

Philipp A. Maas

## On Discourses of Dharma and the Pañcatantra\*

*Once upon a time ... there was laughter in India that  
transcended (but did not ignore) distinctions of  
caste, religion, and province –  
Sanskrit was the medium for it.  
(Siegel 1989: xii)*

In his monograph entitled “The Fall of the Indigo Jackal. The Discourse of Division and Pūrṇabhadra’s *Pañcatantra*,” McComas Taylor projects a theory of Michel Foucault’s onto the Sanskrit literary tradition of the Pañcatantra (PT) in order to show that a uniform discourse of social division provides the backdrop against which a number of narratives may be interpreted. Up to the present date, this book was reviewed at least four times. Brinkhaus 2013 is a quite critical appraisal, whereas the reviews by González-Reimann (2009), Mizuno (2009), Sathaye (2009), and von Hinüber (2010) are, on the whole, quite favourable. The last mentioned reviewer concludes, however, that

this carefully written and interesting book does not tell us much if anything new about the P[añcatantra] within Indian culture, but it would, most likely, tell a perhaps slightly perplexed Pūrṇabhadra if reborn recently, much about contemporary European interpretations of texts.<sup>1</sup>

In his ironic conclusion, von Hinüber indicates that “The Fall of the Indigo Jackal” is based on a problematic hermeneutic approach. Although he does not discuss the problems of Taylor’s study in detail, it may appear that von Hinüber takes this monograph as an example of “contemporary European interpretations of texts” that are difficult to reconcile with historical research in South Asian cultures.

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\* The present paper is a review article of McComas Taylor’s *The Fall of the Indigo Jackal* (Taylor 2007). — I would like to thank Patrick Olivelle, McComas Taylor, Dominik Wujastyk, an anonymous reviewer, and the editors of this journal for thoughtful discussions of, and comments on, an earlier version of the present article. Different parts of this paper were presented in lectures at the 29th Deutscher Orientalistentag in Halle on October 23, 2004, at Seoul National University, South Korea, on September 10, 2009, and at the International Conference “The Pañcatantra Across Cultures and Disciplines,” at the Sächsische Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Leipzig on September 29, 2012.

<sup>1</sup> Von Hinüber 2010: 49.

Without entering into a detailed methodological discussion, I shall argue in the first part of the present article that Taylor's hermeneutical approach is indeed problematic. By addressing problems that have not been touched upon in the previously published reviews, I hope to show that Taylor's interpretation of a number of PT narratives is far fetched and that his hermeneutical approach is circular. In the second part of this paper, I would like to demonstrate that several discourses of social division and other *dharma*-related topics that are not discussed in Taylor 2007 provide indeed the background for an appropriate interpretation of two recensions of the same narrative that appear in two recensions of the PT. The earlier recension of the "Weaver as Viṣṇu" uses discourses of *dharma*-related topics in a humorous and satirical manner, whereas the later recension is strongly censored from a conservative brahmanical perspective.

1. Taylor 2007 argues that a uniform discourse of social division provides the backdrop against which narratives of the Sanskrit literary tradition of the PT may be interpreted. Its author received inspiration for this argument from a theory of Michel Foucault's, according to which "[p]ower is produced by knowledge and knowledge, in turn, induces the effects of power" (Taylor 2007: 39). This process has an impact also on the production of literary works. More specifically, literary works are accepted in society only if they correspond to discourses, i.e., sets of accepted beliefs, attitudes, thoughts, etc. that structure cultural activities. Discourses, however, are not only the precondition for the acceptance of literary works, but are also its result, since by gaining acceptance, literary works validate the discourses they reflect and add to their normative power. Discourses and literary production are therefore, as it were, self-energising.

Taylor tries to apply this theorem to the relationship of the Pañcākhyanaka (PĀ), the comparatively late and conservative<sup>2</sup> recension of the PT that the Jaina monk Pūrṇabhadra completed in 1199 CE, and the discourse of social division within the society in which the PĀ (and, by extension, the PT) circulated. He interprets the PĀ (p. 40) by examining how a discourse of division provides

the background against which many of the narratives are played out. It provides a set of unspoken assumptions; the "natural" and barely perceptible ground rules that govern societies, real and fictional.

Taylor tries to show that the backdrop of many narratives in the PĀ is the conception of social division into four classes (*varṇa*). He assumes that animal

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<sup>2</sup> See Sternbach 1948: 85b.

families or species (*jāti*) in the forest kingdoms of the PĀ represent classes of human society (*varṇa*) viewed from an idealizing traditional brahmanical perspective. In order to deal with the social status of different groups, Taylor applies a useful heuristic model that he calls the “social *maṇḍala*.” In this model, social status is represented by a series of concentric circles. The central position is occupied by the most powerful and ritually pure group of human society, to which the most powerful and auspicious group of animals in the forest kingdom of the PĀ corresponds. Less powerful and/or pure/auspicious social groups occupy less central positions in the outer circles.<sup>3</sup>

Taylor’s central assumption is that the characters in the fictional animal societies of the PĀ, like humans in society viewed from a brahmanical perspective, are naturally denied social mobility. Individuals cannot change their social position; they remain members of the class (*varṇa*) into which they were born. Any attempt to counteract this universal law is bound to fail and leads inevitably and naturally to punishment (see Taylor 2007: 184f.).

**1.1.** In order to back this assumption, Taylor provides an interpretation of five stories of the PĀ that is apparently based on the postulate that a discourse of social division provides the background of every story that contains the motif of loss or death that an animal character experiences after he had previously gained wealth, power or reputation. The occurrence of the motif of “loss or death after gain” is, however, not a sufficient condition for a convincing interpretation of a narrative along the lines of a discourse of social division. Arguably, at least the following three conditions should be fulfilled in addition:

- (1) A plot that reflects a discourse of social division needs a social setting, or, in other words, the character of the narrative has to interact with other members of the forest society in order to represent the social interaction of a human being in a real society.
- (2) The animal character must act consciously in order to improve his situation. If the character’s situation is improved by mere chance, or if the improvement is merely the result of an action of a different character, the gain of wealth, power or reputation cannot represent the attempt of a human being in a real society to change his own social position.
- (3) The final loss and/or death of the animal character must appear to be inevitable. Otherwise, the harm that the character suffers cannot be interpreted to be

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<sup>3</sup> This model is quite similar to the one that Halbfass applied in his discussion of the traditional brahmanical view on social stratification in the context of “Traditional Indian Xenology” (Halbfass 1990: 180). A direct influence of Halbfass’ work on Taylor’s is, however, not discernible.

a just and natural punishment for the violation of a social norm; it would be a mere accident.

**1.1.1.** Since Taylor uses the occurrence of the motif of “death after gain” as the only criterion to identify the discourse of social division into four classes in the PĀ, his interpretation of most of the stories is not entirely convincing. To start with, “Ass in Tiger Skin” (story 4.7) is about a hungry and weak donkey whom his master, a poor dyer, disguises as a tiger in order to let him run free on a crop field. The donkey feeds himself for a while and recovers. When after some time he hears the cry of a female donkey, he unmasks himself by answering her cry and is killed by the guardians of the field.

Taylor maintains (p. 73)

that the inauspicious and peripheral donkey, in taking on the physical appearance and attributes of the tiger, moved to a position of greater centrality, a position of power and prestige that inspired fear in the owners of the field.

