Chapter V

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This chapter concludes with a discussion on the thematic efficacy of the fables in individual, on the reading public. The reasons behind the perennial popularity of these animal tales have been exemplified consequently.

Although the fable is one of the important forms of literature, it is pity that very few scholars have paid any serious attention to it as an art form and so this work attempts to make a study of the fable as an art form. Since the genre is of primitive origin, an in-depth study will throw light on the influence that short stories can have the listeners especially in the fact moving world of the present era. It has also been demonstrated that the available animal fables from The Panchatantra Tales and Aesop’s Fables are civilised forms of the residual memory of the far more primitive fruit-gathering stage in the development of man. This element is still present in the modern competitive economy; hence moralistic forms of the animal fable are still popular in colour comics. Therefore, it has been adduced that the animal fable suggests:

(a) a traditionally structured hierarchy of animal legend akin to the status structured in a civilised society.

(b) a worldly wisdom which is strongly suggestive of group adjustment and;

(c) a socially practical ‘lesson’ or ‘moral’ to be drawn out.
To begin with the tales were narrated orally by the primitive people and handed over to posterity by words of mouth. Various forms similar to that of the fable such as Allegory, Ballad, Bard, Epic, Fairy and Fairy Tale, Folklore, Folktales, Novel, Parable, Poetry, Satire, the Myth, the Jataka and the proverb have been noted which are as follows:

(a) narration,

(b) deduction of the moral,

(c) a careful maintenance of the fictitious characters introduced into it.

Brevity is the very soul of a good fable; the other features depend on it and arise from it. The story is the most important element in a fable. It must, therefore, hit the nail on the head. Characterization must be done in bold and terse words, and, therefore, cannot go into the development or changes in the characters. The characters are mostly animals, birds and inanimate creatures; but are instilled with human power of speech on the human characteristics. A fable is a succinct story, in prose or verse, that features animals, plants, inanimate objects, or forces of nature which are anthropomorphized (given human qualities), and that illustrates a moral lesson (a "moral"), which may at the end be expressed explicitly in a pithy maxim.

Hence a fable cannot go into the luxury of detail with regard to the plot, incidents and characters. The incidents should be narrated concisely, there by leading to further action.
Each and every fable is followed by a moral lesson, which is in keeping with the tenor of each story. The anti-didactive principle of art promoted by Oscar Wilde, that art is moral is not relevant to this kind of didacticism. Those fables however teaches the art of life rather than a system of ethics. It is the empiricism of the purest kind which favours didacticism. It cannot do violence to the aesthetic pattern underlying art.

On the other hand, the maxim containing the moral of the fable, which occurs at the conclusion of each story, serves the aesthetic purpose to the readers. The witty dictum found at the end of Walt Disney comics serves the same purpose. All the stories dealt in colour cartoons like Spiderman, Superman, He-man and all the heroes deal with moral precepts. They fight for moral justice.

In most fables, the Aristotelian principles are represented in miniature. They all have a beginning, a middle and an end. They also comply with the three ‘unities’, and Aristotle refers to Aesop’s Fables in his books.

There is one advantage in making use of animals and birds as characters. The reader identifies himself with the characters and enjoys or suffers with them. Such identification is emotive and therefore raises and disturbs human feelings and passions that ultimately clouds the intellect by passions. In today’s trend all the characters in the cartoon television channels are able to entertain the young and the old with themes that are amusing and a same time encapsulate ideas that are timely and appealing.
The animal characters in the fable are often disregarded, altered and portray some human quality. It is individualized and plays an appropriate in a particular situation. The 'crocodile' is first shown to have been clever enough to deceive the 'monkey' but gives himself away by talking boastfully. The rude played upon the foolish crocodile is the hint at the human drama of bourgeois existence.

It is here that the beauty of the animal tale lies. It becomes the status of a genre a human drama. Personification of these birds take the role of human and the beasts and other creatures make the jungle life peripheral. The colourful animation of Walt Disney Hanna Barbera and many other writers, today is nature consequents of the early fables.

The importance of the educative value of the animal has been discussed with the thematic perspective. All the characteristics features of a fable are brought out, but not of course in a broad research. It can, therefore be termed as Pocket - mini-research.

