

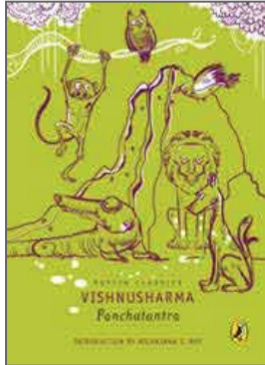
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Vishnusharma and the timeless Panchatantra



Title:Panchatantra
AUTHOR:Vishnusharma
Translat ed by: Rohini Chowdhury
PP:360
PRICE:299
Published As:Puffin Classics

The translator, Rohini Chowdhury, calls Panchatantra, a 'tale-within-a tale' within a tale, a matryoshka doll. Also a 'manual for conducting our daily lives' with wisdom and common sense, as well as a 'masterly treatise' on sociological and political matters. But the most significant thing she notes is that it was a 'revolutionary and successful experiment in teaching young people' and was 'devised' to educate a king's three foolish and lazy sons. The book, thus places the Panchatantra stories, handed down to us for nearly two thousand years, in context. We have all read/ heard Panchatantra stories in some form or other. Chowdhury says, she wanted to place them in context, therefore this new today.

translation. In her introduction, Nilanjana S Roy travels to an ancient manuscript Kalila-wa-Dimna, and as Calila e Dimna in Castil and how the stories of Karataka and Damanaka, the two jackals have been told and retold in the Arab world, in Persian and Urdu. Of course, today's kids know all the talking and playing Disneyland creatures but Walt Disney wasn't the first person to create talking animals like Micky Mouse and Donald Duck, Pandit Vishnusharma created such animals of folklore, for the very same purpose though, to teach children, hold their attention, to convey messages to them. To adults as well today.

This book is not just a collection of stories; it also provides us the history of the Panchatantra tales, their transmigrations etc. Vishnusharma's work is placed anywhere between 1500 BCE to 300CE. It tells the story of a kingdom in the south.... so one assumes, these are of southern Indian origin, but Mahilaropya could be just a figment of Vishnusharma's imagination..... or Vishnusharma's creator's imagination. The super narrator who creates a guru who comes up with these fantastic tales of talking tigers, mean monkeys, angry bulls etc. Whatsoever, they are generally acknowledged to be compiled after the Christian era began in the West. The Tantrakhayika, in Sanskrit Kashmiri, is said to predate the version we know today. In 550 Ce there was a translation into Pahlavi, Persian of those times. By 570 CE it was translated into Syriac, into Arabic by 750 CE and into Persian by 1504 CE. There are about 200 translations of the Panchatantra today.

As Rohini Chowdhury assures us, this edition of the Panchatantra stories are not stand-alone stories. From one narration flows another, in a simple, every-day kind of way. It reminds us of the stories we may have forgotten, brings us new stories we didn't know about, it brings to mind 'similar, real life experiences', it rekindles our perhaps simmering love for stories, it generates the flame of storytelling in us....make up our own stories... its that kind of a book. Its five levels of storytelling, also teaching us how to write. If you didn't know such a book exists, get your copy, its good to present too, at a very affordable price.

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