



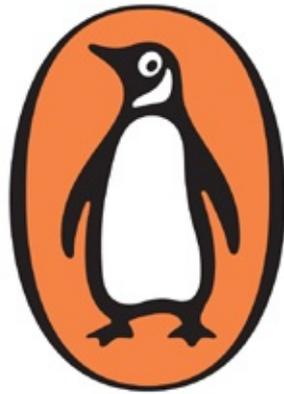
P E N G U I N



C L A S S I C S

NĀRĀYAṆA

Hitopadeśa



Penguin

NĀRĀYAᅇA

The Hitopadeśa

Translated from the Sanskrit with an introduction by A.N.D. Haksar



PENGUIN BOOKS

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THE HITOPADEŚA

As with many ancient Sanskrit authors, little is known of Nārāyaṇa beyond his name. He was evidently a devotee of the god Śiva, who is invoked in both the opening and concluding verses of the Hitopadeśa. Contemporary scholars suggest that Nārāyaṇa was a poet or a preceptor at the court of his patron Dhavala Āndra, a prince or viceroy or provincial satrap of eastern India, who commissioned the work. This densely layered and textured masterpiece was composed between 800 and 950 AD. Nārāyaṇa was an erudite grammarian and philosopher as well as a consummate stylist with a full command of epigrammatic, lyrical, satiric and rhetorical modes. He interspersed his own stanzas with skilful selections and arrangements of extracts from traditional sources. These include the immortal *Panćatantra*, the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*, the *Puraṇas*, the *Manusmṛti*, annuals on economics and statecraft inspired by Āṇakya's *Arthaśāstra*, and famous literary and dramatic compositions.

Aditya Narayan Dhairyasheel Haksar was born in Gwalior and educated at the Doon School and the universities of Allahabad and Oxford. He spent many years as a career diplomat, and went on to become India's High Commissioner to Kenya and the Seychelles, and later the Ambassador to Portugal and Yugoslavia.

He has translated various classics from the Sanskrit, including the stories of the *Panćatantra*, the plays of Bhasa and Daṇḍin's *Daśa Kumāra Āaritam*. The last two translations were published by Penguin as *The Shattered Thigh and Other Plays*, and *Tales of the Ten Princes*.

P.M.S
For my daughter
Sharada
with my love

Key to the Pronunciation of Sanskrit Words

Vowels:

The line on top of a vowel indicates that it is long.

- a (short) as the u in *but*
- ā (long) as the a in *far*
- i (short) as the i in *sit*
- ī (long) as the ee in *sweet*
- u (short) as the u in *put*
- ū as the oo in *cool*
- e is always a long vowel like the a in *mate*
- ai as the i in *pile*
- o as the ow in *owl*

Consonants:

k, b and p are the same as in English

kh is aspirated

g as in *goat*

gh is aspirated

ć as in *church* or *cello*

čh is aspirated as in *chhota*

j as in *jewel*

jh is aspirated

ṭ and ḍ are hard when dotted below as in *talk* and *dot*

ḍ

ṭṭ is the aspirated sound

ḍḍ is aspirated

ṇ when dotted is a dental; the tongue has to curl back to touch the palate.

ṇ as in *king*

t undotted is a soft sound as in *thermal*

th is aspirated

d undotted is a soft sound—there is no corresponding English sound, the Russian ‘da’ is the closest.

dh is aspirated

ph and bh are aspirated

There are three sibilants in Sanskrit: s as in song, ṣ as in *shove* and a palatal ś which is in between, e.g. Śiva.

Introduction

This work, entitled Heetopades, affordeth elegance in Sanskreet idioms, in every part and variety of language, and inculcateth the doctrine of Prudence and Policy.

