Ja 526 — Nalinika Jātaka

English translation by H. T. Francis.

Source: https://raw.githubusercontent.com/suttacentral/sc-data/2d9ca8da858f94302ed6783e2717bf73d651881b/html_text/en/pli/sutta/kn/ja/vol5/ja526.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

“Lo! the land,” etc. This story the Master told while residing at Jetavana concerning the temptation of a Brother by the wife of his unregenerate days. And in telling the story he asked the Brother by whom he had been led astray. “By a former wife,” said he. “Verily, Brother,” the Master said, “she worketh mischief for you. Of old it was owing to her that you fell away from mystic meditation and were mightily destroyed.” And so saying he told a story of the past.

Once upon a time, when Brahmadatta ruled in Benares, the Bodhisatta was born of a wealthy family in the brahmins of the North, and when he had come of age and had been trained in all the arts, he adopted the ascetic life, and after developing supernatural powers by the exercise of mystic meditation he took up his abode in the Himalayas. Exactly in the same way as related in the Alambusa Birth a doe conceived by him and brought forth a son who was called Isisinga. Now when he was grown up, his father admitted him to holy orders and had him instructed in the rites inducing mystic meditation. In no long time he developed by this means supernatural faculties and enjoyed the bliss of ecstasy in the region of the Himalayas, and by mortification of the senses he became a sage of such severe austerity that the abode of Sakka was shaken by the power of his virtue. Sakka by reflection discovered the cause of it, and thinking, “I will find a way to break down his virtue,” for the space of three years he stopped rain from falling in the kingdom of Kasi, and the country became as it were scorched up, and when no crops came to perfection, the people under the stress of famine gathered themselves together in the palace yard and reproached the king. Taking his stand at an open window, he asked what was the matter. “Your Majesty,” they said, “for three years no rain has fallen from heaven, and the whole kingdom is burned up and the people are suffering greatly: cause rain to fall, Sire.” The king, taking upon him moral vows and observing a fast, yet failed to bring down the rain. It was then that Sakka at midnight entered the royal chamber and illuminating it all round was seen to stand in mid air. The king on seeing him asked, “Who art thou?” “I am Sakka,” he said. “Wherefore art thou come?” “Does rain fall in your realm, Sire?” “No, it does

not rain." "Do you know why it does not rain?" "I do not know." "In the Himalaya country, Sire, dwells an ascetic named Isisinga, who from the mortification of his senses is severely austere. He constantly, when it begins to rain, looks up at the sky in a rage and so the rain ceases." "What then is to be done now?" "Should his virtue be broken down, it will rain." "But who is able to overcome his virtue?" "Your daughter, Sire, Nalinika can do it. Summon her here and bid her go to such and such a place and make a breach in the virtue of the ascetic." And, having thus admonished the king, Sakka returned to his own abode. On the morrow the king took counsel with his courtiers and summoning his daughter addressed her in the first stanza:

Lo! the land lies scorched and ruined and my realm sinks to decay:

Go, Nalinika, and, prithee, bring this brahmin 'neath thy sway.

On hearing this she repeated a second stanza:

How shall I endure this hardship, how, midst elephants astray,

Through the glades of yonder forest shall I safely guide my way?

Then the king repeated two stanzas:

Seek thy happy home, my daughter, and from thence without delay

In a car of wood so deftly framed ride thou upon thy way.

Horses, elephants, and footmen—go, begirt with brave array,

And with charm of beauty quickly thou shalt bring him 'neath thy sway.

Thus for the protection of his realm did he talk with his daughter even of such things as should not be spoken of in words. And she readily lent an ear to his proposals. Then, after giving her all that she required, he sent her away with his ministers. They went to the frontier and, after pitching their camp there, they had the princess conveyed by a road pointed out to them by some foresters, and at break of day, entering the Himalaya country, they arrived at a spot close to the ascetic's hermitage. At this very moment the Bodhisatta, leaving his son behind in the hermitage, had gone into the forest to gather wild fruits. The foresters themselves approached the hermitage and, standing where they could see it, they pointed it out to Nalinika and repeated two stanzas:

With plantain marked, midst bhurja trees so green,

Lo! Isisinga's pretty hut is seen.

Yon smoke, methinks, arises from the flame

Nursed by that sage of wonder-working fame.

And the king's ministers at the very moment when the Bodhisatta had gone into the forest surrounded the hermitage and set a watch over it, and making the princess adopt the disguise of an ascetic, and arraying her in an outer and inner garment of beautiful bark adorned with all manner of ornaments, they bade her take in her hand a painted ball tied to a string and sent her into the hermitage grounds, while they themselves stood on guard outside. So playing with her ball she entered the cloister. Now at that moment Isisinga was seated on a bench at the door of his hut of leaves, and when he saw her coming he was terrified and got up and went and hid himself in the hut. And she drew nigh to the door and continued playing with her ball.

