

Children's Literature: A Future of Possibility

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Abstract: Children constitute a considerable segment of human resource. Today's child is tomorrow's citizen. So better children can build better tomorrow and better tomorrow is possible in making of better children. Indeed, the development of both physical and mental faculty is highly obligatory. Children literature thus created to satisfy the psycho-emotional needs of children. This paper purports to study Children literature from various prospective with an emphasis on societal needs in this cutting-edge education.

Keywords: Rudimentary, inquisitiveness, intermediary, societal, illustration

Introduction : An important segment of our human resource has been captured by children who are justifiably acclaimed as the future of the Nation. The rudimentary stage of human life is very crucial and sensitive. Therefore this stage of childhood has to be scrutinized and evaluated with care and concern. Wordsworth has rightly said that "Child is the father of man and he comes to this world with trailing clouds of glory". Rabindranath Tagore has the similar opinion, "Child comes with the message that God is not yet discouraged of man. Child is in fact, the celestial messenger of love, peace and prosperity." Nehru is of the view that "Children are like buds in a garden and should be carefully and lovingly nurtured, as they are the future of the nation and citizens of tomorrow". But the childhood days are not given due attention by many of us. Proper estimation of children, in terms of their health, education and livelihood has not been prioritized. They are even found less prioritized under the dynamic Govt. policies. Indeed, the fact remains that better society and better future can be thought of if better citizens are produced. To produce better citizens we need to be serious about their childhood and due care has to be taken as a gardener does in getting the growth of a sapling. Very often we undermine the children and their likes and dislikes. We consider them as dependents. The traits such as likes and dislikes; taste and attitude; feeling and emotions of the parents become their own. But we should understand and realize that a child has its own psychological needs, problems and satisfactions which are quantitatively and qualitatively different from an adult. We, therefore, try to cater the needs of the child and should not impose anything against his/her will or desire. But here one problem may arise, if a child wishes something impossible then how he/she should be dealt with. With compassion we can let him understand the reality. She/he should be adequately provided with suitable physical, psychological and emotional support behaving her/his age. This is probably the best way to deal with a child. Children are capricious. They are fond of entertainment. Sometimes they entertain themselves by watching visual actions, sometimes by listening

entertaining words and often reading letters of their interest. Children literature plays a significant role in gratifying the needs of our children. Children literature is therefore, a healthy means of satisfying their psycho-emotional needs. Indeed, children literature is the index of a sensitive mind that reflects the psycho-social state of an individual. A child in its tender age needs all facilities for his /her growth both physical and mental. Children literature can possibly provide a great deal for sharpening the cognitive reserve of a child. The memory, attention, language, visual skills, executive functions can be fortified and tuned by nurturing the mental faculty of a child. So language skills are essential for a child to cultivate. To master over such skills a child has to resort to reading books and journals of his/her interest. Books with interesting subject matter and attractive color-pictures inspire children to read.

Interpreting Children's Literature in Learner's Prospective :

Many of us have the opinion that children are mini-adults and they have the same interest, taste and ability. But in fact they are not. They have a special need. If their special needs are not honored they will hardly take interest in going with the same pace as adults. Therefore, the theme, character, plot, format, style, vocabulary and setting are to be selected and utilized according to the children's needs and interests. Getting delight is the primary object of learning. Ornamentation and ability come next to delight as Francis Bacon says in his essay "Of Studies": "Studies serve for delight, for ornament, and for ability. Their chief use for delight is in privateness and retiring..." Therefore, the literature as a whole and children literature in particular should serve the fundamental and primary need of the reader i.e. providing delight. Delight can be derived only when simplicity of diction and clarity of precision are taken care of. Furthermore a piece of literature without any intermediary can better be enjoyed. The *Encyclopedia of Education* (vol.5, 1971) has said "children's literature is any literature is appropriate for children". The appropriateness of such literature can be justified from the evaluation of the degree of simplicity of language and lucidity of thought and pleasure-giving features. To maintain these in literature needs maturity and experience. It has been said that it is easy to be difficult but difficult to be easy. A writer or a poet has to have deeper insight, greater sympathy, higher literary adeptness, more sensitiveness, great vocabulary skill etc in order to produce a great piece of children literature. But scaling down the language by using jargon-free words, short and simple sentence structures do not make children literature. Many of our writers do not estimate children literature a great genre of literature. Indeed, the false estimation of variety of writers stops giving birth to children literature. However, a clear understanding of the nature and scope of children's literature needs maturity. To produce such piece of art the writer needs to have adequate knowledge, skill, higher appreciation of values and mastery over the style of language, flexibility, adequate knowledge in psychology, sociology, and other co-related subjects. The tiny tots are found taking interest in interesting rhymes and short stories instead of learning the mechanics of curriculum-based syllabus/text books. The rhymes like -

“Rain rain go away / Come again another day / Little Omm wants to play / Rain rain go away.”

create much interest in them because of its rhyme, rhythm, simplicity and free flow. Furthermore, coloured pictures, illustrations and rhythmic movement of literary texts make the children's book acceptable. The inclusion of such features requires intensive and extensive exercise of cognitive reserves. It further requires imaginativeness and sensitiveness. In order to produce and make the literature salable one has no other way but to scale down to the level of readers' understanding. Therefore, the vocabulary, sentence structure and above all the story line should be of interest.

