

## THE ASS IN THE LION-SKIN

Part of the surprise which awaited the first orientalists of the West with their learning of the classical languages of India was surely the discovery - some would say rediscovery<sup>1</sup> - of a number of fables and stories, already familiar to them from the Greek, in the collections, and also sporadically, in the classics of ancient India, not the least among them the fable of *The Ass in the Lion-Skin*,<sup>2</sup> which is to be the subject of our observations here. Surprise there surely was, but the Kiplingsian mentality of the earliest colonialists appears to have found it anything but a pleasant one and the first efforts seem to have been towards explaining the phenomenon away as a coincidence, if not as an Indian borrowing from the Greeks.

There were a few, however, who thought otherwise, seeing in certain qualities and elements of the Indian versions evidence of indigenous origin and greater antiquity than those of the Greeks. For instance, though many of the animals which the Aesopic fables treated with familiarity were strange to Greece and Aesop himself was reputed to have been a foreigner, these animals were at home in the forests and fields of India. The idea of a common origin for these similar fables and stories of the Greeks and the Indians, which looked back to the common Aryan origin of these two peoples once crossed the mind of Prof. Max Müller,<sup>3</sup> a century ago only to be rejected by him, certainly as far as our fable is concerned, in favour of

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1. I mean those who believe that the fables and stories which have their parallels in Greece and India originated in India, or at least, had an independent origin in India. If this was truly the case, then the phenomenon would already have been encountered by the Greeks in India after Alexander.
  2. For the version where the ass is discovered by his bray, see Chambray 267; Halm 336; Perry 188; Hasrauth 199. For the alternate version where the ass is stripped of his lion's skin by a puff of wind, see C279; H333; P358; Hs 199. English translations appear in S.A. Handford *Fables of Aesop* (Penguin Books) reprint (1971) p.112 and 113 respectively.
  3. *Selected Essays on Language, Mythology and Religion* vol.1 London 1881, pp.508 and 510 f.

the coincidence-hypothesis.<sup>4</sup> This was later to be the view of A.B. Keith<sup>5</sup> as well.

In a long and informative review-article written in 1960, Dr. Edmund Gordon<sup>6</sup> says that he has identified some 106 Sumerian fables and parables of the Aesopic sort. The clay tablets on which these fables and proverbs are written come mainly from Nippur and Ur and are dated by Sumeriologists to the eighteenth century B.C. Drawing from translations published by Kramer,<sup>7</sup> Gordon,<sup>8</sup> Ebeling<sup>9</sup> and others, B.E. Perry went on to reiterate the theory of a Babylonian origin for at least the Greek fables, though it might as well be applicable to the Indian, considering the great antiquity of these sources, the wisdom-texts of the Semitic orient, including *The Book of Achiqar*.<sup>10</sup>

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4. *ibid.* p.512-513, with n.1. He says there: "In this case it is again quite clear that the Greeks did not borrow their fable and proverb from the Pancatantra; but it is not easy to determine positively whether the fable was carried from the Greeks to the East, or whether it rose independently in the two places."
  5. *A History of Sanskrit Literature* London (1920) p.355. He too, however, shows some uncertainty: "Nor does there seem any conclusive grounds for holding that the tale of the ass in the lion's skin is older in either country." Would it really matter, if they had originated independently?
  6. 'A New Look at the Wisdom of Sumer and Akkad' *Bibliotheca Orientalis* vol.XVII, pp.122-152.
  7. S.N. Kramer *From the Tablets of Sumer: Twenty-five Firsts in Man's Recorded History*. Colorado (1956)
  8. E.I. Gordon 'Sumerian Animal Proverbs and Fables: Collection Five' *Journal of Cuneiform Studies* vol.XII (1958) pp.1-75 and *Sumerian Proverbs, Glimpses of Everyday Life in Ancient Mesopotamia* Philadelphia (1959) - contents described by B.E. Perry in *American Journal of Archaeology* vol.LXVI pp. 205-207.
  9. E. Ebeling *Die babylonische Fabel und ihre Bedeutung für die Literaturgeschichte* Leipzig (1927)
  10. See the fragmentary Aramaic version edited and translated by A. Cowley in *Aramaic Papyri of the Fifth Century B.C.* Oxford (1923) pp. 222-226.

To my thinking, whatever justification there may have been when the parallels recognized between the fables of Greece and India were few and far between, the coincidence-hypothesis is now no longer tenable. When Theodor Benfey<sup>11</sup> first observed the existence of fables remarkably reminiscent of the Greek in his study of the *Pancatantra* and shrewdly suspected that they drew from a Buddhist fund, he was not aware of the far greater number of such to be found in that Buddhist source, the *Jātaka Book*. Way back in 1853 the Rev. Spence Hardy,<sup>12</sup> who was acquainted with an old manuscript of the Sinhalese text of the birth-stories of the Buddha, observed that not a few of the tales which passed under the name of Aesop's fables were to be found in the *Jātaka Book*, the recitation of which the Sinhalese would listen the night through without the apparent weariness which seems to have come over the reverend padre. Despite this, he included translations of some of them in his *Manual of Buddhism* (sic) and had his native pundit count the number of times Gotama Bódhisat (sic) reincarnated as this or that lowly creature in all those numerous formulaestic *yata-giya-davasas* of the *Jātakas*. A few more parallels were observed by other scholars after Fausboll,<sup>13</sup>

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11. *Pantschantra* vol.I. Leipzig (1859) pp.192 & 71.
  12. *Manual of Buddhism - Its Modern Development*. London (1853) pp.100-101. He says (p.100) "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 animals become, in the course of ages, the teacher of the three worlds, Budha."
  13. *Five Jātakas*. London (1861). In his preface (p.1) Fausböll wrote: "The original of this work is the voluminous Pali Book yet in manuscript, called Jata-kassa Atthavannana or Jatakathakatha of which the Royal Library of Copenhagen possesses a complete copy, written in Sinhalese characters on 806 large plam leaves. Having transcribed the greater part of that ms. in Copenhagen, I left for London, expecting to find another complete copy of the same book there; but having met with fragments only, and therefore seeing that a long time will elapse before I shall, if ever, have it for publication, I intend, from time to time, to publish some of the more interesting parts of it, in as perfect a form as my present resources will admit."

beginning with a policy of publishing a few stories at a time, brought out the whole of the Pali text in six volumes shortly afterwards.<sup>14</sup> The five hundred and forty seven Jātakas of this great compendium were rendered in English by various hands in six volumes under the editorship of Prof. E.B. Cowell.<sup>15</sup> It was Rhys Davids<sup>16</sup> who was the first to commence on a systematic translation of the Jātakas into English, in 1880, but other engagements obliged him to discontinue it after one volume had appeared, containing the *niḍḍanakathā* and forty stories.

In his introduction Rhys Davids drew attention to three of the more striking parallels between the Jātaka stories and the fables of Aesop. Among them was our story of the ass in the lion-skin (*Siha-camma Jātaka*. Fausböll No.189).<sup>17</sup> This also happened to be one of the first to be brought out, in Pali with textual comment and English translation, by Fausböll himself, along with four other Jātakas in his limited publication entitled *Five Jātakas*. Among others who made reference to this particular story in their attempt to account for the phenomenon of similar stories and fables appearing in Greece and India were Keith and, as mentioned before, Max Müller.

