APPENDIX: THE STORY OF THE YAKŠA NANDAKA,
GUARDIAN OF THE GATE OF ISVARA

Judith M. Jacob

29. There was once a yakṣa called Nandaka, keeper of the portals of Śiva's palace on Mount Kailāsa. Nandaka was ugly. He had a bald head, with tufts of hair at the sides.

30. As a result, (30) all the celestial beings, the sons of the gods, the nāgas and the yakṣas used to enjoy ridiculing him. Every time they came to call upon Śiva they would slap his head or rap him on the head with their knuckles, laughing at him and mocking him in their various modes of speech before going to attend upon Śiva in his residence. That was how it was every time!

Nandaka was a yakṣa who had no particular power or prowess. When he was slapped and thumped he felt furious and thought to himself, 'The reason why all the celestial beings hold me in contempt is that I am a humble person with no powers like theirs. I must go and see my master, Śiva, and ask a boon of him. Let (31) him grant that my index finger should become a weapon. Then I shall point it at all that horde and make them fall into the outer Cakravāla. That will serve them right for looking down on me and slapping and rapping my head!' With this in mind, Nandaka presented himself before Śiva and said, bowing low before him, 'My lord, I, who am here before you, am your servant, keeper of the gate of your palace for many a long year. I have never received a single gift from you. But now all the celestial beings, the sons of the gods, the nāgas and the yakṣas despise me, my lord, and on every occasion they slap me and rap me on the head. I am incensed with rage and I ask you, my master, to bestow a certain boon on me. (32) Will you grant that my right index finger should become a weapon-finger with the power to point at that vulgar rabble and make them flee far away from me, pell-mell? Then I shall be able to stay and carry out my duties to you, my lord, in contentment.' When the great lord Śiva heard this, he was sorry for Nandaka. He took hold of the index finger of his right hand, raised it up and recited a formula, bestowing the boon, all in a moment, through his own personal might. And the index finger became a weapon, exactly as Nandaka wanted it to be.

33. When he had achieved his wish, Nandaka took leave of Śiva respectfully and went away to carry on guarding the
gate as before. He set about pointing his finger at all the celestial throngs who came to amuse themselves by hitting his head and daily sent them drifting away confusedly towards the distant Cakravāla.

The whole celestial throng, the nāgas and the yakṣas, were reduced to humility by Nandaka's finger. Nandaka kept on pointing his finger, no matter which divinity it was. He merely had to see any one of them coming through the air from afar and he would point at him making him fall towards the Cakravāla. The divine beings were all terrified of Nandaka. They did not dare to come and call on Śiva!(34)

Siva's meeting hall was deserted from then onwards.

The matter was not kept secret; news of it reached Śiva. He was horrified and anxious. 'I gave too great a gift to Nandaka', he thought. 'At present he is pointing his finger only at the outer gods. But suppose he thought of treachery towards me and pointed at me? I should be sent flying towards the distant Cakravāla - no doubt of it! This royal domain of mine on Mount Kailāsa would go to Nandaka! He would certainly take possession of it. Mmm. I can't let this state of affairs continue. I must think about getting rid of him. Then I shall have my peace of mind for the future.' With this thought (35) in mind, Śiva sent a message to his young brother, Nārāyaṇa. Would he please come to see him in the inner room? Nārāyaṇa came and Śiva told him all about the special weapon which Nandaka's index finger had become. Nārāyaṇa listened and then said, 'You gave the boon without considering its potential danger to yourself. How can you now take it back and make it disappear? The matter has already gone too far. The only thing is to work out a way to kill him off.' Nārāyaṇa took it upon himself to help and bade Lord Śiva goodbye. Leaving the royal residence he changed his form into that of a (36) beautiful young girl and walked with graceful movements towards Nandaka's home. When he reached it, he glanced provocatively in Nandaka's direction, behaving like a woman who enjoyed the society of men and leading Nandaka on by various means to fall in love with her. When Nandaka turned and saw the attractive Nārāyaṇa girl, he felt sure, not knowing it was Nārāyaṇa in changed form, that she was a girl from a troupe of dancers. And so he fell head over heels in love with the transformed Nārāyaṇa. He smiled broadly and spoke persuasively, breaking into verse as follows:

(37) 'Come, O dearest treasure! Approach, beloved. I would talk with you. Where are you going and where do you come from? I look at you and want us to be friends'.

