

# **Imparting Human Values In Children Through Literature With Special Reference To Indo-English Children Literature**

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**ABSTRACT:** What is Literature? What is its supreme purpose? Has it been delivering that purpose in our social framework? How does it help to incorporate value education in children? It is answering these questions that shall be the primary focus of my paper. The paper shall also discuss how literature develops a philosophy and incorporates this philosophy in the social framework beginning from the childhood stage itself. It shall be an overview of children literature written or originated in India in general and shall not be a specific examination of the genre. For this purpose, the study considers “Panchatantra”, “Swami and Friends”, “The Magic Drum and Other Favourite Stories” and “The Kashmiri Storyteller”.

**KEYWORDS:** Storytelling, human values, children literature.

## **INTRODUCTION**

In the simplest of simple terms literature is a representation of a society. It is not only a representation but also a reflection of the society that enables the readers to see themselves as they are, to clean their faces if there is mud on their faces, or go into fasting if they are bloating like a balloon. In the words of Saadat Hasan Manto, “literature is a symptom of the state of a society”. He wrote about his stories that “if you cannot bear my stories then the society is unbearable. Who am I to remove the clothes of the society which itself is naked”? By this definition, we understand that literature is meant to encourage introspection in the society. Introspection is the only way to inculcate moral values in a society which needs constant policing and guidance. Literature serves like a guiding star for a society. Children are the foundation of this society. So, imparting a value-based education should be a crucial part of their education process. Children's literature is a great tool to achieve this purpose.

## **HUMAN VALUES IN CHILDREN'S LITERATURE**

Before discussing the contribution of literature in incorporating human values we must be clear about what “human values” stand for? In this context, “human values” stands for everything that is considered morally correct. But the problem with this definition of human values is that what is morally correct for one section of the society may be incorrect for another section of

the society. How does one bring a balance to it then? In the context of this paper, I shall consider those as morally correct that does not cause harm or disturbance to another living being in the society. In short, that which vouches for sustainable coextensive shall be considered to be morally correct. Children are like a blotting paper. They absorb what they are put up on. It is thereby an imperative to create and popularize literature meant for children very cautiously so as to avoid incorporation of wrong values and ideas in them.

There are multiple genres in children literature itself, like, traditional literature that consists of stories, songs and rhymes with anonymous authorship and that are mostly oral, myths, fables, ballads, fairy tales, fantasy, animal fantasy, poetry, verses and so on. The list is different based on different critics. In this paper we shall consider a few narratives of children's literature that is loaded with teachings of human values. For this purpose, I shall consider Vishnu Sharma's "Panchatantra", R.K. Narayan's "Swami and Friends", Sudha Murthy's "The Magic Drum and Other Favorite Stories" and Ruskin Bond's "The Kashmiri Storyteller".

### **HUMAN VALUES IN "PANCHATANTRA"**

The "Panchatantra" dates back to around 300 CE and is considered by a section to be the oldest collection of stories for children in the world. It was originally written in the Sanskrit language and later translated into many other languages like Pehlavi, Spanish, Italian, English and so on. It is a series of five books and holds the wisdom of ages for its readers. It was originally created as a "niti-shastra" that is to teach humans to live their life in a sensible way. It is a unique creation as it employed animals as the characters but having the qualities of human beings. The narrator employed this technique to create a distancing effect on the readers who are human beings. The vices and foibles of human beings are applied to that of the animal characters. They can speak the human language, act like humans and thereby manipulate the readers to accept the foibles of humans. Tales of greed, treachery, stupidity, adultery and loyalty keep unfolding with every succeeding tale.

It helps in inculcating values in children because it is written in the form of a beast fable and the conversations are very witty and entertaining. However, the stories in the "Panchatantra" are not always moral stories. It was quite modern in its narrative for its time as the stories are expressed through dialogues expressing different points of view, accompanied by maxims. These maxims are the unique elements of these stories which suggest that there is no place for a fool in the world.

Intelligence is considered to be of supreme value in the "Panchatantra" stories. Its running theme itself is "knowledge is the true organ of sight, not the eyes." There are several maxims in the stories to support this argument: "Nothing is impossible if one has intelligence", "Shun him who is rogue and fool", "Scholarship is less than good sense, therefore seek intelligence" etc.

