Five Discourses on Worldly Wisdom

by Vishnu·sharman

Translated by

PATRICK OLIVELLE

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Here is a new Clay Sanskrit Library translation of The Five Discourses on Worldly Wisdom, well known also by its Sanskrit title as the “Panca-tantra.” The king despairs of his idle sons, so he hires a learned brahmin who promises to make their lessons in statecraft unmissable. The brahmin’s lessons are disguised as short stories, featuring animal protagonists.

Since their authorship, probably in the third century CE, many of these narratives have traveled across the world, and are known in the West as the fables of Aesop and La Fontaine, and episodes of the Arabian Nights.

The Five Discourses on Worldly Wisdom is the book of India’s folk wisdom, teaching the principles of good government and public policy through the medium of delightful stories and pithy proverbs. Its positive attitude towards life and its advocacy of ambition, enterprise, and drive counters any preconception of passivity and other-worldliness in ancient Indian society.

Anyone who reads The Five Discourses on Worldly Wisdom can understand the reasons for its extraordinary popularity.
THE FIVE DISCOURSES
ON WORLDLY WISDOM

BY VIŚṑṢARMAṄ

TRANSLATED BY
PATRICK OLIVELLE

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BOOK III
ON WAR AND PEACE:
THE STORY OF
THE CROWS AND THE OWLS
ATH’ EDAM ÁRABHYATE SAMDHÌ|VIGRAHA|SAMBANDHAHÌ 
KAK’ÖLÓKIYAMÌ NÁMA TṚĪYAMÌ TANTRAM, YASY’ ĀYAM AD-
YAH ŚLOKAH:

NA VIŚVASET PŪRVAYAVIDHITASYA
ŚAROŚ CA MITRVARVAM UPĀGATASYA;
DAGDHAH GUHĀM PAIYATA GHIKAIPŪRNĀM
KĀKAPRAṆITENA HUT’ĀŚANENA.[1]

RĀJAKUMĀRĀ ÜCUḤ: «KATHAṆ Č ĀĪTAT?» VIŚUŚARM” ĀHA:
ASTI, KASMIṆŚ CID VAN’ÖDDEŚE MAHĀN NYAGRODHĀ|ṚKŚAṆH
SNIDHĀ|BAHALA|PARṆA|GULMA|CHAYAYĀ SVĀGATAM IV’ĀDHVA|
GĀṆṆĀ PRAYACCHATI. TATRA MEGHARṆO NĀMA VĀYASA|RĀJĀH
PRATIVASATI SMA, KĀKĀSAHASRAPRĪVĀṆH.

TATRA N’ĀṬIḌŪRA ULŪKĀSAHASRAPRĪVĀṆH ARIAMDANO NĀM’
OLŪKĀ|RĀJĀH CA PRATIVASATI SMA. SA Č ĀIKĀDĀ SĀḤAJAṆVAIR’ĀŅUŚA-
YĀD ULŪK’ŌPALABDHĀDURGĀVYUṬ’T’ĀṬAH KĀLA|BĀLA|ŚAKTYĀ RĀTRĀV
ĀGATYA, MAHAT” OLŪKĀ-SAṆGḤĀTENA TASY’ŌPARI SAṆṆIṆPITITĀH.
MAHAC CA TEṢĀM KĀṬĀNĀM KADANĀM KṚTVĀ, APAYAṬAḤ.

ANYE|DUṢ ĈA PRABHĀṬA|SAMAYE HATA|TESĀN BHAGA|CAṆ-
CUṆI|PĀṢA|CARAṆAN ANYAṆŚ CA SAMETYA, ŚIVIṆ’ĀŅUŚAṆA|PRAVI-
CAṆ’ŌPALABDHĪṆ KṚTVĀ, MAṆTRĪBHĪṆ S’ĀRDHANŚ MEGHARṆO
MANTRAYITUM ĀRABDHĀH. PRATYAṆSAṂ ETAN MAHĀD VIṢAṢANAM
ASMĀKAṆ SĀṆPATNENA ARIAMDANENA KṚTAM. DṚṬṬAḌURGĀMĀṆ-
GO ŚAV AVAŚYAM ADYA RĀTRAU LABDH’ĀVASARO ‘ṢMADĀ|BHĀVĀYA

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We begin here the Third Book, named “The Story of the Crows and the Owls Illustrating War and Peace.” This is its opening verse:

In a man you have once antagonized,
Or in a foe who has become a friend,
you should never place your trust.

