FRIENDSHIP AND PRUDENCE IN THE *PANCATANTRA*

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Visnu Sarma, in the *Pancatantra*, has a resourceful mouse *Hiranyaka* wondering, "a chalice of trust and affection/ a sanctuary from sorrow, anxiety and fear/who created this priceless gem, a friend? A word of just two syllables, *Mitra*?'[1] This encomium to friendship comes after a long book on the separation of friends (*Mitrabheda)* where a great friendship between a noble bull and majestic lion is undone by a jealous jackal. As a compendium of prudence, intended to awaken the intelligence of dull-witted princes, why does *Pancatantra* deal with, separation of friends (Book 1), winning of friends (Book 2) and false friends (Book 3), all of which detail our erratic instincts in judging friends? In the preamble, we are told that the *Pancatantra* was composed by Visnu Sarma to educate three young princes in '*nitishāstra*' or the art of ruling. *Nīti* broadly refers to moral and political wisdom and in particular to policy, prudence and narrowly to a contrivance or scheme and shāstra connotes a whole body of teaching on the subject.[2] Why should friendship matter to *nitishāstra* at all? How can we make sense of the repeated concern with equality in wealth, lineage and strength (*samānadhanam, kulam and balam*) between friends in the *Pancatantra*? Which joys and pitfalls are intrinsic to the practice of friendship and how can we sharpen our practical wisdom in this regard?

Shades of *Nīti*

The preamble narrates of a glorious king, *Amara Sakti* who is looking for a suitable tutor who would 'awaken the intelligence' of his three sons 'who were averse to learning' so that they would become fit to rule. His three sons were called *Bahusakti* (great power), *Ugrasakti* (fierce power) and *Anantasakti* (endless power). *Visnu Sarma*, who vowed to make them masters of *nīti* or practical wisdom in just

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six months, devised the five *tantras* (principal doctrines) titled 'separation of friends' (*mitrabheda*) which details the blossoming of friendship between a lion king, *Pingalaka* (Tawny) and a grass eating bull, *Sanjivaka*(Lively), undone by a cunning jackal, *Damanaka* (Wily), 'winning of friends' (*mitraprāpti*) which details the bonds forged by a mouse, *Hiranyaka* (Goldy), a turtle, *Manthara* (slowcoach), a crow, *Laghupatanaka* (Lightwing) and a deer, *Chitrānga* (Speckle) that secures them against the wiles of a hunter, 'crows and owls' (*kākolukiyam*) which details the war between *Meghavarna* (cloud hue) and an owl *Arimardhana* (Foe crusher) through intrigue, 'loss of gains' (*labdapranāsham*) which details the ordinary vices of friends, and 'rash deeds' (*aparikshitakārakam*) which details our erratic instincts in judging friends who are unequals.[3]

According to Chandra Rajan, *Pancatantra* must have been composed before 570 AD (when the Arabic version which is the source of foreign versions is dated).[4] Patrick Olivelle notes that Johannes Hertel, who brought out earliest critical editions of *Pancatantra*, listed about two hundred versions in 50 languages in 1914 and concurs with Winternitz's observation that perhaps no book other than the *Bible* has had such extensive circulation as the *Pancatantra*.[5]

Patrick Olivelle and Chandra Rajan are among the few to have noted the primacy of friendship in the *Pancatantra*. Rajan highlights how friendship is singled out for high praise and is possible only between equals and with noble minds, cherished for their learning, their refinement and discipline.[6]However, as Olivelle notes, "the Sanskrit term *mitra* signifies both political ally and personal friend, and the *Pancatantra* cleverly plays on this ambiguity, using aspects of the latter, especially its emotional content, to support its advocacy of the former."[7] Bhikhu Parekh distinguishes three levels of friendship in Indian epics—friendliness (*maitri*), based on mutual interest and reciprocity, bonding of hearts (*suhrd)*, manifest in instinctive and immediate understanding and feeling for one another and finally, greater intimacy and total mutual commitment (*sakhya*).[8] However, the use of *mitra* in the title of *Pancatantra*'s second book 'Winning of Friends', *mitraprāpti*, which deals mainly with bonding of hearts, suggests that the above three types/possibilities were seen as overlapping rather than mutually exclusive.

While we may wonder about the wisdom of using this text as a critical source, given the vicissitudes of its circulation across time and space, it appears that *Pancatantra* was composed, written and transmitted as a fixed text by experts of *nitishāstra* even though only fragments may have been in popular circulation.[9] *Hitopadesha's*

author explicitly says that he has culled the ethical wisdom from *Pancatantra*suggesting that it was treated as a coherent whole.[10] Even though *Pancatantra* is usually seen as children's fare, it describes itself as a *nitishāstra*, a compendium of ethical and practical wisdom. Nīti as proper conduct and right policy pertained to the three human ends of acquiring *artha* (broadly, worldly success in gaining land, wealth, power and friends), *kāma* (pleasure in general and erotic love in particular) and *dharma* (broadly, virtues and duties).

