



**Themes and Trends in Contemporary Indian Children's Literature
in English: A Critical Survey**

Thesis submitted for the award of the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

**in
English**

By

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**Under the Supervision of
Professor Shugufta Shaheen**

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MAULANA AZAD NATIONAL URDU UNIVERSITY
Hyderabad-INDIA
2017**

DECLARATION

I do hereby declare that this thesis entitled **Themes and Trends in Contemporary Indian Children's Literature in English: A Critical Survey** is original research carried out by me. No part of this thesis was published, or submitted to any other University/Institution for the award of any Degree/Diploma.

(Riyaz Ahmad Kumar)

Place:

Date:

CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the thesis entitled **Themes and Trends in Contemporary Indian Children's Literature in English: A Critical Survey**, submitted for the award of the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in English, **Department of English**, School of **Languages Linguistics and Indology**, Maulana Azad National Urdu University, Hyderabad, is the result of the original research work carried out by Mr. **Riyaz Ahmad Kumar** under my supervision and to the best of my knowledge and belief, the work embodied in this thesis does not form part of any thesis/dissertation already submitted to any University/Institution for the award of any Degree/Diploma.

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DEDICATED TO

My

Parents

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ABSTRACT

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Abstract

Children, our future generation, are special people. They deserve good books, as books play an essential role in their upbringing and their overall development. It has been observed that an awareness and attentiveness regarding children's literature is growing in every country throughout the globe. Children's Literature has many components in it for the overall benefit of children, and instructors can use it for development of the language, reading skills and strategies. The aim of the research here is to focus on the dominant themes in the English language children's books in India. The first chapter focuses on uncovering the ambiguities in children's literature, relation and difference between children's literature and adult literature and how the child got recognition in the literary books. It also highlights the condition of child and childhood throughout the ages, and discusses some social philosophies related to children and childhood.

The second chapter tries to highlight the importance of classical children's literature of India in connection with global classical children's literature and contemporary children's literature, it surveys how classical literature shaped the contemporary children's literary scene and how gradually 'children's stories' or 'children's writing' as a specific genre emerged in Indian context, particularly in English. It also provides some light on children's literature in Indian regional languages and gives a clear overall understanding about the Indian children's literature and its roots. The focus of this chapter also would be to trace the genesis and evolution of children's literature in English in India. In India tradition too has a significant effect on the evolution of Indian Children's Literature. Children's literature in India, in all regional languages brought themes mainly from traditional literature. Traditional stories were filled with themes like worldly wisdom,

victory of virtue over vice, gallantry, etc. The stories from the *Panchatantra*, *Hitopadesha*, *Brihat Katha* and *Jataka* were of considerable interest to children and provided them aesthetic pleasure and moral education, and have been adapted in different Indian languages. Mythological stories are part and parcel of the traditional rearing as well as modern upbringing of every Indian child. Children usually get involved and absorbed in hearing of myths, which have the ability to satisfy all age groups, over and over again. The classical works are of extraordinary literary excellence and abundant appeal, and both children and literature of India for children owes and are indebted to it. The imagination of the young reader is awakened and triggered by these stories. The effect and influence of these mythological stories remain throughout life once embossed in the early years on the mind. Writers draw from traditional literature rich metaphors, original style and oral structure in adaptations in current children's literature

The third chapter titled as 'Contribution of Publishers to Indian Children's Literature' bring forth the contribution of private and government run organizations and institutes who work for the promotion of children's literature in India. Children's literature in India is witnessing a drastic change. The position of Children's Literature in India was different three decades ago. Today's children have wonderful books as compared to those before independence. The publishers, writers and artists joined forces to make efforts in bringing out books especially designed and written for children. The educationists and psychologists projected the needs of children to help the writers think in terms of children as individuals who could make great demands on them because of their limitations and the insatiable desire to know about everything. Today there are number of publishers catering

to children. The quantity of publication for children is increasing, and some of the new children's literature allures curiosity among children.

The fourth chapter is the central chapter titled as 'Themes and Trends in Contemporary Indian Children's Literature in English' which is further divided into five subchapters. It highlights the main themes discussed in current English language literature for children. This chapter is followed by the conclusion.

The study discusses both short stories and novels as well, and these stories and novels cater to all groups of children. As younger group of children have shorter attention span they cannot focus for long on novels so short stories are appropriate for them. On the bases of dominant themes prevalent in children's literature in India in English, the following set of themes are taken for exploration. The subchapters and books/stories focused upon in this study are as follows

4.1 Science through Children's Literature

The Robots are Coming; Stories of Robots (1989) Collection of twelve stories by Dilip M Salwi

From Somewhere Out There (2009) by Karthika Das

4.2. Eco-Consciousness and Children's Literature in English in India

Curse of Grass (2010) by Ira Sexena

Ranthambore Adventures (1998) by Depak Dalal

4.3 Gender Role, Representation of Girl and their Voices in Indian Children's Literature in English

The Battle for No. 19 (2007) by Ranjit Lal

Go, Girl, Go! (2015) by Deepa Agarwal

4.4 Bibliotherapy: Children's books in India

Lighthouse in the Storm (2012) collection of 24 stories by AWIC

4.5 Mystery, Detective and Adventure Tales in Indian English children's Literature

The Kaziranga Trail (1978) by Arup Kumar Datta

Mystery of the Falling Mountains (2004) by Nilima Sinha

The present study explains and highlights the condition and current themes and trends which are being represented in Indian children's literature written in English language. This study does not focus on the particulars of the literary process or the detailed construction of story components such as setting, characterization, style, plot, or point of view. It is eclectic in nature. The study is viewed through the theoretical perspective of ecocriticism, reader response theory and gender approaches. The main objective of this study is to bring forth these trends and themes so that it facilitates further researchers and at the same time provide Indian children's literature a place in academic sphere. It also highlights children's literature's instructional purposes and at the same time emphasizes how children's literature can play a significant part in their holistic development. Children eight years above of age are taken in to consideration for this study. 'Child' has been used in this current study from the age of eight to sixteen and teenagers are accommodated with in this term. Keeping in consideration only textual stories the study excludes pictorial and pictographic literature like graphic novels, picture books, comics, adapted novels and animations and cartoons for children.

'Children's Literature' used in this study has many facets. It discusses the problems faced by children in the spheres of society, it instructs and makes them aware of they being

children; science throws light on children's literature and ecological consciousness, liberates child, gives him freedom through adventure, improves wit and makes children 'curious to know things (world)' through detective stories, and lastly provides resolution to conflicts which are within the mind of child and attempts to satisfy psychological and emotional needs. In this regard we can say children's literature conveys and is designed to teach children how to become active members of society and maintain holistic interaction with society in which he/she lives. The main functions of children's literature are socialisation and education. Children's literature is written by adults to forward information which is important for a child to learn in order to become a functioning member of the society.

The subjects and themes in children's literature are now becoming diverse. It is essential that children's books should reflect the entirety of today's world. Arguments are that children should be protected from contentious matters which they cannot follow and grasp. New consciousness of the realities of the world has been shaped by political and social events and the mass media. These stories help children come face to face with the real problems. There has been discourse between educationists, critics of children, writers and those who are involved with children's literature on the degree of exposure to realism necessary for children. Literature of children could be more rich and effective if the writer is well versed in psychology, social issues, and skilled in linguistics so that he can use proper words for children, so that literature for children can contribute to children's cognitive, social, linguistic development. Children's literature is convenient in satiating a number of purposes. Used as a resource for language development, most importantly it

provides a prospect for depicting various issues related to society as a whole through selective and appropriate content for targeted readers.

Children's literature not only entertains the young mind but it is instrumental in communicating knowledge. It is a pivotal responsibility of an adult to make children develop an all-round well balanced personality through education and other relevant activities. It would be wrong to say that children's literature should be only instructional. Children's literature should be 'literature' as the term indicates, and the text should be art based, substantiate and answer children's questions of the world through critical reasoning, should elevate the connection between literature and literacy by developing child's craving and passion for reading.

Contemporary literature for children is woven around contemporary issues. In order to do justice to the child Indian writers for children are more focused on child centered stories. These stories have provided new dimensions to the genre. Children's literature has become a platform for introducing children to a world as it really is.

Indian children's literature has been used to provide instruction along with pleasure. Children's Literature is most effective and stimulating medium through which adults can amuse children, inspire them and guide them. Children need literature suitable to their needs and mental development and the literature which reflect present day situation in the society. In a way it is time to give children suitable reading material which could be set in native surroundings. Children's literature in a way has instructional elements in it that flows from text to the child reader. It has not remained an element of entertainment and aesthetics but has a purpose to serve. It helps and conditions children on how to deal with societal conflicts.

The research tries to highlight that children's literature in India may inculcate the life skills. Children's literature empower child through information, education and services that enable children to make informed choices in their personal and public life. This caters to and promotes creative and responsible behaviour for a child's personal growth.

There are some recommendations that have been made to promote children's literature so as to ensure that the recent trends in children's literature contribute to evolve children into holistic human beings and also ensure that the future writers of children's literature use these contemporary trends in terms of their themes, style, publishing to produce a literature which makes fruitful contribution in developing a child's personality.

Chapter 1

Defining Children's Literature, History and its Ambiguities

Children's literature is confronted with the difficulty of working definitions. Therefore, the starting point of this stage must be the drawing of some margins and the lining and connecting of individual terms with concepts. At the outset let us define, child, childhood, children's literature in the broader perspective. B. Mayall writes, "Both textually and semiotically, 'child' is very much a floating signifier – one whose mundane usage is so seemingly ubiquitous that it invites little if any critical introspection and elides the inherent complexity and diversity of childhoods, whether in conceptual formulation or as lived experiences" (qtd in Beier 4).

Defining Children's Literature

The 'literature' of 'children's literature' is a distinct thought, which is miscellaneous from any other form of 'literature' written for other groups of readers. Children's literature is an educational discipline. It is not easy to define what Children's Literature is, because there is a lot of mixed up thinking and discussions concerning Children's Literature. According to Roger Sale "Everyone knows what children's literature is until asked to define it. . . . We are better of saying we all have a pretty good idea of what children's literature includes and letting the matter rest there" (155). Loosely defined, in the term 'Children's Literature' the word 'children' is generally used to designate for teenagers under the age of adolescence, while the additional word that is 'literature' indicates a piece of writing having finesse of form. So this literature belongs to children and meant for their use. The term is commonly used for the sort of literature which is of attention to children and draws them towards it. Additionally this writing some at times comes with illustration, particularly written for young people. Children's

Literature is defined as, writes Karin Lesnik- Oberstain, “a category of books the existence of which absolutely depends supposed relationship with a particular reading audience: children” (15).

In some way or other Children’s Literature is an ambiguous term, and most of the critics are of the view that the genre is not homogeneous and it has not been defined precisely and accurately. The main argument here is that of the position of child in children’s literature. The ambiguity lies in, according to Anne-Kathrin Höfel

Who exactly can be designated by this term? What are the characteristics of the members of this group? How and where can we draw a line between “child”, “young adult” and “adult”? What if there is no clear-cut difference? All these problems have immediate repercussions on the next key term, “children’s literature”. Which area is covered by “children’s literature” if the construct “child” itself might not be too stable an entity? In which respect then, if at all, does “children’s literature” differ from that for “young adults” and “adults”, and why? (17).

The ambiguity is defined by Saunak Samajdar in the chapter, ‘Homely Children and Unhomely Literature’

The mode of literary praxes, including the writing, reading, misreading, circulation, reception, promotion, censor, mediation, canon-formation and criticism, that focuses upon the texts, inter-texts and peri texts that pass through hypothetical, targeted, and/or actual" child-readers is broadly identified as the domain of "children's literature (1).

Peter Hunt Comments, “Children's literature is an amorphous, ambiguous creature; its relationship to its audience is difficult; its relationship to the rest of the literature, problematic” (“Introduction” 1). Scholars in the field of Children’s Literature cannot even concur on when or where Children’s Literature was coined. Torben Weinreich says, it (Children’s Literature) is “an area of research and an endless debate that is as old as research into children’s literature itself. It is both the simplest and the most complex question we can ask: What is children’s literature? The answers to this question are many and various. There are not quite as many answers as there are researchers, but it is a close call.” (qtd. in Nodelman 136). There is a great deal of discussion as to whether there was a Children’s Literature in the medieval period. Undoubtedly it is clear that once the printing press was invented in the 15th century, some texts and books were published exclusively for children even if the books were mostly geared to educate the children and transfer them into literate citizens of a particular culture. Perry Nodelman writes

Obviously, I don’t agree. I believe that the term children’s literature creates confusion because children’s literature as a genre is confusing—richly and complicatedly so. The confusions make the genre seem impossible only with the assumption that the differing definitions must be mutually exclusive and that one must be right in ways that makes the others wrong, which makes them all mutually defeating. But what if all the differing definitions suggest some part of the more complex truth? What if the contradictions of the definitions are suggestive of contradictions—or, possibly, paradoxes—inherent in the genre itself? What if children’s literature

as a genre represents the complex field of shifting position takings of the field that engenders it? (137).

The commentators on literature written for children have provided a host of definitions over the years. Children's Literature involves a great deal of primary definition. What is text for? What do we mean by Children's Literature? Who and what is the background of the audience, and how do they read? There are several critics who have defined Children's Literature and to begin with Diane M. Barone asks certain questions concerning Children's Literature, "It seems like defining children's literature should be easy: It is literature written for children. That definition is certainly a beginning; however, what do you do with books that are appealing to adults *and* children like *Harry Potter* (Rowling, 2007)? Would you consider this an adult book taken over by children or a children's book loved by adults? What appears to be a simple definition is a bit more complicated" (6). Katharine Jones writes in her essay, 'Getting Rid of Children's Literature'

As critics, we need to change how we look at children's literature. When children's books hit the headlines because of their popularity—such as Roald Dahl and Enid Blyton books or, more recently, J. K. Rowling's *Harry Potter* series—the same questions always come up: are they really for children, are they good for children, how do we evaluate such books, why do adults read them, what is children's literature? These questions are constantly being asked in children's literature criticism, but they surface and become the focus of wider interest at such times (287).

We can say children's literature belong to adults too because of adult's involvement. Katharine Jones gives a clear clarification by saying

It is the reluctance of many adults to openly accept this literature as theirs—books such as Carroll’s *Alice in Wonderland* (1865) and Kenneth Grahame’s *The Wind in the Willows* (1908), as well as books such as Dahl’s *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* (1964) and Rowling’s *Harry Potter* series—that causes many of the difficulties and contradictions in the genre. We do belong to the audience of child literature—we belong as former child readers of such literature, we belong because we were once children, we belong as adult authors, publishers, purchasers, and critics of such literature and we belong as current adult readers of such literature (306).

It is predominant in the masses that Children’s Literature is constrained to only books written for children. Actually it is children themselves who resolve what their literature is to be. It is by and large perceived that children make their own choices about what they like. There are books that are measured classics for children today. But these books were not proposed for children at all. Marah Gubar says in an essay, “On Not Defining Children’s Literature” that “As numerous critics have noted, we cannot simply say that children’s literature consists of literature written for children, since many famous examples—*Huckleberry Finn*, *Peter Pan*, *The Little Prince*—aimed to attract mixed audiences” (209). Children grab these books and possess them for their own. There are many examples of such books and they include lasting favourites of children like *Robinson Crusoe* (1720) and *Gulliver’s Travels* (1726). Daniel Defoe and Jonathan Swift apparently did not have children in their minds as the forthcoming readers when they wrote these fascinating classics. The other classics like Washington Irving’s *Rip Van Winkle* (1830), Lewis Carol’s *Alice in Wonderland* (1856), *Adventures of Tom Sawyer* (1876), *Huckleberry Finn* (1883) and Robert Louis

Stevenson's *The Treasure Island* (1883) unfolded endless joy for children, thrilled the young readers imagination and charmed with their picaresque adventures. Peter Hunt provides explanation related to books written not intentionally for children "some scholars... believe that works from earlier periods routinely associated with children, even if their purpose is didactic or they were not written specifically for children can also be classified as children's Literature" (qtd in Adams 1). Clarifying this point Cornelia Meigs elucidates that, "most of the books regarded as classics of Children's Literature were written without children in mind and were taken over by them with cheerful disregard of what they could not understand. None of these were aiming at children" (Gupta 5). The similar argument is put forth by Jake Zipes, in *The Oxford Encyclopaedia of Children's Literature*

He (mark twain) did not consider that he was writing for a child audience. Instead, as the shifting narrative perspective demonstrates, he alternated between nostalgic adult reflections on childhood and a point of view identified with Tom Sawyer, romantic boy adventure (314).

Robinson Crusoe (1720) written in the eighteenth century was proposed for adults. Later Jean Jacques Rousseau in *Emile* (1762) was deeply impressed by *Robinson Crusoe*. He measured it a dominant discourse on education "the most felicitous treatise on natural education" and "the one book that teaches all that books can teach." (Bellhouse 120)) He is of the view, it is the only book a young child should read. *Robinson Crusoe* has numerous adaptations in many different languages of the world, a sub-genre that is now called Robinsonades. Mary L. Bellhouse writes in 'On Understanding Rousseau's Praise of *Robinson Crusoe*', "Rousseau not only recognizes Crusoe's potential appeal to young readers, he is attentive to the social power of

literature and the ability of fictional heroes to inspire identification and imitation in youthful readers” (134).

For such discourse Beverley Lyon Clark claims, “Children’s Literature is always written for both children and adults; to be published it needs to please at least some adults” (96). Emelyn E. Gardner and Eloise Ramsey write in the preface of their book, *A Handbook of Children’s Literature: Methods and Material*, that tastes differ from child to adults, they say

Robinson Crusoe afford children the most delightful vicarious experience. To them the story is a simple account of the adventure of a resourceful hero who triumphs over obstacles which lie within the range of appreciation. Mature student of English Literature find the same story interesting in the light of its being an outstanding example.... To children *Gulliver’s Travels* is merely a delightful fairy tale; to mature readers it is a brilliant political satire (vii).

They further added and manifested the taste of selecting a book by both adult and children.

One of the chief difficulties in separating so-called children’s books from adult books arise from the fact that many children have mature taste, whereas many adults remain quite childlike in their reading (vii).

John Rowe Townsend goes further ahead and asks some important questions in the *Children’s Literature: The Development of Criticism*:

What in particular is children’s Literature? That is quite a hard question. There is sense in which we don’t need to define it because we know what it is. Children’s Literature is *Robinson Crusoe* and

Alice and Little Women and *Tom Sawyer* and *Treasure Island*, *Wind in the Willows* and *Winnie-the-Pooh* and *The Habbit* and *Charlotte's Web* that's simple: but it won't do. Surly *Robinson Crusoe* was not written for children, and do not the *Alice* books appeal at least as much grownups? ; If *Tom Sawyer* is Children's Literature, What about *Huckleberry Finn*?! If The Jungle Books are Children's Literature, what about *Kim* or *Stalky*?! And if *The Wind in the Willows* is Children's Literature, What about The Golden Age? and so on ("Standards"60).

Peter Hunt one of the renowned critics of literature for children defines Children's Literature:

Children's books are different from adults' books: They are written for a different audience, with different skills, different needs, and different ways of reading: Equally, children experience texts in ways which are often unknowable, but which many of us strongly suspect to be very rich and complex ("Introduction" 3).

Michel Foucault discussed that a "whole history remains to be written of *spaces* which would at the same time be a history of powers" (qtd in 373 Barker). This perception is applicable here because in children's literature the power of the adult over the child is a continuous and endless subtext. In Foucault's argument, disciplinary power is fundamental to space both in literature and in reality because space is always organised in relation to power and control. In this regard Peter Hunt writes in 'Instruction and Delight'

Children's Literature is at root about power –about a power struggle. Adults write, children read, and this means that, like it or not, adults

are exercising power, and children are either being manipulated, or resisting manipulation: there is a tension between the reader implied by the writer, and the real readers (14).

There are large numbers of discussions about Children's Literature. There are critics who suggest that children's literature doesn't exist at all, and question the existence of the genre. Children are a confined audience, they do not write their own books, nor they edit or publish. Mostly they don't select books for their own. It is the parents, teachers, publishers, librarians and academicians who choose books for them. Jacqueline Rose's book *The Case of Peter Pan or The impossibility of Children's Literature* (1984) expands and provides new dimensions in Children's Literature and particularly debates the field widely in cultural studies. She is of the view that the child is ignored as a social being and has no voice, opinion within the society. It is the adults who either control, curb or create that children's voice. An argument is put forth by her is

This term is ambiguous. Is it literature written by children or literature written for children? Children's literature has conventionally been defined as the latter, but the apostrophe in the term continues to suggest possession—that this is a literature belonging to children (304).

Children have limited or hardly any access in creating the literature of their own. Indeed it is the power void and space left by children's weakness that permits the adults authority. Jacqueline Rose an eminent critic in the field of children's literature, argues about the impossibility of the children's literature, "children's literature is impossible not in the sense it cannot be written (that would be nonsense)... this is the impossible relation between adult and child... sets up a world in which the adult comes first (author, maker, giver) and the child comes after (reader, product, receiver) (qtd in

Melrose 8). She is of the view that, children's literature has never been maintained and owned by children regardless of possessive apostrophe in the phrase 'Children's Literature'. She argues "Children's fiction rests on the idea that there is a child who is simply there to be addressed and that speaking to it might be simple... if children's fiction builds an image of the child inside the book, it does so in order to secure the child who is outside the book, the one who does not come so easily within its group" (Rose 1-2). Rose says adult is author, maker and giver. The impossibility of the category is because the audience is constructed and created by adult writers and publishers. It is the adults who instructs through such literature, and uses it as a medium to impart values and traditions. She further argues that,

Adults evoke this child for their own purpose (desires, in fact), as a site of plentitude to conceal the fractures that trouble us at all: concerns over a lack of coherent subjectivity, over the instabilities of language and, ultimately, existence itself (Rose 16).

Saunak Samajdar is of the same view he writes,

The children's texts are written rarely by children themselves, so the overarching point of view, despite its ardent and conscious attempts to conceal its experience by the ruse of innocence, is the adult-authorial point of view, a fact that no amount of infantile charade can eliminate completely. For example, *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* is permeated by Lewis Carroll's perspective regarding Alice Liddell; even when the authorial intention is to mimic the child's perspective, the actual operation is much more complex-first the author has to exercise his adult point of view *about the point of view of the child*, and then channel the narrative or depictive act

through the filtered filter constructed thereof. The children's text is therefore the hymenographic proximity/abolition betwixt the child's perspective and the adult's impression regarding the child's perspective (2).

On the other hand Sanjukta Dasgupta, writes in, 'Fantasy, Fiction, Fact: Magic and Realism in Sirshendu Mukhopadhyay's *The Ghost of Gosain Bagan*'

Therefore, due to adult authorship, often children's literature becomes instructional manuals, internalizing an awareness programme that can be overt or covert depending upon the narratorial skills of the creative writer. The hegemonic control of the adult author on the child's empirical and epistemic exposure and responses however is a matter of debate that cannot be resolved easily. The instruction cum entertainment mode of creative writing for children is instilled with a noble urge to motivate and inspire young minds to scale new heights of achievement and become socially and morally integrated individuals (n.p).

Children's Literature studies have certain basic apprehension regarding the concept of childhood. Children's Literature can be placed in the context of real and theoretical childhood, and in the context of literary construct and portrayal of children. It was not until the eighties that children's literature achieved this sort of theoretical and critical self-consciousness. Influenced by F. R. Leavis, the new criticism, and a reader-cantered approach, Townsend writes, "Children's books must be judged as part of literature in general, and therefore by much the same standards as 'adult' books. It must be good book in its own right" (qtd. in Lesnik-Oberstein 132). Critic like Peter Hunt, J. R. Townsend is more focused on this issue. The other critics of Children's

Literature Margaret Meek and Elaine Moss have taken a child centred approach in the area. Children's literature is an attention-grabbing and captivating world of books. Children's Literature is a part of general literature. It may be said to be a branch on the tree of literature. Evidently, Children's Literature is not the concern of children alone as they cannot forward and produce it themselves. It is the parents, teachers on one hand and authors, illustrators and publishers on the other that are latent judges and selectors of books of children. It does not subsist in a world of its own but is entangled in a larger world of literature. Dr. Henry Steel Commenger explains

What after all do we mean by the term? Is it the literature written especially for the young-the fairy and wonder tales, the nursery hymns and songs, the dull book of etiquette and admonition and moral persuasion, the stories of school or playing field or of far-flung adventure? It is all of this, to be sure, but it is far more. It is the whole vast body of literature that children have adopted commonly to share with their elders, but sometimes to monopolize. It is quite literally, their literature. For it is, in the end, not the parents, the teachers, the preachers, not even the authors, but the children themselves who determine what their literature is to be (qtd. in Gupta 4-5).

Literature is the ingenious shaping of life and thought into the forms and structures of language. The practice of literature is two-dimensional, for it involves equally the book and the reader. Some critics consider Lewis Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland* as a perfect book ever written for children. As an adults we think, However, if the child has no background of fantasy, he/she cannot recognize the complication of the plot nor would he or she able to interact with the book and so experience literature. We need then to think the purpose of the words and pictures. How

do the symbols produce an aesthetic experience? How do they help the reader recognize pattern, relationships, feelings that produce an inner experience of art? The real secret of a child's book consists not only in its being less dry and less difficult, but more rich in interest-more true to nature more rich in every quality that replies to childhood's keener and fresher perception. Several adult books like *Robinson Crusoe*, *Gulliver's Travels* and *Baron Munchausen* have become nursery property now. *Arabian Nights*, Lamb's *Tales from Shakespeare* (1807), deserve to be among children's classics. John Rowe Townsend in 'Standards of Criticism for Children's Literature' assigns responsibility to the publisher in deciding what children's book is:

In the long run Children's Literature could only be regarded as consisting of those books which by consensus of adults and children were assigned to the children's shelves-a wholly pragmatic definition. In the short run it appears that, for better or worse, the publisher decides. If he puts a book on the children's list, it will be reviewed as a children's book and will be read by children (or young people), if it is read at all. If he puts it on the adults list, it will not-or at least not immediately (61).

Largely speaking Children's Literature or any literature is designed for a particular section of readers and is after all a branch of mainstream literature. Children's Literature is not anything different or novel in terms of other adult literature. Both are literatures and so possess qualities like, the augmentation of mental faculties of its readers. In other words, children's literature is like adult literature but simpler. Rebecca Lukens suggests an explanation for this kind of position, "Children are not little adults. They are different from adults in experience, but not in species, or to put it differently,

in degree but not in kind. We can say then of literature for young readers that it differs from literature for adults in degree but not in kind'' (9).

For further discussion it is important to mention here the difference between adult and children's literature. Central to this discussion is the question whether literature for children is essentially different from the adult literature. And could children's literature be classed as a literature in its own right? Naturally there exists numerous differences; both type of literature diverge in their thematic subject and style and dealing. Apart from it the age of the target group, textual features play a role in attempts at a definition of children's literature. Deepatha Achar quotes Butts, "because of children's immaturity, some linguistic, emotional, and intellectual limitations are inherent in the genre... implying that children's books are downgraded versions of adult books" (187). As far as children are concerned it is worthwhile to provide and make available books that would enrich their experiences, understanding and acceptance. The writer must not lose sight of his young reader. He should be simple and straightforward in describing characters. James E. Higgins writes

The writer of children's literature does not avoid writing *down* to children by ignoring their special needs and limitations. And there is no antithesis for *down* to children, for when a writer is *over* the emotional and intellectual capacities of his child-readers, then, no matter what he thinks, he is no longer writing for children (37).

In some way or other Children's literature is different from the mainstream writing for the adults primarily because the readers are a different group of audience with specific needs. So Children and young adults have to be addressed in a different way. The writer of the children's books have to consider psychology of child and adolescent and his or her behaviour. This kind of literature demands entering into the child's mind,

examining the psyche occupied with the interesting panoramas of adventure and development. On the contrary it is fact that sentiments of adults are much wider whereas those of the children are less wide in terms of their physical age, mental development, and experience of the world. Margaret Clark writes in *Writing for Children*

Try to avoid ‘writing down’ to your audience; concentrate on trying to see things from their viewpoints; treat your young readers seriously rather than addressing them as if they were a group of different from or inferior to yourself (25).

These aspects decide whether a child can appreciate these books. A child finds it very hard to be attracted towards a work of literature not planned exclusively for him because he has little knowledge and experience of the world. So writers of Children’s Literature are appreciative and take up such themes and aspects which do not go beyond the comprehension of the child. In *Beyond Words: Mystical Fancy in Children’s Literature* James E. Higgins writes, “Books which reach the inner child are those in which an author—from the depths of his own uniqueness—communicates with the essence of childhood (3).

Meindert De Jong writes

It seems reasonable, with a beautiful logic, that when writing for children you ought to write for them out of your own inner childhood, and not out of an adult remembrance. When you write for children from adult memory, you satisfy only the other adults who have also forgotten their inner childhood, and have also forgotten their inner childhood, and have substituted for it an adult conception of what the child needs and wants in book (qtd. in Higgins 7).

Some writers does not aim at audience or readers in advance as Jan Mark writes,

I write about children because I like to have my characters in decent perspective, but I don't mind who reads the books. If I know that the book or story is intended for a child reader-ship and, in the case of the Antelopes, for children of the specific age, then it is only fair to construct the thing from a child's eye level.... Since I do not know my audience in advance, I cannot aim at it (qtd. in Clark 33).

Similar argument is constructed in the following lines

Anything who claims to know what children want is implying a homogeneity which does not exist. This is the language of mass advertising, which has no place in writing of fiction for children or anyone else (qtd. in Clark 33).

While understanding and developing the difference between adult literature and children's literature and relation to both, the researchers enhance the understanding of the genre clearly and make the genre unique. Mike Cadden writes in *Telling Children's Stories Narrative Theory and Children's Literature*

The question is obviously important, perhaps more for the way it leads to decisions about critical approaches to children's literature than for any answer that might be offered. The greatest distinction is that between degree and kind. Those who believe that children's literature is different by various degrees from literature for adults draw more on the work of critics in other fields to point to the marked tendencies of children's literature to do more or less in using different structures or emphasizing different subtexts. Those who see children's literature as different in kind in relationship to literature

for adults spend their time arguing about that which makes the genre unique (xvii-xviii).

Children's stories written by adults are used primarily as aids for instruction, and have instructional value. The writer becomes aware of the simple usage of vocabulary as he is not writing a story for adults. Myles Mc Dowel brings out the vital and critical differences between fiction for children and adults in a more thoughtful style in the following words:

Children's books are generally shorter; they tend to favor an active rather than a passive treatment; with dialogue and incident rather than description and introspection; child protagonists are the rule; conventions are much used; the story develops within a clear cut moral schematism which much adult fiction ignores, children's books tend to be optimistic rather than depressive; the language is child oriented; plots are of a distinctive order; probability is often disregarded and one could go on endlessly talking of magic and fantasy, and simplicity and adventure (51).

Douglas Streets' view is that children's literature possess all the qualities that an adult novel has and is of the view that children's novel should be categorised as a full length fictional creation suitable to one or more specific categories,

A book may qualify as a children's book if it is judged to be clearly and unabashedly conceived specifically for a child audience. *Adventures of Alice in Wonderland*, the wonderful *Wizard of Oz*, or *Pippi Longstocking* for example, contain fun and fantasy clearly woven into the narrative to ensnare the imaginations and accolades of the young. The second group of children's novels is composed of

works written primarily for the pleasure of the authors themselves. Such books are characterized by a highly personal commitment to narrative structure, setting and personality development. The writer more often than not is totally immersed in the fictional reality of the creation, frequently weaving the tale from the inside out... The third category of children's novel includes those seminal works that were originally the official property of adults but have over the years been adapted for and energetically adapted by young readers (xiv).

Despite these strong arguments and opinions it is agreed that there is such a thing as literature for children. Despite numerous efforts at arranging the exact meaning of the term and its elements, critics and scholars still have not reached on an agreement regarding a satisfying definition.

The term children's literature introduces a way of thinking through many complications while supporting and expanding the genre and its critical discourse. It does not discourage the researchers and critics and does not suppress particular areas of debate and dialogue because they are seen to be impossible or ignore difficulties with the genre by assuming that addressing children is unproblematic. And most of all the term children's literature does not negate what children want, require, and is worthy of literature—it does not remove such literature from children. It expounds some noteworthy questions in the criticism and theory of child literature, and tries to find and include them on less unclear and confusing terms.

Thus the term children's Literature comprises in it the suggestion that children are a homogeneous group of readers who enjoy reading a special form of literature called Children's Literature. In the light of the above discussion I found most useful definition for the purpose of this dissertation and the researcher has taken a working definition for

this research that is of Murray Knowles and Kirsten Malmkjaer who have used it in their well-researched book, *Language and Control in Children's Literature* "children's literature is any narrative written and published for children...include the 'teen' novels aimed at the 'young adult' or late adolescent reader" (2). It also covers, "texts intentionally written for children by adults, texts addressed to adults but read by children and texts read by both children and adults" (Lathey 31).

The next key term is 'children' as it builds difficulty as to who exactly can be labelled by this term, and to what extent can we stretch the line between 'child', 'young adult' and 'adult'. What are the characteristics of child in context of genealogy of human being and or of literature as such. For this term I take up here the definition of child according to the Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary, "a young human being who is not yet an adult" (Hornby 256).

Child and Childhood

"The history of childhood is a nightmare from which we have only recently begun to awaken" (1) writes Lloyd deMause. The ideas about children's books are inseparably bound up with cultural construction of childhood. Seth Lerer writes "The history of children's literature is inseparable from the history of childhood, for the child was made through texts and tales he or she studied, heard, and told back" (1).

Concepts of childhood all over history have been the centre of much scholarly examination since Philippe Arie's milestone study, *Centuries of Childhood*, first published in 1960. Philip Arries, a French cultural observed in this famous study, that, "the child was not ready for life, and that he had to be subject to a special treatment, a sort of quarantine, before he was allowed to join the adult" (qtd. in Petr 86). Childhood is a necessary phenomenon in societies. Childhood is a social construct and every culture has its own conception and ways of defining children and childhood. Historians

and anthropologists such as Philippe Aries Margaret mead and Martha Wolfenstein have argued in classical studies that childhood differed throughout history and culture to culture. Children which we find today are not reflective of the historical concepts of child. There are erratic cultural conceptualisation, contexts and subsequent social practices associated with children, and thus to understand childhood, Jenks writes in *Childhood*,

The manner in which children are ‘defined’ and ‘positioned’ today is not reflective of other periods of human history. Varied conceptualizations of childhood existed in different locations, contexts and across socio-cultural-historical periods (2).

Child is seen through the ages as a lesser version or inferior to an adult. It was later children were viewed significantly different from adults. Knowing more about its historical development will heighten our understanding of the past and the present. Philp argues, “premodern Western society lacked a concept of childhood, tending to view children as small adults with no special emotional or legal allowances” (Sterns 4). Philip Aries elucidates that there was no consciousness in previous centuries related to childhood, in “Discovery of Childhood” he writes, “In Medieval society the idea of childhood did not exist; this is not to suggest that children were neglected, forsaken or despised. The idea of childhood is not to be confused with the affection for children. It corresponds to an awareness of the particular nature of childhood... in medieval society this awareness was lacking.” (36). Philip Aries work was extremely influential in generating new ideas about children in history and gained popularity and interest in historians and a budding number of writers began to focus on this phenomenon. In the seventeenth century, notions about childhood changed. Earlier childhood was not considered a distinct category worthy of adults, and children were often viewed as

diminutive version of adult. For most of the historians the eighteenth and nineteenth century child was recognised as significant individual, and thus child as a separate entity came to being. As Roy Lowey writes, “During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, in particular, a school of literature appeared which stressed the innocence of the child” (67). Shulamith Sahahar’s *Childhood in the Middle Ages* (1990) provides detailed description of concept of childhood in Middle Ages. She nullifies Philip Aries’ concept of childhood did not exist in middle ages. The constructive image of medieval childhood is also strengthened by Nicholas Orme in his book *Medieval Childhood*, and is aggressively critical of Aries.

In the Nineteenth Century the subject of childhood had become a powerful force in the Europe. The crux of this ideology lay a solid pledge to the perspective that children should be nurtured. As Locke said written in *A Critical History of Children’s Literature*, “children must not be forced but must be guided and invited into learning, with their curiosity of mind supplying sufficient motive force to carry them to full education” (Meigs 96). An increasing awareness was that childhood had rights and prerogatives of its own. The progress of this ideology did not have a single trajectory with a target clearly in view. Significance of childhood displayed itself in a mixture of ways. The main important ideas related to children were: importance of early education, concern for the salvation of the child’s soul, growing interest in the way children learn, children were messengers of God and childhood was therefore the best time of life to imprint positive thoughts. Rousseau too had fascination and concern for children, “Like Lock, he did immense service by making a study of children’s minds as different from those of their elders, and further he offered his ideas in a blaze of convincing enthusiasm which carried them much farther than could his predecessors” (Meigs 97). The main writers and philosophers who put forth these ideas about childhood in their works are

Erasmus, Locke, Rousseau and Wordsworth to name a few. In the Romantic period major writers used the child to express their profound philosophy through the image of child. Romanticism asserts children and nature have a close proximity. Anne Lundin writes,

Burgeoning interests in the acculturation of children using a metaphor of growth, a favourite trope of John Dewey's educational reforms, fir with this new designed space for children, so close to Nature itself, The child in the book, the child in Nature, and the child in the library conflated in to a profession in charge of a body of literature (5).

Writers of romantic period not only put forth thoughts related to childhood but they used children in their creativity, using children as catalysts for their goals. Peter Coveney says, "The romantic sensibility had often concerned itself with childhood as an agent in the quest for psychological insight and awareness.....subjective preoccupations have been balanced, if something precariously, with the objective interests characteristics of the great literature. For them childhood become part of the objective wisdom which, through the power of their creative intelligence they sought to convey" (46).

These philosophers were of the view that the child will most certainly turn out to be a fruitless creature unless at once and if without proper direction he is subjected to a process of concentrated instruction. Erasmus attacked critically the time and money people spent on training materials. He thought that nature has inbuilt in children the desire to know and a power of memory. Erasmus' thoughts are the impact of humanism, that it was primarily adults who fill fraudulent young minds with evil. John Earle expanded the views of Erasmus about the child, and says "a child is a man in small

letter, yet the best copy of Adam before he tasted of Eve or the apple...he knows no evil. Good habits, learned early, would conduce to piety” (qtd. in Illick 317).

In the subsequent centuries philosophers writers and educationists raised issues concerning children. Figures like John Locke, Jean Jack Rousseau and the Romantic poets wrote child centred educational theories and thoughts related to childhood and children which was lacking in earlier centuries.

Here is an important step towards a child-oriented society, a recognition of the individuality of each child. There is much else which has a similar tendency. Children, said Locke, should ‘be treated as rational Creatures’, their curiosity should be encouraged, there questions carefully answered” (Cunningham 60-61).

John Locke’s *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1690) is a seminal work on children and childhood. He believes a child is a *tabula rasa* or blank slate, and derives his concepts from external objects, and says child is to be “considered only as white paper, or wax, to be moulded and fashioned as one pleases” (qtd. in Cunningham 60). His observations about the children’s books have made an impression on generations. His thoughts have enlighten modern attitude towards childhood and children’s education. Locke is of the view no book is good for children unless the adult keep it ready for him/her. He endorsed for children, “Aesop’s fables, for variety of reasons, not the least of which was the small child’s fascination with animals. Fables were brief and succinct, making them suitable for readers with short attention spans.”(Immel 30-31). Locke gave the idea that children should receive knowledge from biographies of great men, which impel them to traverse, conquer and obtain advantages around the world. Instructional literature was produced throughout this age, Andrew O’ Malley writes,

John Locke's notion of the child's mind as *tabula rasa*, proposed in *Some Thoughts Concerning Education* (1693), was, even more so than Rousseau's concept of the child as uncorrupted product of nature, at the core of pedagogical discourse in the late eighteenth century. This model served as more than a philosophical and psychological observation on the state of the infant brain and the mechanisms of knowledge acquisition; it helped underpin the ideology of equal opportunity (4-5).

Childhood has a distinctive place in the system of life, and modern man hardly knew anything about the psychology and the needs of children. With this understanding we can say, children have unique needs compared to adults, and literature should fulfil these needs and deliver entertainment, play, and pleasure. Rousseau proceeds with Locke's view, and wrote in the preface to *Emile* (1762) that "the wisest writers devote themselves to what a man ought to know, without asking what a child is capable of learning. They are always looking for the man in the child, without considering what he is before he becomes a man" (qtd. in Oelkers 74). Locke had rejected Descartes doctrine of innate ideas brought onto the world with the soul. The pedagogical implications of a sensational model of the mind were enormous. For Locke parental instruction is essential for the development of a child's reason. J. Marshall Beier Writes, in "Children, childhoods, and Security Studies: An Introduction"

Children, as ontological category, are variously constructed as innocent, dependent, vulnerable, impetuous, and dangerous; they are to be cherished, nurtured, protected, regulated, and feared. There is, in some senses, a very high degree of consensus about childhood and, in others, little or none at all. Dominant ideas about childhood may

be broadly inscribed, bespeaking an aggregate of all persons below some age threshold, for example, or they may be imputed to some more exclusive subset of young people, variously defined along intersecting lines of, among others, race, gender, and class. The definitional struggles map with political ones: whether one is constructed within or without childhood bears critically on issues of agency, rights, protection, and more, in ways that may be enabling or disabling of concrete projects and possibilities. Childhood, like security, is an essentially contested concept (4).

The childhood in pre-modern times was not an easy time. The novel concept of childhood that compelled adults to keep children in educational atmosphere bore a straight association to the new doctrine of progress. Childhood were now no longer seen only as a heavenly model of angels but gradually more like a piece of blank paper on which adults must write their ethical codes. Andrew O' Malley says,

Conception of the infant mind as the site on which the aspirations of republican middle-class ideology could be realized explains in large part the dissenters' enormous focus on education. Dissenters from all walks of life participated in the development of a middle-class pedagogy—not only such professional pedagogues as Maria and Richard Lovell Edgeworth, but also such leading dissenting scientists as Joseph Priestley and Erasmus Darwin, and such dissenting industrialists as Josiah Wedgwood (5).

Childhood concept has changed throughout the ages. Bengt Sandin writes in, "The Century of the Child". On the Changed Meaning of Childhood in the Twentieth Century":

Childhood was to take on new meanings. Today childhood is a long period in a person's life. It is filled with schooling and organized leisure activities. Many children spend their early years in some form of pre-school care. There has been a dramatic change in the view of how to bring up the sort of children who would have been regarded as delinquent in the first decades of this century (3).

The sequence of discoveries of childhood spread over the years shows that these concepts of childhood are not to be muddled with the true understanding of childhood in any historical conditions. All constructions and reconstructs of childhood in previous generations, are certainly influenced by cultural presumptions. Childhood in this way is a reviewing of creation by adults who project their own approaches, feelings and values on images of children and childhood.

Beginning of Children's literature

Before there could be children's books, there had to be children-children, that is, who were accepted as beings with their own particular needs and interests, not merely as miniature of men and women (Townsend. *Written 3*).

The development of children's literature is the subject of discussion as to whether it began with books directly written for children or, instead, literature written for adults but usurped by children. Identifying the beginning of Children's Literature is a complicated task. As Maria Nikolajeva points out, "Does the history of children's literature have its own Ancient Age, Middle Ages, Renaissance, Enlightenment, and Modernism? Second, is the history of children's literature national or international?" (x). Children's Literature starts long before in the Middle Ages with oral tradition, when there were no books only stories. Niklas Bengsston writes, "One of the most important

resources available to writers for children has always been the fables and fairy tales of *non-written tradition*" (29). In the medieval period stories were told around fires in cottages or sung in the great halls of the castles. Both young and old alike listened, with no distinction being made between stories from children and stories for adults. These stories were divided into two types, the cottage stories, told in cottages and the Castle Stories, stories told in castles. The castle stories were the stories of heroic tales of Beowulf or King Arthur or the Ballad of Fair Isabella, whose step mother had her cooked and served in a pie. By contrast, the tales told around the peat fires in the cottages were about simple folk: farmers, wood cutters, and millers or beast tales about wolves, foxes and hens. These tales were told over and over for generations until they were finally collected by such persons such as Grimm Brothers and thus passed into recorded literature.

The first books available for children were lesson books handwritten in Latin by monks. All these books were religious or instructional and were used by teachers in monastery schools. During this period Venerable Bede translated and wrote some forty five books for his students at the monastery of Jarrow in England. A book developed by Anselm, Archbishop of Canterbury during the 12th century, *Elucidarium* discussed topics like manners, children's duties, the properties of animals and plants, and religious precepts. *The Gesta of Romanorum* (Deeds of the Roman) compiled in Latin about 1290 contained stories for the clergy for instruction for enlivening sermons. These early lesson books are important to the history of Children's Literature in that they represent some concession to developing specific books for the instruction of children.

William Caxton in 1476 contributed books for children at an early stage of books for children. The books he published included traditional romance, literary ballads, texts and religious books. Diane M. Barone writes in his book *Children's*

Literature in the Classroom: Engaging Lifelong Readers, “With Caxton’s invention of the printing press, children’s literature began to thrive as a separate entity, at first mostly in the form of manner books and stories of Robin Hood” (9). His publishing books set up the foundation that continue for a long period. Among the first books that he published were *A Book of Curtesye* (1477), *The History of Remart the Foxe* (1481) and *Aesop’s Fables* (1485), Maloc’y’s *Le Marte d’Arther* (1485). These books were published for adult readers but at the same time shared by children also. The first children’s book to be influenced by the invention of the printing press were children’s books, lesson books or text books. Children in the sixteenth century used to read from “horn books”. A horn book was not in fact a book at all but alphabets, vowels and Lord’s Prayer was written on a wooden scull or blade. The quantity and types of books available for children extended and children proceeded from the horn books to ABCs, primers and chapbooks. All the available books for children were religious in nature.

Seventeenth and Eighteenth Century: Children’s Books

Concern about the salvation of children’s souls became the central goal of parents and teachers in 17th century which was dominated by the stern spiritual beliefs of Puritanism. Children were considered to be miniature adults by the Puritans, and they were thus equally subject to sin and eternal damnation.

The Puritans were certainly aware of children, but were aware of them in a special sense: as young souls to be saved, or more probably, dammed. They therefore directed a good deal of literature at young people with the aim of rescuing them from hellfire (Townsend. *Written 5-6*).

Children were expected to memorize John Cotton’s catechism, *Drawn from the Breasts of Both testaments for their Soul’s Nourishment, Spiritual Milk for Boston*

Babes in Either England. Originally published in England in 1646, it was reviewed for American children in 1656, the first book written and printed for children in American colonies. In 1671 in England James Janeway published his book titled *A Token for Children, Being an Exact Account of the Conversations, Holy and Exemplary Lives and Joyful deaths of Several Young Children*. In this book Janway addresses his young readers:

You may now hear, my Lambs, what other good children have done, and remember how they wept and prayed by themselves, how earnestly they carried out for an interest on the Lord Jesus Christ: you may read how dutiful they were to their parents... how holy they lived; how dearly they were loved; how joyfully they died (qtd. in Townsend *Written* 6).

Before the formation of children's literature intended explicitly for entertainment, children were attracted to amusing tales and verses published in chapbooks, the only format available to them. Seth Lerer writes, "The word chapbook refers to a short, cheaply made pamphlet sold originally by the chapmen, or itinerant merchants, of English and European cities" (134). In sixteenth century appeared small folded paper pamphlets sold by chapman named as chapbooks. M.O. Grenby writes, "Although strictly speaking texts sold by travelling pedlars called 'chapmen', the term is often used loosely to describe various forms of short and cheap pamphlets common from the sixteenth to the nineteenth centuries. Usually containing popular and plebeian material" (206). Chapbooks became standard in seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and achieved popularity. "Chapbooks have distinct importance in the evolution of literature for children. They had some influence on the format and content of children's books" (qtd. in Bradley 57). Tales about Dick Wittington, Sir Guy of Warwick, Robin Hood

and other heroes were introduced through chapbooks, and brought enthusiasm and pleasure in the lives of children. These chapbooks were mostly criticised by the Puritans as they were intended to create enjoyment rather than instruct. Harry B. Weiss's study of chapbooks is detailed and helpful. He writes,

[d]evils, and angels, scoundrels and heroes, love and hate, murders, deathbed statements, witchcraft, riddles, tragedy, romance, song, jests, fairy tales, religion, shipwrecks, confessions, fables, hymns, speeches, executions, and all that goes to make up life, real and unreal, are reflected in the ephemeral chapbooks that once circulated so freely and are now so scarce (qtd. in Mally 19).