See how the hideout filled with owls was burnt,
by the fire carried by crows. [1]

The princes asked: “How did that happen?” Vishnu-sharma narrated this story.

In a certain forest there was once a large banyan tree. It appeared to offer words of warm welcome to travellers with its cooling shade under its abundant foliage and cluster of trunks. In that tree lived a king of crows named Megha-varna, the Cloud-colored, with a retinue of a thousand crows.

Not too far from that tree there also lived a king of owls named Ari-mardana, the Crusher-of-Foes, with his retinue of a thousand owls. Ari-mardana had learned all about Megha-varna’s fortress from his owls. One day, driven by his inborn enmity towards crows, he came at night with a large squadron of owls and attacked Megha-varna with a force as formidable as Death itself. After inflicting a terrible massacre on the crows, he departed.

The next morning Megha-varna assembled the crows that had escaped the slaughter, many with broken beaks, wings, and feet, and received a report on the condition of the camp. Then he opened a meeting of his ministers to obtain their counsel, telling them: “You see before your very eyes the massacre inflicted on us by our enemy Ari-mardana. Now
puñar esyati. tad aḥinākālam upāyaś cintyatāṃ tadvighāto yathā bhavat’ iti.» evam uktvā, ek’āntiḥbhūtaḥ.

atha tasya’ ānvayaiparāṃparā”āgataḥ pañca sacivas tiṣṭhānti. tad yathā: Uḍḍīvī, Saṃḍīvī, Ādīvī, Praḍīvī, Ciraṁjīvī c’ ēti. tān pratyekeṃ praśṭum ārabdhāḥ.

teṣām ādāv Uḍḍīvināṃ pṛṣṭavān: «bhadra, evam avasthi-te, kim antarāntarāṃ karaṇīyaṃ manyase?»

so ’bravīt: «kiṃ may” ābhyaḍhikaṃ kiṃ cīj jñāyate? deva, yad eva śāstre ’bhihitam, tad eva vakṣyāmi. kiṃ tu balavatā vighṛitasya tadānupraveśo videsāgamanāṃ v’ ēti.»

3.10 tac chrutvā, Saṃḍīvinām āha: «bhadra, bhavān kathaṃ manyata iti.»

sa āha: «deva, ev ev’ ānen’ abhiḥitam: ’balavatā vighṛitasya videsāgamanam iti,” tan n’ ākasmād ekapada eva durgā parītyāgaḥ kāryaḥ. yato yuktam evaṃ sthite, dolāvyājena kālaṃ yāpayitum. yadā bhayaṃ bhaviṣyati, tad” āpayānaṃ kariṣyāmah. yadā svāsthyam, tadā durgā eva sthāsyāma iti.”

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that he has discovered the way into our fortress, given the opportunity, he is sure to return tonight to finish us off. So without delay we must think of a strategy to thwart him.” After saying this he withdrew to a secluded spot.

Megha-varna had five ministers who had inherited the office, succeeding their forefathers. They were: Uddīvin, the High-flyer, Sandīvin, the Joint-flyer, Adīvin, the Backward-flyer, Pradīvin, the Onward-flyer, and Chirañ-jīvin, the Long-lived. Megha-varna began to question each of them in turn.

The first one he questioned was Uddīvin: “What do you think, my friend? Under these circumstances, what should we do now?”

Uddīvin: “Am I a person who would know anything of special value? Your Majesty, I can only tell you what is written in the authoritative texts on the subject. When a person is attacked by someone stronger, he has only two options. He can either surrender to the other or go into exile.”

After listening to him, Megha-varna asked Sandīvin: “And you, my friend, what do you think?”