Compared to the nīti manuals like Chanakyanīti or Sukranīti which tend to be didactic, the Pancatantra, interspersing as it does folktales, anecdotes and well-spoken maxims (*subhāṣitas*) provides a superior discursive resource. As Paul Ricoeur observes, "narrative intelligence is closer to practical wisdom and moral judgment than to the theoretical use of reason in that it sets before imagination not abstract relations between virtues and happiness but situations by means of which we learn to join the ethical aspect of human behaviour to happiness and unhappiness, to fortune or misfortune."[11]

A similar insight also underlies Allan Bloom's magisterial analysis of love and friendship in a series of Western literary classics, starting from Rousseau through Stendhal, Austen, Tolstoy and Shakespeare. Bloom argues that cultivating the imagination about the highest human ends such as love and friendship is best done not through pedantic explanations (which reduce them to power-play or utility) but through timeless plays and novels that bring these experiences alive and tutor us regarding their ambiguities and conflicts.[12] In love and friendship, humans discover themselves as being incomplete which propels them to seek exclusive relationships wherein they learn to exercise courage, generosity, trust and sacrifice.More pointedly, Robert Sokolowski argues, based on Aristotle, that friendship is the finest way in which we exercise practical reason and that practical reason finds its highest employment in friendship in that it affords room for practicing courage, temperance, justice and so on.[13]

Regarding friendship and equality, the *Mahabharata* explicitly raises the question of whether friendship is possible only between equals through the Duryodhana-Karna, Drona-Drupada and Krishna-Arjuna and Krishna-Kuchela relationships. For instance, in the Drona-Drupada episode, Drupada refuses to acknowledge his childhood friend Drona after becoming king saying that only equals can be friends. An offended Drona gets his disciples to defeat Drupada, conquers his kingdom, spares his life and returns half his kingdom so that they can be friends as equals!

Thus, the intertwining of friendship, equality and *nīti* or practical

wisdom is well attested in Indian classics. From the *Pancatantra* preamble, while it is obvious that *shakti*/power (suffixed to the names of the three dim witted princes mentioned above) must be tamed by practical wisdom, it is not so apparent why that would involve learning about friendship. It is because *nīti* lessons must be imbibed by prospective rulers regarding whom they should befriend, especially as many unequals may come calling. Maxims such as make friends with those who are similar or equal in wealth, strength and lineage are often expounded and problematized with wit and irony. Conversely, it is also because we learn about *nīti* in general, i.e. deliberating about the right means to attain wealth or pleasure or virtues with and through friends. Far from being seamless, *Pancatantra* also shows how the diverse and compelling ways of friendship may both reinforce some aspects and disrupt other aspects of practical wisdom.

So far, only select aspects of prudence or practical wisdom as expedient opportunism and cleverness have been highlighted in *Pancatantra* scholarship. *Pancatantra's* most popular stories, be that of the rabbit that lures a proud lion to its death by showing its rival mirrored in a well and the sparrow that gets rid of a predator serpent by stealing a queen's necklace and dropping it in the serpent's hole, involve strategic outwitting of the powerful by the powerless. No wonder that Johannes Hertel translated *tantra* as cases of trickery and set the tone of dominant readings by regarding it as a Machiavellian treatise of deceit, cunning and ruthlessness in achieving political aims.[14] Franklin Edgerton regarded the stories as generally amoral and positively immoral.[15] Patrick Olivelle declares that "it is clear to me, therefore, that the central message of the *Pancatantra*, with the possible exception of Book II, is that craft and deception constitute the major art of government."[16] It is not clear why a rather large Book II, titled 'Winning of Friends', dealing with the wonderful experiences of hailing one another, eating together and meeting to share witty stories must be treated as an 'exception'. Furthermore, the contextual ambiguity embedded in the so-called craft and deception theme has not been given its due in the above readings. As Uma Chakravarti has pointed out in the context of Jataka tales, a number of stories deal with unequal characters in a hierarchical situation where the inferior resorts to deception and cunning to subvert the stronger party's threats. At the same time, there are also alliances suggesting an ambiguity in handling the master-servant relationship as merely hierarchical.[17]

My interest here is in retrieving the many shades of *nīti* which

is usually reduced to expediency by extant interpretations. Given that two big books comprising almost a third of the whole deal with prudence in the discernment of friends and enemies, I argue that while there is a good dose of cunning involved in many stories, there is also a sense that prudence is not just clever opportunism; it involves both an emotive and an ethical component adumbrated here through the problem of equality between friends.

