CHAPTER-VIII

The Utility of Animal Fables in the Modern World

While taking into account the utility of Sanskrit fables in modern time also (as mentioned in the earlier chapter VII) not withstanding the intrinsic richness of morality in almost all Sanskrit literature, one must take careful note that though fables have an origin in the earliest of human tradition and is common to all human kind, it is to be realised that they are told and retold in different context and function in as many variety of ways as there are story-tellers and listeners.

In order to contextualise fable or tale fully, we need to consider the time, place of the teller, when where and to whom it was told and how the listener respond to it and other such details. It is this contextualisation that brings out the utility of the moral of the story in relation to the teller’s presentation and the response of the respective listeners in context to the relative time and place.

It may be noted that many of the fables of Indian ‘Folk-lore’ expressed aesthetic and moral forms, characteristic of various Pañcatantra-Indian cultures, but told through various animals. Most of these fables are used both in human character as well as animal characters intermingled with each other. The story teller sets story using both artistic and elegant styles. The fables are based on characters taken from the animals world who think, speak and act like human beings. The wit or knowledge of understanding, moral conduct and the philosophy of these animals will inspire any thinking mind into exploring further into Sanskrit literature.

There is scintillating wit and humour in these animal fables and it has a stimulating effect on the mature mind. In the modern world children are exposed to a different sort of treat. They amuse themselves in the
company of animals and develop a strong sense of attachment to the characters of these stories. Moreover, these fables depict variety of situations and gives knowledge about the proper actions which are required to skillfully circumvent such situations. A prime example would be the collection of fables as found in the *Pañcatantra*, the *Hitopadeśa*, the *Kathāsarit sāgara*, the *Buddhist Jātaka*, the *Aesop’s fables* etc., which are the store houses of moral teachings and practical wisdoms.

**The utility of animal fables based on ethics and moral purpose**

The moral teaching of these animal fables from all of these collections have proven timeless text even today. These morals fit perfectly well in the lives of all kinds of people.

Thus, the moral teaching of these simple and interesting animal fables have such utility value in the day to day lives of mankind, that, even today the modern man has much use of these fables. So, much so that through time, since the first edition of *Pañcatantra*, these various fables or short stories have travelled with different travellers and crossed many geographical boundaries, to reach the middle east first, then to Europe and now even to the American continent. These timeless, texts if told today would prompt the listener to equate the moral teachings to his present day context and derive relative utility.

Animal tales are among the most ancient. They occur in the *Buddhist Jātakas* and in the *Pañcatantra*, the *Hitopadeśa* and other fable literatures of the world such as, *Korean fables, Tibetan tales, Burmese folk tales, Magic Drum (Central African fables)* etc. These fables have been latter much translated and distributed widely via Arabic, Persian and *Latin* and reached *Europe* quite early.
These tales are greatly enjoyed by children, notwithstanding the animal characters in them, where the children enter their stock repertoires through primers, and express their powerlessness regarding adults, as they are usually about small animals like themselves who outwit their much larger oppressor⁴.

The most striking character of these didactic fables is their persistent political nature (as seen in the Pañcatantra). The nature of power, the qualities of leadership, mother wit and cunning as the weapon of the weak – Subversion, betray and tricks are regular themes. Here too, the powerful tigers, crocodiles and black snakes (oppressors) do not win - a dove manage a whole chain of helper to bring an elephant⁵ to its knees, and a small crow gets the king’s servants to crush a big bad serpent⁶, the great and vast ocean had to return the eggs of an insignificant pewit couple⁷ (without knowing their actual powers) who perplexed the ocean.

All these qualities are well related and accepted by the child’s mind as children find it very easy to grasp the essence of these simplistically told stories.

These stories have the power to bring about a positive impact on future leaders in the making in relation to their respective time and period, obviously a child or existing circumstance in the given time or period.

