

The Illustrated Jatakas of Goutham Buddha At Anjatha Caves

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Abstract

In the present study, attempt has been made to describe the Jatakas of Ajantha caves of Maharashtra state, India, The Jatakas are the stories of the previous births of Lord Gautam Buddha, who is believed as Boddhisattva (a being who is in the process of obtaining Buddhahood), to have passed innumerable existence, both human and animal, persistently qualifying himself for Buddhahood by the greatest acquisition (Paramita) of all kinds of virtues. The Jataka stories are a voluminous group of writing local to India concerning the past births of Gautama Buddha in both human and creature structure. The future Buddha might show up as a ruler, an outsider, a divine being, an elephant—in any case, in whatever structure, he displays some ideals that the story subsequently instills.

Keywords: Guatham Buddha, Life stories, Ajantha, Murals

Introduction

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BRIEF DETAILS OF IMMORTAL AJANTA

*** JATAKA TALES**

CAVE- I:

1. SAMKHAPALA JATAKA
2. MAHAJANAKA
3. SIBI JATAKA
4. CHAMPEYYA JATAKA

CAVE- II:

1. HAMSA JATAKA
2. VIDHURAPANDITA JATAKA

CAVE -X:

1. SHYAMA JATAKA
2. SADDANTA JATAKA

CAVE -XVI:

1. HASTI JATAKA

CAVE -XVII:

1. MAHAKAPI JATAKA
2. SADDANTA JATAKA
3. MRIGA JATAKA
4. MAHISHA JATAKA
5. SIBI JATAKA
6. VISVANTARA JATAKA
7. MATRIPOSAKA JATAKA
8. HAMSA JATAKA
9. SUTASOMA JATAKA
10. HASTI JATAKA
11. SARAVA JATAKA
12. SHYAMA JATAKA

SOME JATAKA TALES ARE SPREADD IN MORE THAN ONE CAVE OR SAME CAVE

TOTAL JATAKA TALES : 16

- For my study I will select about 7 most popular Jataka stories from above list and explain each story in summary from- based on Buddhist Literature. Excellent painting of the same (copes) will be attached.
- Initially I will give an introduction of Ajanta caves.
- In the end I will make passing reference to selected Buddhist sculptures of Ajanta Buddhist caves based on Art and Literature available.

CAVE-1**SAMKHAPALA JATAKA**

Once upon a time, the Bodhisattva was born as the son of the King of Banaras. He was named Duyyodhana. When the son came of age, the king installed him on the throne and embraced the life of an ascetic. He constructed a small hut by a lake called Samkhapala, lived inside this lake, and he used to come out of the pool to receive instructions on Law from the ascetic, the former king of Banaras. Once, when the young king came to pay a visit to his father he saw Samkhapala and learned that he was a Naga King. The Bodhisattva wished to enjoy the worldly delights of the Naga Kingdom; as a consequence of which he was reborn as a king of the Nagas in the next birth. In no time he became tired of the pomp and grandeur of the royal life. Growing sick of worldly enjoyments he relinquished his mundane wealth, took to spiritual life and one day, decided to sacrifice himself by way of the charity. He lay on the top of a ant-hill up for his flesh and skin.

Some hunters, after a fruitless day spent in search of game, saw the enormous script lying still and tried to catch it. As Samkhapala, owed not offer any resistance, they soon chained the market-place over the rough and stony roads. Now it so happened that a pious land-owner of Mithila, Alara by name, was passing by the same road. Out of compassion he paid the ransom for the Naga and set him free.

The Naga King then asked him, “why” do you deliver me from my persecutors Oh Ally out of compassion to thee.”

The grateful Naga King wished do a good turn to his benefactor and invited him to his Kingdom beneath the water. On arrival the Naga palace, Alara was charmed. The King then said to his benefactor, “All these treasures here now belong to you. You may live in this royal palace as your own and enjoy all the regal delights.”

But the wise man replied, And what right have I to enjoy these royal luxuries?”

“All these belonged to me. I was verily the king of this Naga kingdom. But I have abdicated to live the life of an anchorite in search of Truth.”

All these belonged to me.. I was verily the king of this Naga kingdom But I have abdicated to live the life of an anchorite in search of Truth.

So saying, the Bodhisattva retired to his hermitage. Alara, having no alternative, lived in the royal palace, enjoying the luxuries there. But in no time he also became sickened of the worldly mammon and renounced his monarchy with a year, which had appeared to him as the most precious object in the world. Clad in a modest yellow robe, Alara left the palace as a lone pilgrim in search of Truth with a begging bowl and a staff.”