Fables are more than amusing tales; they encapsulate ideas that are timely and appealing. Some deal with current issues, assuring us that we can change the world if first we change ourselves. To do this we need to discover who and what we are; with satire, exaggeration, and pathos, fables hold up a mirror before us. In this way they instruct and uplift and do it quite effectively.
Looking particularly into the often quoted fables of Aesop and the Jataka tales of Buddhist tradition, we discover more than meets the eye for, as the French collector and translator of Aesop's Fables, Jean de la Fontaine, observed:

We yawn at sermons, but we gladly turn / To moral tales, and so amused we learn.

To this end, fables have been repeated and adapted for each generation and life situation. Many, stemming from truths older than time, have passed orally from age to age and country to country. This accounts for their startling similarities and variations, and for the confusion surrounding their origin.

Animals play important parts in fables like The Goose that Laid the Golden Eggs, The Boy Who Cried Wolf, The Fox and the Grapes, The Race between the Tortoise and the Hare, The Wolf in Sheep's Clothing, and many more. These stories, whose characters also include humans and gods, captivated the Greek fancy.

The fable should be regarded as a form of literature, work of art because:

(a) the fabulist attempts to exit life of fable;

(b) the fabulists give external shape to their vision of life with the purpose of giving pleasure to the reader.

However the form is not dead. It has helped the contemporary cartoonist, the comic-strip writer, and the politician has flourished on it. The satirist has used
it to bring home a point in worldly wisdom. The Aesopian tradition is still continued
in the colour comics of Walt Disney and Hannah Barbera. And now in the
twentieth century, we have James Thurber’s *Fables for our Times*.

In other words, within its limitations, the fable answers all the descriptions
of fiction art along with its special characteristics.

The biographies of Aesop and Vishnu Sharma have been reconstructed from
the meagre information available. It is curious to note that both of them had a royal
court to serve. Aesop converted a need into an art form. Vishnu Sharma had young
and wild princes to serve. Aesop was a slave.

Vishnu Sharma, a Brahmin and, therefore, could never be made a slave.
This causes some difference in their philosophical attitude.

Vishnu Sharma and Aesop both had access to a number of well-told stories,
which in their attempt to crystallise into still briefer and more effective pearls might
have shaped into more concise art forms. The credit of authorship can go to the
fabulists in that they gave the raw material a form with a distinct beginning, middle
and an end. They also get credit for the moral content in the wisdom. Much of the
moral content is inherent in the fable itself, though the witty, sarcastic expression
of this moral content should belong to the literary artists.

Literature has its beginning in the telling of a tale, also termed as ‘oral literature’
Stories and fables were told orally and stored in the memory. Now-a-days many
writers have contributed much to children’s literature. Writers from various
country like by Lewis Carroll, Roald Dahl, Brian Jacques, C.S. Lewis and Beatrix Potter, Rev. W. Awdry’s railway series on steam locomotives and diesel locomotives which helped in creating the popular television cartoons. Stories like Thomas and the Tank Engines, Oswald, Make Way for Noddy, Dora and Her Adventures and Hanna Barbara’s Walt Disney series and many such cartoons, highlight virtues that teach through delight.

Lewis Carroll Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland and C.S. Lewis, The Chronicles of Narnia and The Space Trilogy, the author of The Lord of the Rings have all earned considerable popularities. Brian Jacques works are Redwall, Mossflower, Mattimeo, Mariel of Redwall, Salamandastron, Martin the Warrior, The Bellmaker, Outcast of Redwall ..... 

Helen Beatrix Potter was an English author, who was best known for her many best-selling children’s books like Peter Rabbit. Joel Chandler Harris’s Uncle Remus stories are famous for their animated stories. Roald Dahl a British novelist, and short story writer, is credited with The Twits, Charlie and the Chocolate Factory, James and the Giant Peach, Matilda, The Gremlins, published in 1943 is a story about mischievous little creatures and the book was commissioned by Walt Disney for a film that was never made

Brian Jacques wrote Redwall, Mossflower, Mattimeo, Mariel of Redwall, Salamandastron, Martin the Warrior, The Bellmaker, Outcast of Redwall and other stories.
The ability to narrate a story is inherent in man and he utilizes it by creating a make-believe world to which has listeners are transported. Poets sing of heroic adventures and fights, the great teachers of morality have found in the story an apt medium to impress the minds of the listeners, the truth that governs human behaviour and the significance of human life.