Lure of Strangers

As mentioned before, *Pancatantra*'s first book narrates of the cunning and ambitious *Damanaka* working his way back into royal favour by engineering a friendship between a lion-king *Pingalaka* and a bull, *Sanjivaka*. We hear that Pingalaka is all "noble, disdaining flattery, small mindedness, intrigue, above suspicion but easily aroused to anger due to an overabundance of valour and uncommon appetite for power".[18] Sanjivaka, a 'grass eater', possessed great intelligence and profound wisdom, having studied and mastered various branches of learning. Once they meet and seal their mutual regard thanks to Damanaka's effort, they spend all their time in 'learned discussions', shutting out all others. It appears that in a short while, "even a blockhead" like Pingalaka became "wise and intelligent, urbane and civilised".[19]

Engrossed in this exclusive relationship, *Pingalaka* neglects his royal duties causing much hardship for his dependents. It seems that he also elevated him to chief ministership (in the *Hitopadesha,* the post is that of the Chief Treasurer), sidelining the two jackals.[20] In fact, the Hitopadesha even mentions that Sanjivaka alerted the lion to their pilfering and depleting the treasury.[21]Pinched by hunger, Damanaka begins consulting his friend, Karataka, who blames him for introducing the grass-eating bull to the lion. Damanaka admits his fault and narrates some stories of how go-betweens are inevitably hurt especially if they are stupid. Unlike the greedy jackal,who steps in between two fighting rams to lick the blood and is killed, Damanaka claims he is far sighted. Damanaka resolves to devise some clever means to sow mutual suspicion (*bheda*) so that the two are estranged. Posing as a frank courtier, Damanakapoisons the lion's mind saying that Sanjivaka was plotting to usurp the throne for himself. When the lion looks stunned, he quotes *rajnīti* texts which say that a single minister must never be made all-powerful especially when there are hereditary retainers around. He dares to suggest more than once that the lion may know maxims of *rajnīti* but lacks the ability to act in

time due to misplaced affection and compassion for strangers.[22]He harps again and again that the bull is a "stranger", that too, a "useless grass eater" who is bound to betray.[23] To hammer the point home, he retails stories of betrayal by men and animals; one story is about a bedbug which deigned to share the king's couch that was its home with a selfish wasp-guest and the latter, unmindful of when and where to bite the King, stings him one early morning causing a massive hunt that ends in the host-bedbug being killed.

Damanaka is an expert in one aspect of *nīti*, i.e. sheer opportunistic prudence. Expediency, rooted in narrow self-interest is all that he cares about. He knows what is good but uses that knowledge only rhetorically to further his creed of "helping friends and harming enemies" which is why he is in royal service. He draws the distinction between friends and enemies in a utilitarian manner so that one who furthers one's own interest is cultivated whereas one who detracts from the same is shunned. His *rajnīti* does not admit permanent friends or enemies; only a continuous and ruthless struggle to shore up power, wealth and influence through any means whatever.

Initially, Pingalaka does not subscribe to a narrow notion of friends and enemies. He demurs saying that Sanjivaka has been a good retainer, that he is dear to him like his own "body", that a virtuous one like him cannot turn against a benefactor and so on. Damanaka reminds him that servants are always ambitious and do not permanently wish to serve. Pingalaka confesses that he cannot change his warm feelings for someone he held dear for long and that it would be ignoble of him to harm one who had been granted refuge.[24] If a former friend turns hostile, the right thing would be to move him through favours. All of this is mocked as a sign of weakness that is bound to ensue in self-destruction by Damanaka.[25] When he is somewhat inclined to believe the courtier, noble as he is, Pingalaka wants to warn Sanjivaka first which is brushed aside by Damanaka with "what kind of policy is that? For it is known that: you caution a man, and straight out of fear he dissembles, or, he decides to strike. Have no doubt; it is most impolitic to caution a foe by word or act".[26] Pingalaka begins by showing signs of an ethical prudence, one open to noble gestures and regard for the 'learned'; he also suspects that the wily jackal may not wish well, having once been sidelined, and that the bull may have been set up by someone but fails to see through Damanaka's ploy.

