



The Panchatantra: A Treatise On Ethical Values and Eternal Knowledge

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Abstract: The word *Panchatantra* conveys different concepts to the readers. Some recall stories, others the ancient wisdom of the people. An old collection of fables is a made-up story in which animals, birds and other living things are picked up from nature. Usually it concludes with a moral and a timeless source of knowledge. We hardly ever employ stories from *The Panchatantra* when discussing ethical quandaries; instead, we typically use tales from the Mahabharata. This paper aims to show that the primary purpose of the Panchatantra's stories is to impart basic moral values which we need to mould the behavioral skills of our life. *The Panchatantra* is not merely a book of fables. It also represents Indian values and culture consisting of five 'nitis' or principles - *Mitra Bheda, Mitra Labha, Kakolookiyam, Labdhapranasam, Aprikshitakarakam*. Through qualitative analysis I would like to show that Many moral lessons can be found in *The Panchatantra*, such as parables about befriending and retaining friends, avoiding negative influences, and considering your actions before taking them. These lessons are important for enhancing our knowledge and wisdom and serve as a broad manual for appropriate social behavior.

Key words: Eternal, Knowledge, Ethical, Values, Principles

Method of study: To arrive at a logical conclusion, the study utilized textual analysis and qualitative research approaches. Main purpose of the analyzation is to prove the ethical values and moral judgment which are considered se essential conditions for creating a foundation of knowledge.

Introduction: Ethical judgements on unethical behavior are heavily influenced by knowledge. When we are

discussing the eternity of knowledge we must refer to our ancient scripture like "*The Vedas*" which are the most comprehensive repository of knowledge that humanity has ever known, with eternal importance. The core principles of the Vedas are dharma, artha, kama, and moksha. Reaching moksha, which is regarded as the pinnacle of human achievement, is unattainable without comprehending the absolute reality. Our intellectual understanding is derived from the Vedas.(n.d.).

People can mitigate the impact of their experience on their ability to make ethical decisions by adjusting their knowledge level. The link between experience and ethical judgment can be moderated in the setting of auditors by their knowledge. Moral knowledge is also demonstrated to be a strong motivator for moral behavior and is difficult to abandon. According to this, people who possess a greater moral awareness are inclined to make moral decisions and act morally in daily interactions. Because of this, possessing a solid foundation of knowledge about moral standards and ideas can affect people's moral judgment and direct their behavior when confronted with immoral behavior. Whenever we are talking about moral judgment and ethical values then we can't but discuss the impact of *The Panchatantra* in different spheres of human life. It is not merely a book comprising some stories based on moral principles but an important guiding manual for behavioral skills.

The Panchatantra is Sanskrit: "Five Treatises" or "Five Chapters") is a collection of Indian animal stories that has been widely disseminated both domestically and internationally. The text was known in Europe as The Fables of Bidpai (after the Indian sage Bidpai, who is called Vidyapati in Sanskrit), and as early as the eleventh century, a version of it made its way to the West. It is certainly most frequently translated piece of work. The stories woven inside this masterpiece are widely known in the world. It conveys different meanings to the readers. To some it is regarded as a repository of knowledge or to some as an old collection of fables having roots in *The Vedic literature*. The Vedic period placed a strong focus on the value of Smriti, or "memorization." In addition to the lack of printing technology, "wealth in other people's hands and knowledge in books had little or no meaning in time of need." They favored poetry, or padya in Sanskrit, as a medium for simple memorization. There was also a great deal of wisdom in these poems. Numerous translations fell short of preserving these. However, it's crucial to recognise the emphasis that Panchatantra's author placed on this padya, sometimes referred to as Neetis or Maxim on Moral Conduct. Much is unknown about Vishnu Sharma,

as with many Vedic scriptures. Some Sanskrit prints that are accessible identify the author as Vasubhaga, while others mention Vishnu Sharma. Vedic authors seem to have preferred to keep a low profile. They were less interested in earning name and fame; instead they saw the transfer and perpetuation of their knowledge as essential. (Prabhu, 2022) It is not merely a literary composition of knowledge or principles but also an emblem of traditional culture and heritage.