Story tellers have sung of victory in battle and the agony of defeat, gay and tender episodes or grim and fearful experiences. Thus the young and the old, the cultured and the illiterate, succumb to the spell that the story teller casts upon them. The gradual development of story telling and writing of fables with animal characters as protagonists has always served an aesthetic purpose.

One of the primitive manifestations of human communication was the narrative mode. Story telling culture spread through society rapidly. Even the baby in the womb is believed to respond to tales in its puerile manner Abhimanyu in the Mahabharata tale and the elders of the family enjoyed telling stories. Stories that appeal to generation after generation are the stories that reveal the complexity of life. We live in the past, partly in the present and much in the future. A tale is a blend of facts fiction. It need not necessarily contain a moral lesson. Its main purpose is to delight the reader.

Some scholars argue that folktales were passed by oral means as a result of migration. With gradual interest; they spread from country to country, through sailors and soldiers, women stolen from their tribes, slaves and band monks and
young then on the grand tour, as stated by Sutherland and Arbuthnot. The stories that travelled by land changed a great deal because of the retelling process while those that travelled by sea were more similar in version.

The evolution of technology has also changed the tools available to story tellers. Technology has brought about great changes, with the invention of the printing press. Stories abound in such moods as humorous, inspirational, didactic or educative, terrifying, tragic and romantic.

Vishnu Sharma gave importance to Dharmasastra and was careful to see that his works do not go against the principles of Dharmasastra and have aesthetic tendency. The Panchatantra Tales is mainly based on karma theory. There are a number of verses which illustrates the influence and the role of luck or fate. Thus, it is pervaded by the Karma theory. The best example is the story of the Hunter and the Pigeons. Throughout the book, conflict between worldly wisdom and higher moral ethics is nicely depicted. All the characters in the story named based on their nature of their characterization like the lion called Irontooth, a jackal named Clever and a wolf named Fleshmouth in The Story Of The Lion And The Camel, Karataka, the fox, Pingalaka, the lion-king and Sanjeevaka, the ox, the fishes were named Vrinda, Chanda and Manda in The Three Fishes, Ganga Dutt the frog.

An example for Loss of Gains is the story of The Stork And The Crab. The story of Dantila in the mitrabheda of Panchatantra. In Making Friends – Mitra-Sampraktikam which shows the benefits of friendship and discusses at
length how even the weak are capable of saving themselves against their powerful enemies through mutual help as in the story of *The Mouse And The Lion*. The third section of the book is entitled *Of Crows and Owls*, or *Kakolookeeyam*, where it deals with the enemity, as in *A Jackal is not the Lion*, where in the end of the story the lioness says:

Brave you are and handsome,
And learned too my son,
But no one kills an elephant
In the family where you are born. (TPT, 72)

The fifth section of the book is called *Rash Actions*, *Aparikshit Karkam*. A story titled *The Unteachable Monkey*. All the themes in the stories which are discussed in the chapter are based on the five riti's.

*Aesop* the great story teller of Greece was the originator for *Aesop’s Fables*. Aesop was a slave in Greece, though not educated, his knowledge is clearly depicted from the below words which he said to slave purchaser:

Sir, once my two companions would have completed all the work, do you think there will be anything left for me to do? But sir, still I shall carry out the orders given by you and that too with complete loyalty. Also there is an additional qualification with me; I can be utilized for frightening your children when they are nbeing mischievous. (A, 3)
Little is known of Aesop's life other than from references to him in philosophical historical writings of his contemporaries. Plato, for one, mentions that Socrates, when in prison awaiting death, translated from memory Aesop's fables into verse. Others speak of Aesop as wise and eloquent, which belies his biographer's claim that the slave Aesop was grotesque in appearance, dwarfish, potbellied, dark complexioned and mute, until the goddess Isis, grateful for his kindesses to her priestess, restored his voice and the nine Muses each endowed him with her special gift. Thereafter Aesop rose to fame and fortune. Eventually he was granted freedom by Xanthus, the philosopher, whom he had served with distinction, having often solved problems that baffled his master and with homely aphorisms outwitted Xanthus' intellectual students.

