

I. THE WOLF IN SHEEP'S CLOTHING

(A Greek Fable-Motif in the Mahabodhi Jataka)

Among the numerous jatakas which emulate motifs from the fables of Aesop are a number which take theirs from the more popular ones, which are known even among children. As Rev. Spence Hardy remarked with wonder when he first encountered such jataka parallels in an old manuscript written in Sinhala, which he became acquainted with during his stay in Sri Lanka, "Not a few of the fables that pass under the name of Aesop are here to be found; and the schoolboy is little aware, as he reads of the wit of the fox or the cunning of the monkey, that these same become, in the course of ages, the teacher of the three worlds, Buddha".¹

The fables he thus identified in the jatakas in 1853 were a few of these more popular ones, which by 1889 had risen to a dozen or so, to the knowledge of J. Jacobs, who was then of opinion that these examples were still too few to establish a theory of 'borrowing' either way. (The failure to discover a great deal more of such parallel motifs between these Buddhist Birth Stories and the fables of Aesop at the time seems to have been due as much to the large degree of unfamiliarity with the latter as with the former.²

Among the jatakas which have evolved out of motifs derived from the more popular of the Aesopic fables are the *Munika* (No. 30 = Aesop *The Calf and the Ox*, H. 113), *Makasa* and *Rohini* (Nos. 44 and 45 = Aesop *The Bald Man and the Fly*, Phaedr., v.3), *Suvannahamsa* (No 136 = Aesop *The Goose with the Golden Eggs*, H.343), *Sigala* (No. 148 = Aesop *The Fox*

1. *Manual of Budism. Its Modern Development*, London (1853) p. 100. He was of course referring to schoolboys in his own country.
2. For a catalogue of Greek motifs which have been used in composing jatakas, see my 'Greek Motifs in the Jatakas' *JRAS(SL)* vol. XXV (1980-1981) p. 136-183.

with the Distended Stomach, H.31), *Sihacamma* (No. 189 = Aesop *The Ass in the Lion Skin*, H.336), *Viraka* (No. 204 = Aesop *The Eagle, the Jackdaw and the Shepherd*, H.8), *Kacchapa* (No. 215 = Aesop *The Tortoise and the Eagle*, H.419), *Jambu-Khadaka* and *Anta* (Nos. 294 and 295 = Aesop *The Crow and the Fox*, H.204) *Javasakuna* (No. 308 = Aesop *The Wolf and the Heron* H.276), *Gulladhanuggaha* (No. 374 = Aesop *The Lion and the Hare*, H.254), *Dhumakari* (No. 413 = Aesop *The Goatherd and the Wild Goats*, H.12), *Dipi* (No. 426 = Aesop *The Wolf and the Lamb and The Cat and the Cock*, H. 274 and 14) - though the Aesopic instances of the last two items may not be as well known as the rest.³ The motifs of a few other popular Aesopic fables surface in the jatakas, as for instance that of *The Fox and the Grapes* (H.33) in the *Vaka Jataka* (No. 300), with characters changed and motifs themselves rehandled or admixed with others, so as to make them difficult of recognition.⁴

A notable absentee in this group, and yet one that has given rise to an idiom more popular even than the fable itself, is that of the wolf in sheep's clothing. The story tells of how a wolf, a savage predatory beast, put on the appearance of an innocent creature, a sheep, by donning a sheepskin, and in this disguise was able to come right up to a flock of sheep to do his devilry. The Greek version of this, which is in the form of an Aesopic fable, comes down to us from Nikephoros Basilakis, who gives it in his *Progymnasmata*;⁵ it is No. 376 in Halm - *Ποιμήν και Αίνοσ* - *The Shepherd and the Wolf*.⁶

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3. In this jataka a jackal drops a piece of meat to grab a fish, which had leaped out of a river. The fish jumped back into the water and a bird carried away the meat; so the jackal lost both. In Aesop's fable a lion, about to devour a sleeping hare, sees a deer go by and tries to catch him too. The hare, awakened by the noise, escapes - nor is the lion able to catch the deer. For the *Dhumakori Jataka* see my 'Some Unrecognized Aesopizing Jatakas' *Samskriti* vol. 18, no. 2 (April - June 1984) p. 33 f. - item 7.
 4. 'Some Unrecognized Aesopizing Jatakas' p. 27 - item 3.
 5. In Walz *Rhet. Gr.* vol. 1, p. 427.
 6. C. Halm *Fabulae Aesopicae Collectae* (Teubner ed) Lipsae (1925) p. 184.

