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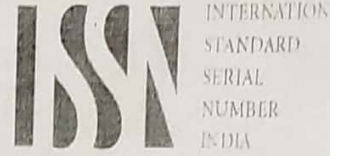
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Comparative Thematic study of the *Pañcatantra* and *Aesop's Fables*

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Introduction

Stories are incredible heritage of human societies; Indian literature has significantly contributed to it. The *Pañcatantra* is one of the excellent efforts of Indian creativity, which sermonizes morality with entertainment. In India, story forms like folk tales, fables, parables, romantic and deductive tales have been developed in oral as well as written forms. Some of them have been preserved in Jain, Buddhist and Brahmin literature. Aesop is legendary for the life he led over 2000 years ago and mostly for the hundreds of fables that have been attributed to his name since. Aesop's fables have reached countless generations since he is reported to have been alive, and they continue to be a part of the lives of many. The *Pañcatantra* as stories are the most widely known in the world. It is considered that the *Pañcatantra* is one of the best collections of stories in the world; the assertion could hardly be disproved. The *Pañcatantra* explored in varied forms in India, traveled abroad in translations, and translations of translations, through Persia, Arabia, Syria, and the countries of Europe. These stories have brought delight to millions of readers. Aesop is recognized as the emergent of the folklore- fable during the ancient Greek period. His enormous popularity fetches him the credit of most Greek, Roman, and European fables. He was supposed to have been very ugly, and to have been mute from birth. As the result of his kindness to some priests, he was miraculously given the power of speech. Aesop used his power of speech both to mock as well as impress his owners.

In comparative study of literature, Theme is very important aspect of study; it encompasses large fields of study, involving many sociological, geographical, mythical, religious aspects. The wide range of thematic study is explained in the book *Comparative Literary Studies*, in the chapter (xi) –'Theme and Prefiguration':

....comparatists have always felt very much at home, despite repeated efforts to drive them out of it: that of 'thematics', 'thematology', or *Satoffgeschichte*...(a) The literary representation, in different languages and at different times of *natural phenomena* and man's reaction to them: mountains, the oceans, the forest; or of *eternal facts of human existence*: dream, or death; or of *perennial human problems and patterns of behavior*: conflict between illusion and reality, the power of destiny, the crossing of true love, libertinage...(e) The literary representation of *named personages* from mythology, legend, earlier literature or history... Raymond Trousson, who knows the field as thoroughly as anyone, has argued, persuasively, that the most fruitful subject for comparative literary studies will, in fact, be found under (a) and (e).¹

At large themes of fables can be classified in to two major sections as

- Instructive messages about human follies
- Explicit moral based upon cultural approach

The target audience of fable is individuals as well as society on the whole so the themes of fables should base on day to day human's behavior and cultural beliefs. Both the texts the *Pañcatantra* and the Aesop's Fable have fulfilled this task ingeniously. In the first section of theme that deals with individuals, both the texts have done marvelous job. In the *Pañcatantra* the titles of every *Tantra* suggest the theme that they deal with. All of them are examples of theme that deal with individual issues. The first *Tantra* is entitled as *Mitra-bheda* means 'Splitting Friendship' as the title implies, chief theme of this *Tantra* is the deterrent of separation of friends. Friendship has been developed between the king lion and bullock. Two jackals were former advisers of king lion. Against one's opinion another developed and later smashed the friendship of the king lion and the bullock. The first *Tantra* embassies on the consequences of 'loosing friendship', the most amassing relation of men with men is friendship, if one fails to mention it there would be a great loss on his part. The sudden next theme of the *Pañcatantra* is 'Gaining Friendship' entitled as *Mitra-samprāpti* here the author intentionally juxtapose both the theme before reader coming out of the impression of theme about consequences of loosing friend. The author narrates the importance of Gaining Friendship in this way the impact of second theme is magnified. Author could have placed the positive theme 'Gaining Friendship' in the first place but intentionally he wants to magnify the importance of friendship he placed it in second place. As the second *Tantra* entitled as *Mitra-samprāpti* the *Tantra* opens with the tale of a clever Dove's king, who saves his retinue from the hunter's trap by making them fly cohesively with its net and then has the bound been cut by his old friend- a mouse. It demonstrates the power of unity and importance of friendship. Later part discusses the benefits of friendship portraying crow, mouse, turtle, and fawn. They cooperated with each other to save the fawn, when it was trapped and later they work together to save turtle.

Most of the themes of the third *Tantra*, *Kākolūkīyam* falls into second type of classification that deal with explicit moral based on cultural point of view. So it would be discussed while elaborating second section.

The fourth and fifth *Tantra* deals with the First classification- the instructive messages about human faults. The title of both the *Tantra* suggests *Labdhapraṅśam* – Loss of Gained and *Aparīkṣitakāraka* – Hasty Action, are the faults of human behavior. The fourth *Tantra* deals with the theme of loss of what is gained; it has the central story of monkey and crocodile. The whole *Tantra* is based on the concept that how stupid fellow loss everything that is gained and how wise fellow protects himself from descending problems.

The fifth *Tantra* deals with the theme of action without thought. It has the central story of the Barber who strikes a stick on monk's head in order to have treasure.

There are many sub-stories in each *Tantras* that advocate the main doctrine of *Tantra*, sub-stories can be said as supportive arguments and examples of main themes.