—from the translation of Charles Wilkins

The *Hitopadeśa* is one of the best known and most widely translated works of Sanskrit literature. It is a collection of animal and human fables in prose, illustrated with numerous maxims and sayings in verse, both intended to impart instruction in worldly wisdom and the conduct of political affairs. Couched in simple and elegant language, it was also meant to provide a model for composition and rhetoric. These features made it a popular ‘reader’ for students of Sanskrit in India from ancient to recent times.¹

The *Hitopadeśa*’s appeal as a compendium of sage advice in an attractive story form extended its currency beyond the confines of the original language. At the beginning of this century, the Indologist Johannes Hertel noted² that its translations already existed in Bangla, Gujarati, Hindi, Kannada, Malayalam, Marathi, Newari, Oriya, Tamil, Telugu and Urdu. The United States Library of Congress lists additional contemporary translations of the *Hitopadeśa* into Burmese, Dutch, English, French, German, Greek, Khmer, Russian, Spanish and Thai. Translations in Malay, Persian and Sinhala have also been recorded.³ The work has been described as one of the most often translated from Sanskrit into European languages.⁴ This was doubtless also because it was among the first Sanskrit texts encountered and studied by Europeans after the establishment of British rule in India.

The *Hitopadeśa* was the second work to have been translated directly from Sanskrit into English.⁵ This took place as early as 1787. The first work so translated was the *Bhagavad Gita*, three years earlier. The translator in both cases was Charles Wilkins (1749–1836), a merchant employed by the East India Company in Bengal. Wilkins also collaborated with the more celebrated scholar Sir William Jones (1746–94), who founded the Asiatic Society in Calcutta, and himself subsequently translated other Sanskrit classics. The first printed edition of the *Hitopadeśa* was published in Serampore along with some other Sanskrit texts in 1804 by Henry Colebrooke (1765–1837). It is appropriate here to pay tribute to these pioneers whose work first aroused

modern interest in Sanskrit and helped to lay the foundation of Indological studies.

The Date, the Author, and the Locale

The *Hitopadeśa* contains quotations from the political treatise *Nītisāra* of Kāmandaki, and the play *Vernīsamhāra* of Bhattanārāyaṇa, which date back to the eighth century ad. The earliest *Hitopadeśa* manuscript, found in Nepal, bears a date corresponding to 1373 AD. Between these two outer limits present scholarly opinion places its composition in the period 800 to 950 AD, or just over a thousand years ago.⁶

For almost a hundred years after its first rendition into English, contemporary scholars considered the author of the *Hitopadeśa* to be Viṣṇu Śarma, who is also the principal character and narrator in the work. It was only when the Nepal manuscript was discovered and a new critical edition of the text⁷ prepared, that its two concluding verses came to light. The first of these names the author as Nārāyaṇa. The second names his patron Dhavala Āndra, who commissioned the book.

As with many ancient Sanskrit authors, little is known about Nārāyaṇa beyond his name. From the text of the *Hitopadeśa* it is obvious that he was a person of considerable erudition, perhaps a court poet or preceptor, and evidently a devotee of the great god Śiva, whom he invokes both in the opening and concluding verses. He addresses Dhavala Āndra by the titles 'Śrīmat' and 'Māṇḍalika' which have been rendered in the present translation as 'illustrious prince', but could also signify a viceroy or provincial satrap. The territorial and other details regarding the life and rule of this dignitary have still to be discovered.

It has been conjectured that the *Hitopadeśa* was composed in eastern India. Its manuscripts have been found in Nagari, Newari and Bengali scripts. One of the tales (I.viii) refers to tantrik rituals and sexual practices which were prevalent in that part of the country.⁸ Two of its verse quotations from the *Rāmāyaṇa* (1.77 and 4.29) are available only in the Bengali recension of the epic.⁹ Of the thirty-five geographical locations mentioned in the *Hitopadeśa* stories, at least nine can be placed definitely in eastern India, if Ayodhya and Varanasi are included in that region. By comparison, those which can be identified in the northern, western and peninsular regions are fewer. The totality of this data relevant to dating and location, taken together with the fact of the text's continued popularity in the east at the time of the British arrival, points to its origin during the last phase of the Pala empire, which dominated eastern India at the turn of the millennium.