Sandīvin: “This fellow’s advice, Your Majesty, is that when a person is attacked by someone stronger, he should go into exile. My response is that one should not abandon one’s fortress suddenly and without cause. The proper thing to do under the current circumstances is to bide our time following an on-again-off-again strategy. When danger threatens, we will flee. But so long as things are normal, we will remain right here in the fortress.”
FIVE DISCOURSES ON WORLDLY WISDOM

tatas tasy' āpi vacanam avadhārya, Praḍīvinaṁ prṭṭavān: «bhavato 'tra ko 'bhiprāyāh?» so 'bravīt: «rājan, ātyayikam idam an'avarataṁ gat'āga-tājkarāṇam. din'āndha'kubja'vāmanā'kuṇājkhajā'vyādhit' āṃśakar'ādibhir nayan'ānayanair eva vayam vinaṣṭāḥ. yata evaṁ gate, saṃdhir eva śreyāṣkara iti. yat kāraṇam:

pravṛddha'cakreṇ' ākṛnto
rājā balavat” ābhalaḥ
saṃdhino 'pakramet tūṛṇaṁ
kośādaṇḍ'ātmaḥbhūtaye. [2]

3.15 yatas teśaṁ saṃñatiṁ kṛtvā, sukhām anudvignā iḥ' āiva sthāsyāma iti.»
tasy' āpi vacanam avadhārya, Āḍīvinaṁ prṭṭavān: «bhadra, evam avasthite, asmākām kim prāpta'kālaṁ manyase?» sa āha: «varam aranye harinā'romantha'kaśāyāny am-bhāṃsy aśevitāni, na ca prabhutva'ras'āsvādinaḥ pari'opas-thāne kṛpanā'jīvitam iti. api ca:

jyāyān na named aṣame;
'sam'ōpananamaṁ mahat kaṣṭam.
garbitam etat puṃsām
ati'nanamaṁ sāhasadhanānām. [3]

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Megha-varna listened to him and then asked Pradívin: “What is your view on the matter?”

Pradívin: “To be constantly going back and forth, Your Highness, would be suicidal. We will all be destroyed if we have to carry back and forth everything—the weak, the blind, the cripples, the dwarfs, the maimed, the lame, the sick, and all our belongings. So, under the circumstances, the best thing to do is to sue for peace. And the reason is this:

When a strong king attacks with powerful troops,
The weaker king should promptly sue for peace,
To save his assets, army, and himself. [2]

So, we should make peace with them and continue to live right here in comfort and free from anxiety.”

Megha-varna listened to his advice also and then asked Adívín: “And you, my friend, what do you think is the appropriate thing for us to do under these circumstances?”

Adívín: “For those who have tasted the sweet flavor of sovereignty, it is far better to live in the wilderness drinking water dirtied by the cud the deer chew than to lead a wretched life in the service of an enemy. Furthermore,

A superior should never bow to one who is not his peer;
To bow to people who are not one’s peers is a great disgrace.
To yield so readily is unworthy
Of real men, for whom valor is wealth. [3]
FIVE DISCOURSES ON WORLDLY WISDOM

api ca:

danḍānām iva namatāṁ,
pumśaṁ chaṁśaṁ vivṛddhim upayāti.
ksayaṁ eti c' ātiṇamatāṁ
tasmāt praṇamen na c' ātiṇamet. [4]

taiś ca saṁ āsmākaṁ saṁdarśanam eva na vidyate. saṁ-
darśanena vinā kathāṁ saṁdhir bhaviṣyaṁ? tat sarvathā yu-
ddham eva nas taiḥ saha puṣkalam iti.»

tato Meghadvarṇas teśāṁ caturṇām api pṛthak pṛthag
abhiprayaṁ nātva, Ciraṁjīvinam āha: «tātā, tvam asmā-
kaṁ ciraṁtvanaḥ 'navaṁ/agaṁ/sacivaḥ. ajasraṁ ca hitānveṣi
kim evam avasthite 'pi, adhunā prāptakaṁlaṁ manyase? yac
tvaṁ brūse, tad eva nah śreyasaktaram iti.»

