

**The Conceptualisation of Economy and Society in
Early Buddhism: A Study of the Jātakas**

*Dissertation submitted to the Jawaharlal Nehru University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
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MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY

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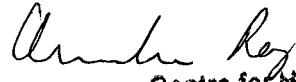
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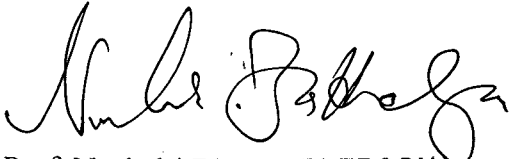


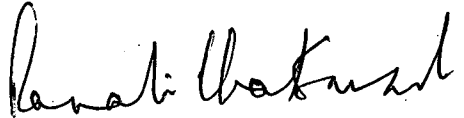
CERTIFICATE

Certified that the dissertation entitled 'The Conceptualisation of Economy and Society in Early Buddhism: A Study of the Jātakas' submitted by L.Lamminthang Simte in partial fulfillment of the requirement for award of the degree of **Master of Philosophy** of Jawaharlal Nehru University, is entirely his own work and has not been considered for the award of any other degree either at this or any other University.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AJES	American Journal of Economics and Sociology
JAOS	Journal of the American Oriental Society
JAS	the Journal of Asian Studies
JEP	the Journal of Economic Perspectives
MMPPL	Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers Private Limited
OUP	Oxford University Press
SH	Studies in History

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CHAPTER I

Introduction

The 6th century BC in Indian history is marked for its intense pre-occupation with philosophical speculation. It saw the emergence and flourishing of the 'heterodox' sects and traditions; which have exerted their variegated mark on the canvas of time and most importantly on the history of Indian philosophical discourse. Different scholars have posited various explanations (or speculation more aptly) as to the reason for their proliferation at this particular juncture in history. While it is true that there exists an intimate connection between ideas and the societies, which give rise to it; there is much less consensus on the nature and character of the society itself. The century is also regarded as the highpoint of philosophical enquiry unsurpassed in many ways. The philosophers of this time articulated their ideas through the practices that they institutionalized.

The range of ideas indicates the complexity of attempts to understand the rapidly changing society around them. It has been argued that the breakdown of the earlier simple communal existence created a sense of alienation, which provided the common backdrop against which individual philosophers were grappling with the problems of human existence. The most important social problems of the day were the rise of the economic and political institutions which affected the individual as well as the community. None of the philosophers took note of the social problems directly but

most of them were influenced by them indirectly.¹ Scholars have attempted to place Buddhism against the backdrop of these general trends of the sixth Century BC changes in socio-economy characterized by expansion and all-round consolidation as shaping the very ethos of the resultant heterodox traditions and sects, especially Buddhism. And this work is an engagement towards that end.

Pre- and post-independence writings in our country had a remarkable tendency towards the positivist values of locating the 'facts' of history in religious texts. Herein, the normative view of social organization was projected as social reality, and, further rationalization and endorsement of the system was sought in the religious texts. A majority of the methodological approaches adopted in many of the early writings on the subject were built on scientific positivism. In writing scientific history the effort was to emphasize on method, and to construct 'authentic sources' to unravel the ancient past, so naturally, the subordinate or marginal could not clearly emerge in these 'authentic' constructions and their absence from history was taken as legitimate and natural. Moreover, scholars consciously discarded colonial historiography but by adopting the categories of caste generated by the same in explaining the origins of caste and also by adopting the same terminology for referring to subordinate and marginal groups without questioning either the nomenclature or the conceptual underpinnings that defined these terms only resulted in further reaffirming it.

It would be reiterating the obvious to state that the subordinated and marginal groups follow religious beliefs and practices which are, quite often than not, based on

¹ Chakravarti, Uma, *Social Dimensions of Early Buddhism*, New Delhi: MMPPL, 1996, p.125.

principles that run contradictory or counter to that of the predominant and preexistent practices and belief-system. In order to understand Buddhism and the contemporary socio-economic dispensation vis-à-vis the marginal and subordinated groups, it has been found worthwhile to adopt the paradigm used by Partha Chatterjee² where he asserts the presence of a “spontaneous philosophy of the multitude”, also referred to as “common sense”, which is the contradictory unity of two opposed elements: one, the autonomous element which expresses the common understanding of the members of a subaltern group engaged in the practical activity of transforming the world through their own labour, often at the behest and certainly under the domination of the ruling groups, and the other the element which is borrowed from the dominant classes and which expresses the fact of the ideological submission of the subaltern group. The specific combination of these two elements is not fixed; it changes in the course of the historical process of relation between dominant and subordinate group. On the one hand the emergence of new philosophies and religions which acquire a dominant position in society will have its impact through the borrowed elements in common sense. Gramsci further expands on this contradictory consciousness as a reflection of the social tensions/consciousness and states that:

It signifies that the social group in question [a subaltern group of great mass] may indeed have its own conception of the world, even if only embryonic; a conception which manifests itself in action, but occasionally and in flashes – when, that is, the group is acting as an organic totality. But this same group has, for reasons of submission and intellectual subordination, adopted a

² Chatterjee, Partha “Caste and Subaltern Consciousness” in Ranajit Guha (Ed.) *Subaltern Studies VI: Writings on South Asian History and Society*, Delhi: OUP, 1998 (Third Impression), pp.169-209.

conception which is not its own but is borrowed from another group; and it affirms this conception verbally and believes itself to be following it, because this is the conception which it follows in 'normal times' – that is when its conduct is not independent and autonomous, but submissive and subordinate.³

Partha Chatterjee identifies in this assertion a useful tool to analyse the consciousness of the subaltern classes – a contradictory and fragmented consciousness – formed and transformed in the course of historical process which brings the dominant and subordinate classes into relations with each other.

We are here trying to argue that Buddhism inspite of all its posturing, at the end, was a subaltern religion – a reactionary religious belief-system which could however not find for itself an existence beyond the space already left by the dominant Brahmanical faith – thus giving rise to the argument that it was just a product of the historical process of accommodation and adjustment conditioned by both the process of a resurgent common consciousness which while trying to assert a space for itself outside the dominant system was in reality only occupying that much space as was apportioned to it by the very entity it tried to displace.

Thus, briefly put, religion in the context of a stratified society like ours can be seen as the ideological unity of two opposed tendencies – on the one hand, the assertion of a universal moral code for society as a whole, and on the other, the rejection of this dominant code by the subordinated.

³ Gramsci, Antonio, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, Tr. Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell Smith (New York, 1971), pp.325-43 cited in, Chatterjee, Partha "Caste and Subaltern Consciousness" in Ranajit Guha (Ed.) 1998, p.170.

Systematic study and engagement with Buddhism can be said to have started in the beginning of the nineteenth century with the initiative of the colonial officers and administrators who were posted in India, Sri Lanka and other South East Asian countries with significant Buddhist populations. It was only with time that native scholars started engaging in these studies as part of the larger effort that came to be initiated in these countries with the rise of a national self-identity and the feeling for the need of a national history taking shape. Subsequently, from the later part of the 19th century onwards we can see a number of books and articles written by scholars of these countries emerging.

Consequently, Buddhism seemed to be new to the West until the beginning of the nineteenth century, although we have ample evidence to suggest familiarity with the tradition there in the west since the thirteenth century itself through the accounts of numerous travelers, adventurers and sporadic missionaries of those times.⁴ Buddhist scholarship until then was confined to the monasteries and within the different schools and sects in the Buddhist countries of Asia. Understandably thus, initial forays in the field of Buddhist studies by scholars outside the Buddhist religious establishment, western and native, remained confined to the problem of Buddhism and its various schools and traditions, viz., the historicity of the Buddha and his date, different sects of Buddhism, its councils, its philosophy, the tradition that preserved original teaching of the Buddha, etc. Some of the debates like the date of the Buddha continued well into the twentieth century.

⁴ See, Bhattacharya, Narendra Nath, *History of Researches on Indian Buddhism*, Delhi: MMPPL, 1981, p.1-17.

During the 19th century we see wide-ranging debates among the scholars who engaged in Buddhist studies over the reliability of sources. Scholars who studied Pali like Oldenberg and T. W. Rhys Davids were inclined to believe that Pali sources were more reliable (and true) and preserved the pure and original form of Buddhism. The complete set of canonical texts in Pali further strengthened this idea whereas scholars like La Vallee Poussin were more inclined to accept Sanskrit texts rather than Pali. This idea of whether the ‘original’ and ‘true’ Buddhism was preserved in the Pali or Sanskritic traditions gradually changed with time as subsequent research established the fact about the existence of an original pre-Aśokan canon composed in some Prakrit dialect which was only subsequently committed to writing in Pali by the Theravada school and in Sanskrit by the Sarvastivadins and others. The variations encountered in these written records belonging to the different schools was not because of the multiplicity of traditions but more due to the fact that the original canon was preserved in and redacted from memory.⁵

Early researches on Buddhism have primarily focused on its doctrinal aspects; and taking off from the view that Buddhism provided a “way out of an individual’s spiritual, mental and moral crisis”⁶, which was in tune with the major trend of thinking of the nineteenth century idealistic philosophers of Europe which considered Buddhism as “an intellectual system dealing with ‘pure knowledge’ as opposed to ‘gross or vulgar materialistic knowledge’”.⁷ It was only later, with increasing exposure to the Pali texts that concerns arose that expressed strong leanings towards the view that Buddhism must have a social and functional role and the philosophy

⁵ Ibid., p. 24.

⁶ Ibid., p. 183.

⁷ Ibid., p. 183-184.

“must have some material basis formulated by the Buddha in response to a specific social demand arising out of certain historical conditions.”⁸

C.F.Köppen’s *Die Religion des Buddha* in two volumes, which came out in the years 1857-89, is the first significant work in this direction. The work mainly based on Tibetan sources, was perhaps the first major study which by adopting a subjective attitude viewed the Buddha as an “emancipator of the oppressed” and a “great political innovator”.⁹

The Anglo-German school¹⁰ showed remarkable interest in this line of research and subsequently, it was Hermann Oldenberg who came out with his book *Buddha*¹¹ in 1881 viewing the Buddha’s teachings in the light of contemporary social life and sifted through the legendary encumbrances of the Buddhist tradition and gave

⁸ Ibid., p. 184.

⁹ Ibid., p. 183, interestingly, Köppen was a very good friend of Marx and Engels, and the latter is said to have borrowed exclusively from Köppen’s understanding of Buddhism in establishing the principles of dialectical materialism in Buddhist ideas.

¹⁰ Following E. Conze’s classificatory division of the course of Buddhist researches based on the preferences and insistence of each school of scholars in relation to the typical nature of the source material: viz., the older Anglo-German School of Rhys Davids and Hermann Oldenberg, basing itself solely on the Pali canon, believed to have preserved the Buddha’s doctrines more faithfully than any other. The Russian School of Minayeff, Rosenberg, Stcherbatsky and others which depended on the scholastic literature of Buddhism and interpreted its different aspects in close dependence not only on the Indian commentaries but also on the continuous living tradition of Tibet, Mongolia, China and Japan; and the Franco-Belgian School headed by Lévi, Vallee Poussin, Przyluski and others which continued on the Russian line but used other sources also supplementing their philosophical and philological analysis with the data of ethnology, sociology, etc. See, *ibid.*, p. 5-6.

¹¹ Translated into English under the title *Buddha: His Life, His Doctrine, His Order* in 1882 by William Hoey.

a rational account of the facts of the Buddha's life. This work exhibits strong strands of environmental determinism¹² where he had characterized pessimism as the essence of Buddhism. Further, he identified the source of this philosophy of pessimism in the weak physiological constitution of the inhabitants of Eastern India – the strong and stout Aryans of the north-west who following their migration to the east, and the culminating effect of the adverse climatic conditions became lean and thin, and afflicted with numerous tropical ailments. These factors led to such alarming levels of mortality that they became fully disinterested in life as to them life meant nothing but disease, infirmity and death. It was on such material basis that the Buddha based his teachings – a way out of the miseries of human existence and offered the illusory world of the ideas of rebirth, transmigration and metempsychosis.¹³

On similar lines but, based more on objective rather than subjective speculations, it was T.W. Rhys Davids in his book *Buddhist India* (1902) who made for the first time, a complete attempt at viewing Indian history and society in the light of knowledge derived essentially from the Buddhist materials. This immensely helpful book, which is all of 16 chapters, has a dedicated chapter on the Jātakas where

¹² Also known as geographical determinism, the view holds that human activities and patterns of culture and societal development are governed by the environment, primarily the physical environment such as landforms and/or climate; and that it is these environmental, climatic, and geographical factors alone that are responsible for human cultures and individual decisions and/or social conditions have virtually no impact on cultural development. Individuals build up knowledge by encountering the world through their senses, and are unable to transcend their responses to the environment; they are at the mercy of environmental stimuli. Though it came to be discarded later but it was very much in vogue in geographical analysis well into the 1950s. Key proponents of this notion include Ellen Churchill Semple, Ellsworth Huntington, and Thomas Griffith Taylor.

¹³ Bhattacharya, *History of Researches*, 1981, p.184.

he has given an extremely insightful analysis of the nature, structure and issues concerning the Jataka stories.

It was Richard Fick's *Die sociale Gliederung im nordöstlichen Indien zu Buddha's Zeit*¹⁴ brought out in 1897 that can be possibly regarded as the most extensive work based exclusively on the Jātakas. In this book, acting on the felt need of studying the socio-economic condition of India during the time of the Buddha, he collated social and economic data from more than the 500 Jataka stories and systematically arranged and analysed them. The book, though, has a marked pre-occupation with the issue of caste, with at least 8 out of the 12 chapters of the book dealing with the issue. It is in Narendra Wagle's *Society at the Time of Buddha* that we find a comprehensive discussion of the social conditions which were responsible for the rise of Buddhism. Wagle has adopted a new methodology to analyse the social structure of an earlier age from the works of a relatively later period.¹⁵ The work contains chapters on patterns of settlement, social groups and rankings, kinship and marriage, and occupational divisions. Analyzing words like *Gama*, *Nigama* etc he tries to explain the patterns of settlements and their relative significance and also by analyzing the terms of address used by different members of society he arrived at an outline of social groupings and rankings.¹⁶ This work is important since the patterns

¹⁴ Translated into English by S.K. Mitra in 1920 under the title *The Social Organisation in north-east India in Buddha's Time*.

¹⁵ Being seized with the problem of a problematic source category i.e. Pali texts, texts which were composed a few centuries after the demise of the Buddha, hence to reveal the exact social condition prevailing during his time, Wagle ingeniously adopted with certain modifications, Morgan's theory of consanguinity and affinity to expand on the obscure aspects of social life on the basis of the studies in the evolution of kinship terms.

¹⁶ Bhattacharya, *History of Researches*, 1981, pp.191-192.

of economic life of the period and its relevance to the rise of Buddhism are discussed here.

R. S. Sharma's two articles published during 1970-1973¹⁷ hold the idea that the primary factor that revolutionized the material life of the people around 700 BC in Eastern U. P. and Bihar, the birthplace of Buddhism, was the use of iron. It initiated plough agriculture with iron ploughshare, and consequently created a new social setup, a class society. This society was marked by the rise of state power in which cattle in the form of private wealth to be increased by commercial activities gained much importance, and its senseless destruction for the purpose of non-vegetarian food and also for the purpose of Brahmanical sacrificial cults came to be discouraged. The voice of protest was raised by the trading class and was given theoretical and moral support by Buddha and his contemporaries. The most emphatic protest against animal sacrifice is registered in the early Pali texts. The brahminical attitude to trade was not helpful, with the traders hence being assigned a lower place in society. The Buddha took up the cause of this emergent class, having something new to contribute during its rise to power, and that is why traders at the first rank became his associates, and Buddhism lent full moral support to the financial and other interests of the trading class.¹⁸

Uma Chakravarti in her landmark book *Social Dimension of Early Buddhism*, in a way endorses Sharma's argument. According to her, Buddhism emerged in a rapidly changing stratified society where there emerged a sharp distinction between

¹⁷ We are here referring to *Das Kapital Centenary Volume* (1970) and paper read at the 29th International Congress of the Orientalists (1973).

¹⁸ Bhattacharyya, *History of Researches*, 1981, p.192.

the rich and the poor and the urbanization process was going on. Agriculture was widely spread in the middle Ganga valley region and private property holders like *Gahapatis* emerged as a prestigious class. All these descriptions agree with the Sharma's argument. The meaning of the *Gahapati* is merely a householder. But based on the textual evidence Chakravarti argues that they were not mere householders at the time, but holders of private property, and were prosperous, mobile and dynamic. They were one of the major social groups that patronised Buddhism most lavishly. Further, she argues that only the private property holders could do the same, since they had the sole authority to take decisions regarding property and not the people who had common ownership of the property in the *Ganasanghas*. This is somewhat paradoxical in view of the basic teaching of the Buddha regarding renunciation. The author analyzes all the names mentioned in Pali Chronicles where social and economic backgrounds are mentioned and through statistical analysis established that major class of supporters of Buddhism came from 'high' families.

Chakravarti's work stands out as a significant contribution to the long-standing tradition of analyzing early Buddhism as a social movement. Here she contends that the earlier studies on early Buddhism were conceptually flawed as they had presumed the reality of the existence of a rigid four-fold varna system as depicted in the Brahmanical texts without any rigorous cross-checking with the wealth of alternative/contemporary Buddhist and Jaina accounts. She had by careful analysis of key Buddhist social concepts found in these texts; enriched and redirected in a major way our understanding of the contemporary socio-political and economic situation and interaction. And she asserts, based on her study of the Buddhist texts, that the

Buddhists followed an alternative – simple high/low stratification¹⁹: this contention also holds true in our analysis of the Jataka stories.

While discussing the sources, she rightly states that earlier studies on Buddhist society lack a proper perspective of time because of their treatment of Buddhist texts as a homogeneous unit. Epigraphic evidence ranging from 200 B.C. to A.D. 200 has also been used to substantiate conclusions on social stratification drawn from early Pali literature. Citing from literary references to terminologies used and referred to, she posits the supremacy of the occupational categorization of labour.²⁰ Furthermore using the same source categories, she identifies the *gahapatis* as an important and influential section of society who were “major employers of labour” but “not a caste or a group whose status was based on birth”, rather cutting across groups. She identifies this inclusion of the *gahapatis* as a distinct group as the “strength of the Buddhist scheme” and the consequent “weakness of the Brahmanical mode in explaining the politico-economic domain” and exhibits its “rigidity and distance from empirical reality”²¹. Thus, not only is this book one of the more comprehensive treatment of this topic but also it provides a new language for continuing the discussion.

Chakravarti has identified a marked tendency of the absence of the *gahapatis*, who were the emergent class heading the production activities from the Buddhist *Sanghas* and their significant concentration among category of lay followers. This,

¹⁹ Chakravarti, *Social Dimensions*, 1996, p.109.

²⁰ Chakravarti, Uma, *Everyday Lives, Everyday Histories: Beyond the Kings and Brahmanas of 'Ancient' India*, New Delhi: Tulika Books, p.63.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p.66.

she tends to explain as the evidence of the tacit recognition by Buddhists of the indispensability of economic functions in society and by extension for the growth and continued existence of their order – this despite their advocacy of renunciation as a means to salvation. She further posits this immense sensibility to the social milieu as the main reason for the success of Buddhism. While dealing with the problem of stratification, she emphasizes, for the first time, the Buddhist point of view, by giving more importance to Buddhist texts. It has been asserted that the inclusion of the *gahapati* in the system of stratification is the strength of the Buddhist scheme. She firmly attributes the immense success of Buddhism, though momentary, over Brahmanism only as a direct offshoot of their positive attitude/outlook towards the expanding economy and the new class of rich people it produced. The Buddha and his philosophy according to her “represent the most serious and most comprehensive attempt by a philosopher in India to analyze the rapidly changing society in which he was situated.”²² Now based on this premise she postulated that the social reality of the times was reflected in the various tenets of Buddhism and its engagement with the social realities of the period produced through the Buddhist faith, a new consciousness and an alternative discourse of the contemporary times; correspondingly thus, its structures and systems were an ultimate reflection of the times.

Aloka Parasher Sen analyses the historical roots of social oppression and exclusion of the ‘other’ that have marked the making of identities in the Indian

²² Ibid., p.119.

subcontinent.²³ With contributors as varied and renowned as Romila Thapar, Brajadulal Chattopadhyaya, Vivekanand Jha, Eleanor Zelliott, Uma Chakravarti, Dagmar Hellman-Rajanagayam, and others²⁴; this volume discusses the various historiographical approaches to the study of marginalized society in India for the period before 1500 AD. Significantly, all the major ideas about hierarchy and difference, self and other, to emerge from early India are touched on by these authors. The following ideas of Sanskritic ritual status come in for systematic analysis: *dharma*, *varna*, and their sub categories; family, community, and the political structure – *jana*, *jati*, and related terms; race, colour, and ethnicity – *arya* and *dāsa*; indigenous and foreign – *mleccha* and *barbara*; purity and pollution – *dvija*, *sudra*, *antyaaja*, *asprasya*. Notions of and data about slavery, gender domination, mobility, professional and occupational diversity, religious divisions, and sectarian grouping are also engaged with.

It is notable that critical acknowledgement and engagement to the extremes of the practices of untouchability and other social disabilities in Indian civilization can be said to have begun with the advent of Buddhism, naturally so, the volume contains a substantive number of essays on the subject taking a marked Buddhist framework. The issue of the ‘other’ is also examined in great detail in the book²⁵. The works identified casteism and its guarantor the Dharmasastra resulted in the ‘othering’ of the

²³ Sen, Aloka Parasher (Ed.), *Subordinate and Marginal Groups in Early India*, published under the Themes in Indian History Series, New Delhi: OUP, 2004.

²⁴ Including J.T. O’Connell, Aloka Parasher-Sen, KR Hanumanthan, Dev Raj Chanana, Richard Fick

²⁵ Romila Thapar “The Tyanny of Labels” and B D Chattopadhyay “Representing the Other?” in Aloka Parasher-Sen (Ed.) *Subordinate and Marginal Groups*, 2004.

Buddhist adherents in Ancient India and the Muslims later on in the intermediate and immediate/present past.

Another remarkable analysis of the Jatakas that has come out is that of John Garrett Jones' *Tales and Teachings of the Buddha: The Jātaka Stories in Relation to the Pali Canon* in 1979.²⁶ Continuing on the tradition of drawing mostly from Pali sources, he has analysed the texts mainly looking at the themes of karma and rebirth, the ethical teaching of non-injury, sex and marriage, social teaching, doctrinal teaching and mythological elements. He has made an interesting observation that, of the five main Buddhist precepts, three are considered to have more specific social significance, viz., the second precept theft; the fourth, false speech; and fifth, consumption of intoxicants. The others, ahimsa extendable to all sentient life is not only restricted to human society; and sexual conduct, though surely having social ramifications belong more to one's private life and is so much less social, and they have been analysed and reduced into a very lucid and complete description in the book where he has conducted a topical examination of these major Buddhist concepts and compares them between the Jatakas and the *Vinayas*.

The Buddhist scriptures, specifically, the Theravada canon can be divided into three groups (*tipitaka*). They are: the *Abhidhamma* (supplements to the *dhamma*), the *Vinaya* (the discipline; mainly concerning the rules to be followed by the monastic monks), and the *Sutta Piṭaka* (collection of discourses),²⁷ which is further made up of

²⁶ Jones, John Garrett, *Tales and Teachings of the Buddha: The Jataka Stories in Relation to the Pali Canon*, London: George Allen & Unwin, 1979.

²⁷ Considered less eminent than the other four *Nikayas* (also called the four *Agamas*) because of its fragmentary nature (comprising no fewer than fifteen separate works) and absence of

Five Nikayas (the Fifth called *Khuddaka-Nikaya*), the Jataka stories belong to this last group, The compilation of canon is generally ascribed to the Council of Rajagaha (about 483 BC), and brought to completion at the third Council convened by King Ashoka in the second half of 3rd Century BC²⁸.

