

Tales: The Driving Force of Ecological Propaganda

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Abstract

This research paper turns a critical spotlight on moral tales that have perpetually been enlightening the cultured society by transforming ecological values in tune with moral values. The cynosure of this paper is 'inspiring young minds', besides, an unimpeachable awareness pertaining to ecological crisis which is posing an unconditional menace to people who are encroaching natural resources as if they are the Lord of the universe. Only a proper understanding of ecology, environment, and people will come in good stead in the future. To avoid the clutches of impending doom, ecological awareness should be given to children and adults. A sound assimilation of nature will create an indelible mark in their fledgling minds.

The present world, mired in the vortex of chaos, has been deteriorated by ecological bankruptcy; a daunting threat to each and every human being who nonchalantly devours the rare possessions of the earth like a canker which eats up a blooming rose cautiously and gradually. Covetous humans earn a wrath from nature by sponging off minerals and resources, once it was replete with pristine beauty, resulted in ecological crisis which, now, wages a strong retaliation against a swarm of inhabitants of the earth. Various proactive measures are being carried out by so called environmentalists to mend the situation. A good deal of Information has been disseminated by means of literature and media in order to protect nature ,but, amidst a tedious effort, all their attempts are only on paper like a utopian dream; a tall promise. The conviction of saving endangering birds, animals and natural resources is in need of the present scenario so that it is futile to teach new tricks to the old dogs. Teaching morals of nature to the adults causes less impact; on the contrary, moralising young minds is judicious choice. It is imperative, so to speak, to instil an intrinsic awareness of preserving nature in children who have flexible bent of will to appreciate nature. The moot

point of the paper is to turn a spotlight from adults to children who are cornerstones of the next generation.

In earlier days, people used to relate moral stories for inculcating ecological values in the minds of children. Children, the part and parcel of a family, were adept at listening to the stories with all ears because they were interested in hearing tales. Aroused by curiosity, they could internalise the bare bones of stories sometimes sans a proper understanding, so they became an inherent part of the stories. As clean slates, they could easily register characters, dialogues, themes and morals of a story with a quick span of time. *Panchatantra*, *Arabian Nights* are some of the collections of folk tales, wrapped in morals, created a huge impact on inexperienced minds, besides, they paved the way for harmonious environment in tune with cohabitants for the benefit of conducive living. Children were, once, lured by stories but the time has changed everything; sans grandma, sans stories, and as a result sans morals.

Timeless tales, a collection of 24 stories, published by The Hindu, tries to imbibe values in the delicate minds of children. Not only each story is intended to amuse children but also tries to make children aware of struggles including racial, gender, ecological crisis etc., the motto of the stories is to instil ecological values in the minds of children which is in desperately need of the hour. Many stories are bent on the ecological upheaval that is posing a threat to humans who are now on the verge of extinction. The estrangement from the centre (deviation from nature) by humans is the ultimate cause of the present crisis. People, without knowing the essence of nature, take nature for granted. They eat up treasures and exploit them more than enough. All creatures, in the world, are governed by an order but the very order has been altered, changed, doctored, mangled, and distorted for the sake of some vested- interested- people and political mountebanks. Alka Srivasta in *Morality and Moral development: traditional Hindu concepts* says,

Everything that exists on the planet earth, other planets, the solar system.. the entire universe is governed and sustained by the laws of Dharma... while the universe may naturally and unquestioningly follow the laws of dharma, human beings has to choose otherwise. Whenever *Artha* gains excessively importance for humans, they knowingly or unknowingly deviates the laws of dharma. This creates conflicts, which are evident both within individuals, and in the wider society. It gives rise to passion of greed, desire, jealousy and anger that give rise to all forms of conflicts and social disturbance (Alka 117).

Renuka Radhakrishnan's story "The Lost Smile" is a quest of Romu who is always sad. The reason for his strange behaviour is his ill- treatment of a dragon fly. He, once,

tortured the tiny insect as by the writer's words "Snap! He held the dragonfly's wings between his thumb and forefingers". (Krishnan 78). A fairy in the form of the dragonfly punished him by taking away his cute smile as a result he became a laughing stock among his friends. It was the outcome of his ill-treatment he had done on the insect. Romu suffered a lot for his mistake and he was neglected by his friends because of his mischievous behaviour. One evening, when Romu was watching his friends playing cricket, they hit a flower with a ball. After hitting a blooming flower, they ran away. Romu took pity on that flower and he wanted to save it because he realised that it also deserves a place to live in the earth as like him. So he watered the plant and restored its life. This act of Romu's transformation is etched by the writer as, "when the others had run away with their ball, Romu walked up to the rose. the soft white petals looked crushed and dirty. Romu looked at the rose for a few moments... Romu's heart went out to it at once. He fetched the watering can and gently watered the rose, until it looked cheerful again" (TT 80). The fairy, which deprived the smile of Romu, was fainted by the hit of the ball. When Romu watered the plant it got revived. The fairy restored him the smile and blessed him. When you save nature in return it will protect you like God. Exploitation of nature will always lead to their loss of happiness is highlighted on this story.

