The Buddhist Jātaka Stories. An analytical survey of a few Jātakas and their use in schools in the city of Benares, Uttar Pradesh, India.

De Buddhistiska Jātaka berättelserna. En analytisk undersökning av några Jātakas och deras användning i skolor i staden Benares, Uttar Pradesh, Indien.

Henrik Janné
In dedication to

Omji

Dhanyevadh for Leading Me to

Such Brilliant People. You Have a Special

Place in My Heart.

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Abstract

Title: The Buddhist Jātaka stories. An analytical survey of a few Jātakas and their use in schools in the city of Benares Uttar Pradesh, India.

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Abstract: The research for this thesis tries to find out how the Buddhist jātaka stories are used in the classroom in Benares, Uttar Pradesh India. The subjective also incorporates an aspect of evaluation of Buddhist ethics and a presentation of it. This study project is conducted with an inductive empirical qualitative methodological orientation. This research has found that the Buddhist jātaka tales are a beneficial tool to use in the classroom by teachers when teaching ethics and moral to students.

Keywords: Buddhism, jātakas, ethics, education, curriculum, schools in Benares.
Sammanfattning

Titel: The Buddhist Jātaka stories. An analytical survey of a few Jātakas and their use in schools in the city of Benares Uttar Pradesh, India.

Författare: Henrik Janné

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Sammanfattning: Målet med denna avhandling är att ta reda på hur de Buddhistiska Jātaka berättelser används i klassrummet i Benares, Uttar Pradesh Indien. Ämnet som undersöks innehåller även en utvärderingen av den buddhistiska etiken och en presentation av densamma. Detta examensarbete och d-uppsats i religionshistoria genomförs med en induktiv empirisk kvalitativ metodorientering. Denna undersökning har funnit att jātaka berättelserna är ett fördelaktigt verktyg att använda i klassrummet av lärare när de ska undervisa studenter om etik och moral.

Nyckelord: Buddhism, jātakas, etik, utbildning, curriculum, skolor i Benares.
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Love of my life Kristine, my family in Sweden and friends in India, so this is it, I’ve finally reached the finish line, thank you all.

Brahman, Thanks!
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1 Introduction
It’s difficult for me not to get emotional when I think of, speak of, and write about Benares. Benares is a very intense area on earth indeed and one has to visit and tune into it in order to understand the ambience and vibrancy within the city walls. It must be something to do with the dāl1, a common stew with uncountable variations based on lentils, in Godowlia, the oldest part of the city. My first visit in 2004 was overwhelming in many ways and my central nervous system plus mind went into space-mode that was plunged into earth orbit and I had a truly difficult time to ground myself. I was lost in space time continuum and I wanted to study everything that was around me. Since Benares is one of the oldest living cities on the planet, comparable with Jerusalem and Athens, there are plenty of things to look into for sure. I return to the city as often as I have the chance to and I love taking the long stroll along the ghāts, stairs made of stone, leading down to the river Ganges where citizens come early morning for holy dips and communion with God – Īśwara - as their daily routine. Stopping once in a while for the occasional very bad for your teeth chai, tea made from milk, cardamom and lots of sugar in a ceramic small cup, then throw it on the ground next to the tea stall listening to the unique sound when it breaks. Also to follow how the city changes according to season is simply magic to me. Benares introduced many things I had never been in contact with before and it nurtured me in so many ways that has many things to do with education, traditional livelihood, and then the yoga, meditation and spirituality of course.

1 Words in this paper which is written in roman script in the languages of Sanskrit or Hindi have helpful signs or symbols that make the right pronunciation a little bit easier, i.e. transliteration. Where there is a line over the letter “a”, as in jātaka. The “ä” should be stressed and pronounced in a long way, as in “yawn”. The words sruti or Śiva, should be pronounced with a “sh”-sound as in the English word “should”. Where there is a dot under a consonant, as in ā, ṛ etc., it becomes dental in pronunciation.1 Where ever in the following text there are the symbols [ ], the comments or additions or explanations or the like, is done by the author of this study project, i.e. me. If there are any mistakes concerning these, the same should be responsible for them. Monier-Williams. (1996). Sanskrit-English Dictionary: Varanasi, Godowlia: Indica Books.
During my first visit I knew I would return many times over and over again. I simply can’t put into words how fascinating the city is to me and I will always return for more dāl in Godowlia and strolls along the ghāts with sweet chai. I have spent about two and a half years and made four formal visits to the ancient and holy city of Benares, in the state of Uttar Pradesh, India, as a high school teacher student of University of Karlstad and with the India Program the university is providing. Benares, or more accurately Sarnath, is also the birthplace of Buddhism and it has been a fascinating scenario to conduct studies like this there, on the crime scene so to speak. To have walked the ground the Buddha himself once did, has been and always is, awe-inspiring.

Over the centuries Buddhism developed into a huge, complex and dynamic religion and within the Buddhist field of literature there is a collection named the jātaka stories or birth stories. Simply defined these are the stories narrating the life of the Buddha before reaching enlightenment. The stories can also be viewed as ethical lessons or teachings that illustrate the path to Buddhahood. There are many angles and perspectives one can apply when looking at the stories and it’s about these stories this examination paper will look into.

Ethics is something that comes down from heritage from family and education, to us all. Very seldom do we have perfect ethics from start, it is something that needs to be trained and sometimes even confronted. It is also something that is alive and should always be critically examined and be subject to constant change in accordance to the change to the society. Moral development as studied and stated by Lawrence Kohlberg, who continued the work of Jean Piaget’s research on ethics and moral, is something that can be comprised into 3 levels of moral growth, according to Ken Wilber. It is from the perspective of Wilber this study project views ethics. For more concerning this please view footnote.

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3 Appleton, page 13.


8 According to Wilber, based on Kohlberg and Piaget, there are three levels of moral development. The first is namely; the preconventional, i.e., what I want is what is right – egocentric level. The second level is; the conventional, i.e., what the group want is what is right – socioecentric, or ethnocentric. The third level is called; the postconventional, i.e., what is right for the people, regardless of race, sex, or creed – worldecentric. Wilber, Ken. *One taste*. Page 238.
According to Thomas Kroksmark, Western schools are an offspring from Christianity and the ethics it implies, which in turn is an offspring of its theology hence it concludes many things for example; the Ten Commandments, virtuous versus sinful behavior, based on this particular religious orientation and its cornerstone scripture – the Bible. From the perspective of the history of religions, this is an interesting detail. Because it tells us that the Western school systems are based on Christian traditions, which later on lead to a Christian understanding of ethics and moral in society and more importantly the understanding of other cultures it implicitly defines. Ethics and moral is a fundamental cornerstone within the school system and this also permeates the school law of Sweden. Since this is an examinatory paper in a high school teacher program, it will also include educational aspects. The following is written for teachers and school employees in Sweden to live up to and follow:

“The school has the task of passing on values to pupils, imparting knowledge and preparing them for work and participation in society. The school shall impart the more unvarying forms of knowledge that constitute the common frame of reference that all in society need.”

Sweden is growing more multicultural. What is normal in one culture can seem abnormal in another, vice versa, and often do the differences show themselves in the meeting between people and pupils from other parts of the world. We acquire ideas from the way, and culture, we grow up in. It lies in the teacher profession to educate the pupils, right from wrong and a form of moral upbringing is important. It is also important for teachers to be aware of what the right material used in teaching is and how to present it properly. The cognicentric ways of thinking, i.e., how people in groups and cultures reason and comprehend other cultures, hence evaluating other cultures, different from ones owns, is still a current topic to work with not only in school material but also with the pupils. This is something that is stated in the coarse objectives for the subject of comparative religion.

“The subject of religion is to provide opportunities to reflect on existential and ethical issues from different perspectives, and to provide greater understanding of others can

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14 Bergem; Lpf 94. Curriculum for the non-compulsory school system.
come to other interpretations other than their own."\textsuperscript{17}

According to Bergem, Långström & Viklund, what teachers ought to be good at, in terms of moral education, differs and is dependent on and varies from the demands of time and contemporary expectations from society.\textsuperscript{18} Långström & Viklund also states that ethical questions during class raised by the teacher via case scenarios are a good way for this and the ethical and moral education.\textsuperscript{19} Reports done by governmental instances, in Sweden, have come to the conclusions that yet other key ingredients in this is that the internationalization of foundational values is also occurring at an increasing rate.\textsuperscript{20} It is important that Sweden keeps up in this ethical progression since it is growing more multicultural. More cultural flavors are increasingly added, hence pushing the ethical borderline forward into new fields of human activity. The ministry of education in Sweden has written a report that also shows the importance of the education of foundational values in the school system. And the questions should be central to any school form, i.e., what kind of values are most important?\textsuperscript{23}

Below: a map over India\textsuperscript{24} during the time of the early development of Buddhism. Here one can see Sarnath, where Gautama Buddha started his teaching of the middle path. Also Benares can be seen. In the Buddhist tradition, the city of Benares has been of importance due to the significance of the place in the old times when persons of religion and philosophy would go there to debate

\textsuperscript{17} Skolverket: RE1201 - Religion A & B.
\textsuperscript{18} Bergem, page 15.
\textsuperscript{20} Ds 2005:16. \textit{Att fånga kunskapet om lärandet och undervisning} [Electronic version]. Page 33-34.
their viewpoints. Sarnath is also important to Buddhism because it was here that the Gautama Buddha introduced the middle path, gave his first sermon to his initial five students.25

What this study project and examination paper sets out to do is to try to understand and explore what kind of ethics the jātakas contain? Also how the jātakas are used in schools in Benares, India, will be looked into.

2 Purpose & Aims
The aim of this study is to explore and analyze the ethics of some chosen jātaka-stories from the Buddhist tradition as well as to discuss the jātaka-stories in educational practice in a part of India. It specifically tries to answer the two following questions:

1) What kind of ethics can be seen in some chosen jātaka-stories?
2) How are jātaka-stories implemented and used in education in schools in Benares, Uttar Pradesh?

3 Methodology & Implementation
This study project is conducted with an inductive empirical qualitative methodological orientation.26 Qualitative methodology is not something that is a uniform phenomenon and

there is a wide spectrum of variations within the research methodological litterature.\textsuperscript{27} Generally speaking, there is a new conception, perception and description of what qualitative methodology \textit{is} in every book on the topic. Hence it is within the qualitative science also common that researchers form and apply their own variations and interpretations of methodology to their research and argue on its behalf. Thus there are rarely simple procedures or routines to apply in qualitative research. Runa Patel and Bo Davidsson claims that every qualitative research problem demands its own unique model or design of method and to be a good qualitative researcher one has to have a good overview of the whole field of qualitative research. This field is also something that is in constant change and it demands a continuity of reflection.\textsuperscript{28} The choice of method made for this study project is due to the fact that no one before has conducted a similar research project with such a topic. It lies in the nature of qualitative inductive methodology and is suitable for topics never been investigated before.\textsuperscript{29}

Finally in this chapter on the methodology I mention and briefly will explain the key points of Frank Whaling’s book, \textit{Theory and Methods in Religious Studies}. It has served as a foundational and overlooking indicator in terms of methodological theory in the research field of the history of religions.\textsuperscript{30} Herein there is a broad field of presentation of the diverse understanding(s) of the history of religion from a methodological standpoint. It is a diverse field, the history of religions, and in it many different and intermingled points of reference in accordance to methodology are integrated. The methods used in the field, the history of religions, are viz; phenomenological and historical, scientific, global contextual, psychological- sociological and cultural anthropological approaches. This broadens the study of the history of religions considerably and makes it more broadly integrated. One can view the jātakas from a cultural anthropological angle hence look at the phenomena of the jātakas as expression of culture and the ethics it is infused by. One can view the jātakas from a psychological viewpoint, how do these moral stories shape the individual and collective mind, or psychology, in terms of ethics, education and society. One can view the jātakas from a scientific angle and investigate how the literature came to be and how it was preserved from an historical angle etc. The importance and key point herein is that whatever topic studied, in religious studies, it, the topic, is always multilayered or it always has many faces that together make the bigger picture more tangible, clearer and understandable.