Psychological Approach and Children Literature: The psychological needs of the children are different from the adults. So, one has to delve deep into the psychic level of a child to understand him/her properly. We cannot give justice to the child's needs in respect of his literature unless we have adequate knowledge about his psychological growth and development, state and condition. Encyclopaedia Britannica (1963, Vol. 5, page 504) states “Child's psychology seeks to give a systematic account of the ways in which the mental process of children differ from those of adults, the manner in which they develop from birth to the end of adolescence, and of the mental differences observable between one child and other.” In fact, psychological approach plays a significant role in developing children's literature. There are various types of children having different mindset, aptitude, needs, interests, tastes and so on. These aspects are also variable among the children of different cast, colour and creed. Further it changes in accordance with the societal and circumstantial changes. The level of maturity also varies in various age-groups. So considering the variability of interests, instinct, attitude and needs a writer should write a piece of literature for wide acceptance among the children readers. The basic psychological needs like need to love and be loved, need to achieve, need to belong, need to know, need to be free etc. are reflected in their actions. These needs are differently reflected among the children in different age group. Psychologists and educationists recon three age groups of children like 2-4, 5-8 and 9-15 years. The first age group is very sensitive and venerable. In the elementary stage, children learn with the help of small words, pictures, paintings, objects and often from the real life situations. Therefore, children literature should bear all such elements so as to become widely acceptable by children. To produce such literature one needs greater insight, strong emotion, greater sympathy, sensibility and higher order of sensitiveness. Thus neither children literature nor the authors can be looked down upon.

The children of the first category also learn many things from their families and the surroundings he/she is endowed with. They sense, identify and learn things from their parents. Gradually they identify objects by colour and shape. During this stage they possess limited vocabulary that to the simplest of the simple. So writing literature for this segment of children is a big challenge. The authors therefore, need to be careful in selecting words, structuring sentences, using pictures etc. In simple, the use of small words and short sentences should be the

structural approach of children literature. Rhymes and short stories that carry these features are perhaps the best genres for this section of children. Children at the age of 5 generally start primary education. The enthusiasm, curiosity inquisitiveness, group learning, imitation are some of the characteristic features visible in their behavior. In the age group of 5-8, they like short and simple stories having interesting story line. They can read and understand the story independently and get delight. The stories of fairy-tales, folk-tales, adventurous stories, heroes and monsters, stories of animal planet, stories on discovery are the first choice of the children of this group. They also like small rhymed and rhythmic poems. Children in the age group of 9-15 are relatively matured in reading and writing and indeed better skilled in learning. They are very sensitive and a little critical. They try to be experimental and scientific in their approach. In their adolescence they experience internal impulses and conditions. So they are fond of adventurous stories, stories of hunting, stories of love, travelogues, war, scientific discovery, mythological stories etc. The authors of such literature therefore, produce pieces considering the psycho-emotional state of early adults. However, the healthy psycho-emotional state of children in various age groups help producing literature per excellence.

Socio-Economic-Scientific Prospective: The socio-Economic conditions of the society are well reflected in children literature. The social prejudice, discrimination, dogmas, social crimes are some of the themes of children literature which make understand the society around them. Children literature teaches them to activate the virtues like empathy, fellow feeling, sympathy and kindness to others. This also enables small innocent minds to be brave-hearted to fight against injustice and social evils and taboos. On the contrary the picturisation of economic condition of the society in literature make the children aware about the present and future economy of the country which subsequently make them stronger to face the upcoming challenges. It is no wonder finding the healing touch of science in children literature. The curiosity to know, hands-on-learning by doing, experimentation of new ideas are accelerated when science is introduced into it. Therefore, the introduction of science in children literature makes them more innovative, sharp, informative and factual.

Conclusion : Illustration of culture and tradition in children's literature in true prospective can attract readers' attention. Children's literature should depict appropriate subject matter with leniency of language so as to generate interest, understanding and acceptability among the readers. All these attempts will go a long way with the universalisation of school education and establishment of socialistic, domestic, scientific and prosperous society.

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