Ἐδοξέ ποτε τῷ λύκῳ τὴν φύσιν τῷ σχήματι μεταλλάσθαι, ὡς ἂν οὕτως ἀφθονίαν ἔξη τροφῆς· καὶ δοῶν οἷός περιβεβλημένος μετὰ τῆς ποιμνῆς ἐνέμετο, τὸν ποιμένα φανακίσας τῷ μηχανήματι. Νυκτὸς δὲ μενομένης, συναπεκλείσθη καὶ ὁ θῆρ παρὰ τοῦ ποιμένου ἐγὼ μανθῶν, καὶ φραγμὸς ἐγὼ εἰσόδῳ περιετέθη, καὶ ἀτεχνῶς ὁ περίβολος κατησφάλιστο. Ὡς δὲ ὁ ποιμὴν ἤρασθη τροφῆς, μαχαίρᾳ τὸν λύκον ἀπέκτεινεν.

(A wolf once decided to change his appearance and thus get himself a plentiful supply of food. So he put on a sheep's skin and began to graze with the flock, deceiving the shepherd by his ruse. But when it became night, the beast was shut in the fold with the rest of the flock and the gate placed across the exit, so that the enclosure utterly frustrated his escape. And when the shepherd himself wanted food, it was the wolf he happened to slaughter with his knife.)

The fable motif, if it originated with these characters, wolf and sheep, must surely have done so in a bucolic community that was familiar with these beasts and the relationship there was between them, which made the wolf resort to his ruse. Likewise, the motif, if not also the idiom it gave rise to, would have spread fast and easily among other people given to shepherding, who knew the depredations of wolves.⁷ And it

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7. Wolves were a regular threat to shepherds and their flocks in Greece, as in Italy, and figure prominently in Aesopic fables in contexts which involve shepherds, sheep and sheep-dogs. Another of these fables has given rise to the equally popular idiom 'Crying wolf'. Apollo, in his titles of Νόμιος and Λύκειος, suggests a god of herdsmen in his capacity of a stayer or bringer on of their worst enemy, the wolf. In Italy Romulus and Remus were said to have been nurtured by a she-wolf. The feast of Lupercal had connections with the aversion of wolves or the propitiation of a wolf-god, and reflects the needs of a small pastoral community. The concept of Christ as the Good Shepherd is an easily comprehensible one among folk such as these.

is with these as characters that the motif is met, when it is met, in the best of contexts.

On the other hand, the jatakas of India do not appear to have evolved to any considerable extent among bucolic folk; sheep and wolves are hardly mentioned, their roles being taken by goats and lions in contexts which suggest rather domestic animal-husbandry in villages hemmed in by jungle than the grazing of flocks in pastures. Thus, even if it does not appear in the form of a developed jataka story, it comes as a pleasant surprise when we do encounter the motif of this popular Aesopic fable of the wolf in sheep's clothing in the pages of the Jataka, and at that, not as part of the commentarial story but in the verse formulations of the *Jataka Pali* itself. You will find it as a metaphor in the *Mahabodhi Jataka* (No. 528), which the Bodhisatta (born in that life as Bodhi, a mendicant) applies to the five heretical councillors of the king of Benares in the sermon he gave him after he had escaped their ruses and refuted their false doctrines with the aid of a monkey-skin.⁸ For, having worsted them by the logic of his arguments and shown them up to be the rascals they were, by way of illustration of the nature of charlatans and humbugs, who resort to the habit and practices of holy men to dupe the pious, he adds:⁹

