

The Parables of the three Marchents

- Josef Bartosek*

(Comparison: *Uttarādhyayanasūtra* 7,14-30¹ with Matthew 25,14-27 and Luke 19,11-27)

Commentary

The three merchants represent three different approaches to life. Everybody goes with his capital. Each merchant represents a different approach to life. The capital is life (16). The life in Jainism is the result of previous deeds, not a gift, unlike in the Gospel, and so everybody has his own capital.

One returned with significantly more capital, the other with just his capital and the third returned empty handed.

The third merchant loses his capital and gets plenty of negative *karma* matter (*ghātikarma*) and is born again in a very low position (16), but he is not lost, he only starts again from much worse situation.

The second merchant brings his capital back-he is born again as a human being, but there is no progress. To keep his position he has to "exercise in various virtues" (20), as we know that there is an influx of *karma* and of course, some *karma* falls off as the time passes.

The third merchant increases his capital, by higher virtues he removes *karma* up to the limit possible in this era: *duḥkha-sukha*, (21)

Every sensible man can see that gaining "divine pleasures" is the highest goal. Why lose them? Isn't such behaving silly? (22)

Especially when the difference between them is so huge-like a drop compared with the ocean. (23, 24)

And again: everybody is taught the right way so why doesn't he care? (25)

1. Herman Jacobi, first published by the Oxford University Press, 1895, reprinted by Motilal Banarsidass, 1964

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He who cares will reach the goal (26).

Verse 27 is very peculiar. The reward is bliss of the world, in fact, exactly that which should be refused by a virtuous person. It is either the influence of ancient Indian tradition or the influence of the world, or it is a never ending struggle like between ?????, and ??????. From the point of *dharma* or *mokṣamārga* it will not stand the test.

Verse 28 compares the folly of the sinner (28) and wisdom of a wise man (29,30). The whole story ends with an exclamation 'Thus I say' which resembles European ear for Jesus 'Amen.'

The parable of talents in *The New Testament* (25.15-25.28) about Mathew entrusted his property to three slaves (5 talents to first, 2 to second and one to third) while going on a long journey. On return he demands his property back. The first one returned ten talents, the second one four and the third one just one. Mathews then calls the third one as lazy and evil and takes his talent away and give it to who has ten. Another example 'The parable of the ten Minas (19.11-27) is also similar as told by Jesus where the king gave ten minas each to ten slaves to go and to do business till his return.

According to the note of Herman Jacobi this parallel was researched by H. Hutman, follower of professor Leumann from Strasbourgh. The question whether The New Testament texts are inspired by the *Uttarādhyayanasūtra* or vice versa, or whether the texts are independent from one another and are similar only due to the fact that both are based on everyday-life-examples (Utt 17,15) is difficult to decide.

Jacobi thinks that the parable was created in India and not Palestina. He reasons that the Jaina story has only basic elements which are more precisely developed in The Gospels.

.....(Table on next page)

I will only present the following chart.

scripture	property	gain-loose	consequence
Uttarādh.7,14-30			
1. merchant	Their own equal Capital	Everything lost	Goes into the worse state
2. merchant		Preserved the same	Continues on the same level
3. Marchent		gained	gains the highest reward
NT - MT 25,14-30	Given according to his abilities		
1. servant	5 talents	gained 5	Praised by the Lord
2. servant	2 talents	gained 2	
3. servant	1 talent	Preserved the same	take the talent from him and give it the one who has 10
NT - Lk 19, 11-27			
1. servant	1 mina	gained 10	Rule over 10 cities
2. servant	1 mina	gained 5	Rule over 5 cities
3. servant	1 mina	Preserved the same	take the mina from him and give it to the one who has 10
4.-10. servant	1 hrvenu	Is not known	Is not known

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