The Master, to make this point and more beside clear, repeated three stanzas:

Bedecked with gems as she drew nigh, a bright and lovely maid,

Poor Isisinga sought in fear his cell's protecting shade.

And while before the hermit's door with ball the damsel plays,

Her lovely limbs she doth expose all naked to his gaze.

But when he saw her sporting thus, forth from his cell he broke,

And, rushing from the leafy hut, words such as these he spoke.

Fruit of what tree may this, Sir, be, that howe'er far 'Tis tost

'Twill still return to thee again and never more is lost?

Then she telling him of the tree spoke this stanza:

Mount Gandhamadana, the home wherein I dwell, can boast

Of many a tree with fruit maybe such that though far 'Tis tost,

'Twill still return to me again and never more is lost.

Thus did she speak falsely, but he believed her, and thinking it was an ascetic he greeted her kindly and uttered this stanza:

Pray, holy sir, come in and take a seat,

Accept some food and water for thy feet,

And resting here awhile enjoy with me

Such roots and berries as I offer thee.

[Being an ingenuous youth and never having seen a woman before he was led to believe the extraordinary story she told him, and through her seductions] his virtue was overcome and his mystic meditation broken off. After disporting himself with her till he was tired, he at length sallied forth and finding his way down to the tank he bathed and, when his fatigue had passed off, he returned and sat in his hut. And once more, still believing her to be an ascetic, he asked where she dwelt, and spoke this stanza:

By what road hither hast thou come,

And dost thou love thy woodland home?

Can roots and berries hunger stay,

And how escap'st thou beasts of prey?

Then Nalinika recited four stanzas:

North of this the Khema flows

Straight from Himalayan snows:

On its bank, a charming spot,

May be seen my hermit cot.

Mango, tilak, sal full-grown,

Cassia, trumpet-flower full-blown—

All with song of elves resound:

Here my home, Sir, may be found.

Here with dates and roots, I ween,

Every kind of fruit is seen:

'Tis a gay and fragrant spot

That has fallen to my lot.

Roots and berries here abound,

Sweet and fair and luscious found.

But I fear, should robbers come,

They'll despoil my happy home.

The ascetic, on hearing this, to put her off till his father should return, spoke this stanza:

My father foraging for fruit is gone;

The sun is sinking, he'll be here anon.

When back front his fruit-gathering he is come,

We'll start together for thy hermit-home.

Then she thought: "This boy because he has been brought up in a forest does not know that I am a woman, but his father will know it as soon as ever he sees me, and will ask me what business I have here and striking me with the end of his carrying-pole, he will break my head. I must be off before he returns and the object of my coming is already accomplished," and telling him how he was to find his way to her house she repeated another stanza:

Alas! I fear I may no longer stay,

But many a royal saint lives on the way:

Ask one of them to point you out the road;

He'll gladly act as guide to my abode.

When she had thus devised a plan for her escape, she left the hermitage, and bidding the youth, as he was wistfully looking after her, to stay where he was, she returned to the ministers by the same road by which she had come there, and they took her with them to their encampment and by several stages reached Benares. And Sakka that very day was so delighted that he caused rain to fall throughout the whole kingdom. But directly she had left the ascetic, Isisinga, a fever seized upon his frame and all of a tremble he entered the hut of leaves and putting on his upper robe of bark he lay there groaning. In the evening his father returned and missing his son he said, "Where in the world is he gone?" And he put down his carrying-pole and went into the hut, and when he found him lying there he said, "What ails you, my dear son?" And chafing his back he uttered three stanzas:

No wood is cut, no water fetched, no fire alight. I pray

Tell me, thou silly lad, why thus thou dream'st the live-long day.

Until to-day the wood was ever cut,

The fire alight, and pot thereon was put,

My seat arranged, the water fetched. In sooth

Thou found’st thy pleasure in the task, good youth.

To-day no wood is cleft, no water brought,

No fire alight; cooked food in vain is sought.

To-day no welcome hast thou given to me:

What hast thou lost? What sorrow troubles thee?

On hearing his father’s words, in explaining the matter, he said:

Here, Sire, to-day a holy youth has been,

A handsome, dapper boy, of winsome mien:

Not over tall nor yet too short was he,

Dark was his hair, as black as black could be.

Smooth-cheeked and beardless was this stripling wight,

And on his neck was hung a jewel bright;

Two lovely swellings on his fair breast lay,

Like balls of burnished gold, of purest ray.

His face was wondrous fair, and from each ear

A curved ring depending did appear;

These and the fillet on his head gave out

Flashes of light, whene’er he moved about.

Yet other ornaments the youth did wear,

Or blue or red, upon his dress and hair;

Jingling, whene’er he moved, they rang again

Like little birds that chirp in time of rain.