The popularity of chapbooks with children have influenced John Newbery's decision to publish a book solely for children. Jack Zipes writes, "After the 18th century, the chapbook trade became almost wholly juvenile." (*Brothers* 282). Chapbooks for children continued to appear and contributed to the core body of literature for children and as a protecting force of the literary imagination of children. The decline of chapbooks was due to the rise of periodicals, serials and comics.

Nursery Rhymes or Mother Goose

Mother Goose is a wide categorization of nursery stories and rhymes, characteristically proposed for toddlers or the youngest of readers. No one knows the exact origin of the Mother Goose rhymes. Many artists have illustrated Mother Goose over the years. Mother Goose rhymes comprises of rhymes, finger plays, and alphabet verses. Shakespeare may have known evidently these nursery rhymes, as these rhymes are mentioned in *King Lear* and his other plays. The old enduring nursery-rhyme book was published by Mary Cooper in the year 1744, under the title of *Tommy Thumb's Pretty Book*; a single copy of Vol. II is precious possession of British Museum. It is

regarded as a milestone in the history of children's literature. It includes such much-loved verses as "Sing a Song of Sixpence", "There was an old Woman", "Hickere, Dickere, Dock", and "London Bridge is Broken Down;"

Fairy Tales and Adventure

Enjoyment and fun for children came in the form of fairy tales. First printed in France in 1697, by Charles Persault *Histoires ou Contes du temps passé*; (Stories or Tales of Times Past, with morals), this collection comprises of eight tales. Famous among them are "The Sleeping beauty", "Cinderella or The Glass Slipper", "Little Red Riding Hood", "Puss-in-Boots or The Master Cat" and "Blue Beard". Translated in English in 1729, by Antoine Galland, these fairy tales are France's gift to the children of the world. The *Arabian Nights* is another collection of old fairy tales that came from different cultures of different countries like India, Persia, and North Africa. Its origin is unclear. These stories were written for adults, such as "Alladin" "Ali Baba", and "Sinbad the Sailor" and were appropriated by children. Galland published these tales in France in 1558, but they became available in England in 1706. *Arabian Nights* remained popular throughout the eighteenth century and it appeals to children in the current era as well. Its popularity is in the exotic setting and culture portrayed in the tales. Scholars in the field of children's literature like M.O. Grenby and Alan Richardson discuss the synthesis of imagination and reason in moral tales and the enduring manifestation of fairies, sprites, and enjoyment throughout these tales.

Danial Defoe did not write *Robinson Crusoe* for children, but they appropriated the story and the hero of this story is now the most cherished character among children and their literature. *The Life and Strange and Surprising Adventures of Robinson Crusoe* (1719) was later printed in shortened and pocket-size volume that turned out to be a classic of Children's Literature. Carpenter and Prichard writes, "The adventure

story has its tradition firmly rooted in Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* published in 1719. What are known as the 'Robinsonades' became, for a time, 'the dominant form in fiction for children and young people'" (qtd. in Knowles and Kirsten Malmkjaer 5). This book was so popular that it produced many imitations, in fact, a word, "Robinsonades" was coined for them. The famous Robinsonades examples are; *The Swiss Family Robinson* (1812), *Masterman Ready* (1841), *The Coral Island: A Tale of the Pacific Ocean* (1858). These stories are foundation of modern adventure stories in children's fiction. Seth Lerer comments on the Robinsonades,

Rousseau's vision was immensely influential on the novel's early reception. It contributed to the abridgments and imitations that gave rise to the so-called Robinsonade tradition: the story of adventure, island exile, and return that occupied young readers from the late eighteenth through the early twentieth century (131).

Seth Lerer further explains

For Rousseau, Defoe's novel teaches self-sufficiency. Its hero represents man in a state of nature, outside the boundaries of civil society, unaffected by what others do or think. He teaches children to imagine themselves in potentially real situations. For Rousseau, importantly, Robinson does not foster a fantastic or imaginative place for the child. Instead, he offers a model for particular experience, and in experience lies education (130).

Children no doubt did not understand the scornful and mocking satire of high society in Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* but they did find enjoyment and amusement in the hero's adventures and talking animals. Diane M. Barone writes,

Children read books for enjoyment rather than just to learn a lesson, although lessons were embedded in many fairy tales. In addition to traditional tales, authors wrote books for adults about adventures to strange lands (e.g., *Robinson Crusoe*, by Defoe, 1719). These books, as occurred in the past, were taken over by children, who although they enjoyed the plot, likely failed to understand the satire (10).

Seventeenth and eighteenth century witness a drastic change in perception of childhood. Philosophers such as John Lock's postulated childhood as specifically distinctive from adulthood. In Eighteenth century specifically, due to influence of the educational thoughts, Europeans started to recognise childhood as impressionistic, possibly could be taught ethics, principal and conduct. M. O. Grenby quotes William Godwin in his book *Children's Literature*, "fables were the happiest vehicle which could be devised for the instruction of children in the first period of their education" (14). To maintain this new thinking, authors began to write books for children with the intention of teaching them, and the ultimate objective being the teaching of morals. Stories for children at this juncture were didactic in nature. According to the critic David Whitley:

this is because in the mid-eighteenth century authors influenced by Locke began to see that fables were the perfect medium for encouraging children to work out the lessons for themselves, decoding the allegory or the illustrations to discover simple lessons. Fables were regarded as 'a testing ground for ideas about what children needed from a story and the most appropriate ways for this to reach them'" (qtd. in Grenby 16).

The notion of literature for children generally dates from 1744, the year the English publisher John Newbery printed *A Little Pretty Pocket Book*. Diane M. Barone writes,

“Like Caxton with the printing press, John Newbery changed the world of children’s books when he published *A Little Pretty Pocket-Book* (1744), which was written and illustrated for children.” (10). Murray Knowles and Kirsten Malmkjaer writes, “The history of children’s literature, in terms of publishing, is relatively short, with the bringing out of *A Little Pretty Pocket Book* by John Newberry (1713–67) in 1744 as the generally agreed starting point” (2). After publishing Pocket Book, Newbery opened a children’s bookshop which he was to run for twenty two years. Newbery was a follower of famous English Philosopher John Locke and was inspired by *Thoughts Concerning Education* (1693). He upheld that as soon as the child knew the alphabet he should be lead to read for pleasure; and advocated the use of pictures in books. It was the influence of John Lock that Newbery purposely and openly set to provide amusement for children, something no other publisher had the insight to do. Diane M. Barone writes about Newbery, “Newbery is credited with being the first to recognize that children deserved literature written specifically for them, and not just literature usurped from adults.” (10). In 1765 Newbery published *The History of Little Goody Two Shoes*

Collectively the Newbery books are important in the development of Children’s Literature, but individually the only title with much significance is *Goody Two Shoes.*, This has often been attributed to Oliver Goldsmith, but it could equally well have been written by Newbery or by one or more of the writers in his stable (Townsend. *Written 17*).

Didactic Tales

The development of children’s literature in England occurred simultaneously with the rise of the English novel. During the last half of the eighteenth century, women writers arrived in the area of juvenile Literature to inspire the ethical and moral growth.

The first Children's novel, *The Governess or Little Female Academy* (1749) by Mrs. Sarah Fielding was published in the same year as *Tom Jones* written by her brother. *The Governess* introduces the popular genre of the school story. *Easy Lessons for Children* published in 1760 by Mrs Barbauld contained moral stories supposedly written for children. Other didactic writers of this age continued and followed the Rousseau's theory of education by supporting the child in his natural search for knowledge. The best known followers of Rousseau, Tomas Day wrote *The History of Sandford and Merton*, a didactic tale that appeared in the sections (1783, 1786, and 1789). Such moral tales were one of the dominant forms of children's Literature during 18th century.

Poetry

Eighteenth century poetry for children also highlighted and gave more stress upon religion and instruction. Isaac Watts wrote seven hundred hymns for children, He wrote *Divine and Moral Songs Attempted in Easy Language for use for Children* (1715), and children used to memorize these hymns. James Janeway's *A Token for Children* (1671) is ethical and instructional book for children. These books delivered models for correct manners of conduct, and these writers unraveled and made easy the entanglement of moral, theological and social issues, summarising them into easy comprehension instruction. Isaac Watts writes, "There is greater a Delight in the very Learning of Truths and Duties this way. There is something so amusing and entertaining in Rhymes and Meter that will children to make this part of their Business and Diversion" (qtd. in Townsend. *Written* 104).

The message of these hymns were teaching of generosity and affection, and the collection made up a real child book. William Blake wrote poetry that children enjoyed, but the poems comprising *Songs of Innocence* (1789) were not explicitly written for children. Blake's poetry was occupied with imagination and enjoyment and made the

reader conscious of beauty without preaching. Children still respond to his happy poem that begins:

Piping down the Valleys wild

Piping Songs of pleasant glee (Blake 1-2).

Thomas Bewick appeared during this age as an illustrator of books for boys and girls. His *The New Lottery Book of Birds and Beasts* (1771) was one of the first examples of a master illustrator using his name for a book for children. Literature for children or the books for children at the end of the century were mostly focused on how to live a good life. Information about the natural world was didactic and in conversational style. Consciousness of books for children increased and publishers and authors became attentive of a new market for books. Parents and teachers started to acknowledge the significance of literature for children. The task to teach children moral values that benefit society was the primary aim of these books.

19th Century

Children's Literature in Western Europe and the United States began to change in the 19th century. The didacticism of the preceding ages transformed to make approach for more humorous, child aligned books. Fairy and folk tales at the outset of the nineteenth century faced criticism on being unsuitable and out of place reading for children. Both Puritans and thinkers of the time were against these reading materials for children. Puritans considered them as a form of necromancy, while Locke and Rousseau cautioned about scary effect of fairy tales on children, and favoured stories of daily life.

The outlook towards fairy tales changed when two German brothers Jacob and Wilhelm published the first volume of *Kinder and Hausmarchen* in 1812.

They (fairy tales) created the world of brutality and turmoil, in order to uncover living realities of 1800s through the stories. Rebecca Cicalese mentions in detail in her research paper “The Grimm Brothers: An Interpretation of Capitalistic Demands and Desires”. They brought the stories from the downtrodden class particularly servants and peasants. These serious scholars tried to preserve the form as well as the content of the old tales that were translated and published in England by Edgar Taylor in 1823-1826 as *German Popular Stories*. Jake Zipes writes in *The Brothers Grimm: From Enchanted Forests to the Modern World*, “The Grimms made scholarly contribution to the area of folklore, history, ethnology, religion, jurisprudence, lexicography, and literary criticism” (23). They have been translated in to more than 160 languages of the world. The Brothers have influenced generations of children’s writers. Hans Christian Andersen to Maurice Sendak were strongly influenced by these stories. In the current era Grimms’ tales have ruled the reading material of children. In, “Guardians of the Fairy Tale: The Brother Grimm” Thomas O’ Neill writes, “The stories read like dreams come true: Handsome lads and beautiful damsels, armed with magic, triumph over giants and witches and wild beasts. They outwit mean, selfish adults. Inevitably the boy and girl fall in love and live happily ever after” (O’ Neill). There are translated versions of fairy tales, and in 1846 Mary Howitt translated Hans Christians Anderson’s fairy tales under the title *Wonderful Stories of Children*, and here Children’s Literature as genre became complete due to these fairy tales. John Ruskin was also influenced by the Grimm’s tales and he wrote the modern fairy tale *King of the Golden River* (1851). There were other important writers who contributed to writing folk and fairy tales. Charles Dicken’s *The Magic Fishbone* appeared first as a serial in 1868. *The Wonder Book for Boys and Girls* was published by Nathaniel Hawthorne in 1852, followed by *Tanglewood Tales* in (1853). E. W. Lan’s Version of *Arabian Nights*. It was previously

available as chap books. Washington Irving retold the old tales of *Rip Van Winkle* and *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow* and in 1832 published his *Legends of the Alhambra*. Many other collections of fairy tales appeared and in the last half of the 19th century folktales and fairy tales became acceptable as literature for children.

Family Stories

Mrs Martha Sherwood is a prolific Evangelical writer who produced more than three hundred moralising books. Her well-known book was *Little Henry and Bear*. She is also remembered mostly for *The Fair Child Family* which was popular among young readers. It comprise of series of stories from 1818-to 1847, it considered as the first family stories. Charlotte Yonge also wrote family stories. She tells the story of motherless May family of eleven children in *The Daisy Chain* (1856). Yonge was an excellent story teller and wrote over 120 books. The year 1868 also witnessed the publication of *The Little Women* by Louisa May Alcott,

Little Women marks not only an increased truth- to- life in domestic stories, with children seen as people rather than examples of good and bad. It also makes a relaxation of the stiff and authoritarian stereotype of family life persisting from the still recent times....
(Townsend. *Written* 57-58).

Little Women has been translated in to several languages of the world due to its popularity. Important works which describe families, and attracted children are; Susan Coolidges' *What Katy Did* (1872), *What Katy Did at School* (1873), *What Katy Did Next* (1886), Mary Mapes Dodge's *Hans Brinker: or the Silver Skates* (1865), Johanna Spyri's *Heidi* (1884), Frances Hodgson Burnett's *Little Lord Fauntleroy* (1886). These stories are loved in the current generations too.

Tales of Adventure

The growth of family stories and series books for girls encouraged tales of adventures. Then immersed on the seen the boys' adventure stories, are better known as the Robinsinades, *The Swiss Family Robison*, was written by Johann David Wyss, a Swiss Pastor, and translated into English in 1814. The book delighted children's imagination. It is a story of parents and their sons, and is a great classic among children's literature in English. It was followed by Robert Louis Stevenson's *Treasure Island* (1883) an outstanding adventure story written during the last half of the nineteenth century. It has a thrilling plot and well portrayed characters. Here for the first time adults were drawn to a children's book of adventure rather than children reading adult's books:

The most obvious qualities of *Treasure Island* are its sheer speed, colour and excitement. This is what happens when a first-rate writer, just coming to the peak of his powers, applies himself with boyish enthusiasm to a work that sweeps him away and has swept nearly all readers away ever since (Townsend. *Written* 45).

The themes of excitement suspense in the novel attracts young readers, and appeals to a child's imagination and adventurous side of life. Mark Twain wrote classics *Adventures of Tom Sawyer* and *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* 1876 and 1884 respectively, He combined realism, humour and adventure in his realistic portrayal of growing up in a small town towards the end of 19th century. *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* gained literary applause and commendation, and *Adventures of Tom Sawyer* became a favourite.

The Adventures of Tom Sawyer and *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* demonstrate how we can realistically maintain the 'delusion' of our childish boys in the midst of brutal incongruity. These novels

recapture the pure unadulterated joy and freedom of boyhood and this provide a mode of escape to a world of fantasy. They attempt to persuade, not only by appealing to our nostalgia for a lost childhood and a lost Eden, but by our extending our awareness of what these worlds mean (Kumar 45).

The Rise of Fantasy

It is not easy to locate the exact date and identify and define fantasy. We can say children's fantasy literature started from 1840's with the publication of Edward Lear's *Book of Nonsense* in 1846, a pivotal work in children's literature. Certainly in the subsequent years, some of the greatest works of children were published, and almost all of these works were fantasies. The first inspiring modern fantasy may be seen in a tale *The Water Babies* written by Charles Kingsley an English Clergyman and Scientist in 1863, which is a strong mixture of the fanciful over laden with heavy doses of morality. In 1865 an Oxford Professor of mathematics, Charles Dodgson published *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (1865) under the Pseudonym of Lewis Carroll, Its publication opened the "First Golden Age" of Children's Literature in Great Britain and Europe that continued until the early 1900s. This book is a foundational book in the development of fantasy literature for children. Townsend says in his book *Written for Children: An Outline of English-language Children's Literature* that, "the decade in which fantasy took wing was the decade of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* and *The Water Babies*; the eighteen-sixties" (71). Other well-known fantasies were published near the end of the century. George MacDonald's *The Princess and the Goblin* (1872) and *The Princess and Curdie* (1883) are well known fantasies. These stories are not the forbidding moral tracts evangelic writers feverishly published, but rather celebrate Children's capacity for imagination and belief.

Children's Literature in 20th Century

If the nineteenth century witness a strong formation of literature for children, the twentieth century may be considered as the acceptance of literary and artistic excellence in children's books. The development of children's book sections in publishing houses expanded, the spreading out of public and school libraries service for children came in shape. Beautifully illustrated books for children emerged due to technological improvements. Individuals and organisations started to make efforts for the development of children's literature. In 1945 the Children's Book Council was founded to endorse Book Week and to distribute information about children books. Frederick Melcher devoted his life to improve and promote the books for children. At individual level he promoted an event that encouraged the development of children's literature. He proposed the presentation of an annual award for the most distinguished book for children. In 1922, the Newberry was the first award in the world to be given for "the Most Distinguished Contribution to literature for children". There were other awards like "The Caldecott Medal", "The Hans Christian Anderson Award" for raising the standards of writing and illustrating in children's books. The Junior Literary Guild was established in 1929. In the late 1950's paperback book clubs made it conceivable for more children to own books and increase their interest for reading.

Growth of Informational Books

Children always are in search of new information, and increased understanding of child development in nineteenth century brought the recognition that the child was naturally inquisitive and keenly wanted information. The primary purpose of information books is to convey the information about the world around children. There are verities of advantages in providing information books at an early age of children. Children enjoyed facts, and they eagerly accept information given to them in straight

forward manner. In the history of information of children's books, E. Boyd Smith produced some of the first information picture books, *The Farm Book* (1910), *Chicken World* (1913), *The Seashore Book* (1912) and *The Railroad Book* (1913). The illustrations of these stories were large, double page spreads filled with fascinating detail.

Informational books has been created in abundance to give children facts almost on every cogitable subject. Series of books in the areas of science and social studies were created and were thought important for the development of children, *The First Books*, *All about Books*, and *The True Books* series are examples in series stories. Books of experiments by Schneiders and Freemans encouraged children's science activities. Developments in the field of atomic energy and exploration of space are reflected in these information books for children. Biographies appeared to supply children's awareness of national heroes. *George Washington* (1930), *Abraham Lincoln* (1939), *Leaf the Lucky* (1941), *Pocahontas* (1949) and many more biographies presented idealised images for children. *The Childhood of famous Americans* series initiated the trend of publishing biographies for boys and girls in series form.

Fantasy for children in the first half of the twentieth century flowed mainly from the writings of English writers. Kipling braced the child's imagination in his *Just so Stories* (1920) with his humorous tactics of the origin of animal characteristics.

Kipling's *Just so Stories* are often compared with Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* and *Through the Looking Glass* as the greatest English achievements in writing for young children. Carroll shares with Kipling the faculty of appealing to children and adults alike. *Just So Stories* have been invented for the satisfaction not of a primitive people but of moderns, who are primitive only in

the metaphorical sense that their intellectual development does, to some extent recapitulate the source of human evolution (Kumar 40).

Kenneth Grahame's *The Wind in the Willows* (1908) with pictures by Ernest Shepard became children's classic; it has been reprinted in multiple editions. *The Wizard of Oz* by L. Frank Baum has been called the first American fantasy published in 1900; the highly inventive story of the cowardly Lion, the Tin Woodman, the Scarecrow, and Dorothy in the Land of Oz has been enjoyed by thousands of children. Michael Patrick Hearn notes "(it) reflected and has altered the American character. The book had sold five million copies by the time it went into the public domain in 1956" (qtd. In Burger 201). *Winnie the Pooh* (1926), *To and Again* 1927 and *Rabbit Hill* (1944), have paved the way for the most well-loved animal fantasy to be written by an American, E. B. White's *Charlotte's Web* (1952). This book, with its various theme of friendship, loyalty and celebration of life, is now delighting new generation of children.

Child through the Ages in Literature

During the course of time childhood became one of the important theme for writers, as seen in the literature at the end of the eighteenth century. Peter Coveney is one of the first modern scholars to study child in literature. He has written *The Image of Childhood* (1957) a valuable book for the students and researchers of children's literature. He notes in *The Image of Child*

The child did not exist as an important theme in literature before the end of the eighteenth century. In fact there would seem to be very little historical evidence for existence of children at all, before this date. The absence of children in literature and in historical documents before the beginning of the nineteenth century presumably reflects society's attitude towards children that is they were largely ignored.

All this changed with the advent of the Romantic poets, particularly Blake and Wordsworth, who used the child as a symbol to express ideas that were central to their work (Coveney 42).

Plenty of literature for children is found today that has never existed earlier in the history of the humankind. Different kinds of books, enormously greater than before, and widespread distribution techniques makes thousands of books available to children. Peter Hunt Writes, “All literature, all texts, created before the eighteenth century was not written for children. Children apparently were a part of the audience in primarily oral and aural society” (“Instruction” 15). Previous to the nineteenth century there were a few books written for the specific readership of children. Children read books written for adults, taking from them what they could comprehend. In the introduction of her book, *Aspects and Issues in the History of Children’s Literature* by Maria Nikolajeva writes

Children's literature emerged on a larger scale because at some time in the seventeenth century society began to recognize that childhood was a special period in people's lives and that children had their own special needs (ix).

Maria Nikolajeva considers seventeenth century fertile for the production of children’s literature. Writers became conscious of childhood as distinctive phase of life. The credit for creating initial books for children as Pedagogic and educational perspectives goes to seventeenth century.

Children’s Literature became popular widen throughout the world in the nineteenth century. Writers who often wrote for both children and adults became more experimental and pioneering and received recognition. There was a drastic transformation in the approach towards children’s education in twentieth century.

Children were considered as potential patrons of children's books. Children received more focus, rights and privileges than in prior centuries. Literature for children was measured as medium to play a part in 'civilizing' children. Children became the discourse of adults in arts and literature. Ideas of the child influenced adult literature. The 'child' stimulated poetry, prose, and political discussion during the Romantic period. Annemarie Ambuhl says "Nevertheless, certain concepts originating in Romanticism are still maintained in contemporary scholarship in a rather unreflecting way. Among these, the child as a metaphor for the poet plays a crucial role." (378). Stories for children flourished, and publishers and educators addressed the issue of children in literature in broader perspective. Poets like William Blake lamented on the death of children or were troubled about their future in poetry. In prose children gained space in large numbers in the novels of the second half of the nineteenth century. Children were symbols or icons, standing for innocence, emotion, and simplicity. Romanticism succeeded in providing childhood a liberty of imagination which earlier periods would have crushed. Stephanie Metz writes in, 'Romanticism and the Child: Inventing Innocence'

British Romantics often figured children in adult literature and poetry because of ideas about the child's closeness to nature. The child, some Romantic poets believed, had access to a unique worldview, precisely because a child has not yet rationalized and assimilated the workings of society the way an adult has. The literary and political influence of Romanticism retains its potency even today as it still colors our perceptions of children (n.p).

Anne Lundin comments,

With the Romantics' "discovery" of the child, we are confronted with something new: the phenomenon of major literary figures expressing their most profound thoughts through the image of the child, a veritable Golden Age when "the major wrote for minors." Within a few decades, the child emerged from cultural diminution to become the cultural icon of imaginative literature and philosophical speculations (5).

Romanticism preserved in other cultural movements of the time that influenced the dominance of childhood and its literature. Wordsworth's *Ode on Intimation of Early Childhood* is an important influence in the Romantic attitude of the child. The utilitarian education which became trend was criticised by Wordsworth in *Ode: Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood*

Oh evil day! If I were sullen
 While herself is adoring
 This sweet May-morning
 And the Children are culling
 On every side (Wordsworth 42-46).

The two writers most connected with the innovative vision of romanticised childhood are William Blake and William Wordsworth, whose writings have paved the way to recognise the image of child and children's literature as well. Deborah Cogan Thaker and Jean Webb writes, "It is often claimed that the image of the romantic child has been a key point of reference for the birth of children's literature since the beginning of the nineteenth century" (qtd. in Gill 27). Both these writers shared a passion for the child as a symbol of innocence and naturalness. Anne Lundin writes, in *Constructing the Canon of Children's Literature*

Wordsworth's celebration of a folkloric childhood in *The Prelude* privileged fairy tales and imaginative literature, a curriculum not lost on children's librarians who championed a comparable literature for children of modern America: a canon composed of books of romanticised America, of books that privileged the child in Nature, of books that stood timeless as the fabled and storied lore of classics and traditional tales (6-7).

Wordsworth like John Locke consider that the mind was at birth a *tabula rasa*, Wordsworth commended that it should be wide open to thoughts and sensations, above all those from nature. They possess productive ability at the beginning stage where faculties like vision, fantasy, dreams and reveries could be developed. For Wordsworth basics of moral virtue and beauty are rooted in man in the initial years of life by nature and these things shape the adult life later. "The child is the father of man / And I could wish my days to be / Bound each to each by natural piety (My Heart Leaps Up 9-11). Wordsworth was disappointed over the carnage of the child's 'visionary gleam'. This theme followed repeatedly all through the Romantic writing as a longing to return to the awareness of the child. It is the adult world which takes away the child's innocence. For these writers childhood is comprised of visionary eye and at this level the mind is most accomplished to acquire an imaginative impressions of nature. Wordsworth speaks of this in *Intimations of Immortality* from *Recollections of Early Childhood*.

Thou, over whom thy immortality
 Broods like the Day, a Master o'er a Slave,
 A presence which is not to be put by;
 Thou little Child, yet glorious in the might
 Of heaven-born freedom on thy being's height,

Why with such earnest pains dost thou provoke

The years to bring the inevitable yoke (118-124).

Wordsworth shows that children are certainly gifted with blessings from God. Children came in consideration as they possess keener sensitivity to beauty and truth compared to adults. Literature written for children have a close relation with debates and discussion between the philosophers, theorists and writers in nineteenth century. Deborah Cogan Thaker and Jean Webb writes, “It is impossible to consider Romanticism without addressing the centrality of childhood and the development of a literature specifically for a child audience, but equally impossible to discuss children’s literature without investigating the complexity of these debates (15). Peter Coveney says in *The Image of the Child*:

the concept of the child’s nature which informed the work of Blake, Wordsworth and Dickens was of original innocence. Stemming most forcefully from Rousseau, and in contradiction to long Christian tradition of original sin, it was this which gave weight and edge to the general commentary of these authors as they expressed it through the symbol of the innocent child....The symbol which had such strength and richness in the poetry of Blake and some parts of novels of Dickens, became in time the static and moribund child-figure of the popular Victorian imagination; a residue only of a literary theme almost entirely evacuated of the significance it had earlier borne....It was against this conventionally innocent child that a revolution was affected at the turn of the 19th century (45-46).

William Blake portrays children in different tempers and situations. He also features the different dispositions of children to different locations. Sometimes he

identifies and compares his life with children, as rescuer, redeemer and victim. On the one hand he glorifies the happiness of children and at the same time portrays grim sufferings of children too. Blake in his *Songs of Innocence* and *Songs of Experience* portrayed the image of the child as bright saintly spirited, opposite to the authoritarian forces of urbanisation, mechanization, and Puritanism, which blocked the growth of the child. The child symbolized the world of the imagination in an increasingly industrialized, utilitarian world. For Blake the innocence of the child is contrasted with the experience of the industrialized world. Blake shows his indignation towards ill treatment against children in the pitiless and hazardous chimney-sweeping business. Child freedom was totally taken away by the adults. In *Chimney Sweeper* Blake expresses the idea of the child:

When my mother died I was very young
 And my father sold me while yet my tongue
 Could scarcely cry, 'Weep'! 'Weep'! 'Weep'! 'Weep'!
 So your chimneys I sweep and in soot I sleep (Line 1- 4).

In this regard Peter Coveny says,

The child could serve as a symbol of the artist's dissatisfaction with the society that was in the process of such harsh development about him. In a world given increasingly to utilitarian values and the Machine, the child could become the symbol of Imagination and sensibility, a symbol of Nature set against the forces abroad in society actively de-naturing humanity. Through the child could be expressed the artist's awareness of human Innocence against the cumulative pressures of social experience (44).

For writers like Blake and Wordsworth and their contemporaries, there is always the image of the poetic child or the poet as a child like creature. Because of this trait of closeness to nature and paradise, these writers are able to address the basis of creative imagination without deviation. For them the concept of childhood become the core of their poetic creation and theory. Coveney writes, “The importance is that for them the child became a symbol of the greatest significance for the subjective investigation of the Self, and an expression of their romantic protest against the Experience of society” (45). The child in romantic period exemplifies innocence, contiguity and proximity with nature. Child is an idealized creation in romantic poetry, and through child writers seek to retrieve and vindicate the disappearing light and joy in the commercial world. As Wordsworth says, “But He beholds the light, whence it flows, / He sees it in his joy” (Ode 69-71).

In Western Europe towards the end of the 18th century and coexisting with the innovatory social philosophies and political movements, there arose a change in image of the child. The child came to be regarded not as an inadequate adult to be subjected and pacified as quickly as possible to the adult mode but as a being composed of rich inner possessions and resources, often despoiled by adult tutelage. All these resources have been displayed by writers in literature and arts of the century. Anne Lundin writes,

John Dewey appropriated certain views of the child that were gaining force in the late nineteenth century into his pragmatic philosophy and school reforms. Believing that education could redeem a large society, he positioned child, as critical to that remaking, at the very centre of the school (12).

Children as they give the impression in art, literature, drama or films imply an ample mixture of fantasy and reality. Children embody memories and dreams of adults, their own lost childhood, as well as feelings. These feelings and fantasies often undergo elaborate transformations. Children adopt a variety of appearances as they appear in literature and art. The story of Tom Sawyer and Huckleberry Finn by Mark Twain expresses certain characteristic American attitudes about children. And the protagonists of Dickens' Novels are ingenious and independent and recurrently prove that adults' apprehensions and anxieties about them are unfounded.

Child gained center space in 19th century and became the main protagonist of serious adult fictions, as in the novels of Dickens, George Eliot, Mark Twain, Henry James and Dostoevsky in America and Russia respectively. Popular fictions for children for example Lewis Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland*, Burnett's *Fauntleroy* and Speyri's *Heidi* gained importance. Both the child's view of the adult world, and adult's views of childhood becomes more important. The portrayal of the child in Dickens's writing is very different. Children are depicted noble, helpless, endangered and weak and need the protection of kind adults; and without this they become helpless, suffering victims of terrific, wicked and cruel characters. The most example of such kind of child character we find in *David Copperfield* (1850), where children are threatened by the vicious voice of the school headmaster, Mr. Creakle. Anguish and misery of child is a recurrent theme in Dickens. Not only the children suffered like Pip of *Great Expectations* (1861), Abel Magwitch in *Bleak House* (1853), Oliver, the workhouse boy in *Oliver Twist* but all are exploited in some way or other. *Oliver Twist* endorses the progress of innocence through a world in itself totally corrupt. Dickens uses child as a tool for his first person narration for *David Copperfield*, *Bleak House* and *Great Expectations* through the eyes of children like David, Esther, Summerson and Pip.

Through the child as protagonist, Dickens displays that the Victorian children had expectations of self-improvement because they believed in advancement in life. Whenever these children perceive something that is better for them they instantly crave to gain improvement. As Coveny writes, “the child is now symbol of growth and development, and now a symbol of retreat into personal regression and self-pity.... For Dickens an interest in the child nourished the growth of a moral interest which he dramatized through he medium of his great fiction” (45).

Charlotte Bronte in her lone novel *Jane Eyre* (1847) has shown a child, a female, an orphan through the character of Jane. She has portrayed a typical Victorian female character. The child seems to be in protest through the journey in the novel. The child is isolated without family and friends. Her first speech is a protest against the injustice she suffers. She is struggling to speak to put her thoughts in words.

Child was given roles by writers who believe children are closer to divine, who can figure and form the character of the adult. Such is the example of George Eliot’s *Silas Marner* (1861) where the child reforms the life of an adult. Eppie the child character rescues the old man and shapes his character. George Eliot carried on the Wordsworthian judgement of the child as a transcendental model and instructor. It was central to the romantic vision that there is relation between child and nature. The inventive use of the child by Eliot in *Silas Marner* is marvellous. The child takes the suffering man Silas from myopia to vision. George Eliot asserts recurrently in *The Mill on the Floss* (1860) on the spiritual enlightening quality of a child’s actuality. Robert H. Dunham writes in “*Silas Marner and the Wordsworthian Child*”

George Eliot's fear that the Wordsworthian motto might give her story away indicates that she assumes in her readers a ready understanding of how a child's presence can heal the particular kind

of spiritual blindness described in the novel. Such an assumption reflects more than her own temperament and persuasion, for the poets of the early nineteenth century had consistently used the child's vision as an example and as an emblem of the dynamic and lustrous reality waiting only to be discovered by adults whose perceptions are blurred by convention and by custom (653).

There is another version of children created by the writers such as Golding who creates the world of children without the meddling of adults. Golding tried to challenge the notion of psychology of the child which Ballantyne has adopted in *Coral Islands* (1858). In *Lord of the Flies* (1954) Golding attempts to know through the child's world, the flaws and imperfections of the society and the defects of human nature. The novel has been admired and read by both children and young adults throughout the globe. Stefan Hawlin says, "*Lord of the Flies* has for a long time been a book set for children and young adults" (Harald Bloom 1).

Rudyard Kipling is famous as a storyteller for children and once the child reads him he finds "the lasting joy, and one making itself felt a deeper level than mere excitement or entertainment, is the immediate identification of himself." (qtd. in Montefiore 97). His portrayal of children gives us a glimpse of the baser and more primitive sides of man. Kipling's *Just so Stories* (1902) are often related with Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* and *Through the Looking Glass* as the primary and dominant English achievements in writing for young children. Child is shown care free and irresponsible in his writing. His writing evokes reminiscences and recollections in the readers of their own school days. Rudyard Kipling's *Stalky and Co.* (1899) is one of many novels that permit the reader to relive, in fantasy, his carefree school days. In Kim's personality in *Kim* (1901) we see the most attractive relationship

and the portrayal of childish and childlike characteristics. Kim becomes a lovable re-creation of an idealized childhood.

The exaltation of the juvenile and children is noticeable feature of several great American works, including *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (1884) Young Huck is a principal and important young person in American literature, obscuring even other child characters like Henry in Stephen Crane's *The Red Badge of Courage* and Holden Caulfield in J. D. Salinger's *The Catcher in the Rye*. Mark Twain had a profound understanding of child psychology. He identifies himself with the boy Tom in *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* (1876) and recollects the memories of his own boyhood in the Mississippi valley. He reconstructed his own boyhood with all its joys, sport and adventure. Mark Twain, in fact, has portrayed child as natural and his narrative is the outburst of a child's heart. Similarly in *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, the world of Huckleberry Finn is a youthful world full of innocence, love, sympathy and compassion.

The beauty of child characters is that they succeed in being a child and a grown up person at once. Through the child's mischief we see the novelist examining the world as it were from a remote control. Through the seeing eye of the child used by the writer, the reader can't miss even absurd things (Kumar 47).

Mark Twain shows a child has close association with nature, and run after his own set of conventions and morals. He has no idea of what limitation means. While a child in Mark Twain is rough; yet he has a heart which beats with innocence, love and sympathy. 'Experience' according to Huck means boundaries, pride and insincerity where the world of innocence gets unnoticed. Albert E. Stone Jr. Speaks writes in a book review

To a degree unexcelled by the novelists of his generation, he devoted a career to writing about childhood. Five of his novels, several long novelettes . . . depict the world of adolescents, children, or infants. Indeed, Twain's fascination with immaturity was so deep-seated and persistent an aspect of his imagination that many of his fictional adults are conceived essentially as grown-up children (Ross 366).

Hemingway has depicted child in *The Old Man and the Sea* in relation to the adult. The proximity is such, the adult Santiago succeeded only with the child Manolin. The boy provides warmth and nourishment throughout his journey to catch the shark. Children like this book because of its rhythmic conversation between old man and the boy. It is the relation between the disciple and the master more than it is purely human relation. In the words of Jackson J. Benson, "Everything is due to create persuasively a world where man and boy successfully interact without interference" (qtd. in Singh 18).

American and British writers glorified and exalted childhood in their writings. A child in his significant journey to adulthood affected by difficulties, challenged and threatened by dangers, to which he is frequently exposed, is an 'objective correlative' for the American nation in the processes of coming of age.

These writers were progressively more engaged with the quality of the child's experience and the consequences of this experience for his future development. The writings are evidence of the writer's growing interest in the significance of childhood impressions and their role in the formation of character.

The image of the child in American poetry has continued on par with that in fiction. The poet who most extensively dealt with the concept of child is Walt Whitman. His use of the child image in *Leaves of Grass* provides vital understanding. Whitman's

image of the child is introduced in *The Song of the Banner at Day Break* as a character to explain the source of vision.

Children's Literature has many components in it for the overall benefit of children, and instructors can use it for development of the language, reading skills and strategies. The aim of the research here is to focus on the dominant themes in the English language children's books in India. The first chapter focuses on uncovering the ambiguities in children's literature, relation and difference between children's literature and adult literature and how the child got recognition in the literary books. It also highlight the condition of child and childhood throughout the ages, and discusses some social philosophies related to children and childhood. The second chapter tries to highlight the importance of classical children's literature of India in connection with global classical children's literature and contemporary children's literature. It surveys how classical literature shaped the contemporary children's literary scene. It also provides some light on children's literature in Indian regional languages and gives a clear overall understanding about the Indian children's literature and its roots. The third chapter titled as 'Contribution of Publishers to Indian Children's Literature' bring forth the contribution of private and government run organizations and institutes who work for the promotion of children's literature in India. The fourth chapter is the central chapter titled as 'Themes and Trends in Contemporary Indian Children's Literature in English' which is further divided into five subchapters. It highlights the main themes discussed in current English literature for children. This chapter is followed by the conclusion. The study discusses both short stories and novels as well, and these stories and novels cater to all groups of children. As younger group of children have shorter attention span they cannot focus for long on novels so short stories are appropriate for them. On the bases of dominant themes prevalent in children's literature in India in

English, the following set of themes are taken for exploration. The subchapters and books/stories focused upon in this study are as follows

4.1: Science through Children's Literature

The Robots are Coming; Stories of Robots (1989) Collection of twelve stories
by Dilip M Salwi

From Somewhere Out There (2009) by Karthika Das

4.2: Eco-Consciousness and Children's Literature in English in India

Curse of Grass (2010) by Ira Sexena

Ranthambore Adventures (1998) by Depak Dalal

4.3: Gender Role, Representation of Girl and their Voices in Indian Children's Literature in English

The Battle for No. 19 (2007) by Ranjit Lal

Go, Girl, Go! (2015) by Deepa Agarwal

4.4: Bibliotherapy: Children's books in India

Lighthouse in the Storm (2012) collection of 24 stories by AWIC

4.5: Mystery, Detective and Adventure Tales in Indian English Children's Literature

The Kaziranga Trail (1978) by Arup Kumar Datta

Mystery of the Falling Mountains (2004) by Nilima Sinha

The present study explains and highlights the condition and current themes and trends which are being represented in Indian children's literature written in English language. This study does not focus on the particulars of the literary process or the detailed construction of story components such as setting, characterization, style, plot, or point of view. It is eclectic in nature. The study is viewed through the theoretical perspective of ecocriticism, reader response theory, gender approaches. The main objective of this

study is to bring forth these trends and themes so that it facilitates further researchers and at the same time provide Indian children's literature a place in academic sphere. It also highlights children's literature's instructional purposes and at the same time emphasizes how children's literature can play a significant part in their holistic development. Children eight years above of age are taken in to consideration for this study. Keeping in consideration only textual stories the study excludes pictorial and pictographic literature like graphic novels, picture books, comics, adapted novels and animations and cartoons for children.

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Chapter 2

Journey through the Tradition and Genesis: Overview of Indian Children's Literature in English

India is a huge country with more than twenty two languages and nearly seventeen hundred dialects. Literature in India exists nearly in all the languages, though its development is heterogeneous from language to language. Indian Literature for children and young adults has showed a marked progress in stating its cultural and literary identity. It has rid itself of its complex of colonialism very fast. There are reasons behind this achievement. The focus of this chapter would be to trace the genesis and evolution of children's literature in English in India. In India tradition too has a significant effect on the evolution of Indian Children's Literature. India's pre-colonial literary and cultural traditions, oral as well as written, have been highly developed from the very early period. Dr Sulabha R. Devpurkar writes in *Children's Fiction in India: A Critical Study*, "A nation has its own children's literature, India also can boast of one very rich tradition and treasure of children's literature" (2). India's unlimited treasure of myths and legends, mystery tales and folk tales, ethical and moral percepts of high order have been well preserved in *The Vedas*, *the Upanishads*, the epics of *Mahabharata* and *Ramayana*. *Katha Sarit Sagar* in *Panchatantra*, *Hitopadesha*, *Shuksaptak* and *Jataka Tales* are works where most of the Indian literature originated. Meena Khorana in the introduction of her book *The Indian Subcontinent in Literature for Children and Young Adults* writes

Although children's literature as genre is relatively new in the Indian subcontinent, the concept of entertaining and instructing children through literature, both oral and written, is ancient. The subcontinent

is rich in traditional and folklore, and collections of stories united around a central frame, such as the *Panchatantra*, *Hitopadesa*, *Jataka Tales*, and *Kathasaritsagar*, were popular throughout the subcontinent (XI).

It is right to comment here that without the classical literature of India, contemporary children's literature of India cannot be discussed because of the close relation between the two. In his paper Kamal Sheoran titled, "*Contemporary Children's Literature in India*", had argued in the year 1975 that the state of children's literature in India was one of many contradictions saying, "India is a country of many contradictions. Contemporary children's literature is one of them. It is an unpalatable truth that in a country, where thousands of children are doomed to illiteracy, the urgent need is to provide textbooks and other basic needs for rudimentary education. At this point, to speak of children's literature as a specialized field is far-fetched and fanciful" (127). Currently the situation has changed much, and writers for children have shown a marked change and have been dealing with themes and issues related to children as well as culture. There is no doubt that India has its own cultural heritage and literature of its own. Sheoran argues that the oral narrative tradition of India deliver the needs of growing children adding,

India has the greatest living oral narrative tradition in the world. It fulfills and feeds the needs of every young and growing child in that he gets his complete 'story' quota orally. Thus, if children's literature exists at all as a separate entity on the accepted scale of written literature, it exists in spite of rather than because of prevailing conditions. And in this context children's literature in India remains perhaps the greatest paradox of all (128).

Indian multilingual and multi-cultural structure and its principally secular character gave its literature a sole spirit and harmony of thought and feeling to address itself to the modern perspectives of teaching and learning. It is important to find out the probable association between the new and the unknown (traditional literature). Traditional children's literature, is to a great extent oral narrative. It is a living literature that falls and rolls into various forms of the spoken and written word. On the other hand printed contemporary children's literature deals with present-day styles and subjects and have themes related to children and their development. All over the world writers for children have drawn on material offered by traditional Indian literature. Manorama Jafa speaks in 'The National Seminar and Exhibition on the *Panchatantra* Inaugural Address'

Nearly three-fourths of the Children's Literature in Indian languages is based on the traditional literature. Almost all Indian writers for children at some age or other have rewritten the old tales. This rewriting traditional literature is rich in content with appealing plots and is almost immediately accepted by the target audience... the parents, teachers, librarians in India and Indians living outside India encouraged children to read these comics in the hope that this would make children familiar with Indian culture and tradition (35).

Indian folklore is rich and imaginative and remains the most interesting source of children's literature. The philosophy and sciences of ancient India reached distant lands. India is a land of oral tradition. The stories form *Panchatantra* , *Jataka Tales*, *Ramayana* and *Mahabhartha*, have been continuously passed through generation to generation in cyclic patterns. Today Indian children's literature comprises of stories retold from these stories. These classics are modified and improved again and again. Each writer and illustrator drawing inspiration from the original and enriching it further

with his own style and imagination. All over the world the themes of these epics appeal to children. The *Panchatantra* is the best guide to enhance moral values in children since each tale has a moral lesson at its end. Being one of the earliest books to be printed after the introduction of the printing press in Europe, the *Panchatantra* was also the first Indian text to be published by Gutenberg Press in 1483 under the title, *Das Der Buch Beyspiele*. The *Panchatantra* is part of India's rich heritage. It is also a part of our ancient story telling tradition which goes back to the earliest years of Indian civilization and the development of which has been nurtured over centuries. Almost every museum in the world has some folio from the *Panchatantra*. And the central Asian wall painting is full of stories from *Panchatantra*. *Panchatantra* constitutes five Tantantras or five books named *Mitrabhed* (The Loss of Friends), *Mitra Samprapti* (Winning of Friends), *Kokolikiye* (Crows and Owls), *Labdhaparashe* (Loss of Gains), and *Aparikshitkarte* (Rash Actions) and they contain eighty stories. It is rightly said,

One Vishnee Sherma, Shrewdly gleaming

All worldly wisdom's inner meaning

In these five books the charm compressed

Off all such book the world possesses (Ryder 3).

The primarily concern of earlier fairy tales, fables and mythical stories in India was to entertain and elevate the young readers. The *Panchatantra* among these fairy tales and fables constructs the expressive account of Children's Literature. So *Panchatantra* may be called as an initial pattern of Children's Literature in India. As Niklas Bengston writes, "Yet even so, the ancient Indian classic *The Panchatantra*, which new folklore research continues to illuminate, was certainly the first work ever written down for children, and this in itself means that the Indian influence has been enormous, not on

the genres of fables and fairy tales but on those genres as taken up in children's literature" (30).

There is doubt on its exact composition date. It is supposed the writers of this composition is Vishnu Sharma and other scholars. Amit Bhattacharyya writes, "The Panchatantra- 'Five Treatises'- was reputedly written in south India by Vishnu Sharma, but is also ascribed to Bidpai, in the third century BC" (6). The important stories from *Panchatantra* available in translation in English are: - *A Cow, A Hunter, Some Doves and Mouse* by G. L. Chandirani, *A Friend in Need...* by Swapna Dutta, *A Monkey and a Crocodile* by Sneh Singh, *It Pays to be Clever, The Blue Jackal* by Swapna Dutta and *The Wise Rabbit* by Esther Marry Lyons. The best thing in *Panchatantra* is plants and animals can speak and converse with human beings too, which has remained the most appealing for children. Children wonder how the animals and birds think act and talk as they themselves do. Padma Balasubramanian explains

Children live in a world of their own. They love talking to birds, animals, flowers and trees. They love to fantasize whether they are alone or in a group. They always wonder why these animals and birds do not speak to them. They are curious to know whether they speak at all. The *Panchatantra* gives them their answers. Here is a world they are familiar with, here is an environment they are used to – the grass, the bushes, the trees, the woods, the rivers and the ponds (56).

She further explains:

In all stories, children identify themselves with characters, and enjoy or suffer with them. [As when they read or hear mythological stories, they become a Bhima, or Hanuman, or Krishna, or Rama, or even a

common soldier, or Ravana. When they read comics, they become a He-man Batman, or Spiderman] (56).

Children in urban areas are getting more and more inclined towards the internet, web, etc. However the question raised here is how do the *Panchatantra* stories figure in today's world, when adults and children alike are racing towards an electronic world, where things can happen at the press of a button? The question needs to be answered, however difficult. Nevertheless, *Panchatantra* stories are popular, as evident by the number of versions, translations and books circulating around the world. In today's India, traditional literature is much more popular, Shobha Viswanath, publishing director of Karadi Tales, an independent children's publishing house, writes in her article, *Children's Literature in India: A Fairy-Tale?*

This (Indian children's literature) would include activity books, comics, coloring books and anthologies of various folktales, the *Panchatantra* and the *Jataka stories*. Stories from the folk and mythological traditions are the most popular among children's fiction published in India" (Shobha n.p).

Michelle Superle writes about the significance of traditional narratives in current times

Today, all of these narratives still occupy a central place in Indian culture. Not only have they become part of an oral tradition, but they are also now available in written re-tellings that are mass-produced and marketed specifically for children (20).

