

FROM THE EDITOR

FABLES AND PARABLES FOR ADULTS

Recently a German physician psychotherapist, Dr. Nossarat Peseschkian was on a visit to India on an unusual mission: Earlier he had collected a number of Indian fables and parables: he had come again in quest of more. He said that fables could restore balance in an imbalanced mind. They have proved a great help in psychiatric treatment.

Dr. Peseschkian was only putting a stamp of approval on an Indian doctrine that is thousands of years old.

King Amarashakti of Mahilarupya had three sons who behaved before any teacher like bulls before a red rag. The king was a sad man. How to pass on the reins of administration to these tramps? He tried as many methods as the total wisdom of himself and his court could devise, but the princes just refused to be educated!

In despair the king called a conference of scholars and frankly placed his problem before the august assembly and asked if any of them could do anything to resolve it.

Vishnusharma, "a scholar equal to Brihaspati" (the guru of the gods), stood up and accepted the challenge. The king breathed a sigh of relief.

Vishnusharma led the princes to a lonely nook on the terrace and began: "On the bank of the river Godavari stood a *Shalmali* tree in which birds from many a direction came to roost."

And he went on narrating fable after fable—tales of trust and treachery, cunning and naivety, luck and lack of it, crime and punishment and passion and penance. One tale led to another and often one story contained a second one and the second contained a third—a typical Indian way afterwards followed in the *Arabian Nights*.

When Vishnusharma exhausted his fables—he might have taken several weeks to do so—the princes emerged reformed.

Vishnusharma's lore, immortal as the *Panchatantra* or the five-fold knowledge, is acknowledged to be the world's first ever collection of fables and the role it played was not quite different from what the German psychotherapist expects of the fable. In fact, some American psychotherapists had already found parables of Sri Ramakrishna highly helpful.

A fable or parable that has stood the test of time is just not a figment of someone's fanciful imagination; it is often born of a creative genius with a seer's insight. It is a condensed form of wisdom with a force of goodwill behind it.

Beginning with the next issue, THE HERITAGE will present a new feature, *Fables and Parables for Adults*. Instead of waiting for psychotherapists to use them, we can very well use them as preventives, by imbibing their message in our psyche.

THE HERITAGE is planning other purposeful features too. One of them, to appear in the next issue, is *Mythology*.

Mythology is not just a branch of knowledge pertaining to the past. It pervades our culture, literature, folklore and consequently has a great role in moulding our dreams, aspirations and attitudes. It is high time we reviewed such episodes and characters in mythology that will help us understand ourselves.

We will also have a section devoted to literary quiz and news, with items amusing and informative. Besides we will have a section on science and the latest in the world of ideas, soon.

ON THE TIDES OF TIME

Like many constructive endeavors going unnoticed, one that was ignored by the press (no harm done!) was a workshop convened by the Director of the National Institute of Mental Health & Neuro Sciences, Bangalore, Dr G.N.Narayana Reddy, to explore a possible spiritual dimension to the problems of health.

The World Health Organisation defines health as a state of physical, mental and social well being, not a mere absence of disease or infirmity". At one of the WHO Conferences, Dr. D. B. Bisht, Director General of Health Services, Govt. of India, suggested that perhaps it would be right to bring in the spiritual aspect of man's consciousness into the issue of health. The WHO took up the suggestion and requested him to elaborate the proposition. Hence the Workshop.

Your Editor (who had the privilege of participating in the Workshop) found in the idea a turning point in scientific attitude to health. It is the dawn of realisation at a collective level of a truth that mystics knew and as one of them put it, "The spirit within us is the only all-efficient doctor and submission of the body to it the one true panacea."

Spirituality in this context is far from being synonymous with religion. Spirit is the presence in us of a faculty that is subtler than our body, life and mind, call it soul or "Factor X" as Dr. Bisht in his candid manner put it.

Some of the papers presented in the Workshop were of absorbing interest. THE HERITAGE proposes to publish extracts from them in its future issues.