No robe of bark, sign of ascetic grim,

No girdle made of munja grass for him.

His garments shimmer, clinging to the thigh,

Bright as a flash of lightning in the sky.

Fruits of what tree beneath his waist are bound,

—Smooth and without or stalk or prickle found—?

Stitched in his robe, in order loose but thick,

They strike each other with a sounding “click.”

The tresses on his head were wondrous fair,

Hundreds of curls perfuming all the air:

These locks just parted in the midst had he—

Dressed e’en as his would that my hair might be.

But when his locks he did perchance unbind

And loose in all their beauty to the wind,

Their fragrance filled our home midst forest trees,

Like scent of lotus borne along the breeze.

His very dust was fair to look upon,

His person quite unlike that of thy son:

It breathed forth odours wafted everywhere,

Like shrubs ablossom in the summer air.

His fruit so bright and fair, of varied hue,

Afar from him upon the ground he threw,

Yet back to him ’twould evermore return:

What fruit it is I fain from thee would learn.

His teeth in even rows, so pure and white,

Vie with the choicest pearls, a lovely sight;

Whene’er he opes his lips, how charming ’Tis!

No food like ours, roots and vile potherbs, his!

His voice so soft and smooth, yet firm and clear

In gentle accents fell upon the ear;

It pierced me to the heart: so sweet a note

Ne’er issued from melodious cuckoo’s throat.

Its tone I thought subdued, pitched far too low

For one rehearsing holy lore, I trow;

Howbeit—so great his kindness—I would fain

Renew my friendship with this youth again.

His warm arms flashing in their gold array,

Like gleams of lightning all around me play.

With down, as eye-salve soft, were they o’erspread,

Round were his fingers, blushing coral-red.

Smooth were his limbs, his tresses long untied,

Long too his nails with tips all crimson dyed:

With his soft arms around me clinging tight

The fair boy ministered to my delight.

His hands were white as cotton, gleaming bright

Like golden mirror that reflects the light;

At their soft touch I felt a burning thrill,

And though he’s gone, the memory fires me still.

No load of grain he brought, nor ever could

Be won with his own hands to chop our wood,

Nor would he with his axe hew down a tree

Nor carry a sharp stake, to pleasure me.

This rumpled couch with leaves of creepers made

Bears witness to the merry pranks we played:

Then in yon lake our weary limbs we lave

And once more seek indoors the rest we crave.

To-day no holy texts can I recite,

No fire for sacrifice is found alight:

Yea, from all roots and berries I'll abstain

Till I behold this pious youth again.

Tell me, dear father, for thou know'st it well,

Where in the world this holy youth may dwell;

And thither with all speed, pray, let us fly,

Or at thy door my death will surely lie.

I've heard him speak of glades, with flowerets gay,

And thronged with birds that sing the live-long day,

'Tis thither with all speed I fain would fly

Or here at once I'll lay me down and die.

The Great Being on hearing the boy talk such nonsense knew at once that through some woman he had lost his virtue, and by way of admonition he repeated six stanzas:

An ancient home for sages long has stood

Within the sunlit precincts of this wood;

In haunts of angels and of nymphs divine,

This feeling of unrest should ne'er be thine.

Friendships exist and then they cease to be;

Each one shows love to his own family;

But they poor creatures are who do not know

To whom their origin and love they owe.

Friendship is formed by constant intercourse;

When this is broken, friendship fails perforce.

Shouldst thou set eyes upon this youth once more,

Or converse hold with him, as heretofore,

Just as a flood sweeps off the ripened corn,

So will the power of virtue be o'er-borne.

Demons there be that through the wide earth run

In varied form disguised. Beware, my son!

He that is wise should not consort with such;

Virtue herself is blasted at their touch.

On hearing what his father had to say the youth thought, "She was a female yakkha, he says," and he was terrified and put away the thought of her from him. Then he asked his father's pardon, saying, "Forgive me, dear father, I will not leave this spot." And his father comforted him, saying, "Come, my boy, cultivate charity, pity, sympathy and equanimity," and he proclaimed to him the attainment of the Perfect States. And the son walked accordingly therein and once more developed mystic meditation.

The Master, having finished his lesson, revealed the Truths and identified the Birth—At the conclusion of the Truths the back-sliding Brother was established in the fruition of the First Path—"At that time the wife of his unregenerate days was Nalinika, the back-sliding Brother was Isisinga, and I myself was the father."

Once, quoth she, did I see a fair sweet youth,

Here in these brakes, deep-wounded with a boar,

Deep in the thigh...

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Vol. 1, translated by Robert Chalmers, 1895.

Vol. 2, translated by W.H.D. Rouse, 1895.

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Vol. 4, translated by W.H.D. Rouse, 1901.

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Prepared for SuttaCentral by Bhikkhu Sujato.