

Education and children essay sample



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Most of us have heard the story in our childhood. From the Pancatantra, this story tells of four friends, three of whom had been imparted education while the fourth had not. The three friends heady with the knowledge they had acquired wanted to travel to test their newly acquired skills. As they were preparing to leave, one among them suggested that only three of them go for after all their fourth friend was unlettered. The fourth was crestfallen.

It was then that one educated friend gave an advice that has lived much after him. The one who thinks this is mine and that is yours is a small minded person. To the large hearted, the whole world is one family, he said insisting that they take their friend along. It is in this verse that the phrase Vasudaiva kutumbakam occurs, a phrase which finds inscription in the Parliament House.

The story goes on to say that the fourth friend finally did go along and on their way they saw the carcass of a lion. The three educated ones decided to give the lion life. The fourth one had a word of caution to offer. Bring a lion to life and it will eat you up, he said. The three friends keen to test their knowledge could not hear the truth in these words and the fourth friend unwillingly climbed a tree to watch the proceedings. The lion came to life and devoured his friends.

The simple story in which the verse occurs speaks volumes on how the world can truly be one family. The verse originally occurs in a story in the last section of the Panchatantra which advises on how to deal with new situations which have not been experienced before. Subsequently it has been quoted in various other instances in Sanskrit texts.

The first criterion the verse states as essential to seeing the whole world as one family is to give up possessiveness. Do not hold on to an idea or acquisition as only yours. It is yours so that you can use it for common good. This necessarily means one has to give up one's ego. The sense of having knowledge intoxicated the educated ones so much that they did not reflect on the consequences. They did not remember that good counsel can come from anywhere and that the wise should be alert to hear it. In the verse, as is common with most Sanskrit subhashitas, it is not mentioned what you should not be possessive about. In this context it was knowledge. It could be wealth, property, ideas and so on.

The second aspect is to take the less fortunate along on the path to progress. The magnanimous have to be willing to share the fruits of their possession. By taking the uneducated with them, they were taking the burden of fending for him, of showing him the world, for he had no knowledge of the principles that governed them and the responsibility of his actions which would not be dictated by knowing. Sharing is the key to balanced progress or else their own knowledge itself can devour them.

The story ends with the moral that common sense is more important than mere bookish knowledge and one should always be alert. Pursuit of knowledge is good only so long as we keep evaluating it on the anvil of utility to society, ethics and human happiness.

A Kashmiri poet, Bhatta Udbhatta adapted this shloka to a more specific context. He brought in the dimension of relationship and said that the one who says this person is my brother/friend is small minded. One who is large

hearted looks on all human beings as family. The man who thinks that a certain community is his, based on considerations of caste, religion, colour or any such criterion is a small minded one. The large hearted one sees the whole humanity as his brothers and sisters.

Between the two versions the verse says to live the principle of accepting the whole world as one family one should practice certain degrees of non-possessiveness and detachment.

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