

A piece of glass, by being in contact with gold, possesses the lustre of emerald; similarly a fool attains proficiency by being in the company of the good. It is also said—

The intellect is impaired, O friend, by the society of inferiors; it remains what it is with one's equals and is improved by association with one's superiors.

Then a great Pandit, Vishnusharma by name, who knew all the principles of the Science of conduct (or, who knew the very essence of the entire science of conduct) spoke like a second Brihaspati—My lord, these princes are born of an exalted race. They are, therefore, capable of being instructed by me in the Nitiśāstra. For,

No action exercised upon an unfit object can bear fruit: a crane cannot be taught (to speak) like a parrot even with hundreds of efforts. And this other thing,

In this (royal) family a child devoid of merits cannot be born; whence can a piece of glass be produced in a mine of rubies?

P. 5. I will, therefore, make your sons well versed in the Nitiśāstra within the space of six months. The king spoke again respectfully—

Even an insect ascends the head of the good by being in contact with flowers; a stone also attains divinity when well consecrated by the great. Moreover,

As objects on the rising mountain appear bright by the near presence of the sun, so a person of humble rank too shines by being in the company of the good.

Merits pass as merits with those who know how to appreciate them; coming in contact with one devoid of merits they are turned into faults. Rivers, as they rise, have their water sweet, but on reaching the sea they cease to be drinkable. - 47

I, therefore, give you *Carte blanche* as regards giving instruction to my sons in the science of conduct. Having said so the king entrusted his sons to Vishnusharma with great respect.

Now as the princes were sitting at ease on the terrace of their palace the Pandit said before them by way of introducing—

The wise pass their time in amusement derived from (the study of) poetry and Śāstra, while fools pass theirs in vicious pursuits, in sleep or in quarrelling.