evam ukte, Ciraṁjīvy āha: «deva, kim ebbhir n'ōktam asti,
yatra mama vacaṁ śavaṁśaṁ śvaṁ? iha hi saṁśaṁ/svagṛhaḥ
saṁdhir vā vigraba vā tau pūṛv'ōktv eva. tathā āpi yad
Ādīväṁ 'abhahitam, tat pakkhaṁ/yāvartanā'ṁ ścyate. bhadra,
kathāṁ eṣaṁ āsmākaṁ ca yuddham śamāyaṁ? tāvad āśa-
dhāraṇaṁ yuddham āsmākam. sarvathā te balavantaṁ, tatas
taiḥ saha na yuddham āsmākam ucitam. tathā ca:

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And again,

A man's shadow will lengthen when he bows,
as a stick's when it's bent.
But it disappears if you bend too much;
So you should bow, but never bow too much. [4]

There is no common interest at all between the owls
and us, and without such a common interest, how can we
negotiate a peace? Considering everything, therefore, war is
the best option for us."

Megha-varna, after taking stock of the views of all four of
them one by one, then said to Chiraṇ-jivin: “Father, you are
our most senior hereditary minister, and you always have
our welfare at heart. Under the current circumstances what
do you think is the appropriate thing for us to do at this
point? Whatever you say will clearly be the best course for
us.”

So petitioned, Chiraṇ-jivin replied: “What is there for me
to say, Your Majesty? Haven't they already said everything?
Between the alternatives of war and peace, we have already
heard arguments in favor of pursuing the one and the other
in the current circumstances. The advice of Adivin, however,
would lead to the complete rout of our side. How, my friend,
can there ever be an equal fight between us and the owls?
Clearly, in any fight our side will come up short. They are
more powerful in every way. So it will be unwise of us to
start a war with them. As it is said:
pareṣṭam ātmanaś c’ āiva
yo ’vicārya bal’ājibalam
karyay’ orteṣṭhate mohad,
vyaṃdaḥ sa samihate. [5]

3.25 laghusv api vidhātavyaṃ
gauravam paripanthisu,
kṛtyantarajvidhāṛṇām
bhavanti hy aśphalāḥ kriyāḥ. [6]

kṣamāvantam arīṃ prajñāṃ
kāle vikramaśevinam
par’atmaiguṇa’doṣajñāṃ
anusmṛtya na viśvaset. [7]

yam ev’ ābyupayāti Śrīr
upāyaiparītoṣita,
niruddvignā hi tatra āste,
na karagraha’dūṣita. [8]

śatayaty eva tejāmsi
dūraṣtho ’py unnato ripuḥ;
ś’ayuhdo ’pi nikṛṣṭ’atma
kim āsannah karisyati? [9]
ON WAR AND PEACE: THE CROWS AND THE OWLS

When, without weighing the relative strengths
And weaknesses of yourself and your foes,
You go rushing rashly into action,
you're courting disaster! [5]

Show great respect even to minor foes; 3.25
if you act otherwise,
your efforts are in vain. [6]

An enemy who is patient and wise,
Who resorts to force at the proper time,
Knows his and his foe's strengths and weaknesses—
Be watchful, never place your trust in him. [7]

When Fortune betakes herself to a man,
Pleased by the sound policies he pursues,
She will remain with that man, undisturbed;
Her marriage to him will bring her no shame.* [8]

Even from afar, an exalted foe
Is sure to eclipse a man's majesty.
Even though he is near and fully armed,
what can a petty man do? [9]
FIVE DISCOURSES ON WORLDLY WISDOM

na bhito, na parāṃśuto,
'āpayato, na varjitaḥ,
'āśāstro 'py avamantavyo,
'āiko v" ēti nay'ādhiśkaiḥ. [10]

3.30 yasya sidhyaty aṣayatena
śātruh, sa vijayī naraḥ;
yā ekataratam garva
jayī, vijita eva saḥ. [11]

siddhiṃ vañcanaya vetti,
paraspara[vadhena vā.
nirūpayaṃ sukhaṃ sv'āntaṃ.
dvayoḥ kim? iti cintyatāṃ! [12]

ma'āvaliptaiḥ, piśūnaib,
lubdhaiḥ, kāṃ'ātañkaiḥ, śaṭhaiḥ
darp'ōddhataiḥ, krodha[parair
daṇḍa[anitīḥ suḍurgrahā. [13]

iyaṃ tv abhinna[maryāda[aiḥ,
sva[nis[aiḥ, kṛt'ātmabhaiḥ,
sarv[śa[air, upāyas[air,
āmūḍh[a[ eva dhāryate. [14]

tat sarvathā yuddham eva na śreyas[kar[ iti kasmāt?
jyāyasā virodho hastinā pāda[yuddham iv' āik'ānta[vināśa-
"ya."}