The great authority of Benfey had popularised the view that Indian folk-tales originated with the Buddhists. But he was also firmly assured that those of them that has parallels in the fables of Greece were of Greek origin, so much so that when it came to his dating the *Pancatantra*, he refused to put it any earlier than the second century B.C. on the ground that this was the earliest date at which

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14. *The Jātaka: together with its Commentary* first published by Trübner & Co, 1879. Reprint for the Pali Text Society, London (1962). Vol.VII is the *Index to the Jātakas*.
15. *The Jātaka* Cambridge (1895)
16. *Buddhist Birth Stories* London (1880)
17. *op. cit.* pp.v-vii
18. *loc. cit.*

a knowledge of Aesop's fables could have reached India.<sup>19</sup> As for the *Jātaka Book*, which E.J. Thomas<sup>20</sup> calls "the best trumps" of the Pali scholars, when played (in his opinion and perhaps also that of his collaborator, H.T. Francis), achieved nothing except to leave the folklorists without a card for the game; the stories of the *Jātaka Book*, far from being even "a scanty contribution to the Aesopic question", made it obsolete. As Joseph Jacobs<sup>21</sup> had put it, it was "idle to talk of a body of literature (Aesop) amounting to 300 numbers being derived from another (*the Jātaka*) running also to 300, when they have only a dozen items in common." More than this number, Thomas was aware, had been compared, but many of the parallelisms which were taken for granted as long as a common origin was assumed, he thought, had no value "now that the question was open." As for the dozen or so parallels fixed on by Jacobs (among which is the fable of the ass in the lion-skin), he felt it was not necessary to prove that even these were related, since the independent origin of similar tales was still a tenable theory - though he does accord for an assumption that they were connected, "that a path of transmission from India to Greece was open long before communications were established by Alexander."

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19. Benfey found traces of Buddhism in the *Pancatantra* and inferred it was a Buddhist work revised by Brahmins. It is now thought to be the other way round - a Hindu work revised by Jains and Buddhists. The *Tantrakhya-yika*, a much earlier form of the *Pancatantra*, edited and translated by Hertel, showed itself to be free from Buddhistic influence. This does not, of course, preclude the likelihood - unless it can be shown that the *Pancatantra* was older than the *Jātaka Book* - that it drew heavily from the Buddhist work, no matter where the Buddhist work got *its* material.
20. H.T. Francis and E.J. Thomas *Jātaka Tales* Cambridge (1916) pp. 5-6.
21. *History of the Aesopic Fables* London (1889) vol.1 p. 108. Jacobs refers to Jātakas no.30, 32, 34, (with 45), 136, 143, 146, 189, 215, 294, 308, 374, 383 and 426, among them parallels to such well-known fables as *The Ass in the Lion-Skin*, *The Wolf and the Lamb* and *The Fox and the Crow*.

Max Müller contributed to the hypothesis of coincidence in the case of more than just the fables or stories of Aesopic mode. Alluding to the capture of Udena, he agreed with Prof. Wilson<sup>22</sup> that this Hindu tale which resembled, in the quality of its ambush, the Greek story of the Wooden Horse of Troy - only, that the horse of the Greek was replaced in India by an elephant - was the result of accident (rather than borrowing or derivation from a common source). He writes: "However striking the similarity may seem to one accustomed to deal with ancient legends, I doubt whether any comparative mythologist would postulate a common Aryan origin for these two stories. They feel that, as far as the mere construction of a wooden animal is concerned, all that was necessary to explain the origin of the idea in one place was present also in the other, and that while the Trojan Horse forms an essential part of a mythological cycle, there is nothing truly mythological or legendary in the Indian story. The idea of a hunter disguising himself in the skin of an animal, or even of one animal assuming the disguise of another, are familiar in every part of the world, and if that is so, then the step from hiding under the skin of a large animal to that of hiding in a wooden animal is not very great."

The fact that the Trojan Horse story forms an essential part of a mythological cycle in the Greek, whereas there is nothing mythological or legendary about the Indian story need not, *per se* imply that the two stories were of independent origination and thus that their similarity was merely the result of coincidence. Arguments such as this have been used to defend the Western tradition, stemming from Greece, against the evident antiquity of Indian story-literature. Such a defence, at least in this area, seems to me gratuitous, since what seems to have happened is just

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22. *Essays on Sanskrit Literature* vol.1. p.201. See Müller *loc. cit.*

the opposite<sup>23</sup> and the antiquity of the mass of indigenous Indian story-material does not vitiate the likelihood of a later admission of a Greek stream into the great body of the Indian "ocean of the streams of story" (*Kathā sarit sāgara*), as it would have admitted other streams from other sources as well down the ages. Thus, the similarity of certain Indian stories to the Greek could simply, and that too, without prejudice to the origin in India (or anywhere else, for that matter) of the enormous quantum of other story-material, be acknowledged to be through a borrowing of their motifs from the Greeks.

Such a hypothesis would not preclude the possibility - though the evidence is hardly able to support even a hypothesis - that the ultimate source of origin of the Aesopic fables, or at least some of them, was India herself. I for one find it rather fantastic to believe that Greece was doing no more in imparting such fables or stories to India than returning what she had originally borrowed from India herself. Though this may hold out a compromise to the advocates of both Greece and India as the land of the origin of beast-fables in the Aesopic mode and afford a satisfactory explanation for some of the questions they have raised, such a hypothesis would be self-destructive, since it bases itself upon the supposition that India originally had these stories, and thus, renders the Greek gift superfluous. Thus, it would simply boil down to an admission

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23. 'The Ujjain Elephant and the Trojan Horse' *Sri Lanka Journal of Humanities* vol.11 no.1 (1976) p.32-43, where I have discussed the parallel and suggested that the Indian story owed its motif to the Greek. Elements of the *Odyssey* appear also in the *Valahassa Jātaka* (No. 196) - of ship-wrecked sailors in a strange land saved by their astute leader; of Sirens who lure men and destroy them; of Polyphemian cannibalism; of lotus-eater-like refusal to a bandon pleasure and return home; of Circean magic, and - in addition to all this, a Pegasus-like flying horse. The *Jātaka*, interestingly enough, enacts itself in the island of Sri Lanka. Consider also the remarkably detailed parallelism of the Vijaya-Kuvannā episode to the adventure of Odysseus with Circe in the *Odyssey* to which I have drawn attention in my 'Greek Elements in the Vijaya - Legend' awaiting publication in *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society (Cey.Br.)* 1982.

of a Greek borrowing - and this by itself would be adequate to explain the parallelisms without the need to go through a convolution which brings India's own stories back to her with the Greeks.

The theory of coincidence, for its part, weakens in proportion to the number of parallels to Greek stories that are recognized in the Indian classics. I am not now prepared to accept that these are restricted in the *Jātaka Book* to a dozen items, as Jacobs once supposed. My own recent review of the Jātakas in the light of the Aesopic fables<sup>24</sup> (I leave out the myths and historical anecdotes in the reckoning) raises that number three to fourfold, and that too, without admitting those not indubitably parallel or those whose motifs or details participate only partially in the prototype. The evidence suggests strongly a borrowing or influence, if not interinfluence, one way or the other, or, in the alternative, derivation by both Greeks and Indians from a common heritage or some other common source. It is too much to be dismissed as coincidence.

The fable of the ass in the lion-skin, then, in my opinion, cannot be accounted for in its appearance in both Greece and India as glibly as has been done by Müller by an observation such as that "all that was necessary to explain the origin of the idea in one place was present also in the other" or that "the idea of a hunter disguising himself in the skin of an animal, or even of one animal assuming the disguise of another are familiar in every part of the world" and thus working to the strategem of the wooden horse (or elephant, as the case may be) from the ruse of the ass in the lion-skin.