In a same way, Aesop has dealt with the themes that discuss human faults. Aesop has huge collection of fables, near about 313 stories on different subjects. Aesop's stories are fragmented, they are not interlinking like the *Pañcatantra*. In the *Pañcatantra* a thread of theme can be felt that bounds each story like necklace. While here each story has individual subject. Yet there is still something in that for we can classify Aesop's themes in three major sections. First is like themes that suggest 'Man cannot hide his or her true nature', whatever human have developed in terms of intellect, logic, observation, emotion, how so ever he became cultured, May they put on mask of harmony, unity, pity and love. Human cannot hide his or her true nature. There are many fables here who advocate such reality of mankind. Second important theme is the 'Brutality of day to day life'. There has been always clashes between powerful and weak; the clashes were more profound in ancient time, people were generally concern with their basic needs. Ancient people are more nearer to nature as well as more nearer to the brutality of the nature. There is famous quote of Adolf Hitler; "If nature can be cruel, why not men?" Moreover greed for land and wealth made them blind towards tenderness of life. The third theme of *Aesop's Fables* can be out lined as, 'One cannot escape from his destiny'. Destiny is an overwhelming theme of the fables. No human, object or animal can escape from the destiny.

When we compare first classification that deal with individuals of both texts, it is clearly felt that author of the *Pañcatantra* was in endeavor to amplifying the idealism in person. That is because of cultural and religious values of the author. The author of the *Pañcatantra* as earlier steted was Hindu-Brahmin, Hindu culture and Hindu religion is more concerned with inner world of men. It encompasses the ideology of purity, piousness, truth, life after death, salvation... all these ideas lead men to live an ideal life, a life that everybody want to imitate. So the ideal life is the main spotlight of the author. On the other hand it is also true that 'ideal life' is also in 'idea'. It is not cent percent possible in practical world. Author was aware of reality and practical world but intentionally he wanted to make a standard. The argument can be opposed by saying that the author advocates the doctrine of "Çtha□PratiÇāthya□" (Shrewdness should be faced by being shrewd). But these words are the way of dealing in practical life. It is not ultimate goal of the author, what he means is, for practitioner of ideal life, sometimes it is ok if they have to be shrewd. Shrewdness is against ideal life but after all it is practical life and there is no harm sometimes in being shrewd to face the shrewdness of the world.

In the first *Tantra*, author shows that what happen when king lion and bullock cannot become shrewd against his adviser jackal who was shrewd, here shrewdness is not the theme of the *Tantra*, here loss of friendship is the theme. In second *Tantra* crow, mouse, turtle and fawn use a trick to save themselves. Here gaining friendship is the theme. The focus of author is in idealism behind the actions. It is the matter of perception. It is the same case with themes of fourth and fifth *Tantras*.

On the other hand Aesop has not taken charge of idealism, he wants to teach moral on the factual bases. He wants to sketch the life with the instruments of reality. Later Plato advocated importance of idealism in the Greece. Aristotle was the match with Aesop. Aesop believed the one cannot escape from the reality to teach morals. As

he demonstrates in his first theme that men cannot hide his or her true nature, so don't expect so. Accept the fact that his or her nature will not change. Accept the nature of (his or her), or don't deal at all. This is the moral of Aesop's Fables. In same situation the *Pañcatantra* may say; it is after all human nature it could be changed. One should try to change it. The *Pañcatantra* depicts this ideology portraying friendship between the king lion and the bullock. One is predator and on is prey. Friendship could not be possible between this two, but here it does. They both became intimate friends. In the same way, in one fable of Aesop there was treaty between hounds and sheep of friendship. But when hounds get chance, they eat them up. This is a grass root level difference in the themes of *Pañcatantra* and *Aesop's Fables*.

Aesop's point of view is that life is a brutal. Accept the brutality and be cautioned. On the other hand the *Pañcatantra* says life is beautiful, if you learnt the art of living. The very first fable in the *Aesop's Fables* is *The wolf and the Lamb*. In the fable *The Wolf and the Lamb*, once a Lamb astray from the fold, meet a Wolf, Wolf resolved not to lay violent hands on him, but to find some plea to justify to the lamb the Wolf's right to eat him, so he addressed the lamb that last year he has insulted him, the Lamb replied in mournful tone that he was not then born, Wolf asked again he feed in his pasture, the Lamb replied he never tested grass, the Wolf again asked he drank from is well, the Lamb replied his mother's milk is food and water for him. He never drinks water. Upon which the Wolf seized him and ate him up saying he wants to remain superless, even though he refuted every one of his imputation. The moral of this fable is "The tyrant will always find a pretext for his tyranny". On the other hand in the *Pañcatantra*, in second *Tantra*, tyrant twice caught by tyranny first king of dove was caught by hunter with his retinue, but deliberately they flew cohesively to a friend mouse and the mouse set them free. Later the fawn was caught by hunter in a trap, so on as turtle but due to friends efforts they all set themselves free. Aesop demonstrates brutal part of life and gives moral while the *Pañcatantra* demonstrates beautiful part of life and gives moral.

Aesop advocates the role of destiny over men while the *Pañcatantra* supports human effort to create his or her destiny. Destiny is an irresistible theme of the fables. No inanimate object nor animal nor human being can escape from the destiny. In the fable, *An Oak and Zeus*, an oak tree appeals Zeus to stop men from chopping him down. Zeus responds that it is the oak's own fault for being so useful to carpenters. It is his destiny to be chopped down because of his nature.

