CHAPTER TWO

Fable as a Discourse in the Indian Narrative Tradition

"The princes grasp the essences through these five vidyas in the stipulated period and become extraordinarily smart in worldly affairs as well as in the basic knowledge needed for running a kingdom’s politics. Since then, the Panchatantra has come to be known as the one education medium for those ignorant of deep knowledge contained in Sastra, Upanishads and Puranas."1

Vishnu Sharma

In the Indian tradition, narrative is given an epistemological status. A story is committed to a serious social and cultural objective. Ever since the first narrative impulse was found in the Rig-Veda, a long and ever-evolving narrative tradition has seen the birth and development of numerous genres and modes of story-telling, but the notion that stories are narrated primarily for discursive functions has remained as constant as ever. Any new narrative genre is only recognized as another mode of discourse. “The Indian tradition has accepted akhyana, narrative, as a mode of both constituting and transmitting knowledge…Literature for us is not an end in itself. It must serve larger ends.”2

The dissemination of the stories among the people was helped by the fact that they were a part of the oral tradition, and hence, the composed narratives either used the elements from the folktales or became absorbed in the folklore. Almost all the narrative texts include portions from the knowledge- texts such as Arthashastra or Natyashastra, which

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2 Kapil Kapoor, “Buddhism and Literature: Philosophy, Narratives and Jatakamala”. Keynote Address at a National Seminar on Buddhism and Literature at Benaras Hindu University, Varanasi, 2005
makes it evident that the story was just another method to take the discourse contained in these texts to the people at large. The fable-narratives also give the impression of a narrative genre conceived principally for the dissemination of the knowledge of the Sastras:

The parable, or the fable, which is only the same thing under another name, has always been the favorite Eastern method for conveying instruction...story, with an underlying moral, comes natural to the Oriental mind... so in a vast and miscellaneous literature, such as the classical literature of India, we should naturally expect to find instruction and wisdom conveyed under this form.

The Upanishads, the Brahmanas and the Aranyakas, the Puranas and Itihasas, there is not one narrative composition that does not consciously develop an epistemology. And which is precisely the reason why works like Mahabharata have been read primarily as knowledge-texts, and are equaled with the Vedas. "The Mahabharata is not only a Veda; it is so important a Veda that to read it is to dispense with the need of reading other Vedas."

The fables contained in the Jatakas, the Mahabharata, the Panchatantra and its various recensions, apart from being overtly and covertly mimetic constitute political, religious, social, philosophical, cultural and literary discourse. Even the animal narratives in the Chandogya Upanishad, though their form is not as completely developed as the fables in the Jatakas, the Mahabharata and the Panchatantra, exploit the metaphor of animal lives for the representation of knowledge (jnana). It is very interesting to note that the narrative of Satyakama uses animals like bull, a flamingo and a swan for discursive instruction. Such use of animal characters in a composition as old as the Upanishad had been greatly responsible in attributing a discursive role to the latter narratives of the Indian tradition.

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3 Hitopadesha or The Book Of Good Counsel, Translated from the Sanskrit Text by B. Hale-Wortham. London: George Routledge and Sons Ltd., 1924. p vi-vii

The *Panchatantra* alone makes direct references to all the great Indian thinkers of various fields like Panini, Jaimini, Kautilya (Chanakya), Kamandaka, Bharata Muni, and Vatsayana. There are also many references to *Nitisataka* of Bhrtahari. Many of the aphoristic utterances in the *Panchatantra* are attributed either to Chanakya or Bhartrhari. The author first pays his respect and indebtedness to Vacaspati, Sukara, Parasara, Vyasa and Canakya, and then he says that Vishnu Sharma, after he has gone through the essence of the *Arthasastras* and other *Sastras, Upanishads* and *Puranas* existing in the world, has written, in the five books of the *Panchatantra*, a thoroughly delighting lesson. Indeed, describing the *Panchatantra* as a fable-narrative version of the various *Sastras* would not be an over statement.

The fables in the *Panchatantra* produce small sections from the various philosophical, political and literary texts. These discursive sections are judiciously placed within the narrative framework of a fable-narrative. To begin with the literary discourse, the *Panchatantra* makes it evident that the *Naytasastra* is truly the fifth *Veda*, a *Veda* that mediates between the philosophy and the folk. This goes on to show that Bharata’s discourse on dramaturgy had become very popular about the time Vishnu Sharma composed his work. Listening to the serious discourse of music, including the accurate descriptions of *Rasa* and *Bhava*, from the mouth of the foolish Donkey is amusing, but there is point behind this that the reader should not miss.

It is in the fifth book of the *Panchatantra*, a fable features the Jackal and the Donkey, who clandestinely enter inside a garden to eat the sweet cucumbers. It is a beautiful full moon night and, inspired by the romantic ambience, the Donkey wants to sing. The Jackal tries to stop the Donkey, and rightly so, because the Donkey could only bray, which would wake up the watchman. Seeing the Donkey adamant to sing, and failing to reason with him, the Jackal crosses over to other side of the fence, in order to save himself from the guard. The Donkey brays and awakes the watchman, who beats him thoroughly. Therefore, it is a bit incongruous that the Donkey Uddhata should talk about the *Natyasastra* and the Indian music.
Nevertheless, it is this incongruity only that makes the use of a detailed description of melody and music prominent. As is the wont with the Panchatantra, the description from the Natyashastra is presented as a serious discourse, and is not confused with the foolishness of the Donkey. The Donkey lectures about the seven notes of music, the forty nine gamas, twenty one murcchans, forty nine quavers, three matras and three taals. He goes on to discuss yati, asyas, rasa and bhava. Then, he makes a direct reference to Bharata Muni and the 185 divisions of music that he enumerated. Like a serious critic of music and literature, the Donkey Uddhata rates the Natyashastra as the fifth Veda.

If we accept that the Panchatantra was a popular text, as the critics of the work have suggested with examples, then the numerous references to philosophers and intellectuals from the Indian tradition makes a curious case of what is considered today intertextuality. The texture of the fables in the Panchatantra is replete with quotations and references from so many thinkers and their texts. This only goes to show that as a part of the oral tradition these texts were in constant circulation in the social sphere. Even a discipline as intellectual and abstract as philosophy is talked about in the Panchatantra. In the second book of the Panchatantra, the mouse Hiranyaka lectures about the Indian Grammarian Panini, and Jaimini, the sage who composed the Indian philosophical system, the Mimamsasutras.

One reason why we find discussions about the Indian knowledge system in the fable-narratives of the Panchatantra is that the text had to teach the various disciplines through these limited number of fables. Hence, author-narrator thought it essential to intersperse portions from the various knowledge-texts, which he illustrated through the fable-narratives. For example, the author-narrator has put the entire gist of an important Buddhist concept in the mouth of the cunning Cat in the third book of the Panchatantra:

Oh! This world is inessential; life is ephemeral, the pleasure of the company of relatives and near and dear ones is like a dream; the upkeep of family is part of a grand magic show. Therefore, there is nothing real apart from dharma.
The body is mortal, wealth will not stay forever; one moves around with death surrounding him, therefore one must enrich himself with dharma.\textsuperscript{5}

What the cunning Cat says, especially in the first paragraph, is very approximate to that aspect of Buddhist philosophy \textquote{according to which the world is without any substance like a dream or a magic world or a mirage. The Buddhists also proclaim the dictum that all in the universe is Ksanika or momentary in character}.\textsuperscript{6}

Though the fable may have animals as speaking and acting, the form is held on the serious message that takes it forward. The form of the fable does not shadow the message; rather it intensifies the real discursive content expressed by the narrator and the author. The Panchatantra, for instance, is obviously a guide to success in politics. The first book shows how a king might lose his best and trusted friend and counselor if he is not alert to the treacherous wiles of a courtier; the second book shows how the alliance of prudent friends can protect them against a powerful enemy, the third book reveals how a political trick can make a campaign against an enemy, superior in material strength, successful; the fourth books shows how a person, in a hopeless situation, can escape an unavoidable seeming death through a barefaced deception; and the fifth book delineates the mischief produced by inconsiderate and hasty action.

It is very apparent to the reader as to what has been intended for him/her, for instance, in the story of the Crocodile and the Monkey or the Donkey in the Lion’s skin. In fact, the element of discourse is more pronounced in the fables than in other narratives, so there is no difficulty in placing the Indian fables within the knowledge-defined narrative tradition of India. On the other hand, it is extremely easy to talk about the fables contained in the Jatakas, Mahabharata, Panchatantra or Hitopadesha as subject of knowledge, because their narrative contexts, the conditions of their narration, also suggest a religious, political or social discourse.

The first three books of the Panchatantra, with some exception, foreground political discourse, especially their frame-narratives. Whereas, the fifth and the sixth book

\textsuperscript{5} Panchatantra, translated by Vijay Narain. Delhi: Chaukhamba Sanskrit Pratishthan, 2006. p.219
\textsuperscript{6} Chandra Apurba Barthakuria, India in the Age of the Panchatantra. Calcutta: Punthi-Pustak, 1992.p.134
proclaim worldly wisdom. However, critics believe the two kinds of discourses are interrelated and complement each other. Hence, they cannot be put in different categories, it is because, worldly wisdom is as important as the knowledge of the politics to attain power and success. That is the reason why in the gathas (stanzas) and the epigrams we find political ideology and worldly wisdom alike. As far as number of aphoristic statement is concerned, the work weighs heavily in favor of the political discourse. Out of the 451 sayings of the Tantrakhayika, 205 are about politics, 138 deal with general thoughts of worldly wisdom and 108 are about moral, philosophical and religious discourse.7

The Buddha was determined to take the teachings and messages of his Dhamma to the common humanity of the Indian society. So, he made use of story-telling to achieve his purpose. He actually recognized the faculties and abilities of the folk. Bharata composed the Natyasastra as the fifth Veda, because the common humanity could not grasp the Sastras. In the same vein, the Buddha understood that narratives, including fable-narratives, would be the best method to disseminate the Buddhist doctrines. This methodology of the Buddha was naturally understood by folk, his disciples and the future leaders of the Sangha. As the Jatakas existed in the oral tradition they assimilated in themselves popular tales, ancient mythology, stories from the older religious traditions etc. In brief, the Jatakas imbibed the common heritage of the Indian masses. Though the narratives are primarily Buddhist, they do deal with life outside the religious influence. The 8th century Chinese pilgrim I-Tsing felt “the object of composing the Birth Stories is to teach the doctrine of universal salvation in a beautiful style, agreeable to the popular mind and attractive to readers”8.

