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The Theme of Friendship in the *Hitopadesa*

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Abstract

The current paper studies the theme of friendship in the *Hitopadesa*. Friendship is a prominent theme in the *Hitopadesa*, and its stories provide the framework for many kinds of friendship. Since the text is largely written in the context of statecraft, friendship is encoded predominantly as diplomacy between inter-state and intra-state actors. Alternatively, as exemplified in the stories, friendship is also an aim and an end in itself. Friendship is an aspect of cultural heritage that is to be welcomed and enriched insofar as the ecological balance of the world as one family is concerned. The current paper argues that the *Hitopadesa* tends to interweave two threads together: one, the theoretical aspects of friendship based on philosophical and ideological assumptions premised on balance between *dharmayuddha* and *kutayuddha*, and the other, that lies post-theory within the affective, spontaneous and practical aspects of specific friendships between individuals.

Keywords: friendship, niti, *dharmayuddha, kutayuddha, dharma*

The *Hitopadesa* was composed sometime between 800 and 950 CE by Narayana, who was a Lord Shiva-devotee, a court poet in the court of Dhavala Chandra in eastern India, a grammarian as well as a philosopher. Translators of the *Hitopadesa*, along with literary historians, have argued that the *Hitopadesa* contains extracts from the Ramayana, the Mahabharata, the Puranas, the Panchatantra, the *Arthashastra* and the Nitisara. The current paper studies the theme of friendship in the *Hitopadesa* using The Penguins Classics translation of Narayana's original *Hitopadesa* by A.N.D. Haksar, as the primary text. At the start and end of the *Hitopadesa*, the philosophy of ecological one-ness, connectedness and continuity is re-iterated in the phrase "vasudhaiv-kutumbakam" (71-2), which is taken from the

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Maha Upanishad or the *Mahopanishad*. *Hitopadesa* belongs to the genre of "nidarsana katha" or a "story which aims to teach by exemplum and is often satirical" (Haksar xii). The main plot involves the central protagonist, Visnu Sarma's attempt to educate the young sons of King Sudarsana, at the latter's behest. A series of interwoven and nested stories, including bird and beast fables, tha t exemplify *niti* and *dharma*, lie within the main text of Visnu's Sarma's lessons to the princes. The *Hitopadesa* skillfully organizes a lesson plan for the young princes in four sections: *Mitralabha* (Gaining Friends), *Suhrbheda* (Splitting partners), *Vigraha* (War) and *Sandhi* (Peace), that ultimately comprise the entire work. The current paper argues that the *Hitopadesa* tends to interweave two threads together: one, the theoretical aspects of friendship based on philosophical and ideological assumptions premised on the balance between *dharmayuddha* and *kutayuddha*, and the other, that lies post-theory within the particular, emotional, affective, spontaneous and practical aspects of specific friendships between individuals, involving individual psychological states, within the family as well as community life, at large. The current paper shows that though these two threads of friendship are often bound together in nebulous and liminal ways, it is in the instances of gaining and separating friends that one's proficiency in *niti* and *dharma*, as *kshatradharma,* may be put to the test. Thus, the ruler's exercise in friendship must display a strategic as well as emotive discernment between commitment and caution while practising *dharma* and exercising *niti*.

Friendship is a prominent theme in the *Hitopadesa*. The stories provide the framework for many kinds of friendship. Since the text is largely written in the context of statecraft, friendship is encoded predominantly as diplomacy between inter-state and intra-state actors. Alternatively, as exemplified in the stories, friendship is also an aim and an end in itself. It is part of a heritage that is to be welcomed and enriched insofar as the ecological balance of the world as one family is concerned. Friendship is specifically concretized in the exercise of *niti* and *dharma* within the ambit of kingship and rule. On the one hand, the princes must learn rational lessons about whom to befriend and whom not to so that the natural rule of *dharma* and the dictum of *niti*, may prevail, be energized and expediently put into practice within the context of the lived realities of social and political