Once free, Aesop made his home in Samos and traveled widely, visiting Corinth, Athens, and elsewhere. At Babylon he was appointed minister to the king, and in Lydia became a favorite of the wealthy King Croesus. Aesop became very famous in the kingdom of Croesus. Most of the stories that we read today as Aesop's fables were told by him during the period he was with Croesus. It was there in the court of Croesus that he became acquainted with Solon the great lawgiver, and with many of the famous men of that time. Sent to Delphi on a commission of the King, Aesop found the Delphians unworthy of their reputation; and they, fearing exposure, planned to destroy him. Concealing a golden bowl from the temple of Apollo in his baggage, they accused him of theft and sacrilege, and condemned
him without a fair trial to be hurled to his death from the Phaedrian cliffs. This, they implied, was the vengeance of Apollo, whose wrath he had apparently incurred years earlier when he had erected at Samos a shrine to honor the Muses rather than the God. His cruel death shamed and saddened the ancient world. Two hundred years later, in Athens, a statue of Aesop was placed in front of those of the Seven Sages of Greece.

During the past 2500 years or so Aesop's fables have been translated and enjoyed the world over. Generations have been instructed to emulate their clarity of style and satire. Typical examples of his compassion and skill are found in the well-known stories of The Lion and the Mouse, and The North Wind and The Sun [retold from Aesop without Morals, Lloyd W Daly]. In the first, we read of a lion, who awoke to discover a mouse running over his back. He seized him and was about to eat him when the mouse said, "If you will let me go, I will repay you." The lion, amused, released him. Later the lion was caught by hunters and tied up. Hearing his groans the mouse came to his rescue; gnawing through the rope he set the lion free.

In the contest between the North Wind and the Sun each wagered that he was the stronger and would prove it by forcing a man to take off his coat. The Wind blew and blew, but the more he blustered, the tighter the man wrapped his coat about him. The sun just beamed, and the man, warmed and relaxed, took off his coat!
Aesop stories were told for common man and instruct the reader in worldly wisdom. Aesop possibly did not write as of Panchatantra and certainly did not make a collection of his fables. They were spoken as occasion gave rise and were handed down from the mouth.

One important thing discussed in both the fabulists is the stories dealt had a beginning, middle and an end. Aesop told stories to entertain, but Vishnu Sharma told stories to teach the princes. A comparison of the authors of the works is interesting. Aesop was a slave, and Vishnu Sharma was a Brahmin. This caused some differences in their attitudes in the stories. Both of them had access to a number of well-shaped stories. Vishnu Sharma had wild and young princes to teach. Aesop did not have any such purpose. He converted a public need into an art form. He was never appointed to teach anyone. It was the outcome of his hobby to tell others stories’ to his friends. Both the writers can get the credit for the moral content of wisdom in the animal fable. Much of the moral content of wisdom will inhere in the content of the fable itself, though the witty, sarcastic expression of this moral content should belong to the literary artist.

In a way both Aesop and Vishnu Sharma dwelt in the forest and had a stock of popular animal stories. Both have invested animal characters in their stories with a certain human quality – fox for cunning, the hare for timidity, the dog for fidelity and the donkey for foolishness.
Human characters from all walks of life are introduced in Aesop's Fables. They are carpenters, blacksmith, masons, hunters, slaves, cobblers, fishermen, merchants, physicians, butchers, millers, shepherds, etc. However they are not known by their professions.

Aesop introduces a number of animals such as ass, bull camel, cat, crow, dog, dolphin, eagle, flee, fox, goose, gnat, grasshopper, hare, horse, hawk, hen, heifer, jackdaw, kite, lamb, lark, lion, mouse, mole, monkey, owl, ox, panther, peacock, partridge, raven, serpent, swan, tortoise, wolf, and wasp, besides others. But it should be noted that the fabulist does not introduce the elephant in his fables. He does not give the characters the label of their species as the Ass, the Lion, the Monkey and the Dog.