In the fable *The Father and His Dream*, an old man dreams that his son will be killed by a lion. He does everything that he could do to prevent this. He builds a house for his son and makes him stay there. He decorates the house with paintings of game. The man's son approaches a painting of a lion, and he is so frustrated with being kept indoors that he strikes out at it. The painting falls on him and kills him. His fate is fulfilled. The lion kills him.

Both the texts the *Aesop's Fables* and the *Pañcatantra* have travelled long voyage of time period. Both the texts are translated in many languages. Many authors have re-created them. What today available is the re-creation of original ones. It is the same case with both the texts that they had been destroyed before the first re-creation

and there are many versions available of both the texts that is due to multiple interpretations. Moreover the translators have not just translated; they have transcreated according to their milieu and local. In the *Aesop's Fables* around 300 B.C. the four significant collections of *Aesop's Fables* came into exist by Demetrius of Phaeum, especially as the reference book of fables and for writers and speakers to quote. The major issue of Multiple Interpretations came when Phaedrus in 55 A.D. composed his 'Latin Verse' version of the fables. His version was based on Demetrius's collection. 'Phaedrus expanded *Aesop's Fables* and added some stories from other sources and his own creations'². This Latin verse derivation of Phaedrus becomes the base for three medieval Latin prose referred to respectively as 'Aesop of Ademar', 'Aesop ad Rufum' and 'Romulus'. Each version was modified by means of expansion, deletions and additions. The *Pañcatantra* has many versions, these versions named as per the geographical areas, on which they supposed to be written like: West Indian version, Kashmirian version, South Indian version etc. All these versions differ from one other in the interpreting the stories. In the West Indian version in the fifth *Tantra*, *Aparikṣitakāraka* story of *The Barberis* the central story while in South Indian version *Brahmin's wife and Mongoose* is the central story. Both these stories are in the fifth *Tantra* of both of the version but the interpretation of stories have changed, and as interpretation changed, importance of stories have changed and that is how in one version, which is sub-story, shifted to the central story in another.

In the *Aesop's Fables*, some scholars focus on the changes that individual authors make in their editions of the *Aesop's Fables*. Samuel Richardson, in addition to explaining his own changes, discusses those of Sir Roger L'Estrange and Samuel Croxall in their editions, especially in regard to the morals, in order to advance their own political viewpoint. Barbara Mirel discovers three methods of interpreting Aesop in various modern editions and shows how *The Fox and the Crow* is presented differently according to each one. Mary-Agnes Taylor examines the changes made by various poets in favor of the ant in *The Ant and the Grasshopper*. George Clark compares the fables of *The Cock and the Jewel* and *The Swallow and the Other Birds* in the versions of Aesop and Robert Henryson. *Aesop's Fables* are 'ready to use' examples perfect to create deep impact on audience so different authors have edited, deleted and added some stories as per their local need and milieu.

Abdullhbn al Muqaffa translated the *Pañcatantra* from Pahlavi to Arabic in 750A.D. Here he modified two jackal's names into the *Kalila* and *Dimna*, perhaps because of the immensity of the first *Tantra*, or because the Sanskrit word *Pañcatantra* as a Hindu concept could find no easy equivalent in Zoroastrian Pahlavi, their names the *Kalila* and *Dimna* became the generic, classical names for the whole work. Here whole focus lies on the first *Tantra*. The frequent appearance of two jackals in the first *Tantra* catches whole attention of translator from other *Tantra*. Moreover, Abdullah Ibn al Muqaffa has also added some stories from Arabic literature and names of some characters have also been changed. The crocodile has been changed to 'Alghlim'. The mongoose has been changed in to weasel and Brahmin becomes Hermit.

In the translating any work, it is hard to remain original especially when the work moves from one civilization to another. In the case of the *Pañcatantra* and *Aesop's Fables*

there is less translation and more 'trans-creation'. It is naturally possible because the *Pañcatantra and Aesop's Fables* moves not only from one language to another, but it moves from one country to another, from one culture to another, from one civilization to another. As perception changes interpretation also change.

Comparison of themes resolves many aspects. As S.S. Praver mentions in his book *Comparative Literary Studies: An Introduction* that;

Such study of theme and motif may be seen as the literary equivalent of what art-historians know as iconography; and its interest seems to me assured by least three considerations. First: the comparative study of themes and motifs enables us to see what type of writer chooses what type of material, and how the material is dealt with at various times... second: 'Thematic' studies enable us, in fact to examine and contrast the spirit of different societies and epochs as well as those of individuals talents...lastly: thematic study must not be divorced from study of literary style³.

The proposed study enables us to study human nature and collective unconsciousness from anthropological point of view. The mankind of the world is categorized in four basic human races: Australoid, Caucasoid, Mongoloid and Negroid. The middle part of the world commenced from India and reaches up to Greece which belongs to Caucasoid Race. The Caucasoid people were usually divided in three clusters on linguistic groups, termed Aryan, Semitic, and Hamitic, the most ancient known Indo-European languages were those of the ancient Indo-Iranians. The word *Aryan* was therefore adopted to refer not only to the Indo-Iranian people but also to native Indo-European speakers as a whole, including the Romans, Greeks, and the Germans that helps the study to assume that though archetypes remain similar their myths varies, as centuries pass. The rooted cultural, religious and spiritual values bring change into their perception and approach of life. Such difference can be identified in the themes that the text deals with.