\textsuperscript{28} Patel, page 118-125.
4 Research Ethics

Research ethical guidelines are focused on during the work progress and in correlation to respondents in this paper. Steinar Kvale writes concerning ethics in research and to mention a few principles used in this study project. The ethical principles or guidelines mentioned are, viz; informed consent and confidentiality, and the role of the investigator.

Informed consent and confidentiality; before the recording of the interviews the question of confidentiality was raised by the interviewee, i.e., me. All of the respondents have concurred and accepted, if required, to their names being published in this examination paper.

The role of the investigator; research is a moral and ethical enterprise where the investigator visits the areas of interest and the people living herein. The personal interaction during interviews influences the interviewee, and the knowledge surfaceing from the interviews influences our perception of man and our situation. Therefore it is important, from the researcher’s part, in a research reciprocal aspect, to build up a pleasant atmosphere and a connection of mutual trust where there is openness and the possibility for the respondents to feel comfortable enough in order to speak freely of his/her experiences and thoughts concerning these in correlation with the topic studied. In this case the jātakas. This means taking a stance of fine balance between the gatherings of knowledge based on cognitive faculties and the ethical aspects of human interactive relationship based on emotional intelligence.

These above stated aspects of research are particularly important when going abroad to a foreign culture to do investigations, like India for example and the ancient city of Benares. Many cultural differences are there that may cause problems along the way and it is important for the researcher and investigator to be responsive to subtleties that has to do with cultural orientation and behavior. Problems may arise out of cultural differences that can interfere with the interview atmosphere.

For example; if I as an investigator, don’t have, let’s say, at least a basic knowledge about social conventions, or unwritten rules of proper conduct and how to show appropriate respect

32 Kvale, page 104-116.
33 Kvale, page 104-116.
to the person I meet, and how to interact in an Indian context as a curious guest. And I maybe
greet the respondent I have the fortune to interact with in an improper way. I stretch out my
right hand with a self-secure stare into the respondent’s eyes with a firm handshake. Like we
do here in the West in order to show the person we meet that we are reliable and trustworthy.
This is often the case in Benares India, not always it should be stated, and Westernized
manners are also present. But this is the key to success in this aspect, to meet and greet in a
traditional way. Bad manners in Benares, traditionally speaking, is let’s say If we sit on the
floor and I point my feet and foot soles at my respondent. Or if I touch the respondent on the
shoulder, or even worse on the head, with my left hand moreover. Then the interview
situation easily can get out of hand so to speak and not only have I as an investigator made the
situation socially toxic due to cultural ignorance, from my part. But also, presumptuously
lessen my chance of getting good material and authentic information out of the respondent. In
a worst case scenario, if one encounters a traditional old school respondent, which I have done
in many cases during this and other examination papers pursued in Benares, one gets a moral
teaching rather than an interview, and that is not only confusing but it also can be a bit painful
and face is lost in ego-embarrassment. Because as a foreign researcher and investigator, I am
simply on a short visit to learn what the culture at hands have to say concerning this or that
and this is done, at best, i.e. when in Rome do as Romans.

5 Collection of Data
For the gathering of information and collection of data to this study project, I used interviews,
books on the topic, articles and internet websites.

6 Interviews
During the interviews there has been awareness on what Jan Krag Jacobsen within an
interview situation calls the third ear. With this Jacobsen means that the investigator is
observant to what happens interpersonally during the interview process in order to come
closer to the undercurrents of subconscious activity between the respondent and the
interviewee. This is done in order to understand more fully what is going on during the
interview situation.34

“The interviewer will then receive a wealth of information during an interview that he does
not know anything about. It may be received by the senses in a way that is outside the scope

of consciousness, maybe it's about residues of different instincts. We must have communicated
with each other before the course of development were given access to the spoken language.
The interesting thing is that all these unconscious messages can be heard with what is sometimes
called the third ear. It's not about any general ear or any other organ, and therefore we will
explain this a little closer. The unconscious material interviewer receives do something with him.
It triggers thoughts, feelings, associations and moods. When you perceive these changes or events
that take place with third ear. Listening with the third ear means that you are more aware of what
is happening inside a self in the encounter with other people."\footnote{35}

In here one can see how Jacobsen argues for the human faculty of cognition in terms of
understanding, consciously, how a person takes in information in an interview situation.

In this study project the interview format has been of an open, also semi- structured interview
as explained by Hayes\footnote{36}, Jacobsen\footnote{37} and Smith.\footnote{38} An interview guide was constructed prior to
the interviews, see Appendix, page 49. This guide was not followed strictly but rather used as
a guide where follow-up questions often took place during interviews. In an open or semi-
structured interview format, the orders of the questions are less important and the interviewer
has more freedom to probe interesting areas that arise.\footnote{39} The reason for the choice of this
interview format has been that this model of collecting data, allows new substance and aspects
to pop up during interviews\footnote{40} that can be used to come closer to what is being studied. The
questions asked are broad and open and therefore gives the opportunity to an unlimited
variation of possible answers.\footnote{41} During the interviews taken, the analytical variables
concerning non-verbal communication, was observed. These variables were; feedback\footnote{42},
probing, body language and proximity and interpersonal transactions. This in order to get a
better comprehension of what was being said during interviews and if what was being said,
matched or was congruent\footnote{43} with the analytical variables.\footnote{44} Furthermore a measure of culture,
communication and its differences was implemented during interview situations.\footnote{45} Lastly, in
terms of methodology during interviews, the chapter \textit{Att lyssna} (To Listen) played an
important role during interviews. This in terms of mirroring the non-verbal communication

\footnote{35}{Ibid. This is my translation from Swedish.}
\footnote{36}{Hayes, page 121-123.}
\footnote{37}{Jacobsen, page 19.}
\footnote{38}{Smith, page 56.}
\footnote{39}{Ibid.}
\footnote{40}{Jacobsen, page 19.}
\footnote{41}{Ibid.}
\footnote{43}{Pease, Allan. \textit{Dina gester avslöjar dig}. Södertälje: B. Wahlströms Förlag, 2004, page 14.}
\footnote{44}{Ibid, page 66-94.}
\footnote{45}{Ibid, page 159.}
making sure that I, as interviewee, understands the respondents as correctly as possible via 
humming sounds, nods, eye contact and posture. ⁴⁶

Twenty respondents were interviewed and recorded with a digital device that was easily 
adaptable to a lap top computer. Three of these recorded interviews were lost due to technical 
difficulties during field research. However notes taken during fieldwork from all twenty 
interviews are still in possession. All together there are 550 minutes of recorded material. In 
three of the interviews there was an interpreter needed. There were three different interpreters 
used in this study project and their names can be seen in Appendix, page 51. In those cases I 
used an interpreter I sat down prior to the interview and went through central concepts of my 
study and what I meant by them with the interpreter. This in order to scale down the errors 
and misunderstandings due to earlier understandings, preunderstandings, of terms I used in 
this study project. I one interview situation I came in contact with the interpreter at the scene 
and by chance the interpreter had the time and interest to participate and to help. In another 
situation, it seemed that the interpreter was instructed by his director to sit down and to 
interpret. In fact, this interview was a disaster and was not used for this study project more 
than mentioning it took place. What happened was that the interpreter took over the interview 
completely after about 15 minutes by starting to give answers to my questions by himself. In 
another and the final interview, an interpreter was arranged by me at the place of interview.

7 Transcripts of interviews

All recorded material has been transcribed and the interviews are thoroughly listened to, notes 
from the interviews are followed when there have been a need for the spelling of terms and 
names correctly. During the interviews there are formal conversations and the social chit chat 
between the interviewer and respondents, these are not transcribed, but only the stuff and 
matter that have or may have importance to this study project is. The sound quality of one 
interview was too poor to make sense of and was left un-transcribed.

8 Selection of respondents

In order to gain a good point of reference of the topic studied, to get in depth knowledge on 
the Buddhist jātaka tales and to gain data which is representative to what is investigated, the 
respondents varied from a wide cluster and have a broad repertoire concerning their 
background affiliation with the topic of Buddhism. Some were Buddhist 
priests/monks/practitioners from both the Theravāda and the Mahāyāna traditions. Others

were teachers working within the educational field and who used the jātaka stories during education in ethics to high school students. One is an associate professor in Buddhism and Pali studies. One respondent is a professor of anthropology with many years of experience in the Buddhist field. Another one is a professor emeritus of Indian philosophy and religious studies. Yet another one is distinguished scholar of semantics and linguistics.

9 Previous research & Literature
There are numerous studies made on the jātakas and its history, what they are, the scriptural context, traditional and cultural aspects, ethics and morals etc. I will present some of the literature and previous research made by a few scholars on the topic down below. Some of which are pioneering work and some which are quite recent. I have chosen litterateur that I find of importance for this work and that shows the jātakas in a historical context according to the previous research done. Also it, the literature, presents different perspectives that it applies on the topic at hands.

A British scholar of Pāli and Indology, Thomas William Rhys Davids\(^47\), wrote the book *Buddhist Birth Stories*\(^48\), in the year 1880. In here he carries out the facts concerning the orthodox Buddhist belief of the origination of the birth stories. He explains that it was believed in orthodox Buddhist circles that the jātakas came into existence and was written down immediately after the death of the Buddha. The stories were handed down to the time of the Council of Patna in the year of 250 BCE. The next year, 251 BCE, they were brought to Sri Lanka by the great missionary Mahinda, the son of King Ashoka. Davids states that:

“Unfortunately this orthodox Buddhist belief as to the history of the Book of the Birth Stories rest on a foundation of quicksand.”\(^49\)

This is not scientifically supported, he further writes, and it is also contradicted by the evidence of the books themselves. T.W. Davids states that the jātakas contain a record of the every day-to-day life, and everyday thought, of the people among whom the tales were told.

\(^{47}\) T.W. Davids, 1843-1922, is one of the pioneers in the studies on Buddhism and the jātaka stories. He was a British scholar of the Pāli language, Indologists and founder of the Pali Text Society. It was on the island of Sri Lanka, when passing his civil service exams that he came in contact with the Pāli language. Davids was part of the excavation of the ancient city of Anuradhapura on Sri Lanka. Parts of his career was controversial, because he was in favor of the British Imperialism and via Buddhist studies trying to make the British rule stronger thru lobbyism and lectures. He gave “Historical Lectures” and wrote papers advancing a racial theory of a common “Aryan” ethnicity amongst the peoples of Britain, Sri Lanka, and the Buddha's own clan in ancient times. These were comparable to the racial theories of Max Müller, but were used to a different purpose. Rhys Davids claimed that Britons had a natural, “racial” affinity with Buddhist doctrine. Wikipedia; (Visited on the 28th Oct 2013). [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thomas_William_Rhys_Davids](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thomas_William_Rhys_Davids)


\(^{49}\) Ibid, page i-ii.
Therefore they should be viewed as and most important collection of folk-lore extant today. T.W. Davids also writes about how there is a strong resemblance to stories in the West and that this is due to the fact that the Western stories were often borrowed from the Buddhist litterateur.

In India and amongst the Hindus there is a collection of folklore called the pancha tantra, the five books, and T.W. Davids states that it is a kind of Hindu Pentateuch or Pentamerone. In its earliest form, i.e., in Sanskrit, this work is lost. But in the sixth century AD a book very similar was translated into Ancient Persian, and later into Syriac. This was done about 750 AD., under the name of Kalilag & Damag into Arabic under the title Kalilah & Dimnah. Because these stories were very popular among the Arabs, and as the Arabs were gradually interacting with the Europeans, they brought the stories with them. Soon after this, there are translations into Western tongues and languages. According to T.W. Davids, the first translation into a European language, modern Greek, was done by a Jewish man named Symeon Seth around 1080 AD. This version was turned into Hebrew by another, unknown, author, which later on John of Capua turned into Latin between 1263 and 1278 AD. At about the same time as the Hebrew version, another translation was made direct from Arabic into Spanish, and a fifth into Latin. And these five versions of translations were afterwards turned into German, Italian, French and English.