Quite apart from how there came to be so many parallels - and even Jacobs' 'dirty dozen' seems to have worried the minds of scholars like Thomas to concede a path of transmission from India to Greece (and here too, as the philosopher Heraclitus might say, "the way up and the way down are one and the same") one has to explain how so many parallels correspond even in details, notwithstanding the

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24. 'Greek Motifs in the Jātakas' in the forthcoming issue of the *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society (Cey. Br.)* 1981.

obvious localization and cultural acclimatization which the stories obviously underwent in their new context. If we take our fable of the ass in the lion-skin, for instance, why, it may be asked, should the animal who draped the lion-skin in the Jātaka have to be an ass, who did likewise in the Aesopic fable, and why had the skin he draped have to be a lion-skin and not the skin of any other fierce beast? There is, of course, a similar motif with opposite intent - of a fierce animal masquerading as a mild, which appears in Aesop in the fable of *The Wolf in Sheep's Clothing*; but, here again it is none other than a wolf (even if the wolf occurs rarely in the Jātakas) that disguises himself with similar intent in a Jātaka, and in nothing other than the skin of a sheep.<sup>25</sup> The affair of *The Crow and the Fox* in Aesop becomes, in the *Jambu-Khādaka Jātaka*, one between a crow and a jackal, India's popular equivalent of the Greek fox. The tortoise who wished to fly in the Greek fable remains a tortoise in the Indian story, even if the birds are changed;<sup>26</sup> and so on, in numerous other fables and stories, not only are the motifs strikingly similar but even some of their distinctive details. Can all this be explained as accident or coincidence? Besides, why then, it may be asked, did not a cluster of such coincidences occur in any other land, when, to quote Müller, "all that was necessary to explain the origin of the idea in one place was present also in the other?"

The fable of the ass who covered himself with the skin of a lion and fooled everybody, for some time at least, until he was found out and cudgelled, has been one of the world's most popular fables, among school-children and adults alike. The version responsible for this has been the Greek of Aesop, even when the story spread to the countries of the East. Its appearance in the birth-stories of the Buddha is, however, less well-known and discussion of the interesting transformations it has undergone with

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25. See the *Mahābōdhi Jātaka* (No.528). Here the motif of Aesop's famous fable of *The Wolf in Sheep's Clothing* (H376;P451) appears in stanza-form and has not been expanded and elaborated into a Jātaka; besides, the wolf's ruse does not bring him to grief.

26. On the latter two Jātakas see the brief commentaries by Rajs Davids *op. cit.* p.viii-xiii.

its transportation to India, and even before that, in Greece itself, has not proceeded beyond a few cursory comments in writers and scholars. Leaving a more comprehensive study to someone else, I shall make do here with some broad references to these which will, at the same time, show that the story in the Indian classics flows from and develops, in its own particular way, the Aesopic fable of *The Ass in the Lion-Skin*. For, even if the ass persists throughout all the changes, all the other details will be seen to take on variation, the skin undergoing a degree of localization, the betraying bray turning from one of frightening to one of fear and then of passion, while the most fascinating transformation comes over none other than the observant fox in Aesop, who did little more there than remain unfooled. For, in the Buddhist Jātaka he becomes none other than the Bodhisatta himself and, in the Hindu redactions, ends up as a farmer covered in a grey blanket who, as if in poetic justice, fools the ass himself into thinking him another ass and puts an end to the animal's own dissembling.

The earliest collection of Aesopic fables there is record of is a work in prose by Demetrius of Phalerum, an orator and antiquarian scholar of the fourth century B.C. According to Diogenes Laertius<sup>27</sup> it was one book-roll and was called *Aesopica*. This seems to have been extant up to the tenth century at least and served as the source of later writers such as Plutarch, Dio Chrysostom, Lucian and Themistius, as well as of Babrius and Phaedrus. Fragments of a collection of Greek fables in prose preserved in the Rylands Papyrus No. 493 may be part of this work. The so-called Augustana, the oldest and largest extant collection of prose fables ascribed to Aesop, which served as the parent stock for three later editions of 'Aesop's fables' is now thought to have derived a substantial part of its fables from the work of Demetrius.<sup>28</sup>

27. v. 80.

28. The ms. is now known as Monacensis 546. B.E. Perry *Aesopica* vol.1. Urbana (1952) p.300: "*Fabularum recensio 1, sive Augustana, quae est locupletissima, quin sit ab antiquis temporibus tradita, i.e. a primo vel secundo vel tertio p.C.n. saeculo, nemo harum rerum peritus dubitaverit.*"

These collections include two broadly distinct versions of the fable of *The Ass in the Lion-Skin*. The first of these, which is found in the Augustana (also known as Recension 1) was surely the older and more authentic version of the fable and is, as far as the way in which the ass was betrayed for what he truly was, paralleled in the *Sīha-camma Jātaka* and all the Indian recensions of the fable. Here the fortuitous event which caused this was the ass's untimely and unthinking bray.<sup>29</sup> It reads:

An ass, putting a lion-skin on himself, went around causing fear among the animals. Then, seeing a fox, he tried to frighten him as well. But he - for he had happened to hear the ass braying - said to him, "Be assured that I too would have been scared, if only I had not heard your bray."

Here all the participants are animals and the ass's only motive in donning the lion-skin is to pass off as a lion and have the satisfaction of seeing other animals dread him. The only punishment he suffers is the humiliation of discovery - and this is by the fox, the personification of shrewdness and cunning in the animal world.

The second version brings the incident out of the forest and into the fields and those whom the ass frightens are now men and flocks (*kai phugē men ēn anthropōn, phugē de poiimniōn*), though there is still no implication that the ass's impersonation of a lion was with the intent to eat the grain in the fields with impunity. It is no surprise however, when this intention finds expression in an alternate of this version of the fable given by Chambry.<sup>30</sup> To this the Indian recensions may also owe their

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29. But see F. Edgerton *The Pancatantra* London (1965) intro. p.15. "Only in one very late version of the Aesopic fables", he says, "is the ass recognized by his bray, a feature on which all Indic versions agree." He means the Augustana, but before scholarship related it to Demetrius. However, it will be observed that what he then thought was the earliest Greek version of the fable, Lucian's, was innocent of the puff of wind and lends support rather to the bray as the cause of his discovery.

30. C280 p.454 (*Aliter*).

detail, found in all of them, of the chastisement of the ass unto death, which is not there in the older version of the fable in Aesop. Though this is ultimately effected with bow and arrows when the terse and tidy fable degenerates into story, in India the Jātaka shows that it had taken over only the cudgelling found in the Greek.

The most significant distinction between the two Greek versions is, of course, the manner in which the ass was exposed.

An ass, putting on himself a lion-skin, was taken by everyone to be a lion. There was flight among men; there was flight among the flocks. But when the skin was lifted off him by a puff of wind and the ass was exposed, everyone ran at him and thrashed him with sticks and cudgels.

Here it is a puff of wind; the bray figures nowhere in it. Nor is there the third party, someone who assumes the role of the fox in the other and older version of the fable. However, it was inevitable that with time the two versions of the Aesopic fable of *The Ass in the Lion-Skin* should receive collation in Greece itself, in which some of the chief elements of both should figure. This is found in the fable as told by Lucian, and afterwards by Babrius.

Before the establishment of the manuscript tradition which makes it probable that the Augustana fables of Class 1 and its derivatives traced back to the Aesop of Demetrius, scholars dealing with the fable of *The Ass in the Lion-Skin* took Lucian's narration of it in his *Piscator* 32 as the earliest account of it in the West. Rhys Davids<sup>31</sup> and Max Müller,<sup>32</sup> following Benfey, thought that the reference in *Cratylus* 411a showed that the fable was already known among the Greeks by the time of Plato, Rhys Davids that it had already given rise to a proverb, much as its version in Lucian did afterwards. The context in Plato, however, suggests that the allusion is rather to the assumption of the lion-skin of Hercules (as by the god Dionysius in the *Frogs* of Aristophanes) than of the ass. Socrates there

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31. *op. cit.* intro. p. vi.