We can understand the ferocity of the tiger, the kingship of the lion, the cunning of the fox and the stupidity of the donkey, which probably was the earliest to be reclaimed. But more elaborate allegories such as the old lion tired of hunting and demanding that each species send one victim for his daily nourishment is clearly the superimposition of an already political existence. The subject of such stories is to criticize a king who is living on the tributes from his own subjects. The intended teaching is that the king should be active, because only through his own activity can he exist. No animal enters the mouth of a sleeping lion. Such tales are derived from not only a political existence but has inspired political allegory as:
The fool who ignoreth
Good peoples’ instruction,
Like the careless camel,
Meeteth sure destruction.(TPT, 89)

The meritorious acts or punyas will always, brings happiness; while the sinful acts bring about unhappiness, as in the story Man Gets What He Should:

Man gets what he should receive,
That even God cannot prevent.
So grieve I not, nor am surprised
At what is mine – it can’t be another’s.(TPT,47)

Some fables can be considered as satires. In The Wolf And The Lion a wolf stole a lamb from a fold and carries him off to his lair. A lion mets him on the way, and seizes the lamb from him. The wolf standing at a safe distance, complained, that the lion had taken the prey unrighteously from him. The lion mockingly replied that it was righteously his, since it was the gift from a friend. The King dominating his subjects and demanding the food there with showing his powers with force.

All the stories are authoritative in Panchatantra are to make the reader believe that the statements made by the characters are all correct and are in accordance with the prevailing customs and laws. The characters introduced in the stories justify the statements made by them as:
He who serves the king
Is respected everywhere,
No matter how foolish or low caste
Or under serving of respect
Even if the king’s servant should be a base coward
He is not belittled by the people.(TPT, 34)

The tales highlight such truths like; a man is not able to enjoy wealth even after acquiring it. The wisdom offered continues with what we sometimes call moral, or cynical, but in either case, it is usually good advice expressed in a minimum of words. One should be wise and acquire worldly wisdom, it is clearly said in the opening lines of The Panchatantra Tales itself it is to be seen

Better than a foolish son
Is one deceased or never born,
The pain that gives at least is brief
But the fool gives cause for lifelong grief.
Better abortion or no cohabitation,
Better still born or even a daughter,
Better a barren wife, but not a foolish son,
Even if a rich or handsome one
What can one do with a cow which gives
Neither calves nor milk

Whats the point of having a son

Who’s neither devoted nor learned? (TPT,1&2)

The fables of Aesop are didactic and clearly moral fables. The very spirit of the fables is clear that Aesop’s purpose was to instruct through entertainment. The stories dealt are with simple theme and short.

Aesop’s way of adopting the characters in the story for example The Man and the Serpent. A countryman’s son by accident trod upon a serpent’s tail, which turned and bit him so that he died. The father in a rage got his ax, and pursuing the serpent, cut off part of its tail. So the serpent in revenge began stinging several of the farmer’s cattle and caused him severe loss. Well, the farmer thought it best to make it up with the serpent, and brought food and honey to the mouth of its lair, and said that let they forget and forgive. The countryman said they the snake was right to punish his son, and take vengeance on his cattle, but surely the countryman was right in trying to revenge the snake. Now that both are satisfied, and decided to be friends.

On this suggestion the snake did not accept to take the countryman’s gift. The snake also added that the countryman can never forge his son’s death and he for his loss of his tail.

Moral: Injuries may be forgiven, but not forgotten.
In The Panchatantra Tale Vishnu Sharma portrays snake as in the story of The Gold-Giving Snake. In a certain place there lived a Brahman by the name of Haridatta. He tilled the soil, but his time in the field brought him no harvest. Then one day, as the hottest hours were just over, tormented by the heat, he lay down in the shade of a tree in the middle of his field for a sleep. He saw a frightful snake, decorated with a large hood, crawl from an anthill a little way off, and thought to himself that surely the goddess of the field, and he had not paid her homage. That is why the field remains barren. So he brings her an offering. After thus thinking it over, he got some milk, poured it into a basin, then went to the anthill, and prayed that the snake who is protector of his field, for a long time he did not know that the snake had been living there. For that reason he had not yet brought any offerings to the snake and requested to forgive him. Having thought so, the Brahmin set forth the milk, and went home. The next day he returned to see what had happened, and he found a dinar in the basin. And thus it continued day by day. He brought the snake milk, and always found a dinar there the next morning.