Admittedly, the tiger skin provides the donkey with the power to scare off the guardians of the field (*kṣetrapāla*), which leads to an improvement of his food situation. But does this imply that the donkey improves his social position in the realm of the forest society? Probably not. Since the donkey is the only animal that occurs in the narrative, the turn for the better of his situation can hardly represent an improvement of the social situation of a human in a real society. Even if one is willing to include the guardians of the field into the animal society of the PT, and to take their fear of the fake tiger as a symbol of the donkey’s newly acquired prestige, an interpretation of the narrative as representing the donkey’s transgression of a social norm remains unconvincing. Since the donkey receives the tiger skin from his master, he does not better his food situation himself. Moreover, the donkey’s death is by no means inevitable. He is killed because he does not control his voice when his sexual desire arises. The reason for his death is a lack of mental strength that leads him to unmask his bodily weakness in a dangerous situation when more circumspection and attentiveness would have been required to maintain the fragile situation. Accordingly, it is highly improbable that either the author, or the redactor, or the audience of the “Ass in Tiger Skin” would have understood the narrative as being related to a discourse of division according to the brahmanical system of four social classes.

**1.1.2.** Also not entirely convincing is Taylor’s interpretation of the narrative “Birds Elect a King” (PĀ 3.1). This story is a mythological account of the origin of enmity between owls and crows. The birds are unsatisfied with the governance of their king Garuḍa, because he neglected his duties in favour of serving his master Viṣṇu. So the birds elect the owl as their new king. Just before

the owl is consecrated, a crow appears who convinces the birds that the owl is no suitable choice. The birds return home and leave the owl disappointed.

Clearly the crow prevents the owl from receiving the central social position of a king, a position for which, according to the crow, the owl is unfit by its nature, when it describes the nocturnal bird as mean (*kṣudra*) and evil-natured (*durātman*).<sup>4</sup> Viewed from this perspective, the narrative could be taken to reflect a discourse of social division. It cannot, however, exemplify that an attempt of an individual from the periphery of the human society to improve his social position is naturally punished, since the owl does not strive for an improvement of his position. Moreover, the owl does not experience any loss of formerly gained wealth, power or reputation. He is simply not granted what he had been promised. It is therefore again unlikely that the author and/or redactor(s) of this narrative created it in order to maintain or support, even subconsciously, a division of the human society into four classes.

**1.1.3.** Finally, the “Blue Jackal” (1.11), the narrative from which the title of Taylor 2007 is derived, is also not a convincing example for the working of social forces in the PĀ that support the *varṇa*-system in accordance with the Foucauldian theory.

In this narrative, a jackal who enters the house of an artisan (*śilpin*), is coloured blue when he falls accidentally into a pot of dye. On his return to the forest, the animals fear his strange appearance. The jackal utilizes their fear in order to declare himself king. He expels all other jackals and commits the remaining animals to his service. One day, while sitting in the royal assembly, the self-made king hears the howling of a near-by jackal pack and joins in. His subjects realize that they had been deceived and kill him.

According to Taylor’s interpretation, this narrative reflects a discourse of social division in that the blue jackal’s social position in the animal kingdom is analogous to that of members of the deprived class of *caṇḍālas* in a human society governed by brahmanical norms. That the animal accidentally assumes a new colour (*varṇa*) and establishes himself as king of the forest society, represents the movement of a *caṇḍāla* from the periphery of a brahmanical society<sup>5</sup> to a central position. This social movement violates traditional brahmanical norms and, accordingly, deserves punishment.

Taylor’s interpretation of the “Blue Jackal” contradicts, however, his own premise that all members of the same species of animals in the PT represent the

<sup>4</sup> PĀ 187,19.

<sup>5</sup> I use the term “brahmanical society” to designate the concept of an ideal society as viewed from an orthodox brahmanical perspective.

same social class of the human society viewed from a brahmanical perspective. The blue jackal could only be a representative of human *caṇḍālas* if jackals in the PT generally represented this group. This is, however, not the case. In the frame story of the “Blue Jackal” a jackal named Damanaka, who belongs to a clan of “ministers” (*mantriputra*, PĀ 5,9), tells the narrative to the lion king Piṅgalaka. This jackal has a comparatively high social status, which secures him unlimited access to the king (PĀ 10,16). Or could a *caṇḍāla*, a member of a group from the extreme social periphery, be a royal minister?

Mānava Dharmaśāstra (MDhŚ) 7.54 describes potential counsellors (*sacīva*) to a king (Olivelle 2005: 156):

*maulāñ śāstravidāḥ śūrāṃl labdhalakṣān kulodgatān /  
sacivān sapta cāṣṭau vā prakurvīta parīkṣitān //*

“The king should appoint seven or eight counselors. They must be individuals who are natives of the land, well versed in the Treatises, brave, well-accomplished, and coming from illustrious families, individuals who have been thoroughly investigated.”

This description does not directly name the preferable social classes of potential ministers. Nevertheless, the condition that they should be born in a noble family rules out the possibility that this stanza refers even indirectly to *caṇḍālas*. Moreover, stanza MDhŚ 7.58 states that the king should seek the most important counsel from “the most distinguished and sagacious Brahmin among them” (Olivelle 2005: 157).<sup>6</sup>

Mahābhārata 12.86.7 contains the advice that a king should have eight ministers (*amātya*), “four brahmins, three śūdras and a *paurāṇika sūta*” (Scharfe 1989: 134); even this source does not, however, recommend that the king should take *caṇḍālas* into service.

Since MDhŚ 10.53ab forbids men of all classes who practice the right way of living (*dharmam ācaran*) to seek contact with *caṇḍālas*, it can be ruled out that recruiting ministers from this class would agree with the norms of traditional Brahmanism.<sup>7</sup> If this is true, it is clear that jackals, which can be ministers in the PT society, cannot represent the *caṇḍālas* of the human society. Taylor’s interpretation, which is influenced by the phonetic similarity between the name of the blue jackal Caṇḍarava “Violent-noise” and the Sanskrit word *caṇḍāla* (p. 57f.), is therefore hardly acceptable.

<sup>6</sup> *sarveṣāṃ tu viśiṣṭena brāhmaṇena vipaścītā /* (MDhŚ 7.58ab).

<sup>7</sup> *na taiḥ samayam anvicchet puruṣo dharmam ācaran /* (MDhŚ 10.53ab). “A man who practices the right way of living (*dharmam*) should not seek social interaction with them (i.e., *caṇḍālas*).”

Returning to the interpretation of the “Blue Jackal,” I also find it difficult to agree with Taylor’s view that it is Caṇḍarava’s newly acquired blue colour that promotes his social class in the forest society.<sup>8</sup> The animals of the forest initially fear his colour, which shows their unfamiliarity with the jackal’s appearance. For them, the blue jackal is a stranger. Accordingly, the narrative does not reflect a discourse of the division of a single society in four classes but of the traditional Hindu society’s attitude towards strangers (for which see Halbfass 1990: 175-196). That the “Blue Jackal” deals with the relationship to strangers, i.e., to individuals that do not belong to one’s own society, is explicitly stated in stanza no. 161, in which the animals justify their initial decision to leave the forest out of fear (PĀ 69,3f.):

*na yasya ceṣṭitam vidyān na kulam na parākramam /  
na tasya viśvaset prājño yadīcchec chriyam ātmanaḥ //*

“If he wishes a good fortune for himself, the wise man should not trust someone whose behaviour, family and courage he does not know.”

Moreover, it is improbable that the final death of the jackal represents the punishment for the crossing of a social border. After the indigo jackal has managed to make himself king, the forest state functions properly. Caṇḍarava divides the food, i.e., the meat that his subjects hunt, among the animals of the royal suite according to the conduct appropriate for rulers (*prabhudharmaṇa* [PĀ 69,16]). There is no indication that the jackal would be unfit to be king due to a defect in his own nature (*svabhāva*).

When the blue jackal finally unmasks himself, the forest animals feel ashamed for a moment, but not because they realize the violation of a social norm, but because they had been coerced to work (PĀ 69,22f.):

*adhomukhāḥ kṣaṇam ekaṃ tasthur uktavantaś ca. bhoḥ, vāhitā vayam anena  
śṛgalena. tad vadhyatām asau.*

“With lowered faces they stood still for a moment and said: ‘Alas, this jackal has forced us into service.’<sup>9</sup> Therefore let’s kill him.”

<sup>8</sup> In contrast to Taylor’s view (p. 193), the mere appearance of the word *varṇa*, which means “social class” as well as “colour,” does not justify this interpretation.

<sup>9</sup> Kale (1912: 312) provides two alternative explanations for the word *vāhitāḥ*: “*vāhitāḥ* – misled, made fools of; or, made carry loads, used as servants; he has loaded it over us.” The first meaning is recorded in *MW* (p. 949b, s.v.: “taken in, deceived”), but the source of this is exclusively the PT passage under discussion (*PW* VI, col. 863, s.v.: “Jmd anführen, betrügen: *vāhitā vayam anena*”). Accordingly, “misled” is an *ad hoc* meaning derived from the context. The same is true for the gloss “*vamcītā*” in manuscript “*bh*” of the PĀ (see Hertel 1912: 110). Kale’s second explanation appears to be correct. It is supported by two passages from the MDhŚ, in which the causative of the root *vah* means “to employ, keep in work” (see *MW* 933b, s.v. 1. *vah*).

That the “Blue Jackal” is about the relationship to strangers is also clearly stated in its introductory stanza, which sums up the motto of the narrative (PĀ 68,10f.).

*tyaktās cābhyantarā yena bāhyās cābhyāntarīkṛtāḥ /  
sa eva mṛtyum āpnoti mūrkhās caṇḍaravo yathā //*

“Who forsakes intimates and makes strangers his intimates, will die, like the fool Caṇḍarava.”

Taylor, however, takes this stanza to reflect a discourse of division within a single society. He summarizes his interpretation as follows (p. 96):

The jackal’s undoing lay in the fact that he failed to recognize that society was divided into *abhyantara* ... insiders who can be trusted – and *bāhya*, or “outsiders,” that is, those who are outside one’s circle.

It appears to me, however, that the failure of the jackal was rather not caused by a lack of sociological knowledge. His mistake was that he was an impostor who, like the donkey costumed as a tiger, did not maintain his fraud. The narrative, as I see it, does not suggest that the death of the jackal was inevitable because his own nature did not qualify him to be a king. His lethal mistake was his lack of caution in spite of his vulnerability.<sup>10</sup> Accordingly, Caṇḍarava’s death is one of the many examples for the fate of characters in the PT who suffer because they do not control their natural tendencies (see Geib 1969: 24) and act in the heat of the moment. This analysis of the narrative differs clearly from Taylor’s interpretation, according to which Caṇḍarava is punished for assuming a position in a society for which his own nature did not qualify him.

An interpretation of the “Blue Jackal” could also take the role and position of this narrative within the frame story into consideration. It is the greedy and wicked jackal Damanaka who tells the “Blue Jackal” to the lion-king Piṅgalaka as part of his plot to destroy the friendship between the king and the bull Saṃjīvaka,<sup>11</sup> in order to improve his own position at court. As was already argued by Geib (1969: 102), Damanaka succeeds in frightening Piṅgalaka because the latter’s situation as a lion-king in the frame story resembles that of the jackal Caṇḍarava in the “Blue Jackal” in so far as both characters are cow-

<sup>10</sup> This interpretation is by and large in harmony with the one offered by Van Damme (1991: 144).

<sup>11</sup> Already Ruben stressed that one of the very first stanzas of the PT (stanza 1, PĀ 3,3f.) characterizes Damanaka as an evil and therefore untrustworthy character: “In diesem Vers ist betont, ... daß der ‘verleumderische, überaus gierige’ Schakal die Rolle des Bösen spielt. ... Was auch immer er sagen oder tun wird, der Leser kennt jetzt schon seinen Charakter und seine Rolle” (1959: 10).



ards in the position of kings. Caṇḍarava loses his position because he pretends to be someone other than he really is, after he had surrounded himself with strangers that are more powerful than he is. Damanaka creates fear in Piṅgalaka that he might face the same fate if he, a coward, associates himself with a strong stranger, the bull Saṃjīvaka. It is exactly Damanaka's interpretation of the narrative, according to which trusting strangers brings about one's own misery, that finally convinces the king to separate from his new friend, the bull.<sup>12</sup> Since the reader or listener knows Damanaka's intention to delude the king, she or he is not meant to take this message of the narrative at face value. On the contrary, since the voice of the narrator, i.e., Damanaka, is clearly not identical with the voice of the anonymous author of this PT narrative, the author must have shared with his audience an attitude towards strangers that was more liberal than the one voiced by Damanaka.

**1.2.** How can it be explained that the literary material presented by Taylor and discussed so far does not convincingly show what it is supposed to? Why are the data and its interpretation largely incompatible? An answer can be found in the circularity of Taylor's hermeneutical approach. Taylor presupposed that the Foucauldian theory is a useful tool for interpreting the PT right from the beginning of his work. He neither reflects the applicability of his hermeneutical approach critically, nor does he discuss alternative interpretations of his PT stories along the lines presented above. It appears to me that Taylor's conviction that a discourse of social division in terms of class (*varṇa*) must have shaped the literary tradition of the PT guided his research to such a degree that he could only find what he was looking for. The hermeneutical problems of his approach exemplify that theory can only supplement, but not substitute a philological-historical approach to the PT.<sup>13</sup>

The fact that Taylor uses an highly problematic hermeneutic approach for his interpretation of the PĀ does not, however, imply that discourses of social division did not influence the composition of the literary tradition of the PT. Taylor himself briefly discusses the two stories "Potter as Warrior" (story 4.3 of the PĀ, see Taylor 2007: 68-70) and "Jackal Nursed by Lioness" (story 4.4 of the PĀ, see Taylor 2007: 60-63), of which the latter serves as an exemplification of the former, which do reflect a discourse of social division, although not in the

<sup>12</sup> See Edgerton 1924: II/74f. and Ruben 1959: 56.

<sup>13</sup> Cf. Pollock 2009, of which the statement "I want to insist that philology ... is always necessary but never sufficient" (Pollock 2009: 956) is the briefest possible summary.

theoretical frame of the division of society into four social classes (*varṇa*) but into castes (*jāti*).<sup>14</sup>

2. To present an even more telling and interesting example, the following part of this paper provides an interpretation of the narrative known under the title “Weaver as Viṣṇu.” This story entered the tradition of the PT only at a comparatively late stage of its literary history, probably in the tenth or eleventh century CE. It appears for the first time in the recension of the PT that Hertel named “the more simple text” (*textus simplicior*). This recension is the most widely known Sanskrit recension of the PT in modern South Asia, because it was this recension that Kielhorn and Bühler as well as Kale published in Mumbai 1868-1869 and in 1912. These editions are even today frequently reprinted. Therefore it may be appropriate to designate the *textus simplicior* and its descendants as the “vulgate recension” of the PT.<sup>15</sup> The plot of the “Weaver as Viṣṇu” in the vulgate of the PT can be summarized as follows.<sup>16</sup>

2.1. Two dear friends, a weaver and a carriage maker, who live in the unnamed capital of an unnamed kingdom, see a beautiful princess at a religious festival. At his first sight of her, the weaver becomes heavily enamoured. Hit by the arrows of the god of love, he loses consciousness and awakes in complete desperation. His longing for the royal girl is unbearable, but it is completely out of question that his desire can ever be fulfilled. In order to end his heartsickness, he decides to commit suicide. His friend, the carriage maker, however, knows a remedy. He creates a costume of the god Viṣṇu and a wooden flying machine in the shape of the bird god Garuḍa. Then he advises the weaver to visit the princess dressed up as Viṣṇu at midnight, to make her fall in love with him, and to enjoy the silly girl.

The weaver does as he was told, but his initial attempts to persuade the girl remain futile. The princess refuses to accept Viṣṇu’s request for sex and demands that the god should ask her father for permission. Finally, however, the masked weaver reaches his aim by threatening to kill the whole royal family.

After he has overcome this initial resistance, the weaver visits the princess regularly, until one day her watchmen detect symptoms of love-making at her

<sup>14</sup> *bhūbhujā sa kumbhakārah prastāve pṛṣṭaḥ: “bho rājaputra, kiṃ te nāma, kā ca jātiḥ?” ... so ’bravīt: “deva, yudhiṣṭhirābhīdhaḥ kulālo ’haṃ jātyā”* (PĀ 240,22-241,1). “The king asked the potter on a suitable occasion: ‘Hello Rajput, what is your name, and which is your caste?’ He answered: ‘My name is Yudhiṣṭhira, and I am, according to my caste, a potter’.”

<sup>15</sup> See Taylor 2007: 23.

<sup>16</sup> The narrative was critically edited in Hertel 1902: 97-103 and translated into German in Hertel 1919: 92-98.

body. Asked for an explanation, the girl confesses to her mother an alleged secret marriage with Viṣṇu.

This news delights the parents of the princess very much. Immediately, the king invades the surrounding kingdoms, since he believes himself strong enough to conquer the whole world with the help of his mighty son-in-law. The king's military enterprise does not, however, develop very favourably. His army is beaten quickly, and the remaining troops have to withdraw into the capital. On the evening before the final raid, the king instructs his daughter again to beg her husband for support. Now the weaver realizes that the king's loss of the battle would become his own loss, not only of the beloved girl, but also of his very life. In despair, the weaver decides to show himself in the upcoming battle, hoping that his appearance as Viṣṇu might frighten the enemy.

At the commencement of the battle, the real gods Viṣṇu and Garuḍa consider that if the weaver would fall, they would lose their reputation and veneration in the world. Therefore they resolve to support the fake Viṣṇu. The two gods enter the body of the weaver and the wooden Garuḍa and scorch the hostile army with their splendour, so that the king's army defeats the enemy with ease. Afterwards – and here the story ends – “the weaver enjoyed the princess publicly and according to his wish.”<sup>17</sup>

**2.1.1.** This narrative, which Theodor Benfey judged to be “probably the most beautiful of the whole Pañcatantra,” is indeed remarkable.<sup>18</sup> It is without doubt a very comic satire that depicts the world as being governed by egoism and self-interest. Social norms and ethics do not play a role for the characters in the “Weaver as Viṣṇu.” This is, of course, first of all the case for the weaver himself, whose love for the princess consists exclusively of sexual desire. The frustration of this desire causes him unbearable suffering, which, for lack of an alternative, he wants to end by suicide. This description of the weaver's state of mind is first of all a comical exaggeration. But this stylistic device also implies a characterization of the weaver as a person extremely driven by lust. The same characteristic makes the weaver pursue the fulfilment of his desire without regard for the norms of social division. He, who is clearly meant to be a member of a low social class, establishes a sexual relationship with a *kṣatriya*

<sup>17</sup> ... *pratyakṣatayā svecchayā tām rājaputrīm bubhuje* (Hertel 1902:103, line 135).

<sup>18</sup> “Die fünfte Erzählung ... [i.e., “Weaver as Viṣṇu”] ist wohl die schönste im ganzen Pañchatantra” (Benfey 1859: 159).

girl, i.e., with a girl belonging to the class of warrior-rulers.<sup>19</sup> From a hegemonic brahmanical perspective, this act is a violation of the social norm of classes (*varṇadharmā*), which, according to a view voiced in the MDhŚ, in a non-fictitious human society would deserve punishment by the death penalty.<sup>20</sup>

Moreover, the weaver establishes his relationship to the princess by means of violence when he threatens to kill the girl and her family. This sexual assault cannot legitimize the relationship of the weaver to the princess as a marriage.<sup>21</sup>

It is not only the weaver, but also the father of the princess, who acts out of purely egoistic motives. The alleged marriage of the princess to Viṣṇu means for the king merely an unexpected but highly welcome increase of power, which leads him to invade the neighbouring countries without further considerations.<sup>22</sup> By doing so, he blindly follows a maxim that appears in Kauṭilya's Arthaśāstra, according to which rulers should ally with rulers of equal or superior power and should engage in war against those of inferior military strength.<sup>23</sup> Craving and stupidity unite very much in the king's character, since he does not bother to check the reliability of the information concerning his allegedly mighty son-in-law.

Finally, and this is remarkable indeed, even the gods act out of egoistic motives. Viṣṇu and Garuḍa decide to support the costumed weaver, only because they fear that the defeat of the fake Viṣṇu would affect their standing in the world.<sup>24</sup> If the ritual veneration (*pūjā*), which consists, among other things, of offerings

<sup>19</sup> The underlying satirical humour of the "Weaver as Viṣṇu" requires a considerable social inequality between the princess and the weaver. On the weaver's position in society viewed from a conservative brahmanical perspective, see also below, § 2.2.1-2.

<sup>20</sup> See MDhŚ 8.366ab: *uttamāṃ sevamānas tu jaghanyo vadham arhati* / "When a man of inferior status makes love to a superior woman, however, he merits execution" (Olivelle 2005: 186).

<sup>21</sup> On legitimate forms of marriage, see MDhŚ 3.20-35. MDhŚ 3.34 designates raping a deluded girl secretly as a Ghoulish (*paiśāca*) marriage, that, according to MDhŚ 3.25, is unlawful.

<sup>22</sup> *atha jāmātrprabhavena sakalāṃ vasumatīm vaśīkarisyāmi, iti. evaṃ niścītya sarvaiḥ sīmādhipaiḥ saha maryādāvratikramam akarot* (Hertel 1902: 101, lines 83-85). "Having decided that he would now subdue the whole world with the power of his son-in-law, he committed border violations against all neighbouring rulers."

<sup>23</sup> *vijigīṣuḥ śaktyapekṣaḥ śāḍgunyam upayujīta* | 1 | *samajyāyobhyāṃ samdhīyeta, hīnena vigṛhṇīyāt* | 2 | ... *kumbhenevāsmā hīnenaikāntasiddhim avāpnoti* | 5 | (Arthaśāstra 7.3.1-5). "The seeker after conquest should employ the sixfold strategy with due regards to power. He should enter into a peace pact with someone who is equal or stronger, whereas he should initiate hostilities against someone who is weaker. ... When he initiates hostilities against someone weaker, he attains certain success, like a stone striking a clay pot." (Olivelle 2013: 282).

<sup>24</sup> *loko 'yam āvayoḥ pūjāṃ na karisyati* (Hertel 1902: 103, line 129f.). "These people will not make puja for us anymore."

of food and beverage to gods (Bühnemann 1988: 29), would come to an end, this would not only affect the reputation of the gods but would also lead to a loss of their everyday commodities.

On the whole, the relationship of the weaver with the royal family is based on untruth, which of course is unethical and unacceptable. The message of the narrative, however, contradicts this rule. The introductory stanza of the narrative, which as a motto sums up its message, states that “Even Brahmā does not detect a well disguised deceit.”<sup>25</sup> In other words: Crime may pay.

**2.1.2.** In order to understand the meaning of this narrative within the vulgate recension of the PT as a whole, it is again necessary to take the wider context of the narrative into consideration. The “Weaver as Viṣṇu” appears within the first book of the PT, the frame story of which, as mentioned above, narrates how the wicked jackal Damanaka destroys the friendship of the lion king Piṅgalaka and his chief minister, the bull Saṃjīvaka, in order to secure for himself the social position of a minister. Before he executes his plan, he tries to convince his friend, the jackal Karaṭaka, of the idea that even the weak can win against the mighty by means of clever deception. As already mentioned, the reader or listener of the vulgate recension of the PT knows that Damanaka is an evil and ruthless character, and therefore it is clear that whatever Damanaka says has to be met with mistrust. This also holds good for the “Weaver as Viṣṇu.” Damanaka’s depiction of the world as an essentially amoral place that is governed by the self-interest of its inhabitants mirrors the amoral character of the jackal, and is less a statement by the author of the vulgate PT about the real world. It is, at least partly, the author’s comment on the lack of Damanaka’s moral integrity.

As a literary work for itself, the “Weaver as Viṣṇu” is an excellent satire that makes fun of the fact that even the powerless but clever ones may trick the mighty, including the gods, by exploiting their innate greed and vanity. The reader cannot help but develop sympathy for the weaver, who shows an extraordinary talent for improvisation. Moreover, by violating the norms that govern sexual relations, he executes an act of justice in regard to the royal family, of a type that frequently re-occurs within the PT, namely, the punishment of the stupid. In this respect, the “Weaver as Viṣṇu” fits perfectly well into the literary world of the PT.

The above interpretation of the “Weaver as Viṣṇu” shows that discourses of *dharma* indeed provide a backdrop against which the plot of this narrative as a

<sup>25</sup> *suguptasyāpi dambhasya brahmāpy antaṃ na gacchati* / (Hertel 1902: 97, line 1).

whole and many of its motifs may be interpreted. The discourses of social norms in the “Weaver as Viṣṇu” are, however, not employed to re-inforce an established and virtually eternal uniform discourse of social division, but they are used in a subversive and satirical manner, which reveals a comparatively relaxed attitude towards these norms on the side of the author as well as on the side of his audience.

**2.2.** The satirical humour of the “Weaver as Viṣṇu” appears to have been morally questionable and unacceptable for the minister Śrīsoma, on the behalf of whom the Jaina monk Pūrṇabhadra composed a strongly censored version of this story in his recension of the PT, the PĀ, which was completed on January 17, 1199.<sup>26</sup> The censored “Weaver as Viṣṇu” differs from its exemplar first of all with regard to its extent. Pūrṇabhadra increased the amount of text considerably and inserted a large number of gnomic and didactic stanzas. He also spared no effort in adopting the narrative to the standards of a conservative form of *smārta* Hinduism. Although we admittedly do not have external evidence to confirm this,<sup>27</sup> the conclusion finds support by way of a comparison of the two recensions that is guided by the question of which intentions might have led Pūrṇabhadra to change the narrative.

**2.2.1.** The first altered motif in Pūrṇabhadra’s recension is the setting of the story. While the plot of the vulgate recension is located in a certain capital (*kasmīṃścid adhiṣṭhāne*), which means that the narrative could in principle play out at any arbitrary place, Pūrṇabhadra’s recension is set in the city Puṇḍravardhana in the Gauḍa country. This city in fact exists, in eastern South Asia in present-day Bangladesh,<sup>28</sup> far away from Pūrṇabhadra’s home in present-day Rajasthan.<sup>29</sup> Pūrṇabhadra’s motivation for providing the narrative with a new setting is related to the geographical situating of exemplary conduct (*ācāra*) that is mentioned repeatedly in shastric literature. According to this view, exemplary conduct is practiced exclusively in the north-western part of today’s India, in the region between the two rivers Sarasvatī and Dṛṣadvatī that is called Brahmāvarta in MDhŚ 2.17f.

<sup>26</sup> This dating is established on the basis of the verifiable Indian date that Pūrṇabhadra provides at the end of his work. Taylor’s “correction” of this date to January 19, 1199 CE (2007: 24) is wrong. See the Appendix below, p. 28f.

<sup>27</sup> But see the analysis of Pūrṇabhadra’s redactorial colophon below, § 2.3.

<sup>28</sup> See Schwartzberg 1978: 32, pl. IV.2, and Schlingloff 1969: 16.

<sup>29</sup> Pūrṇabhadra was a Śvetāmbara Jaina monk who lived in the north-western part of South Asia, probably (at least for a part of his life) in Jaisalmer (Hertel 1912: 26).

*sarasvatīdṛṣadvatyor devanadyor yad antaram /  
taṃ devanīrmitaṃ deśaṃ brahmāvartaṃ pracakṣate // 17 //  
tasmin deśe ya ācārah pāraṃparyakramāgataḥ /  
varṇānāṃ sāntarālānāṃ sa sadācāra ucyate // 18 //*

“The land created by the gods and lying between the divine rivers Sarasvatī and Dṛṣadvatī is called ‘Brahmāvarta’ – the region of Brahman. The conduct handed down from generation to generation among the social classes and the intermediate classes of that land is called the ‘conduct of good people.’” (Olivelle 2005: 95)<sup>30</sup>

Pūrṇabhadra’s transfer of the setting of the narrative to the periphery of his world can be interpreted as an implicit statement about the lack of quality of the conduct of the characters of the narrative. If exemplary conduct between social classes is found in the centre of the Aryan land, in Brahmā- or Āryāvarta, a reverse argument can be made regarding the conduct of people living on its periphery. Their way of social interaction, according to this view, should not be taken as a model.

**2.2.2.** Next, Pūrṇabhadra introduces the weaver and his friend, the carriage maker, in a way that differs considerably from the introduction of the two characters in the vulgate recension of the narrative. There, the friends are only briefly introduced by a passing mention of their occupations that is supplemented by the statement that the two friends always diverted themselves together.<sup>31</sup> Without additional information, this could be taken to mean that the weaver and the carriage maker were poor ne’er-do-wells, i.e., two characters on the social periphery.

This assessment appears to be in harmony with the social position of weavers and carriage builders in an idealized brahmanical society according to *dharma*-literature. To start with, the Sanskrit word for “weaver” in the vulgate recension of our narrative as edited by Hertel as well as in the dictionaries is *kaulika*.<sup>32</sup> The manuscripts that Hertel used for his edition frequently read, however, *kolika*.<sup>33</sup> This word is attested in *Vedavyāsa-smṛti* 1.12-13 (cited in *HDhŚ*

<sup>30</sup> This geographical localization of the region in which exemplary social interaction of classes is practiced probably results from a revision of earlier formulations that occur in Baudhāyana Dharmasūtra 1.2.9, Vasiṣṭha Dharmasūtra 1.8-12 and in Patañjali’s Mahābhāṣya 2.4.10 and 6.3.109 that designate a region of similar extent as Āryāvarta.

<sup>31</sup> *asti kasmimścid adhiṣṭhāne kaulikarathakārau mitre prativasataḥ. tatra ca bālyātprabhṛti saha cārīṇau parasparam atīvasneḥaparau sadaikasthāne vihāriṇau kālaṃ nayataḥ.* (Hertel 1902: 4f.) “In a certain capital town lived two friends, a weaver and a carriage maker. And there, the two friends who were since childhood fellows and extremely fond of each other, spent their time by amusing themselves always together at the same place.”

<sup>32</sup> See, for example, *MW* 317b, s.v. *kaulika*.