life. On the other hand, there is a philosophical recognition of and an emotional appeal towards friendship, per se, in terms of its basic structure and its many facets that correspond to and energize the global egalitarian ethic of *vasudhaiv kutumbakam*, while building consensus amongst various stakeholders. The first section, *Mitralabha*, theorizes four kinds of friendship: based on blood, based on family, based on hereditary traditions and based on some calamity (Haksar 64). Here, the discussion on friendship ramifies into a detailed discussion on the productive realization of the *purusharthas* of *dharma, artha and kama*, through meaningful friendships with others. Evidently, within the scope of the *Hitopadesa*, firm friendships can guarantee success in life, which in turn, is channelled through *dharma*. *Dharma* is a Sanskrit word that has had a seminal presence in ancient Indian philosophy, religion and culture. Charles Malamoud explains the objective and social valence of the term *dharma*: "…*dharma* is at once the universal order, the system of norms that expresses it and the totality of observances to be performed by individuals and groups, according to their statutes, in order for this system of norms to be maintained" (38). *Dharma*, within the Bhagvat Gita framework, guarantees ontologically in-built relationship networks within the *varnasrama* framework, where the individual must selflessly follow one's own *dharma*, also called *svadharma*. Drawing upon the work of C.J. Chacko, Modh argues that along with *rajadharma*, "Hinduism also provides norms of Desa *Dharma* that govern inter-State relations" (2). According to Pradeep Kumar Gautum, *dharma* is also explained in terms of political realism within the *Arthashastra* where "*Artha* (material wellbeing) is always moderated by *Dharma* (moral, ethics). Thus, concepts of *dharma* and artha are not separate silos and they do not talk past each other but with each other" (31).

In an article titled, "Norms of war in Hinduism", Kaushik Roy traces the genealogy of *dharmayuddha* (righteous and just war) and *kutayuddha* (unjust war) from the Vedic era through the great epics to the post-Kautilyan era till 900CE. He argues that military details can be traced as far back as the Rig Veda. Both the Ramayana and the Mahabharata, depict war-related conflicts that may be taken to support both *dharma*yuddha and *kutayuddha*. Kautilya's *Arthasastra*, composed around 300 BCE, Roy says, is a realist in

political and military terms rather than moralist or religious terms. Though Kautilya advocates *dharma* as the duty of the King, he also promotes *kutayuddha-vikalpa*, whose basic components are "intrigues, duplicity, fraud" (Roy 36). In the post-Kautilyan era, Roy suggests that Kamandanka, who wrote the *Nitisara*, which is a text which greatly influences the *Hitopadesa*, may not have subscribed to Kautilya's allowance for violence, but he too emphasized strategic warfare. Later, Manu's *Manusmriti* (The Laws of Manu) came as a challenge to Kautilya's concept of *kutayuddha*. In fact, in his bid to "articulate an eternal science of politics" (Roy 38), Manu specifically emphasizes and builds upon *dharma*yuddha as a "normative model" (Roy 121). Furthermore, Roy exposits that with the passage of time, the debate around the use of just and unjust means of war became linked with the respective military and strategic goals of the king-conqueror. Speaking of the *Hitopadesa*, Roy argues that "the *Hitopadesa* offers a coda that includes elements of both *dharmayuddha* and *kutayuddha*" (40). Moreover, insofar as *dharma* conjoins the natural and the moral order (Mahadevan 320), it is a comprehensive and legitimizing concept. In the *Hitopadesa*, natural friendships, sanctioned on traditional and hereditary lines, are promoted and legitimized, while unnatural friendships, that is, those friendships that do not have the sanction of tradition and heredity, are declaimed but also paradoxically acknowledged and upheld on temporary and contingent lines. The fables that declaim and caution against unnatural friendships are underpinned by a logic of species diversity and categorization.

Many friends of every "mould" are likely to be a shield against fate's uncertainties and life's vicissitudes (Haksar 53). Thus, while inter-species friendships are encouraged on symbiotic lines, caution and care must be exercised while fulfilling the demands placed by friendships. Arguably, friendship frameworks envisioned within the macro and microscope of the *Hitopadesa,* point towards richer and subtler threats to public and private relationships as well as species/group sustenance. The *Nitisara* and the *Arthasashtra*, are texts that have been found to influence the stories of statecraft in the *Hitopadesa*. Evidently, both these texts profoundly influence the *Hitopadesa* in the priority accorded to the three powers or shaktis. These shaktis include the "mantra-shakti, the power of counsel and