In contrast, Sanjivaka epitomizes one who is learned but displays no practical wisdom at all. He knows many stories that mirror his predicament; one story about a king with evil counsellors pertains to

that of a chariot-maker, Devagupta, who chancing upon a lion in a forest, quickly offers his own lunch; being in a benign mood, the lion king says that it cannot be satisfied with boiled rice and vegetables; the chariot-maker strikes a pact with the lion on the condition that it come alone everyday to be plied with sweetmeats and candies in exchange for safe passage; in time, they become good friends and the lion gets used to being provided with food and gives up hunting; when its retainers, the crow and the jackal, get to know this, they insist on joining the party; the chariot-maker, on seeing them approach, realizes the danger and climbs up a tree saying that he cannot trust him anymore. Sanjivaka suspects initially that the lion may have been set up by someone but overlooks the jackal standing right in front of him as the culprit.[27]Upon learning about the lion King's betrayal, he bemoans that he was deceived by the latter's sweet speech, bowing and rising, praising and gifting and so on. He regrets flouting the conventional belief that marriage and friendship work well only where lineage (*kulam*) and wealth (*dhanam*) and virtue (*silam*)and strength/power (*balam*) are roughly equal or similar (*samānam*).[28] He laments ignoring the disproportion between itself and the lion-king. Olivelle highlights that there are frequent instructions in the *Pancatantra* that there can be no friendship between meat eaters and grass eaters, between the wild and the domestic spheres.[29]Ashay Naik also argues that this book reflects the tensions between meat eaters, signifying the imperatives of power (belligerent, close fisted, realistic factions) and the grass eaters, signifying the pull of righteousness (peaceable, compassionate, idealistic, munificent mob). Thus, the fragile balance between meat-eating Kshatriyas and his retinue of ministers is threatened by the entry of civilian community represented by the bull or camel or man.[30]

But this is not the last word, for the addressee-princes also listen to a long valedictory lecture from Karataka about his friend Damanaka's short sightedess as well as the lion's lack of judgment in hacking down a great friendship. Here, the friendship between the two jackals Damanaka and Karataka, who are equals, is also worthy of attention**.** Chandra Rajan notes that they represent the politician and the statesman respectively.[31] When Karataka sees the gory spectacle of the lion and the bull goring one another, he forcefully slams Damanaka's notion that *rajnīti* (statecraft) is inherently crooked and protean. Unsentimental to the core, Damanaka boasts that one must achieve success if necessary through another's ruin and gloats that they will now feast on the bull's flesh. Disgusted, Karataka fulminates that the test of a minister's political

sagacity is in cementing rather than breaking friendships that arose spontaneously and that Damanaka is a minister only in name for he has denuded and endangered the king.[32] Conciliation is the choice worthy expedient rather than war, which is hazardous and uncertain and should never be engaged in for paltry gains. In the process, Karataka calls Damanaka a fool, a perverse blockhead, a low-bred courtier and accuses him of bringing about disorder and confusion in the realm to further his own advantage. He mocks that his textual knowledge of statecraft is useless for it had not tamed his passions or intelligence; his bravery is unfair, his pride is overweening and his jealousy is vicious. Karataka asserts that one must not make friendships with fools and rogues. While it is clear that Damanaka is a rogue, Karataka seems to suggest that he is also a fool for his ways bring destruction to his friends and family. Thus, here is a friendship between equals that turns sour on principle.

Lest we think that Karataka is just an armchair critic who analyses things *post facto*, we must note that he is nonetheless prudent. Incidentally, Olivelle translates Karataka as 'the prudent' and Damanaka as "the daring"one.[33] It is not as if Karataka expects the world to be all nice and noble. He is aware of the precariousness of a minister's position, of the unreliability of kings' patronage and their susceptibility to chicanery. He knows of greedy sons who endanger their families for ill-gotten wealth. And of false friends who appropriate what has been entrusted to their custody. Still, Karataka's *nīti* or prudence counsels contentment, not meddling in other's business, acting within the bounds of trust and duty, avoiding deceit to trap the powerful and not risking the king's life for small gains.[34]

This first book ends on an ambiguous note; in some versions, Pingalaka survives and the wily jackal becomes the chief minister. Chandra Rajan points out that it is not clear in other versions whether Pingalaka survives the battle.[35] Ashay Naik justifies Damanaka's ambition, boldness and rightness from the standpoint of meat-eaters. Political necessity might require that rules be broken for a just outcome in a given set of circumstances. As he puts it, if the jackal brothers were not dismissed, or if Damanaka had been rewarded earlier on for the friendship with the bull or if Sanjivaka had not adversely influenced Pingalaka, etc. it would not have been necessary to separate the two.[36]