A series of self-contained short stories within the framework of the main story in each tantra and a collection of verses at the end of each story are key features of this book. Social and Political aspects of contemporary society were shown there. '**Mitra Bheda**' is the first tantra. The main story of this tantra is – A cunning fox named Damanaka befriends a lion named Pingalak and a bull named Sanjeevka. Later he breaks that friendship and kills Sanjeevak by tricking Pingalak. Apart from this, this tantra contains stories like the destruction of the keet by the wisdom of the crow, the destruction of the greedy buck by the crab, the destruction of the lion by the wisdom of the rabbit, the story of the jewel merchant, the destruction of the king by the foolish monkey, etc. Various principles of political science, such as Sama, Dan, Bheda and Danda, are put into the mouths of various characters. Apart from this, general principles are also spread throughout the book. These principles play a decisive role to impart important lessons like "to earn respect you must give respect", "a strong mind can achieve the impossible", "friendship with dishonest people comes at a high price", "the helping hand of a foolish friend is worse than the kicking boots of an enemy".

"**Mitralabha**" is the word for friendship. This tantra contains the tale of the friendship between a rat named Hiranyak and a crow named Laghupatanaka. In addition, this tantra contains a total of six tales, such as how the merchant Sagaradatta, after being expelled from his home, returned to prosperity by means of unwavering faith and good fortune, or how the weaver Somilak, in spite of his best efforts, lost everything due to misfortune. We get some moral lessons like "what matters is quality not quantity", "every problem can be solved by getting to the root of it" and so on. The meaning of the word "**Kakolookiyam**" is "eternal enmity," or crow and owl (Prabhu, 2022). The enduring animosity between Meghavarna, the crow king, and Arimardan, the snake monarch, is the central theme of this tantra. In addition, there are four other stories, one of which describes how the cunning tricksters stole the goat by tricking a Brahmin by the name of Mitrasharma. The foundation of this Tantra is Vighraha and Sandhi. Pandit Vishnu Sharma begins the fourth Tantra by following

lines:

"He overcomes all problems Who does not lose his

cool Even in the face of adversity

Like the monkey in the water"(Poulose, 2015).

These lines convey the main idea of the fourth Tantra "*Labdhapranasam or Loss of Gains*". Through the story of a monkey named Rakhtamukha and the crocodile named Kalamukha we have learnt that one can lose previously earned things because of one's foolishness. 'You idiot, have you seen anyone who has two hearts? You are ungrateful. Get out of my sight and never come this way again'(Poulose, 2015).

"Rash deeds" is the meaning of *Aparikshitkarakam*, the fifth and final Tantra. This Tantra explains the negative outcomes of acting hastily without considering the ramifications. The main plot revolves around a merchant who hosts a foolish guest at his home, and how the guest's hurried actions ultimately cause three monks to perish.

After imparting the lesson of the above mentioned five tantras Vishnu Sharma returned the princes to the king as well educated and upright human beings.

Ever since, Panchatantra has been an integral part of Indian children's lives. In many Indian homes both inside and outside of India, Panchatantra is still told as a bedtime story and retains its educational value for young children.

Universality of *The Panchatantra* in promoting global knowledge dissemination:

The Buddhist *Jataka tales*, which are said to have been recounted by the real Buddha before his passing in 400 BCE, have several stories in common with the Panchatantra. Patrick Olivelle, a scholar, believed that these legends were not made up by Buddhist monks. These legends have long been ingrained in Indian culture. Many academics think that the stories' origins were in earlier oral folk traditions that were only recorded much later.

Dr. Johannes Hertel, a pioneering Western scholar, examined *The Panchatantra* and believed it to possess a Machiavellian quality. Some academics disagree, calling this analysis biased and believing that the stories impart moral lessons known as dharma. On the surface, *The Panchatantra* tells tales and proverbs that encourage using cunning and practical intellect to outsmart opportunistic, greedy, and bad people. Although