The Jatakas were compiled primarily so that the Buddha’s teachings could be preserved for the posterity, as they were originally intended. They had become so popular and circulated so much in the society that the monks feared the narratives could be manipulated and a lot of corruption would enter into them. This goes on to show how as a discourse the Jatakas were considered of serious consequence, that their misreading or

7 Maurice Winternitz, A History of Indian Literature, Translated from the German by Subhadra Jha. Delhi: Motilal Banrasidass, 1977. p 347
8 Pradip Bhattacharya, Jatakamala. www.boloji.com (Visited on 6 August 2006)
misinterpretation would do gross injustice to the purpose for which the Buddha first narrated them. The stories delineate the religious discourse of the formative years of Buddhism, but they also shed light on the social, political and religious life of the people of ancient India.

The primary concern of the fables in the Jatakas, therefore, is to validate the Buddhist discourses. In each fable, the Buddha foregrounds one aspect of the requisite perfections paramitas that a Bodhisattva must master on his or her way to achieving enlightenment. It is generally believed by the Buddhist scholars that in each of the narrative the remaining nine virtues are also embodied, because they inevitably must play their respective supporting parts whenever the Bodhisattva implements a task of perfection. The gathas in the fables are specifically used to convey that doctrine alone. For instance, in the Munika-Jataka (No.30), the Bodhisattva is born as an Ox, Big Red. He and his brother, Little Red, are employed at a squire’s estate. His brother complains:

All the loads that have to be drawn for this household are drawn by you and me, my brother; but all they give us for our pains is sorry grass and straw to eat. Yet here is the pig being fed on rice! What can be the reason why he should be treated to such fare?9

The elder brother, the Bodhisattva, tells him that the pig is being fattened for slaughter, and, therefore, he gets better things to eat. He goes on to give a discourse on the virtues of contentment, which is an important Buddhist doctrine. Now, if the Buddha had taught the doctrine simply, it would not have made as much effect on the masses as he got by creating a fable-narrative around this discourse. The fable ends with the central thought contained in the gatha (verse), which is how each and every fable provides the religious teaching:

Then envy not poor Munika; it’s death
He eats. Contented munch your frugal chaff
The pledge and guarantee of length of days10

10 Ibid., p. 76
Inherently, the fable is used by the Bodhisattva for didactic purposes. The narrative is focused on resolving a situation or problem caused by the development of conflicting interests. It is the development of tension which holds the narrative together and contributes to the dynamics of the story, and also keeps the listeners of the narrative involved. A successful narrative strategy used by the Bodhisattva depends on identifying and offering ways out of problems and conflicts that are confronted or pre-empted.

The fable as a discourse in the Indian tradition can be discussed in terms of its historicity, its connections with the folklore and its use of the contemporary systems of social and political thought. The discursive value of the fables has been quite pervasive throughout. In fact, on second reading, the fable-narratives seem so discursive in intent that though they are still pleasant to read, they are more inclined to a pattern of thought they seek to promote. They are primarily meant to enhance a particular aspect of knowledge.

The narrative texts like the Mahabharata and the Panchatantra are firmly placed in the beginning itself in discursive terms. The Mahabharata is spoken by Vyasa as containing all the knowledge of the Vedas to the extent that what is found in the Mahabharata would be found in all other knowledge texts of the Indian tradition, but what is not found in the epic would not be got anywhere. The centrality of knowledge is stressed in the central framework of Panchatantra. In the introduction to the work (Kathamukha) the king Anantashakti of Mahilaropya asks his ministers the ways to make his sons wise and knowledgeable. The ministers say

O king! It takes twelve years to master Grammar. Thereafter Manu's and other Dharmasastras, polity by Chanakya and others, Kamasstra and other scriptures on lovemaking by Vatsayayana and others are taught. Only after mastery in these, one is considered educated.\(^\text{11}\)

It is obvious that any pedagogical text chosen for the princes would constitute all the knowledge texts. And indeed it is so, because the guru chosen for the education of the princes is Vishnu Sharma, an old man of eighty years, who has mastered the Nitisatra and all other fields of knowledge. He declares the King may exile him from his country,


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in case he does not in six months make the boys expert in *Nitisastra*. Benfey has expressed the assumption that the author Vishnu Sharma is no other than Vishnugupta, another name for the great Indian political philosopher and thinker Chanakya. The text composed by him for the education of the princes, the *Panchatantra*, contains all the knowledge required. In the most famous recension, the *Hitopadesha*, there is no ambiguity about the discourses that Vishnu Sharma would teach the erring princes. The king tells the guru:

> Even an insect, if it be on flower, may ascend the head of the great; a stone if consecrated by a man of mighty power becomes divine...Therefore you shall be the instructor of my sons in Political and Social Science.\(^{12}\)

It is mentioned that king is himself a scholar of the sort of *Arthasastra*.

Thus, the work was meant to train the princes originally. But gradually it acquired fame as a manual of training for the youth in general, not merely the royal princes. Hertel calls the various versions of the *Panchatantra* as "school books". This is proved by the inclusion of the stories from the Indian languages translation of the *Panchatantra* and the *Hitopadesha* in the school textbooks.

The *Panchatantra* very frequently lapses into long political or ethical treatise taken form the discursive texts. In fact the work starts with the merchant Vardhaman giving a long discourse on the merits of enhancing one's wealth. If this seems an example of an exceedingly mundane discourse, then there are many discourses on ethics spread throughout the other fable-compositions. In the frame-narrative of the first book, we get a comprehensive political discourse between two fox-brothers that consists of the citations form the authoritative texts on politics, and the fables that they narrate delineate the political maxims. One of the foxes, Damanka is worried about the well being of the Lion king, Pingalaka, as the latter has been behaving unusually as a feeble animal, uncharacteristic of a lion, full of fear and discomfort. Karataka advises his brother not to meddle in the affairs of the king, and that he should mind his own business:

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\(^{12}\) *Hitopadesha or The Book Of Good Counsel*, Translated from the Sanskrit Text by B. Hale-Wortham. London: George Routledge and Sons Ltd., 1924. p 9
Karataka replied, “Brother why should we bother? What is the use of our thinking on this subject?”

A person engaging in futile tasks not of concern gets destroyed the same way as this monkey died a painful death upon drawing out a nail from wood.”

In order to counter his brother’s philosophy of keeping to one’s own matters, Damanaka brings forth a detailed discourse from the Sastras:

Only they deserve to live whose life is inspiration and means of survival for several others. Otherwise, even birds get enough to eat and fill their belly by mere use of beak.

Among the humans those who have mastered the sciences, have acquired virtues of bravery and earned wealth and have won honors, if for a moment, are considered by the wise as having really lived. Otherwise, even the crow lives a long life and consumes sacrificial meat.

He who shows no mercy to relatives, to the mute and weak creatures or even to other humans, hardly serves any purpose in life...

What is the good of a man taking birth and snatching the youth of his own mother to grow up to be of no use to anyone nor to bring glory to his family or uphold the flag of his own clan...

Even the blade of grass growing on a river bank is more useful if it serves to save a drowning soul and rescue him from his last minute misery.

Those moving in all circles of people and serving to reduce their misery, like clouds bringing relief from hot Sun, are few in number...

More one should speak where it benefits someone so that its results are seen just as red color that fixes better on clean white cloth

This discursive harangue goes on and on unabated for a few more pages. It becomes very obvious here that this ethical discourse is addressed, more than Karataka, to the readers beyond the immediate framework of the narrative.

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14 Ibid, 32-34
Apparently, the discursive quality of the *Panchatantra* is very strong and intense. Evidently, the work has gone through as many as 25 versions and yet every time it has been consistently read and interpreted through the prism of political thought.

“While the older versions are associated with Chanakya or with the Kautilya-*Arthasastra*, attributed to him, in the later recensions the Kamandaki's *Nitisasstra* is mentioned and cited as the main authority”\textsuperscript{15}.

Though we are dealing with the fable world which is ostensibly fictitious, yet the political life comes across in convincing terms through the narratives. The political system and the power-structures as well as the court life of the times find a perfect reflection in the fable-narratives. As far as the *Panchatantra* is concerned, India was then ruled by monarchs like Nanda that the author mentions. There is also a reference to kingdoms like Gurjaradesha and Avanti. However, more important for us is the use of contemporary political knowledge in the fables, which comes from the *Arthasastra*. In terms of the power-structures in a predominantly monarchical system of ancient India, the king’s ministers assumed a very crucial role. They played a very important role in decision-making. It is true that monarchy was not democratic and it rested on the absolute powers of the king, yet on important political matters he did wish a consensus involving the opinions of his ministers and advisors.

The king consulted not one but as many ministers as he could on important policy matters. This is evident from the frame-narrative of the third book, the story of Meghavarna and the owl-king in the *Kakolukiyam*. The very fact that Yudhisthira, the future king of Hastinapur, is asked in the *Mahabharata* to receive discourses on polity from Bhishma, who lay on the death bed, goes on to show that it was the duty of the king to keep himself update on political knowledge. In most of the cases, it was the minister that the king looked up to for keeping himself abreast of the political and ethical principles. For instance, Dhirtarashtra depends a lot on the wisdom of Vidura for his political decisions, and his state is eventually destroyed because he did not heed to the

advice given to him by his minister. In the first book, *Mitraveda*, of the *Panchatantra*, for instance, the system that binds the king with his subordinates is expressed perfectly by Damanaka:

Without attendants, the king gets no glory and is just like the life-giving Sun which is hidden in clouds.

Just as the center of the wheel is connected to the rim with spokes, the same way the king and attendants, complete the circle and the business rolls on.

When the lion king Pingalaka is scared to death hearing the mysteriously dangerous roar of the bull Sanjeevaka, it is his attendant Damanaka who comes to his rescue. The king is extremely distressed and is contemplating to forsake his kingdom and escape to some other forest:

"Dear Damnaka, I have a heart to leave these woods for it appears an upheaval is in the offing...because it appears from now on there is entry of a strange beast in the jungle and one can listen to its loud roar. Probably he is also powerful."

Damanaka acts here as an able counselor that any king would be proud to have with him. He is not only gifted with a great foresight and knowledge of the political affairs, but also an insight into human nature:

Just as bridges are pulled apart due to the velocity of the overflowing rivers, the same way a precious thing is lost to the enemy who is gainer merely because he frightens by noise. Complainants often manage to harm themselves by taking ill of another.

Damanaka eventually proves to be a great inspirer. The wisdom of the king's counselor and his ability to inspire the king to perform glorious deeds is well acknowledged in the Indian political discourse. Accordingly, Damanaka encourages his king to face the situation with courage and strength:

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17 ibid, p. 45
18 ibid
The king who retains his courage and confidence even before a powerful enemy is never defeated. The patient man should not lose courage even before an adverse fate because the sea only swells up with scorching heat which would dry up lesser lakes and rivers.

Moreover, one who does not waver before adversity or get excited with wealth or frightened by war is a rare child of a fortunate mother in all the three lokas.