diplomacy; prabhav-shakti, the power of the army and treasury; and utsah-shakti, the personal energy and drive of the ruler himself" (Gautam 119). Arguably, the *Hitopadesa* envisions friendship as something that must be socially engineered by the King, who exercises *rajadharma* as *kshatatradharma* and manages to manifest friends in order to preserve and perpetuate *rajadharma*. Thus, friendship is evident in timely, friendly and sound counsel for the exercise of *mantra-shakti*. At the same time, friendship inheres in the rulers' own *utsah-shakti* that can inspire *prabhav-shakti* or the ability to garner diplomatic relationships and support from others as evidence of the King's own strength/dependability. *Niti* should preferably be based on *dharma*, and the latter is always realized and enacted from the liminal position between an ethic of charity and an ethic of safety; thus, charity is recommended insofar as personal safety is guaranteed first. Together, the two ethical positions constitute the pillars of friendship between creatures, thereby guaranteeing social harmony. Friendship theoretically signifies certainty, assurance, dependability, not only in this life but also in the afterlife, as a result of the cumulative merit of one's own virtues of life. Alternatively, friends have to be discerned strategically and spontaneously. For example, the friendship between the prey and its predator is unnatural and is, therefore, impossible. In *Mitralabha*, for example, Visnu Sarma starts by narrating the tale of four friends; a crow, a tortoise, a mouse and a deer. Laghupatanaka/Quickflight, the crow, is a live witness to the story of Citragriva/ spotted throat, the pigeon and his friends. A trapper lays a bait, Citragriva warns his brood against the "lure of this rice bait" by narrating the story of the traveller and the tiger, where the traveller is killed by a tiger for prey (Haskar 16). This nested story involves the traveller's greed for a gift by the tiger whose "basic nature (and) … innate predisposition" is "to prey on every man" and that as a "clawed and horned creature(s) … one should not trust their (its) nature(s)" (Haskar 18, 20). Choosing to ignore the natural and friendly warning of "old men" against hypocrisy and deception, the group of pigeons, in fact, follows the advice of a fellow pigeon. They start eating the rice and are trapped. The lesson learnt here is that "When misfortunes are on their way, friends too become the cause, they say" (Haskar 23). The incident validates another rule of nature through the reassertion of *dharma*, as in the *Manusmriti*, which propounds that it is a sin to disagree with a

teacher. Another story, narrated by the crow, about Dirghakarna, the cat, and Jaradgava, the vulture, in turn, validates the danger and impossibility of friendship between the predator and prey.

However, the story problematizes the predator-prey/friend-foe relationship within the political ecology of Grddhakuta, the hill inhabited by the predatory vulture and other non-predatory birds, who live together on a giant fig tree. The other birds know about Jaradgava's handicap; the vulture is blind and lacks claws and thus poses no danger to the birds' offspring, thereby modifying his status as natural predator-foe. In fact, other birds share their food with Jaradgava, who, in turn, guards their young. This is the caveat that legitimizes an otherwise unnatural friendship. When Dirghakarna, the cat, enters this habitat and threatens the young birds, it feels threatened by the vulture, in turn. The cat's deception and hypocrisy are masked by and embedded within his rhetoric of individual versus species trait, where the coda for racial integrity and identity is ultimately vindicated: "Is mere race a sufficient reason/ For anyone to praise or murder; Not conduct, the criterion/ In deciding death or honour?" (Haskar 31), is an appeal the cat makes to the vulture, shifting the burden of moral choice on the latter in a bid to foreclose any distrust/doubt regarding the cat's ulterior motive of preying upon young birds. Evidently, the cat's maxim on friendship is devious and philosophical; friendship, he claims, is a metaphor for the human soul and the most superior form of human virtue, that guarantees its presence even in the afterlife "One friend alone will follow you/ When you pass to death's dominion" (Haskar 33). The vulture's initial doubt is justified on the lines of species behaviour: "cats like meat" (Haskar 33), the vulture argues. Ultimately, the predator's deception and subterfuge are successful. The cat kills and devours the young birds and then slinks out of the habitat. The angry and distraught bird parents conclude that their young have been eaten up by the vulture, which is then attacked and killed for his alleged crime. Thus, the vulture's unnatural friendship with the cat as well as the other non-predatory birds turns out to be a catastrophic choice, and he loses his life at the hands of his friends-turned-foes whose anti-predator instincts, long dormant while the vulture was not perceived by them as predator, are activated on instinct. The moral of the story, says the crow, is that "shelter should never be given to one (like the cat) whose

family and character (that together constitute the natural) are unknown" (34). This is an orientation, a prelude, to what shall follow in the latter half of the *Hitopadesa*—an exemplum for the acknowledgement of *kutayuddha* intermingled with *dharma*yuddha, both kinds of war subsumed within the larger code of *dharma*.

