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.

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 VIṢṆUŚARMAN

TRANSLATED BY
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Atha edam ārabhyate saṃdhī| vigraha| saṃbandhāṃ kāk'ōlokiyaṃ nāma tṛṭiyaṃ tantram, yasy' āyaṃ ad-yāḥ ślokaḥ:

na viśvaset pūrva-virodhitaṃ
dagdhāṃ guhāṃ paśyata guṇaśaṃpratīṃ
kākāpratīṇaṃ hut'āśaṇena. [i]

rāja'kumārā úcuḥ: «katham c' āitat?» Viṣṇuśarman’ āha: asti, kasmīṃś cid van'īḍdeśe mahan nyagrodha|ṛkṣaḥ snigdha|bahāla|paṇa|gulma|chāyāvā svāgatam iv' ādhvā|gānāṃ prayacchati. tatra Meghavarṇo nāma vāyasa|rājaḥ prativasati sma, kākā-sahasra-parivārah.

tatra n'ātiṭāṇa ulūkā-sahasra-parivārah Arimardano nām' olūka|rājaḥ ca prativasati sma. sa c' āikadā saha'jāvair' ānusāya'd ulūk'opalabdaḥ durga|ytr' antaḥ Kāla|bala|sāktya rātrāv āgataḥ, mahāt’ olūka|samghātēna tasy' opari saṃnipatitaḥ. mahac ca teśam kakānāṃ kadanāṃ kṛtvā, apayatāḥ.

anye|dyuś ca prabhāta|samaye hata|seṣan bhagna|cañ-cu'pakṣa|carāṇaṇ anyāṃś ca sametā, śivir’ ānusārā|pravicy' 'opalabdhīṃ kṛtvā, maṃtri'bhīḥ s'ārdhāṃ Meghavarṇo mantrayitum ārabdhaḥ. -pratyakṣam etan mahad viśasanam asmākaṃ sa'jātēna Arimardanē kṛtām. dṛṣṭādyurga|mār-ga śav avāśyam adya rātrau labdh'āvasaro 'smadā|bhāvāya
W e 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-sharman 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-m´ardana, the Crusher-of-Foes, with his retinue of a thousand owls. Ari-m´ardana 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-m´ardana. Now
puṇar esyatī. tad aḥinākālam upāyaś cintyatām tadvighāto yathā bhavat’ iti. evam uktvā, ek’ānti bhūḥaḥ.

atha tasyā anvayaśaparaṃśur āgataḥ pañca sacivās tiṣṭhaṃ. tad yathā: Udḍīvī, Saṃḍīvī, Āḍīvī, Prāḍīvī, Ciraṃjīvī c’ ēti. tān pratyekāṃ praśṭum ārabdhaḥ.

tevām ādāv Uḍḍīvināṃ pṛṣṭavān: “bhadra, evam avasthitte, kim anāntaraṃ karaṇīyaṃ manyase?”

so ‘bravīt: “kim may” ābhayadhikam kim cīj jñāyate? deva, yad eva sāstre ‘bhīhitam, tad eva vakṣyāmi. kim tu balavatā vigṛhitasya tadānupraveśo vidașāgamanāṃ v’ ēti.”

3.10 tac chrutvā, Saṃḍīvinam āha: “bhadra, bhavān kathaṃ manyata iti.”

sa āha: “deva, ev ev’ ānen’ abhīhitam: ‘balavatā vigṛhitasya vidașāgamanāṃ iti,” tan n’ āıkasmād ekāpāda eva durgāḥ parityāgaḥ kāryāḥ. yato yuktam evam sthīte, dolāvyājena kālam yāpayitum. yadā bhayaṃ bhaviṣyati, tad” āpayānāṃ kariṣyāmah. yadā svāsthyaṃ, tadā durgā eva sthāyāma 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.”
tatas tasy 'āpi vacanam avadhārya, Prādivinaṃ prṣṭavān:
«bhavato 'tra ko 'bhiprayaḥ?»
sō 'bravīt: «rājan, ātyayikam idam anjñavataṃ gat'āgata-
tajkaranaṃ. din'āndha'kubja'vāmanā|kunājkhānja|vyādhit'|
ōpaskar'ādibhir nayan'ānayanair eva vayaṃ vinaṣṭāḥ. yata
evaṃ gate, samādhīr eva śreyasākara iti. yat kāraṇam:

pravṛddha'cakreṇ 'ākraṇo
rājña balavat" ābalaḥ
saṃdhino 'pakramet tūrtanā
kośa'īdant'ātma'bhūtaye. [2]

3.15 yatas teṣāṃ sam身份iṣṭi kṛtvā, sukhām anudvignā ih' āiva
sthāṣyāma iti.»
tasy 'āpi vacanam avadhārya, Ādvīnaṃ prṣṭavān: «bha-
dra, evam avasthite, asmākaṃ kim prāpta'kālaṃ manyase?»
sa āha: «varam aranye harinaḥ|romantha|kaśāyāṇy am-
bbhāmsy āsvitāni, na ca prabhumva'ras'|āsvādinaḥ pari'ōpas-
thāne kṛpana'jīvitam iti. api ca:

jyāyān na named āsane;
'sam'|ōpanamanāṁ mahat kaṣṭam.
garhitam etat puṃsām
atiṇamanaṅāṁ sāhasādhanānāṁ. [3]

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Megha·varna listened to him and then asked Prad´ıvin: “What is your view on the matter?”

