

The Method of Problem Solving in Mahosadha Jataka

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Abstract

The aim of this paper is to find out 'a method of solving problem' with reference to the Mahosadha Jataka in Myanmar Buddhist literature. It is an attempt to identify that 'Which method Mahosadha used to solve the problem?' We may identify that the method used by Mahosadha is 'Hypothetico-Deductive'. The Descriptive Method will be used to make a brief survey of the Jataka to show how Mahosadha used this method of solving problem. The Evaluative Method will also be applied together with the relevant principle to justify that the way for solving the problem in the selected Jataka is 'Hypothetico-Deductive' and that the way of knowing in the Jataka belongs to the field of Epistemology. This paper can contribute to everyone to have more knowledge that a person's conduct or judgment must be in accordance with the universal standard or norms of the group to which he belongs.

Key words: (1) Hypothetico-Deductive (2) universal (3) principle

Introduction

It can generally be said that human beings are always facing with some problem in their daily life. At such time, people have to consider how to solve this problem. To solve the problem man uses his intellect and reasoning power based on experience or knowledge received throughout his life. There are different methods to solve the problem depending on kinds of problems, situations, circumstances, conditions, places or times etc. So, philosophers of the ages formulated methods for solving problem from their points of view.

The aim of this paper is to find out 'a method of solving problem' with reference to the Mahosadha Jataka in Myanmar Buddhist literature. Mahosadha was said to be a Boddhisadda. But some scholars regard Boddhisaddha as a mythical concept. However, it is a myth that conveys a well-defined of reasoning for problem-solving.

This paper is an attempt to identify that the method used by Mahosadha is whether Deductive or Inductive or Hypothetico-Deductive or else. Tentative solution will be that the method used by Mahosadha may be formed as Hypothetico-Deductive. The Descriptive Method will be used to make a brief survey of the Jataka to show how Mahosadha used this kind of method of solving problem. Moreover, the Evaluative Method will also be applied together with the relevant principle to justify that the way for solving the problem in the selected Jataka is 'Hypothetico-Deductive' and that the way of knowing in the Jataka belongs to the field of Epistemology.

The Jataka tales that have delighted generations of Myanmar are of Buddhism origin and may be said to be religious. But it should be noted that the Buddha's Birth stories were told by the Buddha Himself to lay down guidelines for living a moral life in human society.

Myanmar is a country with Buddhist culture, so many Myanmar folktales have been greatly influenced by the Jataka tales. Myanmar people gradually became familiar with the Jataka through monks, who preached their sermons including one or two Jataka on the Sabbath. Every Jataka contains lesson to be learnt by today's people.

In the following, Mahosadha Jataka illustrates a method of solving problem and it will be proved to be 'Hypothetico-Deductive'.

A Brief Exposition of Mahosadha Jataka (Judging For the Baby)

One day, a woman carrying a baby in her arms came to a pool to bathe the baby. After bathing the baby, she put the baby to sleep on a piece of cloth and descended into the pool to bathe herself.

Meanwhile, an ogress who eats human flesh, and possesses superhuman powers, took on a woman's form and came towards the baby and asked the mother for she wanted to feed

her milk to the baby. Then the ogress took the baby away. The woman followed the ogress to take her baby back and soon there arose a quarrel between them. They finally arrived at the Mahosadha's rest house.

Mahosadha inquired into the conflict and reflected on the all-round circumstances. Then he asked the two women whether they would follow his judgement or not. The two women agreed to follow his judgement.

Mahosadha, a distinguished wise man, made a boundary line on the ground and placed the baby on that line. After that he let the ogress hold the baby's hands and the woman the baby's legs. Then he let those two women pull the baby towards each of them who were staying opposite places, saying that the one who gets the baby by pulling towards her side, would get the baby. When the woman and the ogress used force to get the baby, the baby cried out in pain. The baby's mother felt as if her heart would break with grief when the baby cried. That is why, she released the baby's hands so that her baby could not get pain and she stood aside sadly.

