

## Myth as Archetype in Two *Jataka* Stories

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### ABSTRACT

*The term archetype signifies narrative designs, character types and images which are found, in a variety of works of literature and the similarity has helped critics to interpret works of literature. Archetypes in the strict sense are primordial and universal images that make up the contents of the collective unconscious, and their existence is revealed by the regular patterns of imagery that reoccur in individual dreams, artistic productions and primitive religions and mythologies. Myth has become one of the most important terms in contemporary literary analysis. It is an integral element of literature and the interest of poets and writers in myth and mythology is remarkable and constant since Homer's time. Archetype is the foundation instrument with the help of which myth carries its narration in time in terms of rituals, romances, birth, death and rebirth cycle.*

**Keywords:** Archetypes, Myth, Literature, Contemporary, narration, cycle.

### INTRODUCTION:

Among the most important vehicles of Buddhist ethical teachings the present paper is a modest attempt to study the two stories (The Two Good Kings and The Rash Magician) from the point of view of Northrop Frye theory of myths- chiefly in its archetypal modes. 'The Two Good Kings' is from *Rajovada Jataka*. Two kings, both wise and good meet in a narrow way, and dispute as to who is to give place. Each sings good to the good, and bad to the bad, the other repays. The first acknowledges his superior, and give place. The Rash Magician is from *Sanjiva Jataka*.

The first section of the paper shall cohesively put forward element of myth, together emphasizing how these enter in its existence in archetypal modes. The second section will be an attempt of mine to give in brief the plot of two stories under consideration. An analysis of stories will also be made in this section and the relationship between men and animals. Myth is the reflection of profound reality. Myths are said to be the greatest falsehoods which tell us the greatest truths.

Myth is a kind of organizing principle and a kind of pseudo – science and it provides answers to various questions. Myths are pervasive. Myth express our deepest and profound sentiments. It talks of that part of psyche which is hidden. Myths are universal and recur through ages. Images and symbols are used in myth to express thoughts and experiences. Two great conceptual principles of myth are analogy and identity. Myths answer a particular need in us, it stirs our emotions.

Myth is a honorific term derived from a classical Greek word 'mythos' which is used in the sense of a traditional tale expressing often symbolically the characteristics of a prevalent attitude in a culture. This mythical attitude keeps on developing and proves an inspiration to the people of a society. This developing nature of the mythical narrative is converted, in due course of time, into a evolutionary process which is easily perceptible in life as well as in Nature. It is a connecting thread leading back to ancient rituals and cultural heritage. According to E.O. James – 'Myth is a form of religious and social expression'. He has summarized his views thus:

*The sacred narrative or myth is a means of  
maintaining order both in nature and in society*

*and preserving conventional attitudes and patterns of behaviour. These narratives are accompanied with sacred rites, which reenact the seasonal drama or creation itself (Bhatnagar, 1999)*

Myth is a system of hereditary stories believed to be true by a group of people belonging to a particular culture. These stories reflect the concept of deities and supernatural beings and are often told at the time of social rituals and sacred ceremonies which are repeated in various seasons, remaining in continuous flux in the cyclic life coming inward and going outward. It is a mode of metaphysical process that involves upward and downward alternation along with life and death. This is also a process of divine world appearing and disappearing like night and dawn. This is what we call the structural principle of myths. As Northrop Frye opines:

*The mythical or abstract structural principles of the cycle is that the continuum of identity in the individual life from birth to death to rebirth. To this pattern of identical recurrence, the death and revival of the same individual all other cyclical pattern are as a rule, assimilated (Russell, 1998)*

Myth explains the originating process, the germinating seeds of the development of an idea or the birth of a system. We infer that myth is a universal phenomenon which contains the whole experience of life and society. Thus, it is able to demonstrate or express human totality.

Myth serves as the governing principle of life and society because of having a unifying power. These conventional myths have moral and social power, having communal implications. These are emporium of faith and knowledge and provide solution to various problems, of society. *Max Muller*, expressing his views on mythology, says that it is an internal need of language. It is that power of language which is used for every mental activity. Behind each word there is some such mythical idea. But according to Frazer, myths are deeply rooted in the profound passion of human life.