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Fable: A genre study

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The stories have enchanted soul of human society and played an incredible role as a preserver of its values. It is hard to find a person who has not gone through or listened stories. Stories are experiences, imaginations and adorations of ancestors molded in artistic form. Fable is one of the ancient forms of stories dealing with all the elements of literature, most likely pleasure and preaching. Use of birds and animals in literature is one of the wisest ideas that have ever made. It is smart idea to protect society from generating any kind of prejudice for any particular race, caste or region.

One Sanskrit proverb has beautiful thought regarding education in life, it indicate that, a person without education is like an animal without horn and tail. This proverb can be smartly used to understand the characters of fables. The proverb is like that; *Manushya Rupen Mrugaha Charanti* (animal exist in a form of human) Here we can use it is like; "*Mrugaha Rupen Manushya Charanti*" (human exist in form of animal). in fables animal characters are given human attributes.

In all the ancient civilization fable form can be found, more likely in India and Greece. In particular there are many similarities of basic human archetypes and lots of differences in their myths. Actually in ancient time, fable follows the oral tradition, so it has traveled from states to countries and from countries to continents.

Voyage of Fables on the stream of History:

It is safe to assume that earlier stages of development and oldest roots of fables are found in Indian Vedic Literature. In *Rugveda*, Brahmans were compared with croaking frogs as they sing at their sacrifice (7/103). In *Upanishada*, the allegory or satire of the dogs are found who search out a leader to howl for food for them (1/12/2). And there are many more examples like story of 'Sarma' (10/108/3, 9). In *puranas* animals are shown as incarnations of Gods or Gods are in form of animal. In the epic like *Ramayana* the character of 'Kagbhushandi' is found who preaches fellow bird 'Garuda'. And in the epic *Mahabharata* there are many incidents where animal is found as behaving like human. Later as with the development of Katha, new form of Fable starts curving itself. Hundreds of fables were composed in ancient India during the first millennium BC, often as stories within frame stories. These included Vishnu Sharma's *Panchatantra*, *Hitopadesha*, *Vikram and The Vampire*, better known as *Vetalpanchvinshti* and Syntipas' *Seven Wise Masters*, famous fables from the Middle East, *One Thousand and One Nights*, also known as the *Arabian Nights*.

In ancient Greek and Roman education, the fable was used as training exercises in prose composition and public speaking. Where students would be asked to learn fables, develop them, invent their own, and finally use them as persuasive examples in longer forensic or deliberative speeches. The need of instructors to teach, and students to learn, a wide range of fables as material for their declamations resulted in their being gathered together in collections, like *Aesop's Fables*. *Aesopica* or *Aesop's Fables* includes most of the best-known western fables, which are attributed to the legendary Aesop,

Fables had a further long tradition through the middle Ages, and became part of European high literature. During the 17th century, the French fabulist Jean de La Fontaine (1621–1695) saw the essence of the fable is moral and rules of behavior. Starting with the Aesopian pattern, La Fontaine set out to satirize the court, the church, the rising bourgeoisie, indeed the entire human scene of his time. La Fontaine's model was subsequently emulated by England's John Gay (1685–1732), Poland's Ignacy Krasicki (1735–1801), Italy's Lorenzo Pignotti (1739–1812) and Giovanni Gherardo de Rossi (1754–1827); Serbia's Dositej Obradović (1742–1811), Spain's Félix María de Samaniego (1745–1801) and Tomás de Iriarte y Oropesa (1750–1791), France's Jean-Pierre Claris de Florian (1755–94), and Russia's Ivan Krylov (1769–1844).

In modern times, while the fable has been trivialized in children's books, it has also been fully adapted to modern adult literature. Felix Salten's Bambi (1923) is a *Bildungsroman*, a story of a protagonist's coming of age, cast in the form of a fable. James Thurber used the ancient fable style in his books, *Fables for Our Time* (1940) and *The Beast in Me and Other Animals* (1948). Władysław Reymont's The Revolt (1924), a metaphor for the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917, described a revolt by animals that take over their farm in order to introduce 'equality'. George Orwell's Animal Farm (1945) similarly satirized Stalinist Communism in particular and totalitarianism in general, in the guise of animal fable.

Genre of fable

Purpose: Primary aim of fable is to entertain child to youth fables attract every one the characters are very funny in presentation. The whole tone of story is funny and at the end of the story shade of humor occurs and that brings wise smile on face. Children and youth are not interested in dry moral preaching fables solve this problem. It entertains and teaches moral. It is like sugar coated pills. Fable also makes cautionary points. Fable teaches how to apply morals in life. Particularly *Panchatantra* gives freedom of choice it does not emphasis that one should follow certain ways, it gives examples that which path led you to which destination.

Characteristics: Fables are typically written as a short story. Fables possess all the characteristics of short story. As short stories have three stages fables have same beginning, middle and end. It has characters, settings, plots, stories, and incident element, like short story it has striking end. Generally only one incident is found in fable, the projection of story is different. Short story develops in serious tone, while fables develop in comic tone. In fable

characters are animals and birds .the language used in fable is different from short story, it is more didactical. Generally fables are written in classic or archaic language. Idioms are frequently found and that sometimes harm the flow of story but in a way fable is meant for preaching. Generally story develops in dialogues.