Michelle Superle quotes Navin Menon, "A visit to any bookstall" will reveal that "a whole lot of books based on traditional literature," as well as "new and creative literature," are currently available for children" (20). These stories portrayed have been part of oral literature for thousands of years. These stories are didactic as they instruct

and indoctrinate in children principles and ethics. It is the writers and publishers who continuously work hard to make available these fables for young and adults alike. Inspired by *Panchatantra*, *The Hitopadesha* or *The Book of Good Counsel* is written in North India for the same purpose and motive as of *Panchatantra*, to teach the five princes. It depicts various human predicaments and their successful solutions. It is translated into multi languages of the world like Persian, Arabic, Latin. These stories have been in the domain of educational function. They are being didactic and pedagogic, and religious teachers have always used these metaphoric stories for Indian children to impart education and values.

Ancient Indian tales are informed by a human nature to action and to transform the world. The focus of these tales, whether oral, written, or cinematic, has always been on finding magical instruments, extraordinary messages. In India almost every language have stories, and these stories have influence of the culture where they are born. All the classical and regional stories in India are laden with songs and verses. The main components of these stories are proverbs and riddles. Experimenting with them writers writing for children in the current times would surely have unlocked a new technique and approach. The impact of these stories have not only been seen in India but in children's literature throughout the globe. Sandhya Rao writes,

These were disseminated from generation to generation, by word of mouth, through folk telling and classical discourse. The history of literatures in different Indian languages uniformly refer to the absence of any distinction between stories for adults and stories for children. Songs and lullabies are widely regarded as the first examples of children's literature. The oral tradition encompassed all members of society (n.p).

Indian values, traditional art of storytelling has continuously been a cradle for world literature. The epics, classics, Indian lore which supplied material to adult literature, were likewise shared by children throughout the world. India's most antique well-known example stories are *Brahat Katha* or *The Great Story* and *Panchatantra*. *Panchatantra* tales have been a foundation of motivation for sequential generations of the writers all over world.

It is not surprising to find that the characters in the stories themselves are given to the telling of tales. At the least provocation, a person recalls a tale, so that stories, and sometimes stories within stories, became embedded in the narrative itself. This is the technique that the western reader knows from the *Arabian Nights*, one which, considering the influence that the Indian story has had on the Middle East, probably in India (Edward et.al. 203).

Panchatantra has assisted as a foundation, directly or indirectly, popular works of works of Geoffrey Chaucer, John Gower, Giovanni Boccaccio and even William Shakespeare. *Panchatantra* stories fables had reached the western world by the eleventh century and merged into the native folklore. *Panchatantra* was widely circulated, and there were around twenty English translations before 1888. Franklin Edgerton teacher in the University of Pennsylvania who authored *Panchatantra Reconstructed* notes

Of all the works of Indian Literature, the *Panchatantra* has had the most profound influence on the world civilization in the realm of literature and art... Few books in the literature of the world have enjoyed such great popularity over so wide an area. It has penetrated practically all literatures of Europe and Southern and Western Asia.

It is known to exist in over 200 versions and translations in about 60 languages and dialects, spreading from Java in the south east to Iceland in the northwest (qtd in Jafa “National” 9).

Arther W. Ryder, an American scholar of Sanskrit has translated *Panchatantra* into English and mentions its significance in the preface

Ever since the dawn of civilization ever since man first realized the imperative need to know himself and through that self-knowledge, to win friends and influence people so to secure his own happiness and well-being not less than those of his fellowmen, the *Panchatantra* stories have unfailingly offered him significant and dynamic aid (Ryder).

Indian literature of past has spread wings widely. It is an established fact that many of the stories of the fable of Aesop, Grimms’, Hans Anderson and La Fontaine have their origin in India. M. K. Agarwal gives a detailed description of Indian influence on modern western thought, in his book *From Bharata to India: Chrysee the Golden*. La Fontaine stated, “It is not necessary that I should say whence I have taken the subjects of the new fables. I shall only say that, from a sense of gratitude, that I owe the largest portion of them to Pilpay the Indian sage” (qtd in Agarwal 505). Vijay Bedekar also gives a detailed descriptions about the numbers of translations of Indian traditional literature in west in “History of Migration of *Panchatantra* and What it Can Teach”

There is hardly any other secular work in the world which has penetrated so deeply in many cultures encompassing practically every continent of the world. During the last 1500 years there are at least 200 translations of *Panchatantra* in about 60 languages of the world. Aesop Fables (2), Arabian Nights (3), Sindbadh (4) and more

than 30 to 50% of the western nursery rhymes and ballads have their origin in *Panchatantra* and *Jataka* stories (Bedekar).

Apart from traditional writers, modern writers also have been inclined towards traditional tales. Salman Rushdie's techniques like flash backs and the story within the story used in *Haroun and The Sea of Stories* have traces of the traditional literature particularly from *The Katha Sarit Sagar*, the longest collection of stories in the world. These motifs have been used by Salman Rushdie recurrently in his writings and in *Midnight's Children* particularly. The supernatural or the concept of fantasy has been drawn from these tales. Murli Melwani writes in the introduction of his book *The Indian Short Story in English 1835-2008*, "It (*Katha-Sarita-Sagara*,) shows men playing a wide variety of roles in the drama of life, a drama in which the magical, the supernatural and the normal are not differentiated" (Introduction). Prema Srinivasan also rightly observed "The familiar *Katha Sarit Sagar* has been literally translated into "the ocean of stories" and the story operates within the focus of the child protagonist, Haroun" (51). The traditional story form of India has been globally acknowledged. It has been recognized as of being of assistance to world literature. Thomas Kullman writes in his paper titled, "*Eastern and Western Story-Telling in Salman Rushdie's Haroun and the Sea of Stories*" writes

The title alludes to two outstanding Eastern collections of stories: the *Indian Kathasaritsagara* ("Ocean of the Streams of Story"; e.g. Bechert 1993: 65), and the *Arabian Nights* who feature the famous caliph Haroun al Rashid.... The story is characterized by a vast range of intertextual and intercultural references.... These elements of European story-telling mix with allusions to the East and to Eastern

mythology.... Haroun is accompanied by a Water Genie, who seems to have sprung directly from the *Arabian Nights* (Kullman).

So we can determine that there are characteristics of Indian classical stories in most of the tales written around the globe. The classical stories from India were retold with different twists and settings which delighted the children. Manorama Jafa says in “Children’s Literature in India” writes,

Most of the *Panchatantra* stories are animal tales which teach worldly wisdom and practical way of living to make life richer and happier. The plot of these tales is knitted around adult intrigues. The physically weak and helpless are shown winning over the strong and powerful with their wit and trickery. The themes of many of these tales were later taken by Aesop and other writers. Several *Uncle Remus* stories in America are also based on *Panchatantra* stories (33).

As already mentioned India has a strong influence on the oral tradition of storytelling. The myths and folk tales have been merged into the fabric of our lives. All over the world writers who write for children have brought material and content from traditional literature of India. The myths, epics, and legends which establish this traditional literature are about gods, the existence and origin of man and the world, the struggle of man against natural and supernatural elements and so on. Manorama Jafa writes about the traditional stories, in “Children’s Literature in India Today”

Over, the centuries, these stories have travelled far and wide and translated into more than fifty languages. Over two hundred versions of these stories exist today the world over. These stories have inspired writers to create similar stories for children (2).

Mohini Rao has a similar opinion and says:

It is only natural that in India these stories have been told myriad times by myriad authors. More than fifty percent of what has been published are the retold version of these tales. There seems to be an overt anxiety on the part of the authors to preserve the fountainhead of stories which are not only ingenious but have the cherished, traditional values (67).

There are number of stories which have an entertaining quality and are recognized as repositories of didactic attitude. These stories spread to the West during the twelfth century via Arabic and Persian translators. These were also moved to the West by merchants and crusaders. So scholars have concluded that ancient India was the foundation of all folk tales and have spread wisdom and brought entertainment and joy to hundreds of millions. As Murli Melwani explains,

These stories travelled to what is now Known as the Middle East, and thence Europe, where they circulated in different versions. In the Middle Ages, Boccaccio and Chaucer often borrowed the central idea of their narratives from one of these versions (Introduction).

Noted German Sanskrit scholar Theodor Beufey (1859) also says:

The Hindus, even before their acquaintance with the animal fables of Aesop, which they received from Greeks, had invented their own composition of a similar kind, and a great many of them at that (Kulshreshtra 100).

We have now refined version of our own stories of past, which are being told in contemporary manner to enlighten children with tradition. The mythological stories of *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* have a great impact on the children of India. These great

epics, the story of Kings and Queens, war and love attract children. As Shanta Rameshwa Rao, in her introduction to the *Mahabharata* says, “If you are an Indian child it is very unlikely that you have not heard of the *Mahabharata*... for over centuries, the epic and the characters and the situations described in it have become part of our very being” (ix). Sudhir Kakar in *The Inner World—A Psychoanalytic Study of Childhood and Society in India* (1982) makes a comprehensive analysis about the growth and expansion of the Indian child in history and literature. Classical Sanskrit literature is one of the earliest to demarcate children and childhood in the Indian literary tradition. Child was more of an object of esteem rather than an individual. In Kalidasa we find any reference of the love and warmth of a father for his girl child. In order to understand the role of children and childhood in the Indian literary practice, we must expand the information of classics available in the regional languages. The most influential enduring literary tradition of India for children can be found in the songs and poems of Surdas and Tulsidas, which are related to medieval Hindi literature. Its continuous popularity is due to its songs and poems for it has changed the folk consciousness in such way that is rare to find in another literature. It is unique in the literary traditions of the world. Surdas has composed five hundred verses on Krishna’s childhood alone. Krishna’s and Rama’s childhood has unique significance, and their childhood are placed close to the center of poetic inspiration.

India does possess its own super-heroes and comic characters that dabble in adventure, mystery action and suspense, all with a dash of Indian sensibility. Due to India’s rich cultural history, most Indian comics are mythological stories like those of Ganesh, Shiva, Veer Hanuman etc (Kumar 22).

Indian culture and society has traditionally been influenced by overabundance of religious traditions, and particularly in Hinduism, we find child characters influenced by Hindu deities. Hindu deities and heroes are loaded in these stories for children. The symbolic images and characters are being found in these stories. Divine qualities were assigned to children. Sudhir Kakar says, “In psychological terms, he encourages the individual to identify with an ideal primal self, released from all social and superego constrains. Krishna’s promise, like that of Dionysus in ancient Greece, is one of utter freedom and intellectual exhilaration” (Devy 419). Indian writers for children have used exquisitely these figures in adventure, mystery action and suspense. Krishna, the most popular God in Hinduism is considered to be an embodiment of mischief who would play pranks on his mother, and friends. Indian children follow with interest the adventures of Krishna in these traditional stories. Mango Books’ *Krishna* (2013) by Prema Jaya Kumar, strengthens the curiosity among young readers, and it highlights the rich tradition; themes, motifs and adventures. Sudhir Kakar says,

In the *Mahabharata*, for instance, he (Krishna) is the wise adult and helpful teacher and counsellor. His nature began to undergo transformation around 500 A.D in the *Harivamsa* (the genealogy of Hari or ‘Krishna’) which stressed Krishna’s early years as a wilful, mischievous child and as the youthful, divine the lover of the *gopis*, the cowherd girls. The later Krishna texts, *Vishnu Purana*, *Padma Purana*, and *Brahmavaivarta Purana* are fascinated by, and focus upon these aspects of the god, Krishna’s freedom and spontaneity as the eternal child (Devy 418).

Hanuman, the powerful and quick monkey God, is one of the essential figures in the *Ramayana*. Hanuman is an icon of young children, and they adore him, his strength,

mischievous nature and the adventures attached to him fascinates them. Devdutt Pattanaik's *Kama Vs Yama* 2011 by Puffin Books, tries to balance the profundity of traditional mythology with childish innocence, allowing children to comprehend the perfect messages that mythology delivers. There are other Hindu Gods, who represent individual traits and who are equally placed in the literature for children and enjoyed by children. Sarasvati embodies wisdom, Lakishmi success, Ganesh inner forte, Shiva the life energy and so have a tangible effect on children. There are stories like *Brave Women of India* (2009), *Shivaji* (1971) published by Amar Chitra Katha enjoyed by modern Indian young reader. Deepa Agarwal writes, "They [children] also need a literature that tells their own stories and provides role models drawn from their immediate lives. While they might be moved by the story of Rama's exemplary life, thrilled by Hanuman's feats, inspired by Arjuna's valour and fascinated by Krishna's complex personality" (11). These tales satisfy children's needs and they obtain gratification and amusement from them, according to May Hill Arbuthnot:

Not only must the heroes and heroines achieve a happy solution for their troubles and triumphant end to their struggles, but the villains are accounted for and satisfyingly punished. The conclusions satisfy the child's eye-for-and-eye code of ethics and apparently leave his imagination untroubled (259).

Michel Grimmitt describes that through these stories child discovers to whom he/she belongs and learns good management apart from spiritual understanding,

No assumptions are made about faith; children learn to respect each other's faiths and to accept differences. At the same time the identity of the child from the religion tradition being studied can be strengthened. Children who come from no particular religious family

background will still enjoy the richness of the images... (qtd. in Keast 65).

If we look at childhood from the standpoint of traditional India, we comprehend that the early stage of childhood was characteristically measured to be one of the most appreciated and cherished phases of an individual's life.

There is another side to the children's stories in Indian market in the form of translations of English books into regional languages and vice versa. Indian writers of children's books have acknowledged that it is easy for children to identify themselves with the characters and local culture portrayed in the stories. So they write in vernacular as well as in English as these books are all set locally. Sandhya Rao, senior editor of Tulika Publishers writes in 'Children's Literature in India: Growing Pains'

And this is natural. It happens to everybody, all societies, all over the world. The histories of children's literature from different parts of the world speak of this compelling need for a sense of identity, of making connections within themselves. Eventually, what is truly representative of the human spirit through a search for roots and identity is transformed into the universal (Rao).

It is interesting to note that traditional stories such as *Panchatantra*, *Jataka Tales*, *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*, folklore, stories with moral from regional languages and historical tales including *Rani Laxmibai*, *Ashok-Birbal* and *Tinali Raman* continue to hold everlasting fascination and Indian children are attracted towards these stories. The children's literature in India, in all regional languages brought themes mainly from traditional literature. Traditional stories were filled with themes like worldly wisdom, victory of virtue over vice, gallantry, audacity etc. The stories from the *Panchatantra*, *Hitopadesha*, *Brihat Katha* and *Jataka* were of considerable interest to children and

provided them aesthetic pleasure and moral education, and have been adapted in different Indian languages. Varsa Das says:

While rendering Children's Literature from one Indian language to other comes across two different exercises. One is translation and the other is adaptation. While translating, one introduces the culture of the original to the children of the other language region, but while adopting one tries to assimilate and make the alien one's own (47).

Mythology in the first place is a collection of tales that are easily readable. Mythological stories are part and parcel of the traditional rearing as well as modern upbringing of every Indian child. Children usually get involved and absorbed in hearing of myths, which have the ability to satisfy all age groups, over and over again. Jagannath Mohanty writes in his book *Child Development and Education Today: Literature, Art, Media, and Materials*

The ancient children's literature is full of mythological characters and events with profuse didactic notes. Since we want to impart instructions and give advice to children for their character formation and moral development, children's literature of this type was regarded as an important instrument for the purpose (137).

As a didactic instrument the stories train a child to experience and absorb the sufferings and hardships from these narratives and emerge victorious. These imaginary tales allow the child to experience an imaginary world that will offer them order and importance. The child begins to comprehend the spirit of happiness and sadness of adult world. He gets involved and becomes familiar with emotions. He is trained to experience resentment and disappointment, love and anger, and the bliss of triumph. Favat writes,

Children's turning to the tale is no casual recreation or pleasant diversion; instead "it is an insistent search for an ordered world more satisfying than the real one, a sober striving to deal with the crisis of experience they are undergoing (qtd. in Zipes 178).

The child's imagination is occupied by these magical figures of gods, fairies and unearthly creatures. Hero, always a godly figure, heroine beautiful of structure and mind. The message of the story is permanently the same; the improvement of the child. These stories allow children to come to their own agreement of right and wrong, good and evil, without parents' recommendations of do's and don'ts. It doesn't mean that stories should replace the parents and other guides of the children but this gives children their own liberty to comprehend and generate their own set of morals through stories, characters and places that become special particular and trustworthy to them. Bruno Bettelheim has commented on the therapeutic nature of fairy tales:

For a story truly to hold the child's attention, it must entertain him and arouse his curiosity. But... it must stimulate his imagination; ... while at the same time suggesting solutions to the problems which perturb him (qtd. Srinivasan 17).

The child in his progress of expansion converts his unexciting world into a world of belief. The more this source of stimulation and motivation, the more will his imagination expand. The emotional and expressive level of the child's mind passes through several variations. Yancey Barton in "Padriac Colum's *The Children's Homer: The Myth Reborn* says:

He (Colums) does not attempt to translate the epic poem, but translates Homer as a story for children, comprehensible by them but always leading their imaginations to new, ancient stomping grounds.

From his omissions rises a myth that retains the cultural value of Greek society: the importance of hospitality toward guests and paying homage to the gods. Because these characters still resemble “us”, their downfalls resulting from their falls resonate, and children have the opportunity to learn from them (Lundin 83-84).

Wordsworth has the same opinion, he says

Here is the world where alone we find our happiness or not at all. The classics for me are the works that somehow persist, they propel me into literary careers, that stir yearnings for outreach, that quicken my conscience for whose own affair with language has been thread bare (qtd. in Lundin 139).

The classical works are of extraordinary literary excellence and abundant appeal, and both children and literature of India for children owes and are indebted to it. The imagination of the young reader is awakened and triggered by these stories. The effect and influence of these mythological stories remain throughout the life once embossed in the early years on the mind. Children have peculiar qualities and attributes; clear discernment, straightforward and truthful than adults, their minds are tender, and are vulnerable, their spirits, yet undamaged by mitigating thoughts, are more unaffected and open. What they lack is to articulate themselves, these worthy story books of past gives words to the child and it elucidates and describes reality and delivers role models. Whatever the features are offered in the contemporary set-up, ancient Indian children's literature is the most uplifting and pleasing, although contrary massively from contemporary structure and content of the story; ancient stories were laden with wisdom and were very near to nature. Ancient grandeurs has stayed the same, and writers draw from traditional literature rich metaphors, original style and oral structure in adaptations

in current children's literature. Murli Melwani explains the benefits of traditional stories for the present writers.

This historical and traditional knowledge will supplement and enrich what he learns from his experience of life in present-day India. The old stories are saturated with the spirit of religion and piety; some stories reveal a secular approach; some, a blend of both. Some stories reveal fancy; others realism. Some are profound; others blend buffoonery with it (Introduction).

Children's Literature after Independence

Only recently we have begun to treat child as a separate entity, requiring literature prepared specially for him. "The dim light on the stage faded away and the focus was on a small, frail child, who looked exceptionally at the heaps of books in the library, who searched the shelves with his small hands" (Kulshreshtha 22). During the British rule there were some significant original works for children in the Indian Languages; however, a majority of the publications were textbooks and supplementary readers, translations of Indian classics and European books, and adaptation of popular adult works, like *Fairy Tales* of Christian Anderson, stories from *Arabian Nights*, abridged versions of *Treasure Islands* and *Robinson Crusoe*. Ms. Madhu Sharma comments on pre independence status of children's literature in India, in her paper titled, "Positioning Children's Literature in World Literary Canon: A Case Study of India"

In India, Children's literature in English as a distinct branch of literature comes into existence only after Independence. Prior to this, there were no books written primarily for children. It is only after Independence that children were treated as target audience for various writers and sufficient amount of literature was made available

for them. In spite of all these, India, under the influence of west and the English language, was still able to produce its own unique children's literature with the essence of Indian-ness in it and thus encouraged national pride, literature and culture. Indian Children's literature and Indian child both acts as a vehicle for transmitting nationalistic ideals to the coming generation. But at the same time it is also true that nationalistic inclinations cannot be achieved and transmitted through literature that is not our own but borrowed from other nations. It rather transmits western hegemonic ideologies (379).

Gulnaz Fatma also writes about the status of children's literature after independence of India in her thesis *Ruskin Bond's World: Thematic Influences of Nature, Children, and Love in his Major Works*

A perusal of children literature in India shows that at the time of independence in 1947, there were hardly any publishing houses that produced children's books, and the adult publisher could not afford to invest in children's trade books during the early post-independence period. At that time they were supposed to publish text books and supplementary readers to counteract the effort of colonialism and to replace the imported books recommended in schools where the medium of instruction was English (16).

The impact of the west was apparent in the nineteenth century, and it was only the beginning. Like in most other fields of Indian art and literature, western current has mingled with the mainstream of children's literature also. India's own folk heritage has been supplemented by the translations and adaptations of Western classics and almost every language can boast of having acquaintance with the children of its region with

tales of Hans Christian Anderson, *Gulliver's Travels*, *Alice in the Wonderland*, *Treasure Island*.

Translations of English writings meant for children first appeared in some languages towards the end of 19th century. Hans Christian Andersen's *Fairy Tales*, stories from *Arabian Nights* such as *Ali Baba and Forty Thieves* and *Alladin and the Wonderful Lamp*, classics like *Treasure Island* and *Robinson Crusoe* were retold in India (Srinivasan 32).

Dhan Gopal Mukherji, an Indian immigrant to the United States, can be considered as one of the earliest Indian writers to write in English for children in India. Before that *Chota Henry* which was published in 1814 by Mrs. Sherwood was the first story book especially for child readers in English set in India. It described the bond between the English child with his Indian attendant who was later towards the end of the story converted to Christianity. It was evident from these stories that didacticism and influence of religious belief were still prevalent in children's literature. Most of the stories of Dhan Gopal Mukherji explained his knowledge about wildlife in India. Prema Srinivasan says "he attempted to portray a colorful but faithful picture of India for the western audience and has been called the Indian Kipling" (34). Mukherji had in mind a non-Indian readership. These books present the social environment of India to a western reader in terms of the picaresque. As Srinivasan says "like the colonial novels of Kipling, they evoke an exotic jungle atmosphere Indian in character, tantalizing to a western audience" (34). Mukherji's has been credited with writing early books for children in English in India, for example *Kari The Elephant* (1923), *Jungle, Beast and Men* (1923), *Hari The Jungle Lad* (1924) and *Ghond The Hunter* (1928). "D.B. Mukharji "can almost be called the Indian Kipling-sometimes, indeed, more satisfying

than Kipling” (Srinivasan 34) He won the Newberry medal in 1928 for *Gayneck: The story of the Pigeon*, republished by NBT in 1998. Mukherhi gives vivid descriptions of majestic landscape and jungle life in the pristine forests of India. The book ends on an optimistic note, as R. K. Murthi writes,

Whatever we think and feel will color what we say or do. He who fears, even unconsciously, or has least little dream tainted with hate, will inevitably, sooner or later, translate those two qualities into action. Therefore my brothers, live with courage, breath wit courage and give courage. Think and feel love so that you will be able to pour out of yourselves peace and serenity as naturally as a flower gives forth fragrance. Peace be unto all (36).

His *Hari, the Jungle Lad*, is about a young Indian boy who goes with his father on hunting expeditions and encounters a wild buffalo, a panther, and other jungle creatures.

The description of the tiger’s raid and subsequent manhunt vividly recalls Corbett, but the language with its old-word charm is definitely the author’s own inimitable manner. The description of the floods at the close of the first chapter has enough spice to tantalize the child reader, who probably cannot wait to get on with the story (Srinivasan 34).

Mukerji continued to write children's books for the rest of his career, publishing *Hindu Fables for Little Children* (1929) a collection of ten stories with jungle creatures as the main characters, and *The Chief of the Herd*, about elephants, in 1929. Three years later he published *The Master Monkey*, about the Hindu monkey god Hanuman. *Fierce-Face: The Story of a Tiger*, published in 1936, was Mukerji's last work for children.

After independence Indian children's literature has witnessed progress regardless of many obstacles. Contemporary children's literature has now varieties of books available covering different sub-genres and local Indian themes.

Children's Literature from Western countries *David Copperfield*, *Tom Sawyer*, *Cinderella* and *Goldilocks* poured in, but they were no creative substitutes for young readers after Independence, writing in English developed independent genre, though emphasis was on Indian themes (16).

The mainstream writers who have tried their hand at children's literature are recognized and eminent writers of Indian English Writing like Tagore, Rajaji, Nehru, and later Manoj Das, R. K. Narayan, Vikram Seth, Satiyajit Ray, Shashi Deshpande, Salman Rushdie Anita Desai and Farrukh Dhondy. Radhika Menon, Managing Editor, Tulika Publishers writes in a paper 'An Overview of Indian Children's Literature in English'

There is a fourth category: books written not specifically for children but which would be enjoyed by them. Here we would find the *Panchatantra*, *the Jataka tales*, *Alice in Wonderland*, *Peter Pan* and many of the popular folk stories and nursery rhymes of the world. The works of writers such as Sukumar Ray, Satyajit Ray, Rabindranath Tagore, R. K. Narayan, Ashokamitran, Basheer (in regional languages), Salman Rushdie, Vikram Seth, Ruskin Bond talk to readers, young and old at different levels, in different voices. This only reinforces the point that a good book is a good book, never mind for whom. And that's how classics come to be (n.p).

Anita Desai's *A Village by the Sea*, was awarded the Guardian Award in 1982. The story about children in their early teens, on the west coast of India. The novel deals with the ideas of hope and willingness to adjust with times. Lila 13, Hari 12 seems to carry the responsibility of the entire family with forbearance. Prabhat Kumar Singh writes in his book, *Random Thoughts: Essays in Criticism*,

Anita Desai, another celebrates contemporary Indian writer, has portrayed, with the 'hypnotic vividness' of her prose, her two adolescent characters' (Lila's and Hari's) grim battle for survival in *The Village by the Sea* (1982). She has shown how in the new economic set-up, the young adults are becoming more and more enterprising. They have faith in the dignity of labour and pride in their sense of responsibility (110).

Neeru Tandon writes in her book *Anita Desai and her Fictional World*, "*A Village by the Sea* is the only novel by Anita Desai which ends in total harmony. It is considered as 'children's fiction'.... The experience made Hari wiser and mature. He was no longer the frightened, confused boy. He knew he could make choices and decisions on his own" (44). Meena Khorana also writes about Hari's character

Hari sees a different type of human misery-overcrowding, filth, child labor, beggary and crime.... The book explicates the Darwinian theory of the survival of the fittest: Hari and the villagers have to adapt just as the city pigeons have done.... Hari's journey to Bombay has gained him an identity, maturity and economic independence. As an affirmation of technology, he turns to his village by bus and then anoints himself with the sweet water of their well ("English" 7).

Prema Srinivasan writes,

Desai has adopted a straightforward method of storytelling, which does not leave anything to the imagination of the reader.... The protagonists live in an adult-controlled world, and the readers is asked to stand back and contemplate and empathize (51).

The Peacock Garden, is laden with the themes of Politics, Partition and communalism. It is certainly full of pathos and poignant too. Desai has described the setting and the atmosphere of partition very lucidly for young readers.

That summer, in 1947, the rains were late. Each day seemed hotter than the last in the little village in Punjal. The earth was scorched and every weed on it had withered. The water in the canals that crisscrossed the fields was all gone, and the clay lay cracked into smooth, pink tiles. The sky was yellow, the sun hidden by dust (*Peacock* 5).

Shashi Deshpande's three novels for children, *A Summer Adventure*, *The Hidden Treasure*, *The Only Witness* are mystery thrillers. *The Narayanpur Incident* set right in middle of independence period narrates incidents like Quit India, and cover themes like patriotism, non-violence, and bravery. Dr Sulabha R. Devepurkar writes in *Children's Fiction in India: A Critical Study*

She (Shashi Deshpande) has also touched upon the children of working class and put them in some visible corner. She deals with middle class children of educated urban society and her concern is for their exploring powers and daring adventurous spirit (61).

These writers do not have an identity linked with children's Literature, yet they have contributed to children's literature, and took some sort of steps to write for them.

The innocence, tenderness, simplicity, wonder, happiness and brightness of childhood reflected in the works of Rabindranath Tagore, has become a source of joy. Sulabha Devpurkar writes in, 'Children's Literature in India: An Old Tree in Bloom'

Tagore may be considered the first important writer of children's literature whose stories were soon available in English. He has written specially for children and some of his stories can be enjoyed by both the children as well as adults. *Kabuliwallah* is a unique example of such happy union (n.p).

Tagore's stories and poems reflect issues related to children who suffer in society, viz child marriage, child abuse, and marriage of little girls to old men, which are recurrent themes evident in his written works for children. In his short stories he has portrayed the girl child in varied dispositions and experiences. The psychology of the child was explored with sensitivity and imagination in *Home Coming* and *Kabuliwala*. The stories of Tagore have a remarkable insight into the psychology of children, their joys, sorrows, hopes and disappointments.

He believed in giving imagination unbridled freedom especially in children and wanted the education at his school 'Shantiniketan' to be completely uninhibited... His children's books are not many, and in his few short stories he captured the essence of children's imagination, their hopes and joys, fears and frustration in a somber tone of voice. An ideal teacher, he sought to impart the liberal human spirit in his writing, particularly for the young reader (Srinivasan 32).

Children are natural, and are loaded with strong imagination, intense feelings, they approach life as black and white, larger than authenticity, their rivals are demons, and their friends are angels. There are writers in India who are gifted with intense

imagination and exceptional genius and can paint convincing pictures of childhood. R. K Narayan in his first novel *Swami and Friends* has shown extraordinary understanding of child psychology. *Swami and Friends* is a novel of boyhood which draws heavily on Narayan's own experiences, and present a realistic depiction of children's world. Prof. K.R. Srinivasa Iyenger writes, "It is as though everyday actuality has taken Narayan's pen and written out this universal epic of all our boyhood yesterdays that are now no more" (365).

Narayan gives a colorful and complete description of the activities, thoughts, nature and school life of children. The author's understanding of child psychology is so perfect that his portrayal of a child's world is as realistic as it should be. The adult reader sees the world through the viewpoint of a child. The child characters reveal a definite journey of the self from innocence to experience and then to wisdom. There is hardly anything about child life which has not been revealed. Like Wordsworth he seems to say "the fullness of your bliss, I feel, I feel it all" (Wordsworth 41).

Narayan projects his boy's innocence through his overall psychology exemplified mostly in his misadventures. This treatment of innocence, on the face of it, may indeed appear plain and straight forward. It is only when one takes a closer look at the young hero's milky innocence with its equally naïve shades, that one realizes how convincingly and deftly doe. Narayan delineate the boy's characters, telescoping his imagination at every conceivable instance (Dnyate 35-36).

Narayan occupies a significant place in Indian literature, and has contributed to the foundation of children's literature in English in India, and was fascinated with rejuvenating the images of his boyhood as well as those of his children which had left

a profound impression on his mind. Children portrayed by Narayan are witty, as O. P Saxena writes in *Glimpses of Indo - English Fiction*

In his novels, his short stories, essays and even autobiography, one can hear the playing, giggling mischief making children itching to come out of his pages (55).

R. K. Narayan's profound concern for children is echoed in his stories. His opinions and thoughts about schooling, corporeal punishment, freedom of children, their education, fun of early years in the child's life are openly revealed in his works. He emphasized in his stories that a teacher must have sound knowledge of child psychology. Narayan says in *Cruelty to Children*;

Most children on account of his daily burden develop a stoop and hang their arms forward like a chimpanzee while walking, and I know cases of serious spinal injuries in some children too. Asked why not leave some books behind at home, the child explains. It is her teachers' orders that all books and notes must be brought every day to the class, for what reasons God alone knows. If there is a lapse the child invites punishment, which takes the form of being rapped on the knuckles with a wooden scale, a refinement from our days when we received cane cuts on the palm only. The child is in such terror of the teacher ... who has no imagination or sympathy (397).

In one of the essays "My Educational Outlook" R K Narayan again talks about the violent methods adopted by the teachers in schools:

In my boyhood, the teacher never appeared in public without the cane in hand. I used to think that one's Guru was born clutching a cane in his right hand while the left held a pinch of snuff between the thumb

and forefinger. He took a deep inhalation before proceeding to flick the cane on whatever portion of my self was available for the purpose. I really had no idea what I was expected to do or not do to avoid it. I could never imagine that a simple error of calculation, in addition, subtraction or multiplication (I never knew which) would drive anyone hysterical (367).

Uday C. Gor in *The Child in R. K. Narayan's Fiction* has tried to understand the child in R. K. Narayan's novels. He focusses upon Narayan's art of characterization in general and on the character of children in particular. Gor has examined the psychological insight of the novelist in the portrayal of school going children. The relationship of children with each other with parents, elders, teachers and world of grownups is studied by him in minute detail. Jayant K. Biswal writes about the presentation of association between child and adult in Narayan's novels, "Childhood impulses and instincts are juxtaposed in a spirit of jubilant conciliation against the world of grave business, the specter of which hangs large in Narayan's other novels. Blissfully oblivious, the innocent children alter the reality of a complex world into their own simple and peculiar terms and strive for a full celebration of their urges" (61). Narayan continued to portray the child's world in contrast to the world of adults. His stories written for children still attract children although written few decades back. Children's book corners, Indian book sellers and publishers are crammed with his stories for children particularly *Swami and Friends* and *Malgudi Days*. *Malgudi Days*, collection of short stories was telecasted on Doordarshan, The child actor of the show Manjunath feels

The show appealed to the people because "perhaps, everyone could identify with Swami. The simplicity of the stories appealed to the

audience. Swami had problems like how to avoid getting beaten up at school or be scolded, how to avoid mischief, lack of funds to buy snacks in school, etc. There were no major complications in Swami's life. Every kid and even a grown-up could connect with the story (Kavita Awaasthi n.p).

Narayan depicts the child characters which leave an impression on future generation of children, and the imaginative excess of children's understanding of life. The emotions, aspirations and abstract notions of the school boy has been portrayed by Narayan with masterly ease.

Salman Rushdie's *Haroun and The Sea of Stories*, published in 1990 is a remarkable children's book having multilayer of themes. The story is a lively, wonderfully imaginative comic tale with a modernized Arabian Nights background. "this (*Haroun and The Sea of Stories*) is for the reader who expresses a willingness to accept the pure fantasy which persuades the book." (49). It follows the classic folk tale in which the hero travels to strange lands to lift a spell on his native country or cure his father of a fatal ailment. In the course of the story he is supported and assisted by supernatural companions and challenges and defeats a wicked magician. According to W.J. Weatherby, ". . . long fable for children ... had been on [Rushdie's] mind for the last three years as something he wanted to do next [after completing *The Satanic Verses*], It was a very long, very fantastic story that he found "very pleasurable to write," perhaps because it had such obvious connections with the *Arabian Nights* stories of his boyhood and few reminders of the grim reality he was living through [i.e.,the controversy over *The Satanic Verses*]" (qtd. in Coppola 229). There is some sort of criticism against the language of the narrative. The language with its subtle shades of meaning, is surely difficult for young readers to follow. The young reader miss out on

the ambiguity of the words. It takes an older reader to fully appreciate and receive the information and the several levels of meaning in the book, but then the child might find the adventure itself too immature.

For the child reader, who is yet not capable of reading the lines, there are no referential gaps-the assumptions of the author do not intrude forcibly enough to detract from the joys of pure fantasy (Srnivasan 50).

Razia Begum Laskar writes in her paper, *Indian English Children's Literature: The Context of Salman Rushdie, Ruskin Bond and Arup Kumar Dutta*

Rushdie is remarkable in the context of children's literature too for he ventured into it with aspects and issues hitherto not treated properly in this literature. At the same time, not only does it break free from the shackles of being urbanized and elitist in its outlook but also brings in a sophistication that was unknown in Indian English children's literature (78).

Though essentially considered as a children's book, *Beastly Tales From Here and There* (1992) by Vikram Seth, is a book for all ages, for all seasons and for all time. With typical artistic neatness, Seth divides his volume into ten poems about animal characters ranging from the poor scoundrel to the obscure-sounding tragopan. Seth writes with his usual enviable felicity, but by exclusively employing the rhyming couplet, tends for once to become metronomic. Ten witty and enchanting animal fables in verse which, like a modern *Aesop's Fables*, can be enjoyed by young and old alike. Sandhya Iyer writes

The book is a compilation of ten fables, retold and reinterpreted in the author's own inimitable style, lending it a lot wit and some clever

twists. While two of the stories come from India, there are other fables taken from China, Ukraine and Greece. (The fact that Vikram Seth learnt Chinese poetry during his stay in the country might have had some bearing here) (n.p).

The animal fables are set in verse and the humour in every line keeps children smiling as they read. Crocodiles and monkeys, the cock and the rabbit, elephants and tragopan, all come alive with Seth's magical touch. The protagonists are animals and the fables familiar, but the strange twists and turns that his poems take keep you in suspense till the very end. The tales are surprisingly refreshing, and Seth has interweaved the fables with delightful humor and quirky philosophy which make the animals jump out of the pages and talk to the young reader. Tarun J. Tejpal writes in a book review 'Vivid verse Folk-stories from all over'

Beastly Tales calls for a caveat: this is children's verse, even though the packaging would have us believe different. Having said that, there's no ignominy there: many of the finest poets from Eliot to Ted Hughes have written for the young. As have many classical scholars like A.E. Housman. And then there are those like Walter de la Mare who remain memorable primarily for their children's fare (Tejpal n.p).

Anita Nair, an author who has given us a number of bestselling novels, such as *The Better Man* and *Ladies Coupe*, has come up with delightful book for eight year plus age group, *Living Next Door to Alise* which is probably a takeoff on the famous song by the same name. For her contribution to Children's Literature in English, she was presented the Central Sahitya Akademi award in 2013.

British colonial rule had a tremendous impact on children's literature in the subcontinent. Sunder Rajan writes, "[i]maginative literature intended specifically for children is not part of Indian literary tradition"; rather, until recently, English language children's literature imported from the west dominated Indian children's recreational reading" (qtd. in Superle 21). A similar view is put forth by Indira Kulshreshtha,

And then there was a wave of consciousness and a certain amount of concern for children cropped up in the air. The child became the center of the attention. His needs became as important as those of the adult. The dawn of the independence brought some light for the child and the dewy tears were washed away by the multicolored rays of the morning sun (23).

Modern Indian children's literature originated in the 19th century with exposure to Western education, imported books, the publications of Christian missionaries, and the introduction of the printing press. Manorama Jafa says, "The concept of children's literature as a separate discipline has come to India from the west. Contact with European countries, and particularly with England and the English language, has let to growth of modern literature for children" (qtd. in Khorana. *Indian XI*). Meena Khorana writes about the growth of children's books in English after independence

The children's literature of India reflects a unique dichotomous approach. On the one hand, nationalistic concerns and themes are prominent in the content of children's books and, on the other hand, writing for children in English, the language of the colonial era, is encouraged by agencies like National Book Trust and Children's Book Trust. While only 2 percent of the literate population uses English as its first language, over half the books published each year

are in English....Children's Literature in English correspondingly is quite different in form and content from its counterparts in Hindi and the regional languages" (*Indian* XVIII).

Makarand Paranjape writes on the growth of Indian children's literature in his article titled as, 'Post-Independence Indian English Literature: Towards a New Literary History'

The rise of children's literature has been phenomenal. Several writers including Margaret Bhatti, Monisha Mukundan, Sirgun Srivastava, Swapna Datta, Loveleen Kacher, and Geetha Dharmarajan have enjoyed great success. Both Penguin and Harper Collins India have created new imprints exclusively for children. Finally, the boom has allowed a lot more of Indian fiction to be translated into English than ever before. Some of the newer writers widely available in English now include Nirmal Verma, Srilal Shukla, Rahi Masoom Raza (Hindi), U R Anantha Murthy and K Purnachandra Tejasvi (Kannada), Vilas Sarang (Marathi), Gopinath Mohanty (Oriya), O V Vijayan (Malayalam), and several others (1054).

A notable feature of the cultural renaissance, which took place in twentieth century, is the fact that publication of literature for children became popular. At its infancy literature for children intended not to improve or reform but entertain and inform children of various age groups, and showed creative motivation. Dr K. A. Jamuna writes, "The first attempts for producing worthwhile literature especially for boys and girls of different age groups in India were made some seventy years ago. Attempts were also made to produce text books and other reading material for them consequent to general awareness after the second world war" (62).

Children's Literature in regional languages of India

Amongst Indian languages Bengali, Urdu, Gujrati, Marathi, Oriya, Telugu and Assamese are very rich in children's literature. Origin of the most of the children's literature in Indian languages can be traced back from the period of oral tradition. In all the languages prior to the advent of written literature, there always existed a body of oral literature called folk literature. And it is worthwhile mentioning here that most of the folk literature was not created especially for children. However much of this kind of literature can be taken as children's literature, and the young readers are attracted towards it because they enjoy the action, humor and adventure of folk literature. Besides, it has didactic qualities and educate the children about the way of living, and focus on the moral and ethical values.

Assamese

Children's Literature in Assamese language is categorized as local songs, local stories or folk tales, mythological or epical story, biography, translated literature, play and science literature. Assam has a vast store of folk literature for children. Like most children's literature, Assamese children's literature has also its origins in oral tradition. Examples of these oral, folk and ballad songs are *Phul Konwar*, *Moni Konwar*, *Garakhiyar Geet* and *Nichukhani* which are enjoyed by children and adults alike.

In 1911, Lakhinath Bezbarua collected short stories like *Buri Air Sadh* (Stories of Grandmother), *Kakadeuta Natilara* (Grandfather and the grandchild) still considered as the millstone in Assamese Children's Literature. Harendra Nath Sarma's *Ashoka* and Samay Balir Khozbor (*Footsteps in Sand of Time*) have received the National award for children's literature. Translations like Jnanadabhiram Barua's *Dadair Paja* (1930) and *Venichar Saud* are Assamese versions of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and *Merchant of Venice*.

Translation of classical works like, Harunar Rashid's *Ratnadeep* (Treasure Island), translations of *Ali Baba and Forty thieves*, *Three Musketeer's*, *Oliver Twist*, *Huckleberry Finn*, *Tom Sawyer*, *Gulliver's Travels*, *The Little Prince*, and *Don Quixote* are available in Assamese children's literature. In the field of children's magazine it is worth mentioning here the first publication of *Lara Bandhu* (Boy's Friend) is nearly hundred years old. Many of the Assamese who have firmly established themselves as children's writers have tried their hand in this literary form. Some of the well-known writers are, Premadhar Dutta, Aparna Vanikya, Bhabendranath Saikia and so on.

Bengali

Children's literature started only about two hundred years ago when Christian missionaries who took the initiative, with *Digdarsan* (1818), the first Bengali journal which was published by John Clerk Marshman. The main idea being to preach Christian thoughts among the young readers. *Balak Bandhu* (1878) edited by Kesabachandra Sen was the first Bengali children's magazine. In 1895 Sibnath Sastri brought out *Mukul*, in which the renowned Bengali writers made their contributions to the children of Bengal. All these writings highlighted the valour and bravery of our legendary heroes thereby making the child conscious of and also adopting India's glorious past. Translations put forward by Rajkrishna Bandyopadhyay, R. Edward, Nimai Basak and Michael Madhusudhan certainly enriched the history of Bengali children's literature. The most significant event in children's literature of Bengal is the publication of an encyclopedia for children namely *Chotader Viswakasa* (1966) by K. Narayan Bhattachary and Puranchandra Chakrabarthy. Children's literature in Bengali has made much development in the later part of twentieth century and can boast of such well-known names as Satyajit Ray, Lila Majumdar, Kishore Bharati, Sukhatara, and Ananda.

Gujrati

Like other regional languages Gujarati language has literature built on folklores and traditional literature. The formation of children's literature originated and developed through inter-textual link with European literature. The characteristics of children's literature were dormant in folk literature. Children's literature produced in Gujarati during the first two decades of twentieth century, mostly consisted of humorous stories and anecdotes. Narayan Hemchandra wrote stories from Mahabharata in *Mahabharatan Vartao* (Stories from Mahabharata). Dakshinamurti published around 150 books for children in Gujarati, and most of his collection was taken from Folk literature. His special contribution *Bal Sahitya Mala* (the Garland for children) is collection of eighty stories, throw light on subjects children are interested in. Gandhiji has made several experiments in child education and literature for children. In this era the child was recognized as an individual identity. Gandhiji's period was considered as the golden age of children's literature in Gujarat.

Gijubha inspired creative writers to address the children. Yeshwant Mehta has written 135 stories. He was influenced by writings of Tolstoy, Dostoyevsky, Emile Zola, Hans Anderson and Guy De Maupassant. Along with these writers Dhananjay Shah and Harish Nayak and Natwarlal Vimawala are also prominent in the field. Dr. K.A. Jamuna writes,

Children's Literature in Gujarati is rich enough. Creative abilities of children are given boost through all this reading material and the readers are constantly kept in touch with the world they live in" (61).

Marathi

Earlier Nineteenth century marks the beginning of Marathi children's literature. Books like *Simhasanabatitishi*, *Panchopakhya* and *Viduraniti* are the earlier traces of children's literature that influenced the young readers. Children's magazines like,

Balabodha 1881 by V.K. Oak, *Ananda* 1906 by Vasudeve Govind Apte remained very popular with children. P. K. Atre was another important name in Marathi children's literature. He wrote *Gurudaksina* and *Veeravacana* and got them enacted by young boys, and his distinctive feature in writing for children was humor. Renowned writer Vijay Tendulkar also took up children's writing and his *Andher Nagaritila Kantale Dina* (1958), *I the Bala Milatat* (1960) and *Chimana Bandha to Bangla* are meant for children. Girja Keer entered the field of Children's literature with the publication of short stories *Vetal Nagari ani Shashi Hemachandra* (1977). Her other popular works are: *Zampaya- the Great*, *Yadbambu Dhabbu*, *Hik Hik Hiyya* and *Raja Mazha ga Gurakhi* which are received by children with warmth.

Oriya

Madhusudhan Rao is the pioneer in the field of children's literature. Among the Oriyan who made a conscious effort to write for children in the modern times, the name of Gobinda Rath comes first, and he contributed the alphabet primer in Oriya called *Barnabodhaka*. Later modern primer *Barnabodha* popular among the children was written by Bhaktakavi Madhusudan Rao. Bijay Kumar Dash writes, "Madhusudhan's songs, lyrics, odes, sonnets and stories has exercised an excellent purifying effect on the minds of young pupils of Orissa for more than 60 years" (Dr. K.A.Jamuna 150). Journal's like *Sansara* (1946) by Ramakrushna Nanda and *Shishu Sampada* (1954) by Binod Kanungo are a landmark in the field of children's literature. Both the journals are keen to give modern knowledge to children in a very simple and impressive style.

Telugu

Dr. Gidugu Sithapathi is an outstanding writer of children's literature in Telugu, and he made constant efforts for the development of children's literature in Telugu, and in 1910 he started writing for children. His contemporaries are Kandukuri

Veeresalingam Panthulu, Gurazada Venkata Appa Rao and Veedam Venkata Raya Sastry. *Aesop's Fables* is translated in to Telugu by Kandukuri Veeresalingam Panthulu under the title *Nithi Katha Manjari*. Other classics of Children's literature like *Gulliver's Travels*, *Treasure Island*, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, *Prince and pauper*. *Great Expectations* are also translated in to Telugu Language. *Budugu* by Mullapudi Venkata Ramana, *Pillalu Puvvalu* by Bujjayi, *Pillala Rajyam* by K. Sabha has appealed to children on account of their captivating style of narration. These writings made a mark in children's literature in Telugu. Apart from books there are some journals meant for children and some worth mentioning are *Bala*, *Chandamama*, *Bommarillu*, *Balamitra*. *Champak*, *Nandan*, *Bujjayi*, *Bala Bharati* and *Pramod*

Urdu Children's Literature

S.G Haider writes, "The history of Urdu children's literature is rich and checkered, like that of its parents-Urdu language and its literature as a whole" (12). Amir Khusru's contribution to children's literature in Urdu and Hindi is worthy of mentioning here. His *Khaliq Bari*, *Paheliyan* (riddles) carry double meaning, *Do Sukhne* (puns) is considered as children's literature. *Rani Ketakl Ki Kahani* (1893) by Insha Allah Khan Insha is regarded as the first children's story for children in Urdu. *Qadir Nama* of Mirza Assadullah Khan Galib is also a contribution to Urdu children's literature. Molvi Ismaeel also composed large number of poems for children, and convey the importance of moral values. His *Taron Bhari Raat* is regarded as the first poem in blank verse in Urdu. Famous poets like Allama Iqbal also took pains to write for children. In his first collection of writing *Bangedera*, poems like *Ek Makda aur Makkhi*, *Ek Pahad aur Gilhari*, *Ek Gaaye Aur Bakri*, *Hamdardi*, *Maan Ka Khaab*, *Parinde Ki Faryad* and *Bache Ki Dua* are intended for children. Prem Chand's short stories like, *Do Bail*, *Jugnoo ki Chamak*, *Sauteli Ma*, *Gilli Danda*, *Holi ki Chutti*, *Nok*

Jhonk and *Masoom Bacha* are exclusively for children, and rural child characters are reflected in these stories, in lucid style and language which make children attach to these stories.