32. *ibid.* n.1.

goes on to add that he must "not be faint of heart" but must undertake the task before him with the courage which, presumably, went with the assumption of the said lion-skin.<sup>33</sup> Nor are the references in Horace *Satires* i.6.22 and ii.1.64 any the less ambiguous as regards the fable.

The fable appears in Lucian in the unembellished and terse form in which fables are found in the manuscript collections deriving, as is supposed, from Demetrius, who surely served them in that form, with *promuthia* for ready consultation or *epimuthia* for expounding their moral, for orators like himself, with which to garner their speeches.

Talking to Philosophy of the humbugs who masquerade under her name, Lucian says:

Apes daring to pass off as heroes! emulators of the ass at Cumae, who put on a lion-skin and thought himself a lion, terrifying the ignorant natives with ear-splitting brays - until a stranger, who had seen a great deal of both lion and ass, showed him what was what with a sound beating.

The cudgelling the ass receives derives from the puff-of-wind version, but it is not administered by the people in general but by a 'stranger' (*xenos*) who fails to be fooled and who obviously has taken over the role of the fox in the bray-version. Besides, the detection of the ass is, as in the bray-version, effected (and by the stranger) from the bray itself, though there is an innovation here in Lucian (which may be all his own) in that it is not simply by the utterance of the bray (which, in fact served to frighten the Cumaeans) but by its quality, which the stranger, with his experience of lions, was able to

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33. There Hermogenes say, "I should very much like to know the charming words, wisdom, understanding, justice, and the rest of them." To which Socrates replies, "That is a tremendous class of names you are disinterring; still, as I have put on the lion-skin, I must not be faint of heart (*homōs de epeidēper tēn leonteñ ende-duka,ouk apodeiliateon ...*) and I suppose I must consider the meaning of wisdom and understanding and knowledge and all those other charming words, as you call them."

distinguish as not being the roar of a lion at all, despite the fact that it was uttered "harshly and frighteningly" (*mala trachu kai kataplēktikon*). What the Cumaeans were ignorant of (*Kumaious .. agnoountas*) was not the appearance of a lion - for otherwise the whole point of the ass's disguise would have been lost - but the actual quality of a lion's roar.

As for the selection of the Cumaeans for the role of the victims of the ass's caper, it must be from their particular inexperience of lions, as the fable implies, and not from any general folly such as has become proverbial with certain peoples as, for instance, the folk of Tumpane with us. If it were the latter, *agnoountas* would have been a strange word to express it.<sup>34</sup>

Localization of a fable need not by itself imply that the version is not original. There is the Aesopic fable of foxes at the river Maeander,<sup>35</sup> which, considering the geography of the island of Samos where he was a slave, could very well have been narrated by Aesop himself. There is also the fable of a monkey and a dolphin,<sup>36</sup> which brings in Athens, and of the goat and the cleaver, given by Zenobius,<sup>37</sup> which is set in Corinth and may have had its basis in an actual incident. The need to identify a community who could not distinguish the true roar of a lion from an ass's crude imitation of it was essential for Lucian's innovative version of the old Aesopic fable.

It is not unlikely, however, that a proverb *onos para*

34. Narayana, like Lucian, set the incident in a specific place in his *Hitopadesa* i.e. Hastinapur, whereas neither the *Jātaka* nor the *Pancatantra* had done so. The contribution is pointless as far as the story goes; *hasti* - is 'elephant', so there isn't even the chance of a pun here.

35. *Foxes* (C115;H30).

36. *The Monkey and the Dolphin* (C88;H63). Cp. the story of *The Monkey and the Crocodile*, which is the frame-story of bk. iv of the *Pancatantra*, in which is inset the story of the ass.

37. Not in Aesop and possibly late. See Zenobius *Cent.i. 27*: so Suidas. Cp. the very similar story in the *Tak-kāriya Jātaka* (No.481).

*Kumaious* ("ass among the Cumaeans"),<sup>38</sup> originating from an altogether different story involving an ass boasting to be what he was not, was told among the Cumaeans and that it was Lucian, or his source at one or more removes, who had run the Aesopic fable of the ass in the lion-skin into this other context so as to give us a localization of the old fable in Cumae. That there existed the Aesopic fable free from this localization even after the time of Lucian is borne out by Babrius,<sup>39</sup> when he narrates its puff-of wind version.

Babrius, compiling Aesopic fables in Greek verse a generation or so after Lucian, finds the wind the cause of the ass's debacle as against the bray (even in its unique treatment) in Lucian. At the same time, however, he accords with Lucian in humanizing the fox, though substituting a nondescript 'someone' (*tis*) for Lucian's 'stranger' expert in lions. His story is that:

An ass, having spread a lion-skin around his flanks, fancied himself to be fearful to all men. As he leaped and capered, everybody hurried to get out of his way and all the shepherds turned to flight. But when the wind began to blow, the lion-skin fell off his back and he was discovered to be an ass. Then someone said to him as he beat him with a club, "You were born an ass; don't try to impersonate a lion".

Benfey's estimate that the earliest date at which a knowledge of the fables of Aesop could have reached India was the second century B.C. needs revision. Already some of the Jātakas inspired by Greek fable-motifs had appeared in the bas-reliefs at Sanchi, Amaravati and Bharhut, showing that they were already popular among the Buddhists of India by the middle of the third century B.C. If we allow for the rehandling and localization in Buddhist India of the motifs of such fables, myths and historical anecdotes as manifest themselves in the Jātakas, there is no way how they cannot be thought to have made their way to India with the earliest advent of the Greeks there with Alexander. I

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38. Erasmus *Adagia*; 'Asinus apud Cumanos'.

39. Fable 139. See Perry *Babrius and Phaedrus* (Loeb ed.) London (1965) p.183. Not found in Phaedrus.C.H. Tawney (*Katha Sarit Sagara* vol. II p.65 n. to the fable) thought it wasn't even in Babrius.

can see no reason why this should not have been so.<sup>40</sup>

In his recounting of parallel stories in Indian and Greek literature, Keith,<sup>41</sup> contributing to the suggestion that at least in certain cases "we have ... to deal with ideas which would naturally develop in men's minds independently", goes on to add, "nor does there seem any conclusive grounds for holding that the tale of the ass in the lion skin is older in either country. In the version in Greece the ass itself assumes the lion's skin and its betrayal by the wind blowing it way; the Indian versions are more prosaic; the ass is given a skin by its owner to allow it to steal corn and betrays itself by its cry."

The other parallels which gave rise to Keith's observation here of an independent origin if story-motifs and literary concepts in Greece and India are those of a sister's preference for a brother over husband in Sophocles' *Antigone* (vs.909-912) and the rejection of a suitor for his immodest dance in Herodotus (vi.129), with their respective India reflections in the *Uchanga Jataka* (No.67) and the *Nacca Jataka* (No.32).

R.W.Macan<sup>42</sup> rejected the possibility that the latter story emanated from Herodotus and was carried to India in the days of Alexander on the grounds that "the (Indian) fable wears on its face and front the more primitive stamp" whereas "the Herodotan is transparently imaginative, poetical, pragmatic." It is on some such distinction that Keith now seeks to dissociate the Greek and Indian stories from each other and to salve the Greek ass from kinship with the Indian. The Greek fable is free from human participation, he implies, whereas the Indian is rather more sophisticated - 'prosaic' is the word he might have used.