Around the middle Ages, there was a collection of fables and stories formed called Æsop’s tales and some of these stories can be traced back to the Buddhist jātakas and almost all of them derived from Indian sources. What also is important to notice is the person himself, Æsop, a slave that lived in ancient Greek around 620-560 B.C., who was a fabulist and storyteller.

T.W. Davids gives the conclusive, yet somewhat he admits not a complete one, answer to the question if it is true that the so called Æsop’s Fables. Are adaptations from tales written to instruct children in the East. Æsop is mentioned several times in classical literature and always as the teller of stories or fables. Plato says, in his writings, that Socrates in his imprisonment occupied himself by turning the stories of Æsop into verse. Aristophanes, an

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50 Ibid, page iv.
51 Ibid, page xxvii.
52 Ibid, page xxix.
55 Ibid, page xxx.
author of comic plays in ancient Greece, 446-386 B.C.\textsuperscript{56}, refers four times to the fables in his writings. Aristotle, ancient Greece, 384-322 B.C., a philosopher, logician, polymath, student of Socrates and teacher of Alexander the Great\textsuperscript{57}, quotes in one form a fable of \textit{Æsop}, which Lucian of Samosata, ca 120-200 A.D., quotes in another text written by him called \textit{Lucian to Nigrinus}.

T.W. Davids makes an interesting summary of the connection India and the West, where one can read about historical events and actual evidence that shows us the probable origin of the jātakas. The following seven points is a reference from the book \textit{Buddhist Birth Stories} written by the same, T.W. Davids:

\begin{itemize}
\item[1/] In a few isolated passages of Greek and other writers, earlier than the invasion of India by Alexander the Great, there are references to a legendary Æsop.
\item[2/] After Alexander’s time a number of tales also found in the Buddhist collection became current in Greece, and are preserved in the poetical version of Babrius and Phaedrus. They are probably of Buddhist origin.
\item[3/] From the time of Babrius to the time of the first Crusade no migration of Indian tales to Europe can be proven to have taken place. About the latter time a translation into Arabic of a Persian work containing tales found in the Buddhist book was translated by Jews into Greek, Hebrew and Latin. Translations of these versions afterwards appeared in all principal languages in Europe.
\item[4/] In the eleventh or twelfth century a translation was made into Latin of the legend of Barlaam and Josaphat, a Greek romance written in the eight century by St. John of Damascus on the basis of the Buddhist jātaka book. Translations, poems, and plays founded on this work were rapidly produced throughout Western Europe.
\item[5/] Other Buddhist stories not included in either of the works mentioned in the two last paragraphs were introduced into Europe both during the Crusades and also during the dominion of the Arabs in Spain.
\item[6/] Version of other Buddhist stories were introduced into Eastern Europe by the Huns under Genghis Khan.
\item[7/] The fables and stories introduced through these various channels became very popular during the Middle Ages, and were used as the subjects of numerous sermons, story-books, romances, poems and edifying dramas. Thus extensively adopted and circulated, they had a considerable influence on the revival of literature, which, hand in hand with the revival of learning, did so much to render possible and to bring about the Great Reformation. The character of the hero of them – the Buddha, in his last or in one or other of his supposed previous births, appealed so strongly to the sympathies, and was so attractive to the minds of medieval Christians, that he became, and has ever since remained, an object of Christian worship. And a collection of these and similar stories, wrongly, but very naturally, ascribed to a famous story-teller of the ancient Greeks, has become the property, the house-hold literature, of all nations of Europe; and under the name of Æsop’s \textit{tales}, has handed down, as a first moral lesson-book and as a continual feast for our children.
\end{itemize}

\textsuperscript{56} Wikipedia. (Visited on the 29th Oct 2013). \url{http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aristophanes}

\textsuperscript{57} Filosofflexikonet. Forum: Almqvist & Wiksell Tryckeri AB, Uppsala, 2003, page 36-43.
in the West, tales first invented to please and to instruct our far-off cousins in the far East.”

If one takes T.W. Davids words for facts, these are interesting implications showing the reader the origin of the jātakas and that Europe has been, unknowingly, under Buddhist influence under quite some time.

Caroline Augusta Foley Rhys Davids is another scholar and translator of English Pāli who has studied the jātakas, she married the above stated T.W. Rhys Davis and continued the work after his death and was president of the Pali Text Society from 1923-1942. Caroline Davids states that the jātakas are included in the second of the threefold Pali canon, (tipitakas) and they were first published in roman character by the Danish scholar Victor Fausböll in the years of 1877-1896. She writes that in 1907 the entire body of stories had been translated into English with Edward Cowell as the leading scholar in this editorial work. She states that Ceylon, Sri Lanka, has played an important role when getting hold of the jātaka stories and that they have been handed down generation after generation via mouth to ear teachings and mnemonics. The jātakas are poetic in character and in the language of Pali rhyme is common when it was handed down from one generation to another. There have been changes in the stories handed down to us and some have been deleted from the corpus.

“Pali compilations for the first three or four centuries took birth in oral shape, and repetitions and refrains were probably aids to memory. And they went on growing, orally. Thus the Jataka collection, as we now have it, is like a great petrified tree. Committed early in our era to writing, it became practically petrified. But till then, as it grew, year after year, in the memories and mouths of generation of story-tellers, it changed, as when that tree put forth new growth every spring. Had it not petrified somewhere about the beginning of our era it would by now be in many details a different collection.”

The jātakas have grown and been altered during time and culture and this above stated quote points to this, i.e., the texts has not been static, they have been alive so to speak. The reason for these alterations and editorial changes of the number of stories in the Jātaka Book, Caroline Davids states, are most probably due to the Great Schism between the Sthaviras – “The Elders”, and the “Great Assembly” - the Mahāsanghika schools. There is proof of these changes by looking at manuscripts, and the jātakas, from the Mahāsanghika school of Vesāli,

61 Ibid, page xiii.
62 Ibid.
an important place and school of Mahāyāna Buddhism. Scholars has taken manuscripts from the older Sthavirashaol of Sri Lanka and made comparisons between them. Some things are subtracted and other things are added to the texts. Caroline Davids further states that perhaps most of the stories are older than Buddhism itself and imported into India from abroad. And they may be viewed as Eastern or Indian folklore or fairy lore. Some are very likely of Buddhist in invention and set into a Buddhist framework, passed on from one generation to another, up to this day. Caroline Davids presents the stories as popular Buddhist propaganda and this in its full garb.

“The full Jataka garb is this: the story itself, technically called “story of the past,” is introduced by an account of some event alleged to have just happened in the little inner world of the “Order” (Sangha). This is technically called “story of the present”. The teller of the “story of the past,” who is always presented as the founder himself of the Sakya (i.e., Buddhism), is then made to remember some similar act or speech, in the dim past, of the chief person in the story of the present. This he tells. He then, in concluding, “assigns” this chief person, together it may be with one or two others, to the story of the past, as having had the recorded experience in a former life.”63

Caroline Davids writes about, without mentioning which one’s in particular or by name, how there are about a dozen jātaka stories that are of special importance. They show the reader about personal growth and of spiritual advance, with ethical progression as a key ingredient of Buddhist life and practice. She views the jātakas as serious religious teachings where morality, also perfections, pāramitās, plays an important role.

“Taking the Jatakas with their introduction, it is scarcely an overstatement to say that, the oddities, the inconsistencies, the many distortions in ideal and in the quest of them, they are collectively the greatest epic, in literateur, of the Ascent of Man, the greatest ballad-book on the theme that man willing the better becomes the better.”64

A professor of Sanskrit in England, Edward Byles Cowell65 states that the stories of the former lives of the Buddha, the jātakas, are at least older than the council of Vesāli in the year of 380 BCE. He means that this conclusion can be proven by the fact that scenes taken from the jātakas are sculptured in the carvings on the railings round relic shrines found outspread in India. These can be found in Sanchi, Amaravati and especially of those in Bharhut, India.

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63 Ibid, page xvii.
64 Ibid, page xviii.
where the titles of several jātakas are inscribed over some of the carvings.\textsuperscript{66} Cowell writes in the preface of \textit{The Jataka or Stories of the Buddha’s former births}, vol. 1, that the notion and concept of metempsychosis or reincarnation was also prevalent in Greek literary history where Pythagoras, 570-495 B.C.\textsuperscript{67}, claimed to have remembered his previous lives.\textsuperscript{68} Hence the theory of reincarnation is not something that is new to the Western thought and yet another interesting pointer to the connection East and West as mentioned by reference above from the viewpoints of Thomas William Rhys Davids.

A contemporary scholar researcher is Naomi Appleton and she is a British Academy Postdoctoral Fellow in the Centre for the History of Religion in Asia, Cardiff University, Wales.\textsuperscript{69} Appleton writes in the book \textit{Jātaka stories in Theravāda Buddhism}\textsuperscript{70}, that the literature of the jātakas illustrates the path and gradual perfection of the Bodhisattva to full buddhahood and that this is not a new notion. Her definition of what a jātaka is, is that it is a story relating an episode in a past birth of the Buddha. And that they are to this day very popular in Theravāda Buddhist countries as shown by the frequent illustration in temples, their presence in sermons, children’s storybooks, plays, television programmes, theatre, dance and poetry.

The stories are also used in key moments in life, because the jātakas are dynamic and rich in its essence, i.e., they include many levels and orientations, where the reader may look at how Indian society was morally structured when they were written down or how the teacher disciple relationship looked like to give just a few examples. Appleton suggests that when studying the jātakas it is necessary to use a variety of methodologies in order to build up a complete picture and understanding. She seems to view the jātakas from an integrative perspective where the different parts together form a larger whole.\textsuperscript{71}

“In the study of jātakas, it is textualists who have dominated, looking at the roots in non-Buddhist folklore, counting the rings to ascertain the age, and examining the ways in which the different parts fit together. They have shown limited interest in the purposes or uses of jātakas.”\textsuperscript{72}

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\textsuperscript{67} Filosoflexikon. Page, 452.

\textsuperscript{68} Cowell, page vii.

\textsuperscript{69} Naomi Appleton is a postdoctor of religious studies at the School of Divinity, University of Edinburgh, Scotland, and she has written articles and a book on Buddhism. University of Edingurh; (Visited on the 29\textsuperscript{th} Oct 2013). http://www.ed.ac.uk/schools-departments/divinity/staff/search?uun=nappleto&cw_xml=bioph

\textsuperscript{70} Appleton, page 13.

\textsuperscript{71} Ibid, page 16.

\textsuperscript{72} Ibid.
Appleton’s study on the jātakas is partly distinctions made between the positive, the negative and the indifferent characterizations of the future Buddha to be. Where the protagonist may behave accordingly, i.e., in a bad or good way.

A doctor of philosophy at the University of Delhi, India, is Nguyen Thi Kieu Diem and she has studied the role of animals in Indian Buddhism with special reference to the jātakas. In her PhD thesis, *The role of Animals in Indian Buddhism with special reference to the Jatakas*, Nguyen Diem comes to the conclusion that the jātakas are a method of teaching Buddhists the lessons of karma, samsara and dharma. In the thesis, Diem writes:

“In the Jātaka Tales, each story contains a life lesson, often told with humor, and a reminder that one’s karma is bound to one’s actions. This lesson plan is designed to bring the meaning of karma and the related concept of samsāra to life through the reading of the Jātaka Tales.”

Diem argues that it is a general opinion that it is from the jātakas we have learnt many things about the history, religion, geography, social and economic condition during the prevalent time in the society of India.

“The Jātaka stories have enriched the literature of many other people directly or indirectly and therefore they have greater value in universal literature, not only as regards literature and art, but also from the point of view of the history of civilization. They represent almost all aspects of human society right from the monarchs, minister, counselors, and physicians to the lowest strata including snake charmers, blacksmiths, horse trainers, the people engaged in different professions in the society, besides representing flora and fauna.”