Urabbharūpena vak' āsu pubbe
 asaṅkito ajayuthaṃ upeti,
 hantva uraṇiṃ ajiyaṃ ajaṅ ca
 citrasayitva yena kamāṃ paleti.
 Tathavidh' eke samanabrahmanase
 chādanāṃ katva vañcayanti manusse
 anasaka thaṇḍilaseyyaka ca,
 rajojallāṃ ukkuṭikappadhānaṃ
 pariyaṃbhataṅ ca apanakattaṃ
 papacāra arahanto vadāna.

8. V. Fausböll ed. *The Jataka* vol. V. London (1891. Reprint 1963) p. 241.

9. *ibid.* p. 241.

H.T. Francis translates: 10

A wolf disguised as ram of old
Drew unsuspected nigh the fold.

The panic-stricken flock it slew,
Then scampered off to pastures new.

Thus monks and brahmins often use
A cloak, the credulous to abuse.

Some on bare ground all dirty lie,
Some fast, some squat in agony.

Some may not drink, some eat by rule,
As saint each poses, wicked fool.

This use of the simile of the wolf, who donned sheep's clothing, to describe the nature of bogus religious men here, who by their dress, demeanor and doings deceive the people to enrich themselves, is strikingly paralleled not only in itself but *in the sort of people to whom it is applied* in the words of Christ in his *Sermon on the Mount*. For, he warns men¹¹

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10. In E.B. Cowell ed. *The Jataka* vol. V. London (1905. Reprint 1957) p. 124. Francis reads *vittasayitvā* "causing panic" (*vi* intensive + *trasayitvā* 'causing to be excited') for *cittrasayitvā* found in all the mss. consulted by Fausböll. The commentator of the Sinhala *Jataka Atuvā Getapadaya* (Part II ed. D.E. Hettiarachchi and M. Sri Rammandala Colombo (1960) p. 161) interprets සැපයීමේ බව; රැකීම පාසය ගෙවීම, and the narrator of the *Pansiya Panas Jataka Poth Vahanse* (ed. Weerasinghe Prathiraja - Part II (1955) p. 1790) renders this සැපයීමේ බවට බරව "frightening the rest" - while he shifts the drinking of their blood from 'the rest' to those whom he first killed.
11. Mathew, *loc.cit.*

"Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves".

There is, however, no need to think that Christ's comparison of false prophets with wolves disguised as sheep here has been in any way prompted by the reference in the *Mahabodhi Jataka*, or even, for that matter - as the jataka writer certainly has been - by awareness of the Aesopic fable. It could well be that the Aesopic fable had, by the time of Christ, already given rise to our ever-so-popular idiom, or that vice-versa, the idiom was prior to the fable itself and known among bucolic communities in that part of the world, before it itself gave rise to the Aesopic fable in Greece.¹² The application of the motif as simile or metaphorically to those who make a pretence of religiosity to hoodwink the devout could well have been a case of coincidence and no more.

The author of the *Mahabodhi* verses apparently knew both what a sheep and a wolf looked like, whence he uses *urabbha* for the former and *vako* for the latter, and thus represents the characters of the incident exactly as they are found in the Greek fable, even if these animals are not the readiest to come to the Indian mind in the context of a localized scene. Thus, the *urani* slaughtered by the wolf along with the goats and she-goats (*ajiyah ajā ca*) must be taken as sheep, as was *urabbha*, the animal whom the wolf impersonated by putting on its skin.¹³ If the jataka author was himself an Indo-Greek - and this is not something unlikely - he may even have been quite familiar with these creatures of the Aesopic fable, even if the goats are added towards localizing the motif. (As we shall see, the wolf (*vako*) himself, under localization in Sri Lanka, becomes quite another sort of predatory beast.)

12 Some such development is suggested by Max Müller (*Selected Essays on Language, Mythology and Religion* vol. 1, London (1881) p. 508-510) for the stories which have arisen in Greece and India based on the detail of *nulla vestigia retrorsum*. The evidence of the Wisdom Books of the Semitic Orient suggest the development of fables from proverbs but the opposite seems even more frequent.

13. *urabbha*, Skt. *urabhra*, with *uia* and *urana* (to be compared with Greek ἀρνί 'wether'). Here also belongs Pali *urani* 'ram'. PTS Dictionary s.v.

Unlike the author of the *Mahabodhi Jataka* stanzas, however, the commentator thereof in the Pali *Jatakattavannana* appears not to have known the prototype Aesopic fable and of how the wolf could be said to be, by the *jataka* author, himself *urabbharupena*. Either from lack of knowledge of what an *urabbha* looked like (which is rather unlikely) or what a wolf (*vako*) looked like (which is not impossible), he thinks that the glaring difference which the wolf had to conceal so as to be accepted in the fold of his victims (the sheep) was his overlong tail. So this he makes him hide by tucking it between his legs. Otherwise (he may have thought) this animal (or this particular animal, by a freak of nature) looked much like an *urabbha* and could pass muster when he approached them (and the goats that were with them) in this manner. For, this commentator writes, explaining:¹⁴

maharaja, pubbe eko urabbharupo vako ahosi, tassa nangutthamattam eva digham, tam pana so antarasatthimhi pakkhipitva urabbharupena asamkito ajayutham upeti.....

"O King, there was once a wolf, who had the appearance of a sheep; only, his tail was long. (So) he put it between his legs (thighs) and approached a flocks unsuspected."

With him the wolf has no need of a sheep's skin, as it had for Aesop, or for that matter, Christ of the Sermon on the Mount. Once the tell-tale tail is concealed, the similarity is established sufficient to lull the suspicions of the wary flock.

The result is that the Sinhala commentator in the *Jataka Atuwa Getapadaya*,¹⁵ and following him, the narrator of the *Sinhala Pansiya Panas Jataka*,¹⁶ construe the animal designated by *vako* in Pali as a *yuga diviya*, a creature not only of different appearance but of an altogether different species, a

14. Fausboll *ibid* p. 243.

15. *loc.cit.*

16. *loc.cit.*

leopard instead of a wolf!¹⁷ Correspondingly, the *urabbha* is now construed as a goat, not a sheep. Correspondingly, the need now is no longer for the predator to have a fluffier coat, but a more smoothed-down one! Thus, we are told by the latter author that the *yuga diviya*, in order to achieve this effect of appearing goat-like, (far from donning a sheep-or goat-skin) *dipped himself in water filthied by hogs* (සරවු සරු වතුරෙහි බහා බැලව්නි වලුවන් බදුව පුපුන්ගන්ධ) - the filthiness of the water being of course a sneer at the villain for the extent to which he had to go to achieve his nefarious purpose.

Thus, our wolf in sheep's clothing of the popular Aesopic fable has become, through the substitution of animals familiar to the local scene for both sheep and wolf, a *yuga diviya* in goat's clothing - or, to be more precise, a goat not *in dress* but *in dressing*. And all this apparently follows from the accident of misconstruing the idea tersely compressed in the word *urabbharupena* of the original Pali, which had meant to suggest all of the detail in the prototype Aesopic motif, that the wolf had taken the form (*rupa*) of a sheep (*urabbha*) by donning the skin of a sheep (δορῶν περιβλημένος).