At this stage, another argument is made for and against the nature of friendship: Is friendship governed by nature and its laws that appreciate species-specific behaviour embedded within the primal binary that contrasts predator from prey, such that whether two individuals can be friends will entirely depend on their species/ class affiliation or is it something holistic and non-binary based on a universalist and ascetic logic of "the world itself a family" with individual "conduct and behaviour" that must always already ethically testify to friendship as a natural default mode within the *vasudaiv kutumbakam* framework (Haskar 35)? Without the natural orientation and impulse for friendship and what it entails—cooperation, trust and consensus building—the essence of life within the *vasudaiv kutumbakam* ethic, would be inoperable. Without the vulture's unswerving service and their mutual trust, for example, the birds would have had to incur a heavy burden in carrying out their daily chores while their babies' safety was unassured. It is only when the vulture is earnestly convinced about the innocence of the cat beyond reasonable doubt, does he lower his guard. Moreover, while the trust between unlikely friends (the birds and the vulture) lasted and benefitted both sides, it was based on affective and emotional ties and not on strategic and hereditary knowledge systems. Yet, friendship is always already predicated on the presence of its opposite, which is enmity. In order to take this argument forward, it may be argued that as the stories moralize, friendship is fluid. Friends often turn into foes and vice versa. As suggested in the story of Viravara and in the story of the crow Cloudcolour, respectively, the stranger may turn out as either friend or foe. Evidently, friendship is both an individual as well a generic virtue/concept. Certain kinds of friendship are natural, traditional, hereditary and hence expected, while certain others are unnatural because tradition and the hereditary evolution of species do not sanction them. Natural friendships stand the test of time and are dependable but unnatural friendships are also possible and gainful. For example, Golden, the mouse's unnatural

friendship with Quickflight, the crow, gives him access to a new habitat, near the lake *Karpura Gaura*, and new friends, whom he can help and live in harmony with, rather than be dependent as a pest on stolen crumbs in the house of the monk Cudakarna.

Arguably, the *Hitopadesa* addresses this gap in understanding the concept of friendship by re-mapping and re-calibrating friendship within the confluence of the web of life collective and the species collective, which are, ultimately and in the last instance, subject to being tested upon individual action. Thoughts, speech, and character traits must culminate in *karma* or action, whether in the context of *kutayuddha* or *dharma*yuddha. Interestingly, Arthur Llewellyn Basham compares the Manusmriti with the *Hitopadesa*, in that both these texts "bear(s) witness to and deplore(s) the existence of fatalist views" (282). Thus, certain enduring character traits are desirable in potential friends because they guarantee *karma*, contingent upon the specific time, space and manner of carrying out action:

> Courage, devotion, courtesy,
> Constancy in joy and grief,
> Trust, sacrifice, integrity,
> Are of friends the virtues chief. (Haksar 41)

Therefore, befriending a person who has the qualities enjoined by *dharma* is strategically and politically reassuring. In accordance with the principles of *dharma*, in terms of *kshatradharma*, which is just and righteous warfare, when open battle or prakashyayuddha is waged, *dharmayuddha* itself is exemplified. Cogently, *dharmayuddha*, as per the Bhagvad Gita, is "waged only by the Kshatriyas because only a Kshatriya has the qualities of courage, consistency, resourcefulness, generosity, leadership ability and a noble mind" (Roy 33).