the Panchatantra was first composed in 200 BCE, it only closely resembled the literature of the fourth and sixth centuries CE. The influential Sanskrit work was brought by Buddhist pilgrim monks to Tibet, China, and SouthEast Asia. Versions in all of Southeast Asia resulted from them, including derivatives in Tibetan, Chinese, Mongolian, Javanese, and Lao. Unfortunately, because of frequent assaults and looting of India by powers from the Middle East and the West, no Sanskrit literature written before 1000 CE have survived. Diverse translated versions of this scripture have been found nowadays. Borzuya translated the original Indian version into Pahlavi, a foreign language, in 570 CE. Borzuya translated the primary characters as Karirak ud Damanak after translating the text from Sanskrit into the Middle Persian language (*Pahlavi*) in 570 CE. Before Charles Wilkins translated it into English in 1787. The Panchatantra, also known as *Kalīla wa Dimna* in Arabic, was translated from Middle Persian (*Kalilag-o Demnag*) to Arabic by the Persian Ibn al-Muqaffa almost two centuries later (*Chand, 2022*). This is regarded as the initial masterwork of Arabic literary prose and diverse fabric of cross cultural interaction. Rabbi Joel translated it into Hebrew in the twelfth century. The majority of the European translations of this Hebrew text originated from John of Capua's translation into Latin, *Directorium Humanae Vitae*, or "Directory of Human Life," which was published in 1480. Antonfrancesco Doni translated the Latin text into Italian in 1552. In the 1990s, Oxford University Press (1997) and Chandra Rajan's translation (based on the Northwestern text) were the two English translations of *The Panchatantra* that were released. Patrick Olivelle's translation (based on the Southern text) was published by Penguin (1993). Olivelle's translation was reissued by the Clay Sanskrit Library in 2006 (*Chand, 2022*).

This wealth of knowledge expanded during the tenth and fourteenth centuries as translations into Old Church Slavic, Greek, Latin, Old Spanish, German, Hebrew, Turkish, and other languages were made. The fact that royal courts were in charge of these stories throughout this time and gave them sponsorship emphasizes their cultural relevance. The stories themselves offer an intriguing narrative universe with animal protagonists including the lion, jackal, monkey, crow, and tortoise. These animals deftly and wisely negotiate complex situations, and each of their stories encapsulates a significant moral lesson. The ability of *Kalila wa Dimna* to make learning fun across linguistic and cultural barriers accounts for its ongoing appeal. The narrative technique, representation of the animals as human beings inside the stories have made it a captivating saga for

sharing moral values and wisdom .

Moral instruction through narratives:

For the student, the didactic and sententious tone that permeates classical Sanskrit literature is unavoidable. Nonetheless, it is most noticeable in fables and fairy tales, where proverbial philosophy and a profusion of ethical contemplation are prevalent. This technique of approach is especially applied to the apologue with its moral. One characteristic that sets apart the Sanskrit collections of fables and fairy tales, which are often found mixed together, is the incorporation of multiple stories inside the framework of a single story. In turn, the main story's protagonists share different anecdotes to uplift one another .The overall design of the piece starts to take on the appearance of a series of Chinese boxes. The adjacent eastern peoples of Persia and Arabia used this narrative technique, which they had learned from India, to create their own works. *The Panchatantra* is, of course, the most famous example in this regard.

The first book, "*Mitrabheda*," tells the tale of a bull and a lion who become close friends after being introduced to each other by two jackals in the jungle. Sensing that he is being ignored, one of the jackals begins a game of chess by persuading the bull and the lion that they are each scheming against the other. The jackal, serving as the lion's prime minister, reaps the rewards of his schemes when the bull is ultimately killed in combat with the latter. The main takeaway from this book is that a master should always use caution when listening to individuals in his circle who have influence. He should only act after giving it careful thought (Poulose, 2015). The second book's major narrative, "*Mitralabha*," centers on the experiences of The tortoise, deer, crow, and mouse as characters in order to demonstrate the benefits of wise friendships. The four creatures chosen for this book were chosen with consideration. Their environments—air, water, land, and subterranean—are distinct from one another. They handle different regions when they have issues, thereby representing their dominance in that alliance" (Poulose, 2015). The third book, titled "*Kakolookiyam*" highlights the risks associated with forming friendships between long-standing enemies . According to this book, a state with a capable ruler needs both wise counsel and sovereignty (Poulose, 2015). The fourth book, named "*Labdhapranasam or Loss of Gains*" of what has been Acquired," presents the story of the monkey and the crocodile to showcase how individuals can be easily deceived into giving up their possessions through

flattery. Lastly, the fifth book “*Aparikshtkarakam*” comprises various tales centered around a barber who faced unfortunate consequences due to his failure to consider all aspects of a situation. In global literature, *Panchatantra* is arguably the best example of an allegorical tale or parable. Similar to the *Purana* its importance is global and it exists outside of time and history. None of the characters—human, animal, or inanimate—are associated with a specific place or era in history. Moral lessons in each tale are associated with strong moral judgements. The first narrative opens with the listeners and the storyteller settled in before the narration starts, a scene that is reminiscent of the ancient oral scriptures. In the opening of the first tantra *Mitra bheda* we have come to know about the materialistic mentality of the society through the wonderful narratives of Vardhman:

"There is nothing in this world that money can't buy. These days, people consider money above everything else."