The surprise of course is that the ass in the *Sihacamma Jataka* was already known to have appeared a lion with the help of a lion's skin - so that it should have prompted our commentators, both Pali and Sinhala, as to how an animal that did not look like and *urabbha* took on the *urabbharupa*. But perhaps what discouraged such an interpretation was the unlikelihood of a man doing the same for a predator such as a wolf, as the washerman had done for his ass - though there is no reason to think that a *jataka* animal could not have done some such

17. *Diviya* is of the cat family, a leopard; *yuga diviya* a real or fictitious specie that perhaps got its name because it went about in a pair. As for the original *vako*, it is now converted into the name of this particular *yuga diviya*. He is Baka in the *Pansiya Panas Jataka Potha* (බකවතු පුංඤ්චිට්ඨක).

thing for himself by himself. The other possibility - and perhaps the more likely one - is that the commentators, not being familiar with the sort of animal designated by the Pali *vako*, and half-taking *urabbha* as goat, had gone on to taking the predatory beast as a leopard, the beast who, (along with the tiger in North India), was the more familiar threat to livestock in India and Sri Lanka.¹⁸ As mentioned earlier, the wolf is a very rare occurrence in the jatakas.

Leaving this aside, there exists a more significant difference between the jataka's motif of the wolf in sheep's clothing and that of its Greek parallel, the fable of *The Shepherd and the Wolf*, from which it no doubt derives. Even if most are unaware of it, actually the wolf of Aesop *does not triumph by his deception*; it only brings him to grief, whereas the wolf of the *Mahabodhi Jataka* succeeds, and eminently - after which he scampers off to do the same elsewhere. For, in the Greek the wolf holds up his intended slaughter of the unsuspecting sheep until they are in the fold - but once he is in it with them, *it is he himself who is slaughtered*. For, we are told that the shepherd, in need of a sheep for his supper, (by an irony of fate) layed hold of our wolf as a sheep and killed him, thereby providing the fable itself with its moral: "Even so has assuming a character that is not his own brought about the death of a man; such play-acting can get one into serious trouble."¹⁹

This is good fable, both by way of story as well as lesson. The ironical twist, by which the wolf comes to grief himself - and by the very ruse by which he was plotting the destruction of others - makes it so. But similarly the *Mahabodhi* simile too could have been developed independently as good jataka, if

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18. Thus, the skin of the lion in the *Sihacamma Jataka* (following the Greek fable) becomes in the *Pancatantra* and the *Hitopadesa* the skin of a tiger - a beast who, in the local scene, was the better known predator.
19. This *epimythion*, like the rest of the *epimythia* and *promythia* of the Aesopic fables, has been assigned to its fable in later times - though in this case it cannot be said to be a misfit.

for instance, the wolf in it were taken to be an earlier incarnation of a perverse man, who had taken to the robes to obtain alms, but of whom the other Brothers had complained to the Buddha, as they once did of Kokalika, who was given to luxury.²⁰

That the motif remained unexploited as a jataka, yet as a simile indicative of the direction in which it could have developed as such, shows how some jatakas, like the fables of Aesop, may in their primary form have been sustained, or elaborate, similes, of which the thing compared makes the *pacuppannavatthu*, or present-life story, and the thing to which it is compared, the *atitavatthu* or jataka proper - with *samodhana* to effect the equation of the one to the other through the characters thereof.

Thus, as the present study will have shown, not only was the Aesopic fable of the wolf in sheep's clothing not unknown to the jataka writers, but it is found at an interesting stage in another jataka - as a bud, as it were, which could have flowered into a jataka of its own.²¹ At the same time, the commentarial tradition which treats it gives good example of the manner and extent of localization, (sometimes deliberate, sometimes accidental), which borrowed motifs have undergone in their translation into jatakas.

I have already shown the extent to which this sort of thing can go with my study of another, and fully fledged, Aesopizing jataka of comparable motif - that of the ass in the lion skin.²²

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20. In *Nacca Jataka* (No. 32) - the story of the dancing peacock. This happens in many other instances. Otherwise the Buddha overhears the Brethren talking among themselves, and learns by inquiring.
21. Compare stanza 24 f. of *Sonaka Jataka* (No. 529: Fausböll vol. V, p. 255) with Aesop *The Viper and the Fox* (H. 145, Babrius 173). Here too the motif in verse formulation has not been developed into an independent jataka.
22. See my 'The Ass in the Lion Skin' in *The Sri Lanka Journal of the Humanities*, vol. VII (1981) p. 26-60.