Alternatively, certain individual character traits are inimical to potential friendships. These traits are contrary to the potential demands of *karma*:

> He can't keep secrets, importunes,
> He's fickle, false, to anger given,

Gambles, cold in misfortunes,
A friend is blemished by these seven. (Haksar 41-42)

The predator, for example, befitting his species-specific behaviour of deviousness, cunning and covetousness for prey, often espouses lofty and righteous ideals in pursuit of friendship, with the ulterior motive of ensnaring his prey once proximity is guaranteed. Could this possibly be a signal to the aspiring ruler, whose *rajadharma* would be to protect his subjects and their interests, and therefore, his territory? When the jackal Kshudrabuddhi or Dimwit wishes to befriend Citranga or Spotted One, the deer, the latter's friend Goodwit, the crow, warns him by narrating the above-mentioned story of the Cat and the Vulture. The jackal's argument, like the cat, is lofty: "The large-hearted have always thought/ The world itself a family" (Haskar 35). The deer's choice to ignore his friend's warning against the jackal's species-specific behaviour and what should have been his own species-specific behaviour, to flee/ startle from the predator, on instinct, is a catastrophic choice. The deer remonstrates that:

No one is by nature
Another's friend or foe
'Tis conduct and behaviour
Which always makes them so. (Haskar 35)

Sadly, the deer is tricked by the jackal into entering a farmer's field of corn. The jackal has a sinister plan. The deer, he plans, shall be trapped and killed by the farmer, and consequently, the leftovers shall go to the jackal himself. The deer is, in fact, eventually trapped by the farmer due to the machinations of the jackal. Fortunately for the deer, his friend, the crow, locates him and devises a scheme to rescue him from the farmer's trap. Thus, it is the crow's friendship that gives a new lease of life to the deer. The moral of this story is stated by its narrator, Golden, the mouse: "love between the predator and prey can end only in disaster" (Haskar 38).

Alternatively, another moral of this story, as it resonates with the other sections of the *Hitopadesa*, is that it is important to have friends of different kinds and that interspecies friendships are necessary

compensations for species-specific and individual character traits in order to meet the diplomatic as well as deterministic demands of particular war/combat/ life-threatening situations. Like in the other sections, in *Mitralabha* too, the idea of *niti* is underscored with the object of gaining friends of all kinds and with different proficiencies. Their counsel is invaluable both for self-preservation and to ensure safety from enemies and for being able to live in harmony. Arguably, the *Hitopadesa*'s bird and beast fables underscore *dharma* in cosmic terms as it is re-enacted within the human coda of righteousness. Thus, through the ability to gain (*mitralabha*) and lose friends—or, in other friends, orchestrate *bheda*—human virtues inscribe the morally good from the morally evil, in the cosmos, at large.

Similarly, when Golden narrates his story and expresses his "good fortune" at having Quickflight for a friend in the forest where "in contentment lies felicity" (Haskar 54, 55). Slow, the tortoise, proffers a willing audience and candid counsel: "You hoarded too much," he tells Golden (Haskar 55). As warning, Slow recounts the story of The Greedy Jackal. According to Roy, *dharmayuddha* is characterized by its defensive nature and while, Manu extolls the importance of forts in warfare, "Even Kautilya, the most vigorous proponent of *kutayuddha,* argues against a strategic offensive policy. The *vijigishu* or conqueror-king is advised to confine his activities within the subcontinent" (38). Mohan Kumar Sinha argues that Hinduism has traditionally stressed the importance of humaneness and moderation in war-related aggression and the recourse to negotiation and defensiveness as the principal means of resolving conflicts so as to limit unnecessary injury to one's vanquished adversary. Amongst other texts like the Ramayana and the Mahabharata, Sinha, too, draws upon Kautilya's *Arthasastra* to support his argument, claiming that the "ideals of humanitarianism of ancient India the laws of war were more progressive" than modern laws of war (Sinha 293).

In the *Hitopadesa,* greed is against the dictum of *dharma* and leads to the death of the hunter, the deer, the boar, the snake and Girgharva or Loudcry, the jackal, in "The Greedy Jackal" (Haksar 57), either due to their own greed or that of their attacker. He also offers spiritual counsel against hoarding as a form of *adharma* and