But this realpolitik reading misses the ambiguity and despair about *nīti* pertaining to friends in particular in this book. Conventional wisdom has it that one must make friends with those who are

roughly equal or similar as Sanjivaka puts it. True, friendship with unequals is risky in that it attracts hostility from hangers on who may feel excluded from the charmed circle. It is also difficult since inequality lurking in the background makes such friends succumb to misunderstanding easily. And yet, this is not what is affirmed in the book; no simple rule that one must form friendships only with equals and avoid unequals and strangers is put forth. Karataka never once condemns the friendship between the lion and the bull as an inappropriate match. He advocates a more nuanced prudence, one that is open to acting spontaneously and nobly toward those who come seeking refuge and advancing self-interest within the bounds of duty.[37] Strangers and unequals come hailing and it appears that one must extend the hand of friendship to them, albeit after careful scrutiny.

Taking Risks for the Good

Pancatantra's second book, 'winning of friends', full of paeans about friendship is about a mole, a crow, a turtle and a deer which achieve their desired aims by acting in concord. Once again, *nīti* regarding who should be chosen as a friend is raised here as if the conventional wisdom spouted by Sanjivaka earlier is found wanting. The first debate happens when a crow called Laghupatanaka seeks out Hiranyaka, a mole for friendship thinking "though a person is self sufficient, a person should still have friends to raise his standing". [38]Laghupatanaka has just witnessed the mole freeing his friend Chitragreeva (Sheen neck), the pigeon king and his retinue from a hunter's net. On this occasion, there is an exchange between Hiranyaka and Chitragreeva; Hiranyaka, delighted to help his friend, starts nibbling away the fetters, the pigeon king exhorts him to free his retainers first. Hiranyaka says that masters come first and Chitragreeva counters by saying that as a king, he is bound to show concern toward those who have attached themselves to him.[39] He cites "wise sayings" (*subhāṣitas*) which state that a master who heaps honours on servants constantly and far beyond their due will never be forsaken by them. This reply pleases Hiranyaka who says he only wanted to test his friend.[40]

Impressed by the mole's astuteness, the crow beseeches Hiranyaka to become his friend. But Hiranyaka refuses saying that there can be no friendship between food and the eater, and that "one who is fool enough to make friends with a person not his equal, be he inferior or superior, merely becomes the world's butt of ridicule".[41] The operative word is 'samāna' which connotes "same, equal, like,

similar" in the first instance.[42] In this context, the mouse refers to equality of wealth (*dhanam*), of lineage (*Kula*)) as well as strength (*balam*) and intelligence (*jnānam*).[43] Sanjivaka also referred to the same parameters above. Olivelle has noted that different social groups and strata were regarded as different species and thus inequality and hierarchy were "natural" rather than cultural and malleable.[44] He also adds that the text almost always shows Brahmins in poor light and it is most positive about merchants who are wise, ambitious and virtuous.[45] While it presupposes *varnajāti* as given, *Pancatantra* is not obsessed with casteist rigidity. In one story of a rich weaver who falls in love with a princess and becomes obsessed with possessing her, his best friend asks him, "are you not afraid of transgressing the Law (*jāti dharma*)? You are an artisan, belonging to a class of traders and merchants—those who carry on business; the king belongs to the class of warriors…" To which the weaver replies, "The Law allows the warrior a third wife. Who knows if the princess is not the daughter of a lady of my class, belonging to the business community…"[46] Needless to say, he goes on to seduce the princess through subterfuge and with some divine help, he even marries her and inherits the kingdom. Thus, caste inequality is not so pronounced as inequality of physical strength, wealth and lineage.

The crow threatens to go on a hunger strike; the mole cites well-known ethical precepts that say that friendship and marriage work well only where there is parity (*samānatvam*) of strength, wealth and lineage.[47] Alliances between the strong and the weak seldom work. Moreover, aligning with foes is imprudent and when they happen to be "natural enemies", it is positively dangerous. To the crow's queries, it replies that incidental enmity, springing from specific injuries can be remedied but natural enmity is permanent and inborn. "Natural enmity" between grass eaters and meat eaters, dogs and cats, rival wives, fire and water, gods and titans, snakes and mongooses, lions and elephants, crows and owls, scholars and dunces, chaste wives and harlots, saints and sinners only ends with death. As Rajan points out, it is not that anyone is killed all the time but they all strive to fight the other to death.[48]

The crow, like a constructivist, urges that one makes friends or enemies for a reason and that one must not seek enmity without reason. In its view, "we make friends with people because they help; with beasts and birds for some special reason or other; with fools out of fear or greed but with *the good (sajjan)*, we make friends at first sight".[49] Unconvinced, Hiranyaka says that it would be foolhardy to think that since one is virtuous, one will come to no harm. The crow offers to bind itself with oaths and remonstrates that friendship with

the virtuous is difficult to break and easy to mend altogether. The mole says that one must not trust a foe and an "indifferent wife"![50] The crow is even more awed by the wisdom of the mole and ups the ante saying that it will give up its life if friendship were not granted.