Finally Diem holds out the importance of a Buddhist perspective on animal rights and that the jātakas can teach the modern society how to behave not only to another human beings, but also towards animals since they also have feelings and a central nervous system.

Yet another contemporary scholar that has studied the jātakas is Pragati Sahni. Sahni states that since the jātaka stories contain fables of living animals and vegetation, from a philosophical perspective, the jātaka stories can be viewed as environmental virtue ethics and how they are contemporary and topical to modern society as it is today. This in terms of that the jātaka stories can teach us the readers, right from wrong, to make the right decisions, to take care of the planet which we share together, to do good, to take responsibility of one’s actions and their consequences that influence one’s future. This is why the jātaka stories, Sahni argues, are a crucial contribution to the environmental debate within the early

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74 Dr. Pragati Sahni is assistant professor in the Department of Philosophy at the University of Delhi, India. (Visited on the 30th Oct 2013). [http://www.du.ac.in/index.php?id=270&fmember=2844&cid=322](http://www.du.ac.in/index.php?id=270&fmember=2844&cid=322)
Buddhism, and one that could also provide us with a model for environmental virtue ethics today.\(^{75}\)

This chapter on earlier research has shown a presentation and overview of the history, points of views and the field the jātakas cover. There are similarities between the researchers that have done investigations into the world of the jātakas. Besides the obvious of the common interest in deepening and broadening the knowledge about the stories, there are commonalities that surround the ethics and morality of the stories. All of the researchers used in the chapter Literature, emphasize ethics, perhaps and most probable this is due to the nature of the topic at hands.

The differences between them are based on and come from their different perspective in academia and their observational towers. Thomas William Rhys Davids for example, is a linguistic historian, where he traces the facts and origins of the jātakas via old texts and ancient scripture of Greece from which he concludes that there is a certain parallel or connect ability between Eastern Buddhist thought of ethics and the Western stories and fables.

Naomi Appleton gives her perspective on the jātakas which is of a more questioning orientation where she makes the basic enquiries into previous methodology used in academia. The reason for wider form of methodology is, according Appleton, due to the richness of the stories and its encompassing wholeness and views they contain that reveal ancient society and how it looked like. Appleton means that it is necessary to use many different methods when trying to understand and explore the jātakas. She is critical to previous research made on the jātakas and means it has more or less been done by textualists hence missing out of important features the stories also provide meaning culture in general. Pragati Sahni gives a more philosophical perspective on the jātakas where early Buddhism is looked into and especially its environmental philosophy the stories contain. Sahnis perspective is an overlooking one where the ancient jātakas are used as a pedagogical tool in terms of today’s environmental problems.

**10 Buddhism**

In the following section I will explain in a brief manner about Buddhism, also known as the Dhamma. This is in order to put the topic at hands, the jātakas, into context. Buddhism originates from the historical person Siddhartha Gautama, who was born as a prince into the

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Sakyamuni clan in Kapilavastu, northern India, in modern day Nepal, in the year 566 BCE. He left his wife Yashodara, son Rahula and a life in luxury for a search of ending human suffering. After 6 years of intense meditative practices, he reached enlightenment when he was about 35 years of age in Bodhgayā, in the state of Bihar, under the Bodhi tree, aka. Pipal or Ficus religiosa.

The year was 528 BCE and it is the same year he founded the Sangha, Buddhist community, and put the wheel of his teachings in motion. Thereafter he was known as The Buddha, the awakened one, someone who had reached buddhi, enlightenment, and had made the in-depth distinction between reality and what seems to be real. To put Buddha in an historical context is interesting, because of the time and era he was living in. The religions of north India at the time were manifold, yet Brahmanism and Jainism were the more formal ones who were strict hierarchal and conservative movements that Buddha rebelliously questioned and in the end, he forged his own way, hence creating Buddhism. What is important to know about Buddha and Buddhism, is that he, as the founder of a new religion and philosophy. Never said to come and believe, but to come and see for yourself, and this is called ehi-passika and is central of Buddha’s theme. The doctrine and teaching is viewed primarily as a form of medicine, and Buddha as physician. The legends of him are many and Buddha became an –ism, Buddhism, and it spread into many parts of the world. Sri Lanka, Nepal, Tibet, China, Japan, Korea, Thailand, Indonesia to name a few.

Parallel to the historical path and as with many or any other religions on the planet, time and human drives in the forms of memory, history and opinions. Ideologies, thoughts, beliefs and convictional ideas based on experience, diversify with time. Or intermingle with something else that already existed before, for example in this instance, when Buddhism came as a new school, philosophy or religion to a new place. Where it would intermingle with what was previously inherent in that particular region. The mixture of Mahāyāna Buddhism, via Guru Padmasambhava, and the Bön religion of Tibet is an example of this. Or the Tao and Buddhism in Japan etc. So there is not one single Buddhism, but many Buddhas, which are culturally different from one another. Nowadays there are three major channels or traditions

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77 Earhart, page 849.
78 Ibid, Page 860.
80 Earhart, page 853.
of Buddhism, viz; the Theravāda, the Mahāyāna and the Vajrayāna. Within these three main streams of Buddhism, many other offspring’s has come out into existence. But, first out was the Theravāda tradition, meaning ‘way of the elders’ or ‘teachings of the elder’, also known as Nikāya Buddhism, and it was the first Buddhist community that arouse around and soon after the Buddha in the 5th century BCE. The Theravāda school has many sub-traditions and it is the only one of the early Buddhist schools that has survived down to modern times. Some sources considers it to be the best preserved form of the original Buddhist religion, philosophy, or psychology, and is believed to be found on the island of Sri Lanka, where it has been untouched ever since it set its first foot by Mahinda in the year of 240 BCE.

While other sources mentions Burma as a region where the teachings has remained untouched up until today. Hence once again, the diversity of historical facts concerning this aspect is manifold. All the traditions of Buddhism contains many things and their philosophy or basic assumptions can be deduced from what is called the doctrine of Paticca Samuppāda, i.e., everything’s inter connectedness and law of causality (cause, effect and consequence); annātma/no-soul; nirvāna/the place, i.e. the mind-set of total extinction of desires and aversions, anicca; titthāyatana/the 3 articles of belief. I.e. the belief that 1/all happiness and woe are produced thru former karma (prenatal actions) and 2/that everything is uncaused and 3/everything is created, i.e., there is nothing that is not produced depending on cause and conditions. Lastly, karma/ i.e., how we as beings produce our own destiny. The year of Buddha’s death, in Kusinārā, is difficult to establish because there seems to be a difference of opinion depending what school or tradition or academic source one looks into. But for the sake of making things easy in this case, the year of Buddha’s death is 486 B.C.E.

11 The Buddhist Literature
Here follows a short introduction to the origins of the scriptural sources on which Buddhism rests upon. The Buddhist scriptural field is vast indeed and from its original sources,

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81 Theravada: ‘Way of the elders’ or ‘Teaching of the elder’, this tradition emphasizes the Arhat – ‘worthy one’ and means that enlightenment/buddhi/nirvana is for a few people, not for everyone, and that the pursuit of nirvana is for the Arhat only. Mahāyāna: ‘The great vehicle’ or ‘Greater vehicle’, this tradition emphasizes the path of the bodhisattva, that anyone can reach enlightenment/buddhi/nirvana and that the bodhisattva strives to bring all sentient beings to nirvana. Vajrayāna: ‘the Diamond vehicle’ or ‘thunderbolt vehicle’. It is a form of extension of the Mahāyānaist tradition and puts focus on tantric deity yoga, elaborate rituals, visualizations, mudras/handgestures and mantras. It is believed that these practices will shorten the path to enlightenment. This tradition came to existence around the 7th century AD and there are about 6 schools within this genre.


84 Interview with Prof. Siddharth Singh, 23rd Jan 2006.

numerous traditions have sprung out with sects and sub-sects with their own commentaries and viewpoints on these textual sources. About three months after the death of the Buddha, the closest to him, his disciples and the community of monks, the Sangha. Held a council, referred to as The First Council or The First Rehearsal of the Tripitaka. Because there were no written accord of the words and sermons Buddha gave during his lifetime. This was done in order to remember his sermons and teachings, sūtras/sutta, and to establish the organization and history of the order, vināyā. According to Gombrich, Lamotte and Joshi, it was held at Rājagṛha/Rajgir in the state of Bihar, India. This community of monks chose 500 arhants, or ‘worthy ones’, ‘perfected ones’, that would recite the teachings of the Buddha and preserve it as an oral tradition. These were later on written down in various dialects of Middle-Aryan language, which is based on Sanskrit, and came to be called the tipitaka, also tripiitaka. According to Nārada Thera, this was done about year 80 BCE in Ceylon (Sri Lanka) in the language of Pali and it was written on ola leaves. The Buddhist scripture, also; canon, Pali Canon, The Canonic Corpus, tipitaka (Pali), tri-pitaka (Sanskrit), the three baskets. Is a vast mass of text with about 10’000 collected pages composed and written down by monks and followers of Buddha. Thera states it is eleven times the size the Bible of Christianity.

12 Schemata of the Theravāda Buddhist Literature
Here follows a schemata showing the Theravāda Buddhist Litterateur and this is in order to get an idea, overview and understanding of the corpus of texts within the origins of Buddhism. The English translation, by E.B. Cowell, the jātaka litterateur contains some 1800 pages. As can be seen in the schemata, the jātakas are the tenth book of the Khuddhaka-nikāya litterateur.

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86 Sangha = community of monks and disciples of Buddhism. 
87 Bowker, page 241. 
88 Gombrich & Heinz, page 78-79. 
89 Warder, page 195; Rahula, page 91. 
91 Ibid, page xii. 
95 Thera, page 82. 
96 Cowell. 
12.1 The Jātakas

The jātakas is a body of literature within the Thēravāda Buddhist canon, the tipitaka, and it is a part of the Khuddhaka-nikāya, as can be seen in the schemata above. The exact year it was written down is difficult to establish precisely but it is generally referred to the same time or era as when the tipitaka was written down in the context of the three councils mentioned earlier.98 There is considerable uncertainty surrounding the date, location, deliberations and conclusions of these councils, and while the traditional account may be accepted as reliable in some aspects it should not be regarded as historically accurate in all.99

The jātakas written character is in prose or it has a poetic style. Etymologically the word, jātaka, is derived from the Sanskrit word jāti, which means ‘birth’ and jātaka, (Pāli),

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means 'born-thing' or 'happened-thing'. The jātakas can be called by many names, viz; tales, stories, parables, fables, adventures, legends, riddles, fairy tales, and birth stories. The stories circles around the previous births, or jātis, of the Buddha. Depending on what source looked into, there are 547-550 stories altogether. Some sources states that all of them but one being canonical. Others claim that only the verses in the jātakas are canonical.

Since the universal law of karma is a key concept within Buddhist thought and that this is in strong connection to the belief of reincarnation, metempsychosis, rebirth and the remembrance of past lives. This has also influenced why the jātakas were written down in the first place. In order to teach the laymen and the monks and nuns about ethics and morality and how one should live the life in accordance to the Buddhist path to alleviate the dissatisfaction in life. The jātakas are the tales about the previous lives of the Buddha, before he attained enlightenment.

According to one respondent Prof. Ramshankara Tripathi, the jātaka stories were told by Buddha himself and then written down.

"Originally told by Buddha. But then later Budhagonsha explained the stories. That’s called atakatta. And the same way in Sanskrit also. Jātaka usually that is Buddha’s teachings. And but later other scholars they translate or compose stories on that."