After seeing that case, Mahosadha asked the audience which woman loved the baby more the one who pulled it with great force or the one who released the baby. All people replied that only the mother who loved her baby deeply would not want the baby to be hurt. Mahosadha, then, continued to ask whether the woman, who pulled the baby to her side, was the mother or the woman released the baby and felt sad was the mother. The people said that the woman who released the crying baby and felt sad could be the real mother.

Finally, Mahosadha told the audience that as the woman who stole the baby had the appearance of red eyes, prominent long eyeteeth and had no mercy towards the baby, she must be an ogress. The ogress also admitted that she stole the baby in order to eat him.

Hypothetico-Deductive Method

When we study this Jataka, we can see that Mahosadha used his reason and reflected upon the conflicting phenomenon. In his reflective method, he used the Hypothetico-Deductive method.

Hypothetico-Deductive Method is a methodological device whereby certain propositions are advanced as hypothetical and subjected to verification by inferring effects on the strength of available valid knowledge and comparing these effects to the facts. It is used in association with a number of methodological operations: comparison of the facts; agreement of hypothesis with other theoretical tenets, etc.

The stages of Hypothetico-Deductive Method can be illustrated by the following:

Initial condition (initial hypothesis)

The observed facts concerning this initial condition

The conclusion deduced by deduction based on above two stages

Hypothesis is an assumption based on a series of facts for inferring the existence of an object, or the relation or cause of phenomenon, without actual proof. The corresponding judgment, conclusion or inference is called hypothetical. When formulating the hypothesis, it should be borne in mind.

In the Mahosadha's way of thinking, the hypothesis or assumption would be 'If she be a real mother, then she would treat her baby kindly'. So, he let the two women pull the baby's hands and legs towards respective sides so that one of them could get the baby. But the real mother did not want to get her baby in this way.

This event shows that the real mother did not want to hurt her baby although she wanted her baby back. So, the audience could deduce that it was the real mother who showed love and mercy to the baby.

In this Jataka, Mahosadha used the hypothetico-deductive method to arrive at his judgment. He based his conclusion on how a mother behaves and feels for her baby. He was

sure that a mother would have sympathy and love to her child. It was natural that the baby would be so loved by mother, and this was accepted by all people. So, Mahosadha and the audience decided that the woman has no mercy towards the baby, could not be the real mother. In this way, the woman got back her baby.

This Jataka illustrates and supports the group's moral codes and norms of behavior. In this Jataka, it shows that the mother's conduct to her baby is based on motherhood.

Conclusion

Hypothetico-deductive model or method is a proposed description of scientific method. According to it, scientific inquiry proceeds by formulating a hypothesis in a form that can be observable data. So when the hypothetico-deductive method is used to explore or solve the problem, one must consider the problem and try to make sense of it, observe the data and look for facts in line with previously well-defined characteristics of inquiring data, deduce prediction or expectation from the hypothesis. If one's assuming is true, then expected consequence is sure to be followed.

Western Philosopher Popper also stated that the hypothetico-deductive method begins with a problem, followed by a theory as a tentative explanation or solution to the problem, experimentation or observation is then carried out with a view by experiment, in which cases it is accepted.

In Jataka it is found that at the beginning, Mahosadha used an expedient to reveal the real nature of the ogress. He said that the one, who could make the effort to get the baby, would possess the baby. But indeed, it was a stratagem to provide evidence so that the audience could judge who the real mother of the baby was.

It is important that a person's conduct or judgment must be in accordance with the judgments or norms of the group to which he belongs. Every person should use his own judgment to decide what is right or wrong in accordance with the common nature of human beings.

In this Jataka, it can be proved that Mahosadha used the hypothetico-deductive method as well as the reflective method. He used a universal standard 'love of mother' as an initial condition or initial standard to make judgment. Then Mahosadha observed the behaviors of the two women concerning his assuming initial condition. Here, he observed that whose behavior conforms to the commonly accepted characteristics of motherhood, i.e. love or mercifulness of mother for her baby. After careful observation, he deduced the conclusion or he made judgment to decide who was the real mother of the baby based on the principle of mercifulness. This principle of mercifulness can be regarded as a moral foundation in Myanmar society. This paper can contribute to everyone to have more awareness that a person's conduct or judgment must be in accordance with the universally accepted form of standard or norms of the group to which he belongs.

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