

TEACHING VALUES AND MORALS THROUGH STORIES: A SEGMENT OF OBLIGATORY EDUCATION

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Introduction:

Home is the first school for every child and mother is the first teacher....this statement has become an illusion to the child of modern days. The parents of a family spend a very busy life struggling hard to meet their ends as well as building a secure life to their children. Due to this the time doesn't permit them to relax and teach good principles, morals, values and better ways of life to their young ones. Hence the morals and values have found a place in the curriculum of every educational institute irrespective of age of the learner in the present scenario. The role of stories that teach morals and values have geared up in the curriculum and every child/student has a mandatory learning of these in the institutions before they learn the basics of education system. Stories are also important because they allow us to simulate intense experiences without actually having to live through them. They teach us lessons that help us to survive and make sense of the word. They also help us in a social sense. Among such stories Panchatantra is the most important ones since they communicate the importance of many values that need to be learnt and learning through stories always make the learner remember evidently and undoubtedly. Some examples of stories are mentioned to express the morals.

A human being living in a social environment has to develop certain morals. Morals tend to be driven by personal beliefs and values. Some common morals one has to stick on are:

- ☞ Always tell the truth.
- ☞ Do not destroy property.
- ☞ Have courage.
- ☞ Keep your promises.

- ☞ Do not cheat.
- ☞ Treat others as you want to be treated.
- ☞ Do not judge.
- ☞ Be dependable.

Parents are increasingly busier. Schools and colleges are more engaged than ever in academia and physical grooming of students. Add to this, the explosion of media in all its forms be it digital or visual. The onus, thus, primarily falls on the teachers to inculcate values and ethics in the students. Grandmas are not as available as before, to narrate stories enriched with good

morals and lessons. But what is indeed available is a great collection of moral stories for the learners.

Moral stories help as a platform to educate listeners, irrespective of age since they bring in good principles to live. Value-based stories make students to raise their self-esteem and take greater responsibility for their own behaviour and learning. Reading moral stories to students help impart life values without being preachy. Moral and ethics contribute immensely to the character and have a deep impact on shaping the youngsters/youth. Moral stories for students, just like reading, are not only a wonderful way to build literacy skills but also a subtle, effective way to lay strong moral foundation. Reading moral stories together help them assimilate family values and ethics, giving them a strong grounding. Moral stories provide children with a precedent that can help them stay afloat during challenges. These stories act like guides and help them make the right choices. They also help children to overcome adversities by inculcating strong values and believe in self. Since life does not come with a manual and with its intricate twists and turns, life can be really confusing. What can really help the children navigate through its ups and downs, is a strong set of moral values and ethics. Students who grow up in grounded and values enriched environment are less likely to go off track as adults. This type of learning prepares them for their role in society.

A well-educated person who is a compulsive fabricator earns little respect. Though difficult to explain, this wisdom can be easily imparted through moral stories for students. What prepares children for their role in society and as a good citizen, is the set of values they adhere to. Belief system is what distinguishes a cop from a thief. Both could be equally clever but will certainly have different places in the society. Moral stories for children make this distinction between right and wrong. It is easy to go awry when all you see is negative influence. Peer pressure is immense these days. Most adults confess to starting their addiction to smoking, drinking and the likes under peer pressure. Moral stories for children can help counter this by building a strong sense of belonging and laying a rock-solid foundation of moral values. A good set of values can be of great help to your children in such circumstances. Such children do not succumb easily to peer pressure and are less likely to develop bad habits growing up. However, over the past few years there has been a steady deterioration in the value system. We can't really blame anyone!

One such type of Moral stories is Panchatantra, which is known as “Five Treatises” or “Five Chapters” in Sanskrit. It is a collection of Indian animal fables, which has been widely acknowledged both in the country of its origin and throughout the world. Vishnu Sharma wrote Panchatantra to teach political science to his royal disciples. He was already 80 years old but was known to be a savant in all the Shastras and the theory of politics and diplomacy. According to the legend Amarashakti, King of Mahilaropya in southern India, had three dull-headed young sons. They never knew how to live. The king appointed scholar Vishnu Sharma to educate them. After realizing that conventional tools and techniques of teaching will not work with his new students, Vishnu Sharma decided to write stories. Panchatantra has 5 parts based on five principles 'Mitra Bhedha' (Loss of Friends), 'Mitra Laabha' (Gaining Friends), 'Suhruddhedha' (Causing discord between Friends), 'Vigraha' (Separation) and 'Sandhi' (Union).