'You have asked me a question; I must reply -
with warmth, with eagerness, with desire. I am here because I am looking for a husband, one who pleases me; then I will take him on.'

'Dear lady, blessed with beauty, you are here looking for a husband, to live in harmony together. What kind of man will you choose, precious love? Does a man like me please you?'

'O handsome young man, I am searching for a husband who can dance. If you can dance well enough, I can like you, love you and take you as my husband.'

'My treasure, your beauty excels that of all others! As for dancing the yoke-carrying dance, whatever the measure, I can perform it. What's the difficulty? Dance on, my lady.

'I shall then (38) follow you and so dance correctly. Being a man of intelligence, I shall learn all the rules from you, my teacher. Please dance, beautiful lady!'

When the transformed Nārāyaṇa heard Nandaka undertake to imitate the dancing, he swayed his body, performing the measure cāk' ṽātṛī and he twisted his right index finger round so that it pointed down towards his thigh. Nandaka performed the same dance movements and pointed his finger in the same way. The moment his weapon-finger pointed at his thigh, he fell down instantly on the spot.

Nārāyaṇa turned himself back into the splendid, powerful Nārāyaṇa, four-handed, holding the disc. Moving quickly, he grasped Nandaka's head, pressed him down and raised the disc above him, ready to attack him with it.

Nandaka (39) was full of gloom and dismay when he saw Nārāyaṇa. 'I am beaten by Nārāyaṇa's trickery', he thought. 'In his disguise as a girl, he led me on - I lost my senses.' Compressing his lips in anger, Nandaka spoke. 'So! I have slipped up and let my enemy get the better of me! What can I do, my lord, in my situation, with only two arms? How can I do battle against you, with your four arms? If we both had two, I would not accept defeat by you.'

Nārāyaṇa heard this and said, 'In this existence I have four arms and you only two and so you lose. Now, off you go and be born in the world of humans with ten faces and twenty arms. I shall descend and be born as a man with only two arms and we shall fight each other again.'(40) And with these words Nārāyaṇa killed Nandaka,
using his special disc.

When he learned that Nandaka had been born as the
demon king, Rāvaṇa, Lord of the yaksas on the island of
Laṅkā, Nārāyaṇa changed his form, leaving his old shape on
the shore of the great ocean and was born as Rāma. There
was much fierce fighting between them. The full story is
in the book of the Rāmakerti. Do read it.

I draw upon the early part of this story in order
to show its gāti: 3 Nandaka, who died as a result of his
own index finger, has a gāti like that of a clever indivi-
41. dual who talks constantly and shows off. He points towards
himself alone, praises only himself. (41) A boastful person
attracts criticism and will be destroyed like Nandaka.
Wise people with understanding would do well to give this
further thought.

0 Nandaka, you had your master dip 4 your finger
so that it became a weapon-finger. With the power
thus achieved, you pointed your finger at the godly
throng and dispersed them.

You confidently used your finger, without fore-
thought, until all the divine beings felt angry with
Śiva, your master, who told Nārāyaṇa to dispose of
you.

You lost your life because, through his powers,
the flame of passion consumed your being. You could
see only the girl, and were an easy prey for your
sweetheart! You met with your end through not taking
thought.

42.

When you became overwhelmed by passion's fires,
you proceeded to dance, following (42) the movements
of Nārāyaṇa, who performed the dance figure Phkā Phkul. 2
You pointed at your own thigh, collapsed and so died.

The section on dying by means of one's own finger ends here.
It is gāti No.68.

TEXT

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