Prad´ıvin: “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 Ad´ıvin: “And you, my friend, what do you think is the appropriate thing for us to do under these circumstances?”

Ad´ıvin: “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]”
api ca:

3.20 daṇḍanām iva namatām,
puṃsāṁ chaḥ yāvivṛddhim upayāti.
kṣayam eti c’ ātiṇamātām
tasmāt praṇamen na c’ ātiṇamet. [4]

taiś ca saḥ āṣmakaṃ saṃdarśanam eva na vidyate. saṃ-
darśanena vinā kathāṃ saṃdhīr bhaviṣyatī tat sarvathā yu-
ddhām eva nas taita saha puṣkalam iti.»

tato Meghavarṇas teṣāṃ catuṛṇām api pṛthak pṛthag
abhiprāyaṃ jñātāv, Ciraṃjīvinam āha: «tāta, tvam āṣma-
kaṃ cirantar avatayo ṣaṃcālaḥ acabāḥ, aṣṭa kṣām ca hitānveṣi.
kim evam avasthitā’pi, adhunā pṛāptaśaṅkām manyase? yac
taṃ bruṣe, tad eva naḥ śreyasāḥ karam iti.»

evam ukte, Ciraṃjīvya āha: «deva, kim ebhir n’ōktam asti,
yatra mama vacanāvacakāśāḥ syāt? iha hi saṃdhīḥvigráhayaḥ
saṃdhīr vā vigrāhāḥ vā tvau pūrvv’ōktaḥ eva. tathā’ api yad
Ādivin’ābhīhitam, tat pakṣāvṛtvanāḥ’ōcyate. bhadra,
katham eṣāṃ āṣmakaṃ ca yuddhāṃ sāmānyam? tāvad aśā-
dhāraṇaṃ yuddham āṣmakaṃ sarvathā te balavantaḥ, tatas
taita saha na yuddham āṣmakaṃ ucitaḥ. 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 Chirañ·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, Chirañ·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 Adīvin, 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 ātmānaḥ c’ āiva
yo ’vicārya bal’ābalam
karyay’ōrtiṣṭhate mohad,
vyāpadaḥ sa samihate. [5]

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laghuṣv api vidhātavyaṃ
gaurāṃ paripanthiṣu,
kṛtyantarajvidhāṭṇām
bhavanti hy aśphalaḥ kriyāḥ. [6]

ksamāvantam arin’ prājñāṇaḥ
kāle vikramaśevinam
par’ātmaγaṇa/doṣajñānam
anumṛtaya na viśvaset. [7]

yam ev’ ābhuyupayāti Śrīr
upāya/paritoṣita,
nirudvignā hi tat’ āste,
na kara-graha/dūṣita. [8]

sātayaty eva tejāṃsi
dūrāsthō ’py unnato ripuḥ;
s’ayudho ’pi nıkṛṣṭ’ātma
kim āsannaḥ 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;
    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 bhūto, na parāṃśuto,
'n āpayato, na varjitaḥ,
'n āśastra 'py avamantavyo,
n' āiko v" āti na vyādhikaiḥ. [10]

3.30 yasya sidhyaty ayaṭṭena
śatrūḥ, sa vijayī naraḥ;
yā ekataratam garvā
jai, vijita eva saḥ. [11]

siddhiṃ vañcanayā vetti,
parasparaṇadhena vā.
niśupāyaṃ suṣṭhaṃ sv'āntaṃ.
dvayoḥ kim? iti cintyataṃ! [12]

maḍ'āvaliptaiḥ, piśunair,
lubdhaiḥ, kām'ātaṅkaiḥ, śathaiḥ
darp'ōdhdhataiḥ, krodha-parair
daṇḍaṅtītiḥ suḍurgrahā. [13]

iyaṃ tv aḥhinnaṃ/marayaḍaiḥ,
svānusīṣṭaiḥ, kṛt'ātmabhiḥ,
sarvam'śahair, upāya-jñair,
aṁuḍhaireva dhāryate. [14]

tat sarvathā yuddham eva na śreyas|karam iti. kasmāt?
āyuṣyāvā virodho hastinā pāda|yuddham iv' āik'ānta|vināśa-

ya."}

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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.”
Meghavanā ṛṭha: «tāta, kathaya! kiṃ niśpannam?»
so 'bravīt: «bhadra, sampradhāryatām etat. uktaṃ ca:

yā hi prāṇa[parityāga]
mūlyen’ āpi na labhyate,
sā Śrīr mantra[vidāṃ veśmany]
anāhut’ āpi dhāvati. [15]

krameṇa yaḥ śāstra[vido]
ḥit’āśaṅga
kriyāvibhāge suḥṛdo
na pṛcchati.
<...> [16]

desaṃ balaṃ kāryam upāyam āyuḥ
saṃcintyta yaḥ prārabhate svākṛtyam,
mah’ōdadhīm nadya iv’ āḥhipūrṇaṃ
taṃ sāṃpadah satipuruṣaṃ bhajante. [17]