Two types of collections of fables are found. The first one is like cluster of chain and the second one is individual in itself. In the First type of collection, stories are inter connected and sometimes story within stories. Connections of one fable are found in other fable. This type of collections are more artistic and interesting like *Panchatantra*, *Jataka*, *Shukasaptati* etc. the second type of collections are individual stories, one story has no connection with another, like *Aesop's Fables* and *Fables of La Fontaine* etc.

Plot: Fables are intended to teach and preach, so usually fable contains one incident, easy and accessible for young once. Different collections of fables like *Panchatantra* and *Aesop's Fables* have different plot construction. In *Aesop's Fable*, fables are individual there is no link between two fables of same collection. After one story another story starts with new title and without any connection. It is a simple collection of different fables more like editorial work, while *Panchatantra* has more complex plot. It is like cluster of chains. It is divided in to five section *Mitrabheda* (splitting friendship), *Mitralabha* (gaining friendship), *kakolukiyakam* (crow and owl), *Labdhapranamansha* (loss of gain), *Aparikshitkarakam* (hasty actions). Usually characters are fond in conflicts either they are in need of something or they want something.

With the development of story element of trick is there which brings turning point in the story, the conflicts of characters ends with one or two events leading to lesson for life or moral lesson. Sometimes moral explicitly could be found between two events or at the end of the story. This explicitly is conveying in very few words. Generally fables deal with the abstract and complex subject.

Setting: Pastoral setting in almost all the fables, time is vague, but as Fables belongs to Folklore literature and its characters are animals, birds and plants so usually forest, villages, farms etc are found. Rather setting is unimportant part of fables. Development of stories is only depended upon dialogues. Setting exists only as a background of story to fill extra colors.

Themes: Fables are intended to teach moral lesson, so whatever story may be, the chief theme is to provide instructive message about human faults. Moreover fables are basically folk tales so it is closely related to culture and religion of respective countries and it is its duty to preserve and protect cultural and religious values of its country. Second major theme of the fable is explicit moral based upon culture and religious point of view.

Characters: In the matter of subject, characters of fables differ from the short stories. In fables animals, plants or objects are assigning human characteristics. Their affairs are akin to human beings. Here characters are mythically representative of different humor of human beings. Characters are Anthropomorphism of human nature. Each character dominates one aspect of human nature like Innocent Sheep, Cleaver Jackal, and Boatful Frog etc. and they are in conflict due to their nature.

Usually two or three characters are there to develop the story. The main characters are animals or inanimate objects like Fox, Grapes, Crow, Water etc. usually conflict between two opposite elements are found in form of characters, like Cleverness and Stupidity, Kindness and Cruelty.

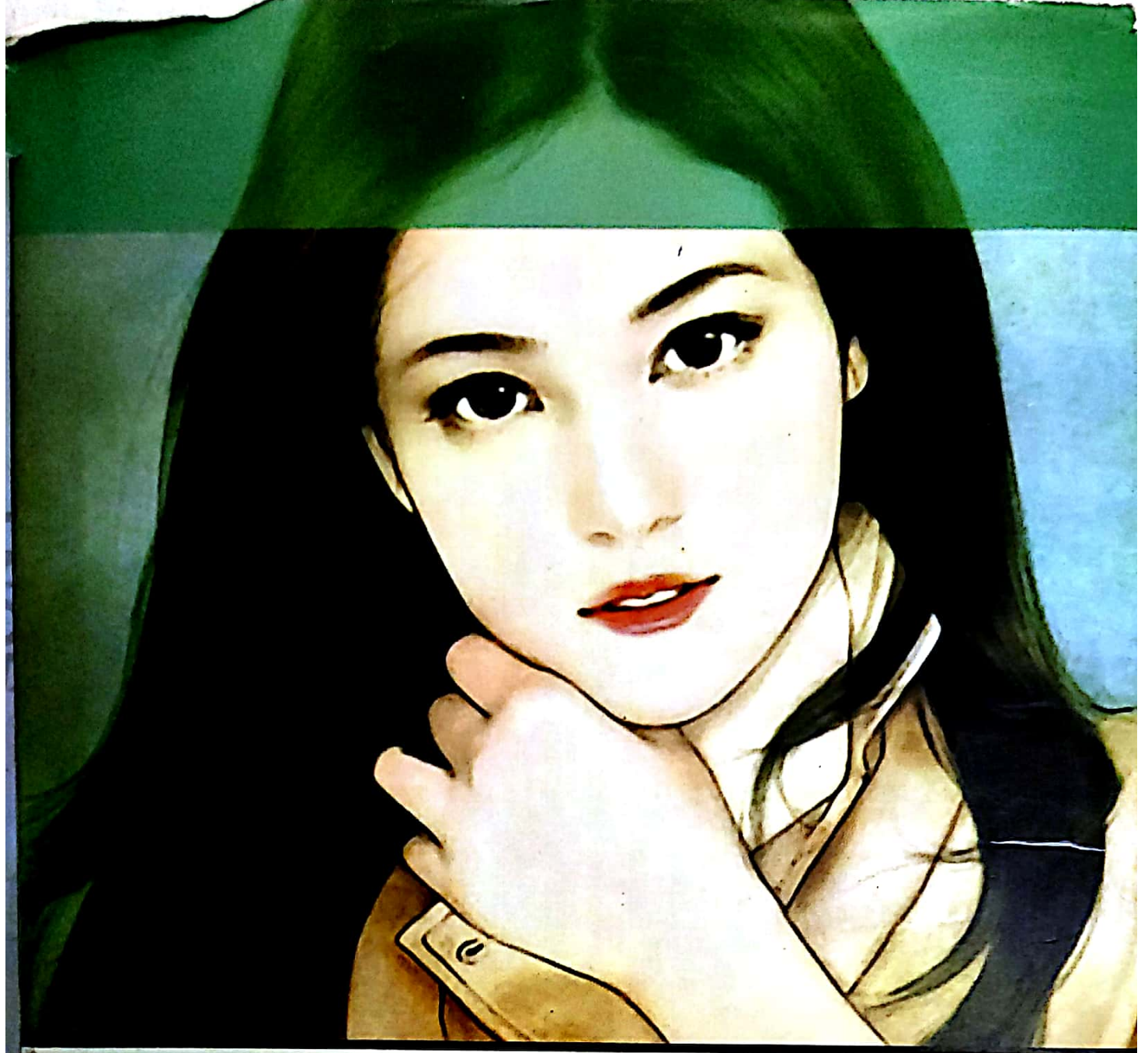
Characters have mostly impersonal names except from *Panchtantra*. Like Fox, Owl, Frog, Boy etc. In *Panchatantra* or any other Indian fables, it is a tradition to name the characters, not only just name, but the names that, suggest the characteristics of that particular character. Like bullock as *Sanjivak* who get another life, Lion as *Pingalak* who become pale out of starvation etc. Fables do not have enough space for the development of characters so there is no scope for round character, only flat characters are found.