And yet, "becoming modest after loss of power, being taciturn after losing one's essential character and losing one's self-respect place the person in the category of grass eater without strength, shine or core of life."

And then, "Getting support from others, if one is still unable to firm up, what is the use of the person who is now like a mere body, ornament made of iron only?"

This long conversation between Damanaka and Pingalaka unravels the responsibilities of the ministers in dispensing their duties to the king and the state, as enshrined in the authoritative text of politics the Arthasastra. It also presents a mirror to the way the king and his ministry functioned in a close relationship in a crunch situation in ancient India. This conversation between the two suggests that the foremost duty of the minister was to advise the king and bring him to the right path when he deviated. This principle is directly taken from Chanakya. It is also said that when the king moves away from the right path, the ministers are to be blamed for not correcting him and this is exactly what Damanaka wants Karataka to understand. The ministers had to give their important advice, which at times was different from what the king thought. It was important, nevertheless, for the king to take their word.

Thus, the duties and responsibilities of the ministers in the age of the Panchatantra as in modern times were very great. The success of the king in internal administration and against external enemies greatly depended on the fidelity and the responsibility borne by his ministers.

The third book of the Panchatantra is even more expressive about the critical responsibility of the ministers to the state, especially in the time of emergency. What the

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19 Ibid
text says could be verily accepted as norms that governed the profile of a minister’s position vis-à-vis the king and state in ancient India:

As it is understood, at such times the ministers should always come ahead to give advice even when not asked and work out a strategy. At such times of exigency if a minister decided to keep silent he should be considered an enemy who speaks sweetly but hides malice in heart. 21

The Panchatantra recognizes the ability of the ministers in tackling political issues and affairs, and while doing so makes a direct reference to a passage from Kautilya’s Arthasastra that lists five-five-fold mantra of diplomacy:

(a) The remedies to be adopted at the beginning of an undertaking,

(b) Having at the command sufficient supply of men and methods,

(c) Proper division of time and space,

(d) The remedy against dangers or difficulties, and

(e) The success in the mission. 22

The third book of the Panchatantra, Kakolukiyam is throughout a discourse on the state, its policy, and its machinery in the times of war. In the beginning itself, the author hints at a right kind of policy that state should adopt, through the analogy of a person, in the event of external aggression, which is relevant even today:

The person who out of sloth ignores the enemy moving ahead with abandon, or a disease either, and does not try to stall them, he gradually gets killed by that very enemy or disease. He is killed even though strong. 23

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In the second book, *Mitarasamprapti*, the mouse, Hiranyaka, expresses the kind of ideology that an individual or a state should adopt while dealing with other individuals or states. The essence of polity, according to him, is to remember the antecedents of the other person or the state before trusting as a friend: “If one has harmed someone once and tries to become friends again he should be avoided otherwise, the person courts his own death.”

In order to give credence to his thoughts, Hiranyaka refers to some major thinkers from the Indian tradition. And indeed reference to the concepts promulgated by these thinkers makes the discursive features of the *Panchatantra* very strong. To establish his views about the three wings of polity, he takes recourse to the thinkers:

Chanakya opined we must do good deeds; Shankaracharya said one must seek more and more friends and Brihaspati taught the policy of not trusting another.

Laghupatnak, the crow, seeks friendship with Hiranyaka because of his vast knowledge, which again validates the importance attached to knowledge in these fables.

Beyond the immediate interest generated by the war between the owls and crows, the frame-narrative creates a conceptual work wherein sections from various authoritative texts are freely quoted. The immediate situation is that the Crow-king Meghavarna is extremely concerned about the safety of his subjects, as the owls led by their king Arimardan continues to pursue aggression, and every night quite a few of his subjects are killed by the enemy. It is difficult to defend his subjects because they live on a tree, which is not fortified and, to aggravate the situation, they cannot see in darkness. He summons his senior ministers and in the top level meeting we get a glimpse of the various ways to deal with enemy during war, as enumerated by the Indian political thinkers.

The first minister suggests restraint and buying peace for the moment and then attacking the enemy once it is made weak by employing different policies. To support his claim, he refers to a tried and tested method employed in the traditional Indian politics:

> In this world the outcome of a war is always uncertain. Hence, one should go to war only when the three forms of truce *Sam, Dam, Bhed* have failed...and if these fail, then consider open war.

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24 Ibid., p. 157  
25 Ibid., p. 159
The important means of fighting the enemy which are advocated by Kautilya in the *Arthasastra*: *Sandhi* (peace), *Vigrāna* (war), *Sanshrya* (seeking help), *Asan* (stay put inside a fort *(durg)*) and *Dvaidhibhava* (duplicity or double dealing), find reference in more than a few places in the *Panchatantra*. For, instance the senior-most minister Sthirajivin prevails upon his king to adhere to *Dvaidhibhava* or duplicity in order to destroy the enemy, and the king by placing his trust in the policy of this minister eventually tastes victory over the stronger army of the owls. Again, in the midst of the debate between Damanaka and Karataka, on whether or not to ask the lion king, Pingalaka, the reason of this trouble, and offer him assistance, we find a reference to this same principle enumerated in Kautilya's political theory as mentioned by the minister in the third book, Sthirajivin:

Damanaka says “today the king sits with his family scared. Therefore, we must approach him, enquire into the reason of his worry and advise him pact (*Sandhi*) or war (*Vigraha*) with the enemy. If not these, I would advise him to stay put and wait and then join the more powerful of his two enemies (*Sanshray*) and if both of his enemies are equally powerful to live in equanimity with both (*Dvaidhibhava*). I shall suggest to him anyone of these proposals after knowing the exact cause of his worry.”

Sthirjivin, the minister of the Crow-king Meghavarna draws an elaborate analogy between his experiences inside the enemy territory with the various adverse experiences the Pandavas faced in the *Mahabharata*. He argues that in the days of adversity, the superior human being would deal with the hardships with fortitude, not getting perplexed by the atrocious present but rather living the hard times with grit and determination. Such a person has the ability to foresee that the difficult present would lead to a pleasant future. Arjuna had to live the life of an effeminate dancer and decorate his hands with jewellery, the same hands that carried the strong bow, Gandiva. Bhima had to work in the kitchen. Nakula and Sahdeva had to look after the cows and guard the house of Virat. Even Draupadi had to suffer mortification. But all of them persevered well. He draws this analogy as a response to the assumption of his king that he must have suffered a lot in the enemy territory. The king confesses that he and the other ministers had really been

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27 Ibid. p. 35
worried and anxious about his well being. This is what the aged minister says after completing this analogy with the Pandavas:

It is a sign of mature politics that great men even obtaining to severe difficulties never leave a task in the middle.
Lowly persons of base personality never begin a task; those of medium character leave it midway when adversities strike. It is only the best among them who finish a task begun

There is also another analogy with the Mahabharata present in this book of the Panchatantra, which appears before the war between the crows and the owls. The Crow-king and his ministers are drawing out strategies that they would like to adopt for the war. There is a direct analogy between the discourse given by Narada Muni to Yudhistira and the words spoken by Sthirjivi to Meghavarna. The Crow minister does acknowledge the source of his discourse to Narada Muni. It is about the king being aware of his chief points of weaknesses, which his enemy might exploit to defeat him:

There are 18 prime weak targets the enemy can impinge upon to control the king and these should be guarded and there are 15 that are weak points of personal nature. One who keeps a watch over these is able to prevent calamities

Some of the weak target points enumerated by Narada Muni and re-told by Sthirjivi to the Crow-king are, the minister, the priest, the army commander, the prince, the gate keeper, the chief of the army staff, the chief of the elephant department, treasury, border security and so on and so forth. Some of the weak target points related to the personal life of the king are the chief queen, the queen mother, the chief of spies, the guru, the bodyguard, the courtesan etc.

For knowledge on the war and the methods employed as means of combat during the war, the fables in the Panchatantra freely draw from the Arthasastra, especially Chanakya’s strong recommendation of a strong fortress. There are many examples in the Indian history how the fortress as a defense was actually adopted by numerous kings:

28 Ibid., p.256
29 Ibid., p.212

71
In ancient India, fortresses played a very important part in defense. A king could easily resist his enemies by taking shelter in a fortress. We learn from the history of Alaudin Khalji that the Hindu king Hammiradeva effectively resisted his mighty enemy Sultan Alauddin for a long period by adopting this strategy. But when there was a great scarcity of food inside the fort, he came out and fought valiantly with the enemy and died.  

There is an exact analogy to this in the third book of the *Panchatantra*. One of the reasons why the Owl-king is more powerful is that he and his subjects live inside the invincible fort of a mountain cave. Though the Crow-king himself has the luxury of a fort-like construction in the depth of the foliage of a tree, most of his subjects live on the foliage or around it and perish to the attack of the owls at night. Therefore, Prajivi, one of his wise ministers rightly suggests *Asan* (living in wait inside a strong fort, and wait for the right moment to attack) as a strategy to deal with the stronger enemy. Using an appropriate analogy he says that a jackal staying at an appropriate spot can even defeat an elephant, but his moving away from its favorable place might even make a dog stronger than it. He sums up this very important concept developed by Chanakya in the following words:

Hence let us strengthen our fort, recruit more soldiers and mass foods and weapons and work on ditches etc to be ever prepared for war. If victory comes after such a fight it is glory and kingdom. And even otherwise we attain to heaven being true to political morality. Moreover, it will become difficult to owls to meet us when we are externally well defended even if weak positioned compared to them. The wind cannot uproot creepers anyhow.  

In the second Book, the mouse-king Hiranyaka dwells in an underground fortress having many tunnels and winding escape routes that provided security to him all the times, in the event of any exigency. Here, the narrator gives a very poignant discourse on the utility of the forts for a king and his subjects:

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A king without a fort is easily controlled just as the toothless snake or a sober elephant. A single soldier can fight hundreds from inside a castle.\(^{32}\)

In the first book of the *Panchatantra*, the narrative of the clever Hare and the foolish Lion, Bhasaruk establishes a historical perspective to the construction of the forts. This fable narrates the very popular tale of the Lion king Bhasaruk who ruled over a jungle. So that king does not kill indiscriminately his subjects in the jungle for food, it is decided that the subjects would offer one animal each day to save this widespread killing. One day it is the turn of the witty Hare, and he traps the Lion Bhasaruk through a false account of another lion who claimed to be the real king. As the Hare prepares to tempt Bhasaruk to a well in whose reflection he would show Bhasaruk the other lion, and provoke him to jump on the supposedly other lion in the well, he tells the following discourse on fort. His description establishes the mythological history of the concept:

> What is not achieved by a number of horses and elephants is possible once one is inside the fort. One archer from inside the castle can target hundreds. That is why politician always prefer a fort.

