

Tiya - A Parrot's Journey Home

Abha Chatterjee

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Older Indian literature and mythology are replete with stories about animals and the foibles of man being depicted through moral stories - storytelling for educating Princes and training them to rule - Hitopadesha, Panchatantra, the Kural. How is Tiya (the parrot) different?

First, the training of a prince is not the main goal. Second, this book is for everyone aspiring to become themselves - to their full potential. In other words, to develop spiritually, emotionally too, not just for the ruling classes. This means that the reader is actually Tiya, unlike in the short stories of yore. More than just 'beneficial advice' that the Hitopadesha wishes to give, 'the art of intelligent living' proclaimed by Panchatantra or the aim of the Kural to inform the readers about life, love and the ways of the world, Tiya wishes to provoke the reader into leading a more fulfilling life.

Tiya, a modern tale of a parakeet, is the coming of age of a bird that begins life sheltered in her tree with little exposure to the world. She decides to embark on a journey on the advice of the wise owl that believes she can explore her full potential only if she leaves the comfort of her own tree. Journeys have been the traditional metaphor for life and its teachings.

This voyage brings Tiya in touch with her own weaknesses and her strengths - she goes through the trials and tribulations that only experience and travel (in all senses of the word) can imbue. The originality of this short book lies in the fact that it is gender neutral because Tiya is neither hero nor heroine in the traditional way - she is an ordinary being like everyone. She is also

the epitome of someone starting off 'privileged' due to the life she has led so far - wise people to help her and familiarity with the community she belongs to.

A parakeet is one who can mirror, imitate the human sounds. The mirror effect in this short fable is one of lessons that she can offer to the human beings this time round. The structure follows her adventures - she is flying towards an unknown to find that her first encounter teaches her that the rules of games get changed often and without prior notice - one has to deal with them as one goes along.

The meeting with the Fays challenges her to believe that beauty can bewitch for a while but goodness and stability do not spring naturally from there - there is cruelty too as "what appears good to you may not necessarily be good for you". (p. 40).

The experience with the Fays comes into use while dealing with the Zarys. Hans, the mentor, appears by Tiya's side to make the transitions between experiences and to make statements that illuminate them, such as "No one is a freak, Tiya. We encounter what we create, and we create what we want. No experience is a waste in life". (p. 50).

There are lessons for managers as this book suggests that all of us are 'unusual' and should aim to realise our true potential. Indeed, if all could do that through the varying experiences and trials then the organisations would benefit, as would the individuals. Living with the learnings from each job or experience, using our knowledge to the fullest, would make us realise our potential.

The encounters with the Zarys, the Revolutionary Birds, the Leaktons, the Ambigers, Lozos, Lollys, the Dingdings and so on just demonstrate, to reader and Tiya alike, the importance of existence, its meaning for an individual and reaching out to a higher being in oneself.

Finally, Hans' words reverberate throughout the story: "You are much more than what you think you are and you can achieve a lot more than you are achieving" (p. 81).

Self-awareness and self-realisation is suggested for living the good life. There is no going back and we must, as managers or actors on this earth, encourage the qualities and skills that help us grow - we are successful only when we know ourselves.

The progression is clear - the first few adventures lead us to reflect on anger, greed, beauty,

cruelty, and such weaknesses. Later, the encounters illustrate how one can reach to the self through introspection and detachment, silence versus talk. The road to an illuminated Tiya is humorous. The book ends with the belief that Tiya is one with Hans, and yet - separate.

The reader too has journeyed with Tiya and come home - significantly, the home is also the now comfortable zone of being one with oneself and the One.

Author's Profile

Abha Chatterjee is currently the Associate Professor at Indian Institute of Management Indore. Her research interests are: communication, ethics and cross-cultural studies.