The *Anguttara-Nikāya* specifies the Jataka as one of the nine *angas* (division) of the Buddha's teachings. These are of very limited value understandably since, there is every possibility of their being later in date than much of the other canonical material, reflecting a period when the sacred texts were beginning to be collected and classified and there is no certainty as to the scope and the contents of the Jataka referred to in these passages. Jones argues for the view that the Jatakas were entered into the Buddhist canonical literature later than the Buddha himself, but not more than a century later, taking in view archaeological evidence²⁹. Geiger is of the opinion that the *Jatakathavanna*³⁰ was compiled by a Ceylonese priest and, if not by Buddhaghosa himself, by somebody close to him in time. This was very much a compilation rather than a composition, however, since the stories had already enjoyed a long oral history. Whilst the verses were regarded as fixed and unalterable, a good deal of latitude was allowed in the telling of the story so that the latter sometimes came to contradict, or grow independent of, the associated verses.

consensus amongst the Buddhists of Sri Lanka, Myanmar, and Thailand as to what pieces belong to it.

²⁸ According to Ceylonese chronicles it was fixed in writing only under king Vettgamani, in the last few decades BC

²⁹ Based on the bas-reliefs at Sanchi, Amaravati and Barhut depicting scenes from the Jatakas, it is however sure that many of the Jataka stories were well-known by the third century BC. Also see, Chakravarti, Uma, 'Women, men and beasts' *SH*, Vol.IX, 1993, p.43.

³⁰ The commentary on the Jataka verses, i.e. the prose stories, etc., as we now know them.

The Jātakas are generally taken as a collection of five hundred and forty seven stories arranged in twenty two books in an order determined by the number of verses associated with each story. A Jātaka could have, and frequently did have, a number of different titles, whereas a number of different Jatakas could be given the same title; the title could indicate the subject of the tale or the name of one of its characters or one of its first words. The tales are always told by the Buddha and he, as Bodhisatta, always features in the tales, usually as a main participant in the action, but sometimes merely as a witness, the latter being a very convenient device for transforming a non-Buddhist folk tale into a Buddhist birth story with a minimum of effort. This is indeed an interesting and significant observation, as this gives a rather novel way of appropriating diverse tales and in this way gives them a Buddhist tinge.

Each Jataka story is composed of four parts, firstly an introductory story set in the present time called the *paccupannavatthu* narrates where and in what circumstances the particular story is being related. This is followed by the main story after which the story usually derives its title from; which is called the *atitavatthu* or the story of the past. It predominantly begins by stating the place and period when the events being narrated are purported to have occurred and are often set in a typical past that opens with the phrase 'once upon a time in the reign of King Brahmadata' the Bodhisatta was born as such and such and so on, after which the other characters of the story are introduced. The Buddha himself is always more or less involved, either as an actor or as a witness; in the events of the *atitavatthu* (the story of the past) it is he who recounts the tale of the past. At the end of this narrative there is a verse which is the essence and sometimes also the moral of the story. Finally the story of the past and the story of the present are sought to be linked by the identification of the main

characters involved – this part is called the *samodhanam*, and is attributed to the Buddha.

While both the prose sections, the story of the past and the story of the present, have been justifiably attributed to a single author, the story of the past is privileged in a variety of ways. In fact, chronological distance is invoked to lend weight to a set of explanatory/didactic devices. Besides, generally, though not always, the story of the past tends to be longer, the narratives are richer in terms of content, the range of situations explored the personnel involved ranging from lowly lizards and insects to dazzling gods and goddesses. The stories of the past and present are differentiated not only in terms of time, but also in terms of space as well. The framing stories, i.e., those of the present, are located in the monastery, the most popular being Jetavana, near Savatthi.

The stories exhibit unmistakable marks of the participation of sections normally left outside the purview of intellectual production. This is because the representations of the subordinated sections exhibit such a high degree of sensibility which is suggestive of emanating from direct experience. In the case of the Jātakas the appropriation of everyday tales and realities to convey a meaningful message took place at the hand of the Buddhist bhikkhu. The bhikkhu mediated between the folk tale and the canonical Buddhist text to construct a unique set of narratives; he mediated also between the great and the little traditions within Buddhism which as a peripatetic, he was ideally suited to do. The Buddhist bhikkhu by virtue of his location acted as an interface between the learned and the commoners, thereby mediating the interchange of ideas and tradition on both sides.

This is indeed an interesting and significant observation, as the Jātaka stories, in spite of their obvious significance and value remains problematic mainly due to the fact that the stories in their present form are of uncertain origin. The question generally posed is, did it originate with the Buddha himself? Notably, the present collection contains very many “fables, fairy-tales and records of everyday experiences, such as are in no way peculiar to Buddhism, but are the common property of the world, floating down the ages.”³¹ “The Jātaka is seen as a special case of a general tendency to heighten the supernormal attributes of Gotama and to give to his teaching the sanction of information and insights not accessible to the ordinary run of humanity”³².

There is, naturally, skepticism among historians in using the Jātaka tales as source material, due to the basic nature of the tales and the way they came to be compiled which practically excludes their being assigned any clear chronology or authorship. However this need not dissuade us in our present endeavor as depending on the use which we seek for it – as in the present case which is a synoptic view of the social milieu in respect of the marginal and subordinated characters in contemporary Buddhist society – no other source material holds out such promise in giving us a view of “the total experience of men and women who inhabited the world for which the texts of high tradition made rules”. We say this because, as narratives, they expose the everyday lives and experiences “of the laboring poor, who hardly figure in the

³¹ Jones, *Tales and Teachings of the Buddha*, London: George Allen & Unwin, 1979, p. 4.

³² *Ibid.*, pp .4-5.

texts of high culture except as a collective category upon whom certain rules were sought to be imposed”³³

The cumulative aspects of the Jātakas which give them a ‘popular’ character are the use and propagation of Pali, the language of Buddhist discourse and texts. Though Buddhism cannot be divested from the elites, Pali, the language of the texts has been described as a compromise of various spoken dialects; it was seen as an alternative to Sanskrit, the language of a fairly restricted group of people even among the elites. Another characteristic is the oral narration, and the link with performance. The association of the Jataka stories with a narration to an audience, set in the open, is fairly strong, but it is not certain as to who constituted the audience; furthermore, the presence of an audience naturally exerts an influence on the shaping and dissemination of the text and stories therein making it somewhat fluid and contextual in content whereby the narrative style would be continually improvised upon according to the composition of the audience. Moreover, the audience response would be recycled as an input into the original story leading to considerable interpenetrations in the agendas of the narrator and that of the audience.

The circumstances that provoke the Buddha’s narration of a story often are the evil intentions of the villainous Devadatta or the vices of lazy bhikkhus or the virtuous actions of certain bhikkhus, and these are woven into the narrative to highlight the Buddhist philosophy. There is a consistency in the behaviour of the characters who are linked in the stories of the past and the stories of the present and this too helps provide fixity of meaning. Since the present in the Jātaka is always contemporaneous

³³ Chakravarti, ‘Women, men and beasts’ *SH*, Vol.IX, 1993, p.43.

with the Buddha and this is the starting point of the narration and also because the entire set of narratives is concluded with a return to the Buddha, the beginning and end of a Jātaka story is always in the hand of the Buddhist. This strategy works to provide an anchorage and succeeds in imposing Buddhist ethics upon different sub-narratives which might be read into a variety of ways. There is thus a master narrative which seeks to provide both an anchorage and closure to units which may otherwise be open-ended and capable of being consumed differently.



This dissertation draws almost exclusively from *the Jātakas: or the Birth Stories of the Buddha* of E.B.Cowell³⁴ to delve into the possibilities of analyzing the extent and conceptual limitations of early Buddhists. The analysis is divided into three sections, involving the social aspects, economic aspects and symbolic aspects of it.

In the first chapter, we deal with the different aspects of society as pictured in the Jātaka stories. Here, people who have normally been kept away from the purview of the intellectual discussions are stressed upon. The representations of these subordinated classes are done with great sensitivity, which clearly indicates that direct experience of it was made use of with the Buddhist bhikkhu acting as an interface between the learned and the commoners, mediating efficiently between the Great and the little traditions – the folk and the canonical texts. Among other issues the chapter also deals with the question of hierarchisation in the context of the Buddhist social outlook. This is done by postulating the Jātaka stories being the result of convergence between a religious order set on moral precepts and the reality of the world. Along with this, an attempt is also made to study the conscious effort made at transforming a

³⁴ *The Jataka*: Ed. E.B.Cowell Tr. By various hands, 6 vols. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers Private Limited, (First Indian Edition), 1990.

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philosophical and renunciatory creed into a pragmatic and ideological system; which seems to become instrumental in directing the Buddhist faith in its interaction in the social milieu.

The idea of individual and social ethics of an ideology and its adherents is important as it has pertinent bearing on the behaviour, and 'economic sensibility' of the group. It is commonly argued that the Buddhist grounding in the twin spiritual concepts of *nibbana* (nirvana) and *kamma* (karma) makes it ill-disposed towards any notion of critical engagement or participation in the economic activity and rather encourages disengagement or indifference, it is on this issue that the second chapter will delve into – the inter-relationship between the seemingly antagonistic worlds of belief/faith and the mundane business of daily survival which is solely based on materialistic equations. It is an effort to inspect how one affects the other.

Further, we will be seeking to examine the instrumentality of Buddhism on forms of economy and economic activities in the light of the debate of its manifest philosophy as being an individualized or communalized creed. Issues concerning the Buddhist approach to problems, specifically 'economic' problems in society and its sensitivity or otherwise to them will be examined.

Lastly, the third chapter is dedicated to the analysis of animal representations in the Jataka tales. It deals with the significance of such representation, its relationship with and possible interaction with the socio-economic milieu of the society at large and its possible outcomes and causes. Understandably, the Jataka tales seen in this light seem to have more of an observational character than a record of the times – more

like a way by which the society might want to reveal itself or maybe felt about itself – which by all records, could be the closest we could ever get to an honest record of a past society. Added to this was the use of animal and other symbolic imagery which already carried a pre-conceived burden of embodying aspects of tradition that can be expressed in no other way. For instance, the use of imageries like the unicorn, the phoenix or the fire-spewing dragons, were utilized especially in religious folk-lore, to prefigure the birth, life and death of “god-like” figures or sometimes and also the sins and foibles of mankind. Thereby, by lessening or magnifying the attributes of the symbolic images, the whole aspect of using symbolic imagery has an inherent bias attached to it; it is this facet that is of most importance to us.

The usage of such symbols and imagery is useful in understanding the relationship the society at large shared with the basic religious ideology and beliefs at that time – as well as how they interacted and affected each other at different levels. Along with this, it could also help us identify the roots and causes for the development of a particular strand of belief-system, as well as the religious and sociological thought process involved in its evolution and development. Herewith, through the use of various symbols and other imageries, the stories and characters thus presented in the Jatakas thereby become tools for the subversion of reality and the product of an ultimate and deliberate recasting of the present consciousness; which sometimes tend to become illusive or sometimes allusive.

CHAPTER II

The Jataka Stories and the Social World of the Early Buddhists

According to Uma Chakravarti, the Buddha and his philosophy “represent the most serious and most comprehensive attempt by a philosopher in India to analyze the rapidly changing society in which he was situated”.³⁵ Based on this premise she postulated that the social reality of the times was reflected in the various tenets of Buddhism and its engagement with the social realities of the period produced through the Buddhist faith, a new consciousness and an alternative discourse of the contemporary times; correspondingly thus, its structures and systems were an ultimate reflection of the times. Thus, the themes and concerns expressed in the Jatakas exhibit a stark preoccupation with lay life – circulating for the most part within the lay community, mediated by the Buddhist monks.

This section seeks to deal with the question of hierarchisation in the context of the Buddhist social consciousness/outlook. We will try to postulate the Jātaka stories as being the end-result of a convergence between the Buddhist prescription of a religious order patterned on a set of moral precepts and the reality of the world – the transmogrification of a philosophical and renunciatory creed into a pragmatic

¹ Chakravarti, Uma, *The Social Philosophy of Buddhism and the Problem of Inequality*, *Social Compass*, Vol. XXIII, Nos. 2-3, 1986, pp. 199-221. And also in Chakravarti, Uma, *Beyond the Kings and Brahmanas of 'Ancient' India*, New Delhi: Tulika Books, 2006, p.119.

ideological-system that understood the exegeses of its survival as an Order. To try and gauge where and how the different aspects of this conscious effort at transforming figured and to what extent it was instrumental in directing the Buddhist faith in its interaction with the social milieu – is also part of the agenda.

A significant departure of the Jātakas from the so-called brahmanical world-view was that it was comparatively loose structurally and had a somewhat dispersed ideological content though loosely contained within the overall Buddhist world view that vehemently contested the claim of *Brāhmaṇas* to social and intellectual pre-eminence based on birth and advocated the potentiality of merit acquired by dint of labour or spiritually, which could accrue to anyone willing to strive for it. Generosity and moderation in conduct being deeply cherished virtues, the *Brāhmaṇas*' lack of moderation and selfishness combined with an unabashed pursuit of material goals while claiming spiritual pre-eminence presented a stark contrast.³⁶

A significant number of stories in the Jātaka tales are directed against the considered evils of greed and gluttony – characteristics which were usually imputed to the *Brāhmaṇas* and women (even the Sisters of the Buddhist monastery). The character of women also comes in for much vilification; we find ample instances to support the anti-woman rhetoric in this present literature under study. In the stories

³⁶ For instance, see Jataka Story No. 129 where the Bharadvaja, a clan or great rishi or religious teachers are ridiculed for their greed and taunted for their ways by calling the tuft of hair on the top of their head as “gluttony that has decked your crown with that top knot”. For, The Jataka Story Numbers cited in this work and other quotations from the *The Jataka* I am using here Professor Cowell, E.B. (ed.) *The Jataka or Stories of the Buddha's Former Births*, translated by various hands, Motilal Banarsidass Publishers Pvt. Ltd., Delhi, First Indian Edition, 1990.

the women characters are not provided with much reason to rejoice about in terms of representation. In most of the stories, women are in fact straightaway referred to as lecherous, greedy, impassioned, fat and ugly (especially in the case of country women).³⁷

The stories dealing with the character of women provides for us valuable insight into the points of intersection between the popular culture and the culture of the higher classes, as also of their divergence. The narratives represent women as being prone to lazing about or gadding about or slovenly in their house holding. Almost invariably the many stories dealing with the insatiability of women's sexual appetite and their habitual proneness to adulterous liaisons is the account of some *bhikkhu* or other pinning for the wife of his lay life. These stories indicate to us the rigors of monastic existence and the difficulties of convincing the ascetic monks of the need for chastity and asceticism as practices which must be followed.

One illustrative story that reflects the treatment and regard given to womenfolk is the Jātaka Story No. 31.³⁸ In this story the women characters are represented merely as objects of desire and no more, not even allowed to partake in the commission of good deeds through which they might better their lot.³⁹ This is evident from the attempted exclusion from the commissioning of a large hall, by the

³ Jātaka Story nos. 92, 108, 113, 115.

³⁸ *The Jātaka*, Book I, pp. 76-83.

⁴ The Buddhist belief that taking birth in any particular form is the cumulative result of an individual's deeds – both good and bad – the former leading to a higher life-form and the latter leading to birth in a lower less respectable life-form. And here, evidently the male birth is particularly valorized in relation to female birth.

men folk, in the hamlet of Macala,⁴⁰ which they had gotten built “at the meeting of the four highways” of the four women in the house-hold of the Bodhisatta viz. Goodness, Thoughtful, Joy and Highborn. Of these, Goodness contrives with the carpenter to make herself the head of the Hall⁴¹. The carpenter here uses Bodhisatta’s own words against him to speak up for the case of the womenfolk saying “Master what is this you say? Save the realm of Brahma, there is no place from which women are excluded.”⁴² Interestingly, even in this story, women are found to move up in their successive rebirths into being handmaidens of Sakka by sheer dint of their activities concerning the Hall and its surroundings. Moreover, since Highborn evidently did not participate in the activities, she “having performed no act of merit” was eventually and understandably “reborn as a crane in a grotto in the forest.”⁴³

⁴⁰ Their justification for exclusion of women was that “they (the men-folk of the said hamlet) had lost all desire for womankind; they would not let any woman share in the good work” *The Jātaka*, Book I, p.79.

⁴¹ Before getting any work done on the Hall, the carpenter commissioned for the work had some pinnacle wood dried, which he fashioned and bored and made into a finished pinnacle. This he gave to Goodness. On completion, he told the menfolk there that they had forgotten to make a pinnacle and that they ought to have a pinnacle which “can’t be made out of green wood;... which had been cut some time ago, and fashioned, and bored, and laid by.” and beguilingly suggested that if they looked around they might be lucky enough to find someone who has a readymade pinnacle for sale. Naturally Goodness happens to have the very same pinnacle that they want to put up. But on being asked for a price, she refused to name a price but insisted that she be made a partner in the good work. In which case, she would give it for free. This story is related in *Jātaka Story No.31*.

⁴² *The Jātaka*, Book I, p.76-83.

⁴³ However, Highborn following her birth as a crane, by “continuing all her life long to keep the Commandments” earned rebirth into the family of a potter and then was eventually reborn as the daughter of the *Asura* king Vepacittiya, and for her goodness was “rewarded with the gift of great beauty”. See *ibid.*, p. 81-82.

Likewise, Jātaka Story No.436⁴⁴ tells of how an *Asura* demon captured and carried off to his cave a “certain noble lady in the kingdom of Kāsi, of exceeding beauty” by rushing upon her men-escorts “in a terrible form” as she came back to her settlement in a frontier village after visiting her parents, making her his wife. And he, in order to protect her “put her in a box which he swallowed, and so guarded her in his belly.” The said woman however on getting half a chance still succeeded in hoodwinking her captor.

Here in the story, the voice or instrumentality of the woman is completely muted, except for the purpose of showing her guile in procuring a man for herself to disport with inside her confinement. The *Asura*’s lament afterwards on learning of the woman’s treachery is also quite indicative, “Though I guarded her in my belly, I could not keep her safe. Who else will keep her?” Here as well, the *Asura*’s action in forcibly taking her captive is taken as a very normal, mundane occurrence and it is also interesting to note that the woman was supposed to be kept “safe”! First by being escorted by a posse of possibly heavily armed escorts and then further ludicrously by being hid in a box inside and then for added measure swallowed inside the stomach. This story, exemplifies not so much the concern for the safekeeping of womenfolk as much as it is illustrative of the extent to which womenfolk can go even in the face of all extensively formulated restrictions to bind them.

I tended her with care both day and night,
As forest hermit cherishes a flame,
And yet she sinned, beyond all sense of right:
– To do with woman needs must end in shame.

⁴⁴ *The Jātaka*, Book IX, p.313-316.

Me thought within my body, hid from sight,

She must be mine – but “Wanton” was her name –

And so she sinned beyond all sense of right:

– To do with woman needs must end in shame.

Man with her thousand wiles doth vainly cope,

In vain he trusts that his defence is sure;

Like precipices down to Hell that slope,

Poor careless souls she doth to doom allure.

The man that shuns the path of womankind

Lives happily and from all sorrow free;

He his true bliss in solitude will find,

Afar from woman and her treachery.⁴⁵

This engagement with female sexuality as something disruptive was a major concern within the various stories/tellings of the Jātakas; also the issue was perceived as one which could generate interest, and was consequently exploited as part of the narrative strategy. Queens were virtually never depicted as deliberately leading ascetics astray – they do however expose themselves literally and somewhat inadvertently to holy men while offering hospitality in the absence of their husbands. This may lead to the king giving up his wife to his guest and, in most instances to the ascetic realizing the folly of being ensnared by short-lived worldly pleasures. In any case neither the queen nor the ascetic is punished, the queen if found out is humiliated

⁴⁵ Ibid., p.315.

but not subjected to any of the prescribed punishments, simply because her behavior is considered to exemplify women's nature.⁴⁶

Notably, women of the upper classes are almost always associated with adulterous behaviour seeking opportunities for such misbehavior as opposed to the character of women of the unpropertied classes who are depicted as engaged in laboring, or in eking out an existence⁴⁷. Moreover, despite noticeable preference for high birth (as king, ascetic, lion, monkey), we find in the Jātakas the Bodhisatta taking to the life of the despised and rejected (outcasts, robber, rat, pig), the singular exception however is the whole dimension of femininity. In this connection, the Bodhisatta, inspite of his numerous births and rebirths never assumes the female form human or animal. This fact can be considered as being in complete agreement with the overall attitude of the Buddhist creed towards women and their considerable potential towards subversion of their belief.

In the domestic household, a wife was for the most part obtained for money paid to her father's family by the husband in whose house, however, she exercised full control over internal management.⁴⁸ A monkey just let loose by its owner informs its

⁴⁶ Roy, Kum Kum 'Justice in the Jatakas', *Social Scientist*, Vol.24, Nos. 4-6, April-June 1996, p.35.

⁴⁷ See Jātaka Story No. 120, where a queen makes the king promise exclusive fidelity to her but she herself commits adultery with each one of the 64 royal messengers sent by the absent king to enquire about her welfare. Also, Jātaka Story No. 145, where wife of Brahmana misbehaves everyday while her husband is out for work . And also, Jātaka Story No. 411 where the queen-mother fell for the Bodhisatta, a priest and her son's best friend.

⁴⁸ Women also seem to enjoy more rights in marital relationship as evidenced from Jataka Story No.411. However we also find possible reference to domestic violence against women as indicated in Jātaka Story No. 130.

tribe in the forest that human society was vastly different from theirs in view of the following:

“There are two masters in the house; one has no beard to wear,
But has long breasts, ears pierced with holes, and goes with plaited hair;
His price is told in countless gold; he plagues all people there.”⁴⁹

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Jātaka Story No.458⁵⁰ and Jātaka Story No.530⁵¹ sufficiently testify to the existence of the practice of giving daughters in marriage in exchange for money. But, the character and virtues of the bridegroom were of great consideration to the brides father before he gave her away in marriage and it was rather considered preferable in the case of a father having more than one daughter to have them all placed in the hands of one groom of known good character than giving them away to different grooms of varying characters and manners. Thus, we find instance of a man with four daughters gave them successively away in marriage to the same groom who fulfilled all these conditions. No instance of polyandry adopted by a woman is however recorded⁵².

Want of husbands on the part of girls was looked upon as a curse and the king in whose kingdom suitable husbands could not be found was cursed by all,⁵³ and the

⁴⁹ *The Jātaka*, Book II, p.130.

⁵⁰ *The Jātaka*, Book XI, pp. 66-70.

⁵¹ *The Jātaka*, Book XIX, pp.134-140.

⁵² While the men, not excluding even the priests had more than one wives... “the Bodhisatta was conceived in the womb of his (King Brahmadata of Benares) priest’s chief wife”; see Jātaka Story No.411.

⁵³ Jātaka Story no. 520.

king was very well held accountable for it. Instances are many when girls on attaining proper age which generally ranged from twenty to thirty went of their own accord in search of husbands.

Jātaka Story No.383⁵⁴ sounds a note of warning to would-be husbands in the matter of acceptance of wives. The story, besides deprecating marriage between parties of different tribes is yet another one of the many reflections in the Jataka stories to be found building on the theme of crafty and beguiling nature of womenfolk.

Jātaka Story No.488⁵⁵ narrates the shifting fortunes of the household of a certain “great Brahmana magnifico”⁵⁶ into which was born seven sons and also a daughter, who was the youngest of all. When Mahā-kañcana, their eldest son was grown and had “studied at Takkasilā all the arts and sciences”,⁵⁷ his parents sought to establish him in a household of his own by ‘fetching’ him “a girl from a family to be a fit match”⁵⁸ for him. However, he refused to do so and tried to mollify his parents by telling them that, “you have other sons, bid them be heads of families and leave me alone”,⁵⁹ and by and by all the other sons also refused likewise; including their daughter, Lady Kañcana, their only daughter and youngest of the siblings. Upon the

⁵⁴ *The Jātaka*, Book VI, pp.168-169.

⁵⁵ *The Jātaka*, Book XIV, pp.192-197.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p.192.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p.192.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p.192.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p.192.

death of their parents, the wise Mahā kañcana did the obsequies for his parents;⁶⁰ and after distributing all the treasures worth eighty crores to beggars and wayfaring men, he made the 'great retirement' and retired into the region of Himalaya, taking with him his six brothers, his sister, a servant man and handmaiden, and one companion.