SIBBI JATAKA

King Sibi was famous for his rectitude and magnanimity. To test him, two gods Yama and Indra appeared before him in disguise. -Indra, the King of the gods, sought protection from the King, disguised the gods, sought protection from the King, disguised in the form of a fleeing pigeon pursued by the God of Death, Yama, in the guise of a hunting hawk. The latter demanded his natural food, the flesh of the pigeon and asked the king to surrender the pigeon. The King was in a fix. He could neither refuse the hawk its rightful prey nor could he forsake the refugee. To solve the problem he proposed to offer his own flesh to the hawk in lieu of the pigeon.

In the panel we find the king seated on his throne with the trembling pigeon on his hand and the hawk in front of him In the panel next the King is seen cutting off his own flesh and weighing the same in a scale with the pigeon on the other pan. The pictures are greatly dam aged, but still the story can be adduced from the fragments that remain.

CAVE – II

3. HAMSA JATAKA

The Mahahamsa Jataka story painted around the first cell-door on the left (II/I) can be summarized as follows:

Queen Karma of Banaras saw in a dream some geese with golden plumage alighting on the Royal palace and preaching the Law with sweet voice. The sermon of the miraculous birds charmed the queen and when she awoke she expressed her ardent desire to the king to listen to the real preaching of the golden geese. The king took counsel with ministers who told him that there were golden geese on Chitrakuta in the Himalayas, and that by a stratagem they could invite the birds into their city and trap them. The king was pleased to hear this and at the suggestion of his ministers he had a beautiful lake excavated in the north of Banaras, where he planted five kinds of lotus, and scattered different varieties of grain to attract the birds. He also engaged a fowler to keep watch and to trap the golden geese when they alighted there. The fowler knew of the beautiful lake and the safety of its waters spread in the bird-world, and the flock of golden geese, when apprised of it, told their group leader, Sumukha, to approach their fill of the good food there. The goose-king whose name was Dhatarattha and who was the Bodhisattva himself, on hearing the request of his flock observed: The haunts of men are dangerous let not this entice you.

But as they went on imploring him, he relented and the flock flew to the lake. On alighting from the air the goose-king put his foot into a trap which the fowler had set. Sumukha, on noticing his chief's plight, was much distressed and asked the fowler appealingly:

"I should not care to live myself, If this my friend were dead, Content with one, let him go free.

And eat my flesh instead. We two are much the same in age, In length and breadth of limb, No less for, three if thou should. Take me in exchange for him"

The fowler's heart was touched by the words of Sumukha and he released the goose-king, but both the birds asked him to take them to the king, so that the birds asked him to take them to the king, so that he might not be deprived of the reward he had won. When presented to the Raja Dhatarattha and Sumukha instructed him in the Law and the desire of Queen king and the queen and set out for Chitrakuta.

CAVE – X

4. SHYAMA JATAKA

On the triforium between the 13th, 14th and 15th pillars there was a mural depicting the story of Shayama Jataka. The story may be summarized as follows:

In one of his incarnations the Bodhisattva was born as the son, named Shayama, of a hunter. His parents had renounced worldly pleasures and were living the life of anchorites. Unfortunately the hunter and his wife were both blind and had to depend on their son entirely. One day, when Shayama went to fetch water from a river he was heard by the king of Banaras, who had come to the forest on a hunting excursion. The king could not see Shayama and being curious to find out what kind of animal was drinking water, he shot a poisoned arrow in the direction of the sound. The arrow hit the Bodhisattva and killed him at once. The king felt distraught and carried the dead boy to the parents. He offered to serve the blind couple for the rest of his life to atone for the death of Shayama. Fortunately, however, in the end, by the intervention of a forest-goddess, not only was Shayama restored to life, but blind couple regained their eyesight.

We see next, (also drawn in Fig. 6,7) Shayama holding a pitcher of water on his left shoulder, while the poisoned arrow hits the right side of the torso, The raja is seen in the scene beyond, close to young Shayama regretting his folly.

The next episode show that the dead boy has been brought to the blind parents who are bewailing their irreparable loss.

There might have been other scenes representing the last act of the drama, showing the rejuvenation of the boy and the rejoicing parents, but we do not find any trace of it in the painting of Griffiths.

Besides the charm of narration and the dramatic presentation of the sequences, the artist has shown great skill in dramatizing the moods of the characters. The graceful poise of young Shayama balancing the water pitcher on his shoulder resembles a Greek-sculpture. The pathos of the lamenting parents (extreme right), feeling the dead son with their fingers, is superb. The landscape and the fauna are in complete harmony with the calm atmosphere of the forest.