Urdu language at its developmental phase draws mostly from many literatures and civilizations of the central and west Asian nations, its children's literature too developed itself with various beautiful narratives, anecdotes, and amusing characters. The Arab, Persian and central and west Asian Classics like, *Alif Laila and Lail* (Thousand and One Nights), *Qissa Tota Mayna*, *Qissa Hatim Taai*, *Tilism-e- Hoshrubah* along the tales from *Koh-e-Qaf* (Caucasia), wisdom anecdotes of Shaik Saadi's *Gulistan and Bostan*, mystic stories of Maualan Rumi, humorous and satirical incidents of Mulla Nasrudin dominated the children's literature of Urdu.

Payam-e-Taleem (1926) was started by Dr. Zakir Hussain, and encouraged writers and poets to contribute to children's literature. His writings, *Abboo Khan ki Bakri*, *Andha Ghoda*, *Kachhuwa aur Khargosh*, *Akhri Qadam* and *Murghi Ajmer Chali* are some of his exceptional stories for children.

Krishan Chander's *Uta Darakht* is the first original novel for children in Urdu. He will always be remembered for his precious contribution to fiction for children in Urdu. His famous stories are *Chidiyon ki Alif Laila*, *bewaqoofon ki Kahaniya*, *Son eke Seb*, *Shaitan ka Tohfa*, *Lal Taj* and *Sone ki Sandooqhi*. He excelled in prose, poetry and composed numerous stories for children. S. G. Haider sums up "Urdu Juvenile Literature through Times"

The Urdu literature for children, having undergone a more or less continues development...has now a valuable treasure of poetry, humor, national and international folklore, drama and general fiction. It is also moderately equipped with original fantasy and adventure. A

good number of books are being produced on modern topics of interest, like science, including technology, general knowledge. Hobbies, and sports so on” (26).

Children’s literature in Urdu language developed adequately till the first half of the twentieth century. Nevertheless, partition of India along with its socio political disturbances left some severe effects on it. The new generations of writers and poets are completely conscious of the priceless heritage and the shifting world’s social, political and technical situations. Books on nearly all domains of contemporary life were added to the prevailing children’s literature.

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Chapter 3

Contribution of Publishers to Indian Children's Literature in English

Today there is a literature for children which never existed before in the history of mankind. Revolving racks in drug stores, super markets, train depots, and airports, display brightly illustrated books designed to attract young readers (Huck 3).

Children's literature in India is witnessing a drastic change. The position of Children's Literature in India was different three decades ago. Today's children have wonderful books as compared to those before independence. There were hardly a few books available which children could read and enjoy even in their mother tongue. The case was even disheartening in the area of English. If at all, very few books of foreign publishers were passed on to them. There were a few reasons that can be held for this kind of neglect on the part of the grownups: the publishers in India were not conscious of the need to produce books especially meant for children.

There is no dearth of reading material in the market today and things are looking brighter every year. As Vijaya Ghose says, "Today everything is right for children's books. There is a literacy drive on; the number of publishers has increased; language publications have come into their own. It is to be only hoped that those in the business will be able to produce the kind of books that fire a child's imagination and lead him or her into a world beyond mere words and numbers" (Ghose). The publishing industry has woken up to the fact that our children need books set in their own social milieu and social sensibilities with characters they can easily identify with and scenes and situations familiar to them.

Today there are a number of publishers catering to children. As Indra Kulshreshtha points out that:

There came a marked difference in the attitude of the publishers, authors and illustrators as the educationists started paying more attention to the 'need based' preparation of reading material for the young ones. Gradually the shyness and hesitation of being labelled as an "author of children's books" gave away to more sophisticated class of writers who wrote books for children (23).

A scrutiny of children literature in India shows that at the time of independence in 1947, there were hardly any publishing houses that produced children's books, and the adult publisher could not afford to invest in children's trade books during the early post-independence period. At that time they were supposed to publish text books and supplementary readers to thwart and neutralise the exertion of colonialism and to replace the imported books recommended in schools where the medium of instruction was English. The National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT), established in 1961, publish bias - free and appropriate text books. However, a few number of urban population acquainted with English had to depend on books and magazines imported from England and United States. India is known for its oral literature and therefore the modern trend of creative writing known as children's literature written for young readers began in the nineteenth century under the influence of western education and imported books. However, before twentieth Century, children's literature was confined to traditional tales transmitted orally, adapting adult's books for children and translating foreign classics into Indian languages.

After the independence of India there was a sense of urgency in our values and in our standards. There was a rapid and almost complete reorientation of thinking.

“Years after Independence, children’s book publishing was seen not simply as an economic enterprise. There were at that time, few publishers of children’s books operating independently, and in order to cater to the country’s children and neo-literate population” (Roy n.p). New goals had to be set up. The rapid change in our values and priorities resulted in a conflict of ideas and ideals. This was reflected in children’s books too. In this rather uncertain state of things, children’s literature had to take a back seat. Not much was written and published until the advent of Children’s Book Trust in the late fifties. It was the late Shankar Pillai, the founder of the Childrens Book Trust, who gave children’s books a new concept and importance. Vijaya Ghose writes, “Suddenly publishers, like many others in India, have woken up to the fact that there is a segment of the population called 'children'. That these children have specific needs which so far had been neglected and catering to these needs may in fact become a profitable venture: children get what they want and publishers may make some money!” (Ghose). Within a short time since the establishment of the Trust, children’s books became the subject of new thinking and discussion.

The publishers, writers and artists joined forces to make efforts in bringing out books especially designed and written for children. The educationists and psychologists projected the needs of children to help the writers think in terms of children as individuals who could make great demands on them because of their limitations and the insatiable desire to know about everything. Jagannath Mohanty rightly comments

Promotion of children’s literature is multi-disciplinary and multi-dimensional issue. Authors may prepare their materials observing all the requirements psychological, sociological, linguistic and educational, but artists have to provide suitable illustrations, editors should bring about necessary modifications in the copies and

publishers should bring out the book in appropriate format and get up. Unless all these personal authors, illustrators, editor and publishers co-operate each other and join their hands, children's books cannot be attractive and useful. Such collaboration among these functionaries is badly and particularly required for promotion of children's literature (211).

Today there are number of publishers catering to children. Among these the leading ones are Children's Book Trust, National Council of Educational Research and Training, National Book Trust, Ratna Sagar, Harpar Collins, Puffin Books, Prathan Books so on. In an interview Praba Ram, the founder of *Saffron Tree*; a blog for Children's Literature says, "It's truly a breath of fresh air in the world of Indian children's publishing. Today, there are some excellent independent children's book publishers working to promote authors and illustrators and create books with modern Indian sensibilities, while also being sensitive to the needs of children living in both rural and urban India. And there are veteran publishers such as Children's Book Trust, National Book Trust, Rupa etc. with years of publishing experience, who have promoted gems like Ruskin Bond" (Parekh p.n).

As far as exclusive books for children in English are concerned, it was renowned cartoonist, K. Shanker Pillai, or Shanker as he is popularly known, who pioneered the movement. He realised the need for children to have their own literature to read at leisure and, more importantly for pleasure, at a price well within the reach of the average Indian child. With this in mind, he founded the Children's Book Trust (CBT) in India in 1957. He began by writing stories himself, and later encouraging other writers to contribute to this much needed and neglected field:

CBT one of the pioneer publishing houses in India, has set for itself the praiseworthy objective of promoting “well written, well-illustrated and well-designed books for children” these include fiction, non-fiction, folklore, fantast, adventure, history, heritage, culture, science fiction, natural history, humour, apart from very attractive books keeping in mind Shanker Pillay’s approach to children, the CBT has always expressed concern for the expansion of individual reading beyond text book material. The attention towards information books has added a new dimension to CBT’s publication programme (Srinevasan 40).

Noted children’s book writer Deepa Agarwal has a similar view about CBT. She says:

On the one hand the children’s book scene has witnessed movements like Children’s Book Trust, Amer Chitra Katha and the Nehru Bal Pustakalaya series of the National Book Trust. These have performed enormous service in making available to children throughout the country low priced, quality books in the major India languages.... A happy balance between books that merely entertain and those that in form and promote values has been achieved. It has begun to be recognised that Children’s Literature plays an important role in inculcating attitudes (Agarwal n.p).

Children’s Book Trust has been concentrating on expansion and diversification. What had been a collection of classics and mythological tales have expanded to include science fiction and books promoting environmental awareness. Wildlife preservations and environmental safety are the favourite themes. In his article, “*Promotion of Reading Habits in Rural Children*” Vijaylakshmi Nagraj says, “the collection of books published

by (CBT) Children's Book Trust which made up a major part of our library was what was started with. It was at this point that I felt that more observation would not suffice. Promoting the reading habit was also equally important. This, the advantage of using CBT books was that we also had the language translation of the books written in English. The children were thrilled to read the stories in the language they know and then attempt the English versions" (Nagraj). Talking of CBT brings to mind books by Thompson Press, which, when they appeared in the early 70's revolutionized the concept of children's publishing. Subir Roy says in an article, "Children's Book Illustrations in India" that: "CBT has made a beginning by introducing a series called "How it Works" which covers various aspects from invention to functioning of the aeroplane, the motor car, the television, the ship, the clock, and the train. The information of these is given in the Indian perspective. These series have become very popular, but then there are lot of other areas, which need to be brought out for the children in an attractive and well-illustrated format" (118). Rich in colour, good paper, and hard bound books came at a time when the market was not ready for them. That or their marketing set-up was poor. To encourage creative writing, CBT has been organizing annual competition for writers of children's books. What began in 1978 merely as creative forum where new ideas could be tried and authors discovered has turned in to a new mega industry with more and more avenues being explored. CBT's competition has unwillingly set the trend and the ball rolling, gathering strength by strength. Vijaya Ghose writes:

CBT books have improved enormously, thanks to the competition in the market. Some of our finest original writing for children has come from CBT, to name only Arup Kumar Dutta's *The Kaziranga Trail*. They

haven't looked back since and perhaps they are the only publishing house that mainly brings out fiction (Ghose).

The first competition for writers was held in 1978. The rules for entry were simple with no specification of subject or length except that the entries were to be on any subject of interest of children for general reading. They were to have an Indian background and reflect Indian life.

CBT also brings out an illustrated monthly magazine in English for children called *Children's World*. CBT encourages new talent in writing and illustrations and also organizes training programmes to upgrade skills and remains open to new ideas. The manuscripts range from fiction, non-fiction, plays, poetry, travelogue and humour for all ages. In 1979 CBT organized the first international Children's Book Fair at New Delhi which provided a welcome opportunity to Indian writers, Illustrators, Editors, Designers and Publishers to look at the large variety in children's books. After the year 1979 a good number of books for children came to the scene, like *The Chandipur Jewels* by Nilima Sinha, *The Story of Panchami* by Abhijit Sengupta, *You and the Computer* by Dr. Rajagopalan, which are extremely informative books for children in the simplest possible form of language.

In the 1960's, a new development in English language books for children was the publication of picture books. The first picture book published by CBT in 1965 was *Home*, written by Kamala Nair and illustrated by K.S. Kulkarni. CBT has to its credit a large number of famous picture books. It published bibliography of *Children's Books Published in India* which covers 7000 titles in English, Hindi, Bengali and other major Indian regional languages.

The CBT is now equipped to handle original Hindi manuscripts without limiting the programme to translation. In 1985, CBT, in

collaboration with the UNICEF, organized a competition to portray boys and girls as equals. In 1989, CBT, collaborating with World Wide Fund for Nature organized a competition on “Our Environment”....

The CBT management predicts a promoting future for children’s books in India... Sanchita Sharma in her “Growing Pains” has commented “the print run of each book tells its success story. CBT publishes 10,000 copies of each book and it prints or has running stock of 100-125 titles at any given moment” (Srinivasan 41).

Association of Writers and Illustrators for Children (AWIC)

After independence in 1947 the need for developing literature for children was felt and the late K. Shankar Pillai an eminent writer and cartoonist took the lead by establishing the Children's Book Trust for the publication of children's books. In an article “Chasing Dreams: Shanker and Children” Vinoo Hora writes, “ ‘Children deserve nothing but the best’ was his firm belief and with the keen interest he was taking in children, Shankar began to realize that there was a dearth of good reading material for children in India. He decided to establish a printing press and print books for children. In this venture he was greatly aided by Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru and in fond remembrance, Shankar named the building of Children's Book Trust, ‘Nehru House’. ‘Children must read good books,’ Shankar has always stressed and proved his point by writing over 160 books in English and almost all have been translated into Hindi.”(Hora). He systematized workshops to motivate and direct writers to write and artists to illustrate books for children. These motivated writers and illustrators came together to organize the Association of Writers and Illustrators for Children (AWIC). The main aim of

AWIC is to promote better books for children. In 7 March 1981, Shankar provided the guiding spirit and inspired the members to work dedicatedly for the cause of children's literature. The main aim of this registered voluntary organization is to promote and develop creative literature for children. Authors, artists, publishers, teachers, librarians, parents, in fact any adult who is interested, in the promotion of children's literature can become a member by paying an annual subscription fee and a life member by contributing Rs. 4000. Manorama Jaffa says, "The seed was sown, slowly it sprouted, and now the AWIC is recognized as a pioneer organization for the promotion of better literature for children and also promoting its creators. Over the years, AWIC has expanded its activities in the national as well as in the international fora. AWIC has also set up the Indian Section of International Board on Books for Young People (Ind IBBY) since 1990. Today, AWIC is regarded as one of the most successful voluntary organizations in the world, in the field of children's literature" (Jafa n.p).

There is a designated decision-making body but the essence of team work amongst all members is a distinctive characteristic of AWIC. This organisation holds the meeting every month to debate different aspects of children's literature. Apart from distinguished writers, artists, librarians, and publishers, young readers are invited to these conventions from time to time. Vinoo Hora Opinions

Mr Shankar, before you fulfil your premise of bringing joy and smiles into the lives of all the children of the world. When you went around Connaught Place on your bicycle did you perhaps see the dull, vacant eyes, expressionless faces of those children who tug at your sleeves and beg for food, who run around bare feet and clean cars for a few pennies while children of the elite pore over your books, spend hours in your dolls

museum and gaze with delight at the aquarium which you have so thoughtfully provided. How do these children in their rags enter the wonderland that you have created, Mr. Shankar? You are known to have said humbly, 'I am old now, to do anything active', and yet we feel that you could inspire your Association of Writers and Illustrators for Children (AWIC) to launch a crusade through their writings and illustrations and create a feeling within the children themselves to try and eradicate the evils of poverty and drugs from amidst children (n.p).

To monitor trainee writers, AWIC organizes result oriented workshops twice a year. Considering the attractiveness of books on different themes, AWIC organise achieve-oriented workshops for the welfare of the children and children's literature in India. 'Writers' Workshop in Hindi' was first workshop organised by AWIC in 1982, 'Writers Workshop on Picture Books Stories' was in 1983, in 1985 Workshop Science Fiction, for English language writers it was organised in 1986 and since then it continued on. AWIC organized competitions for writers and illustrators to produce the best literature for children.

The quarterly Journal of the Indian Section of IBBY *Writer and Illustrator* is significant journal in the field of children's literature in India. It publishes research based articles, book reviews in sixteen Indian languages related to children's literature. The writers, illustrators, story tellers, playwrights who contribute in the field of children's literature in India is being highlighted through this journal. It also publishes profiles to display the contributions made. It gives space to prize winning stories also. The AIWC also assists publishers who are leading publishers of Children's books across the country. Manorama Jaffa the founder Secretary General of AWIC writes:

The AWIC holds monthly get together, seminars and conferences where different aspects of children's literature are discussed. Eminent authors, illustrators and publishers are invited to its meetings from time to time. It also arranges regular display of outstanding books and original art work of children's books published in India and other countries. In 1992, the AWIC organized the first ever exhibition of original art work in Indian children's books at the International Children's Book Fair at Bologna in Italy. In the same year, it also published a colourful catalogue titled *Indian Illustrators 1960-1992*, presenting the work of 42 Indian illustrators for children. This is the only catalogue in the country containing the work of Indian illustrators (Jafa).

Unless the books reach their target readers writing and publishing of these books has no meaning. Keeping this in consideration AWIC has started its distinctive venture of area or home libraries for children. After an assessment of reading habits and the condition in school libraries, AWIC decided that libraries should be established in communities so that children can pick up books of their choice. In the beginning after the establishment of these neighbourhood libraries, books were collected from publishers and writers through contributions. Started in 1983, currently there are more number of libraries run by passionate associates of AWIC. AWIC has reached through these libraries to thousands of children, and children are being familiarised to the delightful world of stories. In a seminar "*Children's Literature of the Warm Countries*" in Copenhagen Manorama Jafa spoke about AWIC, "AWICs home libraries which have reached out to children of all sections of society in Delhi and other states. She detailed the activities of AWICs dedicated volunteers who often work in dismal rural conditions.

The AWIC Library Project does not merely make books available to children but actually motivates them to read through its varied programmes” (qtd in Nita Berry Seminar in ‘Wonderful Copenhagen’). In the distant and remote areas of India, where there are no bookshops AWIC children's libraries are the only centre of books for children.

Winner of the IBBY-ASAHI Reading Promotion Award, this project was started in April 1983. Today 114 libraries in Delhi and across India have been initiated under this voluntary scheme to promote reading. Each library is provided with free books. The project aims at making good books available to children where there are no books or few books. Most of the libraries are managed by AWIC members on a voluntary basis. While most libraries function from the homes of AWIC members, some libraries have also been set up in parks, hospitals, railway platforms and slum areas for under-privileged children. Each year AWIC awards the Best Librarian, and two Reader of the Year awards from AWIC Children’s Libraries. AWIC initiated IBBY Library Project – Creating Children’s Libraries at Mandi village in Delhi (NCR), at Tezu in Arunachal Pradesh, at Jaipur, Rajasthan and Daman in Goa, India. The UNICEF Library Project - Creating a Children's Library launched the first library set up in Gujarat, and second in Lalitpur district of Uttar Pradesh in 2007 (AWIC n.p).

Surekha Panandiker writes in her article, “AWIC- A Group of Dedicated People Working for Children’s Literature” writes, “ In the slums around Delhi where children had never seen a story book, AWIC libraries provide the pleasure of reading these books. Our libraries have provided an incentive to literacy by giving colorful and

attractive books. Delhi Saksharata Samiti is making use of our libraries in eight different places. In villages of Punjab and in remote tribal areas of Torba in Bihar we have brought relaxation and pleasure in the tension-ridden lives of the children” (Panandiker n.p).

Exhibition of good books and art work of children’s books have a tremendous impact. Not only in India but also abroad AWIC has been exhibiting children's books and art work. AWIC took up the challenge and has been representing India in the international children's book fairs. Indian Section of the International Board on Books for Young People (IBBY) have actively participated in the world exhibitions since 1990. AWIC assembles and chooses children's books from Indian publishers, presents them in these exhibitions, and has the credit of organizing an exhibition of the artwork of Indian illustrators of children’s books. The beauty of the original artwork of Indian talented artists are being displayed, publishers, artists and visitors from all over the world were captivated by the extraordinary excellence of Indian illustrations. Indian authors illustrators and translators who won awards are Ranjit Lal for *Faces in the Water* talks about female infanticide in India, Nirmal Kanti Bhattacharjee, a translator translated Sunil Gangopadhyay's *Bhoyonkar Sundor* (Bengali) into English titled as *The Dreadful Beauty*, Shanti Devi, a Madhubani artist, is the illustrator of the book *Bioscope* (Katha), a story of a village near Mithila told by a girl through illustrations. Deepa Agarwal’s *Caravan to Tibet* (2007), a masterpiece, was on the Honour List of the prestigious International Board on Books for Young People (IBBY). *No Guns at My Son’s Funeral* translated into German and Spanish which was on the *IBBY Honour List*. Arup Kumar Dutta was chosen for ‘Lifetime Achievement Award’ for his contribution to children’s literature. To promote Indian writers AWIC presents catalogue of writers on the occasion. Prema Srinivasan Writes about AWIC,

The members of the Association of Writers and children have been committed to quality writing and, over the years, have brought a professional approach to the art of writing for children. By continuously reiterating the fundamental rules of sound story-telling, the workshops and seminars held by AWIC has created the much needed awareness of the importance of children's literature (55).

To have a better perspective and to undertake research in the field of children's literature it is necessary to have worldwide contacts. By becoming the Indian Section of the International Board on Book for Young People (IBBY) since 1990, AWIC has filled this lacuna. Today AWIC is looked upon as an important institution by researchers, students and all those who are interested in the field of children's literature. Surekha Panandiker a well-known writer of children's books writes, "We know much has to be done, the field is vast, millions of children who need books are waiting, the advent of TV and cable is threatening the development of book culture, but we have made a beginning. With the team spirit of its 400 members and cooperation from all concerned people AWIC will march ahead to promote and develop good literature for children" (Panandiker) Vijaya Goshe also has the same opinion about AWIC, she says in her article, 'The Dilemma of Children's Books':

This piece would be incomplete without mentioning two organizations that have done a great deal to promote children's writing and the reading habit in children, AWIC--Association of Writers and Illustrators for Children and AWIC Children's Library. AWIC was formed to get together writers and illustrators for children to teach them the necessary skills as well as to expose them to other creative people. They hold regular meetings, conduct workshops and

publish prize-winning titles in English and Hindi. They bring out a quarterly journal called *Writer and Illustrator* (Ghose).

National Book Trust (NBT)

In the publishing scene of Children's Literature in India, The National Book Trust (NBT) was established in 1957 by the Government of India (Department of Higher Education, Ministry of Human Resource Development) to develop reading habits and creation of book culture in the country. In the early years, NBT's emphasis was on publishing books specifically for children. The main objective of the trust was to help the child to see the word through Indian sensibility and at the same time promote national integration. Varsha Das writes, "These books promote national integration by providing common reading material in their mother tongue to children all over India on wide range of subjects. They cater to four age-groups namely, pre-school, 6-8, 8-11 and 11-14" (47). It has been bringing out children's books since 1970 under the scheme of *Nehru Bal Pushtakalaya*. Mohini Rao comments,

With the launching of its very popular and successful series Nehru bal Pushtakalaya (Nehru Library for Children), in 1970, the National Book Trust became the major publisher of children's books, perhaps the biggest in the country today... Besides being well illustrated and well produced, the books are moderately priced as the Trust is a non-profit making organization. Their publications have filled a great void. Being both good and inexpensive, their books are in great demand, especially for bulk purchase by libraries (70).

National Book Trust published its first illustrated book *Bapu* by F. C. Freitas in 1970. The events of the Trust include publishing, promotion of books and reading, promotion of Indian books abroad, assistance to authors and publishers, and promotion of children's literature. NBT publishes reading material in several Indian languages for

all age-groups, including books for children and neo-literates. NBT's children's books are known for their illustrations, and the most leading illustrators are Pulak Biswas, Jagdish Joshi, Mrinal Mitra, Subir Roy, Atanu Roy, Manjula Padmanabhan, Mickey Patel and Suddhasattwa Basu.

Every year during the National Book Week from 14-20 November, the Trust organises a number of Book promotional activities throughout the country to promote book mindedness among the masses. This year too, a weeklong programme for children was held at the amphitheatre of Nehru Bhawan, NBT. Based on the theme, *My Children My Literature*, the Festival saw participation of a large number of children from various schools and NGOs in and around Delhi. During the Week, children interacted with well-known children's authors like Shri Gagan Chandra Adhikari, Smt Surekha Panandiker and Shri Prakash Manu and gave dramatic performances based on stories by renowned authors like Rabindra Nath Tagore and Ruskin Bond. Besides, a number of book promotional activities, which included seminars, book review sessions, meet the author programmes, poet's meet and book release functions were held all over the country (NBT n.p).

NBT as an organisation organised few book fairs in North-east to promote books for children. The fairs organised special literary activities in order to attract children towards the world of books. The events included and organised are 'quiz and sit & draw competitions', 'meet-the-author' programmes. The seminars on *Children's Literature and Reading Habit* and discussions on *Writings of Rabindranath Tagore, Essential Elements in the Literature of the North-East* are a glimpse of promotion of children's literature in Northeast. Prema Srinivasan Writes,

Alongside books of information, NBT has moved into textbook publishing as well. They plan to identify outstanding fiction in all regional languages as well as prize-winning titles from all over the world. NBT has identified a potential market in the ethnic population living in U.K and a wide variety of books is displayed in the national as well as the international book fairs (38).

She further writes:

Seminars, information campaign, the National Book Week and the Reader's Club are the various programmes planned by NBT for long term results. If, by and by, children take to reading not just as another exercise but a creative experience, it would achieve the NBT's chief aim (39).

National Centre for Children's Literature (NCCL)

In 1993 National Book Trust established a centre named as National Centre for Children's Literature (NCCL), which is the central organization to screen, manage, design and support the publication of Children's Literature in several Indian languages. The NCCL has established a library-cum-documentation centre of children's literature. Like other organisations it also holds workshops, seminars and exhibitions to advance children's literature in India. In promoting and developing the reading habit of the children at the primary level, NCCL facilitates in locating 'Reader Clubs' at schools all over the country. It also encourage research areas concerning children, regulate surveys related to children and Children's Literature. In a report published by National book trust of India says

So far, over 35,000 Readers Clubs have been set up across the country. NCCL established over 1100 Readers Clubs, besides organising Meet-the-Author programmes, storytelling sessions,

workshops seminars, Readers Club Orientation programmes and other children's activities in various parts of the country. In addition, yearly issues of Readers' Club Bulletin, a bilingual magazine for promotion of reading habit among children were also brought out. (Report 7).

NCCL's 'Reader's Club' invites people who are interested in overall development of children's literature. The invitees usually meet periodically in the Club, the discussions revolve round promotion and development of children's literature, the children gets opportunity to engage themselves with the books and enhance their reading habits. Active writers for children visit these centres, and provide books and monthly Bulletin of NCCL, and over all learning takes place at the centres at comfort.

Renowned writers and experts on activities are invited as resource persons in such training/orientation programmes. Workshops on creative writing or interesting activities for children or members of Reader's Clubs are also organised from time to time. Besides, the centre arranges subject experts for organising different activities such as workshops on writing and publishing, storytelling etc. on request for promotion of children's literature (NCCL n.p).

Paro Anand, a prolific writer for children and storyteller writes:

The 'concepts and intention behind holding these meetings is to understand the' problems that beset the world of children's books and try, through discussion an' interaction, to find solutions to them. We hope that from each interaction will come action. Each meeting focuses on a specific area of children's literature and the subject is explored in-depth (Anand n.p).

National Centre for Children's Literature has revealed many opportunities of extending its work from the very beginning of its existence, but has also found itself struggling with a number of questions. Appropriate books for particular age group of children, involvement of gender, class discrimination etc. in the content of books and how it should be eliminated from children's literature. This is the reason NCCL has started publication of the Readers' Club Bulletin in January 1994, comprising of reading material for children. It is being published every month, and stories are written in both English and Hindi languages, it also provides proposals, suggestions and ideas for activities to be taken up by Readers' Clubs. Paro Anand writes about the meetings of

Readers' Club:

The meetings have formed an important bridge between the creators of children's literature on the one hand, and the actual users on the other. Thus, it is a unique forum where teachers, parents, book sellers, school principals, librarians and, most important, children themselves have the opportunity to interact with the creators and express their literary views, needs, complaints and desires to those who are responsible for the creation of literature, that is, publishers, editors, authors, illustrators. This has aided those who create the books to understand their readership and also, learn from those who are experts, or have some special experience in a specific focus area the needs'; limitations and possibilities of that a tea, For instance,. a whole range of ideas was thrown' up during the several meetings whether on the subject of special needs for books for disabled children, in the areas of writing for teenagers, on history or science. In this way, there is a sharing of experiences and ideas, as well as the giving of examples of books, whether

Indian or foreign that are outstanding in the area under discussion (Anand n.p).

National Council of Education Research and Training (NCERT)

National Council of Education Research and Training (NCERT) set out with admirable objectives on the same line as NBT to improve the existing reading habit amongst children. NCERT was established in 1961 in the backdrop of a school system struggling to disengage from its elitist colonial past. Its main objective was to create a common programme of school education that was collectively accessible and reflect the pluralist character of India. In its initial years in 1963 NCERT felt grave concern for the children and commenced projects on “Why, What, and How to Write for Children” and in 1980’s launched a multidisciplinary project called “Leading to Learn” The aim was to improve the capacity of imaginative and bright reading in children. NCERT has been publishing basically textbooks and supplementary readers at a subsidized price.

Begun a few years ago, the Mathura Project, run in about 560 schools, reaching 40,000 children, has succeeded in catching the imagination of teachers, administrators and planners. The project uses a participatory process, involving teachers, researchers and experts in all aspects of the design. It aims to improve the teaching of reading and writing in the early classes, promotion of new pedagogies of reading and writing and supporting it with research, setting up libraries in the schools, training teachers

(http://www.ncert.nic.in/oth_anoun/leading_the_change.pdf).

NCERT’s contributions in various book fairs have always been considerable and significant, it presents textbook experts in all subjects, both arts and sciences. English titles which are written for children and published by NCERT are *What on Earth is*

Energy? by D.P. Sen Gupta which is beautifully illustrated and developed for children in the age-group of eleven and thirteen. This book intends to make children aware of science in everyday life and to demystify it. The book is meant to proclaim that science is not extraneous to us, but that we are part of science. *Talking of Trees* by Pratibha Nath, as a part of Reading to Learn series provides essential and interesting information about 31 types of trees that adorn hilly and plains alike. This book is sure to appease the curiosity of young readers about nature and environment and gives them the gift of an enquiring mind and spirit. *Bahuroope Gandhi* by Aru Bandyopadhyaya, describes the multifaceted personality of Gandhiji as a barrister, author, kisan, weaver, nurse, journalist, mason, shoemaker, carpenter, blacksmith and barber. It is an interesting books for children and for those who wishes to know about Gandhi. *Akasa Darsana Atlas* by G.R. Paranjpe helps to guide and initiate the children into the mysteries of the most fascinating part of the universe i.e. the sky, Akasa Darsana Atlas is designed to create a desire to acquaint children with what they see in the night sky. *Contours of Courage* by Manoj Das it an anthology of few fascinating characters who were involved in the fight for India's freedom; these stories illustrate how every children has the capacity to face the most adverse situation with indomitable will. The collection will help to cultivate social, ethical and moral values in children. *Glimpses of Plant Life* by Brij Mohan Johri and Bharati Bhattacharyya the two parts of this interesting informative book point out the details of dependence of human life on plants for various reasons like food, fibres, dyes, drugs and even survival categorized under interesting heads like "Plants of Worship", "The beautiful Orchids", "Wealth of the Firs" "Bonsal" "Mosses" "Plants that Heal", "Plants of Ramayana" "Plants of the Quran" "Biblical Scenario" and such. The two parts deal with a wide variety of plants and trees along with their botanical names, uses, history which is beneficial to children. *Remote Sensing*

by Meenakshi Kumar, is a small effort under the project 'Reading to Learn' attempt to give the children an insight into the remote sensing technology. The subject matter has been conceptualized in such a way that attempt to motivate the children to read. *Thirukkural* by P. Varadarajan, a translation of well-known Tamil Classic Thirukkural intends to make the young generation aware of India's wisdom, its shades of vibrant culture and its personal and social value systems. It is a collection of 1330 couplets composed in the Venba meters, is a treasure of traditions and values related to human life in totality in all its domain. *A String of Camels* by Pratibha Nath is collection of stories and poems. This book aims at making the child reader aware of the wonderful world around him. The common theme running through the book is the beautiful relation between the child and animal, besides developing a love for animals in the mind of the child. *The Ship of the Desert* by S. K Ram comes under the project 'Reading to Learn' series aiming at grooming the children to become adept at reading to make them love books and to make them aware of the world of wonder and beauty around them and within them, it describes how the ship of the desert-the camel, is quite adaptive to the harsh environment it lives in.

Saffron Tree

Apart from publishers and illustrators there are blogs on internet which children parents and librarians can access easily for books. One of the most famous blog is *Saffron Tree*. *Saffron Tree*- a non-profit, community-oriented, multi-cultural blog exhibit children's books. *Saffron Tree* bring together and presents wide-ranging of children's books primarily from India and the books around the world. It does the work of figuring out what books you should select for your child. It displays on the blog age wise list of books from toddlers to young adult books and non-fiction for children. *Saffron Tree* was created in October 2006 by Praba Ram. She is a children's story writer, story-time

expert and an early literacy supporter. In writing for children, the wonders of nature and cultural diversity inspire her the most. Praba Ram comments, “Children's books, especially ones with cross-cultural/multi-cultural flavors, happens to stir our passions. As a result, our reviews sometimes showcase our support for the fiercely independent small publishers from here in the U.S. and India. Occasionally we accept a copy or two from authors and illustrators who have worked on Indian/ South Asian themes and other multi-cultural genre. And, true to our belief, if the book resonates with us and our kids, we share it here” (Praba n.p).

She further writes:

Children's books bring out the inner child in us - the curiosity, the discovery, the unbridled wonder at the world around us - which we, as parents, manage to lose sight of in today's complex life. Reading children's books helps us take a step back and see the world through our children, making it an enriching experience for us that we've come to cherish. As all who are passionate about reading would agree, the benefits of exposing children to books from a very young age cannot be over-emphasized. And, we believe that blogging about the wonderful books, along with the delightful moments we experience while reading these books to our children, helps create a wider forum to discover and appreciate not just the books, but the joys of reading as well (Praba n.p).

Writers who contribute to *Saffron Tree* are Sathish Ramakrishnan, Ranjani Sathish, Sheela Preuit, Anitha Ramkumar

The other important publishers who publish solely for children in India are as follows: Duckbill, Harper Collins, Jyotsna Prakashan, , Katha, Little latitude, Ponytale Books, Popular Prakashan, Pratham Books, Pickle Yolk Books, Puffin Books, Pustak Mahal,

Ratnasagar, Red Turtle, Sage Publications, Seagull Books, Sterling Publishers, Takshila Publications, Tara Books, Tulika Publishers, Vikas Publishing House, Young Zubaan,

In India there is huge mass of standardised, prosaic, mostly didactic and often clichéd books. There are many good writers and illustrators in English language and in all the Indian regional languages. Children's publishers in Indian need to produce modern, appropriate, receptive and responsive Indian literary resource for children. Manasi Subramaniam writes, "New writing [children's Books] in India is adventurous, offbeat, and pans the entire spectrum. Like the country itself, the market is entirely non-homogenous, catering to every kind of reader and writer. While larger publishing houses with eclectic focus still dominate the market, the independent publishers continue to thrive, often collaborating with these giants, but refusing to lose their individuality (32).

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Chapter 4

Themes and Trends in Children's Literature in English in India

It is exceptionally important to comprehend that children's literature is significant, effective and will continue to be influential in future too. Interest in children's literature is growing in every country throughout the globe. Children's literature echoes the values and ethics of our societies and communicates these values to children. Growing numbers of adults and academics are conscious that children's literature is a part of the mainstream of all literature, like adult literature. The quantity of publication for children is increasing, and some of the new children's literature allures curiosity among children. Ms. Madhu Sharma, writes in her article titled as, "Positioning Children's Literature in World Literary Canon: A Case Study of India"

Children's literature, thus, becomes avant-garde and most compelling branch of literature which escapes and travels well beyond the bounds of the long-established portrayal and performances expected from it. In the contemporary literary set up children's literature enjoys encyclopedic and all-embracing fame and aggrandizement due to bizarre and extraordinary production and sales of children's books which consecutively has produced a remarkable level of enthusiasm and attraction towards the field (378).

The subjects and themes in children's literature are now becoming diverse. It is essential that children's books should reflect the entirety of today's world. Arguments are that children should be protected from contentious matters which they cannot follow and grasp. New consciousness of the realities of the world has been shaped by political and social events and the mass media. These stories help children come face to face

with the real problems. Prema Srinivasan writes in his well-researched book *Children's Fiction in English in India: Trends and Motif*.

The Scene in the 90's finds Indian English Fiction firmly established in the literary map of the world. Simultaneously, more children's fiction has become available, which caters to a wider readership. The writers feel more assured of their craft than before, trying their hands at different types of fiction for youngsters (66).

In multilingual nation like India, the adversities confronted by the poor, both rural and urban children, are grave issues which need to be comprehended by today's youth through stories. Ecology and preservation of wildlife, gender sensitivity, child abuse, child bullying, domestic issues like divorce effects on children and so on, are fast gaining importance, and contemporary writers in India handles and delivers such themes well. The writers discussed in this chapter, have remarkable story telling techniques which transform the mundane and the ordinary into rich and though provoking. These writers handle realism as well as imaginative excursion. Bickenell and Trotman writes about the reading requirement for children,

Children need at least two kinds of literature. They need books that portray people living the kinds of life they lead themselves [which is why domestic-realistic literature should reflect the widest possible range of life-style] and they need to be taken into other worlds as different as possible from their own in order to stretch their imaginations, or rather... to keep their imagination supple (51).

Considering this the most important need of the young readers of India is that they be given Indian locale and setting so that they can identify and relate themselves to their reading, as Prema Srinivasan writes,

Till two decades ago, Indian children were mostly reading books produced in the west, which portrayed a life-style that was alien but nevertheless enjoyable as it was conducive to fantasizing about alternate exotic childhoods. Attitudes towards English language and literature have been historically constituted and Indian-English writers for children have conveyed the Indian ethos attractively and authentically to become established and remain memorable (24).

According to Navin Menon, “Thematically children’s literature fall under two broad categories-fiction and nonfiction, fiction can be divided into a) Traditional Literature, that is stories from India’s epics, classics, and folklore and b) Original creative writing in the form of short stories, full length general fiction and scientific fiction, plays, poetry, rhymes and picture books” (57). The researchers focus on full length realistic general fiction and scientific fiction. These novels and stories cover the events based on real happenings, happenings designed to express social reaction towards evil and unsocial behaviour.

In earlier stage of children’s literature in India portrayal of childhood was seen as conventional and romanticized. With the changing times this notion transformed slowly and a more realistic portrayal of childhood is being portrayed with its complications and challenges of life. Children were dwelling in closed spaces of the adult world, and now they seem to be emerging out from this complexity. The young child reader needs is an acquaintance to a diversity of reading materials in the early years, which assist in identity formation and augmentation of knowledge.

Children usually want stories about other children like themselves, about their surroundings, and their home environment. As the child grows up, the desire to escape into imaginary worlds is slowly replaced by curiosity about discovering a more accurate

picture of the world, and realistic stories in broad-spectrum begin to have captivation for the young adult. Prema Srinivasan writes about realistic stories,

Factual realism is the kind found in historical fiction, science fiction and biographical fiction. Situational realism occurs where the characters may be in identifiable setting, age and social strata, which aids in reader identification. Emotional realism is found when the psychological and emotional overtones of the situation ring true. Social realism involves an authentic portrayal of community life, school and home life, leisure activities and coping with social problems such as violence, racism, poverty and other social ills (108).

There has been discourse between educationists, critics of children, writers and those who are involved with children's literature on the degree of exposure to realism necessary for children. The reluctant organizations were of the view that child's innocence would be disturbed. As Nodelman (1997) points out,

Adults tend to represent their own ideas about childhood, including the notion that it is a time of innocence. He argues that in this way literature potentially becomes oppressive by providing only partial representations of what is possible for children to be. For these reasons, the canon of children's literature has, and will likely continue to have, an uneasy position in the world of literature and in the fields of literary and cultural studies (qtd in Rogers 143).

It has been now a trend for the Indian writers to portray social ills. Mari Steel writes in "Realism, Truth and Honesty", "The world has not spared the children, hunger, cold, sorrow, pain, fear, loneliness, disease, death, war, famine or madness. Why should we hesitate to make use of this knowledge when writing for them" (qtd in Srinivasan 108).

In the stories of nature, wildlife preservation and the need to preserve a balance in ecology by conserving the resource are recurrent motifs. There is remarkable empathy with animals and trees, and all these stories are laden with this recurring motif, with some stories having a 'Wordsworthian' relationship with nature. Each of the stories dramatizes the tumultuous experience of Indian children on the brink of adulthood. Alienation, rejection, disillusionment and disappointment are faced and resolved by young protagonists, resulting in deeper understanding of human nature. The protagonists, and the main characters of the stories reach self-understanding after a crisis in which he/she feels themselves and affects the young readers as well. Communal disharmony, gang warfare and identity crises are all familiar problems today, particularly pertinent to the adolescent life. Young readers are likely to be affected by the social codes and messages found in their reading material. Each individual, however, will interpret and take these messages according to his or her own peculiar circumstances and environment. Indian writers have attempted to deal with issues like divorced parents, victims of drug abuse. These stories have been used to convey messages relevant to the present day. Theresa Rogers sums up his article, 'Literary Theory and Children's Literature: Interpreting Ourselves and our Worlds'

Post-structuralist or postmodernist perspectives may call these issues into question by arguing that certain categories of difference, such as ethnicity, are social constructions, and our notions of "others" are often overly simplified. Yet if we are to situate ourselves historically as well as socially and culturally, we cannot turn away from privileging the meaning of some differences over others or ignore the weight of past injustices and current power differentials. We may need to more fully articulate our goals for literature teaching,

schooling, and societal change in order to clarify our current understandings of what is possible for children, books, and reading as we work toward social change (143).

4.1: Science through Children's Literature

No one can deny that much of the progress of mankind springs directly from the discoveries and innovations made by men with an infinite curiosity to probe deep into the mysteries of nature and to understand the power latent in the gifts of nature and to harness them effectively. Modern man claims to have a scientific temper, technological minds and readiness to accept far-reaching changes much faster. It is in this context that science fiction gains importance and especially science fiction for children. Jagannath Mohanty writes, "Since the modern age is an era of science and technology, literature in general and children's literature in particular are apt to be influenced by scientific theme, temper and attitude. In the beginning children's curiosity and inquisitiveness are satisfied through the environment them. Then they eagerly look for more information like what, why, how, etc of the physical as well as the living world" (137).

Science Fiction, abbreviation SF or sci-fi, are well recognised, widely discussed and has become more widespread in modern times. M. H. Abrahams and Geaoffery Galt Harphan defines Science Fiction in, "*A Glossary of Literary Terms*" as "...encompasses novels and short stories that represent an imagined reality that is radically different in its nature and functioning from the world of our ordinary experience. Often the setting is another planet, or this earth projected into the future, or an imagined parallel universe... SF applied to those narratives in which- unlike in pure fantasy- an explicit attempt is made to render plausible the fictional world by reference to known or imagined scientific principles, or to a projected advance in technology, or to a drastic

change in the organisation of society” (356). Roger C. Schlobin collected twenty six definitions of science fiction by different writers who are well versed in science fiction. The following two important definitions among them would give a clear understanding of what Science Fiction is. Firstly, Damon Knight writes,

In an attempt to find out [what science fiction is], I wrote out a list of promising definitions and checked them against works published as science fiction to see how well they matched. Here is the list: 1. Science (Gernsback). 2. Technology and invention (Heinlein, Miller). 3. The future and the remote past, including all time travel stories (Bailey). 4. Extrapolation (Davenport). 5. Scientific Method (Bretnor). 6. Other places—planets, dimensions, etc., including visitors from the above (Bailey). 7. Catastrophes, natural or manmade (Bailey) (Schlobin 504).

Secondly, Peter Nicholls defines it as,

First, it [science fiction] is the great modern literature of metaphor. Conventional literature has a limit, set by everyday realism, to the juxtapositions of imagery it can allow itself. Science fiction, which creates its own worlds, has access to new juxtapositions.

The second major strength of S F is related to the first. It is able to incorporate intellectually *shocking* material, partly because it is so pre-eminently the literature of change, as opposed to mainstream literature, which is the literature of human continuity. Third, Science Fiction is the literature of the outsider, in the extreme sense. Traditional realist fiction observes its action from the viewpoint of a partaker. It shares the illusions of the society which produces it. So

does all fiction, but it is science fiction which makes the conscious effort, sometimes quite successful, to stand outside, to give us the Martian eye view of affairs. Fourthly, science fiction allows us to escape, but gives us the choice of escaping into a world where all is not easy. Fifthly, the freedom of imagery available to the science-fiction writer allows him to derive a potency of effect, whether consciously or unconsciously, from his own hopes and fears, which, in the way of archetypes, are likely to be ours too (Schlobin 506).

Therefore, all definitions converge to the assertion that science fiction is generally a literature of change, which suggests that all science fiction writers dream of changing the world, and with it the readers of science fiction texts.

The term 'Science Fiction' was first used in Britain in 1851 in William Wilson's *A Little Earnest Book upon a Great Old Subject*. Science fiction in nineteenth century was represented by the work of Jules Verne and HG Wells. However, science fiction for children was rare until Christopher (1967) published his book *The White Mountains*. Since then, a great number of authors of science fiction for children have appeared in Britain; for example, Peter Dickinson, Geraldine McCaughrean, Jan Mark, ElenMacGregor, Eleanor Cameron and William Sleator.

Like any interesting fiction, science fiction too is full of action, romance, thrill, fun and possess all attractions of a children's book. Science fiction stories are modern fantasies which suitably substitute for fairy stories and stories of magic. With sound logical basis of science concepts, science fiction satisfies both the fancies of the unknown and intellectual understanding, in order to make the implausible and the way-out science believable. Science fiction takes off from reality into the realm of the

unknown and the unexplored; it has tremendous impact on people of all ages, and particularly the young.

Tracing the beginning of Science fiction writing for children in the west, the first magazine on the subject, edited by Hugo Gernsback and titled *Sci-Fi* was started in 1926. The name of the magazine was later changed to *Science Fiction*. The stories were either space oriented or invention oriented which visualised scientific gadgets. These thrilling wonder tales could even encourage child readers to ultimately pursue careers in various science disciplines. “Children’s books have a vital role to play. They can make science and the universe more accessible to the young people. They can stand for and appeal to the finest characteristics and aspirations of the human species” (Pringle).

Famous American Children’s science writers Seymour Simmon writes about the importance of science fiction for young, “I think it is very important to get kids to read science books from a very young age. If they are not reading books about science by the time they are twelve, you are probably lost them... thus if we want a (science) literate citizenry, we have to start children on science books when they are young” (n.p).

Science writing is about a two century old phenomenon in India, when in the early part of 19th century, Indian magazines started publishing articles on science. It gathered momentum in the early 20th century, when Indian scientists like J.C. Bose, S.N. Bose, M.N. Saha and others made a mark in the world of science. Shobit Mahajan writes in his article, “Popularising Science” that,

Though the first science fiction story in India was written by J.C. Bose in 1897, science fiction as a genre never really developed in our country. Apart from isolated attempts in Marathi and Bengali, science fiction never really caught the imagination of the writers or even the

readers. The situation changed in the seventies when many Marathi authors, including J.V. Narlikar started writing in periodicals and newspapers (Mahajan).

The advantages and disadvantages of science have been profoundly analysed by western novelists in their Utopian and Dystopian writings. Indian writers also have begun to explore this rich source of material presented by science in an explanatory form for children. Science writing for children was actually initiated in the Bengali language in 1940's by a great scientist S.N. Bose when he founded an organisation, 'Bangiya Binyan Parishad', a magazine devoted exclusively to popularising science among children and the young. After the independence of India in 1947, when science was taken up in a big way in the country, the efforts to popularise it in regional languages like Bengali, Marathi, Assamese etc. continued. Programmed publication of popular science books began by setting up organisations. But the organisations did not produce books. Books need writers who are committed to communicate science to the young. This trend has started in recent times only in English and some other regional languages. More and more writers, NGO's and publishers have begun to realise the importance of popularising science among the young. Perhaps this trend can be attributed to several factors, such as, growing awareness about science, media, curriculum changes in the school, parents' emphasis on more scientific information for their children, purchase of popular science books in bulk by various Indian states, the efforts made by several publishers of national repute like CBT and NBT.