Besides this, the children in the modern days also derive much fun from the various animal characters depicted in them. For example, in the ‘Hitopadeśa ‘that is ‘gentle way of instructing’ involve animals in most of the stories behaving like human being, depicting all facets of human nature. It imparts great knowledge, giving proper guideline to conduct all aspects of human affairs.
In the story of ‘The Golden Bangle’ one sees the old tiger inapt (unable to actively hunting due to his old age), luring various men and preying them for food. The fact shows clearly that man should be observant and careful when trading unknown territory and meeting unknown persons.

The moral utility in today’s context would be beware of con-men while the age-old morality in this story was ‘avoid bad company’. Because a wicked or bad company always engages himself in evil deeds.

Further, referring to the story of ‘a kind hearted heron and a wicked crow’ the author rightly states that –

- Neither should one even stay.
- Nor go with a wicked person:
- Because of their association with a crow.
- A swan who was staying with him,
- And a quail who was accompanying him.
- Were killed.

It is truly observed that, the path of honesty is declared to be the most proper and dependable course by these Sanskrit fables. As the frog Gangadatta says, “A muddy garment soil every other object with which the wearer comes into contact likewise, when one virtue is abandoned, all others gradually desert us.”

The utility of Animal fables in modern days as well as old age context

There has been a tremendous change in society from the time these fables were written, yet for whom the fables have been written that is ‘Man’ has remained the same in their innate qualities and temperament. So the tales of Pañcatantra and Hitopadeśa are equally relevant today.
The very nature of some of the animals can be found in man, for example, it is said that, a man is as cunning as a fox, or as meek as mouse, as proud as a peacock, strong as a lion or an elephant, as silly as an ass etc. by reading these fables it is found that in their moral “might is right”. All the stories of animal characters reveal the basic shortcomings and the strength points of the human beings. Expressions such as ‘brave as a lion’, ‘mean as a Jackal’, ‘wise as an owl’, ‘vicious as a snake’, come to mind.

In most of the stories, the animals are chosen as the basic characters to depict the nature of human life. Even though characters of the stories are animals, they depict traits and mentalities of human beings.

By reading the various stories of Sanskrit as well as of other animal fable literature, it is observed that similar situations arise in modern society too.

The utility, as found in the frame story of Pañcatantra in today’s context would be that - one should develop the capacity to differentiate between real friends and flatters. Placing the trust in people who are not sincere may eventually prove disastrous as the world is full of people who will go any length to their own interest. While, the age old morality in this story was that a king desiring his own welfare should kill those who desire to kill him, let it be his father, brother, son, or even a friend.

Thus, the jackal (Damanaka) was successful in his plan who got rid of the bull and further consolidate his position.

In the following paragraphs it is trying to express the utilities of some other animal fables in the modern world as found in the Sanskrit fable literature, such as the Pañcatantra, the Hitopadeśa etc.

The fable ‘Kṛṣṇasarpa kathā’ shows how a cunning device can accomplish what the persons’ courage and physical strength can never bring
about. The wicked among the birds, the crow, took the advice of the most
cunning of beasts, the jackal, for dealing with the most cunning of reptiles,
the serpent. Birds, reptiles and beasts are indicated as being in an ascending
scale of intelligence.

In the story of the ‘crane and the makara’ it is seen that the crane
is too greedy and so comes to grief. He is the type of a hypocritical and
heartless villain as is seen by his telling the makara — “see yonder burring
sheet of rock glistening in the Sun”. All the denizens of the pond carried
by me so far have found eternal peace there. You too will attain such peace
soon.

The story of ‘dog and the donkey’ illustrates that man alone is
ungrateful. This is a skill on man and a questioning of his all round
superiority to animals. It shows the homely truth proved by daily
experience, that many men are more cruel than the tiger, less grateful than
the monkey, and more venomous than the serpent. Man, being gifted with
a far finer brain, can rise to higher heights and sink to lower depths than
any animal. He may be a Buddha or just a Jack the Ripper (a murderer of
England).