*E.B. Taylor* and *James Frazer* agree that primitive man had great faith in the welfare of the tribe who performed magical rites and rituals which proved useful for them. Such social practices gradually develop into certain recurring patterns. It is these recurring patterns which are the source of an archetype. An archetype is a type of literary figure of speech which tries to express these recurring sources and cultural patterns with the help of images, symbols and metaphors. *C.G. Jung* observes such recurring patterns in this connection.

*Another well known expression of the archetypes is myth and fairy tale. But here too we are dealing with forms that have received a specific stamp and have been handed down through long periods of time. The term "archetype" thus applies only indirectly to the representations collectives "since it designates only those psychic contents which have not yet been submitted to conscious elaboration and are therefore an immediate datum of physis experience..." (Jung & Sir Herbert, 1969)*

An archetype means a primordial image, a part of the collective unconscious, the psychic residue of a numberless experience of some kind related to an integrated response from physical facts. It is the psychic life or primitive tribe.

An archetypal theme is mainly concerned with ancient conventions deeply rooted in the life of primitive people coming from different far off places and times. These conventions form a number of images in the psyche often seen in human visions and visions. The archetype emerges from cultural history, from the primitive to the sophisticated. These archetypes are explained by literary anthropology, studying mythical history as myth and archetype are closely related. As *Hardy* and *Westbrook* affirm:

*The myth is the central informing power that gives archetypal significance to the ritual and archetypal*

*narrative to the oracle. Hence the myth is the archetype, though it might be convenient to say myth only when referring to narrative and archetype when speaking of significance. (Das, 2005)*

According to (Frye, 1957), archetypal criticism, therefore, rests on two organizing rhythms or patterns: one is the cyclical and the other dialectic. He further says that the search for archetypes is a kind of literary anthropology concerned with the way that literature is informed by re-literary categories such as ritual, myth and folk-tale.

The title of the story *The Rash Magician* involves one of the important elements of myth which are found from the early life of the primitive that played an important role and influenced his life and society. He believed in the magical influence, which cured many of the evil effects imposed upon him.

The Bodhisatta is the central figure of the story who was born in the family of a rich brahmin in the realm of Brahmadatta. The Bodhisatta studied at Takshila and after that he became very famous in Banaras as a teacher and preached five hundred pupils. Among his disciples, Sanjiva who was taught by the Bodhisatta knew the miracle of magic. Sanjiva used this magical power to survive the dead, but he did not know the counter charm of this magic which brought upon him adverse situations.

Once Sanjiva went to the forest for gathering wood with his pupils and he found a dead tiger there. They discussed how to get back the life of the dead tiger, but his pupils said that he could not do that. But Sanjiva asked them to climb up a tree. Sanjiva gave life to the dead tiger which getting life attacked Sanjiva who died on the spot. Consequently both of them lay dead on the ground.

The young brahmins came to their master with wood and told the terrible events. Their master explained its reason telling them that the sinful should not be saved but doing so Sanjiva had to give his life. The essence of the story is well explained in the following, lines:

*Behind a villain, add him in his need,  
And like that tiger which Sanjiva raised to life,  
he straight devours you for your pains (Sanjiv Jataka no. 150)*

The story concludes to a lesson that sometimes good deeds bring catastrophe according to one's deeds. These mythical concepts are perennial and are often found in the life of common people, which recur repeatedly in society in various forms and shapes.

The concept of good which wins evils is the central theme, of the story '*The Two Good Kings*'. This concept of the ideal story is based upon the principle of mythical tale from the *Bible*, *Upanishads* and other great epics of the world. In this story the conflict of good and evil is represented by the two great kings. Prince Brahmadatta went to Takshila for his education where he learned all branches of knowledge. After the death of his father, he became king and ruled successfully without his will and whim. Among his ministers, no one ever came to his court for a plea of a core, ultimately, his court became vacant. He was very much surprised to learn that no one came to the court for complaint.

He decided to know its reason and went from place to place asking people for his negligence. But no one yet turned to reveal any fault to be found in him. Everywhere he found praise and commendation from people. He crossed the frontier of the state to find out his faults, but all in vain. Entrusting to his minister and government, he mounted in his carriage only with his driver and moved here and there everywhere he heard only his own praise. Consequently, he turned back from his movement and set his fame homework again.