40. See the brief discussion in my article cited in n.24 above.

41. *loc. cit.*

42. *Herodotus* vol.II London (1895) append.14, 'Hippocleides and the Peacock' p.304-311. He could not think that a story dealing with human beings could have degraded into a beast- (or bird-) fable. He thought it more likely that the Indian fable had reached Greece before Herodotus and become humanized and sought to establish the time by discovering the time of the introduction of the peacock in Greece - the result, a veritable wild-  
goose chase.

Likewise, Rhys Davids<sup>43</sup> felt (though with some reservation) that the introduction of the human element took the Jātaka of the ass in the lion-skin out of the class of fables in the most exact sense of the word, and with that, moved on to narrate and discuss the *Kacehapa Jātaka*, "a story containing a proper fable, where animals speak and act like men."

What is and is not a fable remains a matter of definition. Besides, on one, so far as I know, has investigated the truth of the criterion of the primitivity of a fable according to the degree of human participation in it. It could well be that stories in which little or no distinction was made between men and beasts and in which beasts thought, spoke and acted like men and with men were the more primitive order than those which were restricted to animals. In the case of this fable of our concern, however, there is the support of chronology to show that the assumption is not incorrect. As we push back to what may have been the earlier form of the fable, in Greece, it is more and more animal, not only the ass in his lion's skin but the creatures whom he scares (they are *ta aloga zōa*)<sup>44</sup> and even the fox, who alone remained undeceived. Whereas, in its progressive development, in Greece and on through India, the human element gains a more and more prominent place, not in the ass himself (he alone persists in his animal form, underscoring the identity of the motif as between Greece and India) but in those whom he succeeded in frightening and, more especially, in the singular observer of the affair, who had been a fox in Aesop.

Keith<sup>45</sup> was, however, quite wrong in thinking that, in the Greek fable of *The Ass in the Lion-Skin*, the dis-

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43. *ibid.* p. viii.

44. Surely a post-Aristotelian distinction - between rational (*logikoi zōoi*, including men and gods) and non-rational *ta aloga* (animals and plants). Here obviously animals also are designated by the phrase, and with the implication that that was why the ass succeeded in his masquerade. The fox's cleverness is accordingly underscored. The phrase could have been used by Demetrius, as much as by anyone after him.

45. *loc. cit.* See also Edgerton *loc. cit.*

covery of the ass happened only by the puff of wind. He was apparently unaware of the existence of the alternate, and perhaps original and older, version of the fable in Greece, in which, as in all the Indian versions, it is the bray of the ass that gives him away.

Fable, in its simplest form - at least in Greece - was preserved as a brief terse narrative such as is found in the manuscript compendia deriving, as is thought, from the work of Demetrius. It is free from artistic dressing and stylistic exposition besides its own intrinsic qualities of animals who talked and acted like men in situations which gave rise to some moral or political observation. This latter was the fable's *logos* and was often expressed as a foreword (*promuthion*) or afterword (*epimuthion*) to the fable proper. It was left to the user to dress and develop the fable, even to twist it to suit his own need. It is in such elaboration that the Aesopic fables are met in Babrius, Phaedrus and Avianus, though there would have been others before them.<sup>46</sup>

In what form the Aesopic fables got to India when they did is yet to be researched - whether in their raw and compressed summaries (perhaps of Demetrius himself) or in a more or less elaborated compendium of some known or unknown compiler, or simply in the oral transmission of anonymous soldiers, traders and settlers who made their way to India from Greece in the wake of Alexander's invasion.

What is obvious, however, is that when the parallel versions of the Greek fable of *The Ass in the Lion-Skin* are encountered by us in India, first in the *Jākata* and thereafter in the *Pancatantra*, the *Kathāsaritsāgara* and the *Hitopadesa*, they appear to derive from a Greek recension that had already run the two original Aesopic versions together, so that when the ass is betrayed by his bray, he is also assaulted and killed, while the role of the fox, now humanized, as in Lucian and Babrius, is also retained, only to undergo a most fascinating transformation. At the same time the renderings are not only in a highly literary and artistic form but thoroughly localized

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46. See Plato *Phaedo* 60b-c: Socrates in prison admits having engaged himself in putting Aesop into verse.

as part of this elaboration. Inset, in the *Jātakas*, between a *paccuppannavatthu* or 'story of the present' and a *samodhana* or identification of the characters, which constitute the outer framework, these fables appear at first in the form of an *atitavatthu* or 'story of the past' generally as independent of each other as one life of the Buddha can be of another. In the Hindu works, however, they appear in a highly complex escatulation, in which stories are enboxed in other stories. This system of frame stories must trace their embryology ultimately to the *promuthia* and *epimuthia* associated with the Aesopic fables, which in Greece either served the rhetorician to select a suitable fable-illustration or pinpointed the moral of the story.

The *Sīha-camma Jātaka*, which is India's earliest rendition of the Aesopic fable of *The Ass in the Lion-Skin* and Benfey's Buddhist source from which the story made its way to the *Pancatantra*, and thence, to the *Kathāsaritsāgara* of Somadeva and Narayana's *Hitopadeśa*, is one of a set of three *Jātakas* or birth-stories of the Buddha said to have been narrated by the Buddha himself concerning the older Brother, Kokālika. The other two are the *Catumatṭa Jātaka* and the *Sihakoṭṭhuka Jātaka*, the latter somewhat closely related to the *Sīha-camma Jātaka* and some Aesopic fables through the factor of voice in identity.<sup>47</sup> Kokālika, in all three instances seems to have obtruded himself in situ-

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47. *Sihakoṭṭhuka Jātaka* (No. 188) has the cub of a lion and a she-jackal, in appearance like a lion, who attempts to roar when his true-born brothers do so - and only yelps. The lion admonishes him not to do so lest he reveals his jackal-nature. Cp. *The Mule* (C128;H157) in Aesop. A young mule, full of oats, gambols and frisks about shouting that his father was a swift-footed horse and that he was every bit like him. But suddenly he stops and hangs his head in shame - for he remembers that his mother was but an ass. See in connection with these *Jātakas* *The Lion and the Ass* (C208; H259;P151;Hs156). A lion and an ass hunt in partnership. The ass, with his bray frightens out some goats from a cave so that the lion kills them easily. Later the ass asks the lion about his performance. To which the lion replies that even he would have been frightened by the ass's bray had he not known it was an ass.

ations where his betters were involved, either offering to answer questions of difficulty or preach or intone, much to the disgust of the Bretheren. The *Sīha-camma* was narrated to them by the Buddha at Jetavana in the third instance, when Kokālika, hearing a number of Brothers intone, had wanted to do likewise. The Master, on being told of this, observed: "Not this once only has Kokālika been shown for what he was worth by means of his voice; the very same thing happened in times before" ... and he went on to narrate the Jātaka of the ass whose bray betrayed him for what he truly was and not the lion he was made to appear.