The jackal is always a clever one in the Pañcatantra as in the
Aesop’s fables. The force of instinct is unquestionable even in the most
cultured minds. Thus, the story ‘Blue jackal’ is also a skit on persons
preferring the friendship of strangers to those of their own kith and kin.

The story ‘Śiṅhoṣṭra kathā’ (The camel trapped) shows the
cunning trick employed by practiced hypocrites, and how gullible persons
fall victims to them. It also shows solemn promises of immunity from all
harm were kept by kings in the letter rather than in the spirit when their
safety was threatened. There are many instances of persons suffering the
fate of this camel.
Another story ‘The sparrows allies and the elephant’ exemplifies the truth that ‘union is strength’, moreover the force of many petty ones can overcome the powerful just a many blades of grass, when twisted together, make the rope for tying an elephant. The wild elephant (vana-gaja) had been duly punished for his cruel act.

The ‘twin parrots’ in the first book of Pañcākhyānaka of Pūrṇabhadra expresses the idea that upbringing determines character which shows a most important truth often ignored in modern India, the land of hereditary caste, that upbringing is a far stranger factor in determining character than heredity. Instances abound all over the country. The ingenerate members of the so called criminal tribes are life long criminals. In course of time these criminal tribes are reformed by social reformers, and have become exceedingly refined and polished like the parrot brought up by the sages. Hence, man is recognised by the company he keeps.

The utility in the story of the Brāhmaṇa and three Thauges in the Tantrākhyāyikā shows that untruth, repeated over and over again, becomes the truth. The thauges were happy to carry away the healthy goat from the pious Brāhmaṇa deceitfully. Such are the ways of the world. Even learned people can be easily deceived by frauds for it is well known that if a lie is repeated continuously it can pass of as truth. So one who is deft at deceit can cheat any one.

In regards of superstitions, the fable ‘The Brāhmaṇa and the goat’ is a hilariously funny story of how three rogues played on a Brāhmaṇa’s superstition and made him surrender a good health goat mistaking it for an unholy dog (inauspicious).

The prudentially of the wise hare in the story of ‘the moon lake’ illustrates the importance of a famous name. Mere mention of their name can bring about desired result which is the utility of this fable in the modern
day context. This story shows how an appeal to superstition can succeed with the might. In fact the hares create terror in the minds of the elephant and that is a splendid idea indeed. They made merry at the success of their plan because their enemies going away much more frightened than hurt.

In the ‘Cat’s judgement’ the utility would be that one should never approach to his natural enemy for setting his disputes and should not believe his words. The ‘Justice cat’ is the type of a judge who grows fat on the unfortunate litigants while posing as a model with unctuous sentiments.

Again, the story of ‘the frog rides on a serpent’ condemns and show the danger of a love for exotic things and sensations. For such a love, the frog king sacrificed his low-caste subjects and was finally eaten up himself.

‘The monkey and the porpoise’ in the Tantrākhyāyikā is a powerful story exhibiting vividly the clash of emotions. The porpoise resolves to kill the monkey (Valivadana) not because he did not love him but because he loved his wife even more. In life an individual has always to sacrifice the lesser for the greater, and often one lose both in the process, as did the porpoise. The monkey was duped once but could not be duped again. He was, however, a generous foe and gives the porpoise valuable advice. The female porpoise jealous of the monkey is an emotion, which entirely goes against reason.

‘The frog Gangadatta’ in the story ‘Blind Revenge’ in the Pañcatantra shows the unscrupulousness of a hungry man and the cruelty of the weak, which leads, the bad result of mutual hostility. It has been said that hunger can drive a man to commit any sin. One should never trust a hungry person and the vile have no sense of mercy.
The frog, *Gangadatta* thought of taking the help of the snake in liquidating his opponents. It is laid down that ‘a strong tormentor can be set right by stronger antagonist’. ‘*A thorn can always be taken out with another thorn*’.

At the last moments, the frog felt that he (himself) had been the cause of the whole misery by his inviting this natural enemy’. After all, anyone who is a known enemy should be avoided anyway. The utility of this fable is pertinent even today.