kuniti: "To worthy people what you give,/ And that on which you daily live,/ That alone your wealth I merit; / The rest you guard, others inherit" (Haskar 58). In time, Golden, too, offers friendly and sound counsel to Slow. When the friends decide to flee from their current habitat due to the presence of hunters in their forest, Golden warns Slow about the latter's vulnerability on land by narrating two tales. The first tale, "The Merchant's Bride" (Haskar 65), is about the Merchant, Charu Datta and his bride Lavanyavati. Prince Tungabala fulfils his lust for Lavanyavati by tricking her foolhardy husband, who thinks the prince will endow her with wealth and jewels and then let go of her. Ultimately, the distressed merchant Charu Datta, is helpless because the situation is neither conducive for revenge, nor for redeeming the cuckolded husband. In another tale, "The Elephant and the Jackal" (Haskar 67), too, due to his own foolhardiness, the mighty elephant is tricked by a jackal and drowned in a mudbank, before being devoured by jackals. In either case, both Charu Datta and Camphorhead, the elephant, lack good friends and counsel, which would have saved them from harm. Unfortunately, Slow, too, makes the catastrophic choice of ignoring Golden's good advice. As a result, he is seized by a hunter. At this stage, Golden says:

> In joy and grief a partner sure,
> Such a friend is hard to find…
> Fear-weather friends, for money yearning.
> For judging if they are sincere,
> The touchstone is a crisis burning. (Haskar 71).

Together, the four friends hatch a plan to rescue Slow. The story has a happy ending with new and enduring company of friends in the forest, who offer good counsel and safety and security to each other.

The third section *Suhrbheda* or splitting partners, again takes up the idea of unnatural friendship. Visnu Sarma's previous lesson to the young princes about negotiating friendly alliances is followed by a lesson in learning how to split/separate (*bheda*) existing friendly alliances by exploiting the nature and extent of fault lines and deep-rooted discontent between friends. The story revolves around the lion Pingalaka or Tawny's unnatural friendship with the bull Sanjivaka or Lively. This unlikely friendship is split up due to the machinations of

two jackals, Karataka or Rusty and Damanaka or Bossy, who serve Tawny.

After a fall, Lively, has been abandoned in the jungle by a travelling merchant, Vardhamana. He recuperates in the forest and one day, he is spotted by Tawny, who has never seen a bull before. Ironically, Tawny is startled at the sight of the strange bellowing creature. This situation is exploited by Rusty and Bossy. Rusty argues that they should let matters rest by informing Tawny that Lively, is a bull after all, a natural prey for Tawny. But Bossy chooses to exploit the master's vulnerability. What appears to be intervention to Bossy, is deemed as interference by Rusty and a moral case in point is made.

Meanwhile, Rusty narrates two stories that prove the moral and strategic problem of interfering. His story about the meddlesome monkey is the tale of a curious and meddlesome monkey whose "testicles were crushed, and he died" (Haskar 85). The other story, he narrates, is about the ass whose unflinching servitude was tragically misconstrued as intrusiveness by his master, who thrashes his loyal servant instead of recognizing his loyalty.

Bossy tells Rusty, “I know the cause of his fear. That was only a bull bellowing. Bulls are even our prey, what to say of the lion’s” (Haskar 99). Soon, Bossy solicitously broaches the subject of his master’s perplexity before the latter and offers to arbitrate in the matter. He feeds off the fear and threat that both Tawny and Lively harbour for each other. In the process, like “The Canny Procuress” (Haskar 102) and unlike “The cat which became Superfluous”, two stories recounted by Bossy to support his argument, he exaggerates and elevates his own role in brokering a deal whereby the “immense … (and) very powerful …” (Haskar 102) unknown beast Lively, now in a tame avatar, is “conducted and presented to the king (Tawny)” (Haskar 103), for the rest of their days. However, once Lively assumes the status of a treasurer, who guards the treasure-kill made by Tawny, the former displaces the jackals, who are now faced with an existential crisis, as their roles are now redundant in the eyes of their King. Clearly, Lively is a vegetarian and keeps the King's kill safe from the jackals, who are now under the scanner of suspicion as they, like Tawny, are carnivores, after all. Ultimately, the jackals

orchestrate a devious plan where they convince both Lively and Tawny about the threat that they present to each other. A great battle ensues between the bull and the lion and Lively is ultimately killed by the lion.