"If one has money, people want to be friends with you, and relatives wish to deal with you. Everyone tends to avoid a poor person, as if they have a communicable disease. Money holds significant influence in this world." "Without money neither one can attain education nor skills. Even for spiritual practices one must do rituals for which money is needed." "Without money one might be able to attain some stray skills by serving a teacher, yet one remains incomplete". (Dhingra, 2024). Through the wonderful narratives in each tantra we have been shown a mirror to our own selves as we the people are closely associated with this materialistic society.

Relevance of *The Panchatantra* in the present era:

The Panchatantra is not only a collection of animal fables, It's a great aid for understanding the moral principles that guide human behavior. These stories provide insights about morality and psychology. For millennia, Panchatantra stories have enthralled readers of all ages by skillfully fusing engrossing storylines with priceless life teachings. But children's Panchatantra stories take them on a voyage into a world where talking animals teach priceless lessons, cunning plans come to dominate, and the joy of storytelling serves as a doorway to both amusement and wisdom. Five tantras play a decisive role in building our human self. We learn from the stories of *Mitra Bheda* how adversaries or opponents can instigate various circumstances that

lead to the loss of close friendships and enable the enemy to gain strength and accomplish its objective. From the stories of *Mitra Labha* we come to know about strategies to bring our lost friends and at the same time make a new one. It also shows how friends or people with similar interests may band together to overcome obstacles and accomplish a shared objective. Stories inside *Kakolookiyam* teach us the laws and tactics of war and peace which are relevant in the present context of unrest and desolation. For young minds learning the importance of peace over war, *Kakolukiyam (Crows and Owls)* might be a useful educational resource. The stories in the Panchatantra volume from *Labdhapranasam* discuss ways to get out of tough circumstances without losing anything. All people (adults and children) encounter challenging situations at some point in their lives. This section discusses how to deal with these situations and emerge from them without losing important things like faith. *AparikshitKarakam* is an old collection of tales on how carelessness causes one to lose sight of what really matters. These stories show us the value of deliberate action planning and the reason that impulsive decisions should be avoided at all costs. In Panchatantra, creativity abounds. Every story has a unique plot and clever solution, allowing the reader to think critically. In Panchatantra, creativity abounds. Every story has a unique plot and clever solution, allowing the reader to think critically. The story of "*The Sanjivak and The Pinglak*" teaches how to deal with challenges to hold onto one's position. The story of "*The Crows and The Cobra*" teaches us how to defeat our enemies not by using any weapons but by our intelligence. Human actions are more valuable than words in the present time. The story of "*The Talkative Tortoise*" is very significant in terms of relevance. In the 21st century India's educational system has begun to adapt and change in response to the demands of the corporate world. Numerous universities have carried out in-depth studies to determine the need for corporations, necessary syllabus modifications, pedagogical innovations, and many other areas. The results of the study indicate that there was a discrepancy between the supply and demand for competent graduates. Higher education institutions were forced to alter how they taught the curriculum as a result, and they began implementing cutting-edge and effective techniques in place of traditional classroom instruction to instill the necessary skills. Stories of *The Panchatantra* are relevant in terms of life skills, management, creativity and innovative teaching-learning process.

Conclusion: A thorough understanding of human emotions, morals, and social ethics can be gained from *The Panchatantra* stories. The deep delve study of the book helps us to develop our moral conduct and ethical values in terms of behavioral skills, life strategies and overall cognitive development. The purpose of the stories is to alter human behavior, and social conduct towards our society and the nation inextricably linked with our identity and individuality. *The Panchatantra* is not merely a compilation of moral stories but a treatise on basic philosophy of life. It gives insight into the subtleties and delicate complexity of difficult situations. My paper aims to show that *The Panchatantra* is more than just a book of folktales or a bunch of stories for children. It is a treasure of eternal knowledge which promotes social cohesion and personal development. It is a manual on how to develop a strong moral compass and make wise choices in a range of real-life situations.

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