Hiranyaka finally relents, won over by the persistence and frankness of the crow. It appears that when faced with someone, even a "natural enemy" who seeks out one's friendship, calculations of equality and utility must be deferred, if not abandoned. One must recognize that "friendships arise spontaneously and are a blessing of good fortune" and make friends with the good.[51] One must take a risk though it need not be a leap in the dark; all these stories have long exchanges where truthfulness in speech is tested. Of course, not all friendships are based on chance encounters and good fortune; a friend's friend may become one's own friend. This is how the mole is befriended by Manthara, the turtle who is introduced by the crow. Winning of friends concludes with a deer that seeks the friendship of the mouse, crow and turtle. Running away from hunters, the deer Chitranga chances upon the forest where the three friends are assembled; charmed by the sweet speech of the turtle and seeing that they do not pose a danger to him, the deer proposes that they be friends. The turtle demurs saying that there cannot be any friendship since they are small and cannot help in times of need.[52] The deer tells them the story of an elephant herd freed by mice reminding them that size and might need not inhibit the virtuous (Skt. *sajjan*) from coming together and reiterates that one must make friends with the powerful but also with the powerless.

Refined Pleasures

It may appear as if utilitarian calculations dominate the formation of such bonds between unequals. Olivelle has observed that the second book demonstrates the alliance of the weak in response to external threats. In his words:

> …the four animals are all weak: a tiny mouse, a slow turtle, a crow who is more a scavenger than a predator, and a deer who is the ultimate prey, the typical object of the hunt. They are also very different, possibly representing the four different habitats: the turtle in the water, the mouse underground, the crow in the air, and the deer on land. The turtle is a good selection because the story takes place on land and calls for a water animal that can also operate on land. Working together, these four unlikely friends with very different skills and coming from diverse backgrounds are able to outwit the greatest threat to an animal, a human hunter who is here represented as death and evil incarnate.[53]

However, this is to overlook the great joys of friendship which

shape and sustain these bonds. Once friendship is struck, it grows with the activities of "giving and receiving, each other's secrets sharing, dining and entertaining"; the affection between friends is often physically manifest; "seeing a friend sends shivers of joy, body quivers with delight, eyes tear up with joy".[54] Even when one is dying, the sight of a dear friend is said to bring happiness.[55] In fact, it is far better to give up one's life than be parted from dear friends since life can be regained through rebirth but not friends.[56] A trusted friend is even elevated above one's relatives, such as a mother, wife, son and brother.[57] Genuine friendship is not diminished by constant enjoyment, unlike wealth. [58]

The greatest happiness seems to come from exchanging *subhāṣitas* or wise sayings on *dharma*, *artha* and *karma*, etc. "For the wise, poetry and science suffice to keep the mind occupied/it is only for fools that time passes in sleep, squabbling and hatching mischief/ their skin tingles, their limbs thrill, relishing the savour of witty, well turned phrases; men of intellect experience pleasure though they lack the company of women".[59]Whether it is the crow which holds forth on spontaneous friendships or Hiranyaka who expounds on natural enmity (above), friendships are sustained by not just utility but shared wisdom or *subhāṣitagoshti*.[60] In collective gatherings of the urbane (*goshtis*), one recalled, traded, polished and modified 'wise sayings' or *subhāṣitas* according to the context. They were the fees (*dakshina*) to be collected and given in mutual conversation.[61] Daud Ali has argued that *subhāṣitas* constitute a genre of ethical practice; as such, they reflect codes of self-fashioning, aesthetics of virtue and collective shaping of ethical discourse through public dialogues of 'well spoken' maxims.[62] Instead of dismissing these as just legitimatory or utilitarian, we must see them as a communicative idiom in which there is critical reflection on ethical values, aspirations and resultant tensions.[63] They tell us about the actual ways in which we learn to sharpen our *nīti* or practical wisdom through dialogues with friends, wherein fragments of received wisdom are recalled, their ambiguous meanings and contradictory demands are exposed and the conflicting pulls we experience in specific action contexts are sounded out. Recall the many wise sayings exchanged between the crow and the mole that testify to the pleasures of displaying and fine-tuning one's *nīti* repertoire.