In the last two decades there have been significant number of children's books written on science as the theme. Writers like Dilip M. Salwi, Arvind Gupta, RK Murthi, Ira Sexena, Karthi Das and many others are devoted to draw focus upon science. All these writers have tried to give scientific facts and figures in more friendly, story-like

manner, in texts such as *Robots are Coming*, *The Aliens Have landed*, *Aliens Encounters* by Dilip M Sawi, *Earth and Mars* by R. K. Murthi and *From Somewhere Out There* by Karthika Das.

Thousands of children's literature books are published each year. Not only do these books have the power to help our children construct an understanding of language and literacy but also of scientific concepts. Children's literature books have the potential to lead children to construct an understandings of science. Dilip M. Salwi (1952–2004), an Indian writer who pioneered science fiction writing for children has authored stories, plays, novel, biographies, and several books based on science. His attempt was to make science interesting and fun for children. Salwi himself took great pains to write well-researched books, focusing on little-known facts about science and scientists. His stories demonstrates how the “Indianness” of Indian science fiction comes from cultural setting rather than a distant, imagined culture.

His best sellers are *Scientists of India*, *The Story of Zoo*, *A Passage to Antarctica*, *Robots are Coming*, *Tales of Modern Jungle*, *I am a Computer*. *J. C. Bose*, *C. V. Raman and Meghnad Saha*, *Inventions that Made History*, *Mr. Sun Takes a Holiday*, *Fire on the Moon*. His works has been highlighted in *The Cambridge Guide to Children's Books*. His writings are informative, and his talent makes science interesting. He ensures that each story differs from the other, and cleverly avoids the trap of formulaic science fiction. Salwi has experimented with a variety of genres and styles in his attempt to produce interesting books. He offers comments on environment, education, lifestyles, and attitudes; what makes these comments especially interesting is that they are always voiced by aliens. In his stories Salwi speculates on life in the future, creating worlds with several problems, mostly of man's making. Prema Srinivasan writes in ‘Contemporary Trends: English Writing for Children’,

Science fiction writers like Dilip Salwi, make use of a ‘thought-through’ interpretation of where today's trends will lead us to tomorrow (Srinivasan).

However, it is not a wholly hopeless scenario, and Salwi shows how, with some care, our earth can be saved.

Dilip M. Salwi touched the area carefully, and most of the time in his stories creates the idea that, “Does the machine capable of thinking, learning and feeling and have rights? Can it be good or evil?” (Gamble 202). Robots are a recurring motif in science fiction, mainly because they permit writers to generate cognitive estrangement, a state that places readers in a world dissimilar than their own, letting readers interpret or observe world from a different viewpoint. In ‘Better Made Up: The Mutual Influence of Science fiction and Innovation’ Caroline Bassett et al. writes, “SF creates an enabling ‘space’ for innovation. Although not universal, it may be said that evoking a ‘sense of wonder’ or more precisely, working with cognitive estrangement, is a broadly shared aim of SF works” (43). The arrival of the Robots to replace human beings in certain types of jobs is the result of this attribute of science which is the basis of technology. Prema Srinivasan writes,

In the present day, technology has replaced magic and fantasy and is “reincarnated as science fiction”. In India, Jayant Narlikar and Dilip Salwi have made notable contribution in this sphere, making strategic use of computer and robot technology (19).

Robots are Coming (Dilip Salwi)

Robots have been popular in Children’s Literature, and the usage of the subject varies form lightly entertaining, revolutionary to totally disturbing. For older teen agers Dilip Salwi’s *Robots are Coming* is a collection of twelve stories that explore the

interaction between humans, robots and morality. These stories explain the world of robots to children. Robots simply do as they are programmed, designed to learn, think and make choices. Salwi is interested in the moral dimensions of advanced robotics. His stories give a vivid insight into the possible consequences of such a possibility not only in near future, but even the distant one. *Return of Vaman* (1991) by Jayant Narlikar's also has futuristic theme, and explores the grave possibility of the robots eventually taking the place of man the inventor. On asking why he writes Science Fiction, Jayant Narlikar replies "I like storytelling and felt that science has so many interesting aspects that one can tell them in the form of stories. I saw how Fred Hoyle had made a name for himself in this way and so felt encouraged to try myself" (Shenoy). Gautham Shenoy writes,

Jayant Narlikar's stories...charming, contain scientific fact, prophetic vision, make for tremendously interesting reading and are instructive, sometimes cautionary, and additionally, are 'Indian' in spirit and outlook, reflecting its long history and rich culture (n.p).

Science Fiction is different from fantasy because it provides hypothesis, which makes children curious. It has a number of values and one of the values of SF is its ability to develop imagination, improvisation, intuition, speculation and flexibility in the minds of readers. Graham Green writes, "Perhaps it is only in childhood that books have any influence on our lives...but in childhood all books are books of divination, telling us about the future, and like the fortune-teller who sees a long journey in the cards or death by water, they influence the future" (qtd. in Sinyard 109).

Carol. M. Butzow and John W. Butzow writes, in their article, "Science through Children's Literature: An Integrated Approach"

Fictional literature can be used as the foundation of science instruction. Because literature has a story line, children may find it easier to follow the idea that are part of a plot that comprehend facts as presented in textbook. Science is very abstract for youngsters and must be seen as part of their own personal world if it is to be understood and remembered (29).

On the contrary Dr Sulabha R. Devpurkar writes in her book, *Children's Fiction in India. A Critical Study*, "Fantasy is food for children's fiction. It is the basis for all types. The science fiction is not ever scientific; it is nothing but fantasy in the strict sense. Sometimes a writer takes a story to illustrate a scientific phenomenon, but usually there is an element of surprise and thrill created by imagination that is just as wild as that of in fairy tales. Is there a theory behind an invisible man, no. there cannot be an explanation in the science foe such explanation" (53).

Children's literature is growing in the direction of incredible science fiction to stories with ground realities and characters more like the ones whom one sees in day today life. The old literature has more of a world of fantasy and as one advances towards the modern age, one see more of reality. We see Harry Potter series of novels, deal with the world of magic, and is popular throughout the globe. The modern age requires fantasy of its own since it provides a utopia to the children. Martha Thindle writes in his research paper, "The Fantasy Chronotope in Popular Children's Authors: Enid Blyton and Eoin Colfer"

Fantasy then maybe considered as a generic heading for a variety of narratives, taking place in a fairy-tale realm, depicting travel between different worlds, talking animals, supernatural powers, medieval universe, mythical beings and such like, thus bringing magic into the

mundane reality of everyday. Fantasy formed the mainstream of Western literature until renaissance brought about a rejection of superstition in favour of science and reason (2).

Salwi's stories for children may look for a re-expansion of the far horizons. These stories are splendid vehicle for ideas, setting human nature and human problems in new context and catching the attention of bright young minds at an early age, at which they often lose interest in reading for pleasure. Science Fiction writers for children have made full use of the genre, their versatility and ingenuity are often startling. Prema Srinivasan writes, "Science communicator Dilip Salwi feels that the excitement of scientific advancements should be made accessible to children through the form of fiction" (69).

Salwi creates stories in such a way that children seems entirely at home with, astronomy and space technology, and he knows very well how to maintain suspense. Salwi is skilful at constructing future stories. In one of his stories 'The Lost World' in *The Robots are Coming* he writes, "Some years ago, A.D. 4977 to be exact, the spaceship Vayager, launched from the earth was approaching the star Alpha Centauri" (86).

Salwi closely mix the spatial and temporal frame of the narratives to create their secondary worlds. But the manner in which he creates and maintains it is what differentiates their expression of fantasy. Robots are recurrent image in these stories and most of the stories talk about the future of robotics and aliens and their activities and communications with the humans. Some stories have one or no humans at all. This indicates that the future will be in the hold of technology. Martha Thindle writes

The concept of the secondary world can be understood in conjunction with the concept of the chronotope. The fantasy chronotope

predominantly applies only to secondary worlds as the blurring of time and space dimensions happen only in these worlds (5).

Salwi offers at the end of each story a solution and some endings are full of suspense. ‘When there is a Robot in the House’ started with the conversation between Robot Manku and the boy Ajay, It is interesting for the school going boys and highlights how robots observe the humans. “Oh no,” thought Ajay, “I bet that’s Dinish, ask me out for a game of telentennis. I told him I’d go with him, but if I don’t finish my homework, Manku will tell Dad and then I’ll be in trouble” (RC¹ 9). There would be place in every respect for robots in near future. Salwi himself predicts future when says, “Today fear lurks in the human mind as to whether the slave might not turn into masters” (preface to RC). The stories vary from house or homes to offices where robots do various kinds of household chores and office work to the other planets of universe for exploration of these planets. Robots don’t lie as humans and Ajay always thinks that robots are supposed to help humans, and not make life more complicated by questioning every order. Ajay complaints to Robotics International on phone, “Your robots make things really difficult for me it tells tales to my father. It lets in visitors I don’t want to see, it has no sense of diplomacy” (RC 11). The man on phone replied, “you must understand that the Manku robots is a product of science and technology, in which there is no room for lies and unclear statements ... if you and your family have not understood this and if you cannot speak truthfully and in clear sentence, I’m afraid that Manku robots one day cause a mishap” (RC 12). From then onwards Ajay promised that he would not go for lies, “But I’ll be honest from now on. I’ll never tell lies again. I’ll do my homework. I’ll give clear instructions... he thought frantically” (RC 12). It indicates how human failing like dishonesty can have no place in the world of Robots.

¹ *Robots are Coming*

Possibility of robots and their communication with humans is one more theme in Salwi's stories. The theme is echoed through Commander Frazer in 'Songs of the Alien Ships' when the message from the space was deciphered by earth's most skilled cryptologists and astronomers. The message read:

The birds have been sent into space by thinking being who live on the 4th, 5th and 6th planets of a star called Venox in the Swan constellation. It would seem that these worlds are similar to ours, and are inhabited by beings that are not too different from humans except that they have dome-shaped heads, long ears and claw-like fingers to suit their environment. What we have called the 'Song of the Alien Ship' is transmitted on the frequency of water, which is present in abundance on their world.

In an effort to contact other similar being in the universe, the inhabitants of Venox system have constructed and sent out twenty bird-like crafts. These are robot-controlled, hydrogen-powered interstellar ships. They are programmed to approach any worlds similar to their own in order to make contact. In case of threat, they accelerate and move on to the next object. The intention seems to have been to establish communication within the universe. We fear we have lost the opportunity (RC 25-27).

Salwi keeps readers in doubt at the end of the story which also is the main component of SF, "Twenty ships," Commander Frazer exclaimed. "Twenty?" "But only eighteen ships reached us!" Then as the meaning of this dawned on him, he sank back into his chair, his eyes staring into the starlit sky. "We are not alone," he murmured. "But now, we'll never know..." (RC 27). In the story Salwi repeatedly

shows that there is a possibility of other creatures as he writes, “the universe is infinite and mysterious” (RC 23). So Science Fiction is called as the, “future popular form of children’s literature” (qtd in Prema Srinivasan 69) Martha Thindale writes

Children accept naturally the possibility of the range of phenomena that fantasy deals with: alternate worlds, nonlinear time, extrasensory perception, time travel and in general all kinds of supernatural events that cannot be logically explained. It is precisely for this reason that fantasy literature is considered appropriate for children because children easily suspend judgment and disbelief (3).

Neil Gaiman affirms this opinion when he writes,

Sometimes writers write about a world that does not yet exist. We do it for a hundred reasons. (Because it’s good to look forward, not back. Because we need to illuminate a path we hope or we fear humanity will take. Because the world of the future seems more enticing or more interesting than the world of today. Because we need to warn you. To encourage. To examine. To imagine.) the reason for writing about the day after tomorrow, and all the tomorrows that follow it, are as many and varied as people writing (Gaiman n.p.).

Commander Frazer has read before “his mind flew back over the years, to when he had first become aware of the fact that mankind could not possibly be the only living beings in the universe. Several hundred other alien species must exist in the Milky Way alone.” (RC 20). Salwi creates and showed hope for the young children as Commander Frazer did not leave it and continued his study, Salwi writes, “Frazer, grew older, his hope of encountering alien being faded. But, he continued to enjoy his work he did it

completely and now, in his forties... Frazer's youthful enthusiasm had given way to disbelief. He trained youth pilots and kept his station in perfect order..."

In the next story "Marooned off a Meteored" Salwi has crafted a story from a report: a voice from a captain (of Armstrong IV spaceship which was crashed at high speed in the other planet) who left an audio record for future generations. The soft and mechanised voice says at the end of the report:

That's all. I was wounded on impact, and fear I haven't much longer to live. The spacecraft seems damaged beyond repair. My robot team has done all it can, but I fear this is the end. If someone from earth should find us some time in the future, I hope my report will be of use in solving one of the riddles of the universe. As, to the creature, we have no information at all, except that it was vulnerable to the laser gun, and yet large enough and strong enough to overcome the thrust of our engine and damage... badly damage the spaceship.

I am reporting man's first encounter with a living being in our universe. I hope those who come after me will find my account of some use, and perhaps will find a means of establishment contact and peaceful relation with these creatures, whatever they are... (RC 37).

The story takes place on the other planet and we come to know about it at the end of the story when the explorers and robots are in conversation. Martha Thindle quotes C. S. Lewis, "a child does not ask whether the character in a fantasy story is real or whether he/she exists, but is interested in knowing "Was he good or was he wicked?" (3). Prema Srinivasan writes,

When supernatural becomes possible, we're no longer dealing with unbridled fantasy but science fiction, a protean term which embraces

everything from the crude comic strip, interplanetary star wars to sophisticated, psychological drama (19).

Francesca A. Smardo also writes in, “Using children’s literature to clarify science concepts in early childhood programs”

Children’s literature about science should not become a substitute for direct science experiences, storybooks and activities can be effectively blended in an early childhood science program (268).

In *Robots are Coming* robots were saying, “Man made us, first in a very rudimentary form, and then, slowly perfected improved upon what he had done, we were first designed to think, then learn, memorise and utilize logic...Man, our maker, vanished from the face of the earth. It is thought that climatic changes, brought about by gross pollution of the earth, destroyed Man and his species. We remained. They created us half knowing that they were on the path to destruction themselves.... (RC 39). Here not only we come to know that the story is on another planet but it indicates us that that the new generations or the robotic world of post-climatic change is an important aspects of science fiction. As George Papantonakis writes “It is also worth noting that scholars of children’s literature associate science fiction with every kind of disaster threatening Earth, with the whole planetary system, with the threat of a nuclear holocaust and with ecology” (RC 50). It makes readers conscious of their own actions. These kind of stories can be related to Enid Blyton and Eoin Colfer’s fantasies. As Martha Thindle writes,

The concept of the secondary world can be understood in conjunction with the concept of the chronotope. The fantasy chronotope predominantly applies only to secondary worlds as the blurring of time and space dimensions happen only in these worlds. Blyton and Colfer closely integrate the spatial and temporal frame of their

narratives to create their secondary worlds. But the manner in which they create and maintain it is what differentiates their expression of fantasy (5).

Salwi's stories give the impression that Salwi has followed the ideas "three laws of robotics" of Isaac Asimov's, it says "1. A robot may not injure a human being or, through inaction, allow a human being to come to harm; 2. A robot must obey orders given to it by human beings, except where such orders would conflict with the First Law; 3. A robot must protect its own existence as long as such protection does not conflict with the First or Second Law" (Gevers 385). In the next stories, 'The Error of Sherlock Holmes' from *The Robots are Coming* Ketan, the child protagonist of the story sought help from a robot Sherlock Holmes to get his lost dog named Jemmy. Before he went on the search along with the robot there was a warning red card, given by the Counter 66 of the robot store. Ketan read it:

WARNING

THIS ROBOT IS PROGRAMMED TO FOLLOW IN EVERY RESPECT THE BEHAVIOR PATTERS OF THE GREAT DETECTIVE SHERLOCK HOLMES. THE MANUFACTURERS DO NOT TAKE ANY RESPONSEIBILITIES FOR HIS IDIOSYNCRATIC OR ECCENTRIC BEHAVIOUR, NOR FOR ANY INCONVENIENCES SUCH BEHAVIOUR MAY CAUSE THE BUYER (50).

While reading these stories readers mind develop and the child reader starts to uncover their own stories. After Ketan found his dog, Ketan wants to know how the detective was able to nab Mr.Surjit, the thief of the dog. Detective replied, "It was all a matter of observation and deduction. The clues were all there. It was a fairly simple

case” (RC 56). These stories cause tension in the mind of child readers and they are curious to learn too. To the continuous questions by Ketan the robot detective replies, “As I said, it wasn’t a particular complicated case. A few simple observations, a few enquiries, and that was that..... It’s all a matter of minute observation and analyses of fact...” (RC 57) As Franceses A. Smardo writes, “Sometimes a storybook which distorts or ignores a scientific law will arouse a child's interest more easily than a factual book (268).

In Rudy Rucker’s war series, *Software, Wetware, Realware, and Freeware*, robots rebel against the human-centric rules of Asimov and form a free, anarchist city on the moon called Disky. The robots eat a lot of human brains in an effort to convert as many people as possible into robots. On the contrary Salwi continued to follow Asimov’s laws and has portrayed a good relationship between robots and humans. Prema Srinivasan writes, “The question intrigues the reader, who is also aware of the possibility that man, the creator of the robots, may one day prove redundant in a world peopled by robots” (75-76).

In “Robots are Becoming Clever” robots begin to develop human characteristics. Doxie is fed up with the daily routines and replies to Deepa and her parents.

“Yes,” Doxie replied. “An Indian scientist discovered some time ago that metal too can suffer from fatigue due to overuse. It began to weaken and cannot function as metal should. I think that is what has been happening to me. I am used every day without a break. And, as you know, I am not a new model. I have been used before I came to your house. My parts are old, and they are tired. I am suffering from a metal fatigue” (RC 67).

Salwi's stories of science engage children with technology. Modern technology in its many shapes, from nuclear science to cybernetics, genetic engineering and computing and information technology, has become an inextricable part of our daily lives; it not only transforms what we do but also how we construct our world. Margeret P Esmonde writes, "Science Fiction has emerged as a significant sub-genre of Children's Literature. Blending the realism of today's technology with the magic of future possibility, it is particularly suited to fire the imagination or boldly go where no man has gone before" (Makhijani 23).

Scientific thoughts and concepts that come from informational literature support children's individual needs, become knowledgeable and up date citizens, and grow significant career selections. Science has now become a major part of children's everyday lives. Children are enclosed by an environment they must act together with and technology they must use in the quest of scientific information and critical thinking. Today's children are more aware, more concerned and more informed than any preceding generation. This is an exciting genre for them. It meets their needs to verbalize societal concerns. It reflects the implications of technology and the possibilities for the future. Through it children can be provided a method for developing an awareness about some of the alternatives to the world's future.

***From Somewhere Out There* (Karthika Das)**

The novel *From Somewhere Out There* (2009) is a racy science fiction for teenagers written by Karthika Das. She has written one more science fiction *The Cat Spirit* (2003). She is from Tamil Nadu and currently translating Tamil children's stories in to English. The main characters of *From Somewhere Out There* are the Fourteen year old twins Sidhart and Sowmya who are extraterritorial Intelligence- volunteers. They are unable to understand the signal that their home observatory receives at a particular

time every day, “the pages showed a particular pattern of a signal at exactly the same time every day for the past three days... there was a pulsed signal between 2142hrs and 2146hrs everyday” (FSOT² 27-28). NASA at the same time is also bewildered by the focus of the unidentified satellite moving in orbit around the earth.

Karthika deliberately involves the parents in the matter of the children so that they come to know what their children do. Days after Sidarth and Sowmya tell their parents Mr.Murli and Mrs Saritha wanted to know the outcome of their study, “What have you actually got in that study of yours?” asked Mrs.Saritha.” In the reply to this question Sowmya replied, “A full scale observatory would contain observatory domes, CCDs, optional filters, spectrometers, photons, detectors, computers, signal processing hardware, data storage mechanisms, processing software, the necessary accessories, ETI laser beacon simulators, video/audio photon noise converters and much more. We have got only the essential ones” (FSOT 11). Das herself says, “It has a devastating effect on her parents” (11). It not only affect the reader as a whole. Children always wanted to please their parents too; they love the involvement and the attention of their parents which lift children psychologically. As their parents thought, “they had believed that their children were getting deeper into astronomy. Secretly, both of them were thrilled with the choice their children’s subject. They both loved astronomy and were very disheartened they could not devote more time to.” (11). Karthika conveys the message every time in the text to the teenage readers. Children must share their thoughts with their parents like the twins at the beginning of the story, though the scientific jargon their parents cannot understand. The parents were all time ready to listen,” The SETI program is situated at UC Berkely, USA, they have made arrangements with the Arecibo telescope, (the largest, single-dish, most sensitive radio telescope, with the

² *From Somewhere Out There*

large curved focusing antenna in the world) in Puerto Rico to watch the skies for signals. The data from Arecibo are recorded on high-density tapes. Which fill a 35-gigabytes tape per day. The data is divided into 0.25 megabytes chunks called work units. These work units are then transmitted to people all over the world who have volunteered to do the individual analyses. And this is what we will be getting” (13). Later after conversation they both were satisfied, “they both thrilled that they had impressed their parents so much. And they also found it a joy to share their sense of adventure and excitement with such keen listeners...” (16). The writer not only makes parents participants, but stimulates the reader with scientific terms deliberately and forces the children into curiosity. The writer throughout the text uses scientific terms like, ‘gigabytes’, ‘Arecibo telescope’, ‘high density tapes’, ‘ETI’, ‘broadband’, ‘Gaussian Signal’, ‘Doppler shifting’, ‘Chirped signals’ etc. in order to divert the child readers to scientific knowledge before they go to the practical scientific fields. The writer not only uses these terms but gives detailed information about these scientific words, “the Arecibo is not a moving telescope, since it is fixed in position, it takes about 12 seconds for a target beam of the Arecibo’s dish. So we expect an ETI signal to get louder and then soften over a 12-second period, a Gaussian signal, this Gaussian is the one we are looking for in all the mass of data” (FSOT 14).

Alien presence in science fiction written for children is a recurrent theme. Karthika has written the plot of the story very artistically for children. Human characters encounter with the alien and the children encounter with other parts of the galaxy. Children’s encounter with the aliens is recurrently utilised as a literary approach in children’s literature to provide child characters time away from their everyday mundane lives in order to be able to experience adventures outside the protected realm of innocent or unexperienced childhood. This method also offers the author with a means to release

the fictive child from the restraints of authority. In this regard Martha Thindle draws the idea from the Bakhtinian notion of medieval carnival as a celebration of temporary liberation,

The idea of a carnivalistic time out offers an alternative social space where the child characters enjoy freedom, abundance and experience a temporary empowerment in the alternate world which is explicitly visible in the secondary world fantasies (7).

Karthika Das describes beautifully Maya's appearance in front of the children

The air seemed to shimmer and pulsate around them and they stiffened in anticipation. A vague blob of diffused light seemed to slowly materialize in the air and it gradually turned into a shimmering golden orb that hung in the air, suspended by invisible threads. Suddenly it flashed brightly, forcing them to shut their eyes. When they opened them again, the golden sphere had disappeared and its place stood, what looked like an Angel. Her hair flowed down her form in dark waves and she seemed to be dressed in mist that moved and flowed around her soft eddies. Only her face was clearly visible and warm glowing aura emanated from her (FSOT 136-137).

Through Maya, Karthika Das gives much more information of extra-terrestrial to children. They are from as the title says, "From somewhere out there" (139). Here both the children Siddhartand Sowmya enquire repeatedly about the other parts of the world and the advantages and disadvantages of technology. One of the replies from Maya is:

Yes, you are, from yourselves. You see, we were once at the cross roads you people are now. We are technologically advancing in leaps

and bounds, and before we knew it, the technology had brought us to the very brink of extinction...we had developed weapons of such awesome power that we perpetually stood on the threshold of an all-out war that would destroy our own existence and our planet... A few wise ones realised the gravity of the situation and pulled us back from the disaster... I was sent to warn you to turn back or face extinction. The threat is not from anywhere else but from within you (FSOT 143).

This discussion of children's science fiction has shown that Indian authors of children's science fiction have been able to depict scientific temper related to children. In these works, we characteristically encounter an awareness of a global identity that at times co-exists with an awareness of national identity.

Both the writers deal with complex plots, advanced concepts like time stop, time reversal, time travel, and technological gadgetry that is thrilling for a child. These writers locate their stories in an entirely self-contained secondary world which has its own rules and laws governing it. Both authors provide for a space of fantasy and science the idea that it is possible to escape into a different reality that helps soften the rough edges of reality for the children.

Indian science fiction for children can shape awareness of children. Indian authors concentrate on scientific achievements, mainly in the field of space sciences. They have explored travel and the discovery of extra-terrestrials, at times to attack against Earth by extra-terrestrials. This may be because they consider such stories more attractive and easier to expand upon and express an intimate desire of a large part of mankind to scrutinize outside the realms of the Earth. In this way, science fiction is transformed into a vehicle for attracting children. Indian writers have invented a range

of techniques in order to structure the various episodes of their stories, increase suspense and retain the interest of child readers. These include techniques such as accepting rejection, creation of a false sense of security and sudden surprise, concealment, slowing down of pace, parallel action, intervention, anthropomorphism, opening all expectations, emotional intensity and pauses.

Science both fiction and fact provides ample scope for the curiosity and restlessness of the children both boys and girls at an early stage of life. Scientific thoughts and methods that come from high quality informational literature help children meet individual needs, become informed citizens, and develop important career decisions. JG Ballard answers,

I think science fiction always has had a predictive role, and many of its prophecies have come true. I don't think now, oddly enough, that the predictive function is the main task of SF – in the sense of the nuts and bolts of our lives. I don't think it's the job of the science fiction writer any more to predict a new kind of air travel or a new kind of washing machine. I don't think it's on the level of technological change that science fiction has its greatest value. I think it's the psychological realm where SF is most valuable in its predictive functions, because what it does is to put the emotion into the future. It looks at our conscious and half-conscious responses to all sorts of trends that are flowing out of the future towards us. I think in its anticipation of this strange mental environment of the world of tomorrow that it has its greatest value now (Adams n.p).

Since space travel and astronomy started, the speed of scientific revolution in the world has increased. Every age group and feature and characteristics of human life has been

influenced by science. Content reading has also increased towards scientific and technical. Most subjects in children's science books are spaceship, robots and computers. Hugo Grensback in his lecture delivered at Massachusetts Institute of Technology on Oct. 1960, emphasises, "It has been said that the space technology age belongs to the young. Equally true is the fact- it has always been a fact since its inception, the science fiction is the domain of youth. The gifted young mind often has been the faculty of the imagination that can soar and ferret out the secrets of the nature" (Sexena 19).

It is clear that these texts contain a message of hope about the future of mankind, a message that only a science fiction text could contain. From this point of view, children play an active role as heroes, making their own contribution to resolving universal problems such as the energy issue, environmental pollution, and promoting issues such as space ecology, from a pedagogic viewpoint.

These texts are therefore beneficial rather than soul-destroying for the reader. The innovative action that the children are allowed to develop as heroes is likely to influence the child as reader. Consequently, it educates the child reader in a completely natural manner without any obvious morals or didacticism. Values that may be identified and promoted are: cooperation, mutual respect, mutual esteem, and freedom. At the same time, the action of the heroes is depicted in a way that promotes such feelings as a sense of safety, self-confidence, self-respect and self-awareness.

The idea of the pedagogic function of children's science fiction literature does not undermine its ability to be aesthetically pleasing as a text. This is achieved in a variety of ways such as humour, suspense, conflict and expressive means and techniques that are invented by the author in order to attract the interest of the child.

Carol. M. Butzow and John W. Butzow writes, in their article, “Science through Children’s Literature: An Integrated Approach”

The story does this by putting facts and concepts into a form that encourages children to build a hypothesis, predict events, and test to determine whether their ideas are correct. In this way the lesson becomes relevant and conceptually in tune with the children’s abilities. The method is best conveyed through an integrated lesson that involves reading, writing, language arts, and science, as well as math, social science, language, creative arts, and physical activities (29).

Moreover, the idea that a child may learn to enjoy a text from an aesthetic point of view is in itself part of the pedagogic function of a work of literature.

In the future, new authors will appear who will specialise exclusively in writing works of science fiction for children; alternatively, well-established authors might dedicate themselves solely to science fiction. Manorama Jaffa in her introductory remarks in a workshop on “Writing Science Fiction for Children” said, “That we are already in the age of computers, robots and push buttons. We must now open new vistas for children to provide them fresh experience and enable them to have a peep into future possibilities” (Makhijani 22). It should be noted that science fiction does not refer only to stories relating to space and extra-terrestrials, but also cover other sectors of the presence of life in the wider universe. Issues such as arbitrary or non-arbitrary systems, psychological or other pressures, medical, biomedical or biotechnological issues, issues of species cross-breeding, asexual reproduction, immortality after the development of genetics, and cybernetics and bioethics are areas untested from a literary point of view by Indian authors of children’s books. It is suggested that these issues should be

explored in a manner that science has not yet developed in order to prove the value of their imaginations and to inoculate science fiction against the antibodies.

4.2: Eco-Consciousness and Contemporary Indian Children's Literature in English

Children's Literature offers one of the most extensive sources for the study of ideas about nature, the environment, ecology and the role of humans in relation to all of these (Lesnik-Oberstein 208).

The environment is a vital concern of man on earth. Having ruthlessly subjected it to destruction for a long time man is now waking up to realise his idiocies and his trying to make amends for his earlier damage and destruction of nature. This segment of the thesis discuss the tie between nature and children, nature as a place of escape or comfort, issues and the presentation of nature portraying children's literature in English in India.

Nature refers to the phenomena of the physical world and also to the life in general. Right from the existence of human race on the planet, man has looked at nature as a source of energy and life. In the primitive stage, man was totally dependent on the natural resources to survive. As in the prophetic vision of a Kashmiri saint Nund Reshi (1438 AD), "Food will last as long as forests last" (Ann posh teli yeil wann posh)" (Razdan 44). These resources helped man immensely to achieve different stages of development and progress both socioeconomically and spiritually as well. He has capitalized on these sources and made his life better from ancient to modern period. But in this modern scientific and robotic age man has forgotten nature and ecology.

Ecology has been a distinctive feature of many an ancient literature. There is close relationship between Nature and literature, in the past and the current times writers in almost all cultures and civilizations of the world have written about the subject.

Ecocriticism, as defined by Cheryl Glotfelty in her 1996 introduction to the *Ecocriticism Reader*, is: “the study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment” (Glotfelty xviii). It seems simple enough, well designed yet open ended; this definition leaves a lot of flexibility. In fact, one of the most useful and promising characteristics of ecocriticism is its potential for comprehensiveness. Currently ecocriticism is expanding, it promotes opportunities for critics from other schools and disciplines to enter and participate in its discussions, opening up rich opportunities for interdisciplinary study. Richard Kerridge suggests:

The ecocritic wants to track environmental ideas and representations wherever they appear, to see more clearly a debate which seems to be taking place, often part-concealed, in a great many cultural spaces. Most of all, ecocriticism seeks to evaluate texts and ideas in terms of their coherence and usefulness as response to environmental crisis (qtd. in Garrd 4).

Ecocriticism validates how nature exists in literature. A literary text has always strong and larger outside issues to deliver as Foucault says in the first chapter of ‘Unities of Discourse’ of *Archaeology of Knowledge*, “The frontiers of a book are never clear-cut... it is a node within a network... The book is not simply the object that one holds in one's hands; and it cannot remain within the little parallelepiped that contains it: its unity is variable and relative” (qtd. in Harris 125). Today the close relationship between the nature and surroundings of the human is being studied and highlighted in all branches of knowledge and progress. U. Sumathy writes in the preface of her book *Ecocriticism in Practice*,

Literature can effectively create awareness about environment. None can deny the fact that along with issues like racism and feminism, it

is time for environmentalists to occupy centre stage. Just as postcolonialism champions the cause of the 'other', ecocriticism upholds the voice of the 'nonhuman other'. With environmental problems mounting by the day, and when survival is at stake for planet earth, 'eco' has become the much sought-after prefix for all fields, Literature included (Preface).

In this regard ecocriticism became the need of the hour as most critical theories. The literary critic in the field of ecocriticism attempts to research the interrelationship between nature and society and how it has been put into the texts by the writers. Our planet is being polluted by humans and their advanced technology. Nowadays, people invent innovations to make their lives easier. However, natural resources such as trees, animals and water are used as raw material to produce energy in order to improve or achieve their innovative projects. The more innovations are developed, the more environment is destroyed. In order to raise environmental awareness effectively, the process must start from the root. Children have curiosity in nature and always pay attention to their surroundings, so it is easier to start raising awareness among children. U. Sumathy writes in her book *Ecocriticism in Practice*, "It has been said that man does not inherit the world from his parents; he borrows it from his children. In order to ensure that, the world that is passed on to children is healthy one, man needs to preserve and protect the environment. In addition, he has to create awareness among children" (119). Primarily environmental awareness is main endeavour of ecocriticism. It is more effective and beneficial to strengthen awareness about environment from the early years of the children. Ecocriticism is being discussed very less in world of Children's Literature. Karen Lensnik-Obsestein comments her essay "Children's Literature and Environment"

The tie between children and environment emerges primarily because John Locke's belief in the existence of a true nature in a child. Locke's implies that nature of child at once definable and real while it also mirrors the pure and simple nature of a child. This pairing of children and nature allows adult and parents and also writers for children to create a connection between the presence of nature and child's own understanding (210).

Children's literature and environmental criticism are well paired. If we wish to pass on a safe and healthy world to children then protection of environment will be an issue of immediate concern. Children's and Young Adult literature's role in regulating and reshaping adolescence has parallel associations with the literary construction of nature and our perceived relationship to it. Dr. Shobha Ramaswamy writes, in Zai Whitaker's *Andamans Boys: A Critique of Postcolonial 'Development'*

One of the central tasks of postcolonial eco-criticism has been to contest western ideas of development (Huggan and Tiffin 27). These ideas, based on occidental consumerism, took root during colonization and continued thereafter in the new avatar of neo-colonization, resulting in the wiping out of the traditional societies by the dominant culture. Concern for indigenous people and the dangers to their environment has also pervaded the area of Children's Literature (45).

Many Indian writers like Ruskin Bond, Ira Sexena, Deepak Dalal have written effectively on ecology for children. Indeed, wilderness settings have long been a strength of Indian adult fiction and no less so in our children's fiction. There are lot of environmentally and ecologically oriented information books available in Children's

literature in English in India. The Indian environment, possibly due to the unique qualities of its flora, fauna, geological formations and extreme weather patterns features as an integral part of Indian Children's literature. There has been a proliferation of environmentally themed children's books in India over the last few years of the twentieth century and in to the twenty first. We may say that increase in environmental thematic books published within last ten years has provided a rich source of texts for children and for research as well. The texts focus on an exploration of children's development as an ecological subject. Such texts as the *Curse of Grass* (2010) by Ira Sexena and *Ranthambore Adventures* (1998) by Depak Dalal to name a few. Ira Sexena is the recipient of Shankar's Silver Medal for Writing in 1996 and White Raven's recognition in Germany in 2000. She is committed to the cause of Children's literature in India and written extensively about the various aspects of Children's Literature. She writes both in English and Hindi and has twelve books to her credit and numerous research articles on children's literature in India and is a founding member and Secretary of the Association of Writers and Illustrators for Children (AWIC). She is involved in development of good literature for children in India. Her award winning books are, *The Virus Trap* (1998) *Gajmukta ki Talaash* and *Manmauji Mamaji*. Some other of her writings are *Island of Seagulls*, *Caught by Computer* (1988), *For the Green Planet* (1991) and other Non-Fiction and Picture Books.

***Curse of Grass* (Ira Sexena)**

Curse of Grass by Ira Sexena is a story about a village's rebellion for environmental protection. Through this story, she addresses the problem of depletion and decline of forest resources and makes an effort to create awareness against the coming ecological catastrophes, especially among the younger generation. The story is set in the eighteenth century, it is the story of the Bishnois of Ramsari and Khejarli villages, situated near

the lavish green Khejari forest of the Luni valley. The forest was full of greenery in the Thar Desert and loved and worshiped by the villagers. Plundering of the forest wealth and resources were common problems but the Bishnoi men took up arms to guard the Mother Nature against such evils. However, to protect the forest from being converted into a summer palace for Diwan Girdhardas, the Khejarli Village started the 'Chipko Movement', to save the trees and the wildlife. Initiated by young women, hundreds of villagers, both men and women, young and old, joined in and hugged the *khejari* trees protectively, to save them from being chopped off. What started as a peaceful protest against deforestation and desertification, soon led to bloodshed and hundreds of Khejarli villagers lost their lives.

Curse of Grass is told from the point of view of Gauri, a thirteen-year-old Bishnoi girl from Ramsari. She had grown up listening to the oral stories from her grandmother. It is through her the reader know about Bishnois and their interdependent affiliation with the forest.

No one dare to assault our forests and wild animals. Chopping a tree is the most grievous sin and killing animals worse than a heinous murder... We worship our forests. If we do not protect them and keep growing our forest territory, the desert will gulp all his greenery. Then, there will be no wild life, no firewood, farming, no crops and perhaps no Bishnois. We live as long as our faith lives (CoG³ 8).

Bishnois as a community were complete against those who speculate to attack their forests and wild animals. According them cutting a tree or ransacking the forest resources is the most terrible sin. Forest for the Bishnois are religion. Sexena Writes

³ *Curse of Grass*

Bishnoise were decedents of gallant Rajputs, men with true grit, the teachings of their *Guru Jambeshwar Maharaj* had detached them from battlefield to cultivation and preservation of Nature. Now, their main profession was farming and had turned into peaceloving people. Until driven against the wall, they did not think of lifting weapons (CoG 89).

Gauri along with other children and women protected this faith of her community and to prevent clashes between her tribe and the Diwan's army, she took this responsibility to stop attack on the trees and animals. She received the support of her brother Bhinya and friends Bhagu and Ratni. The non-violent approach 'Chipko' was her brainchild. She is portrayed as a brave girl with an indomitable will. A strong personality, she inspired an entire village to contribute towards protecting the environment. Through the efforts of children the Bishnois were awarded the title 'Guardians of the Forests' (CoG 118) by the Maharaja.

Encouraged and motivated by eighteenth-century martyrs, *Chipko* was invigorated in 1970 by female hilly labourers from the Himalayas. *Chipko* is Gandhian in spirit, and gained fresh life under Sunderlal Bahuguna's direction. Sasikala A.S writes in 'Environmental Thoughts of Gandhi for a Green Future' "The key agenda of the Chipko movement was that carrying forward the "vision of Gandhi's mobilization for a new society, where neither man nor nature is exploited and destroyed, which was the civilizational response to a threat to human survival." All these together made Gandhi an exponent of Indian environmentalism" (Sasikala n.p).

Chipko is tree-hugging, a symbol for environmental conservation, both protection and renovation. Chipku activists believe that, "forests sustain society; thus society must sustain the forests" (Murphy, Gifford Yamazota 320). Gouri's thoughts flows

reflectively when she thought, “Why die for the devil... if the situation demands thus and the trees are threatened just cling to the trees- *Chipko!*. If they come to hack our trees – *Chipko!* Do not be scared, just *Chipko!* No arms, no violence is necessary for resistance. Surely, nobody can chop us off with the tree” (CoG 98). *Chipko* has become a constructive resistance of ecological struggle for the writer. When Diwan Girdhardas thought to axe down the *khejari* trees in order to make room for a summer palace, Amrita, the village headman’s daughter wants to kill herself before the Diwan’s eyes in order to save the trees. “*Chipko* will be our war cry... we will just cling to the trees. We won’t let them go and nobody will hurt the trees” (CoG 109). Amrita spoke loud and clear, “We won’t leave our tree. Chop our heads off first, before you touch our sacred *sami*... remain clinging. If *khejari* lives you live, if *khejari* dies you die. *Jai Guru Jambeshwar Mahraj ki!*” (111). In all, three hundred and twenty three Bishnoi’s laid down their lives at the altar of their faith, “Karmaji, his cousins and uncles, the entire Bhudiya clan lay dead amidst the prostrate *khejari* trees. *Chipku! Chipku! Chipku!*- they shouted offering their life”(CoG 123). The writer of the novel herself in the epilogue of the novel comments

The non-violent tree hugging has become a symbol for environmental conservation, both, protection and restoration. It aroused interest towards increased ecological awareness, hazards of deforestation and demonstrated the viability of people’s power in the winning control over their forest resources – a true gift of a women’s struggle, more than three hundred years old (CoG 128).

The title ‘Curse of Grass’ in the author’s words means that, “If the grass cursed the land, there will be no vegetation. No vegetation means no forests, no animals, no birds, no water- none of us” (CoG 72). The Bishnois were fighting for their forests to prevent

themselves from this very curse. But it proved to be strong enough to cause slow death of the Luni valley, which is now devoid of all forms of life.

The story begins to highlight various environmental issues that are staring at us in the face today. Many wildlife species are on verge of extinction due to poaching, despite a ban on it. The need for development and population pressure has been responsible for wide scale forest depletion and degradation. The problem of over exploitation of forests resources needs to be addressed more seriously now, otherwise soon other places will meet with the same fate as Luni valley. This message is clearly expressed in the book.

Look after your land – it is a precious gift of Nature. Tend to it, protect it – don't let the curse of grass destroy it (CoG 70).

In the present day scenario, cutting of trees cannot be stopped entirely. Young readers learn from this narrative to plant more and more trees to balance out the loss because of timber needs. The story shows a path to children and young adults, and helps them to deal with this global concern. There is always a non-violent method of dealing with difficult situations. In Gouri's words

No arms, no violence is necessary for resistance. We don't need weapons to show our anger, we only need to get rid of our fear and show our resolve (CoG 98).

The writer believes that the youth have the power to show the way forward and find solution to conserve the environment. The author is urging the young blood to follow in Gouri's footsteps to prevent our mother earth from becoming uninhabitable within the next few centuries. Amrita asks fellow children,

Are we going to sit and watch our sacred *khejari* being chopped?...We made a promise to our ancestors that we will worship our trees. Who will protect our deities, if we cannot? We grew up

under the shade of *khejari*; our children desire the same too. Are we going to leave behind a barren land captured by the Thar demon? Just because another demon wants to have his way, must we submit? There are our trees, our land” (CoG108).

Curse of Grass is blend of Ecocriticism and Ecofeminism, and the narrative can be ecofeminist reading. Chipko moment is an example where women have taken part as activists in order to prevent depilation of the forests. Dr. Shobha Ramaswamy writes, “Women have been perceived, down the ages, as nurturers and protectors. Women have often taken on the role of activists, the Chipko movement being a prime example of their participation in the effort to prevent deforestation” (21).

According to Eco-feminists women and environments are interlinked together, the former is regarded as closer to nature and men are seen closer to culture. In India genesis of ecofeminism has long history, as in the words of Shiva,

Women environmental action in India preceded the UN Women’s Decade as well as the 1972 Stockholm Environment Conference. Three hundred years ago more than 300 members of the Bishnoi community in Rajasthan, led by women called Amrita Devi, sacrificed their lives to save their sacred ‘Khejri’ trees by clinging to them. With that event begins the recorded history of Chipko (qtd. in Jain 189).

The notion is prevalent in the narrative of *Curse of Grass*. Set up at the time when women were considered to be much weaker than men and completely reliant on them, what Gouri did is praiseworthy. Brought up in a society where people believed that woman could not do anything except sacrifice herself, Gouri did not let herself down because this ideology. She showed great willpower to initiate a peaceful revolt. Ira

Sexena writes about the confidence of this girl child, “Surely we cannot fight a war but we are not weak. are we? We have the power to endure suffering. Don’t we? All we need is a strong will to resist. Let us decide that we will save our trees. There is no way left for the menfolk. It is for us to show the way now” (CoG108-109). The lead character Gauri has been created as a role model.

The author has used an oracular voice of a sage namely *Muni* in the novel, who informed them to protect Mother Nature, and warned about the curse of grass, “Nature is amazing. These forests are a wonder on earth. I am blessed having seen them and you all are blessed for protecting them, Muni uttered in deep voice... O, Children of Nature, both of you are blessed and those with you are blessed ... I am pained to witness a ghastly scene of killing – the corpse of an innocent black buck....*Muni* explained in his cause of distress”(69). Children remained confused particularly Gauri who is a very sensitive child “Was the sudden appearance of the *Muni* a sign of things to come? Why did he come with the news of the black buck’s killing? What did he mean- don’t let the curse of grass destroy it? What is the *curse of grass*?” (CoG 71). Children are conscious and in search of answers throughout the narrative. She thought and wondered, “row of *khejari* trees created voluminous umbrellas of Nature for shelter. What would it be like, without these trees. Gauri had wondered many times?” (39). In the later part of the novel the prophetic voice comes to the mind of child Gauri when she saw, “the face of *Muni* appeared before Gauri’s eyes, and his words rang in her ears-*You young ones... protect your land... don’t let the curse of grass destroy it.* For a long time, she remained silent, shivering with tearless sobs” (CoG 124). The author tried to convey the message that children has the ability and courage, as depicted through the two young girls and a five year old child who refuse to obey the commander who wanted to chop the trees, “Ratni and Bhagu pulled him away. They defied the commander. “We, Bishnois are not

cowards like you. We live for our faith and die for our faith, we do. Do we look old? If not, slash your swords because we will not let you chop our trees.” Then both of them let out their war cry – Chipko - and clung to the nearest tree” (CoG 122). Girls are more vocal as they are protecting the environment and against deforestation, and at the same time they oppose outside intervention of villagers particularly men who had economic, material relationship with trees.

A conscientious effort has been made to create a rhetorical effect. The story will be able to influence the thought and conduct of young readers so that they can help the environment in their own way. The author has written in a very articulate and eloquent writing style so that it may appeal to children. Words have a smooth flow and the story is well planned out. She has clearly expressed what she meant to say, and has a strong feeling about environmental issues. The writer replies in “Inside an author’s mind- Dr Ira Saxena” when asked what is important to write for children,

The Children’s Literature, unlike adult fiction, is purposive, educative, to a certain extent moralistic (the anti-hero does not become the hero) which is given to the reader like a sugar-coated pill, in the garb of entertaining and pleasure reading material. Honesty in writing impacts. Even in creating fantasies of parallel worlds, honest expressions and portrayal of characters emerge as the X factor. In realistic fiction, as I have been mostly sticking to, the plots picture reality in its true demeanour (“Inside” n.p).

The author gets poetic as well, and the message is clear as she writes in a rhythmic style in Sanskrit “Sarsate roonkh rakhe, tab bhi sasto jaan... (Take my head, let the tree live, A noble bargain for us to give)” (51). She further encourages children through this poem:

Two starlings from heaven, pretty 'n shimmering
Fair as lilies, fragrant jasmine blossoms so enchanting,
Lovely Gauri, gorgeous Karmani, Raised in sami, lived in sami.
Joyful birdies of their father's fold, Fawns of
sami, doves in sami.
Delightful Gauri charming Karmani, lived among sami
The devil's eye met the forest greens he loved
For his dream resort, a fine spot he fixed,
Clear the trees; his demon shattered the tribe,
Leave them! Begged the people offering every bribe
Pleaded Gauri tearful Karmani, Daughter of glorious sami
He raved and raged, the villain did not heed
Mercy for sami was not his creed
Tears and prayers shot up his ire
Two little finches danced inn bridal attire
Lovely Gauri fabulous Karmani, Darling girls of sami Unfeeling
villain did not care
The girls of sami dare a glare
Thrust dagger in their heart, right in the village square
Fearless Gauri valiant Karmani, Precious darlings of sami
Victorious they lay silent in red, sleeping
Zooming into stars forever shining, forever shimmering
Dazzling Gauri stunning Karmani, Darling daughter of sami (CoG
 52).

The objectives of the novel is to develop an interest in children for planting and protection of trees, and make them understand the function of forests and its resources, it also provides information of wildlife and its role in the context of global ecological balance. It places the children particularly young females at the centre and acts as an educator of the environment. Saxena writes at end of the novel:

The three friends got busy extracting the saplings. They spent their day collecting the sapling and planted them beyond the edge of the forest. Neither of them chatted as they always did. Rather a strange force of will quietly prompted them to work arduously, to counterbalance for the slain trees across Luni, to spread the forest cover (CoG 125).

Deepak Dalal is one of the main writers of Indian Children's Literature today. He is a specialist on environment and wildlife. He has authored several adventure novels set in exotic locales of India. He aims at creating awareness for the environment at the grass root level by influencing young minds through his writing so that they are inspired to save our beautiful planet earth. The idea behind his writing is to create a connection between children and the 'wilderness areas' through the medium of adventure stories based in India. In one of the reviews of his novel *Sahyadri Adventure: Anirudh's Dream* on 'Buzzing Books' Sajad Girdar writes:

As he writes with refreshing candour. His writing reflects a love for nature and a spirit of adventure. Importantly, he tries to do all of his with stories set in the India, with Indian characters, which makes his books all the more special, being his dream of offering Indian children stories about their own people, in our beautiful country (n.p).

Talking to India Today, Deepak says,

Children's fiction has a purposeIt would be very easy to write an urban adventure. But essentially I want to set my books in all the exotic locales in India... Through these books, children could be at one with the flora and fauna of the place - get the feeling of exploring some of the world's most beautiful coral reefs as in *Lakshadweep Adventure* or feel the thrill of a chase in the wildlife game sanctuary as in *Ranthambore* (Chowdhury n.p).

He further writes in “Creating Awareness of the Environment through Storytelling”

The aim of my work is to attempt to create a connection between our children and our wilderness areas. Resorting to management jargon here, jargon that I believe appropriate in this context: I will say that my primary objective is to ‘leverage’ the medium of an adventure story. My intentions is to tap the powerful potency of a story, to kindle a love for wilderness in the reader; to spark a bond between children and the environment; to create in them a genuine desire to save and conserve that remains (Dalal 76).

He is a fictional adventure writer who has written many interesting and famous books like, *Lakshadweep Adventure*, *Ranthambore Adventure*, *Ladakh Adventure*, *The Snow Leopard Adventure*, *Andaman Adventure — The Jarawa*, *Andaman Adventure — Barren Island* and *Sahyadri Adventure: Anirudh’s Dream*.

***Ranthambore Adventure* (Deepak Dalal)**

Ranthambore Adventure is a thrilling adventure story of Vikram and Aditya who are considered as the ‘Hardy Boys’ in Deepak Dalal’s Adventure series novels. Vikram Singh and Aditya Khan are two young boys, intelligent, sensitive and skilled at solving mysteries. *Ranthambore Adventure* also narrates the story of the tigers, Genghis and

Padmini. Packed with tiger-lore, it traces the moments of Genghis's life – from his birth as a feathery, helpless ball of fur, to his advent as a proud and authoritative predator. It begins with his birth and narrates how Genghis soon occupies a key place in the sequence of events. Dalal has succeeded in creating a great bond of empathy and concern for Genghis. He has created a bond, and the reader follows where the tigers go throughout the book. He skilfully created an atmosphere for child readers through his vivid description of the birth of two cubs in the very first chapter of the book:

The cubs were born sometimes during the cold season. On a chilly, misty morning, in a valley nestled between steep cliffs, the tigress choose a thick, leafy bush. As the sun climbed high and the mist dispersed, she gave birth to two squealing, whimpering balls of fur... the cubs did not open their eyes for a week...the cubs peered at the world around them with large, inquisitive eyes. The bush was alive with all forms of life (RA⁴ 1).

Genghis's fight for survival in a poacher-ridden world is consumed with a sense of urgency, as from the very beginning his mother was aware of the poachers. She took many great precautions to avoid predators, especially those of the twolegged variety, "the tigress was aware that humans in jeeps posed no threat to either her or her family. She trusted humans seated in vehicles, but humans on foot were another matter altogether" (RA 9). The narrative shifts then to two young boys namely Aditya Khan and Vikram. The story provides their young protagonists with a chance of redeeming the damage to the natural world that has been caused by the culture of humanity. The young adults in the novel are charged with the responsibility of recovering the damage which was caused by the poachers to tigers. Children like to see their heroes take on

⁴ *Ranthambore Adventure*

problems and situations which adults too will find difficult to handle. In the Harry Potter books, without any help from adults, Harry and his friends, handle very difficult situations. Children's writing and their expectation from their readings have evolved. Lesnik – Oberstein suggests, "Through its identification with the natural, and with the fulfilment of its own future as the adult it must become... the tradition has been invoked of the child, innocent and pure of perception, as enlightener and redeemer of the adult" (213). The damage to the wildlife is brought to their notice through Vikram's father Uncle Govind or Govindh Singh, who heads the Wilderness Conservation India (WCI) Aditya informs Aarti "There are all sorts of people who slaughter wildlife. Some do it for meat, which is forgivable, Uncle Govind says, if forced by hunger. Many hunt simply for fun, which he says is unpardonable, but the worst part offenders by far are those that kill for profit. That's where 'Wilderness Conservation India' steps in" (RA 15).

These children were curious to know about those who mutilate these forests and animals, and were stimulated when they heard words of Raveer who was Mr. Reddy's (CFO Ranthambore National Park) deputy "the problem is that nobody cares. So what if few tigers die? So what if cattle graze in the forest? Who cares? The public doesn't; the authorities don't, and the judiciary ignores wildlife. No one is bothered! We forest officers often wonder why we take trouble. Why should Reddy *saab* risk his life if nobody is concerned? All has to do is turn a blind eye. Let the cows enter, a few tigers here and there – what does it matter? Certainly not worth dying for" (RA 83- 84).

Dalal has developed an understanding for children, as he wanted to create an awareness among children and young adults, Most of the times children question, as Aditya asks, "What happened to that poacher you were after when I left? The man Uncle Govind called the master poacher. Did you capture him?" (RA 20). He further questions, "Why

is this man free? Can't you arrest him if you know he is a criminal? You said the man possess a ton of tiger bones. Isn't that enough to put him away?" (RA 22). Mørch believes "that we need to inspire children and support their curiosity in all ways so that they themselves experience the urge to act, to be engaged and to care, be it about nature or literature" and "if their engagement is rooted in their own enthusiasm, it is sustainable" (46). In one more opinion Bittu Sahgal, Editor, Sanctuary Asia magazine writes about *Ranthambore Adventure*:

I am convinced that books like *Ranthambore Adventure* will make a difference. They foster within children a much needed sympathy for wildlife. It is the young generation of today that will dictate the future of our forests and sanctuaries. Our task is to prime them correctively now and the story *Ranthambore Adventure*, in my opinion, is a valuable tool in this endeavour (RA).

Out of curiosity they come to know about the master of the poachers, Shankar Chand, who has killed more than fifty tigers, stocked and collected the bones from them and transported them to Chinese dealers at huge profits:

Chand hated the forest and all the creatures. He was descended from a princely family. One of his ancestors had single-handedly killed more than three hundred tigers in his lifetime. His father and grandfather had been great hunters too. But Chand was afraid of all forms of wildlife. He despised animals. His fear was deep-seated and irrational. His father had tried to help him overcome his terror. He had often dragged his reluctant young son into forests, along this same path. He had shown him the various denizens of Ranthambore's wild and beautiful world and had patiently explained that animals

were scared of humans. Tigers, leopard, bear ... name any animal; large or small it mattered not, they all backed away from humans (RA 161).

It was the effort and energy of these children; Aditya, Vikram and other young ones who caught the big fish, Shankar Chand, “Shankar Chand, the greatest poacher of them all, was lying in the grass, curled in a tight ball. His head was buried in his arms and even from the distance Vikram could see that his body was shaking.... Genghis had humbled the poacher. The tiger had won the encounter without even trying. Shankar Chand had passed out” (RA 167). Shankar Chand is based upon a real life character, Sansar Chand, known to have joined the trade at the age of thirteen. Sansar was in headlines in most of the renowned papers and magazines of India and on *NDTV*'s in 2013’ “Jailed for killing hundreds of tigers, Sansar Chand to walk free”, *Times of India* “Sansar Chand, notorious tiger poacher, dead” *Indian Express*, “Cancer kills poacher Sansar Chand who wiped out Sariska tigers”.

The novel ends with a big question whether these forests and animals would remain in peace, and would humans let them live in tranquillity, “Vikram looked at the cubs. The three young ones were playing without a care in the world, happy and content in the presence of their mother. If no one interfered in their lives, the animals would live. They would grow to be the future rulers of the forests. But would they be left alone...? Would the peace and tranquillity of the forests remain...? Vikram had no answers. Only time would tell” (RA 173). In Deepak's own words:

Animals and birds are doubtless the main draw of a forest, but there is more. No forest experience is complete without absorbing the peace and tranquillity of a wilderness area. Imagine the absence of the rumble of traffic, of the bustle of humanity, of the drone of

engines and motors that run our world. Take in instead the rustle of the wind through the trees, the call of birds and animals, and the serenity of a forest. Understand what primal human beings enjoyed and what cities and civilisation have robbed us of – the grandeur of nature (Sharma).

Dalal's stories are set in wilderness areas. Some of these wilderness zones are chosen as national parks and some aren't. Children who live in urban areas know very little about hill areas and wilderness. The settings Dalal has selected help build a bond between children, ecology and environment. The stories generate love for wilderness amongst youngsters. Dalal spoke in an interview, "I noticed that there are hardly any Indian writers in the adventure story space. To imbibe good adventure stories our children are forced to read books by foreign authors that are set in countries that are alien to them and that they might never visit. I thought this to be a shame, especially since India can be such a vibrant setting for stories, given its fabulous diversity in people and geography" (Khattar n.p). He further says,

I decided to use this wonderful canvas that is India as the backdrop for my stories. Accordingly, I have written books set in the Lakshadweep Islands; in the Andaman Islands, at Ranthambore, in Ladakh, and in the Sahyadri range of mountains (the Western Ghats). The aim here is that through my stories children can learn about India's fabulous destinations and its diverse peoples....I have carefully researched these stories and presented facts of what is happening to our wilderness areas to our children. In addition, I have also tried to communicate my deep love for Nature to my readers. Today, most of our children are born in cities and rarely travel beyond them. They know little about Nature and

will probably see no reason to protect them when they grow older. My stories, in a sense, are an attempt to create a bond between children and wilderness areas (n.p).

Writings of these writers above analysed offer varying portraits of the Indian environment that tap into the idea of multiple perspectives of Indian histories, cultures, and environments. The authors exhibit how children are empowered to develop their identity, take solace, or validate their place in the world through their presence and interaction with the natural environment. Nature functions in these novels as a sustaining force and educate the young ones. These stories depict physical movements from the historical land of Bishnois of Ramsari and Khejarli to Ranthambore sanctuary, albeit in different directions and/or for different purposes for children.

These stories validates eco-critical analysis as seen in the interaction between character and setting, portrayals of the landscape, flora and fauna; portrayal of eco-friendly and eco-activist behaviour as well as in depiction of ecological problems such as animal-human encounters and poaching.

Ruskin Bond has also written widely on nature. He is India's foremost writer for children and young adults. British Indian by birth, he is truly an 'Indian' writer whose stories emerge from Indian context, especially from the small Himalayan towns and villages that surround him. The natural scenic hills of Dehradun and Mussoorie almost invariably form the setting of his works and reflect his enthusiastic faith in the healing powers of nature, "having grown up in the hills, in the lap of nature... in once idyllic Mussourie, Kasauli, Shimla, Dehradun and Jamnagar... no one understands nature like Ruskin Bond and it takes his ability to put this wonder into words. He is indeed nature's favourite child" (Reddy 172). Bond's profound and enduring love for nature, his simply approach to living, and his mild and gentle behaviours find a magnetic presence and

voice in his writings. Hence, his distinctive trait as a writer for children is a pure and simple style which pervades his plots, characterization, and prose. Through his writing for children, Bond explores his own and his protagonists' changing relationship with the Himalayas from the freedom of childhood to a deep love and communication with the various manifestations of nature. He is known as the "pioneer of modern Children's Literature in India" (Aggarwal 86). Titles like 'The Coral Tree', 'Flames in the Forest', 'The Prospect of Flowers', 'The Last Tiger', 'The Cherry Tree', 'My Father's Tree in Dehra', 'The Leopard, Sita and the River', 'When You Can't Climb Tree Any More', 'Dust on the Mountains and Garland of Memories' shows children's affinity to nature and somehow these titles engage children's psyche to ecology and develop their consciousness, about nature playing pivotal role in their lives.

Ruskin Bond's writing shows ecology not only as an important or dominant theme, but there is also fear and concern for natural decline that is happening now a days. Children are introduced to the world of nature in stories of Bond, they gain awareness about the protection of the environment which paves way for their overall healthy development. In *The Adventures of Rusty* children run away from the regiment of British boarding school in Shimla to discover the mysterious world of nature. They explore the Himalayan jungles, splash through mountain streams, and have close contact with wildlife. Their young lives are charmed as they travel long distance through these mountains. Through his short stories for children Bond has tried to transfer an important message to everyone, that is, the importance of nature in our life. Environmental stories like 'Panther's Moon', 'Dust on the Mountain' and 'Tigers Forever' emphasise the necessity of living in harmony with nature. Ambhika Bhalla writes:

Through his short stories for children he has tried to convey the importance of nature in our life. In his 'An Island of Trees,' through

the story that the grandmother reveals to her granddaughter, Koki, Ruskin emphasizes the importance of the deep bond that grows between humans and nonhumans, only if there exists love and compassion⁴ between them. Similarly, 'No Room for a Leopard' is the story of deforestation and its accompanying aftermath. It also presents the predicament of the animals after deforestation. In 'Copperfield in the Jungle,' the author shows his abhorrence towards unjustified hunting for pleasure. 'The Tree Lover', 'The Cherry Tree', 'All Creatures Great and Small' and many others are the depictions of the chain which binds man and nature, like the chain of ecosystem, showing their interdependence. Ruskin's basic mission in his stories is to emphasize the friendly relationship between man and nature. He has brought before us our need for each other in his works. Thus, his works are replete with pity for the unsympathetic and cruel attitudes of human beings towards nature (3-4).

Nature always exists in his works with all its vivid vibrating and comforting forms. Child protagonists of Bond find solace in nature's peaceful embrace, its importance, and take refuge in the lap of nature. Child characters in his stories love to play, and take shelter beneath nature. The whispering and murmuring sounds of small rivers and streams, muttering sound of the wind, swirling of dry leaves and grass and the shadow of clouds on the ancient Mussorie hills captivate the readers' mind and soul's eye. Bond is genius at depicting nature.

Eco-writing in the form of children's literature heightens environmental literacy. Through Bond's stories children are made aware of the preservation of the environment. It encourages the children to get involved with the environment and improve their

knowledge of environmental concepts. Mr Dinesh A. Borse concludes his paper, “A Study of Ruskin Bond’s Selected Short Stories in the Light of Ecocriticism” writing

...let alone the writer’s ecological consciousness implied in the stories. Actually, in such an ecological-crisis-ridden time, it is very realistically significant to analyze Frost’s ecological consciousness, as he is still widely read even today. ‘Copperfield in the Jungle’, ‘No room for a Leopard’, and ‘Dust on the Mountain’ are all about the great chain of being which binds man and nature, as in the chain of ecosystem, showing interdependence and all-inclusiveness which emphasizes on the eco-friendly, cohabitative and symbiotic relationship between man and nature (113).

These stories aim to educate its readers about the bounties of nature and how man’s unthinking destruction is depriving the earth of its wealth in terms of wildlife and natural resources. The author has managed to do it in his simple and easy style, using everyday incidents to impress the need for environment protection among the young readers. In the process of inculcating the need for environment protection, he gives a wealth of information about rare species of wildlife, which are in danger of becoming extinct.

Children’s literature can be an effective medium to illuminate environmental consciousness. Children’s literature with a touch of ecological issues can help promote eco-consciousness among the future generations. It will be highly beneficial because if children are encouraged to explore nature from childhood, they will not face the dangerous experiences in future. Children’s literature, interweaved with ecological issues, can strengthen and provide the most valuable service to humanity. As Stephens claimed:

Children's fiction belongs firmly in the domain of cultural practices which exist for the purpose of socialising their target audience. Childhood is seen as the crucial formative period in the life of a human being, the time for basic education about the nature of the world, how to live in it . . . (8).

There are lots of books available in Indian market these days which have a strong power to create environmental consciousness among children. Among them the best books are, *Tigers for Dinner* by Ruskin Bond, *Snow Leopard* by Deepak Dalal *Children of the Enchanted Jungle* by Timeri Murari. The strength of these books play a vital role to counter the catastrophe that ecology faces. The children of this country will soon be responsible for the vast challenge of shielding nature and respecting the right of its inhabitants. It is through books they will get the asset and the stimulation to battle for the survival of the environment.

4.3: Gender Role, Representation of Girl and their Voices in Indian Children's Literature in English

Children in every culture learn to obtain particular roles and behaviours as part of the socialization process. Many of these behavioural roles are based on identification with a particular sex. The development of gender role identity is important to children's self-perception, and it influences the way children are treated by adults and peers, affecting the expectations that others have for their behaviour. The gender identity of most children is shaped by the universally shared beliefs about gender roles that are held by their society. These shared beliefs often take the form of oversimplified gender role stereotypes. As Pam Gilbert (1994) has pointed out, "by entering into the storylines of their cultures, children come to 'know' the range of possibilities available for femininity and masculinity. It is through this 'constant repetition and layering [that] story patterns

and logic become almost naturalized as truths and common sense” (qtd. in Trousdale 127–128).

Children’s literature has many purposes and utilities. As a means of passing on social standards and customs, children’s literature can be seen as reflecting the ideals of society and the intrinsic partialities within it. The established gender role stereotypes shared by society form the gender identity of children. Kathryn Jacobs writes:

For many years a bias has existed against young adult literature. The writing was considered simple and the plots of little real substance. As with any genre of literature, some young adult novels could still be described as such. Today, however, this is not the norm. Presently there are many books written by talented authors that explore a variety of important issues (1).

Gender roles are significant and play an important role in the reading choices of young boys and girls. Children receive a large amount of information in their impressionable early years, and this contributes to the development of their social identities. Problems arise when children are offered stereotypical constructions of masculinity and femininity that may constrain their development at an early age.

The process children go through when constructing their gender roles is an important part of their knowledge construction. In fact, gender is considered "the basic dimension" through which children identify their place in society (Taylor 310).

Gender role stereotyping is the identification of social norms with natural characteristics of males and females as if these were dependent on physiological characteristics. The view that sex roles are innate has been challenged in both children’s Literature and society since the late 1960s. Jack Zipes writes,

The distinctiveness of Children's Literature across such a range of elements substantially shapes critical practice. On the one hand, it defines the field of concern within particular parameters, and on the other hand it tacitly discourages routine adoption of critical approaches grounded in complex theory. A pertinent example is feminist theory: from the mid-1970s, feminist analyses of the nature of gender inequality prompted studies of gender politics and power relation in children's literature (365).

The beginning of the seventies conveyed a close examination of children's books in terms of the roles for boys and girls. Earlier to this, little or no thought had been given to the conscious or unconscious roles children were learning through their literature. Not only literature but textbooks were very influential in the conditioning of girls and boys regarding their traditional and expected gender roles. Thus, Children's literature also began responding to such changes in the society through stories and books that gave female characters a reasonable representation.

"Heroism is gendered". Writes, Margery Hourihan "this is readily apparent in C.S. Lewis' Narnia stories in which both girls and boys are transported into Narina to play heroic roles, but the girls are required to behave exactly like the boys: they become proficient with bows and arrows, take part in the fighting and never give in to weakness" (68). Female heroism was not seen as interesting in India, and traditional Indian oral stories which were often told to children tended to represent women in lower status, or as being less heroic. Female heroism has been degraded and devalued ever since the emergence of hunting oral narratives. Diti Vyas writes, in 'Intersectional Analysis of Gender in Indian Children's Literature: Comparison of Novels Written in English and Gujarati'

In line with the observations of Ipsita Chanda, Maitrayee Chaudhuri and Sunder Rajan, Superle argues that the new girlhood in ICLE (Indian Children's Literature in English) novels perpetuates class hegemony insofar as empowered inspirational status is exclusively granted to the urban, middle-class girls. She discusses how these girls use their bodies, voices and clothing to become 'a new girl' and contribute to nation building, improve lives, strengthen relationships and negotiate between modernity and tradition (159).

These tales were entirely about masculine encounters, because women's role was to give birth, stay at home with their children, and provide an audience for men's stories. Rizia Begum Laskar discusses in "Negotiating Home in Indian English Children's Literature: A Study of the Selected Works of Ruskin Bond, Arup Kumar Dutta, Anita Desai, Shahi Deshpande, and Salman Rushdie"

Thus it can be categorically said that when children's literature first made its beginnings in India, it was essentially a gender biased literature aimed specifically at the male child, who represents not only the hopes and aspirations of the family but also of the nation. In such a context, the concept of national identity and Indianness reinforces itself to be treated seriously in the works for children. And to a large extent this can be seen to be the accepted trend in the early writings when children's literature in India made its beginnings mainly through the Bengali writers (Laskar 33).

Children's oral and traditional stories in India often represented exalting men and boys as heroes while girls and women were too passive and submissive to be heroic. These oral narratives therefore featured young men carrying out heroic deeds. This

characteristic of oral narratives was transported to written children's fiction because many of these stories begin with the notion that the hero is male. Dr Sulabha R. Devpurkar,

In the different categories of stories, there was for a long time one common trait. The absence of a girl character or her very marginal appearance along with the other characters is a common feature in the stories till very recent times. The hero of the adventure stories was invariably a boy. With the beginning of girl's education, there appeared a need for different books for girl readers (57).

The appearance of feminism encouraged the freeing of the female figure from male-controlled penchants and other systems of subordination in both the traditional and modern society, and made literature one of the tools for proposing these redeeming paths. Children's literature in India also responded to such changes in society through writing books that gave female characters a reasonable representation.

In many ways, India seems to have embraced gender equality wholeheartedly. Not only does its constitution promise equal rights to all citizens; the nation was also led by a woman prime minister, Indira Gandhi, from 1966 through 1977, and then again from 1980 to 1984.⁶ Further, many middle- and upper class girls and women, particularly those living in urban areas, participate fully in educational opportunities and professional careers, apparently on equal ground with boys and men (Superle 44).

Most of the traditional stories of past like *Panchatantra* and *Mahabharata* were laden with animal stories and adult characters, and these had very few female characters. The

girl child was completely ignored and hardly present in these stories and the male was the centre of attention. Devika Rangachari writes,

Traditional and cultural constraints have made the development of a modern ‘young adult literature’ difficult in India, hence the very applicability of the term is debatable in the Indian context. As a consequence, gender as an issue in books for children in English in India was not considered particularly significant until very recently (Rangachari).

Traditional Children's books frequently portrayed girls as acted upon rather than active. Stories of demons, gods and fairy tales with happy, moralistic endings probably formed a memorable part of your childhood. “You may remember reading these stories, but do you remember asking why the princesses were always soft-spoken, swooning, fair-skinned women waiting to be rescued?” (Mantri n.p). Girls were represented as sweet, naive, conforming, and dependent, while boys typically described as strong, adventurous, independent, and capable. Sharda Iyer writes, “Rousseau’s prescription has no hope for the girl child. She is deprived of the limitless joys of childhood experiences which implies growing up before one’s time. This impression strengthened when one reads the ancient Indian Literature. There are no girl children as leading characters or for that matter, a character making its presence felt.” (Iyer 60). Children’s Writer Manorama Jafa writes that:

In traditional Indian Literature for children, the ideal woman is sweet-natured and one whose mere presence brings happiness to her husband and to all around her. She is always contented and never brings to her mind even the image of any other person save her own husband, whom she worship as God...if there is heaven on one side

and the happiness of her husband on the other, she chooses to vote for the latter, and does not betray her husband even under the worst possible circumstances (3).

It is clear that gender stereotypes are visible in Indian traditional society, “gender bias in the attitude of Indian parents is evident unfortunately even in the present-day social structure” (Srinivasan 111). It is well prevalent also in Indian children’s fiction and oral tales. The following portion of this writing examines whether the selected texts from children’s fiction suggest any form of empowerment or liberation from the traditional fixation, or from the already established stereotyped literary tradition.

The role of a child is often distorted and the conventional demands are imposed upon the individuals from the young age. The social surroundings of the child decide what actions of a child hero and heroine are praiseworthy and what the blemishes (Devpurkar 59).

Change was seen in the publishing houses with regard to avoiding stereotypes in children’s literature, “Sometimes an unthinking society needs a bit of a shake; in the 1970s children’s book publishers had several. The first, ironically, came from the Women’s Movement” (Clark 70). It was only after 1990s that the girl child was on fore front in literature in India when SAARC countries took up the issue of girl child. Prema Srinivasan writes “In 1990, the SAARC countries celebrated the “Year of the Girl Child” and, since then, there has been a spate of writing protesting that women and children has been “invisible” too long particularly in the under-developed countries” (110). Other occasions like The International Womens Year (1975), the Year of the Child (1979), the International year of the Girl Child (1991) and Decade of the Girl Child (1990 - 2000) have all contributed to creating a new awareness about the status of the girl in society. Prema Srinivasan writes,

In 1990, the SAARC countries celebrated the “Year of the Girl Child” and, since then, there has been a spate of writing protesting that women and children have been “invisible” too long, particularly in the underdeveloped countries. Ardent exponent of feminism have been suggesting for decades ways of escape from physical and psychological entrapment which has been their lot hitherto (110).

The above mentioned conferences have greatly influenced the writers who write for children. These last two decades have seen a drastic change in portraying the girl child in children’s literature in India.

Most of the writers are female writers who have highlighted gender issue in their writing. Michelle Superle has named this girl as “New Indian Girl” and writes, “Indian women authors have begun to create children’s novels which refute this pattern, in particular by positioning girls as capable of contributing to national goals. In this sense, most of the novels by women Indian children’s authors can be considered a form of feminist children’s literature” (38). She further writes, “The imagined new Indian girl in children’s novels by Indian women writers counters traditional portrayals and questions traditional images of girls and women, replacing them with empowered girls as the new role models” (Superle 48).

The texts in contemporary children’s literature in English which support hegemonic constructions of gender ignore the presence of the girl and projects her as passive and weak by making them marginal. In contemporary Indian children’s literature in English, feminist ideology is validated through the occurrence of girl characters and the pursuit of gender equality. Jennifer Earles, writes in, ‘Reading gender: a feminist, queer approach to children's literature and children's discursive agency’, “One of the primary

jobs of any feminism is to critique hegemony and to improve the lives of women/girls” (3).

There are abundant writers who are aware of this issue and have portrayed the Indian girl as active, strong, independent and capable and have broken the stereotypes. Dr Sulabha R. Devpurkar writes

The stories with new set ups and urban background are not always free from myths of different types. Shashi Deshpande, along with a beginning of the art of storytelling through her novels has brought a change in the perspective towards girl child and role in the childhood adventures and fun. She is quite near Enid Blyton. Girl behaving like boys is not her image of child girl (61).

The Indian girl portrayed in the stories of children’s stories represent anti ‘subject positions’ notion of Foucault which are provided by social discourses. For Foucault, “subjects are positioned by hegemonic discourses in terms of status, power, and legitimate knowledge. This helps determine their interpretation of self, world, and others” (qtd in Earles 11).

The 1990’s Indian children’s literature has seen a drastic change in portraying girl child. Indira Ananthakrishna’s *Nivedita New Home and Other Stories* (1991) depicts the girl child as having potential to rise to new challenges, and should be given the same opportunities as her counterpart. *The Exquisite Balance* (1987) by Poile Sengupta, *The Modern Short Stories* (1990) by Vijaya Ghose, and *Heroes Never Die* (1992) by Sigrun Srivatasava are all stories with contemporary setting, dealing with themes related to girl child of India. Some women writers of 1990s who have contributed for Indian Children’s Literature in English are Shashi Deshpande’s *A Summer Adventure* (1978), *The Hidden Treasure* (1980); *The Only Witness* (1980) and *The Narayanpur Incident*

(1982), Suniti Namjoshi's *Aditi and the One-eyed Monkey* (1986); Subhadra Sengupta's *Good Times at Islamganj* (1982); *The Mussourie Mystery* (1986) and *Bishnu, The Dhobi Singer* (1996) and its sequel *Bishnu Sings Again* (1998). Polie Sengupta's *The Exquisite Balance* (1987), Monika Verma's *The Cow and the Peacock: A Tale for Children of All Ages* (1988); Chandramoni Narayanaswami's *Adventure of "Fun"* (1994), Kaveri Bhatt's *Once Upon a Forest* (1986), *The Cuckoo Clock* (1986), *The School Upon a Hill* (1992), *A Ticket to Home and Other Stories* (1996), and *Danger in Dead City* (1998); Verma Sharma's *Anita* (1997); Kalpana Swaminath's *Ordinary Mr Pai: Two Urban Fairy Tales* (1999), Zai Whitaker's *Andaman Boys* (1999); Neelima Sinha's *The Chandipur Jewels* (1981), and *The Butterfly* (1986); Geeta Dharmarajan's *Super Brat and Other Stories* (1989) and *Tegu and Stolen Crackers* (1990), Deepa Agarwal's *Adventure in the Hills* (1996) and *Travel Ghost* (1997).

The books that will be discussed here are *The Battle for No. 19* (2007) by Ranjit Lal and *Go Girl Go Beyond Boundaries* (2015) by Deepa Agarwal.

***The Battle for No. 19* (TBN⁵19) by Ranjit Lal**

Ranjit Lal's feminist novel *The Battle for No. 19* (2007), features a group of strong girls cooperating to survive and help others in the 1984 Delhi riots. Ranjit Lal born (1955) in Kolkata, is one of the prominent faces of contemporary English-language fiction for children and young adults. Besides being a novelist, he is a freelance writer and columnist. Ranjit Lal is a freelance writer cum columnist for over two decades, has written over 1,000 articles, short stories, features and photo features that have been published in over 50 newspapers and magazines. He says his books are "for everyone from age 10 to 100." His books include *The Crow Chronicles*, *Faces in the Water*, *Battle for No.19* and *Mostly Birds, Some Monkeys and a Pest, Bad Moon*

⁵ *The Battle for No. 19*

Rising, Miracles and *The Secret of falcon Heights*. His works are marked by humour and satire. His book, "*Faces in the Water*" won the 2010 Crossword - Vodafone Award for Children's Fiction and the Ladli Media Award for Gender Sensitivity 2011–2012.

The Battle for No. 19 sketches the worries that youngsters predominantly girls face in day today's world. The setting and background of the book is 1984 Sikh uprisings in Delhi, and "features a group of strong girls cooperating to survive and help others in the 1984 Delhi riots" (Superle 48). It gives its teenage readers a look into the grave and dangerous world of terrorism. The cover page of the book writes, "A gripping and powerful story, *The Battle for No. 19* highlights the moral dilemmas of young people in today's world – where violence erupts round every corner, and the lines between right and wrong runs dangerously thin." (TBN19 Cover Page). Eight schoolgirls arrive in Delhi from the hills on an educational tour the very day Indira Gandhi was assassinated. They are trapped and wedged unexpectedly in the middle of a bloody war that threatens to jeopardise their lives. Devika Rangachari writes,

A group of schoolgirls, caught in the middle of mindless communal violence, seeks refuge in an abandoned house and fights to keep savage human marauders at bay. This gender sensitive book maps the emotional journey of the girls, who must draw on unknown reserves of courage and ingenuity to survive, and of Puja, their leader, in particular. Puja, already deeply troubled by her uneasy relationship with her father, must battle fear, self-doubt and overwhelming odds in a personal Odyssey (Rangachari n.p).

There are only female characters within the periphery of the story, and a feminine ethos prevails in the story through characters, who do not rely on a stereotypically masculine kind of power. The narrative opens with the portrayal of eight

girls that create a peaceful setting. The girls between the age of eight to sixteen, on their way home after an educational trip, are driving into Delhi. The laughter and jokes they share, the healthy respect they have for their teacher and their families, left behind in the hills, all form the contours of settings familiar to them. Ranjit Lal describes the girls:

Squashed between Sheetal and Ritika on the middle-row seat of the jeep, twelve year-old Payal nudged Ritika... Ritika, just a year younger and the baby of the group, giggled and tucked her peppermint into one cheek... Sangita, dark with teeth so brilliantly white, Payal had once asked her if she cleaned them with surf. Her own elder sister Seema, with the same whiskey-coloured eyes...Ritika's older sister

Gauri with her placid, oval face, so, so complacent-looking – almost sheep like... And Jaya, with that weird 'spaced-out' stare of hers (TBN 19 1).

Ranjit Lal has portrayed these girls as being strong and resilient who are caught in the violence of riots. The girls show their strength even when their parents were reluctant to send them for the education trip only because they are girls. As Payal remembers, “when Aruna Ma'am had come to ask permission for this wonderful 'history tour' of Delhi and Agra (and Fatehpur Sikri, of course) that she wanted to take her and other girls on, armed to teeth with reasons why they should be allowed to go, Papa had completely taken the wind out of her sails with his dismissive indifference.... Aruna Ma'am had had a much harder time with the parents of the other girls. Straight-backed and determined, she had stormed into their homes and bulldozed, browbeaten, cajoled, sweet-talked, out argued and flattered their parents into letting go away”(3). The reluctance of the parents clearly shows how the girls are not allowed freedom as

compared to boys. In a way we can say these girls' attempts to proceed beyond stereotypes traditionally limiting female roles. They capture the spirit of female Indian innovator and are able to break gender restrictions.

From the moment their smiling and jovial Sikh driver Kartar Singh is dragged out and brutally murdered by a furious mob, they are forced to battle one challenge after another. The mob of thirty men loaded with weapon and *lathis* chant, the anthem of the devil “[Emphasized in text] *Khoon ka badla khoon! Khoon ka badla khoon!*” (8). Kartar Singh's murder leaves them all alone without any assistance and support. Kartar Singh shouts and screams at the girls when he was caught and blood was gushing down his head “What are you waiting for, girls? Get out there! Run! ...Get out...run! Run! Go” (8-9). Frequent words like, “*Time to go! Now,..Come on! Everyone out! Now.. Come on! Out of here.... [Emphasized in text] Don't panic and don't scream! You panic now everything will scatter like peanuts out of a paper bag. And get out of here! Go!.... No time.... Come on!*” (9-10), indicates that the writer tried to make an environment and setting for the plot and the survival of the girls without the interference of the male world.

Lal initially in the story described girls as innocent and helpless against strength of the mob of men and to set the platform so that readers can be impressed by the courage of the girls at the end. Primarily they question their abilities which prove them to be confident by the end of the story, “Will any of us ever be able to actually use these? Will we be able to throw a spear at someone or stab and slash at them with these words and daggers? Aim an arrow at them? God, please don't make us find out...” (TBN 41). There was another question, “What could they, eight schoolgirls, do against twenty-five rioters? Most of them had never seen a real sword, forget about knowing how to use one” (43). The author shows the girl characters stereotypically “prone to

emotion” such as helplessness. In order to avoid and repel such kind of helplessness they initially engage themselves in entertainment and birthday parties, “In a very short time, the dining room was looking quite festive as they tied bunches of balloons to the chairs and fans. “[Emphasized in text] *This must be most bizarre and ludicrous impromptu birthday party ever, even crazier than the Mad Tea Party. We are hiding from goondas who want to burn us alive with flaming tyres, and are now having a midnight birthday party*” (TBN 105). These kind of parties and amusements give a clear cut message to people in general. The celebration of birthday, while they are held hostage in No. 19 is an additional example of the manner in which sentiments are used to help the girls come to terms with the extraordinary way in which the world around them has become infuriated.

A midnight birthday party for Jaya in the house of a missing millionaire whose little children have been hiding from us and everybody else for two days in the barsati of their own house ... while the good citizens of the great capital of India dragged people out of cars and burnt them alive and played host to primeval mobs that has chased both these little children and us to this house... When, how, would this end” (TBN 108).

It was a sense of understanding among the girls they deduced the intentions of the mob when they wanted to enter in the Sikh house, by unscrewing and playing anagrams on the nameplate at the main gate of the Sikh house. It was their intelligence and wisdom they changed “19 RAVINDER SINGH SODHI POONAM M MALLICK” to “19 SRI SWAMI RAO MP CONG I” (37-39). The owner’s name can help identify them as belonging to the Sikh community and make the house a target for the rioters. They didn’t stand still but investigated, probed and questioned throughout while they

stayed in the house. For a short period of time the girls felt safe, and unravel the reason for the riots, “completely entranced by the magical Rashana Room (which is what they called it), they had temporarily forgotten the traumatic events that had chased them here.” (21). That relaxed and safe feeling disappeared the moment when one of the girls switched on the TV and learnt, “Indira Gandhi had been shot by her Sikh bodyguards and later died... so that is why they went after poor Kartar uncle... they are going after the Sikhs!”(22).

Later in the book Lal explores the female “power”, and highlights the importance of the strong role for girls in society. As a consequence, the girls started to change, taking on more conventionally masculine traits and undergoing challenges usually associated with bildungsroman protagonists. This paved the way for female characters in Indian children’s books to be more assertive and strong. Lal describes how these girls started to think and use the different kinds of weapons, “Four swords – two have broad curving blades and the other two, long and narrow ones. Six daggers, four of which have these funny handgrips and triangular blades. The two others are more ordinary, but have stunning hilts.... Two pairs of bows and arrows, two spears and one battle-axe –which is mine! And two exquisite shields... Wow! That’s more than we can handle,” (51). The innocent and inexperienced girls turned into courageous girls. Puja the frontrunner of the group orders, “Okay, so that means six of us have to be armed. Each of us gets dagger – we can tie our dupattas around our waists like sashes and stick them in. Sheetal, you take the axe and a spear, Sangita, Seema, Gauri and Jaya you each take sword. I’ll take the other spear, and a bow and arrow” (TBN 52). At this moment Puja’s thoughts go back to school where the girls were told by the trained monks and Lama that bows and arrows are not meant for girls. She thought,

[Emphasized in text] *She had casually picked up a bow and loosed off three reed arrows in quick succession and crowded them whock! whock! whock! Dead in the centre of the small circle of red in the straw bale target, thirty meters away... A deathly hush fell on the young monks who had seen this, and then the lama had charged out, apoplectic, shouting (most un-lama- like) that girls must never, never pick up a bow and arrow, it was inauspicious, the god would be displeased, but had stopped dead in his tracks, eyes goggling when he had seen where her arrows gone... (TBN 53).*

Lal continuously in the story generates Pujas' thoughts regarding discrimination of girls at every step of their lives in and outside of the home, "*Just as Lama Dorji had given her, after she had sent those first three arrows, wock! wock! wock! Dead centre into the target. His apoplectic rage – 'girls must never, never pick up a bow and arrow!' – had melted in the shock, even as she had mumbled and apology and hastily put down the bow and arrow*" (TBN 90). The girls wanted to learn archery but societal pressure did not allow them to do so. Michelle Superle writes,

No matter how much physical freedom and strength girls are shown to have, there are checks at work. For example, in children's novels published in India girl characters are often told by their male peers to stay home during activities deemed unsuitable for girls. The girl ignores such advices and participate regardless, offering unique and invaluable information, cooperation, and physical contribution to help solve the problem at hand and enhance their communities, thus fulfilling national aspirations as equally valuable citizens" (162).

Same is the case with Puja, Lal peeps into the mind of the girl and writes her thoughts:

[Emphasized in text] *“I’ll have to ask my father” ‘but I would love to learn.’ It had been a soothing balm – the act of picking up the bow, pulling the string back the arrow against the cheek and aiming. Everything fell away and all the tensions was channelled into the bowstring and then released so gently- not at all like a tantrum or hysterical flood of tears. Just a velvety ‘pfft’ and the arrow was on its way . . . ‘what? Archery? What the hell for? Had been Pap’s response- and what are you trying to prove?.... ‘Go if you want to but take someone along’ (TBN 90).*

Further thoughts occupied Puja’s mind, the girl whom all others looked up to in moments of a crisis, battles her own monsters as she wonders, “‘Papa? Would he care? Or would he just shrug in that hateful indifferent way of his and stalk out of the room as he had done when I told him I had won the archery tournament and he pretended he hadn’t heard?... I knew something like this would happen, I knew it... what will everyone say.... A girl missing in Delhi for two nights Running wild... who would marry her now?”(TBN 113). This ostensible uncertainty in Puja’s thoughts only helps to throw into relief her cool headed determination to combat the rioters.

Girls throughout the story became strong in their will. They tackle every hard situation cleverly and are determined in their will, and plan strategies against the mob of strong men, whom they fought and succeed. The girl characters in the story are able to exceed female stereotypes by embracing and celebrating certain characteristics traditionally gendered as feminine. Sheetal one of the girls fought with a spear against one of the attackers, “she raised the spear high with both hands and brought its flat surface down on his head, using it like a *lathi* rather than a spear... it caught him squarely on the head, making him reel back dazed, drop the iron rod and fall flat on his

back.... The world whirled for a bit, before steadying again so that he could focus. The girl was standing on top of him, the spear poised, ready to plunge into his throat.” (TBN 124) The man attacked them a third time but all his attempts were in vain. This time it was Jaya who, “raised the hockey stick and swung a cross-batted arc with it. Thudding it hard against the back of his head. It made contact with an ugly dull sound, the man’s head jerked forward, spittle flying out of his mouth... he crumbled like potatoes, incomprehension bulging his eyes before they folded up into his skull.” (128) The barbaric attitude of men was evident in the thoughts of children, when they thought, [Emphasized in text] *“this monster. Did he go around burning tyres around the necks of children and defenceless people? Did he have children of his own ... where did such people come from? So many of them . . .”* (131). The last attack on these eight school girls has been presented by Lal in the chapter, ‘The Battle for No. 19’ where each of them are energetic and with full power. One of the energetic girl Puja thinks, “[Emphasized in text] *I’m not prepared to accept that. Defeat ... No way, but step carefully*” (167). They prepared boiling hot water to attack the men. , “the eight men who had been caught amidstships on the stairs had been worst hit... for the first time, they had become victims of the agony they inflicted so easily on others” (151). Puja’s father too was there in the mid of ‘Hunter’s Draw’ who had come there with the army as an officer but it was Puja who killed the monster, “she suddenly stepped clear of the box and in one smooth, skin, dancer’s movement, raised the bow and drew the string back against her cheek, and closing one eye, aimed, and so gently and gracefully released the arrow that it might well have been a flying kiss, A swing draw. Hunter’s draw.” (176). And at the same time Puja complains to her father in her thoughts “[Emphasized in text] *Please don’t look at me now, not now. You sidelined me for sixteen years, ignored me. For too many years. What can I do now?*” (174). Her father

realised that girls are not what people think of them as weak and feeble. He comprehends, “‘No, damn son could have shot like that!’ whispered, to himself really, but she heard him alright. And corrected himself, ‘No damn son would have had the guts to attempt a shot like that! One smooth motion.’” (TBN 178), Here Ranjit Lal raises the gender issue through the girl’s father when he tells her, “ ‘I have to debrief you my dear,... debrief you for the last sixteen years. It might take a while’” (182).

In the epilogue of the novel Ranjit Lal describes the girls as grownups and working at different places all over the globe, “Puja runs a school in the hills...her school turns out the best archers in the country. Sheetal and Jaya run a very successful veterinary clinic in Delhi. Seema teaches higher mathematics in New York, and Payal, a brilliant Lawyer.”(183). But what annoys them most is,

How frequently such events – be the riots, terrorist attacks and bomb blasts – keep on happening around the country. And their victims are nearly always ordinary innocent people. People like the girls themselves... Our minds must be sick. No society does this can think of itself as civilised” (TBN 183).

Over all Ranjit Lal evaluated behavioural characteristics of girls, depicted as energetic, determined and hardworking throughout the novel. He has portrayed roles as fighters, adventurers and rescuers and portrayed them as strong and enduring as contrasted to traditional passive roles as caretakers and in need of rescuing. Lal suggests, we can also distinguish actual practices that modify people.

Go, Girl, Go! (Deepa Agarwal)

Deepa Agarwal an eminent writer who writes for children fiction in India was born in Almora in the foot hills of Himalayas Uttarakhand. She has about fifty books published in English and Hindi. Her children’s fiction include adventurous, traditional

and mysterious has been published by publishers in India. Among other honours, she has received the N.C.E.R.T National Award for Children's Literature for her picture book *Ashok's New Friends* published by Children's Book Trust, in 1992-93, several prizes in the Children's Book Trust (CBT) competitions for writers and the first prize in The Asian Age short story competition for her story "Cradle Song". Her book, *Caravan to Tibet* (2007), a masterpiece, was on the Honour List of the prestigious International Board on Books for Young People (IBBY) as the best book from India and translated into Korean. Five of her titles have been listed in the White Raven Catalogue of notable books brought out by the International Youth Library (IYL) Munich. She has also received fellowships to research children's literature from the Austrian government and the Ministry of Culture, Government of India. Her notable works for children are *Chandrakanta* (1988), the first mystery novel in the Hindi, *The Hilltop Mystery* (1998), *Anita and the Game of Shadows* (2002), *Folktales of Uttarakhand* (2008), *Rani Lakshmibai* (2009) a biography, *Write Right* (2010), *Chanakya: the Master of Statecraft* (2013), *Spinning Yarns: The Best Children's Stories from India* (2013), and a Hindi translation of her poetry collection *Do Not Weep Lonely Mirror* (Mat Ro Ekaki Darshan). Her work has been translated into several Indian and foreign languages as well. Deepa, founded a forum the Habitat Children's Book Forum (HCBF) in New Delhi. She says, "I got the idea from the two book clubs for adults running at the India Habitat Centre at the time (2003). I had attended sessions at both. Why not a book club for children? I thought. There was something else at the back of my mind—visibility for Indian writers. At that time Indian children's books were far more confined to the literary boondocks than they are now. And over the almost ten years that I was involved in the HCBF, I am happy to say children discovered many

home-grown books with delight,” (Gopalakrishnan). Deepa Agarwal has extensively used the urban class children and placed them in forefront

Deepa Agarwal’s book, *Go, Girl, Go!*, a collection of eight girl-centric stories, set in both rural and urban areas, gives the readers a chance to ponder upon questions the girls pose in all the stories. Deepa has crafted skilfully eight real life parallels to eight fictional stories. The protagonists in the stories are lively young girls from various strata of society, in closed setting dealing with minute, mundane features of everyday life. These stories are replete with girl children, as a central character which has been ignored completely in the past. Deepa has given role to girls in all the eight stories and validate feminine voice. These stories provide rich insight for exploring issues and dilemmas of the human experience as perceived by the young females. Deepa Agerwal has discussed and grapples in these stories in detail issues related to girls ranging from gender bias in sports to bullying. The other wide range of themes related to girls being discussed by the author are self-esteem, child marriage, gender bias in sports, career dream, women domesticated, speaking out and self-identity. Deepa has given strong voice to girls in all these stories. One of the most predominant ways by which the following stories convey a feminist position is the creation of a central space for girl characters. The representation of girls illustrates the change of the female image from a more traditional one, which is dependent, caring, domestic and weak, into a more modern one, which represents independence, intellectuality and strong mind. A huge number of stereotypes are introduced in these stories and they create beliefs that are learned as early as a young reader starts to read. Nandni Nayar comments about the place of girls in Agarwal’s writing,

Agarwal pays special attention to the boy-girl equation in her books, and attempts to be fair to both the sexes. As for as possible the girl-

boy ratio is maintained. But in most cases the girls display courage and initiative that marks them out as braver (322).

She further notes

Agarwal has made a conscious attempt to introduce younger children to the idea that girls and boys (and hence men and women) can break out their assigned roles in society.... Deepa Agarwal consciously adheres to this agenda in her later books (323).

The story 'Fire' gives the portrayal of three rural girls; Puja, Mitu and a maid's daughter Paruli. It narrates their heart-rending story of broken friendship as well as the grim reality of child marriage. Deepa Agarwal says, "Some of my short stories are indeed, based on early experiences like the short story "Fire" from my collection *Not Just Girls* which is based on a true incident when a friend and I unthinkingly set fire to the forest. I wrote it to try and answer a question that had always troubled me" ("Scholastic" n.p).