Later in the story, as they settled down and improvised a system to practice the life of a recluse, whereby they take turns going out into the forest to fetch provisions for the rest of the group and on coming back would bring it to an enclosure where he laying it on a flat stone would make eleven portions and depart to his place of dwelling; the others coming up at the gong sound, without hustling, but with all due ceremony and order, would take each his allotted portion of the find, then returning to his own place there would eat it, and resume his meditation and religious austerity. One fateful day, Sakka went in to test them and for three successive days caused the portion of the eldest (the Great Being) to disappear. They spoke up one by one in order: Kañcana eventually spoke after all the brothers and then the slave man have spoken and is followed by the slave girl.⁶¹

The king's character is another predominant representational-category in the Jataka stories. Whereas in a significant number of stories the Bodhisatta assumes kingship, but more importantly, what is important for us to look out for is not only the character itself but the instrumentality of the character in propagating certain ideals

⁶⁰ This same theme is found in Jātaka Story No.149, "but when his parents died he became a recluse, dwelling in the Himalyas, and attained the mystic Attainments and Knowledge" *The Jātaka*, Book I, p.317.

⁶¹ What is considered significant is that even in the 'model' hermitage, they are very conscious of their respective ritualistic or social standing in the order of their speech.

considered as desirable and accordingly his more instrumental characters are as advisor/counselor to the king. Though staking claims to the highest and purest tradition of renunciation and detachment from this material world; based on our readings of portions of the Jātaka stories, Buddhism however displays characteristically unmistakable materialistic concerns and ethos. A recurring theme in the Jatakas is that of the recluse who preaches to the king the five precepts and/or the ten duties of kingship⁶². Otherwise, as well the kings in the Jataka stories are very often portrayed as taking the advice of their chaplains or going out of their way to consult the wise men (here in this case, the Buddhist renunciate). Moreover, the Bodhisatta appears as Kings's chaplain or as king's minister or adviser in various instances. This fact thus reinforces the principle that secular affairs were subordinated to the preoccupations of the monk and holy man and it is only through the guidance of the holy man that secular affairs, including matters of state can be properly and rightly conducted.

Jātaka Story No. 149⁶³ is a tale about a king who asks a very holy ascetic (the Bodhisatta) to try to reclaim his “fierce and passionate” son,⁶⁴ which he succeeds admirably by making him taste the bitter leaf of a seedling Nimb tree. It was so bitter that the prince immediately spits it out while commenting that such a tree which is so unpleasant to the taste even though so young, would most probably grow into a deadly poison when it is fully grown. The Bodhisatta seizes upon this comment to make him understand that his subjects would also think likewise if he were to persist on his wayward ways; and that he risks the danger of being hounded out of his

⁶² For instance Jātaka Story No.396, 482, 483, 520, 521, 530.

⁶³ *The Jātaka*, Book I, pp.316-319.

⁶⁴ The name of the prince is in itself, Prince Wicked.

kingdom by the people who would not want a tyrant on the throne. Again in Jātaka Story No. 396⁶⁵ the Bodhisatta as king's councilor manages to convert a king who had been "set on the way of the evil courses"⁶⁶ by telling him through parables the importance and indispensability of the king of the land being sinless and righteous.

The Jātaka Story No. 213⁶⁷ narrates a quarrel between two bands of ascetics over who has more right to claim the shade of a certain banyan tree. When their quarrel is brought before the king, he rules that it must go to the group which had first sat under it, which turned out to be the group led by the Bodhisatta himself. Upon this, the rival group tried to gain undue favor from the king by gifting him with a "chariot fit for an emperor to use". The ascetics are later on struck by remorse when they realize their folly that they, who are the same persons who claim to have overcome love for riches and the lust of the flesh and have renounced the world should fall into a quarrel over the ownership of a tree-shade and offer bribes for it. And on the dawn of their realization, they sped away to the Himalayas to avoid being tempted to further sin. However, the whole unsavoury episode had angered the spirits dwelling in the kingdom who took strong exception to the king for accepting bribes from ascetics and for this same reason caused a flood in which the king and all his subjects perish. The entire state was obliterated, in this case, because the king had been seduced into immoral behaviour through the shortcomings of ascetics.

The reason for urging royal wisdom is simply the need to ensure the maintenance of a righteous social fabric. In this connection, two stories are relevant.

⁶⁵ *The Jātaka*, Book VII, pp. 197-198.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p.197.

⁶⁷ *The Jātaka*, Book II, pp.118-121.

Jātaka Story 247⁶⁸ where the heir apparent to the throne on his ascension to the throne was proved to be a “blind fool” by the courtiers in the court following the advice of the Bodhisatta, the king’s adviser, who proposes a simple test to find out if the prince was fit to rule. Here in this case a potential king is set aside in favour of his adviser (the Bodhisatta) because of the importance attached to royal wisdom and integrity. Similarly, in Jātaka Story No. 257,⁶⁹ we have the Bodhisatta succeeding to the throne at an incredibly early age of seven years because he had demonstrated in various fanciful tests, his precocious maturity of judgment. Moreover, as king he rapidly acquires a reputation for his phenomenal wisdom.

The stress on righteousness of royalty and its special efficacy is further given in Jātaka Story No. 276,⁷⁰ where we find that the king of Indapatta in the Kuru kingdom is not affected by drought conditions due to the observance of “Kuru righteousness” by the king along with fifteen people most closely associated with him. Whereas, the kingdom of Kalinga reels under the vagaries of severe drought in spite of their best efforts until they took to the practice of righteousness.

Far from being above the law, the king was blamable for the woes and miseries of his people, who however seldom urged his removal and calmly reconciled themselves to their lots even in extreme trouble and agony.⁷¹ If a king is righteous but retains the throne, he acknowledges the superiority of the ascetic’s life by being

⁶⁸ Ibid., pp.183-184.

⁶⁹ *The Jātaka*, Book III, pp.207-215.

⁷⁰ Ibid., pp.251-260.

⁷¹ The ideal life proffered to them was, indeed, the life of a saint free from lust, hatred and delusion. See, Jātaka Story nos. 497 and 543.

generous in his patronage and support of holy men and by listening attentively to whatever wisdom they impart. One instance is of particular interest since, in this story the king's barber becomes an ascetic and eventually attains to the rank of a paccekabuddha.⁷² When he returns to court, he calls the king by his family name – much to the indignation of the queen-mother, other courtiers and the multitude.⁷³ The king rebukes the critics, however, and shows great deference to the ex-barber, adding:

One who bowed before us all,
Kings and lords must now salute.⁷⁴

Also, the opposite is also true, as shown in the story that tells of a king Brahmadata who could not “endure to look upon anything old or decrepit, whether elephant, horse, ox or what not”⁷⁵ including old carts and old people – “the old women that he saw he sent for, and beat upon the belly, then stood them up again and gave them a scare; he made old men roll about and play on the ground like tumblers.”⁷⁶ The king's friends were as wanton as he was; so, it came to such a situation where his subjects even had to put away their old parents “outside the boundaries of the kingdom”. In addition, because of the depravity at court and the inability of the people to care for their aged parents, Sakka (the Bodhisatta) observes that there are “no new-comers among the gods” but, on the contrary, “as men died,

⁷² Jātaka Story No. 421.

⁷³ The queen-mother infact angrily spoke thus: “this low-caste shampooing son of a barber does not know his place; he calls my kingly high-descended son Brahmadata”, *The Jātaka*, Book VII, pp.270-271.

⁷⁴ *The Jātaka*, Book VIII, p.271.

⁷⁵ *The Jātaka*, Book II, p. 99.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 99.

they filled up the four worlds of unhappiness.”⁷⁷ Sakka finally decided to do something about it and came to the king disguised as an old man, and, after thoroughly humiliating him in front of his entourage, thus humbled, Sakka warned the “wicked and unrighteous” king to mend his way failing which he would cleave his head with a thunderbolt. He also rebuked the king and reminded him that he also faced the same prospect of getting old one day and he should think if he would want to be treated the same way as he is doing now.⁷⁸

Somewhat similar in stress to the previous story Jātaka Story No.228⁷⁹ narrates how the Bodhisatta (again as Sakka) cures a king of his “desire of riches, and the lust of the flesh and greedy of gain.” It is noteworthy that in his mission of chastising the king here, Sakka took the form of a young Brahmana, who entices the king to the idea of capturing three towns⁸⁰ – “prosperous, fertile, having elephants, horses, chariots and infantry in plenty, full of ornaments of gold and fine gold” – which could be easily captured with a very small army, and offered his services to get them for him.⁸¹

Jātaka Story No.487⁸² presents us with an interesting study in the relationship between the sacred and secular. This is the story in which the Bodhisatta, as chaplain

⁷⁷ The four worlds of unhappiness being viz. Hell, birth as an animal, birth as a *peta* (ghost), birth among the *Asuras* (titans or fallen spirits).

⁷⁸ *The Jātaka*, Book II, p.98-100.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, pp.149-151.

⁸⁰ The three towns being Uttarapañcāla, Indapatta, and Kekaka.

⁸¹ Here is a young Brahmana offering military services which is illustrative of the disregard and non-binding nature of the caste-based duties. For another instance, see Jātaka Story No.109 where a very poor man is appointed as Lord Treasurer by the king.

⁸² *The Jātaka*, Book XIV, pp.188-191.

to the king, “a wise and learned man” we are told, falls in love with a slave-girl by whom he has a son. He will not allow the child to be named by his family name because “it can never be that the name of a noble family should be given to a slave-girl’s bastard”. As the son grows up, having learned from his mother that the chaplain is his father, he falls in with a group of ascetics amongst whom he rapidly establishes himself as the most learned and best equipped to lead the company. The king hears of his eminence and comes to visit him in company with the Bodhisatta. The king is duly impressed by the learned ascetic but the chaplain, even after discovering that this is in fact his son, tells the king that the ascetics are knaves and deceivers and would be better employed as soldiers in his army. He asks for his son to be employed as chaplain under himself. In this story, the Bodhisatta is himself a rather worldly holy man and his son is even more compromised. The father apparently takes it for granted that his son, whose parentage is so deeply infected by worldly passions, can never, no matter how earnestly he tries, break through to true sanctity.

It has been plainly acknowledged in Jātaka Story No.462⁸³ that these calm sages were the real instructors even of kings, much more of laymen. Furthermore, in Jātaka Story No.528,⁸⁴ the Bodhisatta educates the king in the ways of statecraft in the following lines:

“The warrior king that o’er the land unrighteous sway shall wield
Will suffer loss in plant and herb, whate’er the ground shall yield.

And should he spoil his citizens so apt by trade to gain,

⁸³ *The Jātaka*, Book XI, pp. 82-86.

⁸⁴ *The Jātaka*, Book XVIII, pp.116-126.

A failing source of revenue will his exchequer drain.
 And should he vex his soldiers bold, so skilled to rule the fight,
 His army will fall off from him and shear him of his might.
 So should he wrong or sage or saint, he meets his due reward,
 And through his sin, howe'er high born, from heaven will be debarred.
 And should a wife by wicked king, though innocent, be slain,
 He suffers in his children and in hell is racked with pain.
 Be just to town and country folk and treat thy soldiers well,
 Be kind to wife and children and let saints in safety dwell.
 A monarch such as this, O Sire, if free from passion found,
 Like Indra, lord of Asuras, strikes terror all around.”⁸⁵

The theme of the king's renouncing his throne to become an ascetic occurs very commonly in the Jātakas throughout. In these instances, we find that accommodation is provided for a retiring prince or monarch by Vissakamma, the heavenly architect, on the express orders of Sakka.⁸⁶ In Jātaka Story No. 70,⁸⁷ the king (Ānanda) is seized with a desire to lead the anchorite's life after listening to a great sage (the Bodhisatta) preaching. When the people of Benares hear of the king's renunciation they all decide to follow suit. “a train twelve leagues long” sets off for the Himālayas and, in order to accommodate this massive exodus, Sakka orders a hermitage of matching proportions to be built in a demesne from which “all the noisy beasts and birds and fairies” had been driven away. In Jātaka Story No. 505,⁸⁸ on the

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, p.125.

⁸⁶ The instances are Jātaka Story nos. 70, 505, 509, 510, 522, 525, 538, and 547.

⁸⁷ *The Jātaka*, Book I, pp.168-171.

⁸⁸ *The Jātaka*, Book XV, pp. 275-280.

other hand, the heavenly architect provides Prince Somanassa with a simple leaf-hut, though a retinue of deities in human shape attends to him. Equally modest accommodation is provided for the Prince Vessantara and his family in Jātaka Story No. 547⁸⁹.

Two heroic instances of royal generosity occur. These are the stories of kings Sivi in Jātaka Story No.499⁹⁰ and Vessantara in Jātaka Story No. 547⁹¹. The stories have a good deal in common and both go a good deal beyond the “middle way” advocated by the faith. To Buddhism, giving is a means of acquiring merit and of advancing along the Path, but it is supremely the means of maintaining the order. In these stories, which are but extreme examples of a tendency discernible in many of the Jātaka stories, giving has become much more than the provision of the basic needs of the *sangha*; it has been made to become a challenge to scale the heights of self-sacrifice and a mode of self denial.

The story of Vessantara tells us about how after making his vow, Vessantara is married to Queen Maddī, becomes king and, soon afterwards fathered a son and a daughter. When there is drought in a neighbouring kingdom and when the monarch there is unable, by his austerities, to produce rain, he sends eight Brāhmanas to Vessantara to ask for his white state elephant, which has the reputation of bringing rain wherever it goes. Vessantara not only donates the elephant with five hundred

⁸⁹ *The Jātaka*, Book XXII, pp. 246-305. The remaining stories (509, 510, 522, 525, 538) all follow the pattern of Jātaka Story No. 70, accommodating huge numbers of ascetics in vast hermitages.

⁹⁰ *The Jātaka*, Book XV, pp.250-256.

⁹¹ *The Jātaka*, Book XXII, pp. 246-305.

attendants, and grooms and stablemen. Generosity on this scale so alarms his subjects that they go to Vessantara's father and beg him to banish his son before the kingdom is ruined. Before he departs, together with his devoted wife and children, Vessantara indulges in more extravagant giving; even donating the chariots and horses he had been given to take him into banishment. All these spectacular gifts are accompanied by earthquakes and other portents. When Vessantara and his family are living in the hermitage provided for them by Vissakamma, an old Brāhmaṇa (Devadatta) comes to the banished king and asks for his children to be his slaves. The children, overhearing the request, run away. The Brāhmaṇa taunts Vessantara with the accusation that, whilst he has said he will gladly give his children, he has at the same time signaled to them to run away. Vessantara calls to his young son to come out of his hiding, saying,

Be thou my ship to ferry me safe o'er existence' sea,
Beyond the worlds of men and gods I'll cross and lift me free!⁹²

The son dutifully returns and then the daughter. The father is joyful, "thinking how good a gift he had made", and prays like Sivi, that he may attain omniscience: "dearer than my son... a hundred thousandfold is omniscience".⁹³ The Brāhmaṇa ties the children together and drives them away, whipping them cruelly. Twice they escape and return to the father, begging him not to let this cruel old Brahmana take them away. But Vessantara, though he is greatly moved, knows that a righteous man will never retract a gift once given. Though he grieves for his children he realizes that "all this pain comes from affection and no other cause; I must quiet this affection and

⁹² Ibid., p.282.

⁹³ *The Jātaka*, Book XV, p. 254.

be calm”.⁹⁴ He drives away the keen pang of sorrow “by power of his knowledge”. His wife had been away when the children were given to the Brāhmaṇa. On her return, Vessantara sits silent as she becomes increasingly distraught at not finding her children. When she faints away, “although for seven months past he had not touched her body, in his distress he could no longer keep to the ascetic’s part”.⁹⁵ Putting her head in his lap, he soothes her and tells her the truth, begging her not to grieve assuring her that they would get them back and be happy again; later, Maddī rejoices at her husband’s generosity. She begs him to go on giving. On the next day, Sakka comes to Vessantara disguised as a Brāhmaṇa and asks for his wife. Without hesitation, the gift is made, for Vessantara reflects,

Not hateful is my faithful wife, nor yet my children are,

But perfect knowledge, to my mind, is something dearer far.⁹⁶

Maddī is prepared to go uncomplainingly with the Brāhmaṇa – and there are the usual natural signs and portents to celebrate this signal act of generosity. Then Sakka reveals himself, restores Maddī to Vessantara and grants him eight boons.⁹⁷

⁹⁴ *The Jātaka*, Book XXII, p.286.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 291.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 293.

⁹⁷ Vessantara asks of Sakka the following: that his father restores him to the throne, that he may never condemn a man to death, that all his people may look only to him for help, that he will always be content with just his own wife but never subject to a woman’s will, that his son may live long and victoriously, that celestial food will be provided each morning, that he may always have the wherewithal to give without stint, that he may go directly to heaven at death and never again be born on earth. These eight boons are granted, though, of course, the eighth is inconsistent with his being reborn as Gotama!

There is thus a totally happy ending to the story, though a stark and naked attempt at legitimizing the claims of the Brāhmanas to the gifts so proffered. Although the extravagance of the giving of Sivi and Vessantara is greatly praised, it does nevertheless have some very disconcerting features. The canonical basis for giving especially from the throne is that this establishes the well-being of the monks and ensures the supremacy of the *dhamma* in the administration of the state. In these stories, giving has become almost self-indulgence. It is on such an extravagant scale that it bears little relation to the actualities of life, neither does it consider the possibly harmful effects of such lavish generosity on its recipients; it shows a total disregard for personal feeling and it retains a rather distasteful ulterior, contractual character. The giving is not really disinterested. It is a *quid pro quo* arrangement – material goods (including one’s family in this category) being exchanged for spiritual benefits. Though the giving seems so costly at times, its costliness is largely offset by the donor’s bland confidence that it must pay off.

It is hard to miss this as a sly return to the extravagant ways of the brahmanical ideological system, the very extravagance that they were supposed to be fighting against. Though also, it is a departure from the “middle way” of canonical Theravada, in that it turns ‘giving’ into a mechanism for merit-making which is essentially a substitute for the rejected vedic sacrifices. ‘Giving’ becomes almost like gambling; the higher the stakes, the higher the potential winnings – though the Jatakas assure us there is really no gambling involved but by sheer karmic necessity, ‘giving’ must have its reward. The canonical view is that giving is a means to an end, the means by which the *sangha* can be nourished and maintained, but that it should not be allowed to go out of hand. The monk must constantly be on guard against being

corrupted by the generosity of merit-seeking donors; the donor must never forget that his is the inferior position. To receive is more blessed than to give since one's highest good depends on one's willingness to forsake all worldly possessions and oneself depend on the generosity of others. The magnification of heroic giving into an end in itself, a supreme expression of spiritual eminence, is a clear distortion which clearly smacks of vested interests at work.

Robbers quite often appear in the tales. Infact, we find two occasions when the Bodhisatta is born as a robber.⁹⁸ One of these, Jātaka Story No.279,⁹⁹ includes the apologetic note that “the Bodhisattas, even though they are great beings, sometimes take the goods of others by being born as wicked men; this they say comes from a fault in the horoscope”.¹⁰⁰ In these cases, it seems, in spite of the law of karma, one's destiny is decided by one's stars rather than by one's deeds! This is one of the gratuitous details, which constantly enliven the Jātaka since this story is not really about theft at all but about the importance of being able to distinguish friend from foe.¹⁰¹

Jātaka Story No.322¹⁰² is another story, just the type of stories to be found in the Jātakas, to which they owe their universal and continuing appeal. It beautifully

⁹⁸ Jātaka Story nos. 279 and 318.

⁹⁹ *The Jātaka*, Book III, pp. 264-266.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, p.265.

¹⁰¹ The other instances in which the Bodhisatta is a robber are found in Jātaka Story No.318; in Jātaka Story No.164, where he is a vulture and takes to thieving in order to repay a merchant for saving his life; and in Jātaka Story No.168, as a quail, where he all but loses his life for poaching on another's territory.

¹⁰² *The Jātaka*, Book IV, pp.49-52.

talks about the need for a realistic and truthful appraisal of the surroundings and taught at the same time not to be affected by false rumours (teachings). Here in this story, a certain hare which had been thinking to itself “if the earth should be destroyed, what would become of me?” when a fruit falling on a leaf convinces him that the end is indeed at hand. The hare, terror-stricken, without any further delay or investigation runs away from that spot and soon gathers a host of other equally ignorant and terrified animals, equally anxious to flee, because of the first hare’s cry that “the earth is breaking up”. A young lion (the Bodhisatta) sees this mad, headlong flight and, guessing that it is based on some unfounded fear, determines to stop a stampede which could have tragic consequences. He stands in the path of the fleeing column and brings it to a halt. When informed that the animals are rushing away because the earth is collapsing, he asks for the evidence: “who saw it collapsing?” animal after animal has to admit that it only knows of the disaster by hearsay. When the rumour is finally traced to its source, the lion says he will return with the hare to its starting place to see for himself what the position is; the other animals are to stay put. When the falsity of the rumour has been established by the lion, the herd is told to return to the forest. Likewise, in Jātaka Story No.332,¹⁰³ the Bodhisatta, as Lord Justice to the king, admonishes the king for sentencing a village to be punished simply on the basis of one man’s report – which turns out to be false.

Likewise, Jātaka Story No.26¹⁰⁴ is a naïve little story about an elephant which, through repeatedly overhearing the talk of burglars conspiring in its stall, becomes as vicious as the burglars, taking all the men who approach in its trunk and dashing them

¹⁰³ Ibid., pp. 69-70.

¹⁰⁴ *The Jātaka*, Book I, pp.67-69.

to death on the ground. The king (Ananda) sends his minister (the Bodhisatta) to investigate the elephant's change of character. Learning of the evil influence the burglars have had, he counteracts this simply by sending good men to converse in the elephant stall. Jātaka Story No.184¹⁰⁵ tells of a horse that started limping only because it was imitating a lame trainer. At the end of Jātaka Story No.186,¹⁰⁶ we are told of a gardener who deliberately causes the fruit of a sweet mango tree to become bitter by planting sour-leaved nimb trees and creepers around the mango. The stanzas end with the line: "And so you see bad company will make the better follow suit". Jātaka Story No.503¹⁰⁷ tells how the Bodhisatta and Devadatta were once born as brother-parrots; but inspite of their having the same parents, when a whirlwind carries the Bodhisatta to a hermitage and Devadatta to a robber village; their characters develop accordingly. This is not the whole story, however. There are other tales, notably all those which recount great acts of renunciation, wherein individuals successfully resist the pressure of the environment. Along similar lines is Jātaka Story No.183¹⁰⁸, which contrasts the quiet behaviour of the thoroughbred horses, even after drinking strong drink, with the disorderly behaviour of donkeys fed on a much milder brew.

Jātaka Story No.422¹⁰⁹ is the story in which Devadatta as king of Ceti goes to the Avici hell by degrees because he repeatedly tells a lie at a time when lies were unheard of and nobody knew what sort of thing it was, even asking each other, when first told that their king was intending to lie, "what kind of a thing is lie? Is it blue or

¹⁰⁵ *The Jātaka*, Book II, pp. 67-68.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, pp.69-73.

¹⁰⁷ *The Jātaka*, Book XV, pp.267-271.

¹⁰⁸ *The Jātaka*, Book II, pp. 65-67.

¹⁰⁹ *The Jātaka*, Book VIII, pp.271-276.

yellow or some other colour?”¹¹⁰ in this story, the telling of a lie becomes a kind of Fall from primeval virtue and innocence; once the lie is told, “right” is destroyed and other vices ensue.

Devadatta again comes to grief by compromising with the truth in Jātaka Story No.474.¹¹¹ Here he is a young Brāhmaṇa who discovers that an outcaste sage (the Bodhisatta) has a charm enabling him to grow and sell fruits out of season. He manages to obtain the charm only by promising the Bodhisatta that, if at any time the king should ask him how he came by this charm, he will on no account attempt to disguise the lowly origin of his mentor. As we should expect – and as the Bodhisatta has predicted – when the test comes and the Brāhmaṇa is questioned, he does lie and he does lose the charm. Jātaka Story No.518¹¹² is yet another instance of Devadatta’s inability to honour his word. In this story, he poses as a sham ascetic and is thus able to get the snake-king to divulge the reason why the *garuḍas* are unable to capture snakes and carry them off. Before divulging his secret, the snake-king has obtained the sham-ascetic’s solemn promise that he will never disclose this secret to anybody else, least of all the Garuḍa-king. The ascetic promptly betrays his snake friend to the *garuḍas* and pays for his sin by going once again to the Avīci hell after his head has been split into seven pieces.

Jātaka Story No.432¹¹³ is a curious tale about a young man (the Bodhisatta) who obtains a spell which enables him to trace footsteps even after twelve years. The

¹¹⁰ Ibid., p. 273.

