

The Humility of the Peacock

By Ana Mohan

Once there was a Peacock living in the king's forest. When travelers walked the forest paths, they often chanced upon him, his fan outspread strutting beside the path. They always stopped to admire his fine plumage before going on their way. Now, all this admiration soon made the Peacock so proud he became insufferable, and the other pheasants of the forest shunned him. Presently he began to wish for companions, but when he approached the other birds, spread his feathers in the most flattering way and said, "I have chosen you to be my honored friends," as was his way, those fowls of the forests would turn their backs on him. And so, he became more and more lonely. Then one fine morning he had a brilliant idea. "My race," said the Peacock, "is known for its proud ways, and it is high time this changed. I shall become humble, and then maybe the other birds of the forest will think better of me." And so, saying, he covered his fine head with ashes, and with drooping tail made his way to one of his favorite haunts beside the forest path. Presently, he heard horses' hoofs, and a party of riders on fine chargers come into view. "Now," thought the Peacock, "they will see a sight not often seen; a humble peacock, and then I will change the reputation of my ancestors." But instead of stopping to admire him, the fine courtiers rode past without a second glance, for without his marvelous fan outspread they didn't see him. The Peacock, deeply offended, made his way to where he knew he could find the other pheasants. Expecting their congratulations and praise, he was amazed when not one of them said a word to him, though each was secretly wondering what ailed him. Finally, the Peacock returned home saying, "Being humble without the praise of others is too difficult; I will return to my former ways."

Humility for the sake of the praise and good opinion of others is not true humility.