Craftsmanship: In fables author's Point of View is very important aspect. What ever Author want suggest or generate is depended upon their point of view. Fables are nothing but the observation of author of his society. Whatever moral or ethical virtue they deal, is only depended upon their point of view. For example Aesop and Vishnu Sharma are two great fabulists but some where their point of view for society is different and that can be seen in their fables, they have treated same moral lessons in different way, they have different types of taboos and tradition.

Another craft is equally important and that is Art of Personification, here author uses figure of speech in which animal, ideas or things are represented as having human quality. It should be keen, sharp and satiric. Author should be master of creating dialogues. In Fables dialogue is only medium for creation of an effect. Author should use simple language concisely to convey abstract truth in few words. Author should use instructive voice providing directions or useful information.

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Feminism and Women's Writing



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✓
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Twenty

GANDHIJI'S CONCERN FOR EQUALITY AND FREEDOM OF WOMEN

PARASHAR VYAS

Gandhiji brought some radical changes in women's life which would have been otherwise very difficult to bring in society which accepted reforms at a very slow rate. Never before was a woman as strong or powerful as during the freedom struggle of India. To a great extent the reason for this was Gandhiji's attitude towards woman. He did not want her to be weak and helpless in any way.

"Women hold the key of Swarajya"¹ is not merely a lip service, but this was the strong belief of Gandhiji. That is why he involves women from the very beginning in the freedom movement. As a prolific letter writer he wrote many letters to women of multifaceted personalities. His letters to women are found in most cases the strong bondage of emotion that relates each of them with him in a specific relationship. He showed a noticeable respect to the women through out his life. He plays a role of friend, philosopher and guide to women who came in close touch with him.

In older age, Gandhiji walked with the support of two ladies, though he was surrounded by many men. It seems, Gandhiji wanted to indicate indirectly that women are no more to be treated as tender and timid and not at all weak. Mythology and Bhagavad Gita are referred frequently in the letter to support his discourse to motivate and encourage women by stating examples of Draupadi's courage

to the Pandavas , Sita's sacrifice and Kaikeyi's bravery to save Dasharath and Taramati's unparalleled support to Harishchandra. His faith in women was so deep and sound that he promoted women in every field and appealed them to come out of old dogmas and of wrong beautification by heavy ornamentation.

Though he corresponded with many women, here his correspondence to Maniben Patel, Gangaben Vaidhya, Prabhavatiben, Premaben Kantak have been taken into consideration for the present study. Gandhiji had long and detailed correspondence with all these four ladies. They had strong relationship yet they have different shades. Their contribution was also a remarkable in freedom movement. Gandhiji had cultivated and educated them through his letters.

Gandhiji's letters to Maniben Patel :

Gandhiji had motherly love for Maniben. She had lost her mother at very young age and remained untouched by father's love because of some family tradition and modesty. Gandhiji advised her to remove her shyness and taciturn nature. Gandhiji tried to use her strength in the service of nation .His letters are very brief and often pertaining to message of well-being. Throughout these letters Gandhiji also advised her to serve her father. Occasionally he wrote about health. He believed that; "One should have healthy body to serve other people" ²

For sometime Maniben remained very sad and melancholic. Bapu consoled her by saying; "Pure heart has no grief, it never blames, it never sees wrong. This is very great condition. But let me accept the fact that still I am very far from it" ³

Bapu never insisted her to marry. He believed that if girls wished to remain unmarried they must not be forced to do so. At the same time, if they do not have any vow, there is nothing wrong in marrying. True religion is more important than celibacy. He wrote that she should choose the path of life boldly "Those who want to remain unmarried; they should have to be strong" ⁴

Melancholy in Maniben's nature was not because of absence of her life-partner. Once she had decided not marry, she never thought of it. Her dryness might be her innate nature. Once she even thought

of suicide. It was because of problems that she had faced in her childhood. She wrote in her letter; "Now it is clear that my dryness is not because of absence of life partner and I assure that when I think of marriage, I will not feel shame to tell you. I do believe that if I were more frank with Bapu I will certainly be more comfortable"⁵

Gandhiji's letters to Prabhavatiben :

Prabhavatiben belonged to cultured and orthodox Bihari family. Her father Vrajkishoriji was a social worker in Bihar. In 1920, at the age of fourteen she married to Jayprakash Narayan. Gandhiji was highly impressed by her virtues, he tried to cultivate it and mould it in service of nation. As she was daughter of well-cultured family, she inherited the desire for service to humanity and the nation from her family background.