¹¹¹ *The Jātaka*, Book XIII, pp. 124-129.

¹¹² *The Jātaka*, Book XVI, pp. 42-48.

¹¹³ *The Jātaka*, Book IX, pp. 298-306.

king hears of this and, to test the boy's powers, himself steals and hides some royal treasure, then, pretending innocence, asks the boy to find both treasure and the culprit. The treasure is recovered without difficulty but the boy is reluctant to name the king as thief, telling stories which hint at the thief's identity instead. The king, however, insists that the thief be plainly exposed, with the result that, when the boy yields, the people are outraged, club the king to death and put the Bodhisatta on the throne. The king's offence seems to have been his deviousness; in his anxiety to test the boy's skill, he had told lies and played with the truth. As in the Jātaka Story No.422¹¹⁴, it is implied here that it is a particularly wicked thing for a king to compromise the truth since, by doing so, he undermines the foundations of the righteous state.

In the introductory story to Jātaka Story No.465¹¹⁵ the five hundred Brethren were provided for by Anathāpiṇḍika, Viśākhā and the king of Kosala. But at the king's palace, though the fare served was fine and various it was lacking in friendliness. As a result the Brethren took their food from the palace but went off to eat it at the house of Anathāpiṇḍika or Viśākhā or someone else they trusted. The king on discovering was highly perturbed and asked the Master why the Brethren were doing so. He got the reply that they were doing so because of the hospitality that they get from these places – their kindred, or with the Śākya families. On hearing so, the king became determined to get a Śākya girl as his queen-consort, so that the “Brethren would be his friends, as it were with their own kindred”,¹¹⁶ and accordingly caused a message to be sent to Kapilavatthu, the Headquarters of the Śākya clan, and the Buddha's birthplace, to this effect. Now, the Śākyas were subject to the authority of

¹¹⁴ *The Jātaka*, Book VIII, pp. 271-276.

¹¹⁵ *The Jātaka*, Book XII, pp. 91-98.

¹¹⁶ *The Jātaka*, Book XII, p. 91.

the king of Kosala; and as they dared not refuse, they “gathered together and deliberated”¹¹⁷ upon a way out of it. And to allow such a marriage would mean the end of their ‘clan’ purity which they very proudly cherished and also a transgression of “the customs of their clan”.¹¹⁸ They wriggled out of this problem by offering a child born out of the relationship of Mahānāma, a Śākya prince with a slave woman Nāgamuṇḍa by name. This, they reasoned would pass muster with the king as the girl, named Vasabhakhattiya, though of ‘impure’ birth was “by her father’s side noble”. They glossed over the real origins of the girl and thus sent her/as someone “nobly born”. And accordingly, got word sent to the king’s messengers that they were willing to give a daughter of the clan, and they might take her with them at once. But the Kosalans, knowing that “these Śākyas are desperately proud in matters of birth”¹¹⁹ decided to test the girl by seeing if the Śākyas will eat with her and so told the Sakyans that they will take none but one who eats along with them. The Sakyans tricked the Kosalans into believing that they were eating with her without actually doing so¹²⁰. However, the son Viḍuḍabha born to this Sakyan wife eventually discovers the truth about his parentage and, after experiencing the proud disdain and being discriminated against at the hands of the Śākyas, whom he believed were his

¹¹⁷ Ibid., p. 92.

¹¹⁸ Ibid., p. 92.

¹¹⁹ Ibid., p. 92.

¹²⁰ Mahānāma instructed that at his mealtime, Vasabhakhattiya, attired in her finery should be brought in and just as they start to eat, they were to produce an urgent fictitious letter from some king; and by the time he was through with the letter, the girl would have been through with her food.

mother's family, for reason of his lowly birth, he vows that he would not spare them when he is king. The story ends with slaying of all the Śākya¹²¹.

This story is important not only because of the deception practiced by the Sakyans on the Kosalans to preserve their purity of birth; but what is also visible is the stark reality of the hold of notions of purity amongst the people. This story does reflect very badly on the Buddha's own clansmen. It is still difficult to give much credence to the story except for the sense that there must have been some factual kernel that went into the fabrication of such an elaborate story, and at the very least is very unlikely to be purely a fanciful story. This story also quite strongly goes hand in hand with the Buddhistic stress on the precept of truth. And in this story, the Buddha's ultimate favour falls on the precept of truth than on his feeling for his kinsmen. And this story illustrates the counter-currents operational in the attitude of caste distinctions and is also a testament of individuals overcoming the limitations posed on them by the circumstances of their birth.

Jātaka Story No.487¹²² tells how in one of his incarnations as a Chaplain to the king of Benares, the Bodhisatta himself was affected by pride of caste. In this story, He regards his child by a slave-girl as a "bastard" and will not allow his family name to be given to it. But ironically, later in the same story, the Bodhisatta denies the validity of caste contradistinction as also his own Brahmanahood by saying:

¹²¹ Interestingly the Master went up to protect his kinsmen, and actually dissuaded King Viḍuḍabha three times from carrying out his revenge, but on the kings' fourth attempt, He is said to scan the former deeds of the Śākya and perceived that nothing could be done to do away with their evil doing and King Viḍuḍabha effected a great massacre by slaying "all the Śākya, beginning with babes at the breast."

¹²² *The Jātaka*, Book XIV, pp. 188-191.

With canvas dyed in many a tint pavilions may be made:

The roof, a many-coloured dome: one colour is the shade.

Even so, when men are purified, so is it here on earth:

The good perceive that they are saints, and never ask their birth.¹²³

Of course, this can be explained away as the very basis and nature of their calling required the ascetics themselves to be indifferent about their own caste pedigree – or lack of it.¹²⁴

Apart from Jātaka Story No. 490¹²⁵ which tells of an ascetic (the Bodhisatta) being unable to induce the mystic ecstasy because he was full of pride of his noble birth, the Bodhisatta again shows caste scruples in inverted form in Story no.497¹²⁶ when as an outcaste Caṇḍāla married to a woman of nobler birth, he refuses to consummate the marriage in the ordinary way on the grounds that this would involve “transgressing the rules of caste.”¹²⁷ Here, in the story, the Bodhisatta actually advises Maṇḍavya to not only feed the people considered pure and highborn but spread his good deed towards the poor and low-caste in order to garner more fruit. In the last section of Jātaka Story No.543,¹²⁸ however, the Bodhisatta preaches a sermon in verse to refute “the false doctrine” of Brāhmaṇas who had claimed descent of all

¹²³ Ibid., p.191.

¹²⁴ In fact, the Jātaka Story No.490 tells of an ascetic (the Bodhisatta) who was unable to induce the mystic ecstasy because he was full of pride of his noble birth.

¹²⁵ *The Jātaka*, Book XIV, pp.205-210.

¹²⁶ *The Jātaka*, Book XV, pp.235-244.

¹²⁷ Ibid., p.236.

¹²⁸ *The Jātaka*, Book XXII, pp. 80- 113.

Brahmanas from the creator Brahman and had maintained the efficacy of vedic ritual, especially sacrifice by fire.

These Brahmin all a livelihood require,
And so they tell us Brahma worship fire.
Why should the increate who all things planned
Worship himself the creature of his hand?
Doctrines and rules of their own, absurd and vain,
Our sires imagined wealth and power to gain;¹²⁹

The following *gāthās* describe the futility of sacrifices and the various duties of the different castes as envisioned in the brahmanical fold:

Brahmin he made for study; for command
He made the Khattiyas; Vessas plough the land;
Suddas he servants made to obey the rest;
Thus from the first went forth his high behest.¹³⁰

However ill-received and practically disregarded their theories might have been by the general people, still undoubtedly proud of their caste and creed which had then become their birth-rights, the Brāhmaṇas formed the learned class to which no

¹²⁹ Ibid., p.110. See also, Jātaka Story No.543, Book XXII, p.106-07, where the Brāhmaṇa in order to save his own skin recites:

Study, the offering of prayers, libations in the sacred fire,
These three things make a Brahmin's life inviolate to mortal's ire.

¹³⁰ Ibid., p.107.

other caste seems to have made the least claim. Evidently, the Brāhmanas were the repositories not only of learning in general but of knowledge of everything that was useful for the acquirement of which people thronged to them with offerings of food. The teaching of boys remained, as is shown in story after story, for the most part in the hands of these Brāhmana teachers.

Though it is referred to in numerous stories as a full-fledged university in the Jataka prose, Takkasilā as a seat of learning was yet to be. In the Jātaka proper, i.e. in the verses the name of Takkasilā occurs only twice, not as a seat of learning but as the capital of the kingdom of Gandhara. In Jātaka Story No. 229,¹³¹ we are told that Takkasilā itself constituted a kingdom the king of which having fortified himself within its boundaries successfully repulsed an attack of the king of Benares who had besieged it. Secondly, in Jātaka Story No. 456,¹³² the mention of Takkasilā occurs definitely in connection with the capital of the king of Gandhara having nothing to do with educational activities. The very silence of the Jātaka compilers regarding Takkasila as a university town is strongly indicative of the fact that its importance as a seat of learning was then unknown and the work of diffusion of knowledge was entirely in the hands of local Brāhmanas.

The Brāhmanas by no means excluded themselves when necessary from enjoying more lucrative occupations such as ministership or any other royal service, they even took to such work as money-lending with no scruples. It may be noted here that the lending of money was then a very flourishing business which even the

¹³¹ *The Jātaka*, Book II, pp.151-152.

¹³² *The Jātaka*, Book XI, pp. 61-64.

minister Vidhura, himself a Brāhmaṇa carried on with no loss of prestige. The Jātaka Story No. 495¹³³ enumerates some of the occupation taken up by the Brāhmaṇas other than teaching. These were: medicine, serving, oppressing people, trade, cultivation, cattle-breeding, the slaughtering of cows, hunting etc. in fact, every kind of occupation which the Brāhmaṇ could conveniently lay his hand on was accepted by him. As an instance of moneylending being profitably adopted by a Brāhmaṇa we may cite here the fact that before his eventful journey to Nāgaloka with the Yakkha Puṇṇaka, the Brāhmaṇ Vidhura made over to his relations among others the office of lending money.¹³⁴

In his statement to Puṇṇaka the Yakkha, with reference to his own status as the minister of king Dhananjaya, the Pandit Vidhura explained the meaning of the term 'dāsa' as follows:

“Some are slaves from their mothers, others are slaves bought for money, some come of their own will as slave, others are slaves driven by fear. These are the four sorts of slaves among men.”¹³⁵

No matter in whatever way they were obtained, the dāsa were never subjected to impolite or harsh treatment and most of them enjoyed equal privileges with the members of the family they lived in. they were afforded sufficient facilities to practice piety for the attainment of heaven in a family that had any desire to live righteously. As is evident from the lines where there is a talk about how the Khattriyas,

¹³³ *The Jātaka*, Book XIV, pp. 227-231.

¹³⁴ See, Jātaka Story No.545.

¹³⁵ *The Jātaka*, Book XXII, p.139.

Brāhmanas, Vessa, Sudras and Chandalas or Pakkusas all by practicing Dharma in this world become equal in heaven.¹³⁶

The criteria by which people, high and low, were judged as envisaged in the Jātaka Stories was by merit. Buddhists maintained that treatment must be given to a person according to his desert and if such was not respected and adhered to in a society the wise must quit the place immediately:

where'er the good find honour small or none,

Or less than others, live not, but begone.

Dull and clever, brave and coward, all are honoured equally:

Undiscriminating Mountain, good men will not stay one thee!

Best, indifferent and meanest Neru does not separate,

Undiscriminating Neru, we alas! Must leave thee straight.¹³⁷

All in all the Brāhmanas are a vilified lot in the Jātaka tales., in spite of the overall advantage or preference conferred to them in respect of their learning; with knowledge being considered the way/path to ultimate release or salvation. The Brāhmaṇa as a whole in the stories are usually depicted as a greedy lot, dishonest, ready to hood-wink people for their own gain, given to gluttony and usually learned men. The fact that the Bodhisatta in spite of his antipathy towards the Brāhmanas still

¹³⁶ Refer to, *Ibid.*, p. 126-156.

¹³⁷ *The Jātaka*, Book VI, p.160.

adopts the groups' identity in such a large number of his rebirths in the Jātaka stories is in itself quite an interesting and revealing paradox.¹³⁸ This lends credence to the contention that Buddhism was still very much a product of its immediate milieu trying to exert for itself a space within the pre-existent dominant setup of the Brahmanical social and ritual ideology.

The lower classes are represented in the Jātakas as engaged in agriculture, tending livestock, craft manufacture and performing drudge labour – working for wages to support themselves and their family is a very common description of the poor with loyalty and meekness being their stock characteristics.¹³⁹ Representation of loyalty include an occasion when the ex-farm servants of a *gahapati* who has fallen on bad times and becomes a victim of injustice take the initiative in seeking to ensure that justice is done to their ex-master.¹⁴⁰ This is in conformity with the moral order as prescribed by Buddhists: kind masters and loyal hardworking slaves not envious of their master's position and wealth which make for social harmony.

The quality of the life of the poor is one feature that the Jātakas capture comparatively faithfully. Abject poverty defines the lives of the lower classes, which is evident in the manner of their food, clothing, and dwelling. They are described as often beaten and reviled and abused by their masters. Their experiences were so limiting that a poor rustic who became a *bhikkhu* is represented as being able to see

¹³⁸ Instances like Jātaka Story No. 497 where the “Great Being” is said to be born outside the city as a Caṇḍāla's son are only but exceptions.

¹³⁹ *The Jātaka*, Book I, p.98.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p.286.

only the shaft of a plough in every object that he was shown.¹⁴¹ One poor man wanting to be eased of his poverty told the Buddha that he worshipped a tree sprite to deliver him from his misery.¹⁴²

In conclusion, therefore we can say that Buddhism retained the notion of social hierarchy but was tempered on the basis of differing access to the means of production and high and low status based on the nature of work pursued and on wealth. At the same time, the Jatakas provided a sterling opportunity for the acting out of the aspirations and consciousness of the lower classes within certain mediated parameters. In the words of Uma Chakravarti the moral world of the Buddhists is reaffirmed specially since the narratives simultaneously limit the playing out of social transgressions and yet permit or even encourage the countering of the Brāhmaṇas' hegemonic control over ideology through transgressions originating in the intellectual arena. All this is achieved while retaining a popular genre of story telling and letting the text give out a multiplicity of meanings at the same time ambiguous, subversive and reaffirmative.¹⁴³

Through the Jātaka narrative, the lower status groups are given representation well beyond their roles as objects for whom the rules are framed while the actions and focus of the elites is given a subjective treatment quite at variance from the normative categories. The 'lowly' characters exhibit the mundane emotions where they "act, laugh, weep, subvert, and resist as much as they fall in line, but even as they do so

¹⁴¹ Ibid., p.272.

¹⁴² Ibid., p.253.

¹⁴³ Chakravarti, Uma 'Women, men and beasts: The Jātakas as popular tradition', *SH*, Vol. IX, 1993, p. 70.

they retain a degree of autonomy from the consciousness and perceptions of those who represent high culture". We are exposed likewise to the elements of the 'popular' and are given the opportunity to envision the world from below through the narratives of people who very much identify with the subordinated and marginalized but also at the same time share the values of the upper classes through the representation of their assumed subjectivities.¹⁴⁴

¹⁴⁴ Chakravarti, Uma, 'Women, men and beasts: The Jātakas as popular tradition', *SH*, Vol. IX, 1993, p. 68-69.

CHAPTER III

The Jataka Stories and the Economic World of the Early Buddhists

The relationship between religion and economy is both complex and controversial.¹⁴⁵ This relationship between two ‘ideationally opposite systems’ – the former which concerns with the afterworld and is based on faith or belief in the existence of a supranormal realm; and the latter, which deals with the mundane affairs of daily business of human survival and advancement at different levels – as an individual, family, a state or even globally – is understandably a very vexed issue. Indeed, scholars have grappled with this question by either taking religion to be a dependent variable or an independent variable, posing, in the first case, how economic development affects religious participation and belief and in the second case how religiosity affects an individual/group character in areas such as work ethic, honesty, thrift and thereby influence economic performance and development.

¹⁴⁵ For further discussion see, Rachel M. McCleary and Robert J. Barro, ‘Religion and Economy’, *JEP*, Vol. 20, No. 2 (Spring, 2006), pp. 49-72, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/30033650>, Accessed: 25/05/2009, 02:13. And Welch, Patrick J. and Mueller, J. J., ‘The Relationships of Religion to Economics’, *Review of Social Economy*, 1470-1162, Vol. 59, Issue 2, 2001, Pages 185-202.

Thus, our problem is closely related with the proper understanding of the 'economic man'¹⁴⁶ and 'economic sense'.¹⁴⁷ And progressing from there, we should be posing the question as to whether the Buddhist practitioner was one such 'economic man' or otherwise? It was in the works of economists¹⁴⁸ through the 19th and 20th centuries that the term 'Economic Man' took on a more specific meaning of a person who acted rationally on complete knowledge, out of self-interest and the desire for wealth. Consequently the assumption has been criticized not only by economists on the basis of logical arguments, but also on empirical grounds by cross-cultural comparisons. Economic anthropologists¹⁴⁹ have demonstrated that in traditional societies, choices people make regarding production and exchange of goods follow patterns of reciprocity, which differ sharply from what the model postulates. Such systems have been termed as 'gift economy' rather than 'market economy'. Also, economists Thorstein Veblen, John Maynard Keynes, Herbert Simon argue against the idea stressing the effect of uncertainty and bounded rationality in the making of economic decisions by human beings. Thus, the overall question of the economic sensibility or otherwise of Buddhism is closely tied in with the question of the development of human ideals, more so with the civilization-ideational clash between the forces of selfish capital-seeking and communistic-welfare.

¹⁴⁶ Which Jenks, Albert Ernest, defines as "one who, for future gain, produces or traffics in consumable goods" in opposition to "natural man" who is "one who produces to satisfy only immediate wants." See, Jenks, Albert Ernest, 'Economic Man-A Definition', *American Anthropologist*, New Series, Vol. 4, No. 2 (Apr. - Jun., 1902), pp. 201-206.

¹⁴⁷ Which to Albert Ernest Jenks is a set of "unique mental attitude toward consumable goods" that the economic man "invariably" possess. The character that separates the 'primitive man' from the 'city' man. See, *ibid.*, pp. 201-202.

¹⁴⁸ Notable ones being Francis Edgeworth, William Stanley Jevons, Leon Walras, and Vilfredo Pareto and Lionel Robbins.

¹⁴⁹ Notable ones being Marshall Sahlins, Karl Polanyi, Marcel Mauss or Maurice Godelier.

Most analysis of Buddhism, till date have centered around the debate on individual-‘ism’ vis-à-vis commune-‘ism’.¹⁵⁰ Indeed, the Buddha, argues King, “had little concern for society as such and little conviction of its possible improvability”.¹⁵¹ The implication of this apparent approach has been that the meaning of the ‘small-scale philosophy’ implicit in Buddhist economics has remained largely divorced from analysis of larger-scale modern society, while, traditional viewpoint on Buddhism had argued that the Buddhist *sangha* was modeled on the *ganasanghas*.¹⁵² The *ganasangha* were one sort of political, territorial ‘clan’ that existed in what is now northern India around the time of the Buddha, about 6th century BC. Two key features of these clans were that its members exercised a collective power,¹⁵³ and held all assets as common property. This world of the monks is to be contrasted, argued Chakravarti, to the *janapadas*, the world of the laity. Decision-making in this lay world was dominated by the kings and the *gahapatis* (the owners of property who never work for anyone else). Here, the decision-making structures, in all realms,

¹⁵⁰ Most traditions of social analysis argue that the well-being of individuals and groups is intimately related to the ethics and rationale of social organization. The Buddha, on the other hand, is often viewed as seeing increased well-being as arising from only individual practice, rather than through the development of particular forms of social organization. For a fuller discussion, see Zadek, Simon, ‘The Practice of Buddhist Economics? Another View’, *AJES*, Vol. 52, No. 4 (Oct., 1993), pp. 433-445, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3487468>, Accessed: 25/05/2009, 01:52.

¹⁵¹ Cited in Pryor, Frederic, A Buddhist Economic System. In *Practice: The Rules of State Policy Making of the Ideal Kings Sought a 'Middle Way' between Right and Left*, *AJES*, Vol. 50, No. 1 (Jan., 1991), pp. 17-32, www.jstor.org/stable/3487026, Accessed: 25/05/2009 02:05

¹⁵² Zadek, Simon, ‘The Practice of Buddhist Economics? Another View’, *AJES*, Vol. 52, No. 4 (Oct. 1993), pp. 433-445.

¹⁵³ See, Chakravati, Uma ‘Buddhism as a Discourse of Dissent?: Class and Gender’, *Pravada*, Vol.1, No. 5, (May 1992), pp.12-18.

were strictly hierarchical, and included little or no process of consultation with the wider population.¹⁵⁴

The idea of individual and social ethics in Buddhism is important as it has pertinent bearing on the behaviour, and ‘economic sensibility’ of the group. It is commonly argued that the Buddhist grounding in the twin spiritual concepts of *nibbāna* (nirvana) and *kamma* (karma) makes it ill-disposed towards any notion of critical engagement or participation in the economic activity and rather encourages disengagement or indifference.¹⁵⁵ Pryor very succinctly puts the generally held notion on Buddhist ‘economic sensibility’ when he states that “its (Buddhist) doctrine of *nibbāna* (nirvana) appears both to deny the importance of economic activity and to encourage withdrawal from this world. Its doctrine of *kamma* (karma) appears to erode any critical analysis of the existing economic order”.¹⁵⁶ He further expanded on this position by going on to reduce the ‘ultimate aim’ of the Buddhist teaching of the *dhamma*, which he maintains, teaches how we are to penetrate the “obvious, visible aspects of life to determine their essential and true aspects”,¹⁵⁷ which will ultimately lead one to the attainment of *nibbāna*, which is, the transcendence of this existence. Likewise, the stress that Buddhism places on withdrawal from this world as the perfect virtue, and an emphasis on a life after the present one and a philosophy which

¹⁵⁴Zadek, Simon, ‘The Practice of Buddhist Economics? Another View’, *AJES*, Vol. 52, No. 4 (Oct. 1993), pp. 433-440.

¹⁵⁵ Max Weber’s argument being still the most formidable work, wherein he argued that Buddhist ideology was in character and “asocial”. See, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, Tr. Talcott Parsons, London: Unwin University Books, Second Edition, 2001.

¹⁵⁶ Pryor, Frederic L., ‘A Buddhist Economic System – in Principle: Non-attachment to Worldly Things Is Dominant But the Way of the Law is Held Profitable’, *AJES*, Vol.49, No.3, Jul. 1990, p.339.

¹⁵⁷ *ibid.* p.340.

seemingly stands for the renunciation of material things and wealth has led scholars to suggest that the religion and its philosophy is antithetical to the growth of an entrepreneurial spirit.

At the very outset, we need to clarify that though our stated objective here is to unravel the Buddhist economic sensibility or practice from the references in the Jātakas; it needs to be reiterated that the texts are produced in a particular social, political and economic context and thus our interpretation always needs to be the sum total of our understanding of the particular context in which the text was compiled as well as the context in which we find ourselves today. Therefore any attempt to understand such starkly pecuniary activities from apparently non-interested source categories will be fraught with unstated though understandable limitations. What is also of particular significance is the fact that the authorship and composition of works such as this was a communistic rather than an individual effort.¹⁵⁸

This section will seek to examine the guidance/instrumentality of Buddhism on forms of economy and economic activities in the light of the debate of its manifest philosophy as being an individualized or communalized creed. Issues concerning the Buddhist approach to problems specifically 'economic' problems in society and its sensitivity or otherwise to them will be examined. Most importantly the impact of the Buddhist institution of the monastic order supported – or in other words, living off the benevolence of the laity – is to be considered. Also, its approach to material well-being in the face of its starkly renunciatory creed will be examined. This section, thus, attempts to infer from the source-material under consideration i.e. the Jataka stories,

¹⁵⁸ See, Davids, T.W. Rhys, *Buddhist India*, New Delhi: MMPPL, 1999, p. 179.

the condition of economic life of the times and the situation under which these two ideationally opposing systems – Buddhist religion and religious economy operated. It is also an exercise in trying to separate the ‘prescriptive from the practical’ and also try and infer the moral or ethical rules behind this economic sensibility which either impeded or helped the Buddhist faith and its practitioners.

