

## The genesis and the evolution of the Jataka stories

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The origin of the Jatakas is generally believed to date back to the pre-Buddhist era. On the one hand, attention must be paid to the similarity in the function of expressing moral advice of Indian religious traditions. On the other hand, it should be discussed taking into consideration the continuous relationship with the folk tradition of India.

It can be stated with certainty that there are parallels between the modes of expressing moral or religious advice belonging to various religious traditions, which were started from the Vedic-era. The custom of generalizing the education or deep religious matters by the medium of understandable stories, stanzas or poems has been absorbed not only by contemporary Indian religious traditions, but also the other religious traditions of the world.

It is commonly accepted that the Vedic tradition is the greater tradition in Indian subcontinent. Nevertheless, the co-existence of the non-Vedic ascetic-tradition or ascetic-culture which was completely different from the major ideas of the Vedic-tradition can also be seen. This ascetic tradition has a history going as far back as pre-Vedic times. Some scholars suggest that under this ascetic culture especially Jains and Buddhists used stories or narratives to educate their followers for the purpose of religious edification which was based on the folklore of Eastern Indians.

This paper discusses mainly on the facts which have been expressed by Eastern and Western scholars regarding the evolution of the Jatakas.

**Key words:** Vedic tradition, Ascetic tradition, Jataka stories, Tripitaka, Folklore

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