Like in the previous section, the nature of friendship is deliberated upon, particularly in the context of whether friendship between individuals is based on the traditional/hereditary context of species-specific predator-prey behaviour, which apriori determines friend from foe, or is it incumbent upon the moral character of specific individuals.Thus, Rusty argues that:

> By nature none show benefaction,
> Be villainous to or sympathize
> With another. It's his action
> Which exalts man or otherwise. (Haskar 90)

Moreover, Rusty argues, "A real friend indeed is he, / Who has no insincerity" (Haskar 121). Arguably, Rusty is the voice of conscience. As his master's true servant, he refrains from overstepping his brief. He champions the terms of his devout employment to Tawny—"to scout for game" (Haskar 87) and warns his friend against service which may be perceived by the master as meddlesome, ill-timed and inappropriate or show concern which is out of place. Alternatively, he is slow to act, displays a lack of effort and resolve. Left to his own predicament, he would have lost his job at Tawny's court. Bossy, on the other hand, is greedy, ambitious, proactive, inquisitive, sagacious, glib and more discerning of his master's body language, gestures and potential responses. He can use lofty philosophical ideals to pitch his ulterior and nefarious motives. However, he can be reckless and needs the watchful eye of Rusty, who acts like a sounding board to Bossy. It is through his conversations with Rusty, that Bossy puts together an elaborate plan, thought out with clarity. Together, their friendship is productive and ultimately helps them reinstate themselves in Tawny's court by eliminating Lively from the master's beneficence. On the other hand, the friendship between Lively and Tawny, is based on the condition of perception of mutual trust which underscores their symbiosis. Their friendship is unnatural as it is against the natural call of predator

versus prey. Once the perception of trust is reversed and modified by the willful orchestrations of the jackals, who manage to reinstate the perception of the predator and prey as categories that are essentially adversarial in nature, the unnaturalness of their friendship easily weakens the temporary and conditional bond between Lively and Tawny.

Interestingly, this section examines service as friendship. It is also a warning to the princes regarding how servitude may be looked upon as a "mark of shame" (Haskar 88) by disgruntled, ambitious and conspiring servants like Bossy. Thus, on the one hand, friendship is natural, economical and necessary for survival. It is underscored within the economizing conditions of nature which creates categories such as predator and prey based on historical/hereditary and time-tested ethical, essential, cultural and psychological factors. On the other hand, friendships are also fluid, conditional, temporary, situational and contingent on the circumstances. They may not lie eternally in or against the interests of individuals but may be formed and split by the orchestrations of outside interests, who ultimately co-exist within the world as one, but the world also as a zero-sum game. The last two sections, namely *Vigraha* or war and *Sandhi* or peace discuss the lessons learnt from war and peace, respectively. Within each of these situations, it is one's friends that determine the kingdom's destiny. Both the sections are based on the quest for supremacy and control between the swan, Hiranyagarbha or Golden egg and the peacock, Citravarna or Dapple. Golden egg is the ruler of the lake called Padmakeli and its adjoining island called Karpura. The peacock, Citravarna or Dapple is the King of the Vindhya hill at Jambu island. A crane named Dirghamukha, or Bigmouth arrives at Dapple's kingdom and enrages the birds there with his insinuations. Clearly, he is naïve, querulous and verbose. Bigmouth narrates the story of "The birds who tried to help the Monkeys" (Haskar 139), suggesting that when friendly and sound counsel falls on unreceptive and irate ears, it is the counsellor—in this case, alluding to himself—who suffers. This is only a prelude to the exchange of stories within a larger war of words between the birds of Vindhya and Bigmouth. Ultimately, he instigates a war between the two kingdoms. Bigmouth is asked to return to Karpura and make an announcement of war to his King. The parrot, a member of Dapple's retinue, refuses to

accompany him, citing the stories of "The Swan and the Crow" (Haskar 146) and "The Crow and the Quail" (Haskar 147). In the first story, the swan is tricked by a villainous crow. He empties his bowels and flies away, while the swan continues to provide shade to the tired traveler with his wings. The traveler blames the swan and kills him instantly. In the second story, a crow tricks a cowherd by repeatedly eating his curds and flying away swiftly, leaving his companion, the slow-moving quail to bear the brunt of his misdeed and thus was killed. Both stories warn against evil-minded friends as company.