CAVE-XVII

MAHAKAPI JATAKA

Once upon a time, the Bodhisattva was born near Banaras as the king of monkeys. He had a retinue of mighty thousand monkeys. In order not to disturb the townsfolk, he decided to live with his followers in a jungle far from the madding crowd. Eventually, he found a big mango tree on the bank of the Ganges, south of Banaras and scuttled there with his team, The tree. Was so big and its fruits were in such abundance. That there was no shortage of food or shelter. And the mangoes of the tree were delicious! But the Great Monkey apprehended danger if any fruit should fall into the Ganges to be carried up-town and catch by men. He, therefore, advised his followers to eat up the mangoes to the last fruit. Notwithstanding such precaution, one large mango fell into the river and subsequently was caught in the net of a fisherman, who having never seen such a big one before, presented it to the king of Banaras. The raja enjoyed the delicious fruit and immediately asked his foresters to trace out the particular tree. In fact, the king himself set sail up the river with his retinue. In no time he located the enormous mango tree and ordered a halt. But he found a big herd of frolicsome monkeys destroying the delectable fruits. Annoyed at their depredation the king asked his archers to shoot the monkeys down. The monkeys were greatly frightened, but the Bodhisattva came to their rescue saying, "Fear not my friends, I will save you all, cave at the cost of my life."

Thereupon the Bodhisattva caught hold of the branch of another tree to convert his body into an improvisatory bridge and ordered his retinue to pass over on his back to safety. The raja noticed this strange behavior of the leader and ordered the archers to refrain from further shooting. Safely did the frightened animals escape, but the last of the herd, 'Deavdatta, the envious villain, intentionally kicked the savior while jumping off his back. The tired leader could not endure this violent punch and fell into the river mortally wounded.

At the instance of the raja a few of his soldiers jammed at once into the river to save the drowning monkey. They brought him ashore and dressed his wounds. When the Great Monkey regained consciousness the raja said, "You seem to possess supernatural power. Why did you then choose to flee like a coward rather than fighting my archers?"

And the Bodhisattva replied, "Because, Oh king, I use my power only to save the lives of others not to take them. This is my Dhamma."

The king burst into a guffaw, and asked in a sarcastic tone, “But I noticed that one of your friends, whom you had saved, nearly kicked you to death! Do you still cling to your foolish doctrine?”

Quota the monkey in reply, “Sire, I even love those who inflicts injury unto me.”

The disgusted king admonished, “you monkeys are queer creatures! Had any human being behaved in this manner towards his benefactor I would have taught him a lesson!”

“If that be so, Ooh righteous King”, replied the monkey, “I stand as a prosecutor before thee, seeking justice. I did a greater good turn to one human being in your kingdom and was treated worse in return.”

“I shan’t tolerate that”, thundered back the king, “Show me the accused then, describe the charge and name at least one witness.”

“I’ll do so presently. In order to allow the inhabitants of Banaras a peaceful life and to allow them to enjoy the fruits that grow in abundance in that city, I took away my followers to this remote jungle. In return, the king of that very city scorched us out and ordered his archers to shoot at us without the least provocation. I accuse the king and name thyself as my witness.”

The king was thoroughly ashamed and asked pardon, from the wise monkey; He untreated the Monkey-kin to come to Banaras so that the king could treat, him as an honored guest. But the Bodhisattva destined. He preferred to die in peace rather than dragging on as a cripple. The king thereupon entreated, “ I am sure that you are a Great Being. You must have come to this world with a mission. Could you teach me the Doctrine, so that I may contribute my mite for its propagation, not that you are leaving this world?”

The Bodhisattva readily agreed and he taught the king the ‘ Doctrine of Ahimsa’ before breathing his last.

MRIGN JATAKA

Beside the second window to the right of the door in the front corridor is painted Jataka story, practically obliterated at present. The two drawings furnished here are from facsimile copies prepared by Griffiths. Let us have the story first:

Once upon a time the Bodhisattva was born a buck of golden skin. He used to live in a desolate jungle being careful so that his whereabouts were night the deer heard the wailing of a man in distress in the wilderness. Following the direction of the sound the deer discovered the forlorn traveler who had lost his way. The golden buck set the man on the road to Banaras and untreated him not to gossip about his rescuer. The man solemnly promised to keep the secret and thankfully left the woods. On arrival at Banaras this man hoard that Queen Kemal of Banaras had a dream the previous night in which a golden deer had preached the Law to her. The king, as usual, had proclaimed a reward to the person who could give him any information about the golden buck. The man could not cheek temptation and squealed to the king about the golden deer. In fact, the traitor led the king, accompanied by a large retinue, for the capture of the buck, Eventually, the king surprised the golden deer and aimed an arrow at him, when the Great Being held him back, addressing him thus:

Oh Lord of the Charioteers, Great King!