One day the Brahman asked his son to take the milk to the anthill, and he himself went into the village. The son brought the milk, set it there, and returned home. When he came back the next day and found a dinar, he said to himself that the anthill must be full of gold dinars. The Brahman’s son killed the snake and wanted to take them all at once. Having decided the Brahman's son returned the
next day with the milk and a club. As he gave the milk to the snake, he struck the snake’s head with the club. The snake, as fate willed it, escaped with life. Filled with rage, the snake bit the boy with her sharp, poisoned teeth, and the boy fell dead at once. His people built a funeral pyre not far from the field and cremated the Brahman’s son.

Two days later his father returned. When he discovered under what circumstances his son had died, he said that justice had prevailed. The next morning, he once again took milk, went to the anthill, and praised the snake with a loud voice. The snake appeared in the entrance to the anthill, and said that the he had come out of greed, not letting even his grief for his son’s death. From then on friendship between the Brahman and the snake was no longer possible. After saying so the snake gave him a costly pearl and disappeared into her cave. The Brahman took the pearl, cursed his son’s lack of understanding, and returned home.

Both The Panchatantra Tales and Aesop Fables had a great purpose of moral instruction at the end of the story; as, A well-meaning friend may not be able to help a person because of the person’s own stupidity. Whether fraud and treachery can be practised by a conscientious man or not? The answer is that even a conscientious man should practice fraud and treachery against a wicked enemy. It is ironic to notice that another theme dealt in is that good fortune comes through the favour of fate. Greediness is the root cause of unhappiness. The story deals
with doing the duty and the result are in the hands of fate. Another idea dealt is what is use of wealth without wisdom, as it is rightly discussed:

What is the use of treating
Wealth only like a bride,
And not a common harlot,
For all on the way side.

And,

This is yours or mine,
The small minded show
This earth is a family
The large hearted now. (TPT, 82)

The moral content of *The Panchatantra Tales* and the *Fables* of Aesop does not hinder in a way to art. It rather supports and stimulates art. It accepts the clash of interests in the phenomenal world and refuses to be cramped by ethical or abstract imperatives. This is certainly true of *The Panchatantra Tales*. This kind of teaching is not anti-life. It teaches the art of life rather than a system of ethics.

The stories have been so picturesquely described that every child would find them not only pleasurable but learn to delight.
The style of both the works is simple and direct. Aesop uses prose for his narration. In *The Panchatantra Tales*, the fable begins with a verse form. Then the story is told in prose. There is an intermingling of prose and verses in between the fables to justify the statements made by the characters.

There are a number of references to gods in *The Panchatantra Tales*. Among them is the story of Devasharma, which throws light on Shaivism. But in Aesop, we do come across some gods and angels, but they just come and go. There is no theory or explanation of any doctrine in the fable of Aesop.

Thus reading of books is considerably lost due to modern age. Viewing the stories has made man passive no longer the wisdom of Francis Bacon applicable.

Some books are to be tasted, others to be swallowed and some few to be chewed and digested.

Fables have been admirably constructed with a motive of general utility and of universal application. Both the fabulists contributed imagined qualities super infused by human analogy upon the animal world with the ripest wisdom. Thus the dedication is recalled again and again by the younger generations as well as the older generation. These animal appearing as stock characters have become popularized in the colour comics and in all the television channels. It is noted that Aesop and Vishnu Sharma paved the way for initializing the art.
Fables have lasting appeal because of their many levels of meaning and because in their heroes we see ourselves. By their ingenious examples we learn how to disentangle ourselves from materialistic involvement, and how to develop the use of the five weapons of spiritual attainment so that, when in the end we triumph, we will have helped not only ourselves, but others on the journey towards perfection.