The Nature of the Work

The nature of the *Hitopadeśa* is clearly defined in its prologue. The second verse names the work and asserts that its study gives knowledge of ‘*nīti*’, apart from proficiency in language. Subsequent verses extol the merits of learning and knowledge. The work is a manual of *nīti*. This Sanskrit word, derived from a root which means to lead or to guide, carries the connotations of worldly wisdom, prudence and propriety, as well as appropriate policy and conduct or, by extension, politics and statesmanship. A portion of Sanskrit literature is entirely devoted to the subject of *nīti*. The *Hitopadeśa* expounds it in a popular form through fables and gnomic stanzas.

The work has also been placed in the Sanskrit literary genre of the *nidarśana kathā* or exemplum, a story which aims to teach by examples and is often satirical. The pattern is the familiar one of a frame tale emboxing others in turn. The basic narrative describes a king, worried that his sons lack learning and are becoming wayward. He summons an assembly of wise men and asks who among them can cause his sons to be ‘born again’ by teaching them *nīti*. The challenge is accepted by a great pandit named Viṣṇu Śarma, whose expertise in *nīti* parallels that of Bṛhaspati, the guru of all the gods. The princes are entrusted to Viṣṇu Śarma, and he instructs them by narrating the four books of the *Hitopadeśa*, each with its own mix of stories within stories illustrated with epigrammatic verses.

Relationship with the Panćatantra

The structure of the *Hitopadeśa* is remarkably similar to that more ancient collection of tales, the *Panćatantra*. Both works have an almost identical frame story, and the principal narrator has the same name. Their relationship has been described variously by modern scholars. Basham considered the *Hitopadeśa* to be a ‘version’ of the *Panćatantra*, Keith a ‘descendant’, Winternitz a recast, while Dasgupta and De described it as ‘practically an independent work’.¹⁰ A detailed study made more recently by Ludwig Sternbach¹¹ demonstrated that the *Panćatantra* provides the chief source of material for the *Hitopadeśa*. Nearly three quarters of the latter, including almost one third of its verses, were traced to the older work.

Nārāyaṇa has specifically acknowledged this source. In the ninth verse of his prologue, he names his four books and states that they have been composed by drawing from the *Panćatantra* and another work. The version of the *Panćatantra* from which he drew his material is, however, unknown at present. In some instances the *Hitopadeśa* text is nearer to the *Panćatantra*’s southern recension, in others to the Kashmiri, the Nepalese or even the old Syriac version.¹² Compared with the five books of the *Panćatantra*, the *Hitopadeśa* has only four. In these the order of the older work’s first two books—except as found in the Nepalese text—has been reversed; its third book has

been divided into two; and parts of the fifth book have been incorporated into them. The fourth book of the *Panćatantra* is mostly omitted in the *Hitopadeśa*, and at least ten of the latter's thirty-eight interpolated stories are not found in any *Panćatantra* version at all. Of the over two hundred verses traced to various *Panćatantra* versions, a majority are found in the first two books of the *Hitopadeśa*. Though mostly scattered, they also include some sequences such as 1.173 to 1.178 and 2.129 to 2.136 in the present translation.

Other Sources of the Hitopadeśa

Nārāyaṇa's 'another work' covers multiple sources. Sternbach's study categorizes them into three broad groups: *nīti*, *dharmaśāstra*, and other miscellaneous works. The first two are reflected mainly in the verse portions of the *Hitopadeśa*.

Apart from the *Panćatantra*, Nārāyaṇa's single main source is the verse composition *Nītisāra* of Kāmandaki. Nearly ninety verses in the *Hitopadeśa* are quotations from this work. Devoted chiefly to the aspects of *nīti* that deal with political theory, most of these verses are contained in the third and fourth books. They discuss the subjects of diplomacy, war and peace. Good examples are verses 4.111 to 4.132, describing sixteen types of peace treaties, which are taken from the *Nītisāra*, 9.1 to 9.22. The majority of verses 3.69 to 3.84 are similarly derived.