The incident, which took place, as in at least three hundred and ninety four other Jātakas, "when Brahmadata was ruling in Benares", is however not localized in any particular village or district. A merchant, who had an ass to carry for him, was in the habit of draping a lion-skin on his back and turning him loose in the rice and barley fields. Watchmen, who saw the beast, took him for a lion and kept their distance. But one day, when the merchant did the same thing, the watchmen ran home and gave the alarm. Whereupon, the villagers armed themselves and hurried to the field, shouting and blowing conches and beating drums. The ass was frightened out of his wits and gave a hee-haw. The Bodhisatta, who was a peasant's son in that life and witnessed what happened, at this point repeated the first stanza:

"This is not a lion's roaring  
Nor a tiger's nor a panther's,  
Dressed in a lion's skin,  
'Tis a wretched ass that roars".<sup>48</sup>

As soon as the villagers found it was only an ass, they set upon him with cudgels and broke his bones and went away, taking the lion's skin with them. When the merchant found the ass had come to grief, he repeated the second stanza:

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48. *N'etam sīhassa naditaṃ na vyagghassa na dīpino, pāruto sīhacammaṇa jamma nadati gadraḥhaṃ disvā dutiyam gātham āha.*

"Long might the ass,  
 Clad in a lion's skin,  
 Have fed on the barley green.  
     But he brayed;  
 And that moment he came to ruin".

And as the merchant uttered these words the ass expired.

The realistic detail of the use of conches and drums in addition to shouts in 'beats' to flush out tigers and leopards can only have originated in a land familiar with such exercises. Rhys Davids<sup>49</sup> however goes further and thinks that the fable could not have originated in any country in which lions were not common.

Even as between Greece and India, the presence of the lion (or lion-skin) need not necessarily imply Indian origin for the fable. Archilochus,<sup>50</sup> as far back as the eighth century B.C., knew a fable of an ape. But the super-abundance of large animals not found in Greece must speak for a foreign influence in the Aesopic fables, not to mention Aesop's own extraction - though this need not award the matter to India. The ancient Babylonians, if not some other Near Eastern people living between Greece and India, could very well have been familiar with such animals as the wild-ass, the camel, the ape, the crocodile and the lion and evolved stories in this mode. As for Rhys Davids' "reasonable explanation" for the ass being dressed in lion-skin, which he finds in the Jātaka but not in the Aesop's fable, I think the ass's wish to appear a lion is a good enough one by itself and quite in character with fable.<sup>51</sup> Indeed, it was this very human element which gave the ass his lion-skin in the Jātaka which Rhys Davids<sup>52</sup>

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49. *ibid.*, p. 7.

50. Fragment in Ammonius *De Voc. Diff.* 6. See also the Aesopic fable *The Ape and the Fox* (C38; H44; P81; Hs83)

51. *loc. cit.* See also Edgerton *loc. cit.* "No Greek version has any real explanation of how the ass came to be wearing a lion's skin; in India, the use of asses by washermen to carry loads of clothes is commonplace." Animals behaving like human beings is of the essence of fable and it is this that lends itself to the moral construction thereof.

52. *ibid.* p. viii.

was to find soon afterwards excluding the story from "the class of fables in the most exact sense of the word."

Both the aforementioned Augustana and the Accursiana (known as Recension III), which follows the Augustana closely in respect of our fable, except in its *epimythion*, set the event in jungle environment; the victims of the ass's masquerade are all animals and so is the individual who is not fooled by it (i.e. the fox). The ass is, except for the bray he uttered in an unguarded moment, voiceless, though one would not have been surprised if he had replied to the fox's quip in human language.

Already, by the second version in Aesop, (which appears in Accursiana IIIg), the incident has moved to a rural setting and those who flee the ass in the lion-skin are, as mentioned earlier, men and flocks, and in a variant of this he despoils the fruits of the farmers' labour (*tous tōn georgōn elumaineto ponous*). In Babrius, a human being, an unspecified 'someone', takes the role of the fox as well, though, since it was the wind that lay bare the ass, he is reduced to the role of moralizer only, unlike the more positive role of the fox in the old Aesopic version (in which the ass is found out by his bray). On the other hand, this latter is maintained by Lucian in the 'stranger' he has in place of the fox.

The ruralization of the story in the Jātaka, the humanization of all its participants except the ass, and the cudgelling (or whatever) of the beast to death (which shows the running into each other of the two Aesopic prototypes of the fable) collectively evince the fact that the fable, when it got to India, got there in coalesced form in which the most important detail, the detection of the ass by his bray, had been retained in preference to that of the puff of wind. The humanization is further advanced with the introduction, in the hands of the author of the *Sihā-camma Jātaka*, of an owner for the ass, a merchant, who, in the *Pancatantra* and the works which followed it, becomes a laundryman, perhaps because laundrymen were more popularly associated with the use of asses for their transport than traders. Together with this, what the ass had done out of purely psychological yearning to be feared by others in the Aesopic fable, now becomes the diabolical ruse of his master. The new motive was, of course, already germinal

in the Greek version given by Chambry, where, though the ass donned the lion-skin with the wish to appear a lion (*epithumei leōn einai dokein*), he despoiled the fruits of the farmer's toil.

Whoever it be that the ass received as master in India, as Rhys Davids says, it did detract somewhat from the purely animal fable. On the other hand, the non-violent role of the fox (as against that of the stranger in Lucian, who takes it upon himself to belabour the ass) suits the Buddhist story, where the peasant's son (the Bodhisatta) merely verbalizes the discovery of the ass by his bray enough to help put the presumptuous Kokālika in his place. Rhys Davids<sup>53</sup> is right that the identification of the peasant's son with the Bodhisatta is the only part of the story which is essentially Buddhistic and that here it is of little importance (to the plot of the story). The reason for this unimportance is that the ass brays in the hearing of all and not just the Bodhisatta and all recognized that it was an ass, whereas the Bodhisatta's counterpart in the Aesopic fable, the fox, heard the bray all by himself and was thus privileged to a knowledge which, in a different way, was available to the stranger in Lucian, and which the other spectators had not. The Jātaka version could very well have dispensed with the role the Bodhisatta plays without affecting the plot; this is not possible with the fox in Aesop or the stranger in Lucian. Its persistence in the Jātaka keeps a detail of the original Greek fable, as in the *tis* of Babrius, but also conveniently serves to tie up this secular story to Buddhism.

Of academic interest also is what occasioned the ass's betraying bray - for the psychology behind it is what occasions the fable's moral. That which was in Aesop inadvertence (and the fox would have heard the ass bray when already covered with the lion-skin) becomes in Lucian a deliberate attempt to frighten, with the cause of discovery not simply the cry but the quality of it. In the *Sihacamma Jātaka* the villagers attack the ass even when they take him to be a lion; perhaps they did not expect much more than to drive it off. But when he hee-hawed in fear and they found he was after all an ass, they set about him free from trepidation. In the *Pancatantra* - and the

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53. *loc. cit.*

*Hitopadeśa* follows this - the ass's self-betraying bray takes on positive sexual overtones. In the former it is occasioned by the sound of a she-ass braying; in the latter (with dramatic irony worked out to the full) the ass himself mistakes a cultivator covered in his cloak for a she-ass. In contradistinction, as Benfey<sup>54</sup> himself observed, it is for another ass (einen andern Asel) that the ass in the story of the *Kathāsaritsāgara* mistakes the cultivator - in which case his call is one of camaraderie than of desire.

Despite the fact that the *Pancatantra* author could have come by the Aesopic fable of *The Ass in the Lion-Skin* independently of any Indian literary source, Benfey seems right in thinking that he owed his story-material to a Buddhist collection, more likely than not our *Jātaka Book*. Apart from the slight changes in detail, which could very well be the author's own, the only new one that is introduced is the one mentioned above - the sound of a she-ass's bray to account for the ass's own ill-fated cry. Otherwise the merchant of the *Jātaka* has become a laundryman in the *Pancatantra*, and the lion-skin a tiger-skin.

The story is narrated in the *Pancatantra* by the monkey to the crocodile within the frame-story of the fourth book (itself surely derived from the *Vānara Jātaka* (No. 342) by way of explanation of the stanza which the monkey had, immediately before that, recited as a proverb to be drawn from the preceding emboxed story of *King Joy and Secretary Splendour*.