"Fire" narrates that girls are only meant for house hold chores. Paruli's mother always believe that, "girls were meant to be kept busy with household chores all the time." (GGG⁶ 23). But on the contrary Paruli was an adventures girl and has adventurous ideas as well. She was the one who, "discovered the places where the fattest, juiciest *hissalu* berries grew-crunchy orange cups that fell into your hand as soon as you touch them" (GGG 24). The story is full of playful activities of the girls. They all have fun and engage in blame game as to, 'who broke the fire' in the nearby forests where they live, and their forgiveness of one another. Pooja says "actually, she was ready to make up with Paruli now. Their games felt tame and kiddish without her." (32). In her absence she thought again of her, "slashing away the stinging nettles from their

⁶ *Go Girls Go*

paths on one of their excursions to the forest, so they wouldn't step on them by mistake and suffer. Picking up thorny branches and casting them aside... and then ... standing there hesitantly with jacaranda branches in her hand" (33). Both friends of Paruli; Puja and Mitu come to know later after the visit of Paruli, "An older and subdued Paruli, who hardly spoke to Puja. Actually, she hardly spoke at all. Getting married seemed to have thrown her into a permanent state of embarrassment. She was busy helping in the kitchen most of the time. Or she sat outside trying to knit something from a much-travelled ball of wool" (GGG 34). They knew, "Paruli was not their playmate any longer. She had entered the world of grownups, where Puja couldn't follow" (34). The story gives an insight as to how early marriages destroy the early years of the girls. The girls are also socialized to be subordinate and are accustomed to getting married at an early age. Deepa Agarwal provides a real parallel story of Alice, an office cleaning staff in Delhi who says, "I lost my parents at an early age. My uncle who took over as my guardian, decided to marry me off. I was only 15 then, and did not know what was right for me. Life has been difficult since.... I am able to earn for my family when my husband cannot. I will never marry off my daughter early" (GGG 35).

'Do you Want to Play Football?' is the story of aggressive and bold girl Monica, Deepa Agarwal described her as, "her big eyes shone as she gazed in to the distance, nibbling hungrily at a thumb as though it were her favourite chocolate bar" (GGG 36). Monica and her friend realised and pondered, "Why can't we have a football team?why shouldn't they have a football team? Why couldn't girls play football?.... it is not written anywhere that there's a law against girls playing football!" (37). The girls are curious to play football as they know their strength and vigour but they fail to get a chance from the school authority, and were repeatedly told by school principal, "it is not the game for girls. I'm really sorry" (GGG 39). Monica encourages the girls in the

story as well as the young readers, “Monica made up her mind to do something, she had to do. And she did. First, she rounded up a group of girls in the colony. Then she persuaded them that it was very important for them to learn play football” (41). Later they joined the neighbouring football club of Summit and Anuj. At first both the boys didn’t give them a chance to play the game. It was wit as well as resistant force against conventional norms that girls can’t play games, “You’re afraid to give us a chance. You’re a silly, old fashioned, stick-in-the-mud – that’s what you are! Stuck in the ancient times.” (42). After getting a chance to play football with the boys they became ecstatic and jubilant, “Nidhi felt as if she, too, were flying off to some wonderful faraway place along with the ball” (43). Their thoughts were full of questions and aspirations, Monica thought, “I wish I could tell the Princie, ...I wish I could tell her that we’re playing football... she should know that girls can girls ca play football” (43). Post playing football these two girls catch a running thief. The news reach the reluctant principal, who this time was overjoyed by the brave act of the two girls from her school. After narrating their story the girls were praised by the school authorities, “We are all very proud of our two heroines. And this advice is particularly for those of you who aren’t keen on sports. If you play any game regularly, it will teach you to think fast. It will also make you physically stronger and swifter.... Girls don’t commonly play football ...but may be playing it helped the confidence to tackle the thief” (45). The parallel story of Anaya Upendran says,

Walk into any school in India and you will see a group of boys playing cricket But have you seen girls playing cricket? I guess not. Here lies the starting point for any story about Indian women cricket. Girls on India have particularly no opportunity to play cricket at the school level, and that is the biggest concern for women’s

cricket in India. if cricket is not played by schoolgirls, where will the talent feed for U-19 and state cricket come from?" (GGG 46).

Indian girl in children's novels does deliver motivation that girls can achieve whatever they want to. Deepa attempts to add a taste of trustworthiness and to build a pillar of assistance for girls. One more story from the book is, 'The Interview Game', the story of a fourteen year rural girl, Govindi. The story gives a special account of female innovators who are able to start from nothing and extend their dreams by hard working ethics. Her dream is to become a journalist. She is fascinated by her favourite anchor Sunita Raj, "if only she could become someone like Sunita Raj!" (48), whom she has watched her on a TV show. She used to imitate her favourite anchor with the cows as her audience, named it an 'interview game'. She would be puzzled and questioned herself, "Did women like her actually exist? But there was, right in front of Govindi" (GGG 48). Hailing from far-flung area, she grazes the cows after returning from the school plagued with questions, "why couldn't they repair the roof? Surely the government had enough money for that? Those important people probably felt that a rundown structure was good enough for the girls. If only Sunita Raj could take up this problem! She would make things happen. Yes, she would grill the ministers mercilessly" (49). Govindi had developed amazing skills by rehearsing question answer sessions with the cows. Govind's dream comes true when Govindi appears in Sunita's show for her brother's case. Adrina Bharali of St Mary's School, Guwathi says, "When I told my mother about it, she mocked me and said, "Forget about it. You are not a boy to have such dreams!.... It was very disappointing to know that my mother would have supported my dreams had I been a boy.... I don't know how to dream like a girl because I always thought that dreams and aspirations do not discriminate between boys and girls. But perhaps I was wrong" (GGG 61).

The 'Great Paratha Challenge' has bullying as its theme. One more story 'When Haria Comes' is a heart rendering story of a twelve year old village girl Madhuli and her maternal grandmother. The story talks about Madhuli how she handles the home in absence of her father and brother who had gone to Delhi to earn their livelihood. She becomes the main support of her family. It takes her time, space and lessons to learn and grow, understanding, accepting and adapting to the absence of her father and brother. This is in fact a reflection of the expansion of femininity, the process of girls becoming independent of males, learning the rights and responsibilities of girls and becoming more important in families and societies.

It is the strength and heartiness of this young girl which helps her to manage the house even at odd times. Initially she thought her brother (Haria) would come and support the family and the ailing grandmother. But her inner strength didn't allow her to wait for her brother's support, "Madhuli really got tired of waiting, and sometimes she felt so despondent that she wondered if Haria would ever be able to save enough to take Amah to Delhi" (GGG 82). Her ability questions her, "Why can't I do anything? Just because I'm girl? She had thought resentfully. She and Amah coped with so much on their own, without Babuji and Haria's help." (82-83). It was her will and enthusiasm that she was able to withstand turbulent times with her grandmother lying on bed, "The medicine didn't help at all. Amah's groans grew louder. What was she to do? Madhuli's heart beat uneasily as she tries to recall the curse Amah used when she had a stomach ache. Quickly, she heated a lump of asafoetida and put it on Amah's Navel. It was quite effective. To her dismay it didn't work at all then warmed pads of cloth on the dying fire and pressed them on Amah's belly. That didn't work either". (85). She couldn't not stay calm and tried her best to tackle the situation, "No, no, she couldn't give up like that. How could she let Amah lie there suffering without doing anything ... Desperately

she racked her brains for any idea that might help” (87). The story revolves around this twelve year girl’s wisdom and thoughts, her continuous efforts and success. She had rescued her grandma without having any support of the male member of the family. Her decision to take her grandma through the darkness of night in the jungles on a palanquin to a new hospital won the hearts of the young readers. Deepa Agarwal suggests young readers that they too can handle even the toughest times of their lives with ease without any male support as Madhuli did, “she wouldn’t have to wait till Haria came. Madhuli could manage too! And very well!” (90). Mou Gosh a shop owner from Kolkata speaks,

I have been able to lift my family out of poverty and earn respect and recognition. I remember my father telling me, when I was just 7 or 8 years old, that I had been a boy, my mother would not have any sorrow. It felt awful to hear that then. Today, I am glad I was born girl. I have no regret over my gender (GGG 91).

One more story in the book is ‘Speak Out’ The story addresses the issue that girls cannot take decisions of their own and they don’t have enough control over their lives. After winning the prize for debate in school, Shakshi a young girl of ten years, expected a show of appreciation and praise from her parents at her home, but when Shakshi questions the early marriage of her cousin sister. She was told, “You have to learn, Shakshi, that girls should not be so outspoken. You’ll create problems for yourself.” (96). She is a teenaged girl who learns to develop and grow up on her own. Deepa Agerwal describes the deep agony of the young mind. Shakshi thought, “How strange- in school she was awarded for expressing her opinions forcefully, and at home Ma wanted her to remain silent when something didn’t feel right to her” (97). She further thinks,

How could there be such a vast difference between the opinions you could voice at school and those you could voice at home? How hypocritical it seemed! What was the point in these activities? If you did not believe in the cause you are speaking for, how could you be convincing? She had believed too sincerely- that was her fault, it suddenly struck her. The thought made her sick to the heart (GGG 101-102).

It is common for girls entering adolescence to experience a 'loss of voice', meaning a struggle to realize or come to terms with their own experiences and opinions. Sudhir Kakar comments, "Girls and women have no sphere of their own, no independent livelihood or activity, no area of family and community responsibility and dominance, no living space apart from men, within which to create and manifest those aspects of feminine identity" (qtd. in Cooper 118). She wants to become independent physically, emotionally, psychologically and intellectually. Deepa Agarwal gives a provides voice in the form of Shakshi's father when he speaks out,

I feel speaking out at home is far more essential than speaking on a platform to win a prize. We need to learn from the young, Maya. We adults get so blinded by self-interest that the difference between right and wrong gets blurred. I'm proud of you, Shakshi, my dear (GGG 101).

Bidyapati Thingbaijam, Deputy Superintendent of police, Manipur, says, "I have been able to make my parents proud, so much so that they feel that I have not given them any room to complain for not having a son. I stood up for myself for the girl I was, and still today I stand up against all the wrongs that have happened to me or will happen to any girl child or woman" (GGG 105). Such incidents halts the development of children

as Egan and Perry argue that “feeling strong pressure for gender conformity is generally harmful (rather than beneficial) to mental health because of the limitations that are imposed on possibly fulfilling opinions, which weakness feeling of autonomy and puts children under stress” (34 qted in Arta Toçi and Melek Aliu).

(Girl) is the main character in these stories. They are round characters who develops from a more traditional girls into much more independent young girls. These types of stories are actually very much influenced by changes in society and culture. Young girls demand independence physically, psychologically, emotionally and financially. Therefore, teenage stories tend to reflect the change in social values and culture. As Nandini Nayar comments in her article, ‘Deepa Agarwal and Indian Children’s Literature in English: An Introduction’ in an edited book, *Perspectives on Indian English Fiction*

Not Just Girls, is a cry against generalizations against or about girls. And I her book she makes a conscious attempt to fight these, to set records right and to feature girls who are more than just ornaments (322).

Representation of the young teenaged girl has changed. The image is no longer ideal. She is round and realistic. All female characters are a representative of high qualities with different interpretations. The themes of these novels encourage young readers to grow up and be independent. The ‘new girl’ in society are independent, brave and strong. They are shaping into the new women of society and need to ‘learn’ and ‘grow up’ to be the new women through their own effort. These writers have functioned as visionaries, continually pushing back the boundaries to craft new paradigms for gender representation. These stories opens before these girls, a horizon of great opportunities to disclose and prove their ability. Each of them comprises distinct

versions of self-realization. Jennifer Earles writes in, "Reading gender: a feminist, queer approach to children's literature and children's discursive agency"

girls certainly are disadvantaged by patriarchal constructs of gender, 'boys' performative choices also are diminished for fear of penalty. As a result, the collectivity of educational spaces may be lost as feminine boys come to dread these settings. However, by providing children with better literary examples of collective interactions, cooperation, and love, authors and educators could help further deconstruct hegemonic notions of gender at school for the benefit of all students (16).

She further suggests,

Children do still require the educational tools to understand how meanings and objects impact their choices. This is where books that feature stories about love and adventure, acceptance and security, bodily agency and change, collectivity and self-determination could help to break down those dichotomies that inform hegemony and hardship (17).

In these stories girls are more aware of their own identities and qualities. They are no longer subordinate or mediocre. These girls show us that they not only have traditional qualities, such as kindness, love, care, mildness but also acquire new-fangled qualities, such as bravery, strength in facing difficulties and crisis. Not only do these work in question address issues of gender representations in Children's Literature, they also create a platform for challenging established hierarchical systems. These writers who write for girls, attempts to show that the girl child has the potential to rise to new challenges, and should be given the same opportunities as her male counterpart. Happy

endings may not always be convincing, and children should face real life issues in the books they read which would finally help to build enough confidence to cope with them if the need arise.

4.4: Mystery, Detective and Adventure Tales in Indian English Children's Literature

Children ask for dreams of glory in a story with action-packed adventure, lively characters solving real-life conflicts and portraying universal sentiments to be cherished. Adventure stories are best providers of entertainment, enjoyment and it stimulates the children to go beyond the mundane and ordinary lives, in order to increase the imagination level. Rebecca Lukens writes in her *Critical Handbook of Children's Literature* about readers' motives:

We choose literature that promises entertainment and, sometimes, escape. If other discoveries come to us too, we are pleased and doubly rewarded. However, our first motive for reading a novel or a poem is personal pleasure. We may lay the book aside with mixed feelings, but if there is no pleasure, we reject it completely or leave it unfinished (3).

Adventure stories are one of the leading categories of books in both adults and young adults, the purpose of this genre for children is to tell children about unfamiliar or imaginary setting and places, as in the classic works such as *Gulliver's Travels*, *Robinson Crusoe* or *The Jungle Book*. They are stories that comprise of exciting and daring events and situations removed from the everyday.

When adventure stories are written especially for children, and with young characters as their true centre, the writer's task is necessarily more complex. The stock motif of adventure fiction-chase and

escape, a difficult quest, the solving of a mystery-involve danger, physical stress, violence (273).

Adventure and mysteries are the most popular genre in children's fiction. Elements of mystery, crime, and detection have long been important characteristic of stories appreciated, adored and enjoyed by young readers. While these books fulfil the need to educate and convey a value system, they are not blatantly didactic and hence are acceptable to young readers. Their underlying themes retain a safe distance from the ugly side of the society-violence, trauma, terrorism and evil effects of political and social conditions. In the British Empire adventure stories have ample advantages, recognizing the attraction that exotic overseas adventures could hold for children. In imperialistic and colonial point of view, M. Green and D. Butts writes

Adventure stories have flourished in periods of imperialistic territorial expansion, and have contributed to the formation of the imperial gaze. In fact, these stories have been employed by authors from colonized nations as well as from imperial suzerains; however, the relationship of the two has not been sufficiently explored (qtd. in Han 100).

Hyunjung Han points out, in his article, "Adventure Stories and Geographical Imagination in Japanese and Korean Children's Magazines, 1925-1945"

Adventure stories are important materials for examining the relationship of space and identity, which becomes even clearer in the asymmetric power dynamic of colony and empire (100).

The adventure story normalized the idea of the empire both for young British children and for overseas readers, while at the same time imparting in them moral values that

were identified as distinctively British. As Seth Lerer comments, in his book, *Children's Literature: A Reader's History from Aesop to Harry Potter*

Read *Robinson Crusoe* for its canoes and you find scenes of individual accomplishment, moments of observation, and narratives of the encounter between European and savage. The canoe stands as a project not just of maritime mechanics, but of the literary imagination: the thing we make ourselves, to take us places we have never been (132).

The main elements of adventure tale are, a heroic protagonist; Heroes in adventure stories are usually male but now the trend has changed drastically and the girls are taking part in the leading roles, (e.g Recha in *Mystery of Falling Mountains*) in children's literature. Earlier, in an adventure or mystery story it is generally a boy whose intelligence and cleverness saves the girl from insecure and threatening situations. The famous classic heroic protagonists are Tom Sawyer, Huckleberry Finn, and Don Quixote. Margery Hourihan writes, "Hero stories are essentially optimistic for they assert, against all the evidence, that victory is possible. The hero triumphs over the wilderness, and therefore over chaos, nature, evil, death itself" (27). The heroes from adventure-fantasy, are the heroes of magical territory, children these days are inclined towards these characters, and they include Bilbo Baggins, Harry Potter, and Lewis Carroll's Alice. The other elements of the adventure story is, a journey of quest, without it there is no adventure, to adventure to unusual locations action and danger.

The generic label, adventure story, signifies a loose, catch- all category of children's literature. In the nineteenth century it was almost synonymous with the term "boys' story," and it is in this connection that it is used here. "Adventure" implies a noticeable level

of danger and excitement in the narrative, and it also means that sometimes of tactical manoeuvre in either a war or wilderness setting. Books of this sort were usually a mixture of types: partly about school, hobbies, friendship, first love and so on. But in many, battle tactics became a major focus of the narrative (97).

These kinds of books propel their readers into boisterous and energetic adventures. Children love a puzzle and challenging element in a narrative and at the same time like the challenge of solving these puzzles and challenges. The mystery component in a story offers children to think critically and this quality also is essential for a successful book. The young reader always wants to know 'what next'. These types of stories, and mystery thrillers, offer some resolution and a sense of closure. Children remains involved till the puzzle solves, and this resolution satisfies the emotions of the reader. Indian writers dealt with or borrowed western thoughts but they altered it in their own way and, focused on the group of children as characters, using their imagination to create fantasy, depicted them occasions pitted against the evil of adults. Girl readers are also viewed as a major consumer group, and more girl characters are present in the stories in order to enhance their appeal to audiences of young girls. Prema Srinivasan comments,

Indian children who have been brought up on a diet of the western adventure story are being offered an assortment of stories in this popular category by Indian authors. Though there are a number of Enid Blyton clones, some writers have succeeded in rendering the mystery element within a credible Indian milieu. Ray's *The Imperial Ring* (1965) and Dutta's *The Kaziranga Trail* (1979), ushered in new

kind of adventure mystery that was satisfactory Indian in tone and texture (16).

Children of India has inherited a number of stories and the heroes of the *Ramayana* and *Mahabhartha*, most children in India, rich and poor, still have access to it. Children seek heroes for inspiration, hope and identification, in their dramatic play and assume roles of such heroes. Characters like Ram; person with high values, Hanuman; devoted, sacrificing and powerful, and Sita; courageous. These traditional adventurous stories are for all ages. Ira Saxena writes in, “Children Love Heroes in the Ramayan”

The *Ramayana* is a story for all ages. It sweeps the fancy to a world of kings and rakshasas and general goodness but all the actors in the story remain real, with the basic human qualities. They are ordinary people, in flesh and blood, who become heroes, fitting Mollie Hunter’s description of hero: “an ordinary person who can still draw on the source of some emotion common to all mankind, yet still one which enables that person to transcend his or her ordinariness and to become for a moment, an inspired or inspiring figure.”” (27).

Nilima Sinha one of the writers for children in English comments in, “Potter Mania in India” “the success of Harry Potter has encouraged Indians to look at their own heritage with new eyes. Modern ways of presenting ancient elements from our mythology are being explored, both in the print and the electronic media. Animation films on Rama, Krishna, and Hanuman the monkey god as modern super heroes, and comics based on Devi, the goddess turned into power woman, are some examples of the trend set by the boy wizard” (28).

She further explains,

In our epics, the good as well as the evil possessed extraordinary powers. Skilled in battle, they knew spells or mantras that set off weapons capable of great destruction. The noble Rama protected the sages in hermitages or *ashrams*, where lessons were given to students on good conduct and the art of war. He protected them against the powerful giants, the *rakshasas*, who disturbed their peace (Sinha 27).

These writers have taken up the challenge of better informed and wider readership by offering to the young tales of adventure where action and character are truly interdependent and inter reacting. Adventure stories, like any other class of fiction, reflect in varying degree the social attitude of their times. The writers of west Ballantyne, Rider Haggard, Buchan, and Arthur Ransome have offered to their readers generally accepted social values.

I feel that the young adventure story in the future will most successfully reflect the contemporary world, not by going over the top in inventing new scenes of horror and violence but by carefully balancing the element of entertainment with the element of reality and, most of all, by considering carefully the respective roles of children and adult in a story, the likeness and differences in the way they accept a challenge, their independence of one another and their interdependence (Fisher 279).

There is influence of regional literature on the writers of children's literature. Mystery novels have a great history in India. *Chandarakanta* published in the early twentieth century is a creative attempt of Devaki Nandan Khattri, and set a landmark in the literary world. *Chandrakanta* is an adventure story written in Hindi, translated into English by Manju Gupta under the title *In the Mysterious Ruins*, replete with all the

elements of fiction that awakens the senses – magic, fantasy, bravery, bewitching beauties, vamps, venom, duels, danger, chase and above all suspense at every turn. It is a tale of magical achievements of realistic goals in dark dense forests, raging storms won over by intelligent manipulations. Action dominates the nerve of the plot. Action was the key in those times as the society was on the move, ideologically and politically. It represented the zest of a free spirit casting a shadow on the existing feudal system. It evoked such suspense that long queues stretched outside the printing press to buy their copy as the book unfolded chapter by chapter and was distributed like a pamphlet. *Chandrakanta* appealed to the youth and the buoyant spirit of the times which has not faded with times. A balanced growth of adventures continued the creative energy of *Chandrakanta* when a large chunk of mystery and adventure stories blossomed. Deepa Agarwal writes in her article ‘Rediscovering Chanderkanta in English’

True, in many ways, *Chandrakanta* seems tailor made for the contemporary juvenile reader, more than other classics. The labyrinthine but racy plot, with its innumerable twists and turns, the incredible level of suspense that is maintained right to the end makes it truly ‘unputdownable’. The independent minded heroine, Chandrakanta and her fearless companions Chapla and Champa are almost like present-day young girls while the teasing, irreverent exchange between Prince Virendra, Tej Singh and the other aiyars is what you would find in most books for young adults (Agarwal n.p).

These novels affirm values of scientific reason, logic, and teleology, and the enlightenment idea that society is progressing towards a perfectible point. These novels tend to suggest that everything can be known through empirical presumption, thus most

crime novels have conclusive endings in which villain is exposed. Deepa Agarwal comments,

But what really makes up the core of Devakinandan Khatri's enduring masterpiece? There is the main action, which revolves around the romance between Virendra and Chandrakanta and Krur Singh and Shivdutt's villainous attempts to prevent the lovers from getting together. The Aiyars' battle of wits is connected to this, while the baffling mysteries of the tilism, the astonishing mechanisms that trap Chandrakanta and Chapla in the maze pose further obstacles for the lovers but also provide an opportunity for Virendra to prove his mettle. Then there are the enchanting descriptions of his settings—the dense forests, mysterious tunnels, even the grotto in which Tej Singh confines his prisoners that are such a delight to read (Agarwal np).

The genre of adventure, detective and mystery fiction in India is largely a western import and even in adult literature progress has not been extensive. In the context of Indian English children's literature, which is itself suffers from a legacy from the west, it is necessary to understand the complexities that go into the making of an Indian English children's detective or mystery novel.

As discussed earlier, Superle commented that the plot has been Indianized to give it a local color and feeling. Other than that, most detective fiction for children in Indian English remains what she terms an "Indian Blytonnade". Claire Chambers in "Postcolonial *Noir*: Vikram Chandra's "Kama"" writes,

Yet, particularly, since the period of rapid decolonization of the most European colonies that occurred immediately after the Second World

War, an increasing body of what may be termed as post-colonial crime novels and stories is being produced. Writers such as Jamiyung and Satyajit Ray rewrite the classical crime novel, overturning the genre's usual stereotyping representations of formerly-colonized countries. In addition to Norbu's English-Language novel and Ray's short stories (mostly available in English translations from Bengali), there is also of course a profusion of postcolonial detective texts in other languages (32-33).

There are prolific writers around the globe who have developed mystery and adventure novels for children, Enid Blyton, J. K. Rowling etc. The awakening about children's literature promoted creative writing and the fast pace of modernization expressed itself in realistic literature in India. In India writers like Ruskin Bond, Arup Kumar Dutta, Nilima Sinha, Deepak Dalaal, Deepa Agarwal, Shashi Deshpande, A. K. Srikumar, Deepavali Debroy have extensively written adventure and mystery novels for children. Ruskin Bond, one of the known and familiar writers for children in India, has contributed significantly to the development of children's literature in English in India. Prolific writings on children's literature have been steady for the past so many years. For the past forty years he has been writing poetry, biographies, folktales, and fiction specially directed at Indian children. He has contributed to adventure genre immensely in his works. *Vagrants in the Valley* (1957) is a sequel to *The Room on the Roof* (1956). Both are twin novellas of adolescence. *Rusty, the Boy from the Hills* (2002), revolves around Rusty, an inquisitive, sensitive and lonely boy. Bond narrates the adolescent Rusty's wanderings and adventure in search of identity with his friends. Maya P. writes

If you're a reader who wants car chases and evil villains and fast moving, complex plots this book is not for you. This book was

written to provide an escape from the harsh reality of life and to transport us to another world, without the complications and trappings of the modern day life (P Maya np).

In Bond's *Rusty and the Magic Mountain* (2015), Rusty and his friends Pitambar and Popatand spotted adventure when they begin to start to climb a mysterious mountain. It was believed mountain was surrounded with witches and superstition. Intermingled with humorous events, the uncertainty, suspense and ecstasy of adventure and the horror of an unknown landscape and people, Rusty's newest adventure becomes a fascinating tale. Tayan Singh in 'Ruskin Bond Brings Back Rusty. After More than a Decade.' writes

This time, Rusty, an orphaned Anglo-Indian boy, goes out with his friends Pitambar and Popat, to explore a mysterious mountain – a mountain that has several bewildering legends behind it (Singh np).

Dehradun is a back drop in *Vagrants in the Valley*. Here, Rusty is joined in his travel by Kishen, another ran way. The novel takes on a journey of the countryside seen through the eyes of a 16-year-old boy called Rusty. *Our Trees Still Grow in Dehra* (1991), received Sahitya Academy Award in 1992, this collection of Short Stories, traces the life from childhood to adolescence to adulthood. It runs through massive mountains and is full of adventure.

The most important aspect of the Indian stories is its inseparability from the children, the story is not only *his*; the hero's story. The reader perceives the world of the text and the events which occur in it from the 'children's' point of view. As we see characters in adventure stories of Arup Kumar Datta, Nilima Sinha and Deepa Agarwals. The events may be focalized through the consciousness of one or more of the child characters. As we find in the very beginning sentence of Dickens's *David Copperfield*,

David's role as a hero is announced as, "Whether I shall turn out to be the hero of my own life, or whether that station will be held by anybody else, these pages must show" (Dickens 1).

These stories generate suspense in the readers mind once the reader is eager to find the solution, the story takes the form of a journey and the point of plot development is well built, it consists of flash backs, memories and linear progressions. These stories are thrilling and easy to read for children. Children feel pleasure by arousing anticipation, the reader desires to know 'what will happen next'. As plot of the story concludes the desire of the reader is momentarily satisfied. The enthusiasm regenerates in the reader only if the hero or more than one hero (children) move on to the next encounter. Sara Innis Fenwick writes, in her article, "*Evaluating Mystery Stories for Children*"

An aspect of mystery reading by children which should always be kept in mind by those doing reading guidance with children is that for the majority of children the appeals of mystery fiction are broader than the puzzle interest. Only a small percentage of children who ask for a mystery will refuse any story which does not have "Mystery of" or "Secret of" in the title. The other appeals of this group of stories, e. g., change in circumstances, adventure, are present in many stories not classified as mystery; and it often develops that it is fundamentally these elements, made exciting by the suspense of the mystery tale, which attract readers. Thus, an opportunity for broadening reading interests of juvenile mystery stories is always present, and reading guidance should be especially thoughtful and careful (524).

***The Kaziranga Trail* (Arup Kumar Dutta)**

Arup Kumar Dutta is nationally as well as internationally acclaimed as the Blyton of India, and has contributed to children's literature in India. He has given the young as well as the old a literary feast for the last three decades with his exhilarating and colourful literary creations. He has written a number of adventure stories, and the writer has the distinction of having one of his popular books, *The Kaziranga Trail* (1978), translated into various foreign and Indian languages, including Japanese, German, Russian, Czech, Hungarian and Italian. The story of *The Kaziranga Trail* has been filmed by the Children's Film Society as "Rhino". Couple of other stories by Arup Kumar Datta are also being filmed. *The Kaziranga Trail* has won Shankar's Award in 1979. It was followed by *The Blind Witness* (1984), *Revenge* (1986), *Smack* (1990), *The Lure of Zangrila* (1986); which won a National Award, *Trouble at Kolongijan, A Story about Tea*; all are based in the Northeast and are filled with adventure and mystery. Two of his books have been included in Literature of the World Series by the Asahi Shimbun. For his contribution to journalism he has bagged Siva Prasad Barooah National Award in 2004. He has been chosen for the 'Lifetime Achievement Award' by the Association of Writers and Illustrators for Children (AWIC), New Delhi, and the Indian Chapter of the International Board on Books for Young People (IBBY) for his contribution to children's literature. In 'The Tireless Wordsworth: A profile of Arup Kumar Dutta', Kuntal Sharma Pathak writes

A freelance columnist and journalist, his short-stories and articles have appeared in many of India's leading journals and newspapers. *The Kaziranga Trail* and *The Blind Witness* have been brought out in Japanese Braille for blind readers. An astute short-story writer with encyclopaedic knowledge, his art of telling his story is simple. He manages to draw the immediate attention of his readers by the

simplicity of his, making even a serious subject of study truly engaging. In his engrossing and thought-provoking book *The Brahmaputra* he has attempted to sketch a profile of this fascinating river and has at the same time enlightened the readers with the society which evolved on its banks and the heights of civilisation it attained (Pathak n.p).

Arup Kumar Dutta tried to follow the purposes of Ruskin Bond in trying to resuscitate and initiate to write better books for children in India. Dutta digresses from the style earlier writers used to write, they (writers) solely use to regenerate the available traditional format, he remains focused on bringing new ideas in his writing from western writers at the same time we find ingrained Indian sensibility in his writing. He shaped through his works an opportunity or a space which eased developments in Indian writing in English for children. His writing is in a way new venture and new beginning for Indian English children's fiction. Change of traditional stories to more realistic approach is apparent in "Indian writing in English for children" with his publication of *The Kaziranga Trail*.

The Kaziranga Trail is set amidst the reserve forests of Kaziranga in North-East, the simple local lads, devoid of urban sophistication, discover and follow the trail of poachers in the sanctuary emerging as heroes. The exotic locale of the sanctuary substitutes for the thrill of unknown space and unreal people. Thrilling adventure story that takes the reader on a delightful trip, the writer's passion has been to introduce children to various unusual regions and kindle their interest in the exotic and wild bounty of nature. As Julia Eccleshare comments in *Contemporary Classics of Children's Literature: A Guide to the Harry Potter Novels*

Children read more readily for action than they do for mood; their need to know 'what happens next' must be satisfied if they are to become readily engrossed (16).

Margery Hourihan also provides the same opinion, she writes, "These stories (hero tales)...create pleasure by arousing excitement and desire, the desire to know 'what will happen next'" (46). The first few sentences of the book establish the atmosphere of the sanctuary, and even send a thrill down the spine through the pages of the book as the mystery part becomes more and more gripping. Arup Dutta's story-telling abilities is very well mirrored in this memorable story that is *The Kaziranga Trail*. Prema Sirinivasan writes, "The Kaziranga Trail ushered in a new type of adventure story, Indian in tone and texture. Without relying on contrivance and coincidence, the plot moves in tightly constructed episodes" (61). Here the whole plot revolves around three attentive young village boys Dhanai, Bubul and Jonti, along with their young elephant Makhoni and their thrilling adventures and encounters with the rhino poachers in the Kaziranga sanctuary, finally nabbing them with the assistance of the district forest officer. The author in this story displays wide-ranging mastery and skill by keeping his curious and readers enthralled. R. Krithika writes in her article, 'Have you read any of these?'

This journalist from Assam is probably best known for *The Kaziranga Trail* about how three young boys outwit poachers in the national park. The book won Shankar's Award in 1979 and was also made into a film by the Children's Film Society of India. Apart from this, Dutta has 16 other books for children, all of which are based in the Northeast and are filled with adventure and mystery (Krithika n.p).

Arup Kumar Dutta brings in a completely different perspective to Indian English children's fiction. He tried his hand in a manner that was a direct imitation of the western mystery stories that the likes of Enid Blyton made very popular. His glory doesn't lie in a blind copying of the style and refurbishing them with an Indian milieu and names, something that most Indian English children's authors tend to do. Prema Srinivasan writes,

Dutta easily circumvents the usual pitfalls of the unwary author the idealisation of objectives and sentimentality of approach. His aim has been to create an awareness of the preservation of wildlife, which he does in the spontaneous construction of the story schema. Without relying on rhetorical persuasiveness, he gets across his message on ecology and his adventure story transcends its existence as a mere entertainer and has something more substantial to offer to children (62).

The brilliance of Arup Kumar Dutta lies in the fact that, unlike many of his predecessors and successors, he created an original setting using the very local circumstances and gave a feel of the regional flavour which doesn't jar our senses. Prasant Das writes

In *The Kaziranga Trail* Dutta appropriates the formulaic patterns of the books he read as a boy to create a children's story rooted in a regional, Indian milieu. The book does not strain the reader's credulity unlike some currently popular children's fiction. Dhanai, Bubul and Jonti move about on a pet elephant, a potentially exotic substitution for the Blytonic dog, but this is quite natural given the

story's context. The plot does not feel contrived and the boys are not wonder boys or specially gifted (3).

Dutta tried to portray a picture of the North-East particularly Assam different from the tourist guide's psychopathic and fawning version. Presma Srinivasan writes, "The casual use of local terms gives the book an Assamese flavour" (61). His portrayal doesn't emphasise the mystic or mythical aspect of the North-East but holds a mirror to the society about the stark realities like floods, terrorism, rampant poaching, poverty etc. and this picture is more or less true for the rest of India too which find place in his works.

The question of essentialization and homogenization does not apply here, at least with regards to *The Kaziranga Trail*. Kaziranga, as a sanctuary is known probably worldwide but the problem of poaching associated with it remains specific to the region and it is only the people of the region who can understand the gravity of the situation. At the same time, the question of homogenization comes in when there is a possibility of replicating it somewhere else (Laskar 178).

Prasant Das writes in the article, 'Indian Writing English from the Northeast'

He (Datta) strikes a neat balance between their roles as detectives and children. Dutta is also completely at ease in depicting Kaziranga and its surrounding villages. His knowledge of the jungle is evident in such details as the use of a common herb to bandage the elephant's wound. To assert that he is dealing with a different culture within India, Dutta occasionally employs local words such as "dao" and "beel". Though he often explains unfamiliar words in English, there

are occasions when he refrains from doing so, forcing the non-Assamese reader to puzzle them out by context (3).

One of the main concerns for Datta is to redefine not only the concept of the North-East for the readers outside the region but also to reconstruct Indian English children's literature into more than a mere lesser or appendage of western children's literature. This need to build a distinctive Indian identity for Indian English children's literature forms a backdrop of most of his works and in the process he justifies his position as an Indian English children's author.

Dutta depicts in his writing the realistic elements at the same time the whole plot of his writing runs through the adventure genre. In one of the reviews on Dutta's book *Footprints in the Sand* for children, Rubina Sami writes,

As for Arup Kumar Dutta, he writes in a very crisp manner, phrasing big words but without frills of a decorative language. He doesn't in any way spoon-feed his adolescent readers. Instead, he stimulates their imagination and spirit of adventure (32).

His ability in writing is also echoed in his use of mystery settings and plot construction, characterization, the strengthening of the climax and vital denouement. He is using a systematic and mechanical pattern that has been created and advanced by western writers. As Michelle Superle criticizes,

Indian children's authors have been vigilant in their attempts to infuse the Blytonnades with Indianness. This cultural content positions these novels as recognisably Indian—apparently a sufficient remedy against imitation, although certainly not against potential essentialisation or homogenisation (110).

The time, when Arup Dutta started writing, especially *The Kaziranga Trail*, there was a real dearth of English language children's fiction in India. Except for Ruskin Bond, there was hardly any author concentrating on children's writing in India and English language children readers satisfied their needs through western imports. Under these circumstances, Dutta presented *The Kaziranga Trail* where he directly addressed a specific problem of Assam and, probably, the rest of India too. Dutta has used a very Indian setting and made his characters very distinctly Indian. Nita Berry, talks about the Indian setting in Dutta's writing, in 'Arup Kumar Dutta's World of Gripping Fiction'

Dutta's pen brings alive the dark, dense forests of Assam, and skilfully penetrates the 'elephant country' in remote Arunachal Pradesh, painting vivid Indian settings for his thrilling stories themes like animal poaching, drug peddling etc (6).

The particular problem of poaching can possibly be replicated somewhere else in India but the skill of Dutta's work lies in the nuanced rendering of the landscape and its people, with a sound knowledge of the area. One of the first descriptions that Dutta gives shows his acquaintance with the place and his dexterity in handling the language and the setting. Dutta observes himself

'Creation of authentic background gives credibility to a story... in the case of younger children, the line dividing fantasy from reality is wafer thin...but an older child desires greater realism in works of fiction' Although the adventure/entertainment element is most important in a story, a good adventure story transcends its existence as a mere entertainer, and has something more to offer to children, he feels, 'while it is true that writers must guard against the temptation

to preach sermons, it is equally true that a seriousness of purpose enhances the quality of an adventure story and sets it apart our bookshop today' (Berry. "Arup Kumar" 8).

The Lure of Zangrila is another exciting adventure story after *The Kaziranga Triel* and *The Blind Witness*. It describes the obstacles faced by an expedition of boys attempting to assault a peak, and will specially appeal to older children. Yasu and Charanjit are rivals for the leader of the team. But the slow and steady Yasu wins over the overeager and careless Charanjit. Charanjit harbours resentment, even though Yasu saves him when he has a dangerous fall. And here begins the conflict which creates many problems for the team later on. Meena Khurana writes in *The Indian Subcontinent in Literature for Children and Young Adults*

The plot is intricately structured to balance the psychological motivation of the characters and the outward progress of their ascent... the inner tension of Charanjit to excel on his own reaches a climatic point (134).

In the thrilling story of boys who have chosen to climb an unclimbed mountain Zangrila, things began to go wrong during the course of adventure. However, plain talk from their trainer's restore their confidence. The conflict between Yasu and Charanjit's impatience to hurry results in few accidents. Yasu's confident leadership and their competent teamwork combine to save them. Yasu, Charanjit and Jasbir continue, while the others elect to remain behind. The three struggled on, Charanjit's selfish ambitions spell disaster for him. Almost at the summit, an avalanche strikes, and he is trapped in the snow. Once again courageous Yasu risks his life and saves him. Charanjit learns a valuable lesson, that it is more rewarding to help others than to be obsessed with dreams of personal glory.

In addition to provide a vivid account of mountaineering in the Himalayas, *The Lure of Zangrila* makes a philosophical statement: Mountaineering is more than just rigorous training and scientific equipment; each mountaineer must first understand the character and personality of a mountain, and then approach it with a spirit of awe and humility (Khurana 134).

The beautifully crafted book, the careful attention paid to detail, the techniques of mountain climbing are meticulously described and explained by Datta. The tension between Yasu and Charanjit is extremely well depicted and woven skilfully into the action. Both the boys are sharply etched. Yasu- sure of his priorities while Charanjit self-seeking, eager to prove himself at any cost. The thrilling adventure story will provide the readers several elements to learn; the importance of team work, the value of persistence, of keeping cool in the crises to name a few. His *Trouble at Kolongijan* is also an adventure of a young boy, Moina, who becomes the hero when he assists the police and the village council to apprehend some criminals who were determined to destroy the village by blowing up the river embankment.

Arup Kumar Dutta in *The Poisoned Pool* and *Baby Elephant* narrates two adventures of the heroes of *The Kaziranga Trail*. Dhanai, Babul and their elephant Makkhni. Dutta has vividly described the crimes being done in Assam regions. In the story "The Baby Elephant" the children encounter three evil-minded villagers who plan to pull out a baby elephant trapped in a ditch and sell it for a profit. The children's protest are met with threats but they succeed by an ingenious plot to set the baby elephant free. The author's vivid, masterly description of the beautiful forests of Assam brings them alive to the young readers. The serenity of the forests and the quiet atmosphere set the stage for the thrilling drama to follow. The story unfolds at a rapid pace ending with the success of

the young readers. The author's deep concern for the sensitivity of the forest inmates is well presented with narration. The author has painted a vivid picture of the helplessness of the animal and this creates a lasting impression on the children reading the story.

The author has tried to educate the reader about the ways and behaviour of the elephant. These stories not only make children enjoy reading but it inculcates in children a love and concern for the wellbeing of the animals.

Nilima Sinha is one of the best acknowledged children's authors of mystery-adventure stories. *The Chandipur Jewels* (1984), *Vanishing Trick at Chandipur* (1984), *Adventure on the Golden Lake* (1986), and *SOS From Munia* (1990) are her best books, and are in category of prize-winners for Best Fiction and *Adventure before Midnight* was shortlisted for the White Raven List for libraries internationally. The most popular novel written by her is *Mystery of the Falling Mountains* (2004). She has been active in writing for children and contributed a lot for Indian children's literature in English, she is expert in writing in other sub-genres including historical fiction, fantasy, short stories, plays and biographies. In Save the Earth Series *The Yellow Butterfly, So Can I, Rishabh in the Land of the Flying Magicians* are famous titles among children. Most of her books are being taught in school curriculum. Nilima Sinha contributed to anthologies such as *Our Leaders, Triumph of Non-violence, Together We Marched, Kamla's Story, Mystery Stories- 1 and 2, M for Mystery-1 and 2, There's Another Way, Stories From Across the Globe, Once Upon a Time in India, Road to Peace and Lighthouse in the Storm*.

Nilima Sinha has written few years before about the future of Indian Children's Literature. She has emphasised that the requisite is to form literature which would sustain and grip the imagination of the young, to produce work which would motivate

not only this generation but many other generations to come. Nilima Sinha writes, “Author’s Role in Production of Better Books”

The need is to produce characters which every Indian child will love and true to emulate. We have epic heroes such as Krishna, Hanuman, and Arjun. But what about the heroes to satisfy the modern child? We have Phantom, there is Superman, there are five Findouters and there is Nancy Drew. But what about indigenous heroes from our own milieu? Should we allow our kids to feel that great men are born only in West? What about lovable characters like Noddy, Donald Duck and Mickey Mouse? Should such cuddly characters emerge only in Europe and America? Is it not time we had more cute little creatures of our own-like Chitku, Cheeky-Meeky and Havaladar Oopy? (7-8).

Dr Sulabha R. Devpurkar writes about the importance of mythical heroes in children’s literature,

Among mythical characters Krishna can provide multiple dimensions of a child. He is the lord, who makes a path amidst the flooded Yamuna as an infant. In the west Hercules is such character who performed miraculous strength and power of human will even as an infant. Krishna is Divine in the form of human. His adventures therefore have a shadow of celestial powers not the human effort..... Krishna remains one of the most popular child-heroes in the comic-books and other story books for children (18).

Nilima Sinha’s writings remain firmly set in the Indian locale. She feels that there are endless possibilities for good literature to be created by delving into our rich and

colourful heritage, that we have enough material to write about – exotic locales to set adventure stories in, precious gems from our ancient history to base stories on, folk tales to be revived, epics and mythology to dive into to create the most magical tales of fantasy, and incidents galore from the lives of great as well as ordinary people to build upon. She writes

To create adventure as exciting as *Treasure Island*, fantasy as eternal as *Alice's Adventure in Wonderland* and characters as delightful as those in *Winnie the Pooh* must be the aim of every author. Not to imitate Western classics or produce imitation Enid Blyton mysteries, but to create something wholly Indian and entirely original which could strike a chord in our children's mind- this is what we must strive for (8).

Surekha Panandiker says,

Children are free to travel with Gulliver. They can enjoy the thrill of roaring through jungles of India. They can try their hand at solving the mystery of the Stolen Budha or Kanchipur Jewels. They can identify with heroes of innumerable adventure stories. Then there are evergreen stories from the *Punchatantra*, *Mahabhatra* and *Ramayana* (102-103).

Nilima Sinha is identified with mystery stories. Many of her stories have won awards. Her childhood adventures are reflected in her stories. Her first book, *The Chandipur Jewels*, deals with adventures of three children, who go to Bihar on holiday. Their search for lost treasure, their growing love for the old house, their exciting adventures through small town of Bihar are all familiar to Enid Blyton fans. But what sets them apart is the Indianess that Nilima has instilled into the tale. Shyamala V. Iyer writes,

Nilima Sinha certainly seems to have become adept at the rather difficult art of writing good, original mysteries. At a time when writers are churning out tame imitations of Enid Blyton, Sinha's books stand out for their Indianness (48).

Nilima Sinha a prolific writer with lively imagination and a remarkable gift for connecting with children, has dealt with a master plot, pace, suspense and the moral tale. *Chandipur Jewels* is a gripping story by her. What gives the story the stamp of quality is the clarity with which Mrs Sinha gives individuality to the characters, the ease with which the story portrays the natural reaction of children, the deft humour she introduces in the conversations, the confidence with which she narrates the tangles and unravels them, the grip she maintains over the suspense. She recreated the character of Chandipur Jewels in *Vanishing Trick at Chandipur*. Her characterization is vivid and dialogue appropriate. Prema Srinivasan writes,

As a tale adventure, it may not be exceptional as the author's use of the standard devices of the adventure story has been well within the prescribed norms. ... the author has been able to recreate the Indian ambience in the setting, which creates the mood of the story and highlights the nature of the characters and the action in which they are involved (60).

In these novels children have the curiosity to know the contemporary events happening in the nation. Children are being taught to address and highlight the problems prevailing in the society. In this process children get awareness at the beginning of their life

In the contemporary novels, children remain enmeshed in such social hierarchies. It is usually empowered, middle-class child characters who work together in the novels to address various problems and

concerns, including those similar to the ones outlined by Abdul Kalam: these classes alone possess the agency that allows them to recognise and act upon problems. However, these characters also frequently elicit the support and aid of a wide variety of child and adult family and community members, sometimes including members of a low castes or classes, highlighting the advantages of group effort (Superle 64).

Mystery of the Falling Mountains (Nilima Sinha)

Children are full of curiosity about the world around them. It is in nature of child to ask questions. Adults mostly are apathetic to the child's need to know and understand. Some appreciate this attribute and answer the child's questions or direct it towards sources of knowledge. *Mystery of the Falling Mountains* (2004) is full of questions asked by children. *Mystery of the Falling Mountains* has a driving, action-centred plot that forces the young readers to turn the page and get engrossed in it. During the course of reading the young reader finds a puzzle that they solve from clues thrown by the narrators and at the same time it reverberates with personal experience. Indira Kulshreshtha writes,

A child's instinct to learn comes from his surroundings, his wanderings, his curiosity.... There is so much to fascinate them to learn about, there is so much that fascinates them, and they are so keen to discover their moorings, that is no wonder that their inquisitive and curious minds wish to understand the mysterious and unknown world around them. A book of knowledge or an informational book goes a long way to satisfy their insatiable desire to 'know' (115).

Mystery of the Falling Mountains is a story of Ajay, his sister Richa, their Muslim friend Rustom, who decide to spend their holidays from boarding school with their school friend Dipak at his residence at Sivatika in Himachal Pradesh. Rustom was very well off with his father being the head of a former princely state in Uttar Pradesh. Dipak Pant's father had been on good terms with Ajay and Richa's parents till his death. Rustom, Richa and Ajay graciously accepted Mrs.Pant's (Dipak's mother) invitation to stay at Sivatika for the holidays.

However, Dipak's delay in fetching them from the station caused great anxiety to the children but their anxiety was increased tenfold when a landslide occurred on their way to Dipak's residence, though it was not monsoon i.e the time for landslides. Here the curiosity arisen within the minds of children. "Look, if we had moved just one inch more this side we would have plunge into the dark abyss!" (MFM⁷ 10) the inquisitiveness among the children began as Richa continuously asked the questions. And they shared the answers themselves.