The *Nītisāra* is based on a celebrated earlier dissertation on politics, the *Arthaśāstra* ascribed to Kautilya, also known as Ācāṅkya. Nārāyaṇa mentions this legendary statesman (3.60) though, interestingly, he has no quotations from the *Arthaśāstra*. The *Hitopadeśa* does feature a large number of stanzas from various *nīti* verse anthologies named after Ācāṅkya, such as the *Vṛddha* and the *Laghu Ācāṅkya*, the *Ācāṅkya Sāra Samgraha* and the *Ācāṅkya Rāja Nīti Śāstra*. It also contains *nīti* verses from the *Garuda Purāṇa* and the well-known *Nītisataka* of Bhartr̥hari.

The term *dharmaśāstra* here refers to the vast body of literature dealing with legal and juridical precepts which acquired scriptural status in the course of time. Nārāyaṇa quotes about sixty verses from this category of works, his main sources being the *ManuSmṛti* and Books XII and XIII of the *Mahābhārata*. Others include the juridical works named after lawgivers like Gautama, Āpastamba and Baudhāyana.

The miscellaneous sources include the two epics, various *Purāṇas*, and well-known poetic and dramatic compositions such as the *Śiśupālavadhā* of Māgha (3.96), the *Kirātārjunīya* of Bhāravi (4.103), and the *Mṛcchakatika* of Śūdraka (2.126). The verse numbers indicated within brackets are sample quotations in the *Hitopadeśa* from the last three works. Some of the *Hitopadeśa* material is also found in other collections of stories. For example, the tales of the woman

with the two lovers (II.vi), and the faithful servant Vīravara (III.viii) also occur respectively in the popular collections, the *Śukasaptati* and the *Vetāla Pañcāvimsatikā*. In the absence of a clearly established comparative chronology, who borrowed from whom is an open question. A number of *Hitopadeśa* verses are also found in the old Javanese and Pali literature of south-east Asia, and the Tibetan and Mongolian literature of Central Asia. In these cases too the primary sources are still to be determined

The Hitopadeśa Verses

The over seven hundred verses interspersed in its prose text are a distinctive feature of the *Hitopadeśa*. Some of these, like the first two and the last three of the work, and the concluding stanzas of its first three books, are probably the author's own compositions. The others are direct or modified quotations. The book is thus as much a verse anthology as a compilation of fables on *nīti*.

Some of the verses selected by Nārāyaṇa occur in more than one work; some are still current in the form of proverbs and popular sayings. The famous verse 1.14, which is repeated as 4.134, is found in the *Garuḍa Purāṇa* (1.111), the southern (3.39) and the Nepali (3.32) *Pañcātāntra*, the *Āṅakya Nīti Darpaṇa* (12.14), as well as the *Vetāla Pañcāvimsatikā*. Verse 1.71, which contains the often cited maxim 'Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam,' occurs in the *Pañcātāntra* (5.38), the *Āṅakya Nītiśāstra* (1.69) and, with a slight variation, in the *Vikramaśaritam* (3.1).¹³ Other well-known verses include 1.16, which is found, barring one word, in the *Bhagavad Gita* (17.20), and the now notorious 1.122, which is taken from the *Manu Smṛti* (9.3). The fine stanza 4.92 is from the Udyoga Parvan (40.21) of the *Mahabharata*,¹⁴ and the satirical 4.105 from Bharṭṛhari's *Nītisataka* (1.3).

Most *Hitopadeśa* verses are of the type known as *muktaka* or *subhāṣita*. This poetic form has been compared to the Persian rubai or the Japanese tanka.¹⁵ A single stanza, the meaning or mood of which is complete in itself, it was composed in isolation or as part of a longer work. It dealt with a large variety of themes and, at its best, combined brevity with a felicitous condensation of thought. It was also often designed for easy memorization and quotation in an age when books were still few and handwritten. This mnemonic function led to a large number of such verses being composed essentially to convey information and advice on all kinds of subjects besides *nīti*, from medicine and mathematics to erotic techniques and military tactics.