śūrāḥ, sarv’ōpadhāḥśuddhā,
buddhimanto, vicaṅgaṇaḥ
saḥāyaḥ syur; nṛpatvam hi
satśahāyaṇibandhanam. [18]

viśāṇaṃṣaḥgaṇṭaṃsaṃmutthīr’[ānala]
sphuṅga[māl]āṇukile ‘pi dantinām
raṇe ‘pi pitvā tu yaśāṃsi vidvīṣaṃ,
bhavaty āvīdvā na hi bhājanam śriyāḥ. [19]
ON WAR AND PEACE: THE CROWS AND THE OWLS

Megha-varna: “Tell me, father. What will be the outcome?”

Chirañ-jivin: “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 guṇavatāhāya-parigraho vijīgītaṃ ek’ān-taṣiddhaye. uktāṃ ca:

na vaṃśā/mārga/kramalakṣaṇam guṇaṃ,
nirikṣate n’āiva vapur, na c’āgamam;
ya eva śūraḥ sūśāhyavān naras,
tam eva Lakṣmiḥ capal” āpi sevate. [20]

guṇeṣv adhārabhūteṣu
phale kasy’ āsti saṃśayaḥ?
nyastaś c’ātmā satāṃ vṛtte
vibhūtiḥ ca na dūrlabhā. [21]

3.45

“api kṛityartham āyānti
nāṣam sadyo tiṃmānīḥ?
na c’ecchanty ayaśomiśram
apy ev’āṇāntyam āyuṣah.” [22]

jāyā’ōtkṣipyatāṃ pādo
dakṣināḥ kiṃ vicāryate?
mūlāṃ hi prāhur ācāryā
dirghaśūrttram āpadāṃ.” [23]

śrut’āpaviddhair etair vā
vṛṭhā kiṃ śuкаbhaṣṣitaḥ?
prājnas tvam, tyajyatāṃ maunaṃ;
yasya velā, tad ucyatāṃ! [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]
mantram hirijayam
pravadanti manishinah;
mantrasya punar atmaca
buddhi c' ayatanam param. [25]

sad eva khalu mantrasya
dvarni tu nar'dhipa;
viditany eva te, tata,
kirtisyami kirtiman: [26]

3.30 atmam, mantriduta ca,
channa, trisavanakramam,
akaram bruvate sastham;
etavan mantraniiscaya.
[27]

asa芒ghitasya punar
mantrasya shnu yat phalam:
aihina dharma/kamabhyan
artham prapnoti kevalam. [28]

atha vyavasit/anujna,
chedana samishasya ca,
anisam tasya ca jnanam—
mantri^nath trividham phalam. [29]

tad yathay mano visambha^nat gacchati, tathay pra-
yatitavyam. yat karanam:

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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,
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:
mithyā praṇihito mantraḥ
prayotkāram aṣaṃśāyam
durīṣṭa iva vetālo
n' āṇihaty' ōpaśāmyati. [30]

3.35 ātma[pakṣa[ksayā] āiva
para[pakṣ] jōdayāya ca
mantra[dvaidham amāyānām
tan na syād iva bhūtaye. [31]
āyā/vyayau yasya ca samvibhaktau,
channaś ca cāro, nibhṛtaś ca mantrāḥ,
nā ca āpriyaṃ mantriṣu yo braviṣī -
sa sāgar[āntāṃ prthivīṃ praśāsti. [32]

tad evaṃ punar bravīmi: yuddhaṃ na śreyā iti. saṃ-
dhir āpy a[śakye 'rthaḥ saha|ja|vair'] ānumbandhānām. tad
yadi may' āvaṣyaṃ mantrayitavam, tad apanīyatāṃ ete ma-
ntri|mātra|vyapadesa|keval'|ōpa|jivinaḥ kathaukuśalāḥ. na ca
karaṇīyeṣv ātyayikeṣu saṁkaraṇaḥ rahasyaṃ phalavad bha-
vatā.

tathā c' ānuṣṭhite, Meghavarnaḥ āha: «tāta, bāla|bhāvād
a|n|abhiṣiṇo 'smi. yathā braviṣī, tathā karoṃi. tvad|āyatam
hi sarvam idam. tvam adhun' ārtha|vādi jñāna|vijñāna|saṃ-
paṇaḥ pītṛkramaṇa hit'āśi. kiṃ tu kauruḥalam ucyatāṃ:
kaṭhaṃ 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, 
never 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 Chiran·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?”
so 'bravīt: «bhadra, vāgdoṣṭ.

3.60 suśīrām hi caran nityāṁ
gṛiśme sasyam ābuddhimān
dvīpiḥcarmajpratichanno
vāgdoṣṭād rāsabho hataḥ.» [33]

so 'bravīt: «kathaṁ c' ātat?»
Ciraṁjīvy aha:
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; 3.60
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:
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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.

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