Another tale which highlights the core concept of the ecological crisis is about Josiah, the protagonist of the story, "At the edge of the woods", has a false notion that he is the owner of the land. His father gave him a small piece of land and asked him to take care of it by cultivating. Josiah considered the lands as tools to earn money so he exploited them to mint money. As a skinflint, he never allowed even a sparrow to visit his land because he wanted to cultivate tomatoes and wanted to become rich. His greedy nature is expressed in the words by the writer as "never had Josiah ploughed so carefully or weeded so fiercely. Tomatoes after much consideration, were to be his maiden crop. Josiah dreamed of huge red orbs, exports and profits. He began to plan and calculate every inch of ground and for each plant." (Dharma 123). He was irritated when he found a sparrow sitting and eating his tomatoes. He informed his mother that he was going to break the leg of the sparrow, which disturbed his dream of getting rich, by a snare. Because it spoils his profit. The father said that even a sparrow sits in his own land doesn't mean that it is the owner of the land but he got irritated "of course it's for you to decide if you want to chase the sparrow away or not: it's your field, but don't set a snare. Josiah tried grudgingly to let the "doebe". Every time he saw the dainty hoof prints though, he felt a surge of irritation. He laid a couple of thorny branches by the wooded border and felt smug when the hoofs prints were less" (Dharma 105). The mother wanted to explain the value and the need of nature to Josiah because of his

harsh and cruel treatment towards nature. She advised Josiah that nature and humans are interrelated and people need to depend on nature for our benefit. People need the support of earthworm to nurture the soil and dry leaves acts as manure. Their dependence on nature is inevitable because human and nature are interdependent to each other. People always count on nature for their benefit because it is their life system. Hannah, the author of the story, highlights the ecological values and our dependence on nature through the mother's character.

You know that God not only created us but everything in the world around us..
God created the world big enough for all of us – humans, animals, plants-
but sometimes we human beings are not big enough to realise this...
the deer, sparrows, and even plants take only as much as they need from
the land. They don't understand our human boundaries and ideas of
ownership. We human tend to take more than we need. (Dharma 108)

In the story "A forever Gift" Soma Basu instils the need of planting trees. Niharika the protagonist of the story wanted to present her friend a nice present for her birthday. She was nonplussed when she found her mother gave a sapling as a birthday present. When presenting the gift Niharika was mocked by her friend for her poor choice of the cheapest gift. This was expressed by the writer as "in fact one boy said, "oh! Niharika got a tree for Nalini. Come and see what we gave her so that you get an idea of what gifts one can gave" (Bahree 63). Sukanya, the mother of Niharika's friend saw all those happenings and at the end she announced the value of the sapling which was presented by Niharika. She said,

A plant that gives life and is worshipped, teaches us to respect all living beings and save the environment. All other gifts will lose their value with them but the plant will always live and grow in our house... All of you must learn to protect environment and spread the message of conservation. She said, as a proud Niharika was called on stage for a loud round of applause.

When morals are vanished in the air, the world will become a state of disrepair; a sort of modern Pandora's Box. Enchanted by modern gadgets; benumbed by technology; imprisoned by social apps; children idle their precious time away in engaging useless apps. Without knowing the values of nature, they spend much time within four walls. They forget the notion that nature is the best teacher that aids them in maturing. What is the use of teaching that is not useful for society? What is the use of science that ruins the beauty of nature? What is the use of children who are devoid of the basic knowledge of nature and culture? The panacea for the situation is to impart the values of nature to children. They will

be given awareness, morals, and education through tales and stories. People can't bend their will after it gets matured. So teach children who can catch up things very easily as quick mettles do. Piaget and Koehler, the educational psychologists, also proved that values and morals have to be imparted to humans in their childhood days for the better results.

“Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it.” (Proverbs 22:6). The only possible solution for the present crisis is to inculcate the importance of nature in children in order to form a harmonious world because they are blood sources of the future. Children are endowed with the gift of emulation. They can imitate, like a parrot, whatever they observe. As for as ecological crisis is concerned, human should have a clear idea that loving money is root of all chaos and troubles. They have to love nature and treat it as their children. Training young minds will solve the imminent danger. People can bend a –fifteen- year- old boy but they cannot bend a fifty- year- old -man.

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