This collection of more than 50 stories focused on five strategies:

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1. **Mitra labha or gaining of friends** features stories that talk about how to win friends.
2. **Mitra bheda or losing of friends** features stories about how one can lose friends.
3. **Apariksitakarakam or imprudence or acting without thinking** tells us how we can lose what is important to us when we act without thinking.
4. **Labdhapranásam or Loss of gains** tells us that it is always possible to get out of a difficult situation without losing anything.
5. **Kákolúkiyam or of crows and owls** features stories that talk about the strategies and rules of war and peace.

The collection is divided into five volumes, and hence the name Panchatantra ('pancha' means five and 'tantra' means systems).

For example the stories of Mitralabha (Gaining friends) with their moral are:

Story	Moral
The hermit and the mouse	<i>Strike at the enemy's source of strength to defeat him.</i>
The foolish weaver	<i>Lack of proper judgment can lead to several missed opportunities</i>
Four friends and a hunter	<i>Teamwork can achieve great results.</i>

Some stories of Mitrabedha (Losing friends) are:

Story	Moral
The Jackal and the drum	<i>Do not react blindly with fear.</i>
The crows and the cobra	<i>Even the most powerful enemies can be defeated with intelligence.</i>
The lion and the camel	<i>It is unwise to trust cunning people who surround powerful or wealthy ones for their own benefit.</i>
Right mind and the wrong mind	<i>Avoid association of the wicked or you may end up paying for their misdeeds.</i>
the talkative tortoise	<i>One should speak only at the right moment.</i>
the bug and the poor flea	<i>Do not trust the words of strangers, for they could just be false promises</i>

Stories on Apariksitakarakam (Imprudence) are: The musical donkey

Story	Moral
The Musical Donkey	<i>There is a right time and place to do anything.</i>
The bird with two heads	<i>Having a conflicting state of mind is dangerous.</i>
The mangoose and the brahmin's wife	<i>Do not act in haste without understanding the situation.</i>
The lion that sprang to life	<i>Common sense is always better than knowledge.</i>

Stories on Kakolukiyam (Of Crows And Owls) are:

Story	Moral
Elephants and hares	<i>A little ingenuity can solve a seemingly big problem.</i>
The foolish brahmin and the crooks	<i>If a lie is repeated several times, it becomes the truth for a fool.</i>
Of crows and owls	<i>Do not offer counsel unless asked for.</i>
The thief, the brahmin and the demon	<i>When two people fight, it is always the third person who benefits.</i>

Story on Labdhapranásam (Loss Of Gains)

Story	Moral
The story of the potter	<i>Appearances can be deceptive or never judge a person by his or her appearance.</i>

Panchatantra stories ignite curiosity among the readers. They learn about human action and reaction in different situations through narratives having animals.

Such stories prove beneficial in the brain development of students and aid them in handling real life situations. The central theme of the Panchatantra is the harmonious and integrated development of man, a life in which security, prosperity, friendship and learning are combined as to produce a lasting joy. Fable is also a short tale that teaches a moral. It usually has animals or inanimate objects as characters. Fables are closely associated with fairy tales.

Some important values one has to understand and follow are: Honesty - being truthful and sincere, Integrity - sticking to one's moral and ethical principles and values, Kindness - being considerate and treating others well. Perseverance - persisting in a course of action, belief or purpose. To lead a wonderful life, the Children must respect others, love the family, know what is adjusting and compromising, have helping mentality, respecting religion, do justice, and never hurt anyone. The stories teach us various lessons of life in Panchatantra. Its theme is to emphasize the importance of friendships, team work, and alliances. In the words of Patrick Olivelle, a Sri Lankan scholar in Literature, it teaches, "weak animals with very different skills, working together can accomplish what they cannot when they work alone",

The moral of these stories is they teach us, once someone's trust is broken how difficult it is to get it back. Lying can help you survive only for a short time, but if it becomes a regular habit, you can easily lose friends in the long run. For example, the story of "The Thief and the Giant Brahmin" teaches us how to choose friends and enemies smartly. These are stories which inspire one to live in a right way, work in a right way, feel about others in a right way.

Reference:

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