Stand still, and do not wound,

Who brought the news to you, that here

The deer was to be found.”

The king was enchanted with the dulcet, but the enthusiasm of the traitor was not the least curbed. He rushed forward and caught hold of the deer by the two horns. Immediately, his two hands fell off and the man screamed in excruciating agony. The King was dumbfounded at the turn of events. The golden deer then appraised him of the ingratitude of the informer. The infuriated king unscathed his sword.

To Kill the betrayer but the Bodhisattva intervened He advised the king to appreciate the extent of poverty that could drive a normal human being to turn a traitor. Speaking thus to the king to appreciate the extent of poverty that could drive a normal human being to turn a traitor. Speaking thus to the king the golden deer restored to the traitor his two hands and admonished him to lead a virtuous life.

Thereupon the golden deer was brought to Banaras-not as a prisoner but as an honored guest. The wish of the queen was fulfilled as the Bodhisattva preached the Law to her and all through king's court.

7. MAHISHA JATAKA

It is a drama of two acts. In the first, we see the Bodhisattva, then incarnate as a wild buffalo, standing under a tree, in the jungle. An impertinent monkey put his hands over the eyes of the buffalo and tormented him in many ways. The Bodhisattva endured the pain taking no notice of the ill-treatment of the monkey. Next day, another buffalo-a savage beast, happened to come and stand under the same tree when the Bodhisattva was elsewhere. The wicked monkey, taking it to be the same harmless animal, mounted on his back and respected his pranks. The savage buffalo at once shook him off, drove his horns into the monkey's abdomen and trampled him to death.

Somehow or other this vivid mural has withstood the ravages of time. The artist has drawn two successive scenes, one below the other and included the figures of a god in both scenes.

This story appears to be a meeting ground of violence and non-violence, and in a way warns the hostile forces attacking Buddhism against leasing the non-violent monks.

8. MATRIPOSAKA JATAKA

In this mural drawn on the rear wall of the back corridor between the first and the second cell-doors to the right of the into-chamber, the artist has shown consummate skill in attributing human clings to animals. The story as depicted in the wall paintings differs slightly from the Jataka version but agrees with the version recorded in, the Chinese text translated by E. Chavannes. This can be summarized as follows:

Once upon a time when Brahmadatta : reigned in Banaras the Bodhisattva was born as a magnificent white elephant in the Himalayas. Both the parents of the sacred elephant were blind, and he took them away to a lotus lake in desolate forest. There he served them both with great care and affection. One day he saved a forester who had lost his way in the jungle, by carrying him out of the forest on his back. The man, however, marked the trees and the hills, and went to Banaras. The king's sacred elephant had just died and there was a proclamation seeking suitable replacement.

The forester betrayed the friendly elephant and guided the king's hunter to the elephant's lair. The Bodhisattva recognized the forester and was going to kill him for his ungrateful betrayal, but then he thought that this would be in-compatible with this doctrine of non-violence. In spite of his great strength he permitted himself, to be captured and taken to the king's stable. The king had good food in abundance placed before the captive elephant, but the beast touched nothing. The keeper of elephant, but the beast touched nothing The keeper of the stable reported this to the king who came down

On the wall of the left aisles the sculpture of the Buddha's Mahaparinirvana in full relied. He is lying on his right side, with his right hand under his head. His head reclines on a cushion which gives the impression of being pressed by the weight of his head The folds can be clearly seen. A member of mourners are seen seated below in profound grief. Near the cot of the Buddha, a stand, an oil-can and flowers may be noticed. Above the figure of the Buddha gods and goddesses can be seen. This is one of the best sculptural panels of Ajanta. The figure of the Buddha in Mahaparinirvana is of huge dimensions. His face shows that calmness and serenity which can come only when a person has reached that stage of eternal bliss where there is no pain and no pain and no sorrow and from where there is no return to this world of unhappiness. The artists of Ajanta have succeeded in capturing this mood and in this they are true to the great art traditions of the period

Himself to land out the cause of this abstinence. The dumb animal was silent, but Brahmadatta could understand from his attitude that the elephant would ultimately die of hunger. Finding on other way the king ordered the release of the captive and asked his hunters to follow the elephant to see where he went.

The elephant was thereupon let loose and he dashed out for the lotus-lake where he knew his blind parents had been dying of hunger. The king's men followed him on foot and on horse-back to find that the elephant went to the very spot where he had been caught a few days ago. Two old elephants, a male and a female, came out of the jungle to meet him. The elephant caressed the old ones and drawing water from a limpid pool he squirted it over them. When this was conveyed to the king he came himself to the abode of Bodhisattva to witness the rare sight.

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