Buddhist ethics is very readily associated with its stress on the virtue on detachment. This tradition of virtue, if seen within the larger tradition of religious ethics, is not a stock characteristic of Buddhism. Nevertheless, this proposition tends to hold in agreement with the general tendency to consider Theravada Buddhism as dominated by the world-renouncing values of the monk antithetical to a social ethic. It also differs from the view that monastic and lay ethics, while not in opposition, are merely complementary. The moral value of voluntary poverty, ordinarily labeled a monastic virtue, can be seen as the foundation for other-regarding virtues such as compassion and benevolence.

The doctrine and practice/belief in transfer of merit finds numerous mention in the Jātaka stories; though clearly inconsistent with the earlier doctrine of *kamma*, which is emphasized throughout much of the Pali canon; wherein in Theravada Buddhism, each individual is responsible for their own deeds and can work towards acquiring and accumulating it, though in no way univocal, the Pali canon are more specific in emphasizing the principle of non-transferability of merit;¹⁵⁹ we can find that, “A man’s *kamma* is said to be his own. Each being must be an island unto

¹⁵⁹ See Malalasekera G.P. (1967), ‘Transference of Merit in Ceylonese Buddhist’, *Philosophy East and West*, Vol. XVII (1967), pp. 85-90.

himself, and work out his own salvation”¹⁶⁰ and also that, “there can be no sponsor (*pratibhoga*) – whether Brahman or recluse, whether *Mara* or *Brahma* – to protect a man against the fruit of his evil deeds.”¹⁶¹ Also, in the *Khuddakapatha*, *Kamma* is considered a treasure which not only is it not to be shared but also goes with a person on death, “accompanying him when he abandons what is to be given up.”¹⁶² According to McDermott, the *Jātaka* “documents an important stage in the development of the doctrine of the transfer of merit”,¹⁶³ as shown in the case of the *Sadhina Jātaka*, where the doctrine/belief in transference of merit is argued against – though, “not on dogmatic grounds, but on ethical grounds”.¹⁶⁴

However, as empirically attested by David E. Pfanner and Jasper Ingersoll¹⁶⁵ in their study of two modern-day Burmese and Thai Villages suggests that:

... merit does, to be sure, provide a strong incentive to produce more goods or services at times – to finance the expensive celebrations of family life cycle events, especially ordination, marriage and death. But the incentive here is to earn enough money to spend on the particular family celebration for merit and social prestige, not to accumulate more wealth to invest in a permanent increase in production. But then again, these villagers believe that greater

¹⁶⁰ See *Samyutta Nikāya* III. 42, cited in, McDermott, James P., ‘Sadhina Jātaka: a case against the transfer of merit’, *JAOS*, Vol.94, No.3, 1974, p.385.

¹⁶¹ *Anguttara Nikāya* I. 172, cited in, *ibid.*, p.385.

¹⁶² *Khuddakapatha* VIII.8-9, cited in *ibid.*, p.385.

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*, pp.385-387.

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, pp.385-387.

¹⁶⁵ E. Pfanner, David and Ingersoll, Jasper, ‘Theravada Buddhism and Village Economic Behavior: A Burmese and Thai Comparison’, *JAS*, Vol.21, No.3, (May 1962) pp. 341-361.

merit will eventually bring greater fortune. In their terms merit-making is a sort of capital investment.¹⁶⁶

Wealth is considered simply as a return for merit already accumulated and also is a means for making more merit; the wealthier a person, then it is taken to imply copious merit. So, does the value placed on merit ever serve as an incentive to increase production, in order to gain more wealth? Wealth is a sign of merit already made; a reward for merit already made, and a means for making more merit. The more wealth possessed, the greater the merit – however, merit to the religious-mind is merely a qualitative value which is ‘used to explain’ and indexed to a persons poverty or wealth, illness or health, misery or happiness - rather than serving as a quantitative/functional value which (rarely) acts as an incentive for systematic, rational efforts to accumulate more wealth for capital investment.¹⁶⁷

It can also be said that the quest for merit also do influence the consumption and redistribution of wealth in any particular society in the form of offerings for village/community works or directly to the monks and their establishments. And as society becomes more complex, David E. Pfanner and Jasper Ingersoll had observed in their study that society becomes more ‘segmented’ and the village roles ‘differentiated’, and individuals begin to become less integrated in the life of each other in their various roles, so that “relationships among them seem more formal and specific than in earlier days”¹⁶⁸ the aspects of village life are no longer so integrated in the life of each individual as he enacts his various roles. The aspects of life have

¹⁶⁶ Ibid., p.356.

¹⁶⁷ See, *ibid.*, pp. 341-361.

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 354.

become more discrete segments, and relationships among them seem more formal and specific than in earlier days. And secularization of the economy and the fading away of traditional pervasiveness of religion has resulted in the tacit challenging of the value placed on merit making in the traditional economic way for alternative 'satisfaction through consumption'. While many of the traditional influences of religious norms and values on economic life though increasingly diminish the functional consequence of changing economic beliefs and behaviour upon religious life needs extended engagement.

The concept of merit continues to occupy central position in the belief systems and is "still a central value which serves as a basic moral explanation for fortune and misfortune, and as an incentive for much religious and social behaviour."¹⁶⁹ As economic activities become secularized and the traditional pervasiveness of religion faded somewhat, the value placed on making merit in so much of economic activity has been tacitly challenged by a major alternative: satisfaction through material consumption. Also, "merit does not result in activities that foster the accumulation of productive wealth in either society, but merit-directed activities do have important economic consequences through their effects on the disposition of income."¹⁷⁰ While many of the traditional influences of religious norms and values on economic life remain, in diminished degree, it seems evident that this analysis must be extended to include the functional consequences of changing economic beliefs and behaviour upon religious life in order to understand religion and economy in a modernizing society.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid., p. 360.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid., p. 360.

To the Buddhist, the conceptualisation of virtue encapsulates the fundamental qualities like overcoming attachment to self and acting compassionately on behalf of others, which can be regarded as an appeal to and practice of “voluntary poverty and extensive benevolence”¹⁷¹. Theravada Buddhism emphasizes the development of a character that seemingly stress high regards on the cultivation of self-restraint and self-renunciation and an active, disinterested regard for others, in other words the cultivation of voluntary poverty and extensive benevolence. This stand is reinforced by the Buddhist invocation to the illusory nature of the world and individual self and declaring detachment as a prerequisite for salvation from this illusion.

Any discussion on the economic life of the time however cannot preclude a discourse on the normative/prescriptive hierarchies that were sought to be imposed in a society, as we cannot, however enticing, discount the stranglehold of the devious designs of caste-based allotment of labour into the daily exchanges. Moreover, the logic behind the whole structure would be so strongly and adroitly argued that it takes no expert to guess the extent/validity of its hold and relevance on the contemporary population.

However, in the India of that time when the Jātakas were composed, and based on the reading of this particular source, caste seems to be seldom an index of avocation. We find numerous instances of the different ‘occupational groups’ encroaching into other occupations meant for other castes. For instance, a sage of

¹⁷¹ See, Swearer, Donald K., ‘Buddhist Virtue, Voluntary Poverty, and Extensive Benevolence’ *The Journal of Religious Ethics*, Vol.26, No.1, Spring 1998, pp.71-103.

great power and reputation named Matanga was found among the *Caṇḍālas*¹⁷². It also appears quite clearly that the several 'economic' pursuits in life such as trade, cultivation, money lending, asceticism and hunting were practically interchangeable as will appear from the following lines in the *Jātakas*:

“Trade, farming gleaning, usury, whate'er thy calling be,
See that thou sin not, but by these support thy family.”¹⁷³

Moreover, when it came to general employment avenues and also employability, we see that religious affiliations and group membership seem to have been quite instrumental. We have a story where the Bodhisatta brought forward Chattapāni before the king and recommended him to the post of keeper for the park, vouching that he had the four virtues:

“I envy not, and drink no wine;
No strong desire, no wrath is mine,”¹⁷⁴

We have the story where the Śākya tribe of Kapilavattthu and Koliya tribes of Koliya disputed over the allocation of the waters of the river Rohini. This story gives us an indication of the practice of damming of rivers for irrigation purpose; and the dispute in the story revolves around the release of water from the dam, which due to dry conditions was barely enough for one catchment area and if the two sides drew water from the dam, both sides would suffer; the two tribes were arguing as to which

¹⁷² See *Jātaka* Story No. 497.

¹⁷³ *The Jātaka*, Book XV, p.263.

¹⁷⁴ *The Jātaka*, Book II, p.135

side should get the water. Later, the dispute flared up into a situation of war between the two neighboring tribes where the Bodhisatta had to intervene.¹⁷⁵

The Great Being refused to accept the 1000 acres which the Brāhmaṇas offered him, but took only eight acres. The Brāhmaṇas set up boundary stones, and made over this property to him.¹⁷⁶ Concerns for the recipients' needs never really did seem to matter in gift-giving in early Buddhism; as illustrated in the case here where the donee of the said land is a parrot.

In T.W. Rhys Davids' *Buddhist India*, we find listed 25 different trade-crafts¹⁷⁷ viz. elephant-riders, cavalry, charioteers, archers, nine different grades of army-folks, slaves, cooks, barbers, bath-attendants, confectioners, garland-makers, washer men, weavers, basket-makers, potters, clerks, accountants. Also on the list are workers in wood (including carpenters and cabinet-makers, wheel-wrights, and builders of houses, ships and vehicles of all sorts), workers in metal (including all sorts of iron implements, and gold and silver works of great delicacy and beauty), workers in stone, weavers, leather workers (who made all sorts of foot-coverings and sandals), potters, ivory-workers, dyers, jewelers, the fisher folk, butchers, hunters and trappers, the cooks and confectioners, the barbers and shampooers (who also had their own guilds), garland-makers and flower sellers, sailors (not only on the rivers but also sea-going), rush workers and basket-makers, painters (who also freely dabbled in frescos).¹⁷⁸ He further goes on to add that, of the above list, with the exception of two

¹⁷⁵ *The Jātaka*, Book XXI, pp.219-220.

¹⁷⁶ *The Jātaka*, Book XIV, p.178.

¹⁷⁷ See, Davids, T.W. Rhys, *Buddhist India*, p.88.

¹⁷⁸ See for further description and specific references, *ibid.*, pp.90-96.

or so of the crafts, all of them were administered by their own guilds. These guilds, which he maintained were “not unlike the medieval guilds in Europe”¹⁷⁹ were empowered to settle internal disputes arising amongst its members, including their wives and disputes involving one guild with another were arbitrated by the Lord High Treasurer.¹⁸⁰ We find that the Jatakas list masons, blacksmiths, carpenters, painters, men skilled in all arts and crafts, with their razor-adzes, spades, hoe, and many other tools.¹⁸¹ In the same story, the queen-mother and Kevatta are specifically mentioned as having paid bribes¹⁸² to the workers of Mahosadha to stop them from demolishing their houses.¹⁸³

Apart from the guilds such as the goldsmiths, blacksmiths, carpenters, potters, architects, sculptors, painters, shoemakers etc already listed above; the principal occupation appears to have been trade and cultivation. Inland trade was carried by caravans moving along well-known routes lying across hills and deserts and also overseas.¹⁸⁴ T.W. Rhys Davids also drew up two major arterial routes that were in use

¹⁷⁹ Eighteen being the total number of guilds usually enumerated. See, *The Jatakas*, Book XXII, p. 14.

¹⁸⁰ Jātaka Story No. 445 narrates how the post supposedly came about. In the story, the king of Benares gave Pottika “the post of Treasurer and with it went the judgeship of all the merchant guilds. Before that no such office had existed, but there was this office ever after” *the Jātaka*. Book X, p. 27. Also see, Davids, T.W. Rhys, *Buddhist India*, p.97.

¹⁸¹ Jātaka Story No. 546. In the same Jataka story we find the specific mention of ship-wrights sent out by Mahosadha to built 300 ships.

¹⁸² *The Jātaka*, Book XXII, p.222.

¹⁸³ “... in this way, by seizing houses in all parts of the city, and procuring bribes, they got nine crores of gold pieces.” Ibid., p.222.

¹⁸⁴ See, Jātaka Story No.1.

by traders of the times based on the oldest *Pali* books.¹⁸⁵ The journey was usually undertaken by merchants either on boats, caravans or bullock-carts; the routes were:

1. North to South-west: Savatthi to Patitthana (Paithan) and back via Mahissati, Ujjeni, Gonaddha, Vedisa, Kosambi, and Saketa.
2. North to South-east: Savatthi to Rajagaha via Setavya, Kapilavastu, Kusinara, Pava, Hatthi-gama, Bhandagama, Vesali, Pataliputta, and Nālanda; and probably upto Gaya; and from there upto Benares and Tamralipti.
3. East to West: mainly along the great rivers; along the Ganges, westernmost point upto Sahajati, and Kosambi along the Jumna. Southwards, right upto the mouth of the Ganges and from there to Burma.¹⁸⁶

Besides these, we find in the *Jātakas*, the evidence of trading exchanges between Videha and Gandhara¹⁸⁷, Benares to Bharukaccha and thence to the “Golden Land (Burma)”¹⁸⁸, Benares and the “Gold Country”¹⁸⁹ Burma by sailing down the river Ganges to its mouth¹⁹⁰, Champa¹⁹¹ and moreover we also find the mention of the

¹⁸⁵ See T.W. Rhys Davids, *Buddhist India*, pp.102-105.

¹⁸⁶ See, *Ibid.*, pp.103-104

¹⁸⁷ In *The Jātaka*, Book VII, p. 222; King of Videha asked about his friend, the king of Gandhara from the merchants.

¹⁸⁸ In *The Jātaka*, Book V, pp.123-125; King Tamba of Benares deputed Sagga, a minstrel to look for Sussondi, his queen-consort.

¹⁸⁹ Said to be the district of Burmah and Siam, “the Golden Chersonese.”

¹⁹⁰ *The Jātaka*, Book X, pp.10-11; a certain Brāhmaṇa, named Sankha set sail for the Gold Country to bring back wealth to keep up his lavish alms-giving.

¹⁹¹ *The Jātaka*, Book XXII, p. 19-22; Prince Mahajanaka, the son of Ariththajanaka, on attaining the age of 16 years set off for Suvannabhumi from Campa to carry on trade and make money to regain his father’s kingdom usurped by his uncle Polajanaka..

kingdom of Baveru, identified with Babylon visited by merchants from Benares.¹⁹² The Jātaka stories relate many a fine and beautiful tale of the resilience and qualities of the overland merchants of the times, and the conditions of their journey across vast barren stretches of wilderness.¹⁹³ The Jātaka Story No.2¹⁹⁴ especially very clearly describes the journey undertaken by a group of 500 trading carts under the leadership of the Bodhisatta. It also mentions that these trading caravans usually were led across these wastelands by the aid of ‘desert-pilot’ who were adept in reading the position of the stars by night.¹⁹⁵

Thus, we can assume that there existed brisk and vigorous inland as well as overseas trading activities as the sea-borne merchant-men of those times are said to be familiar with and having trading contacts with adjacent lands such as Burma, Ceylon, Persia, Arabia and as far westward as Syria and Babylon. For instance, we have the story of a master mariner named Supparaka-kumāra, who by the age of 16 years had gained “complete mastery over the art of seamanship”. Upon his father’s death he took up the position of the head of the mariners, a calling to be cut short by an accident whereby he turned blind in both eyes following an injury by salt water. Though he continued being the head of the mariners, he no longer plied ships himself and thus went off to seek service under the King of Bhāru who employed him as his official valuer and assessor. However, on realizing that the king was not rewarding him to the level commensurate to his accomplishments, he quit, and came back to his

¹⁹² *The Jātaka*, Book IV, pp. 83-84.

¹⁹³ See Jātaka Story Nos.1 and 2.

¹⁹⁴ *The Jātaka*, Book I, pp. 9-11.

¹⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, p.10.

home, the “seaport of *Bharukaccha*” and lived there.¹⁹⁶ Subsequently, there he was approached by a group of merchants who had outfitted a ship and were looking for a skipper. Despite his physical limitations, he was convinced by their complete trust and he went on to lead them in an arduous voyage lasting 4 months through different fanciful oceans and seas.¹⁹⁷

Moreover, we also find copious instances of the kind infrastructural arrangements that were in place to facilitate trading and other contacts. For instance, we find that the citizens of the kingdoms of *Aṅga* and *Magadha* who were traveling from one land to the other, used to stay in a house on the marches of the two kingdoms where they rested, sheltered and proceeded from there.¹⁹⁸

Any discussion on the economic life of the early Buddhist cannot leave behind considerations and conceptualization of welfare, be it the welfare of fellow humans or any sentient beings. And this concern for welfare of others, irrespective of what is behind the whole concern can again be closely linked to the idea of morality. Morality more specifically involves actions between people and a concern for other people's welfare: moral rules prescribe how we ought to act towards others and what considerations we ought to have”¹⁹⁹.

¹⁹⁶ See, *Jātaka* Story No. 463.

¹⁹⁷ Which some scholars have opined, could be a description of the Pacific Ocean. Vide Iliot's *Hinduism and Buddhism Outside India*, vol.III, cited in De, Gukuldas, *Significance and Importance of the Jātakas*, Calcutta: Calcutta Univeristy, p.106.

¹⁹⁸ *Jātaka* Story No. 227.

¹⁹⁹ Jones, Richard H. (1979), ‘Theravada Buddhism and Morality’, *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, Vol.47, No.3, Sep. 1979, p. 372.

One is compelled to observe on this immensely popular point, where the Jātaka tales are moving very markedly in the direction of the quality of sacrificial self-giving, often in the most extravagant terms. The giving of the Bodhisattas in the Jātaka tales, which later emerges as the ideal of the Mahayanists may have a very similar thrust. In various rebirths, the *Bodhisatta* is portrayed as giving away all his possessions, his limbs, his life-and even his wife and children – not usually out of compassion or self-denial; but more often to fulfill his anxiety for attaining enlightenment.²⁰⁰

We find that in the cases of both Sivi and Vessantara²⁰¹ (the Bodhisatta in each case) they are dissatisfied with gifts, however lavish, which “comes from without”. They vow that if anybody asks for part of their own bodies – heart, eyes, flesh, and blood – they will, without a moment’s hesitation give it. In each case Sakka hears the vow. He comes to Sivi in the guise of a blind old Brāhmaṇa and asks for an eye. Sivi gives him both eyes. One of his courtiers asks him what he hopes to gain by this sacrifice – is it “life, beauty, joy or strength”?²⁰² Sivi replied that it is none of these things, neither is it glory, sons, wealth or kingdoms, but,

This is the good old ways of holy men;

Of giving gifts enamoured is my soul.²⁰³

²⁰⁰ See, *ibid.*, pp. 371-387.

²⁰¹ Jātaka Story Nos. 499 and 547 respectively.

²⁰² *The Jātaka*, Book XV, p. 253.

²⁰³ *Ibid.*, p. 253.

However, it turns out that his action is not as disinterested as this would suggest. Having donated one eye to the Brāhmaṇa , Sivi says to him, “the eyes of omniscience is dearer than this eye... a thousandfold: there you have my reason for this action,” Sivi is wanting to exchange his ordinary human vision for “the eyes of omniscience”; sure enough, Sakka returns to him undisguised and restores his eyes, not mere “natural eyes”, “but these eyes are called the eyes of Truth Absolute and Perfect”.²⁰⁴

In many instances in the Jātakas, we find the whole idea of giving to be governed more by a soteriological end rather than as an act of selfless act – the ‘end’ being the accumulation of merit which will eventually help gain enlightenment. In Buddhism, the amount of merit acquired depends upon the sanctity of the recipient. And thus, socially worthy concerns are usually ignored in favor of giving to monks engaged in attaining enlightenment. In effect there is an exchange system: monks get material support and in return bestow the giver merit. Since widows and orphans do not have this to offer or at least have lesser efficacy than the priests they tend to be ignored; moreover, their material situation is seen as being the result of past actions and only improvable by their own actions. Even the monks themselves can be ignored: any goods given to an impious monk are expressions of reverence not for the monk himself, but for the robe and the Order (and so merit still accrues). Thus, there is a seemingly convoluted mechanism in operation that feeds on the layman’s need for accumulating merit and in this endeavour the order of monks is in no least willing accomplices.

²⁰⁴ Ibid., p. 254-256.

In Story No. 495²⁰⁵ where the king of Kosala is discussed by the assembled brethren, praising his goodness in giving away such incomparable gifts to the brethren by examining and selecting the “most holy saints among them” and by thus doing so, was not only engaged in giving; but also “gave it in a case of much merit”.²⁰⁶ And interestingly so, too; the Master also attested to this sort of ‘discriminate giving’ declared that “Tis no wonder, Brethern, that the King of Kosala, being the follower of such as I am, gives with discrimination wise men of old, ere yet the Buddha had arisen, even they gave with discrimination.”²⁰⁷ Moreover the same story, relates how the king Koravya of the city of Indapatta in the kingdom of Kuru, though giving away much, even to the extent of setting “all India in a commotion”, never really gained much satisfaction as there was not even one among those who received those gifts one who “kept so much as the Five Virtues”.²⁰⁸

Similarly, so is the case in another story where king Bharata of Roruva in the kingdom of Sovira, upon realizing that his alms were being “devoured by worthless greedy people” in consultation with his chief queen Samuddavijaya,²⁰⁹ resolved to seek out worthy recipients to receive their gifts.

He who gives to righteous men,

Strong in holy energy,

Crosses *Yama*’s flood, and then

Gains a dwelling in the sky.

²⁰⁵ *The Jātaka*, Book XIV, pp.227-231.

²⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, p.227.

²⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, p.227.

²⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 227.

²⁰⁹ Interestingly, she is described as a woman “wise and full of knowledge.” *The Jātaka*, Book XV, p.280.

Like to war is charity:

Hosts may flee before a few:

Give a little piously:

Bliss hereafter is your due.

Prudent givers please the Lord,

Worthily they spend their toil.

Rich the fruit their gifts afford,

Like a seed in fertile soil.²¹⁰

Also in the same story we have the Elders of the Assembly declaring:

The world's on fire, decay and death are there the flame to feed;

Save what you can by charity, a gift is saved indeed.²¹¹

Here in the cases cited above, the anxiety to give gifts away to 'deserving' donors is pretty evident. And from it we can surmise the fact that giving then, was not only about a detachment felt for material wealth or not even a giving done out of concern for fellowmen who need it more. Rather, the whole idea of giving (in the secular sense) apparently becomes an exercise to serve a totally selfish end i.e. to maximize one's chance to gain more merit and thence to be enabled for a better deal in the next rebirth.

²¹⁰ *The Jātaka*, Book VIII, p. 281.

²¹¹ *Ibid.*, p.281

In simple words, what this implies is that the activity of giving attains a starkly utilitarian/base objective rather than a moral/religious one; this practice has the tendency to use other people as merely occasions for our merit-gaining – obviously not a moral approach to others. There is an irony in this arrangement: the more a monk renounces material goods, the more worthy he is and therefore the more material goods he is given.

In a stark reflection on the kind of lavish generosity that the kings bestowed on their favored subjects; we are also exposed in some measure to the flipside of such actions of the rulers in the form of the unmistakable indication of the heavy and possibly (at times) coercive fiscal extractions in the form of taxes and other state levies:

Even so the wise man without violence,
Gathers king's dues n village and in town,
Increases wealth, and yet gives no offence:
He walks the way of right and of renown.²¹²

We also find a story that describe the kind of joy and relief that people feel on being rid of a tyrant who exacted high taxes.²¹³ Likewise, is the story about king Pancala, in the kingdom of Kampilla, who being “established in evil courses and reckless, ruled his kingdom unrighteously”.²¹⁴ His ministers were likewise,

²¹² *The Jātaka*, Book VII, p. 198.

²¹³ Jātaka Story No. 240: “story of a wicked and unjust king named *Maha-piṅgala*, the Great Yellow King, who with taxes and fines, and many mutilations and robberies crushed the folk as it were sugarcane in a mill”.

²¹⁴ *The Jātaka*, Book XVI, p. 54.

unrighteous. His subjects being unable to fend for themselves and their families, and suffering under the oppressive taxation and living in perpetual fear of the king's men deserted their settlements and "wandered in the forests like wild beasts."²¹⁵ The same story relates how in a certain village tax-collectors killed a dappled calf and stripped off its skin for use as their sword-sheath.²¹⁶ Though it is possible to read this story as giving indication into the fate of a kingdom and its people under unrighteous rulers; it is also quite significant that oppression was said to be in the form of oppressive taxes and fines.