Her in-law's family was also advised by Gandhiji to remove wrong family customs. As Jayprakash Narayan had studied abroad and being a socialist, there was difference of ideology between him and Gandhiji. But because of pure love and straight-forwardness of Bapu. He succeeded in developing relationship and creating understanding between Jayprakash Narayan and Prabhavati Devi.

Prabhavatiben was frequently advised to consider her mother-in-law as her own mother. In letter to Vrajkishoriji Gandhiji showed annoyance towards restriction imposed on Prabhavati ; "I feel sorrow that you have restricted prabhavatiben. We are very few people who wish to serve religion and nation. You should be free from the fear of government and society."⁶

Prabhavatiben was advised not to follow false customs of family with her modesty and fully satisfy her in-laws with her service. In the beginning, few letters were written in Hindi later they were shifted to Gujarati. As she was uneducated she could not gather enough courage to give voice to her inner feeling. Bapu inspired her by writing; "Don't be hasty to get education, your piousness, patience and dutifulness is true education."⁷ Gandhiji believed that virtues are more important than only being educated or literate.

Gadhiji's letters to Gangaben Vaidya :

Gangaben was born on 1878 in Vaishnav Bhatiya family. At the age of thirteen she got married. Her husband Meghajibhai died

just after three years of marriage. At that time Gandhiji was experimenting with 'Satyagrah' in South Africa. As he arrived in India he established 'Satyagrah Ashram' in Ahmadabad. Gangaben was highly impressed by Gandhiji's presidential speech at Mumbai in 'BhaginiSamaj'. It changed her life completely. In 1924 she came to live in Ashram with her daughter and two sons. In a letter Gandhiji wrote that; she should keep writing letters to him, although he might fail to answer some of them.

As she had taken responsibilities of kitchen she had to face many problems and obstacles. She wrote about the incidences in the letters. Bapu consoled and encouraged her; Gandhiji wrote "Don't think that I have to do all these things. Think that god is doing everything. If you understand this theory, you will feel relief"⁸ Being Gangaben an uneducated woman, she felt shame and thought that she was committing many mistakes in writing. Gandhiji educated her through letters and advised her to improve her writing, language, He wrote; "Do not have fear of grammar, where the grammar of heart is pure, what can the syntactic grammar do?"⁹

The history of freedom struggle is quite well-known. Women from all walks of life participated in the freedom struggle of 1930, 1932 and 1942. They took part very bravely. It was a glorious day for them when under the leadership of Gangaben at Borsad, they were beaten cruelly by police. At that time Gandhiji was in Yeravada Jail, He wrote to Gangaben that she was the same as he has thought of her. He wrote "How would I be happy if I have seen you in blood stained sari? I will feel bad if you all sisters were not in this brave occasion. You all have no anger on police is a great thing. They are your sons but they are unaware"¹⁰. This is how Gandhiji taught women to cultivate the virtues of motherly love and forgiveness.

When Gangaben became disappointed from Ashram work, she was told that she sang Bhajans very beautifully "Mane chakar rakho ji..." Gandhiji wrote, "Think of its meaning and of Shlokas of our prayer. Those who think that they belong to God; God promises to provide for their 'Yogakshem' then why should we worry about all these things? Our relationship with Ashram is like a Hindu marriage, once it is established it carry on forever"¹¹.

Gandhiji's letters to Premaben Katak :

Premaben was like a disciple, daughter and friend to Gandhiji. Their company elaborates the ideas of spirituality, liberty and wisdom. Their letters are natural and create an interesting philosophical reading. This journey of letters is like a pilgrimage. It contains a long span of nineteen years. Gandhiji's last letter on Premaben was on 16th January 1948 and he died on 30th January 1948. Gandhiji continued to write till the last day of his life and that's why we have a large store of letter literature by Gandhiji. In the letters to Premaben, Gandhiji discussed various issue like food, health and many other aspects of life.

Some letters are short, while some are very long. Some letters are light and some are very serious. These letters pertaining to the descriptions of Ashram life and development of relationship . These letters are like an autobiography of Premaben. She was compared with three saintly ladies Muktabai, Janabai and Mirabai by KakaSaheb Kalelkar. As she had devoted herself to Gandhiji, she molded her whole life according to Gandhian ideology. As the spirituality is one of the chief aspects of their correspondence Gandhiji elaborated his idea of God in this manner;

"God is omnipotent It is not necessary to see him. We haven't seen many of our relatives. Somebody's parents may have died but on faith of somebody we believe that they exist, as our sages are testimonies of God, we should have faith in God."¹²