However skillful in disguise,  
 However frightful to the eyes  
 Although in tiger-skin arrayed,  
 The ass was killed because he brayed.

"How was that?" asks the crocodile; whereupon the monkey narrates:

There was once a laundryman named Clean-Cloth (Suddhapata) in a certain town. He had a single ass who had grown feeble due to lack of fodder. As the laundryman wandered in the forest, he saw a dead tiger

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54. *op. cit.* vol.1. p.463 (§188)

and thought: "Ah, this is my lucky day. I will put this tiger-skin on the ass and let him loose in the barley fields at night. For the farmers will think him a tiger and will not drive him out." When this was done, the ass ate barley to his heart's content. And at dawn the laundryman took him back to the barn. So, as time passed, the ass grew plump. He could hardly squeeze into his stall. But one day the ass heard the bray of a she-ass in the distance. At the mere sound he himself began to bray. Then the farmers perceived that it was an ass in disguise and killed him with blows from clubs and stones and arrows.

Lacote's studies of the existing descendants of the great compendium of stories, in Prakrit verse, called the *Bṛhatkathā* and attributed to Gunadhya (c.3rd century A.D.)<sup>55</sup> have made it practically certain that the work contained no version of the *Pancatantra*. He has strong reasons, however, for thinking that a version of it was drawn into an expanded recast of the *Bṛhatkathā* made at an uncertain date, apparently in North-West India, perhaps in Kashmir. This compilation, together with its *Pancatantra* material, he believes, was written in verse in the Pāiśāci dialect like the original of Gunadhya. It is from this work that Somadeva's *Kathāsaritsāgara*, together with Ksemendra's *Bṛhatkathāmañjarī* derive, both of them in Sanskrit verse and composed in Kashmir around the eleventh century A.D.

As for the *Hitopadeśa*, M. Winternitz<sup>56</sup> considered it a recast of the *Pancatantra* while others thought it "practically independent." Both views are extreme. Three-quarters of the *Hitopadeśa* text are based on the *Pancatantra* while the remaining tales are either original or drawn from sources unknown to us. This fact is admitted by its supposed author, Narayana, when he says in the introduction of his work, that the four books of the *Hitopadeśa* have been extracted from the *Pancatantra* as well as from some "other books". It has already been proved by Edger-

55. See especially his *Essai sur Gunadhya et la Bṛhatkathā* Paris (1908),

56. *Geschichte der indischen Litteratur* vol. III p.291. See L. Sternbach *The Hitopadeśa and its Sources* Connecticut (1970) intro. p.1.

ton,<sup>57</sup> following Hertel,<sup>58</sup> that it belongs to the north-eastern part of India (Bengal) and that Narayana, whose patron was Dhavalacandra, must have lived between 800 and 1373 A.D.

That the *Kathāsaritsāgara* and the *Hitopadeśa* draw on the *Pancatantra* for their story of the ass in the lion-skin is quite evident, despite the exaggerations and slight variations of detail. Quite apart from the fact that from the *Jātaka* onwards the ass has a master, whose doing it is to cover the animal in the skin, the Hindu works like to tell us that he did so because the ass was feeble from lack of food; in the decadent version of the *Hitopadeśa* the ass is on the point of death. Conversely, the suggestion is developed that the ass had grown randy from the fine fodder he had enjoyed through the ruse when he, in the *Pancatantra*, heard the call of a female, in the *Hitopadeśa* at least of the other two, thought he saw one, and gave vent to his own fatal cry.

In the Tantrakhyayika version of the *Pancatantra*, of which the only manuscripts known comes from Kashmir, the skin, which in the advent of the Aesopic fable from Greece to India, was a lion's and appeared so in the *Jātaka*, giving that *Jātaka* its very name, *Sīha-camma*, becomes the skin of a panther. There, as in some of the later Hindu versions, the story appears as the first emboxed story of Book III and is not transferred to Book IV as in the manuscripts, called by Kosegarten "Textus Simplicior" for want of a label, and the Purnabhadra text. In the text used by Benfey the skin has changed with the locality into the skin of a tiger, more familiar further south. It is tiger also in the *Hitopadeśa*.

Panther (*dvīpi*) or tiger (*vyāghra*), these variations look back for their inspiration to the first stanza uttered by the Bodhisatta in the *Sīha-camma Jātaka* and links these later recensions of the fable in India with its earliest appearance there. The change from lion to panther (or leopard) and tiger is a localization in a land and

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57. *The Pancatantra, Reconstructed* vol.II Connecticut (1924) p.20 f. ; see also p.48.

58. *Das Pancatantra, seine Geshichte und seine Verbreitung.* Leipzig-Berlin (1914) p.40 f.

region whose villagers faced, and still face, the depredations of these beasts, some even turned man-eaters. The lion-skin, with which the story first appears in the Jātaka, on the other hand, links it firmly with the fable in Greece. Little wonder, then, that right from the appearance of the Bodhisatta's stanza in the Jātaka, India has shown an impatience to substitute for it the skin of an animal more familiar to the rural Indian scene. As observed earlier, the villagers' attempt to drive off what they thought was lion there, with shouting, conches and drums, draws from the real exercise of a 'beat' familiar against marauding beasts in Northern India's tiger- and leopard-country. The *Pancatantra* even tells us how the laundryman Suddhapata had come by his tiger-skin; he had found the carcass of a dead tiger in the forest. The Chinese *Avadāna* version, on the other hand, obviously derives directly from the Buddhist story and retains the skin as a lion-skin.<sup>59</sup>

Observe, finally, what happens to the ass's bray of the Greek fable and the fox who heard it there. For here, in India, the former succeeds in transforming the fox (already humanized in Greece in the stranger (*xenos*) in Lucian and the someone (*tis*) in Babrius, into no less a person than the Bodhisatta himself in the Jātaka and ultimately, in the *Kathāsaritsāgara* and the *Hitopadeśa*, into a cultivator, whom the ass, masquerading as a lion, is himself duped into thinking another ass. On the other hand, the non-participant role the fox of Aesop had maintained is also maintained, for obvious Buddhistic reasons, by the Bodhisatta who steps into it. It is the villagers who assault the ass, when this is done, unlike the man in Babrius' account. And when they do so, note that it is with cudgels (*atthini bāñjantā pothetva*) as in the puff-of-wind version in Aesop (*rhopalois te kai xulois*), even though these Indian villagers had come out armed to drive

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59. See Müller *op. cit.* p.512 n.1. He refers to the translation by Stanislaus Julien (vol.II p.59), in which the ass takes a lion's skin and frightens everybody, till he begins to bray and is recognized as an ass. I regret not having been able to see this version, especially since Müller's summary of it suggests that the ass put on the skin by himself, that it was a lion-skin and that he was detected by his bray.

away what they thought was a dangerous beast. It is the *Pancatantra* which so inappropriately adds arrows to clubs and stones to kill a wretched ass.

Using several versions of the *Pancatantra* and other collections of stories which seem to have drawn on the *Pancatantra* Edgerton made an attempt to reconstruct what may have been the original *Pancatantra*.<sup>60</sup> This laborious undertaking, based on previous studies (especially of Hertel) and on an examination of linguistic correspondence, resulted in his publication of what seemed to him the single literary archetype. His aim, naturally, was the very opposite of tracing the development of the story in the subsequent rehandlings, the material for which, of course, is more to be found in the discrepancies and idiosyncracies of each retelling than in their common elements.

