

Thereat the sham ascetic, to egg him on, recited two stanzas—

“The little tiny feathered fowl in flocks and coveys fly,

In heaps together up they rise, together skim the sky.

“Down stoops the hawk, and all alone, down on them as they play,

Harries and kills them at his will: that is your tiger’s way.”

This said, he further encouraged him: “Royal Tiger, you know not your own power. One roar only, and a spring—there will not be two of them left together, I dare swear!” The Tiger did so.

To explain this, the Master said a stanza—

“Then he with cruel greedy eye, deeming these words were true,

Took heart, and with his fangs all bare leaped on the tusked crew."

Well, the Tiger went back and stood there awhile on the hill. The Boars told Carpenter's Boar that he was come again. "Fear not," said he, comforting them, and then took his stand upon the ridge between the two pits. The Tiger with all speed sprang towards the Boar, but the Boar rolled tail over snout in the first hole. The Tiger could not check his onset, and fell all of a heap into the pit shaped like to a winnowing fan. Up jumped the Boar in a trice, buried his tusks in the Tiger's thigh, pierced him to the heart, devoured the flesh, bit at him, bundled him over into the further pit, crying, "There, take the varlet!" They who came first got one chance apiece of nozzling a mouthful, those who came later went about asking, "How does tiger's-meat taste?"

Carpenter's Boar came out of the pit, and, looking round upon the others, said, "Well, don't you like it?" But they answered, "My lord, you have done for the Tiger, and that's one; but there is another left worse than ten tigers." "Who is that, pray?" "A sham ascetic, who eats the meat which the Tiger brings him from time to time." "Come along then, and we will catch him." So they quickly sprang off together.

Now the sham ascetic was watching the road, and expecting the Tiger to come every minute. And what should he see coming but the Boars! "They have killed the Tiger, methinks, and now they are come to kill me!" Away he ran, and climbed up a wild fig-tree. "He has climbed a tree?" said the Boars to their leader. "What tree?" "A fig-tree." "All right, we shall have him directly." He made the young Boars grub away the earth from its roots, and the sows bring each as much water as their mouths would hold, till there the tree stood upright bare down to the roots. Then he sent the others out of the way, and, going down on his knees, struck at the roots with his tusk: clean through the root he cut, as with an axe, down came the tree, but the man never got as far as the ground: he was torn to pieces and eaten on the way. Observing this marvel, the tree-spirit recited a stanza:-

"United friends, like forest trees—it is a pleasant sight:

The Boars united, at one charge the Tiger killed outright."

And the Master recited another stanza, how that both of them were destroyed—

"The brahmin and the tiger both thus did the Boars destroy,

And roared a loud and echoing roar in their exceeding joy."

Again the Boar asked, "And have you another foe?" "No, my lord," they replied. Then they proposed to sprinkle him for their King. Water was fetched. Espying the shell which the sham ascetic used for his drinking, which was a precious conch with the spiral turned right-wise, they filled it with water, and consecrated Carpenter's Boar there on the root of the fig-tree, there the water of consecration was poured upon him. A young sow they made his consort. Hence arose the custom which still prevails, that in consecrating a king they seat him upon a chair of fig-wood, and sprinkle him from a conch with spirals that run

to the right.

This also the Master explained by reciting the last stanza—

“The Boars beneath the wild fig-tree the holy water poured,

Upon the Carpenter, and cried, Thou art our King and Lord!”

When he had ended this discourse, the Master said, “No, Brethren, this is not the first time that Dhanuggaha-tissa has shown himself clever in strategy, but he was the same before.” With these words, he identified the Birth: “At that time Devadatta was the sham ascetic, Dhanuggaha-tissa Carpenter’s Boar, and I myself 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.

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