The utility of the story ‘*the jackal nursed by the lioness*’ shows the importance of a weak man’s ignorant rage and his subsequent awkwardness and flight.

‘*The mouse maiden who weds a mouse*’ illustrates that it is difficult to move from one’s moorings and instincts. Through this story it illustrates the Hindu belief in marriages within the caste. It also shows how high vaulting ambitions almost always end in humdrum (dull) setting down to one’s caste or class occupation.

‘*The faithful mongoose*’ illustrates a reckless act to a faithful mongoose done in haste without enquiry causes unnecessary grief and repentance later. Suspicion leads to haste action. Whoever reaches some conclusion without verifying facts has to face agonising moments.

The amusing story ‘*The jackal and the elephant*’ further illustrate the evil results of greed. The jackal’s asking the elephant to get out of the quagmire (muddy pit) by catching hold of his tail is an immortal example of the insult heaped on the great by the petty when the latter have them in their grip.

It is found in the animal fables that some animals are though weak or insignificant, many times they triumph over the strong and powerful when
they applied their ‘intelligence’ in proper time, which is a boon of God to them.

The little wise hare had amply proved that intellect was always superior to animal strength. The mighty lion, the huge elephant are made fool as they have relied on the falsehood of the hare.

Likewise, the small, insignificant ‘Tittibha couple’ was able to regain their eggs to be hatched while the vast ocean had to suffer humiliation and apologise to them for his arrogance.

The utility or the usefulness of these animal fables has been told by the author to the princess about how true friends (though rare to find) are able to help one another get over their difficulties in spite of various limitations and lack of resources. Also the ways of the wise and the learned who achieve their objectives, despite various obstacles in their path, by utilizing their intellect, wisdom and above all, ‘united strength of true and dependable friends’.

In the story of the ‘three fish’, the act of the wise fish is quite significant. It says the moral ‘a stitch in time saves nine’ – now it goes without saying that this moral has much utility even today and forever. For if any person is aware of any danger, before it occurs, than the wise act would be to take all necessary precautions ahead of time to ward-off the probable danger. So obvious it is well said that ‘Forewarned is forearmed’.

In the story of ‘the lion and the cat’ the adage has utility even today – one’s need is felt only when his service are required. Servant is no longer required when his services are no longer needed. Therefore, a good servant should always make his master feel in need of his services, otherwise he will become redundant. In this story, it is seen that once the mouse was
killed, the lion’s behaviour towards the cat has changed dramatically. He started ignoring the cat completely.31

Similarly, the story of the Dadhikarṇa, the cat and Mahāvikrama, the lion reflects an idea that a master should not be made free from need by the servant at any time. Having made the master free from need the Dadhikarṇa, the cat has become no more useful to the lion and so became neglectful in giving him food and afterwards due to want of food the cat became weak and perished.32

Also ‘the faithful-donkey’33 in the Hitopadeśa shows the utter profitlessness and the danger of doing another’s duty. It is the donkey who got the worse treatment from its owner for being loyal as a worthy guard. It is not that the master is ungrateful. It is a fact that dogs are to protect and donkeys are to labour. Had the donkey listened to the dog’s advice he would not has been in that misery. The story of the meddling donkey illustrates that one should not interfere with others work or imitate others, it brings only misery. The meddlesome nature of the donkey had taught him a tough lesson.

The utility of the story ‘the two foolish snakes’34 in the present day context, would be ‘beware of enemy within.’ One should never discuss secret matters in the open. People who are unable to keep their mutual secrets and spill them out usually become cause of each other’s destruction, - it then becomes easy for others to target them and destroy them. It happened in case of the two serpents, as described in the Pañcatantra, that they discussed some secret matters in the open and because of their jealousness with each other, both the serpents revealed the extreme secret of their own extermination. While the age old utility of this fable would be ‘traitors are the worst enemies’.
The utility of animal fables in the modern world teaching the doctrines of confidence, prosperity, knowledge, friendship and endeavour

The utility of the animal fables in Sanskrit literatures like the Pañcatantra, the Hitopadeśa and other works such as Aesop’s fable, Jātaka tale etc. are based on philosophical theme which has not lose its appeal even in modern times – an age of atomic fear and madness not to speak of old age. It has a stimulating effect on the mature mind also. As it is found in the story of the ‘sage and a mouse’\textsuperscript{35} in Hitopadeśa, a mean person after obtaining a respectable position, desires to harm the benefactor just as a mouse after being turned into a tiger, got ready to kill the sage. However, the sage while understood the evil intention of the tiger turned it into its original identity, that is, a mere mouse.

The utility or usefulness of these fables are also seen while describing about some real natures of servants and masters. In the story of the ‘faithful donkey and the dog’\textsuperscript{36} reflects its utility in the present day context that—‘One who supplicates at the time of action, is a mean servant and a meaner friend. That is why, one should never render null and void the services of a servant – who has done his duty, but should please him with a reward of thoughts, words and looks’. Here the dog tamed by the washer man is an evil-minded creature, a sinner, because he is neglecting his duty towards his master at the time of calamity, but the donkey tried to perform its duty to the master as a faithful guard without thinking its consequences.
According to the donkey:-

‘One should face the sun on the back,
The fire with his belly,
The master with full devotion
And the next world with the absence of deceit.’  

Here, the unfortunate donkey has been punished instead being rewarded. The story of the foolish donkey and his master clearly teaches the very important lesson that nobody should interfere in others’ duty. This is a practical lesson for all times.

Similarly, in the frame story of the first book of the Pañcatantra (The lion and the bull) the utility in today’s context would be – one should not do away with an old servant and honour a new comer- there is no greater fault than this- for it breaks up the homely atmosphere, the kingdom etc. which is indeed an improper action. As a faithful but shrewd natured jackal (Damanaka) noticed those things very minutely of his king, the lion – (Pingalaka), who brought the discord between the two friends.

Secondly, in the modern days, the utility of this fable would be – ‘a gentleman should never keep the company of a low person about whom he knows nothing while the age old morality in this story is that – ‘forgiving a traitor is not good as it will dissatisfy the other’. It is truly speaks of – ‘one must not give shelter to an unknown person also’.

The authors describe in the first part of the Hitopadeśa and Second Book of the Pañcatantra, that when the crow Laghupatanaka wants to make friendship with the mouse Hiranyaka observing his honesty and sincerity towards his friend, the pigeon-king Citragrīva he utters these words that ‘friendship with a virtuous man is like a jar of gold, hard to break and easy to join’.
The crow also observed some qualities in the mouse.

Purity, generosity, valour.
Likeness towards distress and happiness.
Courtesy, affection and truthfulness
These are the qualities of a true friend.
Which are visible in the mouse."

It should also be noted here that 'cleverness and truthfulness are known during the course of conversation, while maturity and steadiness are known from experience. From the conversation between the crow and the mouse, not even one of those faults is visible in the crow, whereas the nature of the crow generally seems to be cunning or wily."

In the Hitopadeśa, (Peace and War section) the vulture (Dūradarśi) plays its role as the representative of peace-loving diplomats of modern times. Wars have taught many bitter lessons to the people of the world. The two World wars, the Korean War, the Vietnam War and many wars have affected seriously the lives of the peace-loving people. In today's context, all nations big and small desire lasting peace. The move of the wise vulture Dūradarśi for restoring peace is a very important practical lesson in modern politics.

Often war-mongers like Citravarna, the Peacock king, impetuously invaded another country with a view to conquer it, without heeding the advice of his ministers and met with initial disasters and had to conclude a hasty peace. Power politics and diplomacy played a great part here."

Hence, the vulture Dūradarśi advised its king that ‘Vigraha na vidhih’ means ‘war’ is not the measure which wise policy or real statesmanship dictates.
In every sphere of life, politics is also playing an important role and which is universal. At present, though each and every one likes to live a peaceful life, but all over world due to violence and war nobody escapes from violence, etc. which is governed by the dirty politics. In this context we can refer to the self-centered traitors who can bring the enemy from outside to his own state but these quiz longs cannot rule their state with the help of enemies. So in this respect we should very much rely on vulture’s statement and with its foresightedness we can save ourselves from any political quagmire hurdle. It is observed that the traitors invite the enemy to liquidate his opponents, their own race, but ultimately they face their own disaster which is agonizing for them.

**The utility of animal fables in modern children literature**

Indian literature is full stories and anecdotes which are not only interesting, but also education based on moral lessons. The utility of animal fables in modern children literature have occupied an important place which are very popular in modern era. Most of the animal fables are the offspring of the *Pañcatantra* and *Hitopadeśa* and repertoire of good advice. Every fable can be applied to human character traits, like that of love, hate, envy, jealously and so on. Each fable has a good moral and philosophical theme, which has not lost its appeal even in modern times.

In the present day world, when the basic values are fast disappearing there is a need to cultivate in the young minds of the children, the importance of human values in their lives. This can best be done through these animal fables and reading short stories, which are full of moral teachings, it fills the heart of the young children with happiness and positive thoughts. At the same time, they learn the basic moral values that one
should possess to be successful in life. What cannot be taught through sermons can easily be taught to them through stories and fables, which are dealing with animals of different kinds living in the forest, air and in water.

Through these animal fables found in the *Pañcatantra*, the *Hitopadeśa*, the *Jātakas*, *Aesop's fable* etc. children will find it very easy to grasp the essence of the stories. Children are exposed to a different sort of treat. They amuse themselves in the company of animals and develop a strong sense of attachment to the characters of these stories. All these fables and short stories have the power to bring about a positive impact on the future leaders in the making. Besides this, children can also have fun with the various animal characters, such as — "the jackal king", "the monkey thief" "the foolish turtle", "the king frog and the cobra", "the four friends", "the lion and the bull", "the cat’s judgement", "the pious dove", "the singer ass" etc.

It may be mentioned in the present study that different stories of *Pañcatantra* deploy a vast variety of characters drawn from high and low, town and country in the human world. The *Pañcatantra* is like the *Indian Epic* with which it has a strong and close kinship. It represents the society at many levels. It holds a mirror up to the society. Through these animal fables, it is seen that *Pañcatantra* has dual perspective—Edification and Instruction, which are equally important—nīśī is one of its aim.

Children find immense pleasure in reading bird and beast stories. These stories have a dual purpose—giving pleasure and imparting valuable lessons for building up their future in an ideal manner. But these stories have an allegorical character also for which elderly people also derive great inspiration to live a practical life. They derive great worldly wisdom through these stories.
In order to make the children skilled in their behaviour and dealings, the writer of these animal fables which were written in the form of a chain of simple stories with philosophical and moral theme that has again stood the test of time and is relevant to modern world. These fables have always tried to provide delight, tactful wisdom and courage to youngsters and will guide them for safety, prosperity and useful art and culture necessary for a successful practical life.

The utility of these animal tales in modern children literature also have occupied an important place, which are very popular in modern world. Besides Pañcatantra and Hitopadeśa and other works of Sanskrit literature some stories are also found in the tales of ‘Rudyard Kipling’ who is known for his famous work “The jungle Book” meant for the children and which is set in the jungles of India where a human cub stays with the wolves and adapts their culture. These short stories based on the animals of the jungle show how they communicate among themselves. The stories make a sound and interesting reading not even for children but elders too.

Above all, the utility of these animal fables as found in the Pañcatantra, the Hitopadeśa and other works are ever present that bears the morals in today’s context as well as in the context of old age. Though the stories were written several hundred years from now, they have a universal appeal for all people of all societies of all times. They do not lose their significance even to the modern man.
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