In yet another telling instance, in *Jātaka* Story No. 31²¹⁷ we find the village headman being concerned at the villagers taking to a pious life because, he avers, "when these men used to get drunk and commit murders and so forth, I used to make a lot of money out of them not only on the price of their drinks but also by the fines and dues they paid."²¹⁸ The fields seem to have been measured or assessed for taxation right on the fields as evident from a story where a farmer rues the fact that he had taken a handful of rice from an untithed field.²¹⁹ A perusal of the same story also indicates to us that tax was possibly payable in kind/produce.

There exists a very clear and marked dichotomy between the towns and the intervening forests between settled human habitations. The former are places of working merit and alms begging round, while the latter places are seen as truly wild

²¹⁵ *Jātaka* Story No.520.

²¹⁶ *The Jātaka*, Book XVI, p. 57.

²¹⁷ *The Jātaka*, Book I, pp.76-83.

²¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 78.

²¹⁹ As evident from *Jātaka* Story No.276.

places which only robbers and wicked ogres inhabit (these wicked ogres in most cases where they come into contact with the outside influences are usually taken to their new abode in the inhabited areas to be plied with food and other delicacies). Moreover the forest usually is the site of negative forces like forest fires and droughts, peopled by vile spirits and ogres, and finally infested with robbers who are on the prowl to way-lay unsuspecting way-farers and merchant-caravans engaged in trade. The way in which the image of the forest is vilified and at the same time urbanity is valorized if taken along with the fact that this period is co-terminus with the period of increased trading activities is indeed revealing. It also goes to indicate the close proximity of the Buddhist philosophical and pragmatic understanding of the indispensability of the merchant/moneyed class to its support system.

The indelible bond between the economic and religious sphere of activity is best illustrated by the story in the *Jātaka* where the Bodhisatta came to life as Brāhmaṇa. When he grew up he first learned the three Vedas and all learning at Takkaṣilā and on the death of his parents became a recluse, dwelling in the Himālayas, and attained “all the mystic Attainments and Knowledges”.²²⁰ Here, he has practically attained everything that a recluse/ascetic would set out for but by and by we find mentioned in the text that he remained there “till need of salt and other necessaries of life brought him back to the paths of men”²²¹ and he had to come to the city of Benares where upon on reaching there, took up quarters in the royal pleasance and on the next day “dressed himself with care and pains, and in the best

²²⁰ *The Jātaka*, Book I, p. 317.

²²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 317.

garb of an ascetic”²²² he went forth looking for alms in the city. This small story immediately indicates to us how, eventually, even the most accomplished of ‘renouncers’ still had their needs met and taken care of by the settled laymen. Also what is of significance is also the care that the ‘liberated’ soul took in his looks before setting out for his rounds of alms-seeking.

Yet another instance, of the country and town divide is apparent in *Jātaka* Story No. 202²²³ where One day, Laukuntaka, one of the eighty Elders was at the gate of Jetavana to salute the Buddha, when thirty brothers from the country arrived at the gate on their way to salute the Buddha too. Upon seeing the Elder there, they took him to be some novice and taunted him in all ways (“they pulled the corner of his robe, they caught his hands, held his head, tweaked his nose, got him by the ears and shook him, and handled him very rudely”);²²⁴ here, firstly, the group of thirty unruly brothers are identified as being from the country and as if consequent to that, they were behaving in ways unbecoming and rude.

We are also witness to a general state of lawlessness in the outlying areas as we have stories that tell about the borderers raiding the countryside; and having assailed a town, and taken prisoners, laden with spoil they returned to the border. Further, from the story we can immediately see the practice of making the people captured in these predatory raids and plunders, either being taken as wives by their captors or also as slaves. This is apparent from the captive-girl’s thought as she tries

²²² Ibid., p. 317.

²²³ *The Jātaka*, Book II, pp. 98-100.

²²⁴ Ibid., p. 98.

to find a way of escape, “these men, when they have carried us off home, will use us as slaves; I must find some way to escape”.²²⁵

A brother who had gone for meditation in a forest in the border areas of the land of Kosala had his cell burnt down and duly reported it to the villagers that he was “living in discomfort”,²²⁶ who were likely to feel obligated to make another hutment for the mendicant; but interestingly in this story we find the villagers successively dismissing the mendicant telling him that they would first have to see to it that their fields were properly irrigated as the land was in drought and then when the irrigation was over with, they again told him that they had to do the sowing; then that they had fences to put up; the weeding; the reaping and then the threshing and went on for a full three months. This story apart from its significance in terms of its description of an annual agricultural-cycle of the time; what is indeed more significant is the fact that the villagers of that particular village come across as pretty economic-minded and un-inclined to put religious duty/obligation ahead of their responsibilities to ensure their livelihood.²²⁷

So much so, for the question of the relations between the roles of the king and ascetic; and of the passage from the one to the other as also of the relation between state and sangha. As we have seen, this is one of the major concerns of the Jataka collection. There are few stories which look at things more from the viewpoint of the individual, but which stress the extent to which the individual is influenced by his environment.

²²⁵ *The Jātaka*, Book XIII, p. 137.

²²⁶ *The Jātaka*, Book I, p. 91.

²²⁷ See, *Jātaka Story No. 36*.

In conclusion, the laws and conventions of the society and state in which Buddhism took roots can be said to have evolved out of the main conception of their surrounding be it religion or long before the advent of Buddha and hence it would not be out of place here to have a brief reference to the pre-Buddhist conception of religion in so far as it is helpful to our understanding at the outset of our entering upon a discussion of the then state of society and politics in the Jataka gleanings. Given the socio-economic and historical background that Buddhism arose from, the significance of the order of monks as an avenue of social, geographical and economic mobility for the vast majority of the population attributed lower order in society cannot be over-emphasised and needs to be analysed further.

According to the Buddhist doctrine of contentment, full happiness comes through one's detachment from the tragic human craving for all sorts of things in life, including life itself. This austere, rarified ideal is fairly commonly known among the practitioners of Buddhism, but rarely adhered to and conveniently so, not considered to be fully applicable except to people with extraordinarily high merit. But, this doctrine of contentment is enough a part of a laymen's ideal values to be of some influence. For one, this vision or ideal of contentment and happiness does probably limit the material aspirations of some or atleast create ambivalence and uncertainty among some people with regard to material aspirations; and secondly, it offers alternative satisfactions or a rationalization to some of the poorest section in society who cannot enjoy a higher level of consumption in this life.

CHAPTER IV

The Representation of Animal Characters in the Jatakas: Form and Content

To many philosophers, both ancient and modern, man is regarded as the “representational animal” or *homo symbolicum*, the creature whose distinct character is the creation and the manipulation of signs – things that “stand for” or “take the place of” something else²²⁸. In literature, this has been employed in a relatively elastic notion sometimes to achieve a realistic yet simplified notion of reality and the everyday life. The Jataka tales is one such class of ancient literature which made use of this to bring to us the reflection of the society of its time.

According to Henderson, it is this very character of man – as *homo symbolicus* which has attracted many of the world’s foremost thinkers like Frazer, Freud, Jung, Levy-Bruhl, Malinowski, Whitehead, Cassirer, Jaspers, Heidegger, Bultmann, Eliade, and Tillich. And this very problematic of the development of thought and culture had gone hand in hand with the interest in the question of symbols, their origin, function and truth. Furthermore, he concedes that, human life because of its “symbolic mode”,

²²⁸ For a full discussion on the idea of man as a representational animal, see, Henderson, Edward H. *Homo Symbolicus: A Definition of Man*, *Man and World*, Vol. 4, No. 2, May 1971, pp.131-150

may be thought of as a mean between complete immersion in and complete detachment from the here and now²²⁹.

The Jātaka stories by their very nature, unmistakably, depends a lot on the usage of symbols and re-presentations of the reality through different allegories of what is the 'here and now' of things. Likewise, the stories and characters thus presented in the Jatakas thereby become tools for the subversion of reality and the product of an ultimate and deliberate recasting of the present consciousness. They therefore present to us a veritable wealth of symbolic imagery and literary tropes of the contemporaneous society that are sometimes allusive or otherwise illusive.

To put it rather broadly, the Jātaka tales are thus more truly a comment on or a presentation than a record. It is a way of observing a society that reveals the way the community feels about itself. It preserves for posterity important moments in a cultural movement through time – otherwise fluid and amorphous. It does this by means of images and allegories that are to be found in the imaginative tales and poems. This is because those images embody aspects of tradition that can be expressed in no other way.

There exists in literature a long-standing tradition of the use of animal characters – be it the “fabulous creatures” like the unicorn, the phoenix or the fire-spewing dragons to the somewhat personified but otherwise natural animals of the

²²⁹ It is in this imaginative and symbolic contrast in between the pre-symbolic life of complete immersion and the post-symbolic life of complete detachment that he identifies the “symbolic man”. See, Henderson, Edward H. *Homo Symbolicus: A Definition of Man, Man and World*, Vol. IV, No.2, May 1971, pp. 131-133.

fables – These beasts, through continued usage and reference, along with the fabulous and the exotic became real in public fancy; and symbolized for the public-in-the-audience, a “truth” or “reality” that subsumed in their consciousness a “true” and “real” symbol of the eternal and they in turn were utilized especially in religious literature, to prefigure the birth, life and death of “god-like” figures or else the sins and foibles of mankind.²³⁰ The Jātaka is seen as a special case of a general tendency to heighten the super-normal attributes of Gotama and to give to his teaching the sanction of information and insights not accessible to the ordinary run of humanity.²³¹ The phenomena of talking, feeling and thinking animals is a common stock of most folklore, which in the Indian context understandably gains much more significance and power in view of the believe in rebirth – which is especially all the more so true of Buddhist philosophy.

The relationship between normative religious concepts or symbols and the basic cultural orientation of social groups at the macro-societal level – or in other words the relationship between religious ideology and society which spawns it is clearly discernible in this repertoire of diverse stories. It concerns and exposes us to the ideational content of religion, with the thought process underlying belief, and with the evolution of both. From speculations into the origins and evolutionary stages in religious development being replaced by speculation about the social functions of religion; and finally the interest in the thought processes underlying religious beliefs

²³⁰ See, Jones, George Oswald von Wolkenstein's *Animals and Animal Symbolism*, *MLN*, Vol. 94, No. 3, German Issue (Apr., 1979), pp. 524-540, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2906530>, Accessed: 18/02/2009, 02:30.

²³¹ Jones, *Tales and Teachings of the Buddha*, London: George Allen & Unwin, 1979, pp.4-5.

is replaced by a concern with the sociological processes by which religious institutions both reflect and legitimize social institutions and cultural values.

This section is an analysis of the Jātaka stories where animal representations have been employed.²³² It involves the form and content of the representations and the significance of the particular representation and its possible reference to the social milieu in the light of the larger objectives of the study.

From the total of 547 Jātaka stories,²³³ we find 123 instances wherein the Bodhisatta assumed 35 different kinds of animals; and from among these animal-forms, it is the monkey, lion, parrot, goose and elephant that are particularly well-represented. The monkey with 11 different stories is undoubtedly the most used representation followed by the lion with 10 instances; while the parrot and goose share the third place with 9 representations each and the royal and majestic elephant comes fourth with 7 instances. While the other forms that the Bodhisatta assumed were that of the antelope, buffalo, bull, cock, crow, fish, fowl, frog, hare, horse, jackal, iguana, lizard, mallard, ox, naga, partridge, peacock, pigeon, quail, rat, singila bird, stag, vulture and wood pecker.²³⁴

²³² For the purpose of this analyses, the birth-form of the Bodhisatta, the central character of the entire repertoire of the Jātaka stories, has been taken as the classificatory criteria.

²³³ It is reiterated that I am using here the Professor Cowell, E.B. (ed.) *The Jātaka or Stories of the Buddha's Former Births*, translated by various hands, Motilal Banarsidass Publishers Pvt. Ltd., Delhi, First Indian Edition, 1990.

²³⁴ I have tabulated the various births of the Buddha, the number and the title of the Jataka Story for easier and quicker reference. See Appendix I.

Understandably, the theme of enduring compassion, self-sacrifice and detachment occupies an important place in the different tellings of the Jātaka stories. In Story No. 72²³⁵ the Bodhisatta is the enduring and detached king elephant who as head of a herd of 60,000 elephants detached from them ñ learning that there was sin in the herd and dwelt in solitude in the forest. This immediately does bring to the fore; the obvious priority attached to the practice of going away from society to practice and attain the higher spiritual goals. Further, in the story, He bestowed his prized tusks upon the wicked Devadatta as the price for omniscience.

In Story No. 221,²³⁶ through the medium of a short story and a few lines attributed to the Bodhisatta we find a very innovative way of creating awareness regarding the standards of purity and conduct expected of an initiate into the order. Here, we find the necessary qualifications being described in a very concise and apt manner. For a person to aspire for monkhood:

“If any man, yet full of sin, should dare
To don the yellow robe, in whom no care
For temperance is found, or love of truth
He is not worthy such a robe to wear.

He who has spued out sin, who everywhere
Is firm in virtue, and whose chiefest care
Is to control his passions, and be true,

²³⁵ *The Jātaka*, Book I, pp.174-177.

²³⁶ *The Jātaka*, Book II, pp.138-139.

He well deserves the yellow robe to wear.²³⁷

Likewise, the different characters in the stories are utilized in such a way as to propagate the different ideals of the Buddhist faith such that the complex philosophy was sought to be weaved into a narrativisation that could be easily grasped by the lay audience. For instance, in Story No. 388,²³⁸ the older of the two abandoned piglet is used as the medium to reach the message of the Buddha to the audience, here the whole city of Benares “from kings and viceroys and downwards”²³⁹ who came or stood transfixed to listen to it. In Story No. 403,²⁴⁰ talking to hermits fearful of snakes on the banks of the Ganges, the Bodhisatta taught the importance of goodwill to all creatures, even the most threatening.²⁴¹ Further, in story after story one is reminded of the importance attached to non-injury. The Great Being as lord of the elephants is not driven to vengeance when he is wronged by a jealous wife who bore a grudge against him and when she is later reborn as a human being orders the elephant killed.²⁴² However, more is entailed than merely non-injury. The compassion exemplified in the Jātakas is one of self-sacrifice.

Another famous tale is the story describing the self-sacrifice of the Banyan deer king, who offers his own life to spare that of a pregnant doe. Here the king, whose daily pastime had been the daily killing of deer in the royal garden, was so moved by this act that he vowed never again to harm the deer; and the deer, in turn,

²³⁷ *The Jātaka*, Book II, p.139.

²³⁸ *The Jātaka*, Book VI, pp.180-183.

²³⁹ *Ibid.*, p.182.

²⁴⁰ *The Jātaka*, Book VII, pp. 216-217.

²⁴¹ Story No. 203

²⁴² Story No. 514

promised not to consume the crops of the land and thenceforth beasts and men co-existed happily.²⁴³ Again, in Story No. 482,²⁴⁴ the Bodhisatta in his manifestation as golden deer saves a drowning man from whom he summarily extracted a promise not to reveal anything about his presence to anyone. However, the ungrateful man betrays his whereabouts to the king of the land who had it captured to fulfill the desires of the Queen Consort and later on the deer discourses both the king and queen. The king on hearing of the treachery of the man wanted him to be put to death but Bodhisatta full of compassion interceded for him and saved the life of the ingrate.

One of the most popular themes addressed in the animal-births stories is that of the deer or other beasts caught in the hunter's snare and of the courage and devotion of its mates who does not desert but is prepared to lay down its life for the sake of the one ensnared.²⁴⁵ Eventually, the hunter being impressed by the spirit of this act is converted and the release of the victims is achieved; while, on the one hand, one is being reminded that one should not take the life of any other creature sometimes a discourse is also thrown in.

Another characteristic portrayal in the animal-births of the *Jātaka* stories is the tales that teach against hypocrisy and greed²⁴⁶. Also in Story No. 219,²⁴⁷ where the Bodhisatta as monkey was the pet of the king of Benares, and winning the heart of his master with his tricks was later set free by the king and reunited with his kindred,

²⁴³ Story No. 12 and in a very similar way in Story No.385.

²⁴⁴ *The Jātaka*, Book XIII, pp.161-166.

²⁴⁵ Story Nos. 359, 501, 502 and 533 all bear the same theme

²⁴⁶ For instance, Story Nos. 32, 141 and 150.

²⁴⁷ *The Jātaka*, Book II, pp.129-130.

upon his reunion they insistently begged him to tell them about the human beings and “the manner of living in the world of men”²⁴⁸, and the only character of mankind he could report about was their insatiable greed for things impermanent:

Both princes and Brāhmanas cry out, – mine! Mine!²⁴⁹

Upon which the congregated monkeys cried out to him not to continue further even to the extent of closing their ears tight with their hands. Not only that, they even condemned the place²⁵⁰ on which they have congregated for this particular occasion and thereby reiterating, for the benefit of the lay-audience (here in this case, the hearer of the story) that discontentment was a quality even the lower animals despise. This basically greedy and vile nature of human beings is further illustrated in the story in Story No. 122²⁵¹ where the Bodhisatta is the state elephant²⁵² who was lavished with praises by the people of Rajagaha to the extent that the king himself was envious and tried to kill it.

The problem of foolish pride is also another frequently addressed topic; the tale of the puffed up jackal who thought he could imitate and compete with a lion and hence met his doom by being crushed under the foot of the elephant²⁵³ is a pertinent example. It should however be noted here that the moral of the story points to the

²⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 130.

²⁴⁹ Ibid., p.130.

²⁵⁰ They later christened the place Garahitapithi Rock, or the Rock of Blaming because they said “in this place we heard a thing not seemly.”

²⁵¹ *The Jātaka*, Book I, 269-271.

²⁵² Infact “a great mahout endowed with marvelous power which flow from merit”.

²⁵³ See, Story No. 143.

virtues of modesty but only in part. While one is rightly reminded against the over-extension of ones' claim as it leads to danger;²⁵⁴ on the other hand it also maintains that a shrewd calculation of one's ability may bring success

But who the measure of his own power knows,
And nice discretion in his language shows,
True to his duty lives and triumphs o'er his foes.²⁵⁵

Story No. 357²⁵⁶ precisely brings home to us this point when the crow, quail, frog and blue fly team up to teach a rogue elephant a good lesson. One can also take this as an indication of a language of revolt whereby the weak can infact gang up against the powerful who uses their power without moderation.

Again in Story Nos. 394²⁵⁷ and 395²⁵⁸ we find the question of greed and contentment being addressed by the crow as the antagonist with a quail and pigeon respectively in the role of the protagonist.

The care of aged parents and striving for their welfare especially so when it is an aged mother is a recurring theme in the stories, more so, in the animal-births in the form of deer. Infact in Story No. 385²⁵⁹ a brother who was supporting his lay-parents was commended by the Buddha. The Bull manifestations of the Bodhisatta give it as

²⁵⁴ See Story No. 239.

²⁵⁵ *The Jātaka*, Book IV, p.76.

²⁵⁶ *The Jātaka*, Book V, pp.115-117.

²⁵⁷ *The Jātaka*, Book VI, pp.194-195.

²⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, pp.195-196.

²⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 171-174.

having very strong ties with its human owners²⁶⁰ and showing a strong sense of natural justice.

In a number of stories we also have the animal-characters pronouncing rewards for (mis)deeds committed by men. In Story No. 325,²⁶¹ when a false ascetic tries to kill lizard (the Bodhisatta) he immediately, though an animal pronounces reward for his (attempted) sin. Lone reference to Bodhisatta as buffalo portrays him as a self-serving and calculating one who endured the mischief of a monkey and waits for it to reap its own reward; lest he act against it and incur the inconvenience of having to suffer the demotion in his own acquired merit.

Story No. 267²⁶² narrates how even the high and mighty come to ruin if they fall to the guiles of womenfolk. It narrates a story of a crab that was so large and fearsome that even the elephants would not go into the lake occupied by it, which unfortunately was their only source of drinking water. Later, the Bodhisatta went ahead with the purpose of killing the crab but ended up being held hostage by the great claws of the crab. Following this turn of events, his mate addressed the crab, which was smitten by the female voice and let go of the male elephant (the Bodhisatta) who immediately crushed it to death by stepping on it.

For instance, in the single reference to birth of the Bodhisatta in the form of a cock womenfolk are compared to a cajoling cat.²⁶³ Here the cock is wooed by a she-

²⁶⁰ Story Nos. 28 and 29 respectively

²⁶¹ *The Jātaka*, Book IV, pp.56-58.

²⁶² *The Jātaka*, Book III, pp.235-237.

²⁶³ See, Story No. 383.

cat into marriage in order to eat him and the subsequent discovery of the malafide intentions of the cat and the cock's refusal. Here in the story one can yet again establish deeper concerns being spoken out regarding the identity markers that were prevalent in that time. This betrays on the one hand serious efforts by the Buddhist adherents to keep themselves as distinctive as possible from other sects or teachings and in the more crude way is certainly a reflection into the differentiation existent in society and the imperative need felt by the order to somehow preserve it.

It is indeed tempting to read into these stories the kernel of the communistic grounding of the renunciatory creed of Buddhism wherein the overwhelming tendency is towards teaching its adherents to abhor greed or the craving for more, which, they maintain, prevents one from attaining true knowledge. On the other hand however the Buddhist mendicant is surely and very much rooted in the worldly affairs as evidenced by the various stories in the same corpus of *Jātaka* stories. It valorizes the success attained by those beings who utilize their ability and their wits. The wise, according to the *Jātaka* tales are those who stay awake, use their wits, and capitalize on the foibles of others.²⁶⁴ Such tales exhibit a worldliness that is true and relevant for any age.

We find ample evidence that suggest the kind of contestation for the allegiance of the populace that might have happened at that age. In this, the Buddhists come across as a religious sect that encourages the people to choose for themselves and admonishes unquestioned allegiance to false austerities and other ascetics. It addresses the kind of mass hysteria created by the lack of good judgment or

²⁶⁴ For instance, Story Nos. 118, 152, 208 and 518.

common sense by one animal,²⁶⁵ wherein we find the Bodhisatta in the form of a brave lion having to awaken the jungle animals to their folly in believing the hare without further enquiries or questioning themselves.

In the backdrop of this the power of influence/suggestion is thoroughly well-presented in the *Jātaka* stories. In Story No. 26²⁶⁶ we find the royal elephant turn rogue just by overhearing the evil schemes of some burglars. Likewise, Story No 186²⁶⁷ tells the story of how a gardener turned the mango to bear bitter mangoes by planting creepers and sour-leaved nimb trees around it. Moreover, in Story No. 503²⁶⁸ too the Bodhisatta and Devadatta inspite of their being brother parrots were borne by a whirl-wind each to a hermitage and a robber-village respectively and subsequently each acquired/imbibed the corresponding characteristics of their respective settlements.

The uneasy balance that the new creed and its proponents had to tread when it comes to the question of entrenched hierarchies and competing claims to caste/class superiority is poignantly narrativised in the two contrasting stories in *Jātaka* Story No. 465²⁶⁹ and Story No. 487.²⁷⁰ The former narrates the story of the Śākya cheating the king of Kosala who was desirous of being wed to a Śākya woman, and the Śākya being mindful of their claim to superiority and their caste purity sent a half-Śākya to the king for his bride. This story attains added significance as this treachery was

²⁶⁵ See, Story No. 320.

²⁶⁶ *The Jātaka*, Book I, pp.67-69.

²⁶⁷ *The Jātaka*, Book II, pp.69-73.

²⁶⁸ *The Jātaka*, Book XV, pp. 267-271.

²⁶⁹ *The Jātaka*, Book XII, pp. 91-98.

²⁷⁰ *The Jātaka*, Book XIV, pp. 188-191.

committed by the Gotama's own clan – the Sakyas. In the latter, the Bodhisatta shows his prejudice when he refused to give his family name to “bastard” child he bore with a slave girl. Thus, we have ample instances to argue for the persistence of the hold of caste and notions of high and low births amongst the Buddhist adherents and preachers which can also be deduced from the sheer number of references of the practice of it from the present sample of stories taken up for review. In Story No.536²⁷¹ we find that the Koliyas and Sakyas fighting who were quarrelling over something (possibly river- water sharing) engaging in a verbal-fight with each side “spitefully touching on the origin of their princely families” and increasing in tumult following it.²⁷²

Again, a reading of Story No. 304²⁷³ produces an unmistakable picture that almost is equivalent to an advisory of sorts exhorting people to always act accordingly keeping in mind one's station/standing in any particular setting. Here, in this story, the two naga brothers (Mahadaddara and Culladdara) on being banished from the naga world by their father the king to the dunghill in Benares were mocked at by the children there. Though the younger and more volatile of the brothers Culladaddara was almost provoked to attack them with his poison but was held back by his elder brother Mahadaddara who uttered the following lines which immediately exemplifies firstly, the conduct expected of a high-born and also the folly of being infuriated by the taunts and discourtesy of lowly folk:

²⁷¹ *The Jātaka*, Book XXI, pp. 219-245.