Premaben has asked Gandhiji in a letter who his hero was? He replied that, a hero means an honorable deity. In political affairs Gopal Krishna Gokhale was his ideal. Tolstoy, Ruskin and Shrimad Rajchandra inspired his life. Premaben was given the responsibility of handling the Ashram. Her nature might be strong because Gandhiji wrote that your nature was strong, rude and reserved, but it was not a big fault. By this letter she was offended and asked to make her free from responsibilities of the Ashram. Gandhiji wrote; "Who else can tell you the truth? It is good to know the truth."¹³

In the learning lessons of sacrifice, modesty and endurance she lost her weight. Bapu advised her "Your body should shine like copper. If you don't feel hesitation in eating fish, you can go out

side of the Ashram and you can eat fish" ¹⁴Bapu's attitude was clear regarding non-vegetarian food. He never forced others to be strict vegetarian. In response of Premaben's letter Gandhiji once wrote; "Don't beg pardon for your long letters. I have learnt from it. It is reflection of your mind. Letters are reflection of writers' mental condition. This is special quality of letter writing".¹⁵

Premaben had strong determination and she had no fear of the world. She behaved according to her own wish. On such occasion Gandhiji advised her that one should worship virtues instead of a particular person, a person may be wrong and all human beings are mortal; while virtues are eternal. Ashram was the best place for overcoming weaknesses and also added not to go outside for the sake of love for others. He wrote;

"Love has no need of physical proximity. If it has, then it is momentary. Death or separation is true test of love"¹⁶

Premaben has once mentioned in her letter that; she might sleep with any man on the same bed for the whole night and get up in the morning as innocent as a child. Gandhiji sensed her ego and, elaborated the term celibacy in following words; "celibacy is depended up on God, practitioner of celibacy remain modest those who born immutable are either God or incapable of being man or woman. Your celibacy is deficient" ¹⁷ Gandhiji seems very frank in letter writing he accepts his weakness and gives advice in the following letters: "My criticism might be my ignorance. It might be possible that I haven't understood your language".¹⁸

"When we fail to clarify our points to elder or younger one should keep silence and pray for them".¹⁹

"The custom that stops you in searching truth should be left".²⁰

"God is imaginary, truth is a form which I follow and that is abstract".²¹

"In my vision of 'Swarajya', tiger & lamb will drink water together, if it remains only imagination, so what?"²²

"Fall of men is in concealed serving of objects. There is no limit of it. I have no enmity towards Gruhasthashram. It is an essential condition. It is beautiful, but Ashram means hidden Dharma".²³

The concept of Ashram was an essential part of Gandhiji's methodology, for it not merely provided a supportive community to develop and consolidate constrictive activities, it also served as a training ground for Satyagrahis. However Gandhiji realized that orthodox elements in Indian society would oppose his communal concept, unless it could be organized on the strict aesthetic bases, particularly so with regards to the important and revolutionary role. He foresaw that women would play an important role in the running of his Ashram and freedom struggle in general. Thus the relative flexibility of the pattern followed at Phoenix and Tolstoy Farm was replaced at Sabaramati Ashram.

Women accepted life suggested by him happily he believed that women's role in household and family is remarkable. He criticized all evil customs that humiliated and degraded women. He respected traditions of the society but not at the cost of loss of individual dignity. His practical and dynamic advice was that to swim in the water of tradition is good but to sink in it is suicide.

Gandhiji often presented ideals before women from Indian mythology. He often talked and wrote in his letter about Sita, Damayanti, Mirabai, Draupadi as great women by interpreting these characters in innovative manner. He said that Sita was a strong woman who defeated Ravana with moral courage Draupadi was an independent woman who saved herself through her devotion to lord Krishna, when Pandavas failed to protect her. Here the appeal to Krishna is to be understood as following one's own conscience.

Present study is a humble effort to understand Gandhian ideology for healthy and pious womanhood. It can be applied not to only women but for the betterment of mankind in general.

Through letters Gandhiji expressed his ideology very straight forwardly and pin pointedly without putting any layer of hypocrisy in language and content.

His letters to women would prove to be a course book for any women who want to be educated, uplifted in one's own individual life. These letters cover various aspects of women's life particularly on the matters which are controversial even today and frequently

debated. These discussions are directly addressed in these letters with remedies and convincing examples and foundational definitions. Were complexity, multi-interpretations, excuses and ambiguous arguments of philosophy do not find any place. Each letter is the answer to women's burning problem. In his letters fearlessness is explained and exemplified in the most practical and rational manner.

Truth and Non-violence are two basic pillars of his ideology. Though he writes to educated Ashram women the particularly of daily life how to stand and fight against thieves. He boldly mentions that if there are no men in the Ashram and thieves enter, they must face and fight out with them bravely.

Gandhiji established Ashram to impart training, cultivation and to demonstrate an ideal human being, a family, a village of the free nation. He was always concern about women and their upliftment. Step by step he uplifted women from wrong, old dogmas to the world of independent individuality. That doesn't mean that he was against the traditional values. He respected all valuable tradition and also insisted that, those wrong dogmas and taboos which were implemented out of fear and superstition must be bravely discarded. He motivated Maniben, Prabhavatiben, Gangaben and all Ashram women to break this false bondage and be free from superstitions and evil customs.

For Gandhiji 'Women' did not mean modern westernized woman. His letters have carved an idol of woman of today's feministic ideology. She is the modest, simple, away from heavily decorated ornamentation yet independent, brave, bold, standing against the challenges of life and participating equally in every field of society and nation Gandhiji wanted women to be the true ideals in the society. He believed that women can play a very pivotal role in shaping the family, the society and the nation at large.

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