<sup>33</sup> See Hertel 1902: 97.

II/1/71, n. 173) to designate a member of the socially extremely despised group of *antyajas*, with which members of the three classes of the Aryan community were not supposed to interact. Although it remains unclear whether the author of the “Weaver as Viṣṇu” shared with his audience exactly the same attitude toward *kolikas* as the author of the *Vedavyāsa-smṛti*, it is probable that the character of the weaver in the vulgate recension of the “Weaver as Viṣṇu” is meant to be a member of the lowest social class of the brahmanical society, a *śūdra*. The social status of carriage makers (*rathakāra*) in a brahmanical society at the time of the composition of the vulgate of the “Weaver as Viṣṇu” is less clear. Brinkhaus’ study of mixed classes in ancient India (1978) shows that different sources from the normative brahmanical literature determine the social status of *rathakāras* divergently. Some sources reveal a tendency to consider carriage makers as part of the Aryan society and to either integrate them in, or to associate them with, the class of *vaiśyas*. In other sources, however, *rathakāras* are considered to be members of the fourth class, that of *śūdras*, or they are even regarded as an extremely deprived group.<sup>34</sup> From the fact that the weaver and the carriage maker appear in our narrative as close companions from childhood on, one may conclude that both characters are meant to belong to the same social class, and this could be either that of *śūdras* or that of outcasts.

This appears also to have been Pūrṇabhadra’s interpretation of the vulgate recension of the narrative, as he apparently did not accept that the weaver and the carriage maker could be viewed as poor and unkempt social outsiders. He therefore composed a much more ornate version of the introduction that has the two friends appear in a favourable light (Hertel 1908: 46, lines 2-7):

*tatra kauliko rathakāraś ca dvau suhr̥dau svasvaśilpe paraṃ pāram āgatau svakarmabalopārjitavittatvād aḡaṇitavyayakriyau mṛdovicitrabahumūlyanivasanau puṣpatāmbūlālaṃkṛtau karpūrāgarumṛganābhiparimalasugandhī prativasataḥ. tau ca praharatrayaṃ karma kṛtvā pāścātyaprahare divasasya śarīraśūśrūṣāṃ ca pratyahaṃ catvarāyatanādīsthāneṣu militau vicarataḥ.*

“In this city lived two friends, a weaver and a carriage maker, who had reached highest perfection in their respective crafts. Because they had acquired wealth by means of their labour, they did not keep account of their expenses, wore soft, beautiful and expensive cloths, beautified themselves with flowers and betel, and made themselves smell pleasantly with camphor, aloe, musk and perfume. And everyday, after having worked for three quarters, they washed themselves in the evening, met at public squares, temples and other places and took a walk.”

<sup>34</sup> For a discussion of the social status of *rathakāras* in vedic and brahmanical literature, see Brinkhaus 1978: 117f., 123-137, 147 and 214f.



In Pūrṇabhadra's recension, the two friends are wealthy and inclined to costly dressing. They lead well organized and respectable lives, the daily routine of which is governed by work and care for personal hygiene. Probably, the authorial intention behind this description of the two characters is, besides attempting to avoid any connotation of bodily impurity, to move the two characters, as it were, from the social periphery to a more central position.

**2.2.3.** Viewed from a traditional brahmanical perspective, it is nevertheless unacceptable that a weaver, if he is a *śūdra*, even if he is rich and clean, establishes a sexual relationship with a princess who belongs to the class of the warrior aristocracy (*kṣatriya*). Pūrṇabhadra solves this problem in two steps. First, he improves the class membership of the weaver to that of a *vaiśya* by letting the carriage maker address the weaver as follows (PĀ 49,10f.):

*kṣatriyo 'sau rājā, tvaṃ ca vaiśyaḥ sann adharmād api na bibheṣi?*

“Don't you fear a violation of social norms (*adharmā*), since the king is a *kṣatriya* and you are a *vaiśya*?”

In this passage, Pūrṇabhadra explicitly mentions that in his recension the weaver is not a *śūdra*, but a *vaiśya*. The sexual relationship of the weaver with the princess would, however, still be problematic if the princess were a *kṣatriya* girl. According to the classical *dharma*-works, this liaison would be an undesirable case of a sexual relation “against the grain” (*pratiloma*) that leads to socially despised offspring. In order to avoid this problem, Pūrṇabhadra takes the second step when he lets the weaver answer the carriage maker as follows (PĀ 49,12f.):

*kṣatriyasya tisro bhāryā dharmato bhavanty eva. tad eṣā kadācid vaiśyāsutā bhaviṣyati. tad anurāgo mamāśyām.*

“According to the social norm (*dharma*), *kṣatriyas* may indeed have three kinds of wives. Therefore, the girl might be the daughter of a *vaiśya*-woman. Therefore I love her.”

The weaver realizes immediately and without taking recourse to any external indication that the girl must be the offspring of a legitimate relationship across the border of class, in which the king, a *kṣatriya*, fathered a daughter “along the grain” (*anuloma*) with a *vaiśya* woman. In this case, the female offspring, according to Pūrṇabhadra, belongs to the same class as her mother, which makes the princess a *vaiśya* girl.<sup>35</sup> But how does the weaver know that the girl

<sup>35</sup> This agrees with the rule mentioned in the sixteenth *adhyāya* of the *Viṣṇusmṛti*, which states that the offspring of couples of mixed classes among twice-borns, in which the father belongs to a class that is just one position higher than the class of the mother, belongs to the same class as the mother. See Brinkhaus 1978: 63f.

is a suitable match for him and that his desire for her is legitimate? Apparently with this question in mind, Pūrṇabhadra has the weaver cite a stanza from Kālidāsa's play *Abhijñānaśākuntala* (PĀ 49,15-18 = *Abhijñānaśākuntala* 1.21).

*asaṃśayaṃ kṣatrapariḡrahakṣamā, yad āryam asyām abhilāṣi me manah /  
satām hi samdehapedeṣu vastuṣu, pramāṇam antaḥkaraṇapravṛttayaḥ //*

“Doubtlessly she's worthy to be married with a warrior, since my Aryan heart desires her. With regard to matters of doubt, the good ones can indeed take the inclinations of their heart as valid knowledge.”

This famous stanza occurs in a crucial scene in the first act of Kālidāsa's play, when King Duṣyanta becomes enamoured on merely seeing Śakuntalā, a girl who lives in a hermitage, and, accordingly, seems to belong to the social class of Brahmins. If this would really be the case, Duṣyanta's love for the girl could not be legitimately fulfilled, because the marriage of a *kṣatriya* man with a *brāhmaṇa* woman, like all marriages of lower class men with women of a higher class, would constitute an illegitimate marriage “across the grain” (*pratiloma*). In reciting the above stanza, Duṣyanta makes it clear that this cannot be the true state of affairs. In reality, the girl must be suitable for him, since otherwise he could not have fallen in love her. Here, Duṣyanta takes recourse to the principle of content-with-oneself (*ātmatuṣṭi*),<sup>36</sup> a principle to which only exemplary members of the Aryan society (*sat*) can take recourse. These high-status members of Aryan society are believed to lead a life in total agreement with the rights and obligations, the fulfilment of which creates, according to the *dharma*-conception of traditional Hinduism, the perfect order of the Aryan society and the surrounding environment and cosmos.<sup>37</sup> This way of living in total conformity with the requirements of *dharma* leads to a self-formation of the individual's character that naturally prevents any conflict of personal inclinations with the demands of *dharma*. Accordingly, the very fact that Duṣyanta desires the girl proves that the girl is suitable for a marriage with him.