²⁷² A different version of the story has the womenfolk of the two clans/villages as the ones fighting.

²⁷³ *The Jātaka*, Book IV, pp. 10-12.

An exile driven to a foreign shore
Must of abuse lay up a goodly store;
For where his rank and virtues none can know,
Only the fool his pride would care to show.
He who at home a “shining light” may be,
Abroad must suffer men of low degree.²⁷⁴

It is pertinent here to bring in a discussion on these mythicised/mythical beings the Nāgas and Garuḍas usually imputed in the ancient lore and textual tradition with powers to bless and reward.²⁷⁵ John Garrett Jones infact goes on to say that the presence of these mythic beings prove that Buddhist and Hindu mythology derives from a common stock of ancient Indian folklore. However, he points to the marked difference in their treatment of the *Garuḍas* who to the Hindu is a malevolent force to be vanquished or banished while the Buddhists have a marked tendency to allude them semi-divine protective and friendly status. He indeed has a very illuminating and an astute reason to give for this saying thus that it “could perhaps be construed as a Buddhist predilection for keeping its feet (or its belly) on the ground as opposed to the Hindu preference for taking to the air in great flights of speculative fancy”.²⁷⁶

²⁷⁴ Ibid., p.11.

²⁷⁵ For fuller discussion on the true nature and significance of these mythic beings, see Jones, John Garrett *Tales and Teachings of the Buddha: the Jātaka Stories in relation to the Pali Cannon*, George Allen and Unwin, London, 1979 pp. 186-188; and Bloss, Lowell W. The Buddha and the Naga: A Study in Buddhist Folk Religiosity, *History of Religions*, Vol. 13, No. 1 (Aug., 1973), pp. 36-53, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1061950>, Accessed: 14/03/2009 02:21.

²⁷⁶ Jones *Tales and Teachings of the Buddha*, London: George Allen and Unwin, 1979, pp. 186-193.

Story No. 152²⁷⁷ narrates the story about the son of a common barber who pined away in love and desire for a Licchavi princess and eventually passed away because it was something that was clearly beyond him. We find the barber trying to explain in vain to his son that the girl being someone ‘highborn’ was beyond “their place and station”²⁷⁸; and that he was setting his mind on a ‘forbidden fruit’. The accompanying story narrates about a jackal that lived in crystal cave proposing to the lioness who inhabited a golden cave and the subsequent feeling of indignant outrage that the lioness bore on hearing such an unseemly thing. The lioness lamented thus:

This Jackal here is mean amongst beast, vile, and like a man of low caste: but I am esteemed to be one of royal issue. How can I live after hearing such things said? I will hold my breath until I shall die.²⁷⁹

Here, what comes through as interesting and noteworthy is that the lioness should compare herself to royalty and of high birth and the Jackal attributed a low standing and birth and is being subsequently assigned a qualitatively inferior crystal cave as opposed to the golden cave inhabited by the lions.

Stories involving the Crow as the protagonist mostly deal with representing the characteristics of an ideal leader, while the antagonists in the same exemplify the harm that befalls undeserving pretenders to high position.²⁸⁰ The story of the foolish

²⁷⁷ *The Jātaka*, Book II, pp. 4-7.

²⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 4.

²⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 5.

²⁸⁰ Likewise in Story No. 434 and 451 where the crow aspires to become like a goose he is unequivocally rebuked.

jackal who requested servitude under the lion and later on put on such airs about himself that he dared challenge the mighty elephant by himself despite the advice of the lion resulting in his death in the process.²⁸¹ In opposite contrast to it, the lion that follows the way of the jackal reduces himself to the despised condition of the latter beast.²⁸²

Also we have the tale of a brave captain among the crow who sacrificed his life to fulfill his queen's abiding wish to taste the food served in the royal household of Benares.²⁸³ Here, it is noteworthy that when the king of Benares was won over by his bravery and devotion to duty, we find an interesting case of hierarchisation being played out in the animal world whereby henceforth the king of Benares sent food for the royal crows, "the same sort as he ate himself"; but for the rest of the common crow, he had "cooked each day a large measure of rice".²⁸⁴

Moreover in Story No. 379²⁸⁵ when talking about people of a certain frontier village who forsook the teachings of a Buddhist monk in favour of other sects we find the Buddha narrate a story of the past which betrays distinctively hierarchised overtones. Here, in the story the Bodhisatta as a golden goose once on its flight back from the Himalayas (foraging for food) to Cīttakuta set down on the golden mountain Neru. From there his younger brother observed that, due to the reflection from the mountain, the common birds and animals inhabiting the mountain all attain a golden

²⁸¹ Story No. 335.

²⁸² See, Story No. 397.

²⁸³ *The Jātaka*, Book II, pp. 295-297.

²⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 297.

²⁸⁵ *The Jātaka*, Book VI, pp. 159-160.

hue, making them all fair to sight without exception. Thereupon the younger brother remarked:

Where'er the good find honor small or none
Or less than others, live not, but begone
Dull and clever, brave and coward, all are honored equally
Undiscriminating Mountain, good men will not stay on thee
Best, indifferent and meanest Neru does not separate,
Undiscriminating Neru, we alas! Must leave thee straight.²⁸⁶

Here the golden mountain Neru comes under reproof for its indiscretion in not being discriminating towards the truly/inherently golden hued birds and the common beasts²⁸⁷. Though here the moral ostensibly is to chastise the people who show lack of discernment between the different doctrines, we can also however identify a refusal on the part of Buddhism to seriously tackle the perceived problem of differentiation in society (which in its more vulgar form assumes hierarchisation) by choosing to fly away from the spot.

At the same time, we have equally vituperative railing in the same corpus against the claims of caste hierarchies:

These Brahmins all a livelihood require,
And so they tell us Brahma worships fire.

²⁸⁶ Ibid., p. 160.

²⁸⁷ Story No. 534 enumerates the fish, crab, tortoise, deer, peacock, geese and human as golden colored.

It was no lack of merit in the past,
But present faults which made them first or last.
A clever low-caste lad would use his wit,
And read the hymns nor find his head-piece split.²⁸⁸

Such an inherent contradiction in terms of dealing with the issue of hierarchy could only be attributed to the uneasy existence that the Buddhist clergy had to carve for itself in the mind of the people, while at the same time fighting to fit into a social and ritualistic standing earlier commanded by the Brahmins in the contemporary social set up. Sponberg in her writing on the attitudes towards women in different periods of Buddhist Indian history has identified a distinctive framework in which such duality and apparent contradictions can be best viewed.²⁸⁹ She had attributed this ambivalence and inherent contradictions, with all their connotations of uncertainty, or even confusion in the ancient textual tradition to what she calls the multi-vocality of texts. She also posits the early Buddhist texts as not a single, uncertain voice, but rather a multiplicity of voices, each expressing a different set of concerns current among the members of the early community. To which instead of seeking to look for justifications in the texts or even at places, doctrinal reconciliations, they should rather be seen as attempts at accommodations of the radically critical social doctrines of the Buddha with the more mundane demands of conventional social values. Which would further lead us to better appreciate the social and intellectual dynamics of the early community of Buddhists.

²⁸⁸ *The Jātaka*, Book XXII, p.111-112.

²⁸⁹ Sponberg, Alan, Attitudes toward Women and the Feminine in Early Buddhism, in Cabezon, Jose Ignacio (ed.) *Buddhism, Sexuality, and Gender*, Delhi: Sri Satguru Publications, First Indian Edition, 1992.

In Story No. 448²⁹⁰ the hen on refusing the treacherous offer of friendship from the eagle is made to recite the discourses which “made the wide woods resound, the deities applauding.”²⁹¹ This and other foregone examples would show that the teachings that the Buddha yearned to impart through these multifarious Jātaka stories are grounded in a common-sensical observation/understanding of the everyday world – those aspects of society and life which would have appeal to even the most base or unsophisticated folk. This could further lead us to profess the opinion that the stories and their treatment of problems and issues reflect a certain amount of bias in favour of the underdog in the discourses of power and power-relations in contemporary society.

Difficulties notwithstanding, the principle of compassion becomes to the Buddhist creed an instrument of conciliating the competing claims of the ultimate good and the worldly values. It is for them a way of relating to the world, their faith’s creed and philosophy in a meaningful way. The worldly and otherworldly elements are found in abundance in the Jātaka stories – a careful reading of which gives us a clear indication of attempts at mediating between the two in a way that was by far unique to the Buddhist order. As evidenced by the stories, each act of compassion invariably leads to an end – liberation of the body – which is the very essence of Buddhism. Such is the significant pattern that emerges from the abundant imagining of the Jataka tales. It is compassion that becomes perhaps the most characteristic and comprehensive mode of mediating between the everyday and the ultimate good.

²⁹⁰ *The Jātaka*, Book X, pp.35-37.

²⁹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 36.

Apparently, the most pertinent problem lies in the identification of a discernible pattern in a string of stories, which are apparently held together by the experiences of one central character, mediated through the medium of the Buddhist monks and transmitted orally over a significant period of time. Therefore, though at the surface of it, due its very nature, the whole exercise might seem like an exercise in futility; however when taken together it yields an easily discernible divide between the two opposite pulls of the travails of everyday living and the daily rigour and limitations posed by the claim of the order to a life of worldly renunciation. While at the same time it should be conceded that the amount of hard historical information that can be legitimately gleaned from these highly diffused and sometimes seemingly contradictory values that were laid out by the mendicants for the lay-adherents of the Buddhist faith is questionable though helpful.

The very nature of the Jātaka stories are also significant as well as interesting in view of the fact that it is perhaps the only and by far the largest collection of stories in the world linked by the experiences of one central character i.e. the Bodhisatta. It is also in this sense, through the travel or accumulated experiences of the central character across different time-periods a reflection of Buddhist idea of time and its understanding of those times in which the incidents on which the narratives are based happened. Truly so, the stories thus being told and retold over time has come to us as repositories of Buddhism – a rare insight into folk Buddhism which otherwise would have been completely lost to us.

CHAPTER V

Concluding Remarks

Following the trend of postulating the Buddhist philosophy as presenting to us, the most serious and comprehensive way to analyze the rapidly changing society and economic interaction of the early millennial AD; and as a corollary to it, the basic tenets of Buddhism reflected the social reality of the times and we can thus find that they showed a stark preoccupation with lay life.

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Looking at the Jataka stories from the standpoint of the issues of hierarchisation, we do find innumerable references to the Brāhmaṇas – the so-called ‘learned’ members of the perceived high class – who, in these stories, are actually

shown to have lack of moderation as well as being selfish and an unabashed pursuit of material goals. This is a significant departure from the comparatively structured Brahmanical worldview. Quite a few stores are found which talk of the evils and the greed of the Brāhmaṇas. Despite the anti-Brāhmaṇical rhetoric, they remained the repositories of not only learning in general, but also of knowledge regarding almost everything that could be considered as useful for the acquirement of joy and peace in life of the people. Brāhmaṇical segment of people also took to ministership and other royal services, and showed no scruples for even work such as money-lending, trade, slaughtering of cows, hunting and oppressing people.

Again, the fact that the Bodhisatta in spite of his antipathy towards the Brāhmaṇical order still adopts the group's identity in such a large number of his rebirths in the Jātaka stories is in itself quite an interesting and revealing paradox. This does make us think that the contention that Buddhism was still very much a product of its immediate milieu trying to exert for itself a space within the pre-existent dominant setup of the Brāhmaṇical social and ritual ideology is in fact a reality.

Any talk of social milieu is unfinished if the perception held of women is not discussed, and as can be expected, the narratives of the Jātakas present us with a very colourful imagery of women, and is unsurprisingly, an arena of contradictions and duality characteristic of the way Buddhist Jātaka stories have dealt with the different issues and themes. This brings forth a very potent point. For such great efforts being made to demean a woman's position in society, they must indeed have held some significance. Or one can ask if they were such insignificant characters in the whole social fabric of the time, then why so much literary energy was spent only to demean

their position. It presents a stark paradox, if one keeps in mind the fact that excepting some isolated cases, they seem to be quite inconsequential in terms of position, status and power held by anyone. We can say that Buddhism retained the notion of social hierarchy but was tempered on the basis of differing access to the means of production and high and low status based on the nature of work pursued as well as on the basis of wealth. At the same time it provided a sterling opportunity for the acting out of the aspirations and consciousness of the lower classes within certain mediated parameters.

The unmistakable materialistic concerns and ethos of Buddhism coming forth to us via the channel of the stories involving kingship can never be denied. In all the stories, the royalty and its great splendour have been elaborated upon, with little or no exception. Even when a king has decided to become an ascetic, he does so with a large retinue of people with him, with the accommodation and other basic comforts for so many people being provided for by none lesser than Vissakamma, the heavenly architect, usually on the express orders of Sakka himself.

Another significant issue, which had emerged, is the fact how in some of the stories revolving around the act of *giving* it almost becomes a self indulgence, and is done on a very extravagant scale, where material goods are being wantonly exchanged (blatantly going to the extent of one's own family) for spiritual benefits. It clearly is a departure from the 'middle way' of the canonical Theravada, and presents in clear terms an appeal to the extravagant ways of the same Brāhmaṇical worldview, which it had been fighting against. One is compelled to observe on this immensely popular point, where the Jātaka tales are moving very markedly in the direction of the

quality of sacrificial self-giving, often in the most extravagant terms – and seen in the economic light, it seems quite significant, as all the gifts are given away in the quest for enlightenment, almost making it seem like an expensive bribe for attaining enlightenment.

In fact, it also emerges as if one's destiny is decided by one's stars and not one's deeds! Issues regarding caste-discrimination and denial of caste contradistinction are also galore. And in many of them the illustrations of the counter-currents operational in the attitude of the people along with testaments of individuals overcoming the limitations posed by the circumstances of their birth, are really well-defined.

The present study can therefore very rightly be termed as a study of contemporary 'stereotypes' – stereotypes which reveal to us through the medium of numerous free-floating stories the proclivities of those times and also educate us in the nuances of their beliefs, customs, practices and more pertinently the social milieu of that time. The present study can be termed as an exercise in the study of 'stereotypes' - stereotypes as the representations being of common day-to-day occurrences are thus naturally reflective of their day-to-day biases as well; and more so since the representation in the stories are not independent entities but rather are mediated by Buddhist precepts through the agency of the Buddhist *bhikkhu* with the sole intention of furthering some moral or pertinent teaching. One can also establish deeper concerns being spoken out regarding the identity markers that were prevalent at that time. This betrays on the one hand serious efforts by the Buddhist adherents to keep themselves as distinctive as possible from other sects or teachings and in a more

crude way is certainly a reflection of the differentiation existent in society as also the imperative need felt by the order to somehow preserve it.

The study of the Jatakas can therefore very rightly be termed as a study of contemporary 'stereotypes' – stereotypes which reveal to us through the medium of numerous free-floating stories the proclivities of those times and also educate us in the nuances of their beliefs, customs, practices and more pertinently the social milieu of that time. The present study can be termed as an exercise in the study of 'stereotypes' - stereotypes as the representations being of common day-to-day occurrences are thus naturally reflective of their day-to-day biases as well; and more so since the representation in the stories are not independent entities but rather are mediated by the medium of the Buddhist precepts through the agency of the Buddhist *bhikkhu* with the sole intention of furthering some moral or pertinent teaching.

While this may not have led to an overthrow of more hierarchical ideas, the fact that alternative analyses were produced and disseminated in a range of accessible stories would have inevitably provided a context which would have made the imposition and acceptance of any single norm relatively more difficult. The fuller use of the Jatakas stories open up to us a plethora of new avenues of interrogating and engaging a wide range of socio-economic issues of early India. Increased acceptance and adoption of the source category may lead but only to a more concerted contestation of the present categories of understanding of the society of the times.

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APPENDIX I

The different births of the Bodhisatta in animal-form and the corresponding Jataka

Sl. No.	Animal-birth of the Buddha	Jataka Story No.	Title of the Jataka Story
1	1 Antelope	21	Kurunga-Jataka
2		206	Nalapana-Jataka
3	2 bird	36	Sakuna-Jataka
4		115	Anusaksia-Jataka
5		133	Ghatasana-Jataka
6		384	Dhammaddhaja-Jataka
7		464	Culla-Kunala-Jataka
8		536	Kunala-Jataka
9	3 buffalo	278	Mahisa-Jataka
10	4 bull	28	Nandivisala-Jataka
11		29	Kanha-Jataka
12		88	Sarambha-Jataka
13	5 cock	383	Kukkuta-Jataka
14	6 crow	140	Kaka-Jataka
15		204	Sukhavihari-Jataka
16		292	Supatta-Jataka
17	7 deer	12	Nigrodhamiga-Jataka
18		15	Kkharadiya-Jataka
19		385	Nandiyamiga-Jataka
20		482	Ruru-Jataka
21	8 dog	22	Kukkura-Jataka
22	9 elephant	72	Silavanaga-Jataka
23		122	Dummedha-Jataka
24		221	Samkhadhamana-Jataka
25		267	Kakkata-Jataka
26		357	Latukika-Jataka
27		455	Mati-Posaka-Jataka
28		514	Chaddanta-Jataka
29		10 fish	75
30	114		Mitacinti-Jataka
31	236		Ilisa-Jataka
32	11 fowl	448	Kukkuta-Jataka

33	12	frog	239	Mittavinda-Jataka
34	13	Garuda King	360	Sussondi-Jataka
35			518	Pandara-Jataka
36	14	Goose	270	Uluka-Jataka
37			370	Palasa-Jataka
38			379	Neru-Jataka
39			434	Cakkavaka-Jataka
40			451	Cakkavaka-Jataka
41			476	Javana-Hamsa-Jataka
42			502	Hamsa-Jataka
43			533	Culla-Hamsa-Jataka
44			534	Maha-Hamsa-Jataka
45			15	hare
46	16	horse	23	Bhojaniya-Jataka
47			24	Ajanna-Jataka
48			196	Vannupatha-Jataka
49			266	Vatagga-Sindhava-Jataka
50	17	iguana	141	Godha-Jataka
51	18	jackal	142	Sigala-Jataka
52			148	Sigala-Jataka
53	19	lion	143	Virocana-Jataka
54			152	Sigala-Jataka
55			153	Sukara-Jataka
56			157	Guna-Jataka
57			172	Ahigundika-Jataka
58			188	Mahakapi-Jataka
59			322	Daddabha-Jataka
60			335	Jambuka-Jataka
61			397	Manoja-Jataka
62			486	Maha-Ukkusa-Jataka
63	20	lizard	138	Godha-Jataka
64			325	Godha-Jataka
65	21	Mallard	32	Nacca-Jataka
66			136	Suvannahamsa-Jataka
67	22	monkey	20	Nalapana-Jataka
68			57	Vanarinda-Jataka
69			58	Tayodhamma-Jataka
70			177	Kukkuta-Jataka
71			208	Nanda-Jataka

72		219	Kancanakkhandha-Jataka
73		222	Asatamanta-Jataka
74		342	Vanara-Jataka
75		404	Kapi-Jataka
76		407	Mahakapi-Jataka
77		516	Mahakapi-Jataka
78	23 naga	304	Daddara-Jataka
79		506	Campeyya-Jataka
80		524	Samkhapala-Jataka
81		543	Bhuridatta-Jataka
82	24 ox	30	Munika-Jataka
83		286	Saluka-Jataka
84	25 parrot	145	Radha-Jataka
85		198	Cullaka-Setthi- Jataka
86		255	Kundaka-Jataka
87		329	Kalabahu-Jataka
88		429	Mahasuka-Jataka
89		430	Cullasuka-Jataka
90		484	Salikedara-Jataka
91		503	Sattigumba-Jataka
92		521	Tesakuna-Jataka
93	26 partridge	37	Tittira-Jataka
94		438	Tittira-Jataka
95	27 peacock	159	Mora-Jataka
96		339	Baveru-Jataka
97		491	Maha-Mora-Jataka
98	28 pig	388	Tundila-Jataka
99	29 pigeon	42	Kapota-Jataka
100		274	Loola-Jataka
101		275	Rucila-Jataka
102		277	Romaka-Jataka
103		375	Kapota-Jataka
104		395	Kaka-Jataka
105	30 Quail	33	Sammodamana-Jataka
106		35	Vattaka-Jataka
107		118	Vattaka-Jataka
108		168	Sandhibheda-Jataka
109		394	Vattaka-Jataka
110	31 rat	128	Bilara-Jataka

111			129	Aggika-Jataka
112	32	Singila Bird	321	Kutidusaka-Jataka
113	33	stag	11	Lakhani-Jataka
114			16	Tipallatthamiga-Jataka
115			359	Suvannamiga-Jataka
116			483	Sarabha-Miga-Jataka
117			501	Rohanta-Miga-Jataka
118	34	vulture	164	Gijjha-Jataka
119			381	Migalopa-Jataka
120			399	Gijjha-Jataka
121			427	Gijjha-Jataka
122	35	wood pecker	210	Losaka-Jataka
123			308	Javasakuna-Jataka

Source: Cowell, E.B. (ed.) *The Jataka or Stories of the Buddha's Former Births*, Vol. I – III, Translated from the Pali by various hands, Motilal Banarsidass Publishers Pvt. Ltd., Delhi, First Indian Edition, 1990.