It was originally written by Vishnu Sharma at the request of an Indian king who had three foolish sons. The king requested Vishnu Sharma to educate his foolish sons with the way of

the world. Therefore, it was originally composed to teach about the way of the world to the princes. It is said that the princes went on to lead quite a successful life after this. The "Panchatantra" stories do not always reproduce victory of good over evil. In fact, Franklin Edgerton, known for his translation of the "Bhagavad-Gita" considers the "Panchatantra" to be Machiavellian. However, the context of its creation must not be forgotten. In the way of the world, it is not always good that wins over evil. One must be cautious at every step of one's life, use one's intelligence to deal with the different situations in life. Reading the "Panchatantra" definitely is an encouragement to the children to sharpen their intelligence along with developing their moral behaviour.

### **"SWAMI AND FRIENDS" BY R.K. NARAYAN**

R.K. Narayan is one of the prominent names that rings the bell when it comes to children's literature in India. His writings are self-reflective and often mirrors his own childhood. His stories explore adult lives through the lens of innocent childhood. "Swami and Friends" is a dynamic account of Swami- the protagonist and his friends. The stories are set in the pre-independent India and has a backdrop of a fictional town called Malgudi. Like every other powerful child literature, these too has elements that make it an interesting read for grown-ups too. If you read it closely enough, the atrocities of the British upon Indians, there call to convert Hindus into Christians, conditioning the Indian minds to Western ones, is reflected in some of the stories. However, a pressure of sticking to the moral at the end of the story was not grow as a part of this collection. It reflects- be it Swami or Rajan or Mani or Samuel- a childlike innocence and how they are free from the hypocritical tendencies of the adult lives. The stories show us that we are to learn as much from a child than a child is to learn from an adult, be it moral values or social values.

### **"THE MAGIC DRUM AND OTHER FAVOURITE STORIES" BY SUDHA MURTHY**

"The Magic Drum and Other Favorite Stories" is the most recent mention in children's literature in this paper. It is very contemporary in its style and Sudha Murthy, with all her maternal instincts, very well understands that stories play a prominent role in shaping children's personality right from a very tender age. The characters in "The Magic Drum and Other Favorite Stories" motivate children and help them to understand the importance of culture and tradition even in this modern generation. Wit outsmarts all other virtues once again in Sudha Murthy's stories too. For instance, there is the mention of a clever princess who will marry the man who can ask her a question she cannot answer; the Orphan boy outwits his greedy uncles with just a bag of ash, and so on. She tells the tales in such an enraging tone that children will unknowingly and smoothly inculcate the habit of reading which has become so rare in the present era of the electronic age.

### **"THE KASHMIRI STORYTELLER" BY RUSKIN BOND**

Ruskin Bond's name is an eternal association when it comes to children's literature. "The Kashmiri Storyteller" is a novel written by Ruskin Bond. Using the medium of a Kashmiri storyteller and his young listeners, Ruskin Bond retells tales of friendship and loyalty, courage and wisdom, greed and betrayal. And when a character is a little too selfish, or overly nosy, or

too cunning for his own good, he faces the consequences- things do not automatically right themselves, and the story and accordingly." (Bhatia, Sonali)

The story encourages its readers to inculcate a positive attitude, clean character and most importantly to be humane. The story takes us back to an era when life was simple and free from the unnecessary chaos, when friends met in real life rather than in Snapchat or other such platforms. It shows that family members, teachers and other elders passing on loaded culture and tradition orally from one generation to another. Instead of just handing over a mobile phone to the kids to learn things, grown-ups actually participated in enhancing a child's growth. "The Kashmiri Storyteller" hints at preserving the necessary art of storytelling by grown-ups involving children into the process. This process will not only enlighten children with value education but also help in building a bond with the older generation.

It is quite obvious to state that children's literature has undergone tremendous changes and development for centuries from the point of its existence, beginning from heavily moral-laden stories to adventure stories to fantasy stories and so on. The changes in the structure of these stories seems to be parallel with the social, political and educational changes in different periods of time. Whatever the changes in their structure, the element to inculcate human values to children through this process of narratives remains constant. Literature is the best way to incorporate human values in children who are going to be the carriers of our tradition and culture.

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