By letting the weaver cite the words of King Duṣyanta in Kālidāsa's *Śakuntalā*, Pūrṇabhadra illustrates that in his recension of the narrative the weaver is not just a respectable but an ideal member of the Aryan society. In other words, Pūrṇabhadra moves the weaver from the periphery of society to its very centre. Moreover, by turning the princess into a *vaiśya* girl, he eliminates the social obstacle for a liaison of the two characters that appeared to be insurmountable in the earlier version of the narrative.

<sup>36</sup> On this principle see Hacker 1965: 102.

<sup>37</sup> See Halbfass 1990: 310-333.

**2.2.4.** Still, the way in which the weaver establishes this relationship in the vulgate of the narrative is highly problematic (not only) from a conservative brahmanical perspective. Initially, the weaver tries to persuade the girl to have sex with him by telling lies built on concepts related to the Viṣṇu mythology. The girl, however, refuses and begs the fake god to ask her father for permission. When the weaver realizes that talking leads him to nothing, he coerces her. This episode reads as follows (Hertel 1902: 100, lines 55-59):

*“subhage, ... gāndharvavivāhenātmānam prayaccha! no cec chāpaṃ dattvā tvāṃ sāvayāṃ bhasmasāt kariṣyāmi,” iti. evam abhidhāya ... savye pāṇau grhītvā tāṃ salajjāṃ sabhayāṃ vepamānāṃ śayyām anayat. tataś ca rātriṣeṣaṃ yāvād vātsyāyanoktavidhinā niṣevya pratyūṣe svagrham alakṣito jagāma.*

“He declared: ‘My dear, give me yourself in a Gandharvian marriage. If not, I shall curse you and burn you along with your family to ashes,’ took the girl by her left hand and led her, while she trembled full of fear and shame, to her bed. And then he had sex with her for the rest of the night in the way taught by Vātsyāyana, after which he went home at daybreak unnoticed.”

When the weaver loses his temper, he demands that the girl should give herself in a “Gandharvian marriage” (*gāndharvavivāha*), a form of marriage that is based on sexual union of the couple in mutual consent.<sup>38</sup> In the present case, however, the pseudo-god does not manage to create the girl’s consent. By threatening to kill the girl and her family he only breaks her resistance and establishes a sexual relation obviously against her will. Accordingly, even if one leaves the discrepancy of class membership between the weaver and the princess out of consideration, it is beyond any doubt that this forced intercourse is not a case of a legitimate Gandharvian marriage. However, in order to mitigate the harsh impression that the coercion of the princess creates, the author depicts the weaver as a gifted lover, who, probably by natural talent, knows how to make love by every trick in the book.

A parallel but strongly censored episode appears in Pūrṇabhadra’s recension of the narrative. The weaver in his Viṣṇu costume approaches the princess who spends her time in an amorous mood on the terrace of the palace. When the princess beholds the god, she venerates him and asks how she, a simple girl, could be the reason for the appearance of the god.<sup>39</sup> The weaver answers as follows (PĀ 50,23-51,3):

<sup>38</sup> *icchayānyonyasaṃyogaḥ kanyāyāś ca varasya ca / gāndharvah sa tu vijñeyo maithunyah kāmamaṃbhavaḥ //* (MDhŚ 3.32) “When the girl and the groom have sex with each other voluntarily, that is the ‘Gāndharva’ marriage based on sexual union and originating from love” (Olivelle 2005: 109).

<sup>39</sup> The princess, who cannot believe that the god came for her, argues with the costumed weaver: “I am only a human girl” (*mānuṣī kanyā vāham*. PĀ 50,22). In contradistinction to this,

“*śāpabhraṣṭā tvam mamaiva pūrvapatnī. mayā caitāvantaṃ kālaṃ mānuṣa-saṃparkād rakṣitā. tasmāt tvām ahaṃ gāndharveṇa vivāhena vivāhayāmi.*”  
*tatas tayā “manorathānām apy agamyam,” iti matvā “tathā” iti pratipannam.*  
*tenāsau gāndharveṇa vivāhena pariṇītā.*

“‘You are my previous wife, who fell from heaven due to a curse. I have protected you all the time from intercourse with humans. Therefore, I want to marry you now in a Gandharvian marriage.’ Thereupon she thought: ‘I would not have dared to even wish for this,’ and approved by saying ‘yes.’ Then he got married to her in a Gandharvian marriage.”

In Pūrṇabhadra’s censored version, the motifs of the Gandharvian marriage and of the curse appear in altered forms. The Gandharvian marriage is no longer a euphemism for rape but the fulfilment of the longing of the princess as well as of the honourable weaver in disguise, and the curse is changed from a serious threat into a component of the weaver’s harmless fabrication. Pūrṇabhadra’s motivation for the change of the episode of his exemplar is, again, to remove as far as possible all morally questionable aspects of the weaver’s liaison with the princess.

**2.2.5** Pūrṇabhadra additionally changes a number of other motifs, which for a lack of time and space can only be mentioned in passing:

- a) At the beginning of Pūrṇabhadra’s recension the weaver does not want to kill himself in order to end the suffering that is caused by his unsatisfiable longing for the princess.
- b) The king does not invade the neighbouring countries because he thinks he is powerful enough, but because he wants political independence from a king of the southern countries to whom he is obliged to pay tribute.
- c) The gods Viṣṇu and Garuḍa do not intervene out of egoistical motives, but because they admire the weaver’s heroism.
- d) Pūrṇabhadra changes the motto of the narrative. The theme of success by means of deception is superseded by the message that the gods support the brave.<sup>40</sup>

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the earlier version contains the much stronger and humorous phrase “I am an impure human worm” (*ahaṃ mānuṣakīṭikāsuciḥ*. Hertel 1902: 99, line 50), which receives its punch line from the discrepancy between the alleged impurity that the princess perceives in herself and the real ritual impurity, from a brahmanical perspective, on the side of the weaver.

<sup>40</sup> The new motto of the narrative runs as follows: *kṛte viniścaye puṃsāṃ devā yānti saḥāyatām / viṣṇuś cakraṃ garutmāṃś ca kaulikasya yathāhave* // (PĀ 45,18f.). “If men are determined, the gods become their allies, just like Viṣṇu, his discus and Garuḍa in the weaver’s battle.”

2.3. The above comparison of individual motifs in the two recensions of the “Weaver as Viṣṇu” shows that Pūrṇabhadra censored the earlier version from an orthodox brahmanical perspective. In order to answer the question of which intentions may have led him to carry out his censorship, it may be useful to turn to his colophon at the end of his work. There, in the second and third stanza, Pūrṇabhadra describes briefly how and why he created his new recension of the PT (PĀ 289,18-23).

*śrīsomamantrivacanena viśīrṇavarṇam  
ālokya śāstram akhilaṃ khalu pañcatantram /  
śrīpūrṇabhadraguruṇā guruṇādareṇa  
saṃśodhitam nṛpatinītivivecanāya // 2 //  
pratyakṣaram pratipadam prativākyam pratikatham pratiślokaṃ /  
śrīpūrṇabhadrasūrīr viśodhayām āsa śāstram idam // 3 //*

“2. On behalf of the glorious minister Soma, the glorious teacher Pūrṇabhadra revised the Pañcatantra with sincere esteem for the sake of the right judgement of kings on worldly wisdom, after he had seen that indeed the whole expert treatise had lost its beauty. 3. The glorious and wise Pūrṇabhadra has corrected this expert treatise with regard to every syllable, every word, every sentence, every narrative, and every stanza.”

Pūrṇabhadra relates that he created the new recension not of his own accord, but on behalf of a certain minister Śrīsoma, who apparently had Pūrṇabhadra’s work supervised,<sup>41</sup> “for the sake of the right judgement of kings on worldly wisdom.” If this statement can be taken literally, it implies that Śrīsoma thought the PT to be of real political relevance. Pūrṇabhadra’s thorough revision, which involved all text constituents from the individual syllables up to complete stories, was necessitated by the fact that the work had lost its beauty (*viśīrṇavarṇa*). Taken for itself, this expression could either mean that Śrīsoma thought the work to be defective either in formal respects, or with regard to the state of its textual transmission. As revealed by an analysis of the following stanzas, in which Pūrṇabhadra creates the impression that he felt insecure about whether he had accomplished his task successfully, the defect of the PT recension available to Śrīsoma and Pūrṇabhadra was felt to be a lack of conformity with traditional *dharma*-conceptions (PĀ 289,24-290,4).

<sup>41</sup> See the second half of stanza 8 (PĀ 290,12): “This literary composition is established like the renovation of a temple, being supervised by very knowledgeable persons” (*jīṃṇoddhāra ivāsau pratiṣṭhito ’dhiṣṭhito vibudhaiḥ //*).

*yad yat kiñcit kvacid api mayā neha samyak prayuktaṃ  
 tat kṣantavyaṃ nipuṇadhīṣaṇaiḥ kṣāntimanto hi santaḥ /  
 śrīśrīcandraprabhaparivr̥ḍhaḥ pātu mām pātakebhyo  
 yasyādyāpi bhramati bhuvane kīrtigaṅgāpravāhaḥ // 4 //*  
*smārtaṃ vacaḥ kvacana yat samayopayogi  
 proktaṃ samastaviduṣām tad adūṣaṇīyam /  
 somaśya manmathavilāsaviśeṣakasya  
 kiṃ nāma lāñchanamṛgaḥ kurute na lakṣmīm // 5 //*

“4. Those who are clever and conversant with the matter may excuse whatever I have improperly done in whichever respect, for the good ones are patient. The extremely glorious master Candraprabha, whose fame travels even today through the world like the river Ganges, may protect me from committing offences. 5. The injunction of the authoritative tradition of the *smṛti*, which supports the maintenance of the established rules of conduct and was authoritatively declared among the entirely knowledgeable ones, cannot be corrupted to the slightest degree. What else but Beauty could the deer of spots create for the moon, who distinguishes the playing of Love?”

If one reads the two stanzas as being of mutually connected content, they reveal that Pūrṇabhadra uses a double strategy for dealing with possible criticism of his work. First, he begs the potential critic to pardon any shortcomings of his revision. Then, after having prayed for protection from committing offences, Pūrṇabhadra addresses the brahmanical authoritative tradition and describes it as being so firmly established that it is incorruptible. He compares the *smārta* tradition with the moon, whose dark spots only contribute to his beauty, just like any challenge to the standards of the brahmanical tradition would only re-enforce its innate perfection and stability. Accordingly, even if Pūrṇabhadra’s revision were imperfect, the shortcomings of his work would not at all impair the perfection of the tradition.

The very fact that Pūrṇabhadra refers to traditional brahmanical norms in the context of possible imperfections of his work suggests that conformity with these norms is at least one important standard against which Pūrṇabhadra expects the quality of his literary creation to be judged – probably first of all by his employer, the minister Śrīsoma. If this is true, Pūrṇabhadra’s censorship of the “Weaver as Viṣṇu” is part of a comprehensive enterprise, viz. his endeavour to create a recension of the PT that agrees as much as possible with traditional brahmanical *dharma*-conceptions. This attitude is new in the textual tradition of the PT.

3. The inclusion and revision of the “Weaver as Viṣṇu” in the literary tradition of the PT indicates the existence of distinct phases in the historical development of this tradition that were characterized by different attitudes towards

brahmanical norms of social interaction. The authors and redactors of the PT in its early phase apparently did not pay much attention to discourses of social division that were based on brahmanical norms. In any case, “social division” was not a prominent theme in their literary activities. This situation changed when the “Weaver as Viṣṇu” was brought into the PT. In this narrative, brahmanical norms of social interaction are indeed important in-so-far as they provide the backdrop for the satirical humour of the narrative. Accordingly, at this time the general attitude towards these norms, at least among the audience of the work, must have been quite liberal, because otherwise the satire would not have been acceptable. This stance with regard to brahmanical norms changed into a traditional conservatism some time before the year 1199, and led the minister Śrīsoṃa to commission a new conservative recension of the PT. The very fact that this recension of the PT was copied and transmitted in quite a number of manuscripts indicates that Pūrṇabhadra’s recension was well received. The PĀ clearly was in line with the *zeitgeist*.

#### APPENDIX

##### THE DATE OF THE COMPLETION OF PŪRṆABHADRA’S PAÑCĀKHYĀNAKA CONVERTED INTO A DATE OF THE COMMON ERA

Pūrṇabhadra records the date on which he completed the composition of his recension of the Pañcatantra in a regular *āryā*-verse which is part of his final colophon (PĀ 290,11).

*śarabāṇatarāṇivarṣe ravikaravadi phālgune tṛtīyāyām /*

“In the year designated by the word numerals shaft (five), arrow (five) and sun (twelve), on the third day, a Sunday, of the dark fortnight of the lunar month of Phālguna.”

The word numerals designate, when read from the right to the left, the year 1255. This can be taken, as I shall show below, to be a year of the Vikrama era. Moreover, the compound *ravikara* (“producing sun” or “ray of the sun”) apparently designates “Sunday.”<sup>42</sup> Pūrṇabhadra may have used this slightly twisted expression because metrical constraints prevented him from using the more natural *ravivāra*.<sup>43</sup>

<sup>42</sup> The same interpretation caused Hertel (1912: 231) to note “*ravikara*, 290,11, = *ravivāra* ‘Sunday’.”

<sup>43</sup> According to Dr. Karl-Heinz Golzio (personal communication), the use of *ravikara* for *ravivāra* is by no means unusual for a metrical formulation of an Indian date.

Accordingly, we are dealing with the date Phālguna, *vadi* 3, Vikrama 1255, *ravivāra* (1). This date can be converted into a date of the Common Era with the help of the tables provided in Jacobi 1892 in four steps.

1. Conversion of the Vikrama year into a year of the Kaliyuga (Jacobi 1892: 443, n. 1):

$$\begin{array}{r} 1255 \\ + \frac{3044}{4299} \end{array}$$

2. Calculating the constellation of the beginning of the year (Jacobi 1892: 410, § 26):

Kaliyuga year	Feriae	Tithi	Moon's anomaly	
4200	1	02.19	699	30.00
+ 99	5	14.79	306	- 16.98
4299	6	16.98	005	13.02

3. Calculating Phālguna *vadi* 3, according to the *pūrṇimānta*-system (Jacobi 1892: 443f., tables 1-3, and auxiliary table 3):

Kaliyuga year	Feriae	Tithi	Moon's anomaly	addition to Tithi
4299	6	16.98	005	
+ 24. Māgha	2	00.78	742	
	8 (1)	17.76	747	+ 0.00
		+ 00.00		
		17.76		

The initial date (24 solar Māgha) is verified, because this date corresponds to the required day of the week (feriae 1 = Sunday), and it is within the third *tithi* (17.76 – 15.00 = 2.76).

4. Conversion into a date of the Common Era (Jacobi 1892: 407, § 19):

4200	10.		
99	00.		
0. Māgha	14.	December	
+ 24. Māgha	24.		4299
	= 38.	December	- 3100
	= 17.	January	1199

Phālguna, *vadi* 3, *ravivāra* Vikrama 1255, was on Sunday, 17 January 1199 CE.



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