Alternatively, it is in testing times that good friends and their sound counsel hold a ruler in good stead. Sarvajanya or Knowall, the goose, is Goldegg's Prime Minister, while the vulture named Durdarsi or Farsighted, serves King Dapple as minister. On either side, deliberations on war strategy and statecraft are carried out and they are chaired by the kings and their respective ministers. The goose enumerates key areas for framing strategy: appointing a secret spy, never "to decide post-haste on war", war as not the preferred means to influence enemies, the real war hero being one who knows "the true power of the foe," "timely labour … true valour … steadfast courage" are important virtues once war is immanent and that "The obstacle most primary/ Is excitation of the mind" (Haskar 154, 155). On the goose's counsel, the stork is asked to prepare a fort around the lake. The goose also advises Goldegg against trusting a new visitor called Meghavarna, or Cloudcolour, the crow, expositing that, "When your kin becomes a foe,/All your secrets he does know" (Haskar 159). On the other side, the vulture advises his King on similar lines. He reflects that:

> The fools who rashly choose to face
> The enemy's force without due thought,
> It is but his sword's embrace
> That for certain they have got. (Haskar162)

Against his minister's advice, King Dapple is eager to wage war. The vulture responds by laying forth a detailed exposition on defence strategy while incorporating differences in terrain, conditions of war, the strength of the enemy based on one's friends, foes and "internal lack of trust" (167), the current preparedness of his (Dapple's) army

and the incentives given to his personnel. His strategy seeks to involve the use of different species of animals based on their individual adaptations, merits, strengths, capabilities, abilities and techniques. At one point, when King Dapple is anxious about losing the war, it is the sagacious and seasoned vulture whose "prudence joined to bravery" (Haskar 176), brings victory to his King. On the other hand, while the kings and their ministers are engaged in personal combat, the loyal and brave stork is martyred. He covers King Goldegg with his own body and is thus killed by the blows from King Dapple's rooster's beak and claws. Thus, the stork has rendered unflinching friendly service to his King in accordance with the ideal of *kshatradharma*. In the fourth and final section of the *Hitopadesa*, *Sandhi* or Peace, the vulture, a loyal and friendly servant of his King, insists on peace and thoughtful action. He does not vacuously please his King by fanning the latter's desire for unmitigated action in the name of *kshatriyadharma*. Instead, he calls for a realistic appraisal of the situation. He assesses that King Goldegg is virtuous and strong and, therefore, a better collaborator and ally than a long-term foe. Thus, in both *Vigraha* and *Sandhi*, war becomes the testing ground of friendship. Words of counsel must pass between friends. Friendship is concretized in good counsel. Alternatively, good counsel is precious and therefore only meant for friends, who, in turn, guarantee, its friendly reception.

To conclude, in his preface to the First Edition of the translation of the Hitopadesa, M. R. Kale, quotes the Indologist Sir William Jones, who suggests that the original title *Hitopadesa*, "the most beautiful, if not the most ancient" variously translated across different regions of the world, may be glossed over as "Amiable Instruction" (Jones qtd. in Kale iii). Kale also quotes Prof. H. Morley, from his introduction to Wilkins' translation of the *Hitopadesa*, who reckons a cultural imperialist "allowance" across a less progressive civilization. Morley suggests that "the local accidents of form" be ignored or expunged and he speculates that "every fable in the *Hitopadesa* can still be applied to human character … (and) might find its time for being quoted now in Church, at home or upon "Change"" (Morley qtd. in Kale iii-iv). These glorious moral reckonings are, as we read them today, oversimplifications at best, for it is in the *Hitopadesa's* genealogical journey, in and through the

contextual reading of the *Hitopadesa* along with its ideological and cultural assumptions, influences, debates and borrowings across ancient Hindu culture and philosophy, that the text may, in fact, be adequately (re)read. As the current paper shows, friendship and friendly relations are concepts both necessary for survival and yet nebulous in nature. This is particularly cogent in the context of international relations and the cross-cultural exchange of ideas today, where friendship and friendly relations as themes, like in the historical readings of the *Hitopadesa* by historians and critics across the globe and across centuries, may be misrecognized within the slippery slope of either relativism or universalism, unless examined across those power differentials that situationally and critically locate texts like the *Hitopadesa* along with their thematic concerns as embedded within the genealogical frameworks and the cultural, social and religious context of the Indian subcontinent.

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