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ON WAR AND PEACE: THE CROWS AND THE OWLS

Whether he’s frightened or is beaten up,
Whether he’s in flight or is abandoned,
Whether he’s unarmed or is all alone,
You should never humiliate a man;
So state the experts in sound policy. [10]

When his enemy yields without a fight,
he’s a victor indeed.
Winning after an uncertain battle,
is truly a defeat. [11]

There are two ways one can achieve success:
mutual slaughter or guile.
Prosperity without sound policy
brings about one’s own death.
Consider which of the two you should choose. [12]

People who are haughty and malicious,
Who are greedy, deceitful, full of lust,
Who are prone to anger, puffed up with pride—
Such people find it difficult to grasp
the proper way to rule. [13]

It can be grasped, but only by those men
Who stay within bounds and have been taught well,
Well-disciplined, whose patience knows no bounds,
Who are skilled in policy and are wise. [14]

So, it is absolutely clear that war is not to our advantage.
And the reason is simple. Picking a fight with someone stronger is like a foot-soldier fighting with an elephant—you are sure to end up dead.”
FIVE DISCOURSES ON WORLDLY WISDOM

3.35 Meghavarṇa āha: «tāta, kathaya! kiṁ niṣpannam?»
so 'bravīt: «bhadra, sampradhāryātām etat. uktam ca:

yaḥ hi prāṇa-parityāga
mūlyenaśīpi na labhyate,
śa Śrīr mantra-vidāṁ veśmany
anāhut āśīpi dhāvati. [15]

krameṇa yaḥ śāstra-vīdo
hiś-āśīnaḥ
kriyāvībāge suḥṛdo
na pṛcchati.
<...> [16]

desaṃ balaṃ kāryam upāyaṃ āyuḥ
saṁcintya yaḥ prārabhate svākṣṛtyam,
mahā-ōdāhim nadya iv ābhīpurṇaṁ
taṃ sampadaḥ satipuruṣaṁ bhajante. [17]

3.40 śūraḥ, sarvā-ōpadhāśuddhā,
buddhimanto, vicakṣaṇaḥ
saḥāyaḥ syur; niṣpatvaṁ hi
saṁsārayaśīnibhandhanam. [18]

visānaṃ saṁghaṭasaṃmutthisāṁ śīrṣāṁ
sphulīṣaṁ-pālīṣaṁ-ākālīte 'pi dantināṁ
raṇe 'pi pitvā tu yaśaṁsi vidviṣaṁ,
bhavaty avidvāna hi bhajanaṁ śīryaḥ. [19]
Megha-varna: “Tell me, father. What will be the outcome?”

Chirān-jīvin: “Think about this, my friend. It is said:

Even at the price of losing one’s life, Fortune cannot be won; Yet if you have strategic acumen, Uninvited she will run to your house. [15]

Not methodically seeking advice regarding your pursuits, From well-read friends of yours who wish you well, <can only lead to grief>. [16]*

‘What is this place like? What are my forces? What’s to be done? What’s the right strategy? What’s the state of my life?’ When he embarks on a course of action, after weighing these points, Good Fortunes chase after that sterling man Like rivers, the ocean filled to the brim.* [17]

Assistants should be brave, prudent, and wise, of proven loyalty; For, without the help of good assistants, no king can ever rule. [18]

Though he has drunk the glory of his foes, In battles garlanded by fiery sparks, Flying from the striking of elephant tusks, Fortune visits not an ignorant man. [19]
FIVE DISCOURSES ON WORLDLY WISDOM

tat sarvathā guṇavatśahayaśparigraho vijigīṭṭam ek’ān-
taisiddhayac. uktaṁ ca:

na vaṣṭāmāryaṅkramalakṣaṇaṁ guṇaṁ,
nirileṣate n’āva vapur, na c’āgamaṁ;
ya eva śūraḥ suṣaḥāyavaṁ naras,
tam eva Lākṣmiś capal” āpi sevate. [20]

guṇeṣv ādhārabhūteṣu
phale kasy’āsti saṃśayaḥ?
nyastaś c’ātmā satāṁ vṛtte
vibhūtiś ca na durlabhā. [21]