According to another respondent Prof. Kameshwara Natha Mishra, the jātakas are as follows:

“So jāta and jātak. That means life or one who is born. Jātak means a child. A born one. To be born. So, they are stories relating to the previous lives of the Buddha. They are known as jātakas. There is other word also, āvādāna. So āvādāna is also of the same type. Sometimes it becomes very difficult to differentiate in between these two classes. The āvādāna and the jātaka. But mainly it is said that the jātakas are the stories relating to the lives of the Buddha, Siddhartha. And after the other words are the stories of the lives of several other Buddhisattvas. They are described in the avadānas. They are also life stories. Also practicing the same things. But not practiced by the Buddha. But other persons are striving for getting Buddhahood."

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100 Davids, Caroline A.F. Rhys. Page xi.
102 The Shambala Dictionary of Buddhism and Zen, page 103; Davids, Caroline Rhys, page xi; Keown, page 125; Power, page 107-108; Thera, page 86.
103 Bowker, page 493.
104 Power, page 108.
105 Interviews: Prof. N.H. Samtani; Prof. Gehse N. Samten; Mr. Alok Kumar Mohanty; Prof. Baidyanath Saraswati; Mr. Swarupanand Sarupa Thero; Dr. Jampa Samten; Dr. Banarsi Lal; Bhikku Gurudhammo; Kenpo Sonam Gyatso; Ven. Wannadhaza; Ven. K. Siri Smedha Thero.
106 Interview: Prof. Ramshankara Tripathi. Interpreter, Dr. Pema Tenzin.
107 Ibid.
108 Interview: Prof. Kameshwara Natha Mishra.
The jātakas illustrate the Buddhist virtues, the parāmitās, in a storytelling form. In the stories, the future Buddha to be, can appear as a teacher, king, outcast, tiger, Brahmin, a compassionate prince, a cruel hunter, father, wise merchant etc. But in whatever form, the tales incorporates and educates the reader of Buddhist virtues in the form of ethics and moral. The jātaka stories is not only a significant aspect of early Buddhist literature, but is also a feature of the religious-social attainment of human civilization in India. As respondent Prof. Narayan Hemandas Samtani puts it:

“And also the jātakas were giving a picture of India at that time.”

These tales or mythological stories, tells much about folk-lore and the social life in ancient India. I.e. they can be studied and used as a magnifying glass when looking at how northern India looked like from a historical perspective.

According to respondent Khenpo Sonam Gyatso, when asked during field research whether the jātakas are educational or not, the answer was:

“Something like that we used to read it. But not like in a academic frame and this cause you should finish this and this you should and then you will be given the examination also or something like that. That we don’t do. But really we use because that of course Buddhist is based on the knowledge and wisdom. But it is also based on devotion is also very important. So what we use to say to generate like a good person. Then you should read the jatakas and life story of many ancient holy persons. So it will help to melt out hardness in mind and become more pure and more thought and more kind. So for that purpose also we use to read the jataka and so it will make more soft instead of very hard and very temper or something like that.”

Every jātaka starts in the same way, i.e. “Once upon a time when Brahmadatta was king in Benares in Kāśi the Bodhisatta was born into…” According to Prof. N.H. Samtani, the word Brahmadatta is a generic for all the kings that once lived in Benares.

12.2 Analysis of the Ethics within Jātakas

The jātakas are told from a moral viewpoint where the main character always behaves according Buddhist ethics. In several stories, the main protagonist plays little or no part in the action, but merely observes or pronounces the moral in the end of the story. He may also

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110 Interview: Prof. N.H. Samtani.
112 Interview: Prof. Khenpo Sonam Gyatso.
113 Interview: Prof. N.H. Samtani.
assault people, kill, steal, commit sexual impropriety, gamble and get drunk.\textsuperscript{114} In order to show the wide field of the Buddhist ethical situations and how they all may be understood, excerpts from some of the interviews will now be provided for. These are the ethics of Buddhism and the respondent’s personal and analytical interpretation of them.

According to one respondent Mr. Mohanty, in the jātakas there are morals for thieves:

“There are even ethics for a thief. Very paradoxical but it is there. In India it was not looked down upon. They said that stealing was the highest level of artistry. Understand this; nobody is encouraged to go into that direction as a profession. But simultaneously you have to have these qualities which are required in ethics. Because in your life you don’t know what kind of challenge is going to happen to you. For example spy. Who is working for his country. He is all the ethics of a thief, isn’t it? From that angle it was."\textsuperscript{115}

According to one respondent Dr. Jampa Samten:

“Most of the jātakas they emphasize the protection of giving, giving everything, sacrificing everything, giving up. Giving everything of what you own. For the benefit or for the sake of others. This is I think there are many stories that are propagating on this purpose, promoting this idea. Promoting the idea giving the things of what you ow[n] for the benefit of others. So this is one of the ethics. And the second is the refraining from engaging in non-religious activities. It could be killing, it could be stealing, and it could be sexual misconduct. Anything means refraining from engaging yourself from non-religious or non-worship activities. I think because. Stories is there to give you some lesson. To give you some, to teach you something.”\textsuperscript{116}

Respondent Prof. Baidyanath Saraswati describes the ethics in jātakas as follows:

“The jātakas are meant to stir up emotions and show the good way of life. The lessons in the stories are not theoretical, nor conceptual, but it is a simple way of explaining things to like a child. The child has to be told something. So the man who reads the jātakas tales to the students, so that they can conceive it simply. It is not theory or philosophy. Philosophy is there, but not in purpose in getting in philosophical thought. It is the simple words, the simple stories, which will help them understand the way of life. The jātakas are practical guidelines and simple to understand for everyone.”\textsuperscript{117}

Respondent Ven.K. Siri Sumedha Thero says in accordance to the ethics within the jātakas the following:

“In jātaka stories actually after explaining everything and trying to see the good and the bad.

\textsuperscript{114} Appleton, page 21.
\textsuperscript{115} Interview: Mr. Alok Kumar Mohanty.
\textsuperscript{116} Interview: Dr. Jampa Samten.
\textsuperscript{117} Interview: Prof. Baidyanath Saraswati.
Trying to give some example and what is good and what is bad.”

Respondent Dr. Surendra Kumar described the ethics in jātakas as follows:

“Jātaka tales are really full of moral values. Ethical and moral values. So, I think that they will stay and to continue in this society. Even in the small family also. Some texts, some stories. Or life of the such kind of stories. Moral, it is full of moral values. So these stories they main aim or the idea is to save their children’s religious stories. Is to create their good life style. Full of moral values. So many. Practice in this whole life. In a normal life the good deeds. So this is, the jātaka tales are nothing else than the good duties of the better upliftment of the this lifestyle.”

Respondent Prof. Ramshankara Tripathi, states after the question if there are any ethics in the jātaka tales the following:

“Yes. This is the main what say hmm the main aim. That’s why because of that the jātakas are there. Not only the ethics, this includes all like meditation, donation and also patience, also effort also concentration and also the wisdom. Includes all six perfections, all six perfections I think is there.”

According to one respondent Prof. Siddharth Singh,

“Jātaka tales are the stories of the previous birth of the Gautam Buddha. Let me tell you the one very important thing. That one should not be confused with the incarnation of any person and the previous birth or many birth. Because there is no concept of incarnation in Buddhism. So sometimes people get confused, that they think that because Buddha took many births in his life. So it was, it is like, the theory on incarnation of the Hinduism. Like in the Hinduism lord Vishnu took many births, sometimes Rama, Krishna and in such a way. All those they were the incarnations of the lord Vishnu. And this they take the Buddhas birth also in the same way. But this is a very wrong conception. In the Buddhism there is a concept that the perfection, because in the original Buddhism. In the Pali Buddhism, there is a concept of ten perfections, das paramitas. Das means 10, paramita means perfection. Later on, in the Mahāyāna Buddhism, it became 6. So these 10 perfections, cannot be gathered, cannot be perfected in just one life. Any each human being has to take, a lot of, means he has to take birth many times to get perfected in those kinds of perfections. Like perfection of, one perfection in dān. Dan means charity. Dana. Sacrifice. You should be ready to sacrifice even your body, even your life, for the welfare for society, for the welfare of others. And you have, I have given you one example, when I was telling you that why it was the Sarnath was called Mrgdāi. Buddhas was born here as a deer. And when he came to know that one pregnant deer, a female deer is going to be killed by the king. Because the king was fond of the deer meat eating. So she offered his body. To take the meat, to take the food. To the king. And many such kinds of examples are there in the jātakas. So the conception is this that, because the Gautam Buddha could not be the Buddha in just one life. He took many birth. He got perfection in many kind of moral values.”

From Prof. Singh's perspective, the jātakas are stories connected with the 10 parāmitās of Buddhism and it takes many births before a person becomes perfect in this sense.
A few of the 547 jātaka stories will be given as examples, to show the reader how they vary in their ethics and what they teach. The jātakas portrayed herein can be grouped into and under themes or thematic categories. This is done in order to make the message with the jātakas more tangible to the reader. All of them presented herein are from the book by E.B. Cowell, *The Jataka or Stories of the Buddha’s Former Births.*

Matakabhatta jātaka, nr 18. The jātaka of the feast of the dead.

Once upon a time when Brahmadatta was reigning in Benares the Bodhisatta was born as a tree-spirit. There was a goat that laughs then weeps as he is prepared as a sacrifice by a Brahmin. The Brahmin asks why do you laugh. Being asked why, the goat explains that he is happy that it is finally his last of 500 births where his head must be chopped off as punishment for sacrificing animals, in previous births where he too was a Brahmin. However he feels discomfort in knowing that the Brahmin, who is about to sacrifice him, will suffer the same fate. The Brahmin sets the goat free and he does his best to protect him, and saying to his disciples that this goat should not be killed. The same moment the goat was saved, it reached out for some leaves from a bush nearby on top of a rock. And that very instant the goats head was chopped off by a falling rock that was struck by a thunderbolt. In that time, the Bodhisatta was born into a tree-spirit in that same spot the event took place and manifested himself by his supernatural powers and seated himself in mid air while the crowd looked on. In his sweet voice he taught them the truth of non-killing and said. “If folk but knew the penalty would be, birth unto sorrow, living things would cease, from taking life. Tough is the slayer’s doom.” These words scared the crowd and hearer’s with the fear of hell and the people, hearing him, were so terrified at the fear of hell that they stopped taking life.

The theme of this jātaka is non-killing of living beings and the thought of ending up in hell if not living after this moral code of conduct. This jātaka shows the reader of mercy and compassion to all living beings. The ethics and the Buddhist theory universal law of causality, also known as karma, are portrayed in the final sentences of this jātaka:

“If folk but knew the penalty would be, birth unto sorrow, living things would cease, from taking life. Tough is the slayer’s doom.”

In these sentences we see that the jātakas contain the ethical message of behaving according Buddhist ethics and “the slayer’s doom” being the law of karma.

Munika jātaka, nr 30. The jātaka of an ox named Big Red.

Once upon a time, when Brahmadatta was reigning in Benares, the Bodhisatta came into life as an ox, named Big Red. He had a younger brother named Little Red. They both lived and worked at a ranch and they did all the work. In the family of the ranch owners there was a daughter whose hand was asked to be married to a gentleman in town. And in order to have a nice dinner after their marriage, they started to fatten up a pig named Munika. Observing this, Little Red said to Big Red. “All the loads that have to be drawn for this household are drawn by you and me, my brother, but all they give us for our pains is sorry grass and straw to eat. Yet here is the lazy pig being fed on rice! What can be the reason to such a thing?” Big Red answered his younger brother: “My dear Little Red, envy him not, for the pig eats the food of death. It is but to provide a meal for the guests at their daughter’s wedding. Wait but a little time and the guests will be coming. Then will you see that pig pulled out from his shelter by the legs, killed, and to be made into curry.” Later, the guests arrived and the pig was made into many different dishes. Then Big Red said to his younger brother Little Red: “Did you see Munika, dear brother?” Little Red answered: “I have indeed seen the outcome of Munika’s feasting. Better a hundred, no, a thousand times than such food is ours, though it be only grass, straw and chaff, for our fare harms us not, and is a pledge that our lives will not be cut of short.”