The modern Sanskrit anthologist K.A.S. Iyer described¹⁶ the *subhāṣita* as 'a pithy saying, embodying worldly wisdom, relating to one or more aspects of life, and often of a didactic character'. The *subhāṣita* on *nīti* may sometimes appear cynical but, in the words¹⁷ of the late Harvard Sanskritist D.H.H. Ingalls, 'its purpose is neither to disparage the world, nor to flatter it, but to

see it as it is. Accordingly, *nīti* verses dispense with elaborate ornaments; they are clipped, sententious, epigrammatic; and they include a wide range within their field of attention, for the real world contains good as well as bad'. These descriptions could well apply to the verses selected by Nārāyaṇa.

Nārāyaṇa as an Anthologist

The *Hitopadeśa* is no pale imitation or mere aggregation of its source materials. What gives it a refreshing identity of its own is the skilful way in which Nārāyaṇa selected and arranged his extracts from a wide range of other works, supplementing them occasionally with his own compositions and modifications to produce something distinctive. In the final stanza of the second book, he refers to his book as a garden or grove of pleasing stories. His art was essentially that of the compiler and the anthologist, assembling and presenting diverse tales and maxims in a manner which gave an additional cohesion and impact to the whole. His grouping of verses, in particular, is harmonious for the most part, and designed to emphasize the moral of each tale.

Nārāyaṇa also adds a sense of liveliness to many verses by having them recited by animal characters. The birds and the beasts of his tales comment on human foibles and discuss life's problems with solemn quotations from authoritative texts. This lends a tongue-in-cheek charm to some of the stories, such as that of the aged tiger (I.i) sanctimoniously citing the scriptures to lure a hesitant traveller close enough to be devoured; or the dog and the donkey (II.ii) discussing the responsibilities they bear to their master, the washerman, while he is in bed with his wife. By the time we arrive at the final frame story which encompasses the last two books, the animals are almost human. The war between the land birds and the water birds, with their vain and impetuous kings, wise and cautious ministers and timeserving courtiers, provides an opportunity for the animal characters to deliver stirring verse homilies on individual psychology and the rules of governance.

Text and Translation

Unlike the *Panćatantra*, which exists in a number of recensions with notable differences, there is only one main version of the *Hitopadeśa*, though it may not be the ur-text. It has been critically edited several times, including by Max Müller in 1865. The longest text, containing 749 stanzas, is the 1864 edition of J. Johnson, while the shortest, which contains 655 stanzas and incorporates for the first time the Nepal manuscript already mentioned, is that of P. Peterson, published in 1887. A scholarly comparison of all the main editions

concludes that ‘the textual differences between the various editions of the *Hitopadeśa* are of little importance’.¹⁸

The text used for the present translation is M.R. Kale’s edition, first published in 1896.¹⁹ With 733 stanzas, it stands between the shortest and the longest texts, and is also the most recent of the main critical editions. One stanza (1.116) which is partly suppressed in Kale’s text, doubtless on grounds of obscenity, has been taken for this translation from Peterson. Kale’s numbering of the stories and the stanzas has been retained. They are referred to with roman and Arabic numerals respectively, the first digit indicating the book. In addition, each story has been given a subtitle for ready reading.

The *Hitopadeśa* has been translated into English several times. Apart from Wilkins’ pioneering version, another rendering by Sir Edwin Arnold appeared in 1861 with the title *The Book of Good Counsels*. The same title was used by B. Hale-Wortham in his 1906 translation. Other translations include some literal ones for students wishing to follow the original text, as well as edited versions for children.

The present translation attempts to render the Sanskrit text faithfully in a contemporary idiom which may also convey something of the particular flavour of the original. The last consideration would also explain the occasional use of archaisms, specially in translating the prose parts. The translation of the verses involved a further consideration. In most, any poetic or ornamental literary content is low or even absent. The emphasis is didactic, and the form is gnomic and often mnemonic. It was felt that these characteristics would best be reflected through a rendition in simple rhyming verse of the doggerel type. A prose translation could have given more scope for precision, but less for conveying the spirit of the original. The varying quality of the verse renderings corresponds to the variations in the originals. Some of them have a fine flourish while others are bald statements for example 4.140 and 4.141, the two concluding stanzas of the work; in other cases the moods differ, as with 3.69 to 3.76 on the subject of war, and 4.68 to 4.77 on the transitoriness of life. In a few instances, the verse translations include additional explanatory lines, which have been put in parentheses.