3.45
«api kīrsyartham āyānti
nāśaṁ sadya’tiṃśhināḥ?
na c’ecchanty āyaśojmiśram
apy ev’ānjantryām āyuṣah.” [22]

jāyāy’ōtkśipyatāṁ pādo
dakṣiṇāṁ kiṁ vicāryate?
mūlaṁ hi prāhur acāryā
dṛṃghaśūtratvam āpadāṁ. [23]

śrut’āpaviddhair etair vā
vṛṭhā kiṁ śukaḥbhāṣitāḥ?
prājñas tvam, tyajyatāṁ maunam;
yasya velā, tad ucyatāṁ! [24]
ON WAR AND PEACE: THE CROWS AND THE OWLS

To ensure complete success, a man intent on conquest must always surround himself with excellent assistants. For it is said:

Fortune, fickle though she is, regards not Fine ancestry, great learning, or good looks, as marks of excellence; She waits only on a man who is brave, and has good attendants. [20]

When a man is anchored On the principles of sound policy,* Is there any doubt that he will succeed? And when he follows the path of good men, Prosperity is not hard to obtain. [21]

‘Do not proud men lay down their lives forthwith for the sake of fame? They yearn not even for unending life mixed with infamy.’ [22]

‘Step forth with your right foot for victory; why do you still hesitate? Procrastination, the teachers declare, is the root of misfortune!’ [23]

Parrots’ prattle! Forget all such dribble, dismissed by learned men! You are wise. Don’t be silent any more. When the time has come, tell what must be done. [24]
A mantraḥ mūlaṁ hi vijayam  
pravadanti maṇiśiṇaḥ;  
mantrasya punar ātmā ca  
buddhiś c’ āyatan’āṃ param. [25]

śad eva khalu mantrasya  
dvārāṇi tu nar ādhīpa;  
vidītāṃ eva te, tāta,  
kīrtayiśyāmi kīrtiman: [26]

3.30  ātmānaṃ, maṇtriḍūtaṇī ca,  
channaṃ, triśaṇaṃ kramam,  
ākāraṃ bruvaete śaṭham;  
etāvān maṇtra niścayāḥ. [27]

āṣaṁgrhitasya punar  
mantrasya śṛṇu yat phalam:  
aḥiṇaṃ dharma kāmabhīyaṃ  
artham prāprṇoti kevalam. [28]

atha vyavasit’ānuṣṇā,  
chedanaṃ saṃśayasya ca,  
aṇiśaṃ tasya ca jñānaṃ—  
maṇtraṇaṃ tvrvidhāṃ phalam. [29]

tad yathā yo mano visambhaṇaṃ gacchati, tathā pra- 
yatitavyam. yat kāraṇam:

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ON WAR AND PEACE: THE CROWS AND THE OWLS

For counsel is the root of victory,
so have wise men declared.
But the highest abode of good counsel
is oneself and one’s mind! [25]

There are just six ways, we all know, O King,
In which, Glorious King, counsel is betrayed.
Although, son, you already know them all,
I will mention them now. [26]

Oneself, one’s ministers and messengers, 350
Secret agents and the three daily baths,
The sixth, they say, is facial expressions.
That’s the verdict regarding good counsel. [27]

But look at the rewards that counsel brings,
when it is not divulged:
One gains singular success in this world,
Without damage to pleasure or virtue.* [28]

Three are the benefits ministers bring:
They sanction decisions and remove doubts,
Then there’s wisdom, which he can always tap. [29]

One should always strive to keep the counsel one receives
confidential. And this is the reason:

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mithyā praṇihito mantraḥ
prayoktāram aṣaṃśayam
durūṣṭa iva vetālo
n’ āñihaty’ āpaśāmyati. [30]

3-55 ātmāpakoṣaṃkṣayāyā’ āiva
paraipakoṣīdāyāyā ca
mantraḥdvaidham amāṭyānām
tan na syād iha bhūtyaye. [31]