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122 Cowell.
The theme and moral teaching in this jātaka is that of forbearance and tolerance of one’s situation in life. That one ought not to envy luxury and other’s gluttony, because one never can know what it might lead to. This can be seen in the sentences:

“I have indeed seen the outcome of Munika’s feasting. Better a hundred, no, a thousand times than such food is ours, though it be only grass, straw and chaff, for our fare harms us not, and is a pledge that our lives will not be cut of short.”

Makasa jātaka, nr 44. The jātaka of sense lacking friends.

Once upon a time when Brahmadatta was reigning in Benares, the Bodhisatta made his livelihood as a trader. There lived and worked many carpenters. One of them, a bald gray-haired man, was working with some wood, with his head shining like a copper bowl. When a mosquito landed on his head and stung him. The carpenter said to his son: “There is a mosquito on my head, please get rid of it.” The son replied: “Please hold still father, one blow will settle it.” The son raised a sharp axe on high with intent to kill only the mosquito, he split his father’s skull in two. So the man fell dead on the spot. The Bodhisatta had been a witness of the whole ordeal and thought: “Better than such a friend is an enemy with sense, whom fear of men’s vengeance will deter from killing a man.” And then he uttered the words: “Sense lacking friends are worse than foes with sense; Witness the son that sought the gnat to slay, But cleft, poor fool, his father’s skull in twain.”

The theme and moral in this jātaka is that of being careful with friends lacking of sense and to choose wisely with whom to interact. This is shown in the sentences:

“Better than such a friend is an enemy with sense, whom fear of men’s vengeance will deter from killing a man.”

“Sense lacking friends are worse than foes with sense; Witness the son that sought the gnat to slay, But cleft, poor fool, his father’s skull in twain.”

Gagga jātaka, nr 155. The jātaka of superstition and a goblin.

Once upon a time, when Brahmadatta was king of Benares, the Bodhisatta came into birth as a Brahmin’s son, who worked as a lawyer. When he was sixteen years old, his father the Brahmin gave him a jewel and they were both travelling to the city of Benares. There they were looking for a place to sleep for the night and asked a gatekeeper where they could do so. They were told there was a house in the outskirts of the city, but that it was haunted, but however they might lodge there if they wanted. The son said to his father: “Have no fear of any goblin father! I will subdue him, and bring him to your feet.” So, the father was persuaded and they went to spend the night in the haunted house. The goblin had been there for twelve year’s in the service of Vessvana, a monster with white skin, three legs and eight teeth, who were a guardian of jewels and precious metals. Whoever entered the house and would sneeze, without getting the wish of “a long life” or “bless you” by his travelling companion, the goblin had the right to eat.

The goblin decided to make the father sneeze and by his magic powers he raised a cloud of fine dust, which entered the man’s nostrils and made him sneeze. The son did not cry out: “Long life” and the goblin came forth and were just about to eat the father. But the Bodhisattva saw the goblin coming and these thoughts passed thru his mind: “Doubtless it is he who made my father sneeze. This must be a goblin that eats all who do not say “Long life” to you.” So the son said “Long Life” quickly and the goblin thought, I cannot eat the father, so I will eat the son instead. But then the father realized and thought: “this must be a goblin, who eats all who do not reply long life to you too”. And the father said quickly: “Long life to you too.” The goblin heard the words spoken and thought: “neither of these is for me to eat.” And the Bodhisattva asked him a question: “Come, goblin, how is it that you eat the people that enter this building?” “I earned the right for twelve year’s service of Vessavana”, the goblin replied. “What, are you allowed to eat everybody?” “All expect those who say ‘The same to you’ when another wishes them long life”, the goblin replied. “Goblin”, the Bodhisattva said: “You have done some wickedness in former lives, which has caused you to be born now fierce, and cruel, and a bane to others. If you do the same kind of thing now, you will pass from darkness to darkness. Therefore from this time on, abstain from such things a taking life.”

The moral theme in this jātaka is that one ought not to be superstitious and believe in supernatural phenomena. And, once again, this jātaka is showing the belief in the universal law of causality, i.e., karma. This Buddhist ethical perspective can be read in the sentences:

“You have done some wickedness in former lives, which has caused you to be born now fierce, and cruel, and a bane to others.

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If you do the same kind of thing now, you will pass from darkness to darkness. Therefore from this time on, abstain from such things a taking life.”

Sasa jātaka, nr 316. The jātaka tale of the selfless hare.

Once upon a time when Brahmadatta was reigning in Benares, the Bodhisatta came to life as a young hare and lived in the wood. The hare had three friends, a monkey, a jackal and an otter. They all lived together and each of them got their own food in their own way. In the evenings they would gather and the hare, in his wisdom, would via the way of admonition preach the Truth to his three companions, teaching that alms should be given, the moral law to be observed, and holy days to be kept. One day there was and the hare addressed this to his three companions telling them to observe the holy-day. And to the one who stands fast in moral practice, almsgiving will bring a great reward. Therefore feed and beggars that come by, by giving food from your own table.

The otter then later passed a fisherman who had landed seven red fish, who had buried them in the sand by the river bank of Ganges. The otter could scent the fish and dug up the seven red fish and pulling them out he yelled out three times. “Does anyone own these fish?” Not seeing any owner to the fish he took hold of the withe of which the fish were strung up on. He laid the fish in the jungle where he dwelt, intending to eat them later when time was right. And then he lay down thinking how virtuous he was.

The jackal also found food in a hut of a field-watcher two spits, a lizard and a pot of milk-curd. And after shouting out three times, “to whom do these belong?” He put on his neck the rope for lifting the pot, and then took the spits and the lizard with his teeth. He laid them in his own lair and thought, “In due season I will eat them.” And he lay down, reflecting how virtuous he had been.

The monkey also gathered a bunch of mangoes from a clump of trees, laid them down in his part of the jungle, meaning to eat them later and thinking how virtuous he was.

The Bodhisatta, [in the shape of an hare], was laying in jungle and on the grass and thought: “It is impossible for me to offer grass to any beggars that may appear, and I have no oil or rice or such. If any beggar shall appear to me, I shall have to give him my own flesh to eat.”

When the Bodhisatta thought of this, Sakka saw it was a splendid display of virtue and decided to put the royal hare to the test. First he went to the otter’s house, disguised as a Brahmin. And said: “If I could get something to eat, after keeping my fast, I would perform all my priestly duties.” The otter replied: “Very well, I will give you some food.” And then he repeated the words: “Seven red fish I safely brought to land from Ganges flood, O Brahmin, eat thy fill, I pray, and stay within this wood.” The Brahmin said: “let be till tomorrow. I will see to it by and bye.”

Then the Brahmin went to the jackal, and when he asked him for food the jackal promised him some food and said: “A lizard and a jar of curds, the keeper’s evening meal, two spits to roast the flesh withal I wrongfully did steal: such as I have I give to thee: O Brahmin, eat, I pray, if you should deign within this wood a while with us to stay.” The Brahmin said: “Let it be till tomorrow. I will see to it by and bye.”

The Brahmin visited the monkey next, asked the same question as to the others before and the monkey replied: “An icy stream, a mango ripe, and pleasant Greenwood shade, it is yours to enjoy, if you can stay content in the forest glade.” The Brahmin replied as before. Then he went to the wise hare and the hare was delighted to hear what the Brahmin was looking for. The hare said: “You have done well in coming for food. This day I will grant you a boon that I have never granted before, but you will not break the moral law by taking animal life. Go, friend, and when you have started a fire, come let me know, and I will sacrifice myself by falling into the midst of the flames, and when my body is roasted, you shall eat my flesh and fulfill all you priestly duties.

Sakka, disguised as the Brahmin, caused by his miraculous powers a heap of burning coals, and told the Bodhisatta. The Bodhisatta thrice shook himself to make sure there were no insects within his fur, they might escape death. Then he threw himself on the burning coals, offering his whole body as a free gift and in ecstasy of joy he fell on the heap of live coals. But the flame did not burn him, it was if he had entered a field of frost. The he said to Sakka: “Brahmin, the fire you have set is icy-cold, it fails to heat even the pores of the hair on my body. What is the meaning of this?” “Wise Sir, I am no Brahmin. I am Sakka, and I have come to put your virtue to the test.” The Bodhisat answered: “If not only you Sakka, but all the inhabitants of the world were to try me in this matter of almsgiving, they would not find in me any unwillingness to give”, and with this the Bodhisatta uttered a cry of triumph like a lion roaring. Then Sakka said to the wise hare: “O wise hare, be thy virtue known throughout a whole æon.” And squeezing the mountain, with the essence thus extracted, he daubed the sign of a hare on the orb of the moon. And after that, Sakka returned to his own place in heaven and the four wise creatures continued to live harmoniously together, fulfilling the moral law and observing holy days.
The theme within this particular jātaka is selflessness and to give without expectancy of receiving anything in return. This is a key feature in Buddhist thought and its implemented ethics and this jātaka tells the reader the story of this virtue, or dana-paramitā. To give alms to and for the people and beings who are not as fortunate as oneself. Again, this is in accordance with the law of karma and accumulation of good merits. This can be read in the sentences:

“In the evenings they would gather and the hare, in his wisdom, would via the way of admonition preach the Truth to his three companions, teaching that alms should be given, the moral law to be observed, and holy days to be kept.”

Culladhammapāla jātaka, nr 358. The jātaka of a jealous king.

Once upon a time the Bodhisatta came to life as a seven months old son to the king Brahmadatta and his wife the queen Candā who were reigning in Benares. They had named their son Dhammapāla. The king thought the queen gave their son too much attention and was feeling very jealous because she did not see him. This made him very angry and fury blinded him. So one day he summoned the executioner into his presence and gave him the order to cut off the sons hands, feet, head and to encircle his body with sword cuts as it were with a garland. The queen offered her own life instead of the sons, but the king refused her offering. The queen was lamenting deeply and her heart was broken as bamboo snaps and fell dead on the spot by heavy grief. The king too was unable to remain on his throne and fell down on the podium. An abyss was cleft apart and he fell into it. A flame arose out of the Avīci hell and pulled the king down into it.

The theme in this jātaka to illustrate how anger, when once arisen, is impossible to control and that fury blinds people hence making them do things that will send them to hell. This portrays the Buddhist belief in ending up in hell if someone behaves in a bad manner. This can be read in the sentences:

“This made him very angry and fury blinded him. So one day he summoned the executioner into his presence and gave him the order to cut off the sons hands, feet, head and to encircle his body with sword cuts as it were with a garland.”

“The king too was unable to remain on his throne and fell down on the podium. An abyss was cleft apart and he fell into it. A flame arose out of the Avīci hell and pulled the king down into it.”

Concerning the ethics provided by the jātaka stories one can see that certain features rise to the surface, that are displaying Buddhist ethics and it’s appropriate behavior one ought to follow. Over and over one is told what happens if one does not follow the Buddhist way of conduct. According to respondent Prof. N.H. Samtani, the jātaka stories are about the bodhisattva and how he lived and worked [in multiple forms] for others.123

13 Buddhist ethics

One can say that the quintessence of Buddhism circles around ethics and what this religious, philosophical, and psychological, tradition considers to be of importance. Proper conduct is mentioned again and again in this aspect.124 The fundamental aim of a Buddhist, living by the motto of Buddhism, whether it may be a Theravādin, Mahāyānist or a Zen practitioner for

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123 Interview: Prof. N.H. Samtani.
example, is liberation and final freedom from samsaric existence, to attain nirvana, via the universal law of karma, which is thought to influence one’s destiny in a flux of birth and rebirth. There are a central theme, a cosmological and metaphysical axiom and rule to live after and accordingly, i.e., the law of karma. If one does not, it is not possible to attain true freedom and eternal liberation, it is believed.

Emphasis on karma is paramount. A person who follows the Buddha, the Dhamma - the teachings, and the Sangha, i.e. the congregation or community of other Buddhists, is called a Buddhist. The interlinked unity of cause, effect and consequence, is a tripod of which the Buddhist teachings rests upon, in karmaphala, i.e., that which bears fruit. This is exemplified by the four noble truths of Buddhism and the eight fold path these are practical manifestations of. The four noble truths, (catvāri āryasatyāni) are; 1: everything is dissatisfaction, 2: what the origins of dissatisfaction are, 3: there is an ending to dissatisfaction, 4: how to end dissatisfaction.

The eightfold path towards enlightenment, (Pāli - āryāstāṅgamārga; Sanskrit - aṣṭāṅgikamārga) or the progress towards nirvana is an extension of the four noble truths, i.e., it is the fourth noble truth. The eightfold path is not a series of chronological steps but rather a part of the process towards what is called within Buddhism nirvana. For a Buddhist, it is the practical handbook on how to live your life as a practitioner. The path, the dharma, is to be practiced in a meticulous manner and it contains precepts or guiding finger pointers to that which governs everyday life.

The eightfold path is as follows; 1: perfected view, i.e., one ought to understand the four noble truths and their dependence on no persistent substantiality, which is the basis for the concept of no-soul, anātman. 2: perfected resolution, meaning non-attachment to aversions and desires which is translated into ahīṃsā, non-violence, i.e., not to do violence thru aversions or desires upon oneself or other beings. 3: perfected speech, always speak truth, sathya/satya. 4: perfected conduct or action in accordance to śīla, i.e., right morality. 5: perfected work, forbearance with once situation, avoiding such things that hurt other beings. 6: perfected effort, to try to produce good karma. 7: perfected mindfulness/attention, to keep the mind concentrated towards phenomena that affects body and mind, i.e., to make sure not to

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125 Bowker, page, 171-173.
127 Bowker, page 172; Interview, Prof. Geshe N. Samten.
act or speak out of inattention or forgetfulness. 8: perfected concentration also meditation, samādhi.

For the Buddhist practitioner, this is called the pañca-śīla, i.e., five precepts. 1: non-harming of living beings/generosity, 2: non-stealing/correct conduct, 3: no misconduct involving sense-pleasure/patient acceptance of injuries received, 4: false speech/correct exertion, 5: losing control of mind through alcohol or drugs. For the monastic community, there are five more added and for the bhikkus and bhikkunis also called the pāramitās, i.e., the ten precepts. 6: no solid food after midday/wisdom, 7: no frivolous entertainment/skill-in-means. 8: no perfumes and jewellery/the bodhisattva vow, 9: no luxurious and soft beds/manifestation of the ten powers of knowledge and 10: no involvement with money of other valuables/true wisdom.

### 14 The Educational System in India

The educational system in India is different from the Swedish system and it takes some time to get an overview of it. Education is both provided in the private and the public sector and the funding comes from three levels, central, state and local. Since India is a vast country with about 1.2 billion inhabitants, illiteracy is still a big problem and especially in the rural areas. A statistic (2007) shows the literacy in India is 65.5%. Currently there is an average of 1 teacher to 34 students in the classroom. Currently about 1.2 million teachers is needed to fill up the gap to the national goals of 1 to 30. The educational system is based on 12 years of schooling system or a 10+2+3 pattern. This means 10 years of primary and secondary education, followed by 2 years of higher secondary school. Then 3 years of college education. The 10+2+3 pattern is an idea given by the Education Commission in the year of 1964-66.

The schools in the city of Benares are of all sorts, i.e., all the different school systems are represented there. In Benares, there are public schools, private schools, degree colleges, private institutions, medical- and pharmacy colleges, and mass communications colleges, Benares Hindu University, UP Board schools. There are around 100 schools in the city, perhaps more, it is difficult to know for sure since all the information found on the internet concerning this is a bit blurry. It also includes a matter of definition. In the state of Uttar Pradesh, India, there are at present 9121 schools that are governmentally approved.
The institution that supervises schools and education in India and the states, are MHRD (Ministry of Human Resource Development, and its Department of School Education and Literacy)\textsuperscript{135} and NCERT (National Council of Education Research and Training).\textsuperscript{136} This is done nationally and state wise via the NCF (National Curriculum Framework 2005)\textsuperscript{137} which is a document and syllabi of orientation for staff of education in India. Furthermore NCERT have regional departments who cooperate with the regional and CBSE and CISCE. There are 28 states in India and in each one, the state board of education, such as the CBSE (Central Board of Secondary Schools)\textsuperscript{138} and CISCE (Council for the Indian School Certificate Examinations),\textsuperscript{139} equips the state schools with a syllabus and curriculum based on the NCF. Accept for the NCF syllabi from the year 2005. It is difficult to try to find a curriculum for the schools in India and in Benares, and the main reason for this is that there is none to find. According to Åsa Hellström and a paper written by her on education in India and how teachers view the topic of curriculum, one can read the following:

“We take the headings in the textbook of the given subject and that is the syllabus for the subject. We are not given the syllabus or the curriculum.”\textsuperscript{140}

The only mass of text that itself states to be a curriculum for education in India found on the internet is that provided by the Board of High School and Intermediate Education in Uttar Pradesh. It is general guidelines for teacher and staff of schools to follow. It can be found and read in the appendix of this paper, page 50.

There is no subject like religious studies in India, on a high school level. The topic of ethics and the Buddhist jātakas fall under the subject of social science. In the NFC curriculum one can read the following:

“Ethics is concerned with all human values, and with the rules, principles, standards and ideals which give them expression. In relation to action and choice, therefore, ethics must be conceded primacy over each of the forms of understanding. Ethical understanding involves understanding reasons for judgments—for what makes some things and some acts right and others wrong—regardless of the authority of the persons involved. Furthermore, such reasons will be reasons for

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\textsuperscript{135} Ministry of Human Resource Development. (Visited on the 9th of May 2013). \url{http://mhrd.gov.in/secondaryedu}

\textsuperscript{136} National Council of Education Research and Training. (Visited on the 9th of May 2013). \url{http://www.ncert.nic.in/}

\textsuperscript{137} Ibid., (Visited on the 9th of May 2013). \url{http://www.ncert.nic.in/rightside/links/pdf/framework/english/nf2005.pdf}

\textsuperscript{138} Central Board of Secondary Schools. \url{http://www.cbse.nic.in/welcome.htm} (Visited on the 9th of May 2013).

\textsuperscript{139} Council for the Indian School Certificate Examinations. \url{http://cisce.azurewebsites.net/} (Visited on the 9th of May 2013).

anyone; reason, equality and personal autonomy are therefore very intimately connected concepts.”

15 The Jātakas in Schools of Benares

During field research a number of schools in Benares were visited and how they incorporate the jātakas in their education was looked at. The jātakas are used in numerous schools on many levels to teach children and students about ethics and morality. And on the other hand, it is also believed that the stories are not used within the educational curriculum. That is, not in the school where respective respondent teach. The school The Maha Bodhi Vidyapeeth in Sarnath, India. There are exams on the jātakas nr 1-10, twice per year in the 9th grade. The exams stay in the school and are corrected and evaluated there by the teachers. In the 10th grade there are examinations on the jātakas nr 11-20. The results from these examinations are sent to the U.P. Board in Lucknow for correction and evaluation.

During field research, the question “Are the jātakas used in school for teaching children?” was asked. Respondent Swarupanand Sarupa Thero answered the following:

“And these days it is taught among the students. It is very significant to them also who are beginners. In others to transform or to educate value of life. So it is significant to the students coming to school. But it is prescribed in the course also. UP government and other instances. Especially in this college, Pali is one of the subjects. Sanctioned by the government of Uttar Pradesh. So we are supposed to teach here the Dhammapada and Pali. And some other books are also there. And jatak stories are also there. Prescribed in the course.”

According to respondent Dr. Surendra Kumar, the jātakas are used in education and school-material:

“So many schools include textbooks. Yes, from the beginner to the higher studies. We also teach jātaka stories. To today’s students. So for they can understand the way of life. So this is practice. Either one way or another. The stories are the teaching of the stories are going on.”

According to respondent Prof. Ramshankara Tripathi, the jātakas are very much alive and used in schools today:

“Yes yes used in course. Everywhere wherever Buddhist studies in the universities and in the everywhere in India and also in the West yeah. It is in the syllabus. Yes in Pali. Pali Buddhism in syllabus and there is the jātaka tales in Pali Buddhism. Whereas in Sanskrit, the jātaka tales are in separate department. Separate separate. But it is still people also use in teaching. Give example, when they teach dharma and when they

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142 Interviews: Ven. Wannadaza; Ven. K. Siri Sumedha Thero; Prof. N.H. Samtani; Mr. Alok Kumar Mohanty; Dr. Surendra Kumar.
143 Interviews: Dr. Jampa Samten; Prof. Baidyanath Saraswati; Bhikku Gurudhammo; Khenpo Sonam Gyatso.
144 Interview: Swarupanand Sarupa Thero.
145 Ibid.
146 Interview: Dr. Surendra Kumar.
give dharma-talk. So they give examples from Buddha’s past lives. Jātaka tales they tell stories. Because stories are related with to accumulate merits. You know. And to know one’s own bad karma and good karma. So people gives examples why this and why that. Yeah within their talk.”

According to respondent Prof. Kameshwar Natha Mishra, the jātakas are only used in education in gradual level:

“No, not in high schools, but in gradual level. Not everywhere, but it depends on the universities who want to prescribe it. Here we have a few jātakas. Prescribed to our students. In Pūrana and Sanskrit Universities a few jātakas are prescribed. We have prescribed in Sanskrit jātakas.”

Another link can be made to the jātakas and the educational curriculum. According to Om Prakash Sharma, honorary doctor at University of Karlstad, Sweden, these stories are used in education whether it is a Hindu, Muslim or Buddhist school in Benares. Because ethics and moral is something that is incorporated with and in a sense transcends religion and religious affinity. The jātakas serves as a moral compass in teaching pupils right from wrong in the educational situation, in Benares.

16 Discussion & Conclusions

Never have there been any form of research like this done before, to my knowledge. And it is therefore easy to put this examination paper into context with previous research on the Buddhist jātaka stories. Previous research has been done on it’s textual, historical, linguistic, philosophical and anthropological aspect. This paper concerns pedagogy and didactics. I have tried to understand what kind of ethics some of the jātaka tales are infused by and whether these stories can be used in the classroom when teaching students ethics and moral. Furthermore, I have looked into how the Buddhist jātaka tales are implemented into education in Benares, Uttar Pradesh, India.

The jātaka stories entered European ground at the end of the medieval period via Arabs and were translated and spread into all the main languages, viz; Greek, Spanish, German, Italian, French and English. There is a collection of stories steaming from ancient Greece called Aesop’s tales and some of these stories can be traced back to the Buddhist jātakas and almost all of them derive from Indian sources. The stories are infused with moral teachings and lessons to learn from. The ethics within the jātakas are wide so to speak, i.e. they include

147 Interviews: Prof. Ramshankara Tripathi. Interpreter: Dr. Pema Tenzin.
148 Central Institute of Higher Tibetan Studies, also CIHTS, Sarnath, Uttar Pradesh India.
149 Interview: Prof. Kameshwar Natha Mishra.
150 Personal communication. The Swedish Study Center of Indian Culture, Ganga Mahal, Assi. On the 7th January 2011.
many things and represent the good and the bad in life. The lessons given in the stories are not theoretical nor conceptual but practical advice on how to live life as a good person.

Concerning the ethics given by the jātaka stories one can see that they display Buddhist ethics. Over and over one is told what happens if one does not follow the Buddhist way of conduct. At the same time the jātakas contain a universal morality that portrays humanity and not only Buddhists and Buddhism in particular. Because of the schism between the Sthaviras and the Mahāsanghika schools of Buddhism, scholars have found due to textual studies that there have been alterations made during history in the jātakas.