> In ancient times on Brahaspati’s instructions Herayankasyap built a fort with the help of Vishwakarma. Vishwakarma even blessed him with success. Since then a number of forts were built by kings on earth.\(^{33}\)

Apart from the fortress, the *Panchatantra* draws on the other efficient systems of defense enumerated in the ancient Indian political thought, like a well organized army consisting of cavalry and infantry. There is also an elaborate discussion about espionage in the ancient Indian political thought, which finds a depiction in the *Panchatantra*, especially in the third book. Kautilya says, in the *Arthasastra*, that the king should have a well worked out espionage system for the defense of his country against the internal and external enemies. He talks, for example, about the different types of spies like *Tikshna Rasada, Shatrin, Udaashita* and *Kapatika*.

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\(^{32}\) Ibid., p.153

\(^{33}\) Ibid., p. 86
Sthirajivi, the wise minister of Meghavarna speaks about the crucial part played by the spies in political matters. He informs his king that it is the duty of the spy to mislead some important officers, especially those closely associated with the enemy king to act in a manner that would bring their king's downfall. Thereafter, gaining a nod from his king, he prepares to get into the enemy territory of the owls as a spy. The Crow-minister poses himself as the great friend of the Owl-king, and after winning the confidence of the Owl-king, he destroys the owls in the most unprecedented manner with the help of other crows. They completely burn down the cave-dwelling of the owls.

The immediate utility of the discourse on war for the listeners of these fables, the princes, and probably the general people of that time, figures in the Hitopadesha. Unlike, its source book, Narayana involves the princes' participation in the section on war. They take active interest in discourse brought to them in the form of these narratives. They are interested in the discourses on war, because, as they say, the teachings are relevant to their lives as princes. The fact that, at the end of the book, the princes, who have been so averse to learning, could utter a maxim on the war shows the pedagogical effectiveness of the narrative in putting across a serious subject in an interesting manner. At the end, the royal students confirm, by demonstration, that they have perfectly understood the important things to know about the warfare, and thank their guru.

Even apart from the war, other political discussions in the Hitopadesha are more distinct than in any other versions of the Panchatantra. The discursive sayings from the Nitisastras are disseminated more through the Hitopadesha than any other book of fables in India. The verse quotations are taken from Kamamdaka's Nitisara. The Hitopadesha is indeed a brilliant selection of narratives built around the epigrams that carry forward the political weight of the narratives. "Of the 600 sayings... 273 relate to king's politics, 222 to common worldly wisdom and only 105 have a moral or religious theme". For instance, in order to bolster the courage of his brother, Damanka makes an aphoristic statement, which he quotes directly from the Nitisastra: "It is the mark of a weak man to

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do nothing for the fear of making mistakes. People do not abstain from eating for the fear of indigestion.”

Through the fables in the *Panchatantra*, we get a glimpse into the court life of the ancient India. The systems governing the life of the kings at the courts are comprehensively depicted in the fables. For instance, the security arrangements of the king in the ancient India are discussed in the frame story of the first book. The Lion king Pingalaka, for instance, moved in a quadruple ring (*chaturmandala*). The king had this ring around him all the time when he was on the move. The king was in the center of the quadruple ring, which was surrounded by his closest and trusted associates, the second circle. The third ring comprised of the servants called *kaakaravas*—the word *kaakarava* means those people who can immediately give the hint of danger to the king. The security guards or officers known as *kimvrttas* formed fourth ring. In the third section of the *Panchatantra*, there are references to *Angarakshaka* and *Sayyaapaalaka*.

There are more references in the work to structure of the royal court of ancient India. In the frame story of the first book, again, a gate-keeper regulates the entrance of visitors to the royal court with the cane that he holds in his hands. Damanaka, the Fox, wanted to enter the court in order to meet the king. The king Pingalaka ordered the gate-keeper to remove the cane and let him enter. Damanaka bowed to the king, and sat on the seat that was meant for him.

In the frame story of the third book, the Crow-king Meghavarna bows with respect to the old and wise minister Sthirajivin. Now, it was a protocol observed then, and it had also been a traditional practice for the king to bow down to a veteran minister. Sthirajivin had been a minister since his father’s time, and hence he followed the tradition by showing respect to him.

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35 *Hitopadesha or The Book Of Good Counsel*, Translated from the Sanskrit Text by B. Hale-Wortham. London: George Routledge and Sons Ltd., 1924. p 77
This does not mean that the fables in the *Panchatantra* are only concerned about the royal life. They adequately delineate the legal and civic discourse that concerned the common populace of India, which are relevant even today. In the fables, we find the critical discussion of the laws governing landed property, tanks, wells, trees and temples and the like. The *Panchatantra* points to the fact that there existed well-defined laws in ancient India. The narrative of the Hare, the Sparrow and the Cat, in the third book of the *Panchatantra* discusses some of the property laws operative in ancient India.

In the hollow of a certain tree, the Sparrow Kapijala lived with his friend the Crow. They were highly intellectual and often talked about gods, sages, kings, *maharishis* and the scriptures. Once, Kapijala went out, as usual, with other birds for food but did not return for very long. His neighbors and friends grew very worried; they gradually accepted, with a sad heart, that he had probably been captured by some hunter. After some time the Rabbit came to the tree and made the hollow his home. One day Kapajila arrived from nowhere, and was extremely upset when he saw his house being occupied by a stranger. A dispute arose between the two, and Shush, the Rabbit protested when asked by Kapajila to vacate his abode. He made his arguments sound very legal:

> This house is not yours but mine only. Then why do you speak in hard tones? It has been said: “After establishing, the pond, the well, the temple and the tree do not belong to any one individual...it is the norm that the person living at a place for 10 years becomes its owner without the need of any proof or evidence. Such continued use itself is the proof of ownership”

The logic put forth by the Rabbit sounds quite modern. The rules that the Rabbit quotes have been picked up directly from the *Smrti*. The *Smrti* text says that ownership is lost forever if the owner donates an asset as public property.

The fable delineates the settlement of this dispute, as practiced in the ancient India, in detail. Both the Hare and the Sparrow decide to approach a legal expert, one who could correctly interpret the *Smrti* rule. Thus, the fact that both the parties show respect to the

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rules enshrined in the law books reveal that the legal aspect is seriously pursued in the story. The legal expert they contact has mastered the *Dharmasastras*, and can judiciously give the verdict in terms of the scriptures.

Though the immediate interest of the fable is sustained by how the Cat, a reputed lawyer, dupes both of them and devours their flesh, it scores some important points about the legal discourse of the ancient India, and the respect people had for law. The Rabbit and the Sparrow know that the Cat is their natural enemy, but they do not avoid going to her, as her knowledge of the law is widely acclaimed. The Cat ends up being cunning and motivated by self-interest, which is nothing surprising about the *Panchatantra* animals. At the same time, the narrative is more interested in drawing out the legal knowledge from her. She says,

> The man who judges merely to retain his honor among men or does so motivated by greed or fear only chooses the path of hell. The judge telling a lie for the sake of gaining animals incurs the sin of killing five people; those giving wrong judgments to get a cow incur sin of killing ten people; for a girl the killing of hundred people; and for another person of one thousand people

> A person sitting in a court of law not speaking the truth; that is not taking a clear stand should be removed from the court because truthfulness itself is justice. It is the duty of the king to verify the truth of an event.  

As in other cases, a mere substitution of the king with the modern state would make the modernity of the fable quite apparent. The fable points to some specific laws in the writings of eminent law-givers of ancient India like Yajnavalkya, Narada and Katyayana. In ancient India, these thinkers framed certain important laws about the right of possession over a plot of land, or wealth. Yajnavalkya says that when a person does not resist an encroacher for twenty years from enjoying his land, the encroacher becomes the virtual master. Narada contends that the right by occupation is the strongest point in deciding the ownership over a plot of land, and any document in the support of previous

37 Ibid., p. 221
owner is useless. Katyana, on the other hand, says that the person, who enjoys them, at the time, is the actual owner.  

Kautilya’s connection with the discourse that the Panchatantra foregrounds has been researched extensively by critics like Ludwik Sternbach and Franklin Edgerton. It is essentially focused on discussing the work as approximate to Nitisastra. The fables convey a need to discuss the Niti discourse in its historicity:

... The Indian Fables have got close relation on the origin and development of the Indian Nitisastras. In certain occasions fable stories have been composed in order to illustrate compressed pithy sayings of a Niti verse, and, sometimes the fables have given occasion for the new composition of the Niti verse.

According to Sternbach, Niti is “the age old art of getting along in the world”, and this is primarily the subject that Vishnu Sharma wants to impart to the erring princes. The avowed objective of the Panchatantra is to teach the “Nitisastra (“Science of Conduct” i.e. the Art of Administration, Politics), in other words ‘Arthasastra’ “the Science of Worldly Advantage”. The connection of the work with the Niti discourse actually makes it predominantly a knowledge-text. Now the scholars are divided about the origin of the Nitisastra as a discipline. In the beginning, the Nitisastras or Niti-kavyas didn’t have an identity as a separate genre. The Nitikavyas have their source in fact in the entire expanse of Indian literature. It is generally believed that well before Kadambaka’s Nitisarsa and other texts of Niti literature, the discourse was spread over the different texts of early India, in form of sayings. These were the gnomic and didactic stanzas on polity and on ethics and practical wisdom expressed, as discursive statements, at different places in the various texts. Subsequently, they developed as a selection from the different

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compositions of Indian literature, and then also got absorbed in the folk as popular proverbs:

Wherever we go through ancient Indian texts we often come across moral precepts or ethical instructions (niti and upadesha), together with guidance on polity (rajadharma), which may be described as early specimens of Nitisstra or Niti Kavya as some orientalists put it. 42

The Vedas and the other Smrti and Shruti texts of the Indian intellectual tradition are the ultimate sources of the practical knowledge on the administrative policy, especially the statecraft, found in the Panchatantra fables and those in the Mahabharata.

In search of the origins of the Indian Nitisastras it is observed that the main object of the Niti sayings is to instruct the fundamentals of social (in other words, moral) and of political life which are found explicit in so many verses and passages of the Vedic Samhitas, and later on in the Brahmanas. 43

In the long oral traditions of India, Vedic seers, Buddhist monks, Jain shaavakas and thinkers of many other religious orders uttered their discourses on polity and administration in incidental verses and instructions on different occasions. Later, the discourses given by the ancient Indian thinkers of Smrti, Arthasastras and Dharmaasastras were compiled and collected and quoted in different Nitisasstras as counsel books on polity, ethics and administration. The elocutions in the Vedas, especially Rg-Veda, on general ethics and the human beliefs of Vedic India, moral stanzas in Aitareya Brahmana and the Upanishads, the ethical and political concepts uttered by sages or learned characters in the Mahabharata and the Puranas, and the Dhammapada of Pali canon, can truly be held as the sources of the Nitisstra. There is also a corollary concept of Nitidharma, instructions on polity and statecraft that are given on different occasions in the Ramayana and the Mahabharata as rajadharma. In fact in the two epics ethical virtues and polity are considered as integral to dharma. 44

43 Ibid., p.18
44 Ibid., p. 18
In the same way, there were various attempts made by the Jaina teachers to collect and compose a large number of scattered ethical texts to impart teaching to the masses, but it can be seen that a lot of sayings in those Jaina Niti-Kavyas are related not only to Jainism, in the same way as the gathas of the Jatakas and of the Dhammapada, though traditionally believed to be the utterance of the Buddha, do not always seem Buddhistic. So, the Indian Niti discourse that has a major presence in the fables of the Panchatantra and those in the Mahabharata has emanated from quite a wide filed of early Indian literature. Monier Williams has wonderfully described how the Niti discourse developed over time:

Numbers of wise sayings have, from time immemorial, been constantly quoted in conversation. Many thus orally current were of such antiquity that to settle their authorship was impossible. But occasional attempts were made to permanence to the floating wisdom of the day, by stringing together in stanzas the most celebrated maxims and sayings like beads on a necklace; each necklace representing a separate topic and authorship of a series being naturally ascribed to men of known wisdom, like Bhdrtrhari, Chanakya, much in the same way as the authorship of the Puranas and Mahabharata were referred to the sage Vyasa45.

The knowledge contained in the Nitisastra, however, is not limited to the level of abstract theoretical formulations. In the narrative form, they delineate an attitude to individual and social life. The aim of human life as understood in India is Purushartha- the fourfold ways of life, which covers life in all its aspects, Dharma, Artha, Kama, and Moksa. Nitisastras cover all four aspects of life so that, the ethical virtues, like regard for all beings, hospitality to fellow beings etc. as practiced by the Bodhisattva are Dharma for a social life; the ethical merits like Truthfulness, Tolerance, are Dharma for an individual being, as adequately reflected in the Jataka fables. While Dharma, Artha and Moksa are predominant in the Jataka fables, the fables in the Mahabharata delineate Dharma and Artha.

In the Jatakamala, righteousness as enshrined in the concept of Dharma is established by fables like The Hare which begins like this

45 Ibid., p. 20
The practice of charity according to their power by the Great-minded, even when in the state of beasts, is a demonstrated fact; who then, being a man, should not be charitable?\(^46\)

The Bodhisattva preaches compassion for fellow beings in the *Lord of Fishes*, by his empathy for the other fishes in the drying lake. Truthfulness is emphasized, for instance, in the fable of the Donkey in the Lion’s skin in *Sihacamma-Jataka*. The *gatha* makes it very apparent that falsehood will lead to trouble:

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\begin{align*}
\text{The donkey, if he had been wise,} \\
\text{Might long the green barley have eaten;} \\
\text{A lion skin was his disguise:-} \\
\text{But he gave a hee-haw, and got beaten}^{47}
\end{align*}
\]

The *Jatakas* primarily presents ethical and religious discourse but it is not distant from what we understand as *Artha*. Not only are there fables like the one about the Crocodile and the Monkey (*Sumsumara Jataka*) which recommend a lie to save one’s life, but also in some cases a fable presents *Dharma* and *Artha*, as communicated by the *gatha* from *Sihacamma-Jataka* quoted above. Though it is preached that the Donkey should not adopted falsehood, it is also suggested that it could well have enjoyed the barley had it been successful in hiding its true identity. Thus the *Jataka* fables promote both *Dharma* and *Artha*.

On the other hand, though the *Panchatantra* fables primarily express policies that propagate worldly benefits for a person or a community, which falls within the purview of *Artha*, they do foreground *dharma*, though only in some of the fables. In the frame narrative of the first book, Damanaka tries very hard to make his brother Karataka

understand their dharma/duty with respect to the Lion king Pingalaka. It is their Dharma, he argues, to show the king the right path at the difficult hour, when he is losing hold over the situation. Like wise, the second fable about the birds in Kakolukiym, foregrounds the Dharma of a king. The birds are extremely unhappy that the king is not following his Dharma: “our king is a devotee of Narayana and takes no notice of us. What is his use when hunters catch us daily and there is no protection?” The fable is quite contemporary. We only have to put the modern state in place of the king. The birds further say that the guru who does not study the scriptures and the king who does not protect his subject are violators of the Dharma.

The Dharma of the king as delineated in the Panchatantra fables is interestingly quite at one with what the Bodhisattva puts forth in the Jatakamala. The narrator makes an analogy between the leaders of the fishes in the lake, who is Bodhisattva himself, to such a king who follows his Dharma of protecting his people in the event of any trouble:

Owing to these efforts, as well as his knowledge of every expedient, the Bodhisattva made them forget their habit of feeding in the cruel manner of fishes. Duly protected by him, that shoal of fishes came to great prosperity just as a town, when ruled by a king that acts in the proper manner, enjoys freedom from every kind of mishap.

Both the Jatakas and the Panchatantra say that the Dharma of the king is to protect the people. Therefore, the notion of the king concerned about the welfare of his people is centralized. In Jataka No.240, Mahapingala Jataka, the Bodhisattva dismisses the king who was “like a speck of dust that falls in the eye, like gravel in the broth, like a thorn sticking in the heel”. In a way, this narrative is very modern. There is a free expression of resistance against the king and a celebration at his death:

Thousands of loads of wood have burnt him quite,

Thousands of pitchers quenched what still did burn;


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The earth is dug about to left and right—

Fear not—the king will never more return

For the earliest discussion of the Rajadharma we have to go still further back to the Chandogya Upanishad, where we find the word Ekaayana, which means the same. Later on Shankara rendered Ekaayana as Nitishastram. It is in this context that Kautilya in the Arthasastra (III) considers the raja as the dharmapratyaks, which means the initiator of the Dharma. In the Jatakas, the concept of justice is interwoven with that of the Panchshila the five virtues, adherence to which was expected from the king, the common men and women, the Buddhist monks and the nuns alike. These included abstinence from taking that which is not given, from misconduct stemming from desire (Kama), from telling lies, and from consuming intoxicants.52

The notion of the just and the unjust king in terms of law and justice is equally stressed in the Mahabharata. In the Shantiparva, Bhishma puts his views on the political morality of a king through a fable. He gives a discourse on Rajadharma to Yudhisthira and Vidura and Dhrtarashtra. He narrates the fable of the mouse to delineate the king who acts to save his kingdom from the enemies that surround it.

Political thought was interspersed with the fables in the Mahabharata, because the subject-matter of the Jaya Bharata was war and hence the Ekaayana or Raajniti or Yuddhashastra was the essential element of the subject-matter in the great epic. The stand of the victorious Pandavas was to be justified on basis of the tradition.53

However, generally, for the text as a whole, the Pachatantra fables have their distinct philosophy, which does not go along with the general discourse of the Jatakas. According to Johannes Hertel the term tantra in the title of the Panchatantra means 'good sense'. He coins the German word klugheitsfall for tantra. Klugheitsfall means

51 Ibid, 167
'case of good sense' when translated into English. He likewise says, *Tantrakhyayika* means in German 'Ans Erzaghengen von Kiugheitsfallen bestehendes', which when translated into English means 'manal consisting of tales of cases of good sense'.

Accordingly, the *Panchatantra* would mean five cases of good senses. The work employs fables to impart the knowledge of good sense in politics. Hertel considers the work a manual of statecraft in the same vein as the Machiavellian literature. He further explains the work as propagating "artifice" or "case of political prudence". He is so radical in his assertion that he argues that all those stories that do not conform to the superiority of cunningness to stupidity should be marked as interpolations.

The concept of *Niti* belongs to a discourse which is diametrically opposed to any convention which regards the practice of virtue rewarded and vice punished as valid. Hence, *Niti* is squarely antithetical to moral discourse as we find reflected in the *Jataka* fable. In the *Jatakas* what is good is governed by the Buddhist principles of right conduct, whereas in the *Panchatantra* fables whatever is useful in material terms is good. This opposition exists notwithstanding the fact that a few fables in the *Panchatantra* were adapted from the *Jatakas*. In the *Kapota Jataka*, for instance, righteousness of conduct and abstinence from greed is emphasized. The cunning Crow is lured by the smell of food in the kitchen where the Pigeon (*Bodhisattva*) has built his nest. It is in the house of the Lord Treasurer. The cook of the house is fond of the Pigeon and offers him the straw basket. In order to gain access to the kitchen the Crow befriends the Pigeon. It is welcomed by the cook who hangs another basket of straw for the Crow. But the Crow has other intentions. He has taken shelter inside the kitchen to devour the meat and fish that very often was cooked there. So, one day he makes an attempt to eat the fish. But, in the process of stealing, he is caught and punished.

In the *Panchatantra* fables cunning and deception seldom fails. It is recommended as a method of success. The narrative of the Snake, Mandvish, told in the third book

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exemplifies this. The Snake wants easy food and in order to catch the frogs living in a pond he entraps one of them by narrating a false story:

The Snake said, “Brother how can I now desire food? Because only last night I saw a frog and wanted to catch it for food. Seeing me he was scared and ran to hide among Brahmins reciting Vedmantras. I could not see him and mistaking the foot’s toe for the frog, I bit a Brahmin’s son and he died. Then his father cursed me in sorrow: “You scoundrel you have killed my innocent son. So now for this crime you shall act as a vehicle for the frogs and that will be your only source of livelihood”

All the frogs, including their king, make a rush for the joyride provided by the Snake. The next day the Snake is able to convince the king to allow him to devour some small frogs as he is tired and cannot give him a joyride. Gradually he eats up all the frogs. Hence, Edgerton rightly comments that “at any rate, the main purpose of the book was to teach worldly wisdom- especially political wisdom, of a highly unmoral and Machiavellian variety”. Hertel believes the general tone of the fables in the Panchatantra is tricky and unmoral, “if not positively unmoral”

Therefore, there is a world of difference between what the fables in the Jatakas and the Panchatantra communicate. The Panchatantra fables belong to a different world-view. “None of the stories of the original reveal such marked religious purposes as appear in many Buddhistic and Jainistic stories”. While compassion is preached by the Bodhisattva (for example, in Lord of the Fishes) as a virtue to be attained, it becomes a grave mistake in the Panchatantra. Compassion and mercy that go against self-interest in fact invites condemnation in the Panchatantra. In the third book, the king of owls, who spares the suppliant Crow Chirajivin, is ruined consequently. If he had followed the advice of his intelligent and sensible minister, Raktaksha, who suggested that the Crow should be immediately put to death, he would certainly have saved himself and his kingdom. In fact, the Crow Sthirjivi regards Raktaksha with respect and not the king who

58 Ibid.
59 Ibid.
had spared his life. After his victory and complete decimation of the owl-empire, he tells the Crow king:

"Dev, I have not seen anywhere more foolish a crowd than the owls and none more intelligent and knower of Sastras than Raktaksha who understood my hidden thoughts and motives well by the simple premise that enemy's servants can never do good. The other ministers were simply there for namesake. They had no efficiency" 60.

In this context, Benfey's contention that the fables in the Panchatantra are derived from the Buddhist Jatakas becomes little difficult to accept, unless the stories have been manipulated to serve the respective discourses. As we can see the fables in the Panchatantra are meant as a manual of politics, and, therefore, they will appear highly incongruous in a Buddhist work, since Buddhist Jatakas, and Buddhism in general, do not attach any meaning to the righteousness of effort for gaining earthly things and earthly power as promoted by the Nitisastra. In the words of Winternitz,

Benfey had arrived at his conclusion with regard to the Buddhist origin of the Panchatantra, because he knew only a single text, of one Jaina version, and, on the other hand, because he was able to locate many of the stories in the Buddhistical narrative works, the antiquity of which he has exaggerated. In fact we come across many of the Panchatantra-stories in the Jataka book, and we can hardly say with considerable certainty today that in such cases the Jataka-book has got the stories from an earlier version of the Panchatantra. Thus, for example the Jatakas Nos. 349 and 361 have been taken from the frame-story of the Panchatantra I". 61

It is possible that fables in both compositions have adapted the narratives from each other and transformed them in terms of the specific discourses that each promote. For instance, in the Buddhist version, some Niti stories have been transformed into Dhamma stories and vice versa. Or, in some other cases the narratives in the Panchatantra that conform to the dominant discourse of the Jatakas appear absolutely as exceptions, as for example those narratives promoting Dharma.


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We cannot say with certainty as to which composition has been influenced by the other. What we can say with certainty is that the ethical philosophy of the two is so widely different for them to be so related, without the necessary changes in the discursive statements that the authors put it in the mouth of the characters. At the obvious level, meanings expressed by the political characters in the *Panchatantra* sound like the ethical utterances one would find in the *Jataka* fables. But on critical examination, the reader would find that there is a major difference in the worldview. In the frame story of the second book, the kindness towards being shown by Pigeon-king Citragriva in his self-negating address to the Mouse-king Hirnayaka cannot be the same as the ascetic-moral discourse in the Buddhist texts. Citragriva seeks not to protect all (animals), which is *Ahimsa*, but to protect and defend those who have given themselves to his care.

In the same section, Manthraka gives the following advice to Hiranyaka:

> Pacified sages advised quietening of desires as the source of personal peace; just as fire does not quench thirst, wealth does not bring the peace of mind.
>
> ...In this world giving alms is the biggest treasure, no greater enemy than greed, no other jewel than good behavior and no bigger wealth than contentment.\(^{62}\)

No doubt this sounds like a prominent discourse we generally associate with the fables from the *Jatakas*, but once the reader is aware of the narrative context of the utterance it becomes clear that it is influenced by the need to provide a temporary relief to a friend, rather than being a proclamation of a universal truth. This passage can be put along the pious utterances by the cunning Cat in the third section, who quotes from the *Dharmasastras* in order to pretend to her prey that she would not harm them; but eventually she devours both of them.

All the ethical utterances in the third book serve the theme of friendship. The benefit of friendship for evading dangers and achieving political success is emphasized. For example, the Pigeon-king Citragriva and his people escape the hunter’s net because of their unity. It is because of their unity and the friendship of the Mouse-king Hiranyaka

\(^{62}\) *Panchatantra*. Translated by Vijay Narain. Delhi: Chaukhamba Sanskrit Pratishthan, 2006. p 185
that they are able to survive. Now, the Crow Laghupatanaka (Light-winged), who has seen their great friendship, asks them to include him in their friendship, and then they add two more friends to their group, the Tortoise Manthara (Slow) and the Deer Chitranga (Colored-Body). In one instance, which delineates the utility of friendship, the Deer is caught in the net of a hunter, and the other friends rescue him. Hence, whatever discursive content we have in this section, no matter how ethical it seems, is oriented towards the worldly advantages of friendship

The fable about the quails in the Jatakas promotes the same motif of unity among kinsmen. It is Jataka No.33, the Sammodamana-Jataka. In this fable, the Bodhisattva is born as the leader of the quails. There is a fowler who has created havoc in the community of the quails by catching them in his nets every now and then. The Bodhisattva suggests them the way out of this crisis:

This fowler is making havoc among our kinsfolk. I have a device whereby he will be unable to catch us. Henceforth, the very moment he throws the net over you, let each one put his head through a mesh and then all of you together must fly away with the net to such place as you please, and there let it down on a thorn-brake; this done, we will all escape from several meshes. 63

Now, this advice of the Bodhisattva to his folk is not at all different from what the Pigeon-king Citragriva tells his subjects by way of an analogy:

If the particles of a substance are minute and numerous and of long strands they are able to absorb many shocks if they stick together. Hence one must stay in a group, when weak, in order to meet the exigencies and turn out successful. 64

In both the fable-narratives, the birds are able to rescue themselves heeding to the advice given by their respective masters. The idea contained in the two fables is same and so is the narrative detail, but the discursive intent of the two is class apart. In the above statement, the Pigeon-king says unity is important when a group is weaker than its

64 Panchatantra. Translated by Vijay Narain. Delhi: Chaukhamba Sanskrit Pratishthan, 2006. p 152
enemy. What is meant is that the fable in the *Panchatantra* advocates unity for an immediate gain. Though the fable in the *Jataka* does delineate the immediate benefit to the quails, what it actually promotes is that people should generally not fight among themselves, which is a universal message. It promotes the notion of love and compassion among kinsmen and women.

Now, though in their discursive intent the *Mahabharata* fables complement those in the *Panchatantra*, especially the fables that are employed in political discourse, there lies a difference. Like the fable about the Pigeon-king that also appears in the *Jatakas*, the entire frame narrative of the third section of the *Panchatantra* comes from the *Mahabharata* (Parvan X). The attack on the Crow-king, Meghavarna, and his subjects by the Owl-king, Arinndham, and his army, and the massacre that follows sets the frame narrative rolling. The same incident sets Ashwatthama thinking in the *Mahabharata*, and he decides go for a nocturnal attack on the Pandavas when they are sleeping in their tents. What is important to note is that in the *Panchatantra*, the sole concern is self-protection and victory over the enemy. The ethicality of the means adopted is immaterial so long as earthly success is achieved, which is the innate understanding suggested by all the characters of different fables in the *Panchatantra*. Even, the Crow-king and his army wreck revenge and destroy the owl empire by using way of deception.

Quite different is the case in the *Mahabharata*, where the ethical imperative is comprehensively discussed before the attack. What the owls did to the crows in the darkness of the night, when the latter cannot see, is against the *Dharma*. Kripacharya loses no time argue with Ashwatthama:

> It is wholly wrong. To attack men, who have retired to sleep, has never been done before. It would be an unprecedented crime against the laws of *Kshatriya* conduct. Aswatthama, for which are we fighting.\(^{65}\).

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Because of Ashwatthama's justification of this plan, it appears the world-view of the fable comes closer to what the reader sees in the *Panchatantra*. But it is only momentary. Ashwatthama argues

> These Pandavas have been guilty of the foulest conduct. They killed my noble and trustful father through a lie. They have killed Duryodhana against the laws of chivalry. I have no doubt in my mind that what I propose to do is quite proper vengeance for all these foul deeds. It is only if I carry out this plan that I can possibly repay my debt to my king and to my father.\(^{66}\)

The same argument can be used by Meghavarna's ministers for the fraud they would play in order to take a revenge on the owls. However, such a need does not arise in the *Panchatantra*, because, as discussed there is no questioning of the ethical dimensions of the means. In the *Mahabharata*, however, the *Dharma* is the touchstone. The means adopted by the Pandavas are justified because they are on the side of the *Dharma* in the great war, whereas what Ashwatthama does, as what the owls do, stands reprimanded in the epic.

The overall impression that the *Panchatantra* fables create is definitely that intelligent conduct for self-benefit even at the cost of morality is justified. But having said that it should be noted that there are some fables in the work that do not go along the general discourse in the work. We have already discussed the concept of *Dharma* as enumerated by Damanaka. In the second book, *Mirasamprapti*, Laghupatnak, the wise crow performs his *Dharma* by saving the other birds from the hunter's net. His action represents love and concern for others in the society: "O birds, this wicked hunter is carrying net and rice grain with him. Do not trust him at all. Consider the rice as worst poison."\(^{67}\)

Therefore, the fables of the *Jatakas* and the *Panchatantra* do belong to two different knowledge systems, while the former is a religious and ethical discourse, the later a *Niti* discourse, that prefers self-benefit over ethics, but there are a few stories that do not

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\(^{66}\) ibid

\(^{67}\) *Panchatantra*. Translated by Vijay Narain. Delhi: Chaukhamba Sanskrit Pratishthan, 2006. p 151
conform to these categories, and overlap. Arthur Berriedale Keith says in his *History of Sanskrit Literature*,

The fable, indeed, is essentially connected with the two branches of science known by the Indians as the *Nitisastra* and the *Arthasastra*, which have this in common as opposed to the *Dharmasastra* that they are not codes of morals, but deal with man's action in practical politics and conduct of ordinary affairs of everyday life and intercourse. We must not however, exaggerate this contrast between these *Sastras* for in the *Arthasastra* and the *Nitisastra* alike there is much in common sense, and that is often in accord with practical morality; at no time can we regard the didactic fable as intended merely to extol cleverness without morality; there lingers around the work a distinct influence of the *Dharmasastra*, as only to be expected, seeing that the *Panchatantra* was intended for the instruction of the young and the instructors were the Brahmins.68

In general, though, the fables of the *Jatakas* and the *Panchatantra* fables are class apart in the ideology they seek to promote. The typical discourse of the *Panchatantra* fables rests, as already said above, on their proximity with the conceptual utterances of Chanakya and Bhrtahari in form of the *gathas* contained in them. Though this is true of all the versions of the *Panchatantra*, the thematic distinctiveness provided by the quotations from political and philosophical texts surfaces most in the *Hitopadesha*

In *Hitopadesha* interspersed throughout the fables are the maxims of wisdom and morality in verse...the maxims are drawn from various treatises on law and morality-from the *Satakas* of Bharthrihari, from Chanakya... similar to the maxims one comes across in Hebrew scriptures, in the proverbs of Solomon, in Wisdom, and in *Ecclesiasticus* 69

Critics like Sternbach have studied the relation between Chanakya verses and the *Hitopadesha*. The influence of Chanakya verses is all pervasive in the Indian literature:

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69 Preface, *The Hitopadesha or The Book of Good Counsel*. Translated from the Sanskrit Text by B.Hale-Wortham.p. x
Chanakya verses have been borrowed from other collections and they have been borrowed into other collections, so that there is not a general Sanskrit anthology of the past thousand years that entirely lacks them.  