While male bonding dominates, as Olivelle has noted, female friendships are not altogether absent.[64]A few stories present females as quick witted, practical and above all, equally keen and adept in ethical discussions. A shining example is that of a female lapwing which pleads with her husband to migrate since the ocean was

devouring all her eggs; her husband refuses saying that their home near the ocean is inherited from forefathers and that the ocean is a friend and dares not to be hostile. Laughing off his bravado, the female lapwing tells stories of those who do not heed good advice, lack forethought and ready wit and are thus blind to their own strengths and weaknesses.[65] Using well-spoken maxims, they also debate weighty ethical questions of who is a true friend and whether helping a friend expecting future returns is friendship at all.[66]

Conclusion

As we saw, after highlighting betrayal and separation in the very first book, *Pancatantra* persists in showing that friendships often happen between unequals and one's practical wisdom must be tuned to both the promise and the risks. Conventional wisdom, which counsels that one must follow self-interest and expediency or make friends with equals, is questioned in favour of an ethical prudence. Instead of dishing out cut and dried moral maxims, *Pancatantra* cultivates our sense of *nīti* by churning the heart, harkening to our emotions and sentiments and going beyond survival instincts by kindling the desire to be good, if not great.

In friendship, our *nīti* or practical wisdom is weaned away from narrow opportunism to caring for another who is not necessarily a blood relative. Spontaneous and disinterested goodwill towards a stranger who comes professing admiration or distress (lion toward the bull in book I, mouse toward the crow in book II) is the originary moment, which sets great friendships in motion. We come to understand and share the needs of strangers through friendship. Inequality of wealth, lineage or might is nullified by the compatibility in learning and wit we may find in so-called "unequals". Of course, like the mouse, we are encouraged to test those who come seeking friendship and not assume that all who come calling are noble and since one is good, no harm will befall us. Far from peddling a heartless prudence, *Pancatantra* directs us to experience the joys and risks of spontaneous and noble friendships to deepen our *nīti* or practical wisdom, a lesson that is worth recalling in these times of opportunistic networking and inarticulate "liking" on social media.

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Notes

1. Visnu Sarma, *Pancatantra*, translated with an Introduction by Chandra Rajan, (Delhi: Penguin 1993), p. 263. This text will henceforth be referred to as Chandra Rajan, The *Pancatantra*.
2. VamanShivramApte, *The Student's Sanskrit English Dictionary*, (Delhi: MotilalBanarsidass 1970), p. 280 and 553
3. I have also relied on a Telugu translation by G. Reddy BalaChenna Reddy, *Pantatantram* (Samskrita Bhasha Prachara Samithya, Hyderabad 1989) which will be henceforth abbreviated as *Pancatantram*.
4. Chandra Rajan, "Introduction", In *The Pancatantra*, (New Delhi: Penguin 1993), p. xvi.
5. Patrick Olivelle, "Introduction", In *The Pancatantra, The Book of India's Folk Wisdom*, Translated from the Original Sanskrit (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), p. ix
6. Chandra Rajan, "Introduction" in *Pancatantra*, p. xlvi
7. Patrick Olivelle, "Introduction" in *Pancatantra: The Book of India's Folk Wisdom*, p. xxxix.
8. BhikhuParekh, "Friendship in Classical Indian Thought*", Indian International Centre Quarterly*, Vol. 35, No 2, p. 156
9. Patrick Olivelle, "Introduction" in Patrick Olivelle, *Pancatantra : The Book of India's Folk Wisdom*, p. xli.
10. *Hitopadesha* (Beneficial Advice), edited by G.L. Chandiramani, (Mumbai: Jaico Publishing 1995), p.14
11. Paul Ricoeur, "Life: A Story in Search of a Narrator" In Paul Ricoeur and Mario J.Valdes eds.,*A Ricoeur Reader:Reflectionand Imagination (Toronto: University of Toronto Press 1991)*, p. 428
12. Allan Bloom, *Love and Friendship*, (Chicago: Simon and Schuster, 1993), p. 30.
13. Robert Sokolowski, "Phenomenology of Friendship*", The Review of Metaphysics*, Vol. 55, No. 3 (Mar., 2002), p. 452. For a deeper comparative analysis with Western scholarship, See Vasanthi Srinivasan, *Virtue and Human Ends* (forthcoming).
14. Patrick Olivelle, 'Introduction", *Pancatantra: The Book of India's Folk Wisdom*, p. xxxi
15. Patrick Olivelle, in "Introduction", *Pancatantra: The Book of India's Folk Wisdom*, p. xxxii.
16. Patrick Olivelle, in "Introduction",*Pancatantra: The Book of India's Folk Wisdom*, p. x and xxxv
17. Uma Chakravarti, "Women, Men and Beasts: The Jatakas as Popular Tradition", In Aloka Parasher Sen ed., *Subordinate and Marginal Groups in Early India*, (Delhi: Oxford University Press 2004), p. 220
18. Chandra Rajan, *The Pancatantra*, p.13
19. Chandra Rajan, *The Pancatantra,* p.44.
20. G. Reddy Bala Chenna Reddy, *Pancatantram*, p. 197.
21. G.L.Chandiramani, *Hitopadesha*, p. 124

22. Chandra Rajan, *The Pancatantra*, p.97
23. Chandra Rajan *The Pancatantra*, p.97. *Pancatantram,* p. 134
24. G.Reddy Bala Chenna Reddy, *Pancatantram*, p. 136
25. G.Reddy Bala Chenna Reddy, *Pancatantram*, p. 137.
26. Chandra Rajan, The *Pancatantra*, p. 104
27. G.Reddy Bala Chenna Reddy, *Pancatantram*, p. 154 and 165, Chandra Rajan, *The Pancatantra*, p.128
28. *Pancatantra*, p. 117, *Pancatantram*, p. 153.
29. Patrick Olivelle, "Introduction", p. xxv
30. Ashay Naik, "Pingalaka and Sanjivaka: The Alliance", in *In Natural Enmity: Reflections on Nīti and Rasa in Pancatantra* (Book I), Kindle edition 2016.
31. Chandra Rajan, *Pancatantra*, p. xxvi
32. Chandra Rajan, *Pancatantra*, p. 152-153
33. Patrick Olivelle, *Pancatantra: The Book of India's Folk Wisdom*, p. 7.
34. Ashay Naik, "Damanaka and Karataka: Fourth Dialogue" in *Natural Enmity.*
35. Chandra Rajan, 'Introduction' in *The Pancatantra*, p.xxx
36. Ashay Naik, "*Coda: The Principles of Nīti"* in *Natural Enmity.*
37. Chandra Rajan, *The Pancatantra*, p. 172
38. Chandra Rajan, *The Pancatantra*, p.201
39. G.L.Chandiramani, *The Hitopadesha: An Ancient Fabled Classic,* p.36, Chandra Rajan, *The Pancatantra*, p.199
40. Chandra Rajan, *The Pancatantra*, p.200.
41. Chandra Rajan, *The Pancatantra*, p.202
42. Vaman Shivram Apte, *The Student's Sanskrit English Dictionary*, p. 587
43. G. Reddy BalaChenna Reddy, *Pancatantram*, p. 252-253.
44. Patrick Olivelle, "Introduction", *Pancatantra: India's Book of Folk Wisdom*, p. xxxvi
45. Patrick Olivelle, "Introduction", *Pancatantra: India's Book of Folk Wisdom*, p. xxx
46. Chandra Rajan,*The Pancatantra*, p. 80
47. G.Reddy BalaChenna Reddy, *Pancatantram,* p.252.
48. Chandra Rajan, *The Pancatantra*, p.203
49. Chandra Rajan, *The Pancatantra*, p.204. G.ReddyBalaChenna Reddy, *Pancatantram,* p.256.
50. Chandra Rajan, *The Pancatantra*, p.204
51. Chandra Rajan, *The Pancatantra*, p.261
52 Chandra Rajan, *The Pancatantra*, p. 251
53. Patrick Olivelle, "Introduction" in *Pancatantra* : The Book of India's Folk Wisdom, p. xix
54. Chandra Rajan, *The Pancatantra*, p.209
55. Chandra Rajan, *The Pancatantra*, p.255
56. Chandra Rajan, *The Pancatantra*, p. 259
57. Chandra Rajan, *The Pancatantra*, p. 261
58. Chandra Rajan, *The Pancatantra*, p.261
59. Chandra Rajan, *The Pancatantra*, p. 254
60. This term occurs frequently in the Telugu translation justifying the emphasis here. G.Reddy Bala Chenna Reddy, *Pancatantram*, p. 260, 262, 322, 323, 336.
61. G.Reddy BalaChenna Reddy, *Pancatantram*, p. 322, 323
62. Daud Ali, "The Subhāṣita as an Artifact of Ethical Life in Medieval India", In *Ethical Life in South Asia.* Edited by Anand Pandian and Daud Ali. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press. 2010) p. 24.

63. Daud Ali, *Courtly Culture and Political Life in Early Medieval India*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004) p. 95
64. Patrick Olivelle, "Introduction" in *Pancatantra* : The Book of India's Folk Wisdom, p. xli
65. Chandra Rajan, *The Pancatantra*, p133.
66. G.Reddy BalaChenna Reddy, *Pancatantram*, p. 185

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