The word jātaka comes from Pali and Sanskrit languages and means born thing or birth. The collection of stories are part of the tipitaka literature and one book within the Khuddhaka-nikāya collection and it’s span is of 547 stories over ca 1500 pages. The jātakas are the tales about the previous lives of the Buddha, before he attained enlightenment and can be seen as an illustrated path and gradual perfection to full Buddhahood and this in practicing and enhancing the parāmitās, also the ten perfections within Buddhist theory. The jātakas can be seen as a method of teaching Buddhists the lessons of karma, samsara and dharma. The stories can also be viewed as descriptions on how folk-lore and the Indian society looked like in the ancient days.

Within Buddhism the universal law of karma is a key concept and this is in strong connection with the belief of reincarnation, metempsychosis, rebirth and the remembrance of past lives. This is the reason why the jātakas were written down from the beginning and it was done in order to teach laymen, monks and nuns about ethics and morality and how one should live life. Moreover this is also in strong correlation with Buddhist ethics and the guidelines The Buddha gave in terms of the eightfold path based on the four noble truths.

The school system in India differs, from the Swedish. The curriculum for schools to follow is viewed somewhat differently where there is one concerning ethics for all subjects of social sciences. There is neither a specific curriculum nor religious subject for schools in general to follow, meaning up to university level. The view in terms of education in India, on behalf of ethics, is that reason, equality and personal autonomy are intimately connected concepts. During field research, I found that the jātakas are used in many schools as teaching material in Benares. Some schools use cartoons or comic books that are based on jātaka stories. One school uses the stories as a formal system of education where examinations are taken and
student’s results are sent to governmental instances for evaluation. The jātakas are in the syllabus of some schools in Benares, but not all. Some high schools use them and in other schools they are only in use at a gradual level of education.

The jātakas are used in all school forms in Benares whether they are Muslim, Hindu or Buddhist, and the reason is that since it is believed it educates students about universal ethics and universal truths which transcends religious systems. From the study into and reading of the jātakas, the stories studied can be grouped into themes or thematic categories. The themes are; proper behavior, forbearance of one’s situation in life, choosing one’s friends carefully, not to believe in superstition, selflessness and to avoid anger and fury.

Another angle which one can apply to the jātakas is of the bridge builder between ethics implicitly propagated in them and educational didactics with its praxis to match. Therefore, from an educational perspective, one easily can state that the jātakas contain didactics and/or recipes for educational theorizing and the stories can be used when teaching the pupils/students proper values and conduct. One does not have to be a Buddhist for this cause, or teaching in a Buddhist school, because storytelling is universal understanding and no matter where one teaches, mind and the basic emotions are the same. So here questions arise one of them being: Where and if a teacher uses the jātakas when they are teaching the students ethics and morality based on the jātakas. Does one not educate and raise Buddhists students?

From a certain point of view, a simple answer can be given, from my perspective. Since the ethics within the jātakas are universal and transcends Buddhist ethics because they are universal and concerned with humanity and human drives and instincts. Student’s does not become Buddhists just because they are taught ethics via the jātakas. As several respondents mentioned during interviews, the jātakas tells the stories of how to be as a good person and to lead the good way of life. These universal ethical standpoints the jātakas happen to be based upon, does not implicitly make a student Buddhist necessarily. It could of course, but it is also an aspect didactics involved and the presentation and representation, of the jātakas to/for the student’s, of which this particular examination paper does not look further into. The results of this paper have found that the jātakas are used in various schools up to the 12th grade in the city of Benares.

Since Benares is oriented via theology one may say, it is also influenced by the belief of the universal law of karma to a high degree. The law of karma is thought of as universal and
therefore it is believed that it cannot be stated as Buddhist only, but as the word universal implies, it is for all to follow no matter what religious affinity one follows, i.e. universal. The jātakas are old, very old, some of the textual basis were there before the age of Buddhist origins, probably even before the pancha tantra. Parts of it comes from abroad in ancient times and intermingled with The Buddha and the cradle of Buddhist origins. This makes it difficult to establish what is what so to speak, because Buddhist influence came to take partnership with the jātakas. Meaning, there were stories prior to the jātakas that were used, then new one’s arose and together they formed the jātaka literature. Moreover what is important to understand is the city of Benares importance or highly concentrated density in terms of religion and religious life, for Hindus, Muslims and Buddhists and it is a deeply religious place where many people live their lives to the fullest in terms of religious orientation. This cannot be compared to any other city like New Delhi, Kolkata or Mumbai for example. Simply because there is no other places like it, to my knowledge, and I have spent about three years in India altogether. Benares is a very traditional place to live in, and visit, and therefore the people one may meet also sometimes is a reflection of this.

Therefore it must be stated that it is almost impossible to make generalizations about research-based findings found in Benares, and then try to apply them to other cities in India. This must be kept in mind and yes, sometimes respondents may generalize and perhaps say: “in India it is so and so” or the like. But it must be kept in mind, that Benares can sometimes also be a very closed down area so to speak, meaning it is traditional, dense in terms of mindset and outlook on life and orthodox. What I’m trying to put forward and say is this. This examination paper is a short version of a big research topic at hands and to study, explore and try to understand something prevalent in Benares, which is traditional and old is a multilayered task no matter what subject of interest it may be associated with. There is so much to unravel, simply because the city and place is ancient and because of the cities age, there has been much influence coming from distant places over the years gone by. So with this said, the jātakas also fits into this picture. Where many of the stories, well, all of them, unfolds in Benares and there is a strong link between the jātakas and the city itself.

Based on the results from the meetings with respondents, the articles and books read during the work with this examination paper I have come to the conclusion that the jātakas can be seen from many angles. One of the angles is that they, the jātakas, are a collection of case scenarios that can be used to teach students ethics during and within the educational field in
the classroom. The jātakas can also be viewed as a general guide on the outlook on life, where there is a central system of values incorporated, i.e. the ethics, which decides/makes recommendations about the direction or choices to be made of the individual in different life-situations. For example, an individual with troubles can pick up the jātakas and find advice or guiding principles concerning recommendations to his or her situation that needs a solution. Some have cryptic suggestions, which I believe are created for the human sub consciousness, and some are more lucid and easily comprehensible and needs less pondering. With other words, these are the incorporated didactics which are based on the principles of Buddhist conduct, i.e. what is of importance and what is right in different situations and the contextual behaviour applied to the situations.

I have investigated and written on how the jātakas are used in some schools as education material in order to teach student’s ethics and morality, the examinations and the evaluations of the student’s results. Except from the cartoons and comic books mentioned briefly by respondent’s used in education I have not looked into exactly how in praxis these examinations and how the evaluations have been conducted. Meaning, how exactly are the jātakas taught, and the pedagogy around it. Therefore the results of this examination paper can be seen as a theoretical outlook on the subject matter and general conclusions can only be drawn from this in this aspect.

As shown in schools in Benares, Uttar Pradesh, India, the jātakas are a beneficial tool to use when teaching student’s ethics and moral in educational classrooms. The West can also learn from this.

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### Appendices

### Appendix A

**Interview guide**

1. What is Buddhism and who is a Buddhist?
2. What are the most significant differences between Theravāda and Mahāyāna Buddhism?
3. What are the jātaka tales?
4. Are the jātaka tales alive today? In what way? When are they used, how and where? In what way are they used in schools and schoolbooks in Benares?
5. In the jātakas, are there any ethics and moral?
6. In the jātakas, is there any reference to the city of Benares?
7. Why is Benares and Sarnath important to Buddhism?
8. Why did Buddha choose Sarnath for his 1st sermon?
9. Do you have a favorite jātaka tale? Which one?

Appendix B

Curriculum for education by the Board of High School and Intermediate Education, Uttar Pradesh, India.

Previously at High School level there were different streams of education namely, Arts, Science, Fine Arts, Agriculture, Technical Education, Commerce, etc. But taking into consideration the need of a common core curriculum up to Class Xth, the Board revised its High School curriculum from its examination of the year 2000. Now in the new curriculum, there is no choice from several streams, instead there are 6 compulsory subjects viz., State language, i.e. Hindi, on other language, Social Science, Science, Mathematics and one subject of Moral, Physical, Socially Useful Productive and Social Work Education, wherein, there is no external public examination, but continuous internal evaluation is done. There is only one optional subject. With the introduction of the new curriculum and the syllabi of Class IXth and Xth have been bifurcated. Formerly, the High School Examination was conducted including the syllabus of both the classes, but now there is only internal assessment and evaluation up to class IXth. An intermediate level, five subjects are to be selected by a student, of which Hindi is compulsory and four other subjects are to be chosen from any of the various groups of subject.

Appendix C

Respondents

Dr. Madhure Pandey. Teacher at Gopi Radha Balika Vidyalaya Intercollege, Ravindrapuri, Benares. Interview took place on the 10th of November 2005.
Dr. T.K. Biswas, historian and museologist. Former Joint Director of Bharat Kala Bhavan Museum, Banaras Hindu University. Interview the 24th of December 2005.

Prof. N.H. Samtani, Former Head of Department of Pali and Buddhist Studies at Benares Hindu University. Interview, in his residence in Mahmoorganj, Jhulelal Colony, Benares. Interview the 11th of Jan 2006.

Prof. Geshe N. Samten., Director of Central Institute of Higher Tibetan Studies. Interview took place at the very same place. Sarnath, the 14th of January 2006.

Swarupanand Sarupa. Teacher of Pali at Mahabodhi School, Sarnath. Sarnath, the 16th of January 2006.

Mr. Alok Kumar Mohanty. History and social science teacher at Krishnamurthi Foundation, Raj Ghat, Benares. Interview the 17th of January 2006.

Dr. Jampa Samten. Associate Professor and Chief Librarian., Deptt. Of Social Science Central Institute of Higher Tibetan Studies, Sarnath. Interview, in workroom at CIHTS. The 17th of January 2006.

Banarsi Lal., Assistant Editor Rare Buddhist Text Research Unit, Central Institute of Higher Tibetan Studies, Sarnath. The 17th of January 2006.

Bhikku Gurudhammo., meditation teacher and theorist in Buddhist teachings at Wat Thai, Ashoka Marg, Sarnath. Sarnath the 18th of January 2006.

Khenpo Sonam Gyatso., Professor and the Head and Dean of Buddhist Philosophy and Logic also heading the Kargyud Department at Kagyu Monastery Sarnath, a.k.a. Vajra Vidhya Institute. Interview the 18th of January 2006.


Dr. Surendra Kumar., Reader in Pali at Central Institute of Higher Tibetan Studies, Sarnath. Sarnath, CIHTS the 20th of January 2006.

Prof. Dr. Kameshwara Nath Mishra. Former Head of Department of Sanskrit and Dean of Faculty of Śabdavidyā at Central Institute of Higher Tibetan Studies, Sarnath. On the 20th of January 2006.


Prof. Baidyanath Saraswati. Former Unesco-Professor at the Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts, New Delhi. Former Professor of Anthropology at the North-Eastern Hill University; Fellow of the Indian Institute of Advanced Study; and Visiting Professor at the universities of Ranchi and Visva-Bharati. Interview, Nirmal Kumar Bose Foundation, Benares. The 21st of January 2006.
Prof. Siddharth Singh., Fulbright Senior Research Fellow, Department of Religious Studies, University of Colorado, Boulder, CO, U.S.A. & Associate Professor, Department of Pali & Buddhist Studies Banaras Hindu University, (B.H.U.). Interviews the 22\textsuperscript{nd} of January 2006, 19\textsuperscript{th} of October and 23\textsuperscript{nd} of October 2012.

Ven.Prof. Lobsang Norbu Shastri., Sanskrit and Head of Translation Department, Central Institute of Higher Tibetan Studies, Sarnath. The 23\textsuperscript{nd} of January 2006.

\textbf{Appendix D}

\textbf{InterPREters in the field}

Mr. R.N. Shunya
Dr. Pema Tenzin, restorer, translator, editor and publisher at CIHTS, Sarnath.
Dr. Beni Madho. Principal at Mahabodhi School, Sarnath.