Dr. Sternbach in his *Chanakya-Niti-Text Tradition* mentions about one hundred printed editions of one collection of Chanakya verses alone. They are popular, because they suggest ways to benefit oneself without too much reaching after cold rules of ethics, which has gone well with people. They are in fact remembered as proverbs, like folklore-proverbs.

Most of the Chanakya verses truly promulgate a Machiavellian attitude to life. What is important, according to him, is one's interest being fulfilled. It is not at all important whether the means employed are ethical or not. Some of the sayings are radically in the favor of profit and interest, without showing any botheration for the rules of ethics:

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Be not too straight, but look to the woods.
Straight trees are cut but the crooked stand.
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A good number of fables in the *Hitopadesha*, for instance, freely advocates the ideology of using crooked means for self-benefit or self-protection. The frame narrative of Pingalaka and Sanjeevaka is a case in the point. The foxes, Karataka and Damanaka, exploit a crooked strategy full of deceit and falsehood to get rid of the Bull in order to enjoy the benefit that the company of the Lion would bestow. In the story of the family of the Crow and the Serpent, the former uses a trick to get rid of his enemy. A small family of crow lived on a tree. In its trunk lived the Serpent, who would always devour the young crows. The Crow finally thought of a crooked means. Once, when the prince had come to bath in the nearby pond, he picked up his gold chain and dropped it inside the tree trunk. The soldiers found the black Serpent inside the hollow of the tree and killed

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71 Ibid., P.1

him before obtaining the gold chain back. Likewise, in the frame narrative of the third book, the most experienced minister suggests crooked means of deception to defeat a stronger enemy.

Thus, the fable delineates an important policy enshrined in the Niti discourse, which is the use of any suitable means for self-protection. We can quote a verse for its basic principle, the source of which goes back to the Mahabharata:

You should give up a man for a family,
Give up a family for a village,
Give up a village for a country,
But sell out the world for yourself.  

It is this perception of self-protection and self-interest that contributes to the development of raja-niti. In Chanakya's terms, the Damanaka would be an ideal minister that any king would like to have. The ability to devise great stratagems that he possesses is what is expressed in the form of pithy sayings in the political discourse of the Arthasastra.

As discussed earlier, the various discourses proclaimed in the various knowledge-texts and used in the fable-narratives are also as much part of the folk. Hence, the animal narratives also reflect the folklore. While discussing the relations of the fable-narratives to the folklore, we might remember that though the study of folklore assumed importance in the form of ethnographic studies in the 19th century in the West, in India we have had a traditionally oral culture. The narrative literature has come down to us spoken by the lips of many anonymous story-tellers, which became a part of the folk. They closely observed the behaviors of men and women. "The Panchatantra gives us an adequate idea of the customs and manners, food habit, dresses, art and culture and the beliefs and superstitions of the people of the contemporary Indian society". We have already discussed that the work contains innumerable subjects like politics, religion, civil and criminal law, moral principles, and systems of education; it also adequately reflects the customs and manners

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73 Ibid. Chanakya Verse. 1.7
of the age, and many other aspects of life. In this way, the *Panchatantra* is an encyclopedia of Indian culture.

In fact, in reading the *Panchatantra* or in reading any other Indian fable-composition, a reader has to perform many readings. The first time the reader would like to study the fable-narrative from the point of view of its contents, because the apparent form of the fable and the interest generated by the words and the behaviors of the animal characters would attract his/her attention. However, on a close reading, the second time, he/she might discover a perspective about the customs prevalent in the ancient India, inherent in the fable-narrative. It becomes important "to point out that the tales contained in the *Panchatantra*, though fables, depict faithfully the common lives of the Indian people." The same is true about the *Jatakas*. A reader may discover layers of meanings, which are not only limited to the religious discourse, but also reflect simple lives and activities of the people. "Thus they can be, and were probably meant to be read at a variety of levels, and function along lines of both commonsense and Buddhist ethics, often welding the two together in complex, not always harmonious compositions."

T.W. Rhys Davids, who pioneered the modern studies on Buddhism, argues that the *Jatakas* are "the oldest, most complete and most important collections of the folklore extant." Though their importance depends a lot on the religious discourse contained in them and their depiction of the life and teaching of the Buddha, they have in them a mass of material that the folklorists consider extremely valuable. There are critics who even go the extent of clamning that the Buddha used the popular stories and he infused the discursive content in them to give the form that they eventually acquired. In other words, it is suggested that the *Jataka* fables, in their content, are adaptations from the folklore: "The Jataka stories, though Buddhistic in form, are really adaptation of still more ancient tales current in the land between the Indus and the Ganges long before the rise of

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Buddhism. For example, the fables like Ass in the Lion Skin and The Fox and the Crow that have been an integral part of the folk imagination for centuries have descended from the Jatakas.

The Jatakas fables make important statements about the historical awareness contained in the early Indian narratives. The stories highlight the preeminence of the Buddha and explain the Buddhist doctrines through relation to the social life and customs of ancient India. The Jatakas are read today by historians as among the sources of early Indian history. The opening of each fable-narrative itself suggests an attempt to provide it with a solid social and historical reality. The Jataka fable maintains an acute historical sense:

Once upon a time, when Brahmadatta was reigning in Benares, the Bodhisattva came to life as an ox, named Big Red, on the squire’s estate in a certain hamlet. And he had a younger brother who was known as Little Red. There were only two brothers to do all the draught work of the family.

In all the narratives an elaborate setting is established, and though the exact historical identification is not possible, apart from the name Benares, the characters, their activities, beliefs and attitudes reflect a comprehensive view of the Indian society. This element of realism would have made the Jataka fables so popular that they were represented through sculpture as early as the third century B.C. That is the reason why the contemporary historians have to depend on the Jatakas, and other Indian narratives, for the historical understanding of the ancient India. “As such they have often been regarded as the closest approximation to the “popular” which we can hope to recover from the relatively remote past.

Even the spread of the Buddhist messages among the people was based on the need to take the Buddhist stories to the people at large. This position is associated with the Mahayana sect of Buddhism. In the 1st century AD, a new Buddhist sect arose, which

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called itself *Mahayana*, ‘the greater vehicle’. This sect believed that the other Buddhist traditions placed too much emphasis on the attainment of *Nirvana* as the primary goal of Buddhist spiritual practice. It is better instead, they contended, to emulate the Buddha’s earlier experiences as a *Bodhisattva*. In another major departure, the *Mahayana* began to use Sanskrit for a wider social reach of the Buddhist knowledge system, including the fable-narrative contained in the *Jatakas*.

Thus, there was a radical ideology within Buddhism that worked for a greater connection between the *Jatakas* and the folk. The *Jatakamala* is a byproduct of this ideology. The *Jatakamala* was composed by Aryashuara in Sanskrit, so as to take the *Jatakas* to those people who did not speak Prakrit or Pali. The *Jatakamala* became an integral part of the folk, as shown by the inscriptions on the Ajanta frescos dating back to the 6th century A.D. One of the reasons of its close connection with the folk was because it promoted, in the main, the Buddhist virtue of compassion, which had more social dimension than the other Buddhist virtues. Dalai Lama has written in his introduction to a recent compilation of the Tibetan version of the *Jatakas* that even today there is a Tibetan tradition of reading one of the *Jataka* narratives as the climax of the Great Prayer Festival celebrated during every Tibetan New Year. This is another indication of the proximity between the *Jataka* and the folklore.

The same is the case with the *Mahabharata*. The fables that were inserted in the epic, along with ballads and legends and other form of folk-tales, in fact constituted the beliefs, customs and traditions of the common people. Every Popular similes and analogies played an important role in the development of fables. During the expansion of the *Mahabharata*, the fables that were included were from the popular narrative literature. So much replete with folk content are the fables of the *Mahabharata* that, because of the fables and other small non-fable popular narratives, it got transformed into an encyclopedia of folk-lore rather than a work of literature:

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Even the famous sacrifice of serpents indicates inventive tendency of common people who express their beliefs, customs and traditions through primitive notions regarding their ancient associates as beasts and birds. 83

The popularity of the fables in the Mahabharata can be understood from the fact that some of the fables in the epic have been expressed in contracted forms. They are not narrated in detail. It can be assumed with certainty that they were so much part of the folklore that there was no need felt to narrate them in detail. Only the characters are mentioned by way of analogy:

It means that the fables, remains of which are now preserved in the Mahabharata, were so popular and known to the contemporary readers that the author did not think it necessary to elaborate it in full84.

In one such case of an extremely contracted fable, Vidura asks Duryodhana to be friendly towards the Pandavaas, and warns him that if he persisted in his inhuman treatment of them, the result would be dangerous. He quotes the example of the goat that digs a weapon out of the earth and gets killed by it.

Very frequently, the epic resorts to comparisons between the various human abilities and habits and those demonstrated by the animals, to suggest important thoughts. These analogies often take the form of contracted fables, and have become interspersed in the language of social exchange. In the Shanti Parva, for instance, on being asked by Yudhithira about various qualities of the combatants in the King’s army, Bhishma says,

It is proper that those weapons and vehicles should be adopted (by particular bodies of combatants) with which they have become familiar by use. Brave soldiers, adopting those weapons and vehicles, engage in battle. The Gandharvas, the Sindhus, and the Sauviras fight best with their nails and lances. They are brave and endued with great strength. Their armies are capable of vanquishing all forces; The Usinaras are possessed of great strength and skilled in all kinds of weapons. The Easterners are skilled in fighting from the backs of elephants and are

83 Ibid., p.125
84 Ibid., p.127
conversant with all the ways of unfair fight. The Yavanas, the Kamvojas, and those that dwell around Mathura are well skilled in fighting with bare arms. The Southerners are skilled in fighting sword in hand. It is well-known that persons possessed of great strength and great courage are born in almost every country. Listen to me as I describe their indications. They that have voices and eyes like those of the lion or the tiger, they that have a gait like that of the lion and the tiger, and they that have eyes like those of the pigeon or the snake, are all heroes capable of grinding hostile ranks. They that have a voice like deer, and eyes like those of the leopard or the bull, are possessed of great activity. They, whose voice resembles that of bells, are excitable, wicked, and wrathful. They that have a voice deep as that of the clouds that have wrathful face, or faces like those of camels, they that have hooked noses and tongues, are possessed of great speed and can shoot or hurl their weapons to a great distance. They that have bodies curved like that of the cat, and thin hair and thin skin, become endued with great speed and restlessness and almost invincible in battle. Some that are possessed of eyes closed like those of the iguana disposition that is mild, and speed and voice like the horses, are competent to fight all foes. They that are of well-knit and handsome and symmetrical frames, and broad chests, that become angry upon hearing the enemy's drum or trumpet, that take delight in affairs of every kind, that have eyes indicative of gravity, or eyes that seem to shoot out, or eyes that are green, they that have faces darkened with frowns, or eyes like those of the mongoose, are all brave and capable of casting away their lives in battle. They that have crooked eyes and broad foreheads and cheek-bones not covered with flesh and arms strong as thunder-bolts and fingers bearing circular marks, and that are lean with arteries and nerves that are visible, rush with great speed when the collision of battle takes place. Resembling infuriated elephants, they become irresistible.

The phraseology used here functions in exactly the same manner as a longer fable. The attributes of the animals suggest important qualities that the combatants should possess. These analogies would gradually get assimilated in the folk. They would be said and shared on different occasions. It is not surprising that in the later ages, expressions such as these became an integral part of the people's vocabulary in form of proverbs.

The folk customs and practices and popular religions contained in the fables throw light on ancient habits and beliefs. This is because the narrative has come to us directly from

the people who lived at that stage of the human civilization, unlike the ‘literary’ tale or narrative, which exists only in the professed work of literature and is frozen therein.

"Just as knowledge is by and large constituted in the mind, it is also stored in the mind. This is another requirement of the oral culture. This requirement...has determined the style and structure of the texts" 86

The Indian fables, like other folk-genres, the myths, place and hero legends, drolls, Marchens, cumulative stories and ballads are narrated to the folk and adopted from the folk.

The fables in the Jatakas and the Mahabharata were part of the oral traditions first before they were put to writing, and even though those in the Panchatantra and its various recensions were composed first (while some critics think they came from the folk), they became subsequently the part of the folk, because they could be disseminated through oral means only. Thus, the fable sustained itself through the expression of mental sharing of the human culture. The narrative in fact lives with the people.

There is a contention among those who have studied the Indian fables as to whether the fable-narratives have borrowed from the folklore or it is the other way round. Critics like W. Norman go to the extent of claiming that themes suggested by the fables are present in the modern life. He makes a distinction between pure literature and oral forms, and argues that the lives depicted in the fables of those times, and the issues that the characters in the narratives confront, are still relevant to the Indian people. So the fables are to be found in the contemporary folk.

"The customs and superstitions portrayed in them are as a rule either those existing at the present or else pure myth, with the exception of those scattered instances where a literary story borrowed by the folk is still so fresh in the popular memory as to preserve the incidents of the times past when the story received its

literary form. It can be said with truth, however, that there are many customs and beliefs of the folk appearing in the oral fiction that occur only rarely, if at all, in the literature.\textsuperscript{87}

In India, the separation between a composition by an author like Vishnu Sharma and the folklore does not exist because of the frequent exchanges between the two. If it is true that the many narratives, in the remote past, had their origin and their existence among the folk, in the pre-literary times, and were later adopted into the compositions, it is equally true that many narratives existed in compositions first and then they were transferred to the folklore, and still continue to be the part of the modern Indian folklore.

In other cases, stories have in all likelihood been carried by literary means to places where they did not exist previously, and have thus been implanted in the folklore.\textsuperscript{88}

As an example of the borrowing of the folklore from the composed narrative, we can take the famous non-fable narrative, 'The Magic Lamp' from Alexander Campbell’s collection \textit{Santhal Folk Tales}. It is a reworking of \textit{Aladdin and the Wonderful Lamp}. Here, it is easier to confirm the borrowing of a folktale from composed narrative, because the source narrative is not Indian.

We can establish the long connection between the Indian fables and the Indian folklore by discussing a particular fable that appears in the collection by W.Crooke from the then provinces of Agra and Oudh, \textit{Talking Thrush}. This is known as a folk fable, but it has come down over centuries from the \textit{Mahabharata}. In the folklore, this fable is narrated by a brass founder, and it is entitled \textit{The Camel's Neck}. There is a camel that follows the most difficult austerities. The god is pleased and reveals himself to him. Seeing the god, the camel asks, "'who are you'? "I am the Lord of the Three Regions", answers the God. 'Show me your proper form,' asks the camel. Then the god appears in his \textit{Chaturbhuj} (fourhanded) form, and the camel worships him. The god says he is happy with the camel, and so the animal can ask him a boon. "Let my neck be a \textit{yojan} long," the camel.

\textsuperscript{88} Ibid., p. 5-6
requests. After having got such a long neck the lazy camel can now easily graze without moving his body. One day it rains, and so the beast puts his head and neck inside a cave to avoid getting wet. A pair of jackals also enters the cave. They see the attractive flesh of the yojan-long neck; they get tempted and begin eating it. The camel curls his head around to see what is annoying him but before he can get his neck back to the jackals have eaten enough to kill him.

This fable is very popular not only in this region but also in other parts of India, with some variations of situation and character. It does appear as a creation of folk mind, but actually it has come straight from the Mahabharata, Parva 12.112, which goes on to show the relationship between the fable and the folk in India. This fable appears there only with a few minor variations. It is said

In the Krita age there lived a camel that had recollection of all the acts of his former life. By observing vows and practising penances, he obtained favor with the puissant Brahman, so that the god determined to grant him a boon. ‘Let my neck become long’ asked the camel, ‘so that I may seize food even at the distance of a hundred yojans.’ ‘Let it be so.’ said the god. The foolish animal became lazy and from that day on never went out grazing. One day while his neck was extended a hundred yojans, a great storm arose. The camel placed his head and portion of his neck inside a cave to escape the storm. A pair of jackals also dragged themselves inside that very cave and entered it for shelter. The jackals began to eat the neck. The camel, when he perceived that his neck was being eaten, strove to shorten it; but as he moved it up and down the jackals, without losing their hold upon it, continued to eat away. Within a short time, the camel died

At the end of the fable, the narrator says

Thus did that foolish camel meet with his death then.
Behold what a great evil followed in the train of idleness

The verse at the end of the folk tale is like

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89 Cited in Ibid., p.8
90 Ibid
Idleness is a great fault: behold, what its fruit was;
By it the foolish camel met with death, owing to his own deeds\textsuperscript{91}

Hence, we can see that there is a close proximity between these two versions, along with the verses that contain their discourse. Likewise, there are other examples of fables in the folklore that have directly come from the composed work and vice versa.

In some cases, it is not the full narrative that is found in the folk, but only the incidents and motifs of the narratives. These are the story-units which are rearranged and given a different shape in the folklore. With the result that the folk narrative, as such, might be originally from that region, but its inputs might have come from the major compositions. The means by which the narratives are carried into the folklore vary. In some cases, the professional narrators, through the \textit{Katha-vachan} tradition, take the stories, especially from the \textit{Mahabharata} and the \textit{Jataka}, to different regions of India. It is a great tradition whereby the narrators travel village after village and give long recitations in the evenings. They take pleasure in narrating them to the folk. Traveling merchants and the wandering \textit{sadhus} are other people who are responsible for the dissemination of the stories among the folk. And also the most known source is the connection between the children and their grandparents.

Quite a large number of folktales found in different regions of India today can be traced to the parallel tales and fables found the oldest versions of the \textit{Jatakas}, \textit{Mahabharata}, \textit{Panchatantra}- the \textit{Tantrakhayyika}, the versions contained in Somadeva’s \textit{Kathasaritasagara} and Ksemendra’s \textit{Brhatkathamanjari}, the Southern \textit{Panchatantra}, Purnabhadra’s \textit{Panchakhyanaka} and the \textit{Hitopadesha}. W. Norman Brown in his \textit{Panchatantra in the Modern Indian Folklore} successfully does a comprehensive analysis of the folk-tales of India as far their lineage is traced to the fables of the numerous versions of the \textit{Panchatantra}. He makes a table to show the links between the folktales and fable-narratives of the composed versions of the work. The table sufficiently supports the claim that the folk-tales have been derived from the composed fable-narratives.

\textsuperscript{91} Ibid
We can take the frame narrative from the first book of the *Panchatantra* and delineate the relationship between the folk-tale and the composed fable-narrative. The narrative of the Lion and the Bull is traced centuries later in the *Fables and Folk-Tales from an Eastern Forest* collected by Walter Skeat and in the *Village Folk-Tales of Ceylon* collected and translated by H. Parker, with little variations. In the narrative collected by Parker, the Jackal meets the friendly pair of the Lion and the Bull. He observes their friendship and expresses to the Bull his wish to be accepted as friends. The Bull refuses, and in order to avenge himself upon it, he intrigues a situation to force a quarrel between the two friends. He instigates the Lion by telling him that the Bull desires to be more powerful and, in the process, dominate him. On the other hand, he traps the Bull by telling him that the Lion wants to kill him with his roar. Deceived by the Jackal, the two friends fight. While and the Lion’s roar kills the bull, the Bull gores the Lion to death.

A comparison of the *Panchatantra* fable with its folk versions shows a good deal of innovation on the part of the folklorist. In the *Panchatantra*, there are two jackals/foxes, Kartaka and Damnaka instead of one, and they are already known to the Lion, as they are the sons of one of his former ministers. They in fact bring the Bull, Sanjeevaka to the Lion, as here it is the latter who is scared of the roar of the Bull. The foxes decide to intrigue the moment they see the Bull. Damanaka says as he approaches Sanjeevaka:

> Oh! this is just as well. Making a pact between him and the king and later enmity between them, would bring Pingalaka under my influence.²

The Lion and the Bull become great friends. They become so attached as friends that the Lion ignores the foxes and his other subjects completely. Kartaka and Damnaka intrigue to separate the two friends by instilling distrust and anger in the Lion for the Bull, as a result of which the two friends fight, and the Lion kills the Bull.

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² *Panchatantra*. Translated by Vijay Narain. Delhi: Chaukhamba Sanskrit Pratishthan, 2006. p. 49
The folk tale is different from the *Panchatantra* fable in the sense that the Lion and the Bull are already friends before the Jackal appears on the scene, and secondly, both the Lion and the Bull are killed in the fight. Now, this fable has been traced to the *Tibetan Jatakas* as the ultimate origin. Norman Brown contends that it is unlikely that the fables found in the Tibetan *Jatakas* were derived from the Indian folk-lore. It is highly possible, he says, that the fable was originally conceived in the *Jatakas*, from there it entered into the *Panchatantra*, and then it was adopted into the folklore. Whether actually the fable is derived from a composition, the *Jatakas* or the *Panchatantra*, or vice versa is a matter of debate, but the fact that there exists a close relation between the Indian fable and the Indian folklore is established beyond point.