Edgerton's researches lead him to accept the detail of a watchman in (gray) cloak, who is mistaken by the ass for a female of the species, to be the cause of the ass's bray, not just the hearing of the bray of a female. Here Edgerton follows the account of the *Kathāsaritsāgara* and also the *Hitopadeśa*, but one that, due to its internal contradictions, cannot have been the original version of the *Pancatantra* but a clumsy elaboration prompted by other factors in the development of the story so far. It seeks to make the sound of a she-ass's cry in the *Pancatantra*-versions the actual sight of a she-ass and, introducing an element of irony into the narrative, makes her not a real she-ass but someone whom the ass *mistakes* for a she-ass, just as much as the villagers themselves were fooled by the ass, willingly or otherwise, into thinking him a lion. And who better is there to double for that role than the observer, who began as a fox in Aesop, became a stranger in Lucian and the Bodhisatta (as a young farmer) in the *Jātaka*, and now appears in the same role of cultivator in these works? In fact, he plays even a third role (that of the villagers), for he also combines in himself the nemesis of our ass.

Already there is awkwardness in the account even before we come to the *Hitopadeśa*, where the exaggeration is quite overdone. For example, in the *Kathāsaritsāgara* the

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60. *op. cit.*

cultivator is armed with a bow when he begins to slink away in a crouch upon seeing what he took to be a panther in the fields. Either, why the bow then, unless he had taken it to be a tiger who was out there in the fields, or, in the alternative, if he took the bow in expectation of such a beast, why did he slink away when he was it? There is also the further absurdity of the killing of the ass with a bow, when it is a cudgelling that was more appropriate for such a beast. The suggestion is that the cultivator quite by chance happened to have a bow with him, which, to say the least, is rather lame. In the *Hitopadeśa*, not only does the cultivator deliberately arm himself with a bow but lies in wait as well for what he takes to be tiger, when the ass mistakes him for a she-ass. The discovery that it was just a poor ass only helps him to kill the easier a beast whom he had in any case intended to destroy - thus detracting seriously from the significance of the ass's ill-fated cry.

Far from rejecting this elaboration as late and spurious as far as his attempt went to discover the nature of the story in the original *Ur-Pancatantra* (as he calls it), and thus accepting the simpler form of it which approximates it to the Jātaka and the fable in Aesop, Edgerton draws around this detail more secondary elaboration than is found in each recension of the *Pancatantra* severally, and in the *Hitopadeśa*, implying thereby that these later works were selective rather than expansive. I give below, and in his own spelling, his reconstruction of what the original *Pancatantra* would have said:<sup>61</sup>

A certain washerman had an ass who was worn out with the vexation of exceeding great burdens (in carrying clothes). And the washerman, thinking to revive him, covered him with a panther's skin and turned him loose by night in grain that belonged to others. And he ate the grain as much as he pleased, and no one (approacht him or) drove him away (from the grain), because they thot him a panther. Now (once upon a time) a certain (husbandman, a) watchman of the grain, saw him, and thot: "(That is) a panther! (I

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61. *op. cit.* vol.II. p.365. It is also included, without the archaic spelling and the bracketing, in his *The Pancatantra* p.111.

am lost!)" And he (bent over and) wrapt his body in his (gray) cloak, and, with uplifted bow in his hand, began to slink away (very cautiously). And seeing him (from a distance) the ass, whose frame had grown fat (and who had recovered his strength), took him for a she-ass; and (since his life was doomed to end) he (put on full speed and) started in pursuit. (But the man ran faster than ever. And the ass thot: "perhaps she may mistake me for what I am not, because she sees my body covered with the panther's skin. So I will take on my true nature for her and charm her heart with a bray." So thinking) he began to bray. (And) hearing this the watchman of the grain knew (by the sound) that it was an ass, and (turned around and) killed him with an arrow.

Here the ass's bray is neither involuntary nor does it betray him against his will; it is deliberately uttered to undisguise himself of the disguise of the tiger-skin and show himself to be what he truly was. It is even intended to charm the she-ass! His undoing was just that someone for whom the disguise was actually meant was also disillusioned at the same time. If anything, this evidence shows that the story had advanced still further in the various recensions of the *Pancatantra*. I cannot think that this (and not the simple form of the story) was the original *Pancatantra* version and that the recensions excerpted from it.<sup>62</sup> For this is not the way fable progresses - from the complex to the simple, but the other way round. And this appears to have been true of our fable of the ass in the lion-skin as well, even though, in the middle of that progression, it also jumped continents.

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62. The washerman, owner of the ass, the emaciated state of the beast, the finding of the (tiger-) skin, the whole intriguing drama required to make the ass bray, i.e. the cultivator with bow and grey coat, his running away and the ass running after him, the ass thinking of identifying himself by his bray, even charming the heart of the supposed she-ass! - what is all this except secondary elaboration overgrowing the terse and economic narration of the fable and only supportive, epexegetic or decorative? It is the wherewithal of story as against the simplicity of fable. Fable, if from anything, develops out of proverb, not out of story.

This is evident from the difficulties that would arise for Edgerton from his defence of his reconstruction of the story, which appears in the introduction to his more recent publication of the translation,<sup>63</sup>

The story represents for him one of the very few examples of borrowing between Greece and India and in this particular case he has little doubt that its origin was in India. The role of the ass he finds purely determined by its lechery - "in Indian stories the ass is standardly regarded as a type of lechery" - whereas "no Greek version has the lechery-motif (which, to be sure is missing also in the Pali *Jātaka*." "In the 'Aesopic' fables in Greek and Latin", he adds, "the skin is always a lion's, as in the Pali," and attributes this to "a Greek borrowing from this Indic source, or one related to the Pali form."

The ass may stand for lechery in India and that may be why he lent himself to such a development of the story ultimately; but that is not all he stands for, nor the most obvious thing he stands for. Edgerton is, however, quite correct in seeing the *Jātaka* as the link-up with the fable in Greece, even though he thought - and wrongly - that it was only in one very late version of the Greek Aesopic fables that the ass was recognized by his bray.

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63, *op. cit.* intro, pp.13-15. It is fortunate that Edgerton has thought to comment on this particular story of the *Pancatantra* at any length in his brief introduction (p.9-20), It is no surprise that he finds there (a) the Pali form very inferior to that of the *Pancatantra* (as reconstructed by him) (b) that the simple Greek fable versions are derivative (c) and that they are derivative, like as not, from the "very inferior" Pali form. Edgerton's reconstructions of the *Pancatantra* stories are based on a learned and exhaustive and largely philological study involving the whole of the *Pancatantra* and taking into consideration the numerous texts in which the stories appear, together with their critical apparatus and the studies of such authorities as Benfey and Hertel. I have limited myself to this single story and rest my refutation purely on what appears to me an evolution, traceable in the several versions of the story from Greece to India, of its central motif and gradual variation.

What he refers to is that of the Augustana, no doubt before scholarship had strongly supported its relationship to the *Aesopica* of Demetrius. Already in Lucian, whom he considers contemporary with the *Pancatantra* in India, the fable figures within an obviously innovative treatment and still retains for itself the bray as the clue to the ass's identity.

The greatest difficulty still remains that, on Edgerton's interpretation of the history of the ass's story, the Jātakas cannot antedate the *Pancatantra*, even though he himself dates the *Pancatantra* to the second century B.C. If they did, the Pali version of Jātaka 189 (the *Sīhacamma*) could not be taken, as he does, to derive from the *Pancatantra* (his original) as do the versions of the *Ka-thāsaritsāgara* and the *Hitopadeśa*. And yet the Jātaka does relate more easily to the Greek versions, as Edgerton himself concedes.

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