The Sanskrit mode for addressing a king, *deva*, which literally means god, has been rendered mostly as ‘sire’. The honorific pronoun *bhavat*, has been translated variously as ‘sir’, ‘Your Honour’, or ‘Your Majesty’, depending on who is addressing whom. The word *nīti* has been rendered in one of its several meanings in accordance with the context. *Dharma*, another word with multiple connotations, has usually been translated as ‘virtue’ or ‘righteousness’; occasionally it has been left in the original, in which form it has already entered the English language. Proper nouns have been retained in the original. In the case of animals, an English near-equivalent or derivative

has also been added. A few names have been split into two words, for example 'Viṣṇu Śarma'. Diacritics have been discarded in the transliteration of some names still in common usage.

Like any good anthology, the *Hitopadeśa* can be savoured best by dipping into it from time to time, as compared to reading it from end to end. Opened at any page, it can reveal a fable or a stanza which may strike a responsive chord, provoke dissent or make a point to think about. At the same time its stories have a pattern which rewards sequential reading. The present translation also endeavours to retain these qualities which have contributed to the original text's popularity over the centuries.

I still possess a dog-eared copy of 'Mitralābha', the first book of the *Hitopadeśa*, which I read as a student many years ago. In preparing the present translation I have profitably consulted Kale's Sanskrit commentary and the notes appended to his edition of the text. I am grateful to David Davidar, Chief Executive Officer and Publisher of Penguin Books (India), for asking me to undertake this translation, and giving me extended time for completing it. I would like to thank Smriti Vohra for editing the typescript. Parts of my translation were earlier read by Madhav Dar, to whom I am indebted for various comments. Thanks are also due to J. Padma Rao of the Indian Embassy in Washington DC, and V.K. Jain, Director, Ministry of External Affairs Library, New Delhi, for helping with the reference material; and to my children Sharada and Vikram Haksar for obtaining information from the US Library of Congress. I am obliged to Dr Bibekananda Banerjee of the Asiatic Society, Calcutta for details of the Newari manuscript shown on the cover of this book. Most of all I wish to thank my wife Priti for her patient, critical and always helpful scrutiny of the drafts, and for her unfailing encouragement and support at every stage of their preparation.

December 1997
New Delhi

A. N. D. H

Prastāvikā

PROLOGUE

- May success tend good people's labour (1)
 By grace of him, on whose brow gleams
 The moon's delightful crescent favour,
 Bright as foam on Gangā's streams.
- Study of these counsels benefic, (2)
 Gives to speech felicity,
 Skill in words, diverse and specific,
 And knowledge of right policy.
- The wise will strive for wealth and learning, (3)
 As if to time and age immune;
 But not delay good works, discerning
 That death may strike one very soon.
- Of all things, learning, seers declare (4)
 It best by far, beyond compare:
 Always prized, it can't decay,
 Nor be seized or forced away.
- Learning even gives the lowly (5)
 Access to high company,
 And thence to fortune: flowing slowly,
 Streamlets too may join the sea.
- Learning teaches manners gentle, (6)
 And they bring gainful patronage;
 The latter leads to wealth, essential
 For bliss and virtue in this age.
- Learnings twain, of sword and science— (7)
 From both can glory be expected;
 But one, with age, invites alliance
 With ridicule; the other always is respected.
- May minds still young be fired here (8)
 By knowledge set in guise of fable,
 As fresh clay pots are moulded, ere
 Their baking into vessels stable.
- Gaining Friends and Splitting Partners, (9)
 Making War to Peace attain:
 Drawing on the *Panćatantra*
 And other works, we here explain.

On the banks of the river Bhāgīrathī there lies a city called Pāṭaliputra. In it the.re reigned a king named Sudarśana, who was possessed of all the royal virtues. Once this monarch heard someone recite two verses: