

INTRODUCTION OF FABLES IN ACADEMIC CURRICULUM

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In an attempt to divert my 7 year old son from the gadgets, I tried to tell him bedtime stories, the obvious choice was fables. One day I told him the fable which I loved the most when I was young and I learnt the moral, “greediness is bad” and we need to be contented in what we have from the story and adapted the same in my life. I expected my son to learn the same lesson. To my astonishment he sympathized with the farmer who could not get anymore golden eggs. I was literally taken aback by his reaction and honestly didn’t know how to react to this I became silent.

After he slept I became nostalgic, when the same story was narrated to me by my teacher, I pitied and sympathized with the goose, and my heart cried seeing the plight of the goose and cursed profusely the man and his wife for having done such a cruel deed.

Same story different reaction, it called for a serious thought. Was there something wrong with the narration? No! Problem lies somewhere else. It proved the fact that today’s generation is heading towards moral degeneration. ‘I, me, myself’- everything revolves around the ‘self’, measures everything in terms of ‘utility’, materialistic wealth.

Alexander, the great, and the greatest conqueror the world has ever seen, died very young at the age of 32. By then he had conquered almost half of the known world. One of famous wishes was that he wanted all his materialistic riches like gold, silver, precious stones etc. should be strewn on the path that led to the grave yard during the procession after his death. By expressing this desire he wanted the world to know even though he strived all his life in earning these materialistic riches, he cannot take even a fraction of gold with him, they all came from the earth and goes back to the earth, this explains the futility of the wealth. So people should strive for acquiring real wealth that helps them in the journey beyond this life.

But today’s generation is living in the ‘now’, i.e., in the ‘present’. They think happiness lies in acquiring and amassing wealth and property and they are in the mad race to acquire the same by hook or crook and least bothered about the means. All they want is to lead a pleasurable and hedonistic life.

When we are sure that our next generation is heading towards wrong direction, it is our duty to show the right path or else with this kind of attitude towards the life not only this generation that is going to suffer but also the future generations will head towards the doom. Right now it is our duty to instill life values in our young ones.

To begin with we can introduce moral stories especially fables like Aesop’s and Panchatantra as part of children’s curriculum. Because if we try to instruct them directly the smarter, the more practical generation is not ready to accept blindly without questioning and we don’t have satisfying answers for them.

Aesop told fables when he could not tell people directly that they are doing wrong. He wrote many fables in order to make a way for younger children to learn morals. He knew that just simply telling a person something will not do anything.

Today we are facing more or less similar situation. The fables can be considered as a valuable tool in persuading others about a specific point. Aristotle, in his 'Rhetoric', argued that in the absence of any concrete evidence for proving one's point that a fable could just as well support one's argument.

If we introduce fables in curriculum, they can be served as a form of children's entertainment apart from being a simple teaching tool. The fables transmit important life lessons using animals as characters which speak and behave like humans. Some of the best lessons that one can learn from fables no matter what age one is –

The Ants and the Grasshopper: The Importance of Thinking Ahead

The Story: A team of ants is working hard all summer to prepare for the harsh, cold winter. Meanwhile, a grasshopper spends the entire summer singing, goofing around, and wondering why the ants work so hard. When the winter comes, the grasshopper has nothing to eat and nearly starves to death (gruesome for a children's story, huh?). The ants save him and he understands why they worked so hard.

The Lesson: Just because you don't need something right now doesn't mean you should put it off. It is okay to take time to enjoy the fun things, but you may not always have the metaphorical ants to save if you. You don't want to wait until winter to buy a heater, wait until the day of to buy a plane ticket, write that essay the day that it's due, or start saving money before too late in life. Think ahead, stop procrastinating, and always be prepared for what's ahead.

In the present scenario we see that the most of the children and youth of today do not actually think and plan ahead. They are not focused and living a life hedonistic life. They just seek pleasure and want to move away from pain. If we teach them through this fable no matter what age group they belong to, the impact will be much more than we try tell the same directly.

The Dog and His Reflection: Be Content with What You Have

The Story: A dog is heading home after finding a big, juicy bone. On his way home, he happens upon a river and sees his reflection in the water. He thinks' he sees another dog with a bigger, better bone than the one he has so he barks at the "other" dog to try and get his bone too. When he barks, his bone falls out of his mouth and he has to go home with no bone at all.

The Lesson: We always want more than we have, but when you take inventory of your possessions, you might realize that the bone you have is enough. It doesn't mean that you shouldn't strive for bigger and better things, though. You should just be careful about always wanting more. Eventually you may find that your desire to have your cake and eat it too will lead you to actually having nothing at all.

Yes, again the greediness is going on increasing in the society. People always want more; this fable effectively teaches the value of being contented.

The Crow and the Pitcher: Don't Give Up When Things Look Bad

The Story: A crow is flying around on an abnormally hot summer day looking for water. He comes across a pitcher of water, but when he tries to stick his beak in he can't reach the water. He

tries and tries, slowly getting more dehydrated. He's about to give up and accept his fate when he has an idea: he drops small pebbles in the pitcher until the water level rises to the point where he can reach it.

The Lesson: Where there's a will, there's a way. Persistence is the key to solving any problem you have because eventually—even if the situation seems dire—you WILL find a solution. Your idea might not be as bad as you think it is, and is just in need of some reiteration.

Belling the Cat: Execution Is More Important than Ideas

The Story: A family of mice is living in fear of a cat that hunts them all day and night. Tired of fearing for their lives every second, they decide to try and think up a plan to help their situation. After some time, one of the younger mice comes up with a brilliant idea. The mouse suggests that they tie a bell around the cat's neck, so they can hear it approach and always be able to hide in time. All the mice agree, except one: the oldest, wisest mouse. The old mouse agrees that it's a good plan in theory, but asks "who will be the one to bell the cat?"

The Lesson: Ideas are essential to solving problems, but even more essential is knowing how to execute the idea. You know that to get into a locked house, you need a key, but without the key it's irrelevant. When you cook up your ideas, either for work or something else, always know how it can be executed before you present it. If you don't have a good way to execute your idea, it's okay to ask for advice, but never boast about your idea until it's truly ready for prime time.

The Young Crab and His Mother: Lead by Example

The Story: A young crab and his mother are spending the day on a beach's warm sand. The young crab begins to walk around, but can only walk sideways in either direction. The mother crab scolds him and tells him to point his toes in front of him and walk forwards. The young crab explains that he would love to walk forward, but he doesn't know how to do it. He asks his mother to show him. The mother crab gets up and tries to walk forward, but she too can only walk sideways. She sheepishly apologizes and lays back down in the sand.

The Lesson: The concept of "do as I say, not as I do" rarely has the same effect as leading by example. When you're in a leadership position you may not always have the opportunity to lead by example, but you should do it as often as you can. Nobody likes it when you demand they do something you can't do. If you can't lead by example, and you need someone to do something that you can't do, ask by explaining their strengths and admiring their ability. Instead of saying, "I can't do this, you need to," you're saying, "I wish I could do this, but you're better at this than I am. Could you help me out?" Leadership skills can be. If you can learn to be a good leader, you have a better shot at becoming one.

These fables are more than children's stories. They are the original advice columns, self-help books, and life hacks. Some of these fables may teach different lessons to different people, but the morals they carry can help you go about your life in better, more productive manner.

Aesop's fables are as relevant today as they were centuries ago. Like the Panchatantra of Ancient India or the Jataka tales of the Buddhist lore, Aesop's fables fired the imagination of generations of young minds since ancient times, reminding them of the age old moral values and the

importance of being good and practicing virtue in a world filled with diverse characters and immense possibilities.

The fables are remarkably simple in expression, but convey appealingly the deeper truths of human life and characters leaving a lasting impression upon the readers and listeners alike. Although some of the stories are as old as our civilization, they are as relevant today as they were thousands of years ago.

Therefore fables can be introduced at the kindergarten level and should be made compulsory till the degree level. A serious attempt to create an 'Utopian' society with a small step.