āya/vyayau yasya ca saṃvibhatau,
channāś ca cāro, nibhṛtaś ca mantraḥ,
na c’ āpiṣyaṃ mantriṣu yo braviṁ -
sa sāgar’āntāṃ prthivīm praśāsti. [32]

tad evaṃ punar braviṁ: ‘yuḍḍhaṃ na śreyo iti.’ saṃ-
dhir apy a/sākyo ‘rthaḥ saha/ja/vair’ ānubandhānām. tad
yadi mañvāvaśyaṃ mantrayitavam, tad apanīyatāṃ ete ma-
ntriṃmātra/vyapadesākeval/’ōpajivināḥ kathāśūṇālāḥ. na ca
karaṇīyasya ātayiṣeṣu śaṭṭkaṇāṃ rahasyaṃ phalavad bha-
vati.’

tathā c’ ānuṣṭhite, Meghavarṇa aha: ‘tāta, bāla/bhāvād
an’abhiṣiṣo ‘smi. yathā braviṣi, tathā karomī. tvad/āyattam
hi sarvam idam. tvam adhun’ āṛthaśvādi jñāna/vijñāna/āsaṃ-
pannaḥ pitṛkrameṣaḥ hit’āṣi. kiṃ tu kaurūhālam ucyatām:
kathaṃ punar asmākam ulūkaiḥ saha vairam utpannam? iti.’

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Counsel wrongly applied, like a vampire*
improperly invoked,
Is not pacified until it has killed
the man who employs it. [30]

When ministers give conflicting advice,
It can only lead to his side's defeat,
And to the triumph of his enemies,
ever to his success. [31]

When one matches one's income and outlay,
Agents are secret, and counsel concealed,
Says no unkind word to one's ministers;
One will rule the whole earth up to the sea. [32]

So, I tell you once more: war is not to our advantage.
Peace, on the other hand, is also an impossible goal for
those who have a natural enmity towards each other. If
you insist that I give you my advice, then send away these
people; they are here to gain a livelihood by their title as
'Minister' and are only good at talking. When there are
emergency measures to be taken, secrets heard by six ears
will be ineffective."

When this request had been carried out, Megha-varna
said to Chirañ-jivin: “Father, I am young and inexperienced.
I will do as you advise; our entire life depends on you. You are
the one who will tell us the truth; you have the knowledge
and the wisdom; and you have my welfare at heart, for you
have served my father before me. But I am curious about
one thing. Tell me, how did this enmity between us and the
owls come about?”

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so 'bravî it: «bhadra, vâgdoṣṭ."

3.60 suściraṇḥ hi caran nityaṇḥ
griśme sasyām abuddhimān
dvīpiṣaṁcaraprajītyānno
vâgdoṣṭd râsabho hataḥ.» [33]

so' bravî it: «kathaṇ c' ātat?»
Cirâmjîvy āha:
THE ASS IN A LEOPARD’S SKIN

Chirañ·jivin: “It all started because of a stupid comment!

Long did he graze nonstop in the corn fields;
Many a summer day he spent grazing
The fields of corn wearing a leopard’s skin;
But due to a stupid comment he made,
the foolish ass was killed.” [33]

Megha-varna asked: “How did that happen?”
Chirañ·jivin narrated this story:
The Five Discourses on Worldly Wisdom is the most famous collection of animal fables from India. No other Indian work has had a greater influence on world literature, and no other collection of stories has become as popular in India itself.

The king despairs of his idle sons, so he hires a learned brahmin who promises to make their lessons in statecraft unmissable. The brahmin’s lessons are disguised as short stories, featuring animal protagonists. Since their authorship, probably in the third century CE, many of these narratives have traveled across the world, and are known in the West as the fables of Aesop and La Fontaine, and episodes of the Arabian Nights.

The Five Discourses on Worldly Wisdom is the book of India’s folk wisdom, teaching the principles of good government and public policy through the medium of delightful stories and pithy proverbs. Its positive attitude towards life and its advocacy of ambition, enterprise, and drive counters any preconception of passivity and other-worldliness in ancient Indian society.

Anyone who reads The Five Discourses on Worldly Wisdom can understand the reasons for its extraordinary popularity.