APPENDIX II

The different births of the Bodhisatta and the corresponding Jataka stories

Sl. No.	Name of the Jataka Story	Form of Birth of the Bodhisatta
1	Apannaka Jataka	Trader/Merchant
2	Vannupatha-Jataka	Trader/Merchant
3	Serivanija-Jataka	Trader/Merchant
4	Cullakasetthi Jataka	Treasurer
5	Tandulanali-Jataka	Valuer
6	Devadhamma Jataka	Prince - King Brahmadatta
7	Katthahari-Jataka	Prince - King Brahmadatta
8	Gamani-Jataka	Courtier
9	Makhadeva-Jataka	King- ascetic
10	Sukhavihari-Jataka	Brahmin - Ascetic
11	Lakkhana-Jataka	Stag
12	Nigrodhamiga-Jataka	Deer
13	Kandina Jataka	Fairy
14	Vatamiga-Jataka	King Brahmadatta
15	Kharadiya-Jataka	Deer
16	Tipallatthamiga-Jataka	Stag
17	Maluta-Jataka	Ascetic
18	Matakabhatta-Jataka	Tree Fairy
19	ayacitabhatta (Panavadha) Jataka	Tree Fairy
20	Nalapana-Jataka	Monkey
21	Kurunga-Jataka	Antelope
22	Kukkura Jataka	Dog
23	Bhojaniya Jataka	Horse
24	ajāñña Jataka	Horse
25	Tittha-Jataka	King's Minister
26	Mahilamukha-Jataka	King's Minister
27	Abhinha Jataka	King's Minister
28	Nandivisala-Jataka	Bull
29	Kanha Jataka	Bull
30	Munika-Jataka	Ox
31	Kulavaka-Jataka	Prince
32	Nacca-Jataka	Golden Mallard
33	Sammodamana-Jataka	Quail
34	Maccha-Jataka	King's Chaplain
35	Vattaka-Jataka	Quail
36	Sakuna-Jataka	Bird
37	Tittira-Jataka	Partridge

38	Baka-Jataka	Tree Fairy
39	Nanda-Jataka	Squire
40	Khadirangara-Jataka	Treasurer
41	Losaka-Jataka	Teacher - Ascetic
42	Kapota-Jataka	
43	Veluka-Jataka	Rich man - Ascetic
44	Makasa-Jataka	Trader/Merchant
45	Rohini-Jataka	Treasurer
46	aramadusaka Jataka	Wise Man
47	Varuni-Jataka	Treasurer
48	Vedabbha-Jataka	Brahmin's Pupil
49	Nakkhatta-Jataka	Wise Man
50	Dummedha Jataka	Prince - King Brahmadatta
51	Mahasilava-Jataka	Prince - King Brahmadatta
52	Culajanaka-Jataka	
53	Punnapati-Jataka	Treasurer
54	Phala-Jataka	Trader/Merchant
55	Pancavudha-Jataka	Prince - King Brahmadatta
56	Kaṇṇanakkhandha Jataka	Farmer
57	Vanarinda-Jataka	Monkey
58	Tayodhamma-Jataka	Monkey
59	Bherivada Jataka	Drummer
60	Samkhadhamana-Jataka	Conch-blower
61	Asatamanta Jataka	Brahmin
62	Andabhuta Jataka	Prince - King Brahmadatta
63	Takka-Jataka	Ascetic
64	Durajana Jataka	Teacher
65	Anabhirati Jataka	Teacher
66	Mudulakkhana-Jataka	Rich man - Ascetic
67	Ucchanga-Jataka	King Brahmadatta
68	Saketa-Jataka	Brahmin
69	Visavanta-Jataka	Doctor
70	Kuddala-Jataka	Gardener - Ascetic
71	Varana-Jataka	Teacher
72	Silavanaga-Jataka	Elephant
73	Saccamkira-Jataka	Brahmin Ascetic - King
74	Rukkhadhamma-Jataka	Tree Fairy
75	Maccha-Jataka	Fish
76	Asankiya Jataka	Brahmin
77	Mahasupina-Jataka	Brahmin - Ascetic
78	Illisa Jataka	Treasurer's Barber
79	Kharassara-Jataka	Trader/Merchant
80	Bhimasena Jataka	Brahmin
81	Surapana-Jataka	Ascetic
82	Mittavinda-Jataka	Sakka

83	Kalakanni Jataka	Treasurer
84	Atthassadvara Jataka	Treasurer
85	Kimpakka-Jataka	Trader/Merchant
86	Silavimamsana-Jataka	King's Chaplain - Ascetic
87	Mamgala-Jataka	Ascetic
88	Sarambha-Jataka	Bull
89	Kuhaka-Jataka	Trader/Merchant
90	Akataññu Jataka	Trader/Merchant
91	Litta-Jataka	Gambler
92	Mahasara-Jataka	King's Minister
93	Vissasabhojana-Jataka	Trader/Merchant
94	Lomahamsa-Jataka	Ascetic
95	Mahasudassana-Jataka	King
96	Telapatta-Jataka	Prince
97	Namasiddhi-Jataka	Teacher
98	Kutavanija-Jataka	Trader/Merchant
99	Parosahassa-Jataka	Ascetic
100	Asatarupa Jataka	Prince - King Brahmadata
101	Parosata-Jataka	Ascetic
102	Pannika-Jataka	Tree Fairy
103	Veri-Jataka	Trader/Merchant
105	Mittavinda-Jataka	Sakka
105	Dubbalakattha Jataka	Tree Fairy
106	Udancani-Jataka	Ascetic
107	Salittaka-Jataka	Courtier
108	Bahiya Jataka	Courtier
109	Kundakapuva-Jataka	Tree Fairy
110	Sabbasamharaka-Panha	Wonder Man
111	Gadrabhapañha	Wonder Man
112	Amaradevi-Jataka	Wonder Man
113	Sigala-Jataka	Tree Fairy
114	Mitacinti-Jataka	Fish
115	Anusasika Jataka	Bird
116	Dubbaca Jataka	Acrobat
117	Tittira-Jataka	Ascetic
118	Vattaka-Jataka	Quail
119	Akalaravi Jataka	Teacher
120	Bandhanamokkha Jataka	King's Chaplain
121	Kusanali-Jataka	Kusa-grass Spirit
122	Dummedha Jataka	Elephant
123	Nangalisa-Jataka	Teacher
124	Amba Jataka	Ascetic
125	Katahaka-Jataka	Treasurer
126	Asilakkhana Jataka	Prince - King Brahmadata
127	Kalanduka Jataka	Treasurer

128	Bilara Jataka	Rat
129	Aggika Jataka	Rat
130	Kosiya-Jataka	Teacher
131	Asampadana Jataka	Treasurer
132	Pancagaru-Jataka	Prince
133	Ghatasana Jataka	Bird
134	Jhanasodhana Jataka	Ascetic
135	Candabha Jataka	Ascetic
136	Suvannahamsa-Jataka	Brahmin
137	Babbu Jataka	Stone-cutter
138	Godha Jataka	Lizard
139	Ubhatobhattha-Jataka	Tree Fairy
140	Kaka Jataka	Crow
141	Godha Jataka	Iguana
142	Sigala-Jataka	Jackal
143	Virocana-Jataka	Lion
144	Nanguttha-Jataka	Ascetic
145	Radha-Jataka	Parrot
146	Kaka Jataka	Sea Sprite
147	Puppharatta-Jataka	Air Sprite
148	Sigala-Jataka	Jackal
149	Ekapanna Jataka	King's Minister
150	Sanjiva-Jataka	Teacher
151	Rajovada-Jataka	Prince - King Brahmadatta
152	Sigala-Jataka	Lion
153	Sukara-Jataka	Lion
154	Uraga-Jataka	Ascetic
155	Gagga Jataka	Trader/Merchant
156	Alinacitta Jataka	Prince
157	Guna Jataka	Lion
158	Suhanu-Jataka	King's Minister
159	Mora-Jataka	Peacock
160	Vinilaka-Jataka	King
161	Indasamanagotta-Jataka	Ascetic
162	Santhava-Jataka	Brahmin
163	Susima-Jataka	King's Chaplain
164	Gijjha Jataka	Vulture
165	Nakula-Jataka	Ascetic
166	Upasalha-Jataka	Ascetic
167	Samiddhi-Jataka	Ascetic
168	Sakunagghi-Jataka	Quail
169	Araka Jataka	Ascetic
170	Kakantaka-Jataka	Wonder Man
171	Kalyana-dhamma Jataka	Trader/Merchant
172	Daddara Jataka	Lion

173	Makkata-Jataka	Ascetic
174	Dubhiya-Makkata-Jataka	Brahmin
175	adiccupatthana Jataka	Teacher
176	Kalayamutthi Jataka	King's Minister
177	Tinduka-Jataka	Monkey
178	Kacchapa Jataka	Potter
179	Satadhamma-Jataka	Lowcaste Man
180	Duddada Jataka	Ascetic
181	Asadisa Jataka	Prince - Ascetic
182	Samgamavacara-Jataka	Elephant Trainer
183	Valodaka-Jataka	King's Minister
184	Giridanta Jataka	King's Minister
185	Anabhirati Jataka	Teacher
186	Dadhivahana Jataka	King's Minister
187	Catumatta Jataka	Tree Fairy
188	Sihakotthuka-Jataka	Lion
189	Sihacamma-Jataka	Farmer
190	Silanisamsa-Jataka	Sea Sprite
191	Ruhaka-Jataka	Prince - King Brahmadatta
192	Sirikalakanni-Jataka	Prince
193	Cullapaduma Jataka	Prince - King
194	Manicora-Jataka	Householder - King
195	Pabbatupatthara-Jataka	King's Minister
196	Valahassa- Jataka	Horse
197	Mittamitta-Jataka	Ascetic
198	Radha-Jataka	Parrot
199	Gahapati Jataka	Householder
200	Sadhusila-Jataka	Teacher
201	Bandhanagara Jataka	Poor Man
202	Kelisila-Jataka	Sakka
203	Khandhavatta-Jataka	Ascetic
204	Viraka-Jataka	Crow
205	Gangeyya Jataka	Tree Fairy
206	Kurungamiga-Jataka	Antelope
207	Assaka-Jataka	Ascetic
208	Sumsumara-Jataka	Monkey
209	Kakkara Jataka	Tree Fairy
210	Kandagalaka Jataka	Wood Pecker
211	Somadatta-Jataka	Brahmin
212	Ucchitthabhatta-Jataka	Acrobat
213	Bharu Jataka	Teacher
214	Punnanadi-Jataka	King's Minister
215	Kacchapa Jataka	King's Minister
216	Maccha-Jataka	King's Chaplain
217	Seggu-Jataka	Tree Fairy

218	Kutavanija-Jataka	Lord Justice
219	Garahita Jataka	Monkey
220	Dhammaddhaja Jataka	Chaplain - Judge
221	Kasava Jataka	Elephant
222	Cullanandiya Jataka	Monkey
223	Putabhata-Jataka	King's Minister
224	Kumbhila-Jataka	
225	Khantivannana-Jataka	King Brahmadata
226	Kosiya-Jataka	King's Minister
227	Guthapana Jataka	Tree Fairy
228	Kamanita Jataka	Sakka
229	Palayi-Jataka	King
230	Dutiyapalayi Jataka	King
231	Upahana-Jataka	Elephant Trainer
232	Vinathuna-Jataka	Trader/Merchant
233	Vikannaka-Jataka	King
234	Asitabhu Jataka	Ascetic
235	Vacchanakha-Jataka	Ascetic
236	Baka-Jataka	Fish
237	Saketa-Jataka	Brahmin
238	Ekapada Jataka	Trader/Merchant
239	Haritamata Jataka	Frog
240	Mahapingala-Jataka	King
241	Sabbadatha-Jataka	King's Chaplain
242	Sunakha-Jataka	Trader/Merchant
243	Guttala Jataka	Musician
244	Viticcha-Jataka	Ascetic
245	Mulapariyaya-Jataka	Teacher
246	Telovada-Jataka	Ascetic
247	Padanjali-Jataka	King's Adviser - King
248	Kimsukopama-Jataka	King Brahmadata
249	Salaka-Jataka	Trader/Merchant
250	Kapi-Jataka	Ascetic
251	Samkappa-Jataka	Ascetic
252	Tilamutthi-Jataka	Teacher
253	Manikantha-Jataka	Ascetic
254	Kundakakucchisindhava-Jataka	Trader/Merchant
255	Suka-Jataka	Parrot
256	Jarudapana Jataka	Trader/Merchant
257	Gamani-Canda Jataka	Prince - King
258	Mandhatu-Jataka	Prince - King
259	Tiritavaccha-Jataka	Brahmin
260	Duta Jataka	King
261	Paduma-Jataka	Trader/Merchant
262	Mudupani-Jataka	Prince - King Brahmadata

263	Cullapalobhana Jataka	Prince
264	Mahapanada-Jataka	Sakka
265	Khurappa-Jataka	Chief Forester
266	Vataggasindhava-Jataka	Horse
267	Kakkata Jataka	Elephant
268	aramadusaka Jataka	Wise Man
269	Sujata-Jataka	Prince - King Brahmadata
270	Uluka-Jataka	Goose
271	Udapanadusaka-Jataka	Ascetic
272	Vyaggha-Jataka	Tree Fairy
273	Kacchapa Jataka	Ascetic
274	Lola-Jataka	
275	Rucira-Jataka	
276	Kurudhamma-Jataka	King
277	Romaka-Jataka	
278	Mahisa-Jataka	Buffalo
279	Satapatta-Jataka	Robber
280	Putadusaka-Jataka	Householder
281	Abbhantara Jataka	Wise Man
282	Seyya-Jataka	Prince - King Brahmadata
283	Vaddhakisukara-Jataka	Tree Fairy
284	Siri-Jataka	Ascetic
285	Manisukara-Jataka	Ascetic
286	Saluka-Jataka	Ox
287	Labhagaraha-Jataka	Teacher
288	Macchuddana-Jataka	Trader/Merchant
289	Nanacchanda-Jataka	Prince - King Brahmadata
290	Silavimamsa-Jataka	King's Chaplain - Ascetic
291	Bhadraghata Jataka	Merchant - Sakka
292	Supatta-Jataka	Crow
293	Kayavicchinda Jataka	Ascetic
294	Jambukhadaka Jataka	Tree Fairy
295	Anta Jataka	Tree Fairy
296	Samudda-Jataka	Sea Sprite
297	Kamavilapa Jataka	Air Sprite
298	Udumbara-Jataka	Tree Fairy
299	Komayaputta-Jataka	Ascetic
300	Vaka-Jataka	Sakka
301	Cullakalinga Jataka	Ascetic
302	Mahaassaroha-Jataka	King
303	Ekaraja Jataka	King
304	Daddara Jataka	Naga
305	Silavimamsana-Jataka	Brahmin's Pupil
306	Sujata-Jataka	King's Minister
307	Palasa-Jataka	Tree Fairy

308	Javasakuna Jataka	Wood pecker
309	Chavaka Jataka	Householder - King
310	Sayha-Jataka	Prince- King Brahmadatta Ascetic
311	Pucimanda-Jataka	Tree Fairy
312	Kassapamandiya-Jataka	Ascetic
313	Khantivadi-Jataka	Ascetic
314	Lohakumbhi-Jataka	Ascetic
315	Mamsa-Jataka	Trader/Merchant
316	Sasa-Jataka	Hare
317	Matarodana-Jataka	Trader/Merchant
318	Kanavera Jataka	Robber
319	Tittira-Jataka	Ascetic
320	Succaja-Jataka	King's Minister
321	Kutidusaka-Jataka	Singila Bird
322	Daddabha Jataka	Lion
323	Brahmadatta Jataka	Ascetic
324	Cammasataka Jataka	Trader/Merchant
325	Godha Jataka	Lizard
326	Kakkaru Jataka	A Divine Being
327	Kakati Jataka	Prince - King Brahmadatta
328	Ananusociya Jataka	Householder - Ascetic
329	Kalabahu Jataka	Parrot
330	Silavimamsa-Jataka	King's Chaplain - Ascetic
331	Kokalika-Jataka	King's Minister
332	Rathalatti-Jataka	Lord Justice
333	Godha Jataka	King's Minister
334	Rajovada-Jataka	Ascetic
335	Jambuka-Jataka	Lion
336	Brahachatta Jataka	King's Minister
337	Pitha-Jataka	Ascetic
338	Thusa-Jataka	Teacher
339	Baveru Jataka	Peacock
340	Visayha-Jataka	Trader/Merchant
341	Kandari Jataka	Ascetic
342	Vanara-Jataka	Monkey
343	Kuntani-Jataka	King
344	Ambacora Jataka	Sakka
345	Gajakumbha Jataka	King's Minister
346	Kesava-Jataka	Ascetic
347	Ayakuta Jataka	Prince - King Brahmadatta
348	Arañña Jataka	Householder - Ascetic
349	Sandhibheda-Jataka	Prince - King Brahmadatta
350	Devatapañha Jataka	Wonder Man
351	Manikundala-Jataka	King

352	Sujata-Jataka	Landowner's Son
353	Dhonasakha Jataka	Teacher
354	Uraga-Jataka	Brahmin Field Labourer
355	Ghata Jataka	Prince - King Brahmadatta
356	Karandiya Jataka	Brahmin's Pupil
357	Latukika-Jataka	Elephant
358	Culla-Dhammapala Jataka	Prince
359	Suvannamiga-Jataka	Stag
360	Sussondi-Jataka	Garuda King
361	Vannaroha-Jataka	Tree Fairy
362	Silavimamsa-Jataka	King's Chaplain - Ascetic
363	Hiri-Jataka	Trader/Merchant
364	Khajjopanaka-Jataka	Wonder Man
365	Ahigundika Jataka	Trader/Merchant
366	Gumbiya Jataka	Trader/Merchant
367	Saliya-Jataka	Brahmin
368	Tacasara-Jataka	Brahmin
369	Mittavinda-Jataka	Sakka
370	Palasa-Jataka	Goose (Golden)
371	Dighiti Kosala Jataka	Prince
372	Migapotaka-Jataka	Sakka
373	Musika-Jataka	Teacher
374	Culla-Dhanuggaha Jataka	Sakka
375	Kapota-Jataka	
376	Avariya Jataka	Ascetic
377	Setaketu-Jataka	King's Chaplain
378	Darimukha Jataka	Prince- King Brahmadatta Ascetic
379	Neru-Jataka	Goose
380	asanka Jataka	Ascetic
381	Migalopa-Jataka	Vulture
382	Sirikalakanni-Jataka	Trader/Merchant
383	Kukkuta-Jataka	Cock
384	Dhammaddhaja Jataka	Bird
385	Nandiyamiga-Jataka	Deer
386	Kharaputta-Jataka	Sakka
387	Suci-Jataka	Smith
388	Tundila-Jataka	Pig
389	Suvannakakkata Jataka	Brahmin Field Labourer
390	Mayhaka-Jataka	Rich man - Ascetic
391	Dhajavihetha Jataka	Sakka
392	Bhisapuppha-Jataka	Ascetic
393	Vighasa-Jataka	Sakka
394	Vattaka-Jataka	Quail
395	Kaka Jataka	

396	Kukku-Jataka	King's Minister
397	Manoja-Jataka	Lion
398	Bhisapuppha Jataka	Poor Man
399	Gijjha Jataka	Vulture
400	Dabbapuppha Jataka	Tree Fairy
401	Dasannaka Jataka	King's Minister
402	Sattubhastha-Jataka	King's Minister
403	Atthisena Jataka	Ascetic
404	Kapi-Jataka	Monkey
405	Bakabrahma Jataka	Brahmin's Pupil
406	Gandhara Jataka	King- ascetic
407	Mahakapi-Jataka	Monkey
408	Kumbhakara-Jataka	Potter
409	Dalhadhamma Jataka	King's Minister
410	Somadatta-Jataka	Sakka
411	Susima-Jataka	King's Chaplain's Son - Ascetic
412	Kotisimbali-Jataka	Tree Fairy
413	Dhumakari Jataka	King's Chaplain
414	Jagara Jataka	Ascetic
415	Kummasapinda-Jataka	Householder - King
416	Parantapa-Jataka	Prince - King Brahmadatta
417	Kaccani Jataka	Sakka
418	Atthasadda-Jataka	Ascetic
419	Sulasa-Jataka	Mountain Deity
420	Sumangala-Jataka	Prince - King Brahmadatta
421	Gangamala Jataka	Householder - King
422	Cetiya-Jataka	King's Chaplain
423	Indriya Jataka	King's Chaplain - Ascetic
424	aditta (Sucira/Sovira) Jataka	King
425	Atthana-Jataka	Rich man - Ascetic
426	Dipi-Jataka	Ascetic
427	Gijjha Jataka	Vulture
428	Kosambi-Jataka	King
429	Mahasuka-Jataka	Parrot
430	Cullasuka Jataka	Parrot
431	Harita Jataka	Rich man - Ascetic
432	Padakusalamanava-Jataka	King's Adviser - King
433	Lomasakassapa-Jataka	Ascetic
434	Cakkavaka Jataka	Goose (Golden)
435	Haliddiraga Jataka	Ascetic
436	Samugga-Jataka	Ascetic
437	Putimamsa-Jataka	Tree Fairy
438	Tittira-Jataka	Partridge
439	Catudvara Jataka (Maha Mitta-vindaka Jataka)	Sakka

440	Kanha Jataka	Rich man - Ascetic
441	Catuposathika-Jataka	King's Minister
442	Samkha-Jataka	Brahmin
443	Cullabodhi Jataka	Ascetic
444	Kanhadipayana Jataka	Rich man - Ascetic
445	Nigrodha-Jataka	Tree Spirit - King
446	Takkala-Jataka	Prince
447	Mahadhammapala-Jataka	Brahmin's Pupil
448	Kukkuta-Jataka	Fowl
449	Mattakundali Jataka	A Divine Being
450	Bilarikosiya Jataka	Merchant - Sakka
451	Cakkavaka Jataka	Goose
452	Bhuripaṇha Jataka	Wonder Man
453	Mahamangala-Jataka	Brahmin - Ascetic
454	Ghata Jataka	Prince - King
455	Matuposika-Jataka	Elephant
456	Junha Jataka	King
457	Dhamma Jataka	A Divine Being
458	Udaya-Jataka	Prince - King - Sakka
459	Paniya-Jataka	King- ascetic
460	Yuvanajaya-Jataka	Prince - Ascetic
461	Dasaratha Jataka	Rama
462	Samvara-Jataka	King's Minister
463	Supparaka-Jataka	Mariner
464	Culla-Kunala Jataka	Bird
465	Bhaddasala Jataka	Tree Fairy
466	Samuddavanija-Jataka	Carpenter
467	Kama Jataka	Ascetic
468	Janasandha Jataka	Prince - King
469	Mahakanha-Jataka	Sakka
470	Kosiya-Jataka	Sakka
471	Mendaka-Jataka	Wonder Man
472	Mahapaduma-Jataka	Prince - Ascetic
473	Mittamitta-Jataka	King's Minister
474	Amba Jataka	Lowcaste Man
475	Phandana-Jataka	Tree Fairy
476	Javanahamsa Jataka	Goose
477	Cullanarada Jataka	Brahmin - Ascetic
478	Duta Jataka	Brahmin's Pupil
479	Kalingabodhi Jataka	King's Chaplain
480	Akitti Jataka	Rich man - Ascetic
481	Takkariya Jataka	Brahmin's Pupil
482	Ruru-Jataka	Deer
483	Sarabhamiga-Jataka	Stag
484	Salikedara-Jataka	Parrot

485	Candakinnara Jataka	Fairy
486	Mahaukkusa-Jataka	Lion
487	Uddalaka-Jataka	King's Chaplain
488	Bhisa Jataka	Rich man - Ascetic
489	Suruci-Jataka	Sakka
490	Pancuposatha-Jataka	Wise Man
491	Mahamora-Jataka	Peacock
492	Tacchasukara-Jataka	Tree Fairy
493	Mahavanija-Jataka	Trader/Merchant
494	Sadhina-Jataka	King
495	Dasabrahmana Jataka	King's Minister
496	Bhikkhaparampara Jataka	Ascetic
497	Matanga-Jataka	Lowcaste Man
498	Citta-Sambhuta Jataka	Outcast - Ascetic - Deer - Osprey - Ascetic
499	Sivi-Jataka	Prince - King
500	Sirimanda-Jataka	Wonder Man
501	Rohantamiga-Jataka	Stag
502	Hamsa Jataka	Goose (Golden)
503	Sattigumba-Jataka	Parrot
504	Bhallatiya Jataka	King
505	Somanassa-Jataka	Prince - Ascetic
506	Campeyya Jataka	Naga
507	Mahapalobhana-Jataka	Prince - Ascetic
508	Pancapandita-Jataka	Wonder Man
509	Hatthipala Jataka	King's Chaplain's Son - Ascetic
510	Ayoghara-Jataka	Prince - Ascetic
511	Kimchanda-Jataka	King Brahmadatta Ascetic
512	Kumbha-Jataka	Sakka
513	Jayaddisa Jatak	Prince
514	Chaddanta Jataka	Elephant
515	Sambhava-Jataka	King's Chaplain's Brother
516	Mahakapi-Jataka	Monkey
517	Dakarakkhasa-Jataka	Wonder Man
518	Pandara-Jataka	Garuda King
519	Sambula-Jataka	King Brahmadatta Ascetic
520	Gandatindu Jataka	Tree Fairy
521	Tesakuna Jataka	Parrot
522	Sarabhangha-Jataka	King's Chaplain's Son - Ascetic
523	Alambusa Jataka	Ascetic
524	Samkhapala-Jataka	Prince - Ascetic - Naga King
525	Cullasutasoma Jataka	King- ascetic
526	Nalinika-Jataka	Ascetic
527	Ummadanti-Jataka	Prince - King
528	Mahabodhi-Jataka	Ascetic

529	Sonaka-Jataka	King- ascetic
530	Samkicca-Jataka	King's Chaplain's Son - Ascetic
531	Kusa-Jataka	Prince - King
532	Sonananda-Jataka	Rich man - Ascetic
533	Cullahamsa Jataka	Goose
534	Mahahamsa-Jataka	Goose
535	Jambuka Jataka	Sakka
536	Kunala-Jataka	Bird
537	Mahasutasoma-Jataka	Prince
538	Mugapakkha-Jataka	Prince - Ascetic
539	Mahajanaka-Jataka	King- ascetic
540	Sama-Jataka	Ascetic's Son
541	Nimi-Jataka	King- ascetic
542	Khandahala-Jataka	Prince - King
543	Bhuridatta Jataka	Naga
544	Mahanaradakassapa-Jataka	Brahma Narada
545	Vidhurapandita-Jataka	King's Minister
546	Mahaummagga-Jataka	Wonder Man
547	Vessantara-Jataka	King

Source: Cowell, E.B. (ed.) *The Jataka or Stories of the Buddha's Former Births*, Vol. I – III, Translated from the Pali by various hands, Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers Pvt. Ltd., First Indian Edition, 1990.