Fortunately, at the same time, Mallika, the King of Kosala, did the same thing, he was also a just king and he tried to find out his faults, but all in vain. He was also praised everywhere while making enquiry throughout the country. And he also arrived at the same spot.

Both the kings met at the same place where the carriage road was got sunk between two banks. It was blocked. The drivers of both the kings discussed the matters for the way out. But the king of the Banaras said, what in the world is to be done? He further discussed about the position and status of both the kings and it was found that both of them were just and men of great significance and however, having a numerous virtuous qualities.

After this, it was decided to give a better, place to a man in which some faults of the monarch are found, although they were having so many virtues.

After this both King Mallika and his driver descended from their carriage, and loosened the horses to give place to the King of Banaras. Then the King of Banaras gave good admonition to King Mallika. Thus both the Kings went to their respective places and made sacrifices of what they possessed; the sterling qualities of mind and

heart. Thus they have been in a position to attain heavenly bliss.

The story reveals the character paradigms which refer metaphysics of life as well as for the betterment of society. Such mythical concepts are found recurring repeatedly in various genres of different traditions and prove very beneficial to lie and society and still contain wisdom and instructions very useful for us all.

This mythical concept clearly reveals the archetypal narrative which moves from one situation to another in a cyclical matter. The view as such is affirmed by several critics and scholars of English.

*Jataka* is a collection of stories about the Buddha's earlier incarnations which give autobiographical accounts of Gautama Buddha. The collection contains fables, fairy, tales, moral tales, maxims and legends. These are also found in other Indian collections such as the *Panchatantra*. Some of these are found in Western literature, notably in the fables attributed to Aesop.

These tales are the main source of wisdom, instructions and information which are found in the later growth and development of various literary genres. These legendary tales reflect the life and work of great leaders, saints, gods, devils and some of the Puranic tales express their natural curiosity, experience and imagination. Moreover, these legendary tales express polarization which comes down from the ballads of the tribal people which they recite recalling the stories of their home-deity as depicted later in tales, containing superstition and old dogmas found in the various traditions of the World.

The analysis of the two *Jataka* tales reveals the bipolar formation which are basic attributes of various folk tales based upon oral traditions. These tales are found floating from one generation to another orally and then they were verbally transformed man to man. They exerted great influence upon the lives of the great poets all over world It could be seen the epics of Homer, Virgil and Dante in the Western tradition, in the Eastern, they are present in the epics Valmiki, Ved Vyasa and subsequent Indian literature.

The study further reveals some of the striking facts which are basic to all life and literature. These facts are related to such various elements and governing modes of myth as symbols, images and metaphors. These modes are expressed with archetypes which are dominant mode language. The archetypes come into existence from the psyche which is centre of gravity that gives the birth of various archetypes which are always moving in dreams and vision. These archetypes patterns form matrix of imagination which inspire the poets and critics.

The story writer sees the world as revealed to him in his inner being, so the world he creates is as if spiritualized by his consciousness. Then the world of a creative writer is always mythical, it is spiritualized as it is embedded in the intensity of his poetic ecstasy related to myth and archetype. As Joseph Campbell observes:

The archetypes to be discovered and assimilated are precisely those that have inspired, though-out annals of human culture, the basic images of ritual, mythology, and vision. (Pilkington 157)

Myth cannot be carried forward without some kind of ritual or the other. The birth itself is ritual but one birth is preceded by other and so on indefinitely. By the term Buddha, Bodhisatta and Brahmadatta is meant the continuity of a consciousness that takes many forms in terms of births and deaths. This means that the time of birth is myth in its symbolic phase and the journey of the Bodhisatta from birth to enlightenment is a journey of myth from the literal phase to the symbolical and the analogical and finally to the analogic phases. *Jataka* stories under consideration have Bodhisatta as metaterm of cross reference. The subject of narration is the Bodhisatta himself who has to take the help of other human and other animal characters in order to preach his doctrine of righteousness, middle path and turning of the Wheel of Law.

Thus, it is marked, as the study reveals that *Brahmadatta* and *Bodhisatta* are germinating point which create archetype patterns influencing the life and society from the ancient times to the present and will continue influence in the whole gamut of life and society, and certify to fact that inspite of various images and symbols the archetypes appear more important and significant.

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