

Resentment – A barrier to Learning

A Storyteller's Advice to his audience
(Extracted from Kalila and Dimna Vol.1 – Ramsay Wood)

I must emphasize this point: my stories require, at this stage, no extra commentary, imaginings, or guesswork by you, me, or anyone else. The very worst would be that of moralizing away the effective substance. Thus the urge to tag tidy little rationalizations, persuasive formulas, intellectual summaries, symbolical labels, or any other convenient pigeon-holing device, must be steadfastly resisted. Mental encapsulation perverts the medicine, rendering it impotent. It amounts to a bypass around the story's true destination; to explain away is to forget. Thus, let the stories which you can remember do their own work by their very diversity. Familiarize yourself with them.

Abundance

There was once a conceited and ignorant aristocrat. He had convinced himself that everything which was in any way connected with him was of a special nature, which could function or yield its greatest value, only because of his association with it.

Among his possessions were a number of excellent fruit-bearing bushes, some plants which bore beautiful flowers, and a number of exceptional hens which lay abundantly.

The citizens of the town adjacent to this odious man's estate tried everything they could to make him more humane. For decades men of spirituality tried to reason with him; philosophers tried to argue with him, scholars tried to convince him that they were more learned than he.

Nobody ever succeeded in making any impression on the man. One day, one of the townspeople decided to visit a wise man, a Sufi who lived in the nearby hills.

"The remedy is quite simple" said the Sufi; "and the only reason you have not thought of it is that your resentment of the man was stronger than your desire to learn how to overthrow him from his own behaviour. Now this is what you must do."

He sent the man away to make a collection amongst the other people of the town. When they had amassed a certain sum of money, they went to the aristocrat and bought from him three of his bushes, six of his plants and twelve of his hens.

These things they installed in a garden near the town, in a place where the conceited man was sure to pass.

Some months later, when the aristocrat was riding past, he looked and saw that the flowers were blooming, the bushes were laden with fruit, and the hens were laying in plenty.

The realisation that such things could also serve the common people, and were not withering or ruined in such profane hands, so demoralised the arrogant man that he had a seizure, fell off his horse, and died.

Story from - Letters & Lectures of Idries Shah