

## THE ARMOUR

### Intent of the Story:

- ✓ *To become aware of our psychological defense mechanism and what they do to us*
- ✓ *Defense mechanisms are like armors or little prisons we fabricate for our safety*
- ✓ *They rob us from our spontaneity, of our self-hood, and make us feel lonely and cut off from others.*

## THE STORY

Good King Leonard was constantly attacked by his neighbors. His life was in danger. One day, his friends advised him: "Your Majesty, what's the use of a shield and a few guards here and there to protect your life in battle? Pray, have a steel amour made for you. It will protect you from head to feet."

And so, Leonard had his armor made. It was strong, safe and impenetrable. It afforded him a safe protection. When he first put on his armor, he found it difficult to move. He was feeling very uncomfortable. Yet, it was safe!

The first time he went to battle with his amour on, it proved its worth. Every bullet, dart and arrow bounced off the armor. Leonard chuckled with laughter at his enemies:" Fools! Can't you see? Nothing harms me anymore! .Ha...ha!... ha!. No one or .anything will ever harm me anymore!"

The more Leonard wore his armor, the more comfortable he would feel in it. After all, in it, he was secure, protected, and invulnerable! Slowly, despite the remonstrations of his friends, Leonard refused to take his armor off. It had become sort of second nature to him. He even slept in it! He muttered to himself: "Any anything, moment may happen. Even at night I have to take precautions and be forever ready for an attack."

Though the armor would offer Leonard secure protection still it cut him off from his friends, from nature, from social life. His armor made him stiff, artificial and unnatural. His armor, his protection turned to be a little prison.

Locked within his armor, Leonard was feeling alone and lonely. Nobody could touch him, caress him or embrace him. He could not touch, caress or embrace others either! All intimacy, spontaneity and closeness to anyone were impossible.

Leonard's friends were very sad for their beloved king Leonard. Formerly, so full of life and cheer, now he was as good as dead! Finally, one day, led by their love and concern for their king and friend, they plotted a loving strategy. In order to celebrate the last victory of Leonard in the battle field, they threw up a big dinner. At dinner time, they got him drunk.

At night, under the cover of darkness, on their tiptoes, they crept into Leonard's chamber. The king was fast asleep. Gently, they lifted off the amour, part by part, and freed their king

and friend from his little prison. Then triumphantly, they walked away carrying off the spoils.

Early morning, next day, longing to see, touch, embrace and kiss their beloved friend, they called at the palace. But, lo! And behold, Leonard was dead!

### **Questions for Reflection and Discussion**

1. Though with his armor on, Leonard was feeling safe, why nevertheless, was he feeling sad and lonely?
2. Why did Leonard, at the end, refuse to take off his armor even at night?
3. Was his "armor" useful to King Leonard? How?
4. Was it harmful too? How?
5. Give reasons why Leonard was found dead in the morning after his armor was forcibly and suddenly taken away from him?
6. Did Leonard's friends – in spite all their love and concern – help Leonard by taking his armor away? Why?
7. What and how should they have done to help their friend?
8. What can be the meaning of the story of King Leonard's armor in real life?
9. Who does Leonard stand for in real life?
10. What does the "armor" stand for in people's life?
11. Are there such things as "psychological armors"? What are they? How do we call them?
12. Name and describe some of those so called "psychological armors"?
13. Do we, do people, use such "psychological armors"? Why?
14. What are the advantages and disadvantages of using such "armors"?
15. Are most people aware of the "armors" they wear? Why?
16. Can we lead happy and satisfying lives inside our "armors"? Why?
17. What is meant by genuineness and spontaneity?
18. Can we be genuine and spontaneous with our "armors" on? Why?
19. Why is there so much feeling of loneliness in most people's lives?
20. Can we shed off our "psychological armors or defenses? How?
21. Should we, forcibly and all of a sudden break away peoples' psychological armors and defenses? Why?
22. How to go about helping others to shed their "armors" off without hurting them?

### **Thoughts for a Talk or Mini Input**

- There are things in all of us which we do not quite like. A 100 % self-acceptance is an unattainable ideal.
- Yet, we have to strive to grow as close as possible to a 100% acceptance.
- The closer we reach to 100%, the greater our happiness and satisfaction in life will be..
- If we dislike and reject ourselves we cannot expect others to like and accept us.
- When we discover in ourselves things we dislike and hate, it's natural that we try to hide them from others.
- Consciously or unconsciously, we are afraid that others may reject what we reject in ourselves, that they may not love us, that they may criticize us, hurt us, put us down, despise us ,etc..

- To protect ourselves from all the darts and missiles of criticisms, rejections, and ridicule, we fabricate amours or defenses to hide our failures and shortcoming..
- For instance, at the physical level, if I am bald and I do not like it, I put on a wig, If my hair is grey I die it black; it, if am short I may wear high heels, if my body is a bit deformed I tailor my clothes in a way that they hide my deformities, etc.
- At the psychological level- even more - we do the same. We do not want others to see our shortcomings, and our- real or imaginary deficiencies - namely, what we do not like in ourselves. We do not want others to see us as we really are.
- In such moments, we take recourse to what we call psychological masks, armors, defenses and playing roles.
- By playing roles, consciously sometimes, mostly, unconsciously, we force ourselves to project a mistaken image of what we are.
- Playing roles means, “Acting in the stage of life, not like what we really are but according to our imaginary self – namely, the person we would like to be”.
- For instance, if I am shy and afraid, I may act like a bold and aggressive person.
- If a feel useless and untalented person I may act as a proud and boastful character
- If by nature I feel sad and dispirited, I may play the joker’s role
- By putting on masks, uniforms and playing roles, we become phony and artificial; we Force ourselves to be dishonest. We are not natural and genuine.
- The net results of it is that
  - ✓ We cannot enjoy satisfying human relationships, true friendships, intimacy and love.
  - ✓ We remain locked within the little prisons of our armors and roles.
  - ✓ Since we are afraid that others may discover our true selves, we spend most of our energies in keeping up appearances, safeguarding our armors, playing and replaying our chosen roles.
  - ✓ Finally, we feel tired, exhausted, lonely, unwanted and unloved.
- To help those imprison in their armors, games and role-playing , we have to show them unconditional love, have long patience, slowly make them realize their true worth, help them to love themselves as they are.
- Don’t remove their armors all of a sudden or too soon. It’s harmful. If you do that they may die of exposure, as Kind Leonard died