"why did it happen, Dipak?".... "I am not sure. Did someone delibratly...try to harm...? No, no ... How is it possible?" Dipak gave a nervous little laugh and did not continue (MFM 11-12).

A warm welcome from Mrs.Pant lightened their spirits besides the scenic beauty of the mountains which extended from the lofty ranges of the Himalayas. Their first introduction to Moti, Dipak's faithful dog was not a crashing success because Moti did not approve of strangers and his suspicions were aroused when Ahmed (Rustom's dutiful bodyguard) used means not approved by Moti to protect Rustom from the dog.

Nilima Sinha then introduces a series of dramatic situations which must work through to prove themselves in all sorts of ways. The mysterious noises in the night

⁷ *Mystery of the Falling Mountains*

during the adventure to the Himalayan village and curiosity among the children, at the same time the humorous distinctive temperament of Ahmad has made the narrative thrilling.

Thuck-thuck, the sounds seemed to come from a distance. Prr-grr... this sounded nearer. It was the purring of a vehicle. What was it doing here so late at night? Other sounds followed. Crunch, went someone's footsteps. Shhhhshhh...hushed whispers, thump-crash, ghrr-whrrr,rrrr.. it was impossible to muffle the mysterious noises. Dare she tiptoe to the window to see what it was all about?" (MFM 14).

In the stories it feels that children are always on a mission. Nilima Sinah makes use of the power of the quest to provide a structure for the narrative drive. There are other instances where all children desire to know things, about the wondrous cave in the mountains which was unrevealed and concealed to the humans. It was children's discovered secret. Children seem afraid to disclose the secret to the evil world, "No, no! No geologist must come here. This my secret. You are not to tell anyone. (MFM 30). Children are excited to discover it.

There were no treasures there, nor were there heaps of pearls or gems. No gold or silver-filled chests, yet all agreed that the cave was marvellous find. The walls glowed with a strange luminosity, sparkles twinkling at spots that caught the sunlight that streamed in through the opening (MFM 29-30).

Children have extraordinary tactics to explore. They have curiosity, as within the cave these adventurous children examine and touch the walls with probing fingers and peep

into caravans and holes we can sense how children can go far beyond given space to explore. As Ajay explores,

“Here we go, into the unknown. No one knows what lies beyond in the dark, where no human foot has trod before” there was an explorer’s gleam in Ajay’s brown eyes (MFM 44).

There is close proximity between nature and children, as children enjoy in the lap of nature in the story. They find themselves mingled with nature’s handiwork, waterfalls, water streams, tall ferns, dense greenery.

Children have fears as apparent in the story, of adult’s intrusion into nature. Children get shaken and offended while seeing thick tree logs floating in the streams. They are very keen to know about who chops the trees floating on the stream. The children felt even more startled when someone breaks into the house in the dead of the night known ironically as ‘visitors’ in the narrative who are a threat the nature.

The children rushed towards the cave. There was no one there. But there was enough tell-tale evidence to show that someone had been present. The loose earth was disturbed. There was footprints that definitely didn’t belong to the children. As if this was not enough, cigarette stubs and used matchsticks lay scattered on the dusty ground (43).

The children were introduced to many more people including Mr.Das, the owner of a neighbouring farm, Shivnath - the contractor, Mr. Hari Lall, his wife - Mrs. Pamela Lall, Motilal - the shopkeeper and Gopi, the gardener. Many buyers were eager to acquire the sprawling property of the Pants. When Mrs. Pant refuses, Dipak was kidnapped. But on the other hand children are nature lovers, they want nature to be get preserved.

The children set out to find Dipak only to realise that their battle was against a very powerful gang of people who were out to destroy the natural resources of the mountains for their own selfish demands.

“I agree now. There is something strange going on here. We promise to catch the enemy and not rest until the ends of justice are met. It is total war we declare, friends. Be prepared, one and all, for the greatest challenge ever faced by man” he declared (MFM 53).

The thriller is interesting and children get engrossed in the story. And at the same time we find some social problems created by man. Children thought, “We must work it out. It calls for a lot of brainwork. Let us all out our heads together and discuss it. The adults call it a brainstorming session” (68). The chapters like ‘Dipak Takes the Walk’, ‘Where is Dipak?’, ‘Letters’, ‘Richa on the Trail’ are both mysterious and full of adventure for children. Children were able to free themselves from the people who have tied them.

Suspicious fell on the Lalls and Mr. Das who were unable to prove themselves innocent. Finally Shibu, the son of the driver was able to locate Dipak but as a result, he himself was held prisoner with Richa . Matters were made worse with the arrival of an anonymous notes to Mrs. Pant threatening her to vacate her house or else suffer. A series of accidents including poisoned milk made it nearly impossible to stay there, but they did not lose hope. Ajay and Rustom by chance came to know where Richa, Shibu and Dipak were imprisoned.

With their wit the children manage to escape and discover the purpose of the notorious gang and their headquarters, office and storerooms.

The furniture was lined up against the opposite wall. A table, three stools, an earthen pot of water, glasses and plates.... Was it an office? An office in a cave--- the idea amused the girl. What was that? She

screwed her eyes, trying to pierce the darkness. Wood. A pile of slim logs stacked neatly along the wall. Was the cave a storing place for the wood? (MFM 85).

They were too late to prevent the gang to set Dipak's house on fire but luckily everyone managed to escape unscathed because of Mr. Das's timely action . "These kids have just told me a shocking tale. There are people who out to destroy our beautiful mountains. They have worked it all out. Everything detail." (MFM 101). With the help of the police, children manage to capture the gang leaded by Shivnath the contractor and details were revealed about the gang being involved in smuggling tree trunks, minerals from the mountains and such other illegal activities. After making sure that the members of the gang were safely in prison, they were on friendly terms with the Lalls and Mr. Das and resumed their peaceful holidays to enjoy the lush green meadows, covered with thick and green grass, sprinkled lavishly with pale yellow daisies and patches of forests all around Sivatika in the Himalayan region.

Children, children, enough! It is more than I can handle. You seem to know much more than I could even imagine! But now, thanks to you, I am beginning to understand.... Indians have the best brains in the world, I always tell Pamela. In fact, everything here is best. This is why we returned. Look at the mountains, the trees, the people! Everything is just super here (MFM 99-101).

At the end there is cry from a young child Ajay, "it is natural calamity. Human beings are responsible too. They remove vegetation and expose the soil. They blast the mountains with dynamite. They make deep holes to mine rocks. They disturb the nature in so many ways and upset the ecological balance. (MFM 101-102) is heart rendering.

Reading is an enjoyable habit which is becoming increasingly popular, this has become possible with an ever increasing development of reading material and improvements in techniques of publishing.

More Mystery Stories (1989) is a collection of stories written by members of AWIC Illustrated by Mrinal Mitra for young children. Each story has all the essential constituents and components of an adventure story. The plot in each story is powerful, has plenty of surprises and excitement, events move fast which grip the reader's attention thoroughly. Meena Khurana, writes

Whether it is a misguided robot, a thieving milk boy, a kleptomaniac, or a roaring monument, each story places the young protagonists in exciting, though believable predicaments that challenge them to think logically. Set in various regions of India, both volumes provide an insight into the life of young adolescents, especially those belonging to the privileged class (155).

“Music Behind Doors” by Sigrun Srivastave, writer and a well-known illustrator of children's stories, is the story of a father who fights to save his child from the world of superstitions and misconceptions which erode the very fabric of human existence. Nita Berry's “The Invisible Burglar” is about a mysterious business which at once excites the reader's imagination. Aman and Saman are two young boys who solve a theft case. General Sahib's medal was stolen, it is the children who uses simple clues as a line of small ants and sticky white stain and help to catch the thief before he gets away. In “Mystery of the Vanishing Biscuits” by Poile Sengupta, the absence of biscuits upsets the boarding schoolgirls and they use all sorts of sums and additions and subtractions to solve the problem of missing biscuits which lead to their adventure. One more adventure story by Vaijaynati Tonpe, “Lost and Found”, begins along the icy waters of

river Teesta where the children go to collect some drift wood. The four children amidst Oohs and Ahs, manage to catch a gang of smugglers. Young readers feel themselves engrossed and enchanted with the dense forest in backdrop. “Detective” by Kamini Kausal, is a dramatic story, all about a set of naughty children and their harassed ‘Masterji’ who forms the comical central figure of the story. The recovery of secreted treasure from the mountain in the most casual of manners is what makes the story fascinating. “The Roaring Mountains” is by S.G. Haider, writer of several prize winning books for children, who is actively involved in promotion of good literature for children in Urdu. The story is all about the school children on camping trip. The scene is set in a village covered with ruins of domes, crumbling walls and heaps of stones from broken graves. As the children decided to settle down sunset around the camp-fire, they hear loud roars coming from the ruins.

“The Lucky Coral Ring” written by famous writer for children, Swapna Dutta. The story is woven around the delicate theme of obsession with the idea of lucky talismans. “Treasure Island” by Arup Kumar Dutta, revolves round the recovery of missing boat on the banks of Brahmaputra. “The Antique Necklace” is by Savitri Makhijani, and the Violin which holds the secret message is the subject of a hot pursuit. Excitement increases through the lines of the story as the plot builds up. It is an action packed story. “Secret of the Hollow Tree” by R.K. Murthy, revolves around secret messages being sent around in code form. Solving puzzles in code form has always been passion with growing children.

Adventure stories does have ample benefits and advantages for the growth of the children. Literature for children particularly adventure stories greatly gratifies the psychological requirements by giving an atmosphere of thrill which is an important requirement for children. The child gets in adventure stories plenty of pleasant and

adventurous situations which he usually misses in real life. For his own adventurous creativities, he gets great motivation from the stories he may read. His mind desires for an adventurous expedition on the top of a mountain or a voyage to the deep seas. In imagination, he wants to perform the challenging roles of the mighty heroes. This he does by reading about the triumphs of great travellers, warriors, explorers, navigators or social workers. He places himself in the position and identifies with the hero he reads about. He draws nourishment in his mental life from the versions of the adventures he reads about in the books.

These stories are driving, action-centred plot that forces children to turn the pages. And puts forth a puzzle that the readers solve from clues thrown by the narrator and the stories echo with personal experience. Struggle, freedom, national duties are recurring themes in adventure stories. All these stories teach self-sufficiency. It teaches children to imagine themselves in potentially real situations. These novels apart from fostering fantastic or imaginative place for the child, offers a model for particular experience and in experience lies education.

4.5: Bibliotherapy: Children's books in India

Perhaps the most convincing argument for the effectiveness of bibliotherapy comes from writers themselves. There's the case of George Eliot, for example, who recovered from the grief of losing her husband George Henry Lewes by reading Dante with a young friend, John Cross, who subsequently married her. "Her sympathetic delight in stimulating my newly awakened enthusiasm for Dante did something to distract her mind from sorrowful memories," Cross later wrote. "The divine poet took us to a new world. It was a renovation of life" (Morison n.p).

Bibliotherapy is an age old concept in library science. The simple definition of bibliotherapy is, the use of reading materials for help in solving personal problems. Webster's dictionary offers the following definition, “Guidance in the solution of personal problems through directed reading” (Gove 212). Zipora Shechtman writes,

The knowledge of healing through books is not new; it can be drawn from long ago from the first libraries in ancient Greece. The usage of the term ‘bibliotherapy’ goes back to the beginning of the twentieth century, when Crothes (1916) labelled it as such. Most of us recognise the power of therapeutic reading. We find ourselves entering the world described in the pages of a good book or appearing in the scenes of a good movie, and we become involved with the characters. We feel happy or sad, we cry with the character who suffers; we want the good ones to cope and the bad ones to be punished. We really care. We usually end up gaining new insights and ideas for our own lives as well. Just reading high-quality literature, then, is a healing process that can enrich our selves (21).

Presently, bibliotherapy is used by almost all assisting professionals in psychotherapy or instruction, like school counsellors, social workers or health providers as well as teachers and librarians. In the school atmosphere, it can be used as an operative method of prevention. Child psychologist, writer and critic of children’s books Dr. Ira Saxena writes

Book Therapy is the art of healing through literature. The concept pre-supposes the potential of literature wrapping a protective shroud of words and imagery around the reader, skilfully transporting the reader away from distress and anguish of reality of the plot and

characters, showing a way through conflict situations (“Psychological” 10).

Shetchtman further make us understand how use of literature is useful in healing and he names it an affective bibliotherapy

Affective bibliotherapy uses fiction and other high-quality literature to help the reader connect to emotional experiences and human situations through the process of identification....Through identification with literary characters, individuals are exposed to a wide range of emotions, of which they can recognise something in themselves, thus reconnecting to their own emotional world. Experiencing is enhanced through the richness of human life, characters, situations, and problems that the literature presents (26).

Book therapy is a technique which is useful not only for adults but also for children. It is not only useful for children who are in difficult circumstances but also for those who are going through problems which may just be developmental in nature. Book therapy can be embedded in the paradigm of Cognitive Behaviour Therapy. Generally these are based on Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) techniques. The central idea is based upon three predominate factors, which are: cognition (how we think), emotion and affect (how we feel), and behavior (how we act). All these work together. The main aim of bibliotherapy according to John Pardeck is

- (a) to provide information about problems, (b) to provide insight into problems, (c) to stimulate discussion about problems, (d) to communicate new values and attitudes, (e) to create an awareness that others have dealt with similar problems, and (f) to provide solutions about problems (n.p).

This is the mechanism through which, educationists, counselors, teachers can approach the target reader. Marcus M. Mottley provides information related to the benefits of reading stories/books in 'Bibliotherapy: The Reading Cure!' he writes an individual has chance to

- relate to the main character and his predicament
- become so emotionally connected to the story that their own feelings are revealed
- realize that his/her problem is solvable or, at the very least, that he/she is not alone
- process possible solutions to his/her problems
- develop hope based on the positive outcomes from the lives of the characters in the book
- bring an added positive dimension to the self-talk that goes on inside (Mottley n.p).

Children's books did not convey profound topics such as loss, divorce, and bullying conflict, trauma until recently. According to Lowe, "Until recently, children's books did not address sensitive topics such as death, divorce, and bullying. In the past few decades and due to societal changes, there have been more books published dealing with these non-traditional issues. (1). Young children are enormously inclined towards the environment in which they live. In a world which is increasingly filled with tensions and stress, conflicts have become an inevitable parts of our lives. Tensions and stress of very high levels such as when caused by the deaths of a family member, war, terrorist attacks, disaster caused by physical conditions such as earthquakes, tsunami attacks may reach traumatising stages. So it is essential for children to learn the managing skills needed to successfully handle grief, frustration, and anger that are a part of daily life and to emerge with a sense of self-control, hope, and resilience. According to Schwiebert "when dealing with sensitive issues, such as death, even with very small children it is not helpful to pretend that nothing is wrong. They will sense your anguish.

Your willingness to discuss this with them reassures them that we can talk about anything and that it is okay to share thoughts and emotions” (Lowe 3). Lowe explains how stories can heal the emotional wounds

On September 12, 2001, three children in my class sobbed, explaining that a parent never came home the night before. As these three first grade students cried, others discussed how cool the planes looked as they flew into our World Trade Centre. To discontinue the morning chatter immediately I announced that it was “morning carpet time.” One of the children handed me a book and asked me to read it to them, as the rest of the students voiced their approval. During this traumatic time in our history, a book instantly and uniformly brought tranquillity back into classroom. It was at that time I knew the bridge between coping, expressions, and healing for students would be through children’s literature. Individuals of all ages appear to lose themselves in stories. Both groups of students will display disapproval if one discontinues reading in the middle of an interesting book. Story-telling is a timeless teaching tool (Kersey 54).

Children’s literature is an approach or direction of expression and a platform where children can activate prior knowledge and associate to the emotional state of characters in a book. The child is a developing human being; developing physically, mentally, socially and morally. Thus the way a child and adolescent perceives the world is very different from the way an adult does. Carol Berns finds “that children may be more inclined to share in these ways through a third person or the safe distance of a storybook character, cartoon, or animal. Children can then talk about the characters rather than about themselves directly” (325). The catastrophes manufactured by man always

instigate greater injury, both physical and psychological to the whole social fabric. Considering children, the range of suffering is powerful and acute; the psychological wounds are deep and intense sometimes pushing children into the security of silence, withdrawal, and a psyche blemished by internal hatred. Then there are threatening, punishing psycho-social worries – racial and communal barriers, breaking up of families, peer pressures, bullying, discrimination, which shatters the self and lowers self-esteem of the child. Children afflicted by these psychological clashes suffer silently till they drop resilience and become victims of dejection and depression. The phenomenon has become world-wide. Johanna Slivinske and Lee Slivinske writes in *Storytelling and Other Activities for Children in Therapy*

When children hear stories, they often identify with the characters and events in the stories. This helps them to reflect on their own experiences, which may be similar to the experiences and emotions of the characters. Processing, gaining understanding, and finding resolution of their own emotional issues may then occur. Hopefully they also may learn that it is beneficial to share and experience powerful emotions in a supportive and caring environment (13).

In order to gain an effective mental balance, it is necessary to achieve equilibrium and serenity after any trauma. Appropriate books lend unquestionable path to such conflicts and trauma. These books and stories pull the child from the depths of their ordeal; eventually enabling them to settle in their circumstance. Reena Jabran writes about the metaphoric tales in her paper titled as, ‘NLP—A Therapeutic Tool’

The children from 6–9 years love to hear stories, so we work on the metaphorical language i.e. tell stories with values. Metaphor in NLP is a vehicle which has life experiences, stories of successful people,

Panchatantra, Mahabarata, Ramayan, Bible stories—through this metaphorical language we can instil suggestions, for children of that age are susceptible to suggestions. It is very important how we use the words, tonality and body physiology to communicate. Physical discomfiture like pain in the body can be removed by these children by playful visualization (n.p).

She further writes, we can use stories for therapeutic techniques

There are NLP techniques which can remove fears, boost confidence, self-esteem, remove irritations and agitations, regrets for past actions, and also learn to celebrate their lives....Handling peer group pressures, parents' pressures, school pressures, becomes very easy through these techniques. There are a whole lot of techniques which accelerate learning, make one love a subject they hate, remove unwanted behaviour,.... change the perception of the world which are creating uneasiness, and handle many more challenges with ease and fun. The bottom line is to learn to celebrate life in spite of all the situations and challenges (Jabran n.p).

Lighthouse in the Storm (AWIC)

Twenty two short stories from the collection *Lighthouse in the Storm* (2012), by different writers, the victims of tragedy are guided to the shore, the shore where one finds reconciliation with the fact and beyond. Hope is sprinkled within these stories. Twenty four stories cover a range of tragic events inspired by real life experiences like

Tsunami, earthquake, Mumbai riots etc. some stories deal with personal loss, grief, child abuse. All the themes are somehow part and parcel of a child's or young adult's life. These stories shared with children and young adults instil resilience and strength to cope.

The New Boy in Grade Seven (Pratibha Naath)

The story is about Jasvir Singh Baghela seventh grader, narrated in first person by one of his teachers. "My first glimpse of the new boy came through a blur of bodies, all in the uniform, all locked in frenzied fight. Even in that melee he stood out, for he was a head taller than the rest, and well-built for one so young." (LS⁸ 7). As the time goes by, he turns to be quite a loner; picking fights at the slightest provocations and beats children smaller to him. The narrator is concerned and wants to unravel the mystery behind such antagonistic behaviour. The picture turns ugly when one of the young teachers is threatened. The narrator and the teacher narrates, "I was deeply troubled. I could, of course, go to the Principal and Jasvir would be hauled up for a serious breach of discipline. At best he would be severely punished. At worst he might be expelled... sent home, bag a baggage. I was against such drastic action. So was young teacher. Somehow, deep down, we were in empathy with Jasvir" (LS 10). There was a sense of curiosity in the teacher as she sympathised with him. "He was like a closed book. How could one reach him?" (10). Once Jasvir approached her in the library and breaks into tears. He has just lost his mother and is very apprehensive and insecure about his father.

He stumbled rather than walked to the seat opposite mine, face bereft of colour, his eyes wide and fearful.... He seemed to have some trouble in speaking. Then, crossing his arms on the table, he put his head down and burst into tears. I let him cry. I let him cry his heart

⁸ *Lighthouse in the Storm*

out. His body heaved and sobs caught into throat till I thought he would choke. But in time the storm passed, the shoulders stopped heaving (LS 11).

The writer writes beautifully

Fresh sobs broke out. On the window-sill one lone, home-bound sparrow sang to herself as I reached out and stroked Jasvir's thatch of hair (LS 13).

The child's world is traumatised and devastated the reason he brings bellicosity towards others. Ventilating out his feelings assists him to get comfort and relief and at the same time also justifies his actions. The narrator proposes that he should involve himself in his favourite sports. "Even two games of football a week helped knock down the wall that he had raised around himself" (LS 14). He takes notice of it and accordingly he absorbs himself into the game. Soon, he is a football star and a popular, likeable hero of the class that brings home a state trophy- the walls are broken and the frown had vanished. The ordeal has come to an end.

We didn't even realise when the frown on his face gave away to a steady gaze from a pair of clear, untroubled eyes.... Happily, for all concerned, his father came to watch him play the final game and cheered the loudest (LS 14).

Jasvir finds resolution to his antagonism and aggression in the game of football. Children need stimulation for this purpose and here literature play important role in giving invigoration. As John Dewey comments, "There are certain powers within the child urgent for development, needing to be acted out in order to secure their own efficiency and discipline, we have firm basis upon which to build. Efforts arises normally in the attempt to give full operation, and thus growth and completion, to these

powers. Adequately to act upon these impulses involve seriousness, absorption, definiteness of purpose, it results in formation of steadiness and persistent habit in the service of worthy ends” (14-15).

Can Anyone Do it? (Deepa Agarwal)

Literature has role to play in educating children about disability. Jen Scot Curwood writes “Learning about social justice in the world and engaging in literary study can be a powerful way for youth to critically consider disability” (16). Earlier the differently abled characters in literature were portrayed as negative like in *Moby Dick*, Ahab as one legged, obsessed captain, and in *Christmas Carol* Tin Tim as the sentimental and hobbling urchin. In this story by Agarwal we find Shankar a disabled character as vigorous and energetic. The story opens with a thirteen year old Shankar, a lame and weak boy with crutches who aspires of being a star cricketer. On the other hand, Griish is the thick skinned and unsympathetic village bully boy who never spares a chance to admonish and castigate this handicap. Shankar asks many questions to himself

Griish, who always mocked him for the lame... Confused, he examined the bat in his hand... how did it turn onto a crutch? And why he was not playing, but standing at the edge of the field watching the game longingly, as usual...? The euphoria vanished, leaving him as flattened as a pricked balloon. A terrible feeling of helplessness swept over him. Why couldn't he race through the fields, leap and play like rest? (LS 15).

The story gives hope and strength to disabled children. Shankar does a heroic job. Shankar has a close proximity with Charles Dicken's Tiny Tim, a disabled character. One night when his father was away at work, Shankar abruptly awakens to the sounds of pain and chaos. To his horror he realises that the river has flooded over and water is

gradually filling into their small residences. Shankar though in anxiety over his impairment to succour his grandmother, younger brother and little baby sister; gathers pluck and wakes them all in good time.

Shankar's breath came quick, his heart thumped painfully. What was he to do? He cast an anxious eye on Laxman, *Dadi* and Mamta. The thought of sitting there, waiting for the floods to carry them off, was unbearable. He had to try – try to do something at least. Whatever he could manage. Lame leg and all (LS 17).

Shankar limps along with his family finds a sheltered place, a huge banyan tree. Even in times of distress he is encountered by offensive remarks and sympathy for his ailment. Few fellows make fun of his pace. “Someone laughed ‘The *langda*’s really afraid” and “it is natural, someone added. ‘ How will the poor fellow manage if he has to run?’”(LS 20). Shankar's will was firm and the remarks and sniggers do him no harm. These category of positive characters may well offer ease to the disabled reader. Shankar was determined to save his loving family. After seeking refuge on the tree, Shankar courageously saves six villagers including Girish with the help of his crutches. The story is touching and depicts the bravery of the differently-abled boy and his grit to succeed against all odds. Tony Seymour suggests, “Disabled characters in children's books, is that they enable disabled children to identify with such characters. This, in turn offers them a sense of re-assurance, whilst also raising disability awareness amongst able bodied children and educating them about people's differences” (n.p). Later at the end of the story Shankar's father says softly, “No son, not everyone...only some like you” (LS 23). As Tony Seymour also comments, “Children's books, which contain disabled characters may well serve to introduce able bodied children to

disability” (n.p). Children with disability gets encouraged due to these narratives, although there less numbers of books specially written on disabled children.

We can find differently abled characters in western children’s books like Clara in *Heidi*, there are books written specifically written for differently abled children in west like *Fifth Form St. Dominic’s* by Talbot Baines Reed and *Mia and Charlie* by Annie Keary. But in India this field needs to be developed.

Daddy, Please Wake Up (Dipavali Sen)

This is a beautifully portrayed story with an undertone and suggestions for children. It portrays a child who is the victim of parental pressures. It depicts the deep psychology of a sensitive child, Vineet. A traumatic incident of a father taking an overdose of pills and lead him to face of death, leaves young Vineet with number of unresolved questions.

A question was bothering him. WHY did Daddy try to kill himself? The question stayed fixed in his mind, not letting him think of anything else. Mummy had said that he had losses. But, to kill himself...? What would have happened to mummy and him if Daddy had managed to do what he had tried? Vineet shuddered at the thought. Didn’t he think of that? Was Daddy not really bothered about them? It was only his business- his profits and losses- that he cared about? A fountain of emotions unsettled him and Vineet to pace up and down in the room” (LS 32).

After playing few games his mind was still questioning, “Did Daddy care so little about him that his growing losses in the business drove him to kill himself? *Didn’t I matter to him at all*’ Vineet reflected soberly” (LS 31). Slowly, Vineet seeks solace in Peppy and the father is back home, well and recovering: but Vineet cannot find himself tackle

his father and exhibiting warmth for him. His father senses something wrong and attempts quite a few times to approach him, but Vineet is gladly happy in his neighbour's home.

Money gone-so he just wanted to die. I hadn't gone, had I? Nor did Mummy go. But he think that Mummy and I would do without him? No, I don't want to think of him!' he exploded, tears streaming down his cheeks, breaking into vigorous sobs (LS 35).

The writer tries to go deep into the psyche of the child, child's apprehensions, fears is evident throughout the story, it tries to bring forth the pressures faced by children due to domestic problems. It also talks about the affectionate bond between parents and children. The story ends on a happy note when Vineet's father suggests that Uncle Das hand over Peppy to Vineet to rear. Vineet is relieved and happy at the thought and is also moved by his father's concern and responsibility for him. The bond is recognised, the stillness and silence is broken. All becomes well and Vineet becomes his father's best friend again. A tale of hope and joy, notwithstanding of the gloomy beginning, the end rests on optimistic and happy note. The next morning dawned with Peppy whining for fresh air. 'Daddy, please, wake up!' Vineet called out. Let's walk Peppy together.'" (LS 38). In the beginning emotional regulation is seen through the child, then child tried to find out the self- efficiency through dog Peppy. And through child readers perspective they sympathise with the child inside the text and at the end there is resilience through optimism.

Hanuman Baby (Indira Ananthkrishnan)

'Hanuman Baby' is a moving story about a young girl Gauri, and the ruination that takes place when she heard that she is adopted child. The story is also an attempt to bring in children awareness about the parent child relationships. The attention-grabbing

title keeps one predicting, but the clever interpretation of the plot is well-ordered and simple. The term ‘tummy mummy’ was coined by Gauri, as she thinks that,

‘All babies come from mummies’ tummies’.... ‘My mother has told me about mummy tummy babies and Hanuman babies. I’m a Hanuman baby, you know’... ‘Hanuman gave me to my mother and therefore I’m a special child’ (LS 41).

To clear the muddle, her girls rush to Gauri’s mother who patiently elucidates that on fervently praying Hanuman, her supplications get responded and she was blessed with girl child. She stepped outside her home to find one in their yard. That is how she said Gauri became the Hanuman baby. The justifications elevates doubts in the child mind. She went out with her friend Janki to find her tummy mummy in a swarming fair in adjacent village. After an ineffective attempt, lost in the crowd of so many unacquainted faces, the girls fell asleep under the shade of a tree, only to be woken up by the high-pitched siren of a police vehicle. Gauri’s mother cuddles her girl with tears rolling down her cheeks and tells her how she spent the entire afternoon searching for her.

While Gauri gazed into her mother’s beautifully soft eyes, Janki whispered in her ears, ‘Do you still want to find your tummy mummy?’

Gauri shook her head. She squeezed Janki’s hand and said with a smile, ‘I like being a Hanuman baby, and I like my parents for making me very special’ (LS 48).

Gauri comprehends that this is the mother she needs and pledges under no circumstances to go astray again. A warm and emotional story that makes one think

twice about relationships of love in their countless forms. Most of the children feel fear in losing their parents, such kind of stories may give some relief to children.

Two Halves of a Smiling Sun (Sulekha Kumar)

It is a serious and sad story with the Bhopal gas tragedy as its setting. A young boy Taabish leads a normal life- scurrying to school in the morning making meaningless chatter with friends and helping his mother back home. He feels closest to his mother who makes marvellous patchwork quilts from random and seemingly useless bits of colourful cloth. It is as she puts a touch of life on the pieces and when stitched together they complete the picture as if by magic. Stitching together peace and bits into one is metaphoric. One night, when all are asleep, they are ruthlessly awoken by hazes of toxic gases impending all around.

No one knew, anyhow, which way to go. In the melee, the most of the families ran closer to the source of the poisonous gas. One by one they collapsed, some dead, some struggling to regain their breath (LS 51).

In the panic that follows, Taabish is orphaned, and thousands are sick due to the harmful gases. The world is devastated for Taabish, who loses his whole family including his much-loved mother.

He did not cry at their burial or at any point of time. He just went about wordlessly, as though he had no voice. He walked around aimlessly, as though he had no voice. He walked around aimlessly the whole day, and sometimes even at night. He ate and slept and answered questions mechanically, mostly by shaking his head. The dazed look became fixed onto his face (LS 52).

He is being advised to re-join school but devotes time dreaming about his mother Ammi Hamida. During the course of time one day Taabish comes across his old neighbour Moin and his daughter Fehmida. Fehmida too has lost her children to the gaseous monsters. Taabish discovers that Fehmida too sews on the machine just like his mother. That breaks the barriers in his heart and he sees his mother in her. An exceptionally well narrated story of how two imperfect and incomplete halves can join together to form one complete whole. Taabish gives her a patchwork quilt left undone by his mother and over some days, she completes it just as her mother would have. Together they stitch the final centrepiece of a smiling face of the sun. Heartbroken Taabish finds the purpose to his life when he becomes hope of a childless mother.

All the way back, Taabish was jumping with joy. His newly found mother was waiting for him at home. Bringing random cut pieces together had changed his life. He knew now when you cut two halves, they do not make any sense. When you join them together, they do. Then they form themselves into sun-complete, round, bright and smiling (LS 60).

Shalley Chaturvedi and Suniti Jaitley writes in a paper titled, 'Bhopal gas Tragedy and Third Generation Children'

Activists in Bhopal like Sardana, Abdul Jabbar, Sadhna Karnik, Satinath Sarangi, Rasheeda Bee, Champa Devi Shukla, Tarun Thomas, etc. are still working for the cause and trying to get support from all parts of the world to heal physical or psychological problems of the victims of this disaster. They all have welcomed the step taken by the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) for including the chapter of the Bhopal gas tragedy into the

syllabus. Sadhna Karnik has been working continuously for children of the uncontrolled area who have been severely affected by the gas. She is more worried about the education of the children of these families as because of poor economic conditions, these children have to earn their livelihood and they are not able to go to school even for primary education (16).

They further write

An evidence-informed study on the effect of book therapy has been developed to facilitate the recovery of children affected by this man-made disaster. In addition to the medical and formal mental health treatment, book therapy is an intermediate, secondary prevention model designed to teach children basic skills to alleviate distress as effectively as is needed which can be easily implemented in schools (17).

The Lyrical Battle (Ira Saxena)

It is a wonderful story – subtle, sensitive and healing. Set in the backdrop of school life, it describes the camaraderie as well as rivalry in an evocative and sensitive manner. Amit and Sameer are classmates and the rivalry between them is bitter. Amit, a cheerful and artistic boy is struck with a life threatening illness and suffers attacks of pain. It was traumatic to deal with the condition. He misses his friends in school and is very worried about a play ‘The Golden Guitar’ that he has been playwriting, which was left unfinished.

I landed back in hospital the very next day, writhing in agony, throbbing stinging every call of my body. Each attack sapped my energy, draining all power resources, glucose levels and proteins.

Each minute in the hospital was a burden, dragging me away from the precious practice session (LS 65-66).

Amit was hopeful and assures his friends that he will complete the song of ‘the Golden Guitar’ a dream classification in the finale. While scripting the final paragraphs amidst pain and suffering of another shocking attack, Amit shows great bravery and willpower.

My thoughts wandered to the dream sequence... clouds of yellow and orange smoke on the purple velvet passage... the lotus flowers turning into smiling, playful children at the touch of the golden magician strumming on his golden guitar... (LS 69).

Amit’s body is overcome with pain but his mind is alive with thoughts.

I scribbled the first lines; a fiery missile ripping my insides shook the notepad from my grip. I held it desperately, clutching it to my heart for life support (LS 70).

Amit pens down a beautiful sequence of lyrics, done in time just as his body slumps into cool vapours of tranquillity.

Line after line linking the poem kept streaming in like the ripples of a brook, bouncy and constant. I tightened my grip on my pen. The music of my lyrics was overpowering. ‘Onwards and forwards...’ it carried me uphill into the cool vapours, casting a dreamy haze around me (LS 71-72).

This short story makes one in curiosity how children and grownups alike deal with such unpleasant sickness imposed on them by fate and how strong one has to be to overcome it. This story gives message to young readers that the sorrow is not long lasting; there is always a bright shine of morning that follows the shady dreamy night. The process of healing starts both from without as well as within.

The Bubble of Shared Knowing (Ken Spillman)

This story is an abstract version or representation of the very predominant yet delicate issues of sexual molestation of young adults. It is all more pertinent to address this in current times, when abuse has become so extensive. Child sexual abuse is “so horrible a concept and so terrifying to parents that form of unconscious denial takes place with the resulting perception: ‘Not my child!’ This perception has become prevalent in today’s families” (qtd. in 206 McDaniel). Rohini is a normal girl who leads a normal life, comfortable in the confines of her bubble, until one day the bubble bursts.

Rohini lived in a bubble. Inside that bubble, things were normal. She had a normal family. She lived in Normal Enclave and slept in a normal bedroom. At Normal Government School, she was a normal student who just managed to avoid an abnormal amount of trouble (LS 73).

An uncle who claims to be a childhood friend of her Baba picks her up from the school, treats her to ice cream and offers her to piggy back like he would in childhood. Rohini finds him trivial and dramatic and obeys and the uncle forces her to please him, and she is trapped with an evil man in a desolate wasteland and who is assaulted. Cynthia McDaniel writes, “Perpetrators often frighten children into silence and secrecy by threatening to harm them, another family member, or a favorite pet, and/or they use their position of authority to convince their victims that the situation is “normal,” and the victim has a duty to obey the adult...” (205).

The wasteland marked out for development sprouted evil. A person was drowning in a pool but floated to the surface with part of her still alive, saved by a bubble that had burst that moment and would never exist again (LS 78).

Nothing returns to normal after the incident which she keeps locked in her heart and Rohini is traumatized with nightmares. But she doesn't stop and unlocks the locks, "but when something unexpected happens, things can change, and change can be good." (LS 79). She decides to tell it all, and it is the day of liberation. McDaniel writes children need to provide information related to abuse with sufficient information, "without sufficient information, children are not only unable to protect themselves effectively, in some instances they may not realise they have been abused" (206). A new bubble wrapped Rohini, a bubble of shared knowledge. The sharing keeps her warm and safe and ends the ordeal inside her.

In Rohini's new normal, the tiniest thing appeared. It was a bubble of shared knowledge, small but magic. She breathed a little easier inside it (LS 80).

To confront and deal with such issues, it is more important to address them rather than consider them a taboo or shy away from them. This is the message that the story portrays. These types of stories support to help children improve understanding into their problems and find appropriate solutions.

Halo of Love (E Shailaja Nair)

It is a story of young Shireen and her brother Avi. Unanticipated incidents happen in their lives and Shireen meets with a crippling accident that leaves her in a wheel chair. The children lose their father. Even though the children are being gripped by these hard circumstances, they move on. The accident has changed all their lives forever. It is one more story of hope and redemption. The story provides child reader a sense of courage that life must go on. Dr. Renu Malaviya comments "these stories provides a feeling of 'I am not alone', 'I need to move on', etc. and reconstructs one's self. Above all, it

provides a base for the child reader to grow back one's control on self and develop again the power to exist and thrive" (27).

***The Outsider* (Nilima Sinha)**

Ashis, an eleven years old is an outsider, a new boy in the school, and feels absolutely out of place after his parents move to India from Boston. Everyone in the family is joyful that they are back home but Ashis is gloomy and wretched. Children in school refuse to include him in their groups and make mockery and ridicule of his American accent.

‘Ca...aa...an, ca...aa...an!’ chanted all the boys together with exaggerated accent. Rohan winked at the boys and said in a mocking voice, ‘He means Amea...aa...reican cricket, of course, it made everyone laugh uproariously (LS 89).

He recounts all his time spent with his friends, his home Cherry Street, American food and the game of football. Ashis starts to make all kinds of excuses to miss school. One fine day at home, he spends time in his garden and notices to his astonishment how attractive, different and distinctive the flora and fauna are in contrast to the sights and noises in the US.

A golden yellow butterfly flew past the boy's cheek. He opened his eyes wide, wondering. What a beautiful creature. He had never seen one like before.... It was so green, shady and pleasant in the garden... a chorus of birds-shrill, sweet and chaotic-filled his ears... he wished he could describe them to his friends and the geography teacher (LS 95).

In a gush of exhilaration, Ashis fetches his camera and starts to capture frames that leave him mesmerised. He is later cherished and appreciated by the school teacher, Mr

Gopinath and the whole class directs him to send them for a competition entry. Ashis is swelling with pride and is filled with realisation that it is easier to mingle and be accepted, if one readily accepts. The natural environments may have physical boundaries, but in the end everyone is the same. The story is relevant in today's time of globalisation and misplaced Indians who return to find their roots

The new school was not that bad, after all, and neither were his new classmates. And come to think of it, his parents' new home in their old country was fine too, he thought. He felt lighter, happier as all his resentment against the move to India melted away (LS 100).

Monsters in Paradise (Paro Anand)

Paro Anand writer of this story 'Monsters in Paradise' is a writer for children and young adults. She has written a novel, *No Guns at My Son's Funeral* translated into German and Spanish which was on the *IBBY Honour List*. She has worked with children in difficult circumstances, including those impacted by conflict and violence in Kashmir and nomadic children of wildlife poachers. She writes

I know my stories work. They always have. When I tell stories, kids listen. They laugh, they wipe away an unbidden tear; they nod in recognition of something from their own lives. My stories always work. Always? No, not always. There was one time when they did not. This happened in Kashmir, very close to the border, near the volatile LOC (Line of Control) in Kupwara. I performed a story. The children listened in silence. They did not laugh when they were supposed to. They looked at me with strange silent eyes – as though I was an alien from Mars. And I may well have been, so different was I in my dress, my behaviour, my very life (Anand 22).

Dr. Shobha Ramaswamy writes,

Paro Anand's sensitive stories focus on the adverse effects of terrorism, religious prejudice, suspicion, hatred and stereotyping during the crucial formative stage in the lives of the citizens of tomorrow. She suggests amity, empathy born of mutual suffering and forgiveness as antidotes to the poison of religious intolerance that threatens our nation (43).

Many realistic stories are woven around conflict and violence that take place in different parts of our country. Dr. Shobha Ramaswamy writes, in "Accepting the Other: Overcoming Communal Barriers in Paro Anand's *The Wild Child and Other Stories*"

The children, both Hindu and Muslim, have suffered personal losses and have been, as a result, psychologically affected. They find it difficult to communicate with children belonging to the other community, whom they have been taught to regard as enemies (39).

Beautifully written story in flashbacks and the writer has portrayed inner thoughts of the victim boy artistically. The story 'Monsters in Paradise' takes place in Kashmir. Shabir Karam, is a boy who has been orphaned along with many others in the irrational obliteration of peace. Shabir's mind hang in the dreams of his family and his much-loved Abbu who vends cloth in the marketplace. He dreams of the past.

[Emphasized in Text] *He sees his father standing at the stall, holding up a bright green length of cloth. A customer stands before him, fingering it. Could it be? Has the child made it in time today to see one of the monsters his father talks about?.... and then he hears his mother-wailing, wailing, wailing, wailing. Hiding behind her, peeping out, he searches for his father.... He wants to tell him to stop*

*Ammi's tears... All he can see is a shred of his father's phiran.
There's nothing more left of him now (LS 105).*

His thoughts of the past troubles him continuously. After remains in hallucinations he returns to reality. Shabir finds himself in care of an NGO who is trying to gather the homeless children-both Hindu and Muslim. Shabir dislikes the daily monotonous routine at the NGO office exchanging names to get acquainted with each other and thinks Hindu names are odd and unpleasant while Hindu children think the same. Dr. Shobha Ramaswamy writes,

Misconceptions and mutual suspicion between Hindus and Muslims have seeped down from adults to children. It is at this stage that children's literature, which has an undoubted influence on young minds, needs to jump into the fray to cleanse the evil influence of communalism and to restore the innocence of happy childhood friendships which would act as the pillars of a harmonious state in the future (38).

The story brings forth the religious divide in society due to political turmoil, the political conflict has devastating effect on the lives of the people and children particularly irrespective of religion and caste. Shabir finds a good friend a Hindu girl who remember and pronounce his (muslim) name and ease and her responsive and pleasant behaviour comforts some of his pain. This narrative is all about finding love and consolation beyond borders.

She smiles at him and says –Shabir. He likes the sound of his name on her tongue....He lands back into the present with a smile at her. He pleased that she remembered his name without help. She smiles back at him. A secret smile. Just between the two of them (LS 107).

The story ends on a note of understanding and hope for the healing of wounds and the forging of friendships. It stimulates the young readers making them aware and optimistic that there is hope to reunite. Paro Anand writer of this story writes about Shabir in ‘Creating Books that Heal’

Shabir came up to me as I was leaving at the end of the workshop. He put his hand in mine and said that he felt a connection with me. And he said, “Don’t forget us, and don’t forget our stories. We cannot reach the outside world. But you can. Go and tell our stories to all who will listen. And maybe there can be a change.” And so I do. I have written the story of Shabir Karam, (whom I have since adopted as my son) in the AWIC’s new book of healing stories titled *Lighthouse in the Storm*. Shabir is proud that his story is now told to all of you who will listen. He is a young man now, working in Srinagar, supporting his sisters and mother. His life is still hard, but his head is held high and his voice is clear and strong. I believe that words did help him heal (24).

The Loose Brick in the wall (Sangeeta Das Dutta)

Children are naive, and do not comprehend the language of prejudice, bias and discrimination. This story is all about family separation. The quarrel that the elders have, transcends down to the children of the family and the children fail to understand. It is the children who break down the walls made by adults. An enjoyable pleasant story for children verifying once again that when adults go awry, it is the children and the elderly who can bring them together again. Children play the role of catalysts in such situations, in mending cracks in relationships and hearts.

Nanhi! My Nanhi! (Girija Rani Asthana)

This story is of young Amit who is the victim of an earthquake and the nightmares are fresh still in his mind. He is sheltered in Apna Ghar under the supervision of Mohan Bhai, the director of Apna Ghar and Sarala Bhen. They are pleasantly amazed to see recovery in Amit, who has taken eight long years to come out of his ordeal and trauma. Life has returned to some amount of normalcy and Amit is now enjoying and doing well at school. On the Republic day celebrations, the moment Amit starts to speak, tremors shake the stage. This time the earthquake has hit Bhuj and Anjar. Mohan Bhai decides to go instantaneously to these places for rescue operations and would like to help the needy. Mohan Bhai says,

I know we won't be of much help in actual relief work- but at least you will be able to provide the much needed emotional succour and psychological support from your own experiences, to those little victims who have lost everyone (LS 122).

Amit is reluctant to go, and shrieks that he wants nothing to do with earthquakes. Amit withdraws and recounts his throbbing memories where his family and his beloved sister Nanhi was stuck under the fury of nature. He says, "That is what an earthquake does to you. Takes away your loved ones and leaves you alone in the world" (LS 122).

Mohan and others have find a little girl whom they found wander on the ruined streets. She reminds Amit of his own sister Nanhi. Amit finds the little girl, desolate and crying. Amit showed sympathy towards her and comforts her saying he is right there for her.

Oh, Nani, my Nanhi! Don't cry! Ma and Baba are not here not here- but I am here, your brother. I will take care of you. He sat down on the ground near her, stroking her hair lovingly. The sobbing ceased. He pulled the small girl into his lap. He started patting her head softly,

singing the lullaby his mother used to make his sister Nanhi sleep (LS 125).

Later Amit decides to be the next saviour and redeemer and leaves for Bhuj and let go of his terrors of nuisance. The Apna Ghar family knows that finally Amit has found consolation and way to heal. A vivid and heart-warming story of Philanthropy, based on real stories of calamity and loss.

The Art of silence (Ramendra Kumar)

The story of Sunil a young boy who is orphaned is given shelter by the villagers in turns as his father was held in high esteem by all. Sunil's life is filled with darkness and his father's memory plague him; nothing can cheer him up or make him smile.

Sunil would sit brooding the whole day. Someone or other would send food for him and he would eat with a lot of difficulty. He would stop going school, and spent the entire day staring at the walls or looking at the only photograph of his father holding a hockey stick and grinning at the camera (LS 132).

During the same time, a young man called Jayant, comes to the village for voluntary development work for children. He is very popular amongst children and engross them in funny tales and drama. Sunil is untouched. This intrigues Jayant, and after a while he decides with the permission of the village elders to take him along. Sunil follows mechanically, and his world is transformed when he sees an ocean of paintings piled up at Jayant's place. In the night when Jayant returns from work, Sunil's eyes are twinkling with excitement as he shows him hand drawn lifelike sketches of the culprit who shot down his father.

On the sheet was was the portrait of a man with close set eyes, a large nose, buck teeth and thick, bushy eyebrows. The drawing, a pencil

sketch, was so very lifelike that Jayant could only gape in admiration (LS 136).

The hidden nightmares came out

It was almost as if a dam had been broken. The torrent of emotions which Sunil had been hiding in his heart burst forth. Sunil told Jayant everything about his life-his childhood, the love and affection he received from his *Baba*, the memories of his myriad moments they had spent together, and finally his *Baba's* murder... (LS 137).

Johanna Slivinske and Lee Slivinske writes

In addition, therapeutic use of art creates a tangible means of expression allowing for a nonverbal comfort zone between the therapist and the child..... Children's emotional states are often expressed within their drawings and paintings. This may increase feelings of freedom and allow them to express emotions in individualized manner (15).

The Newcomer (Vinita Krishna)

The story is a combination of tragedy, relationships and their subtle threads of closeness. Neera is a young teenage girl who has lost her mother, and she is sickened and distressed at the thought of her father's plans of remarriage. Nightmares afflict her and in anguish she wakes to find her bed wet each night. Sullu has been preferred by granny a suitable to be her stepmother. Neera cannot tolerate to be part of her father's wedding that takes place over the weekend and decided to go over to friend's house. After her arrival things are not improved, and each night she wakes in cold stained sheets, but when she comes back from the rest room, her bed is newly placed with unsoiled sheets. She is offended, assumed that Sallu, her stepmother would scorn of

their “secret”. On her birthday Neera unlocks the gift from Sallu after the day is done and expects a set of bed sheets. To her disbelief, her gift is a collection of striking pictures with her father. Neera says, “Tears of happiness filled my eyes. I put the boards against the wall and lay down on the bed. That night, there was no nightmare. I got up dry and fresh the next morning, after a long time” (LS 145).

Neera is also amazed that her normal and regular life with her father has not become different at all, in spite of the ‘Newcomer’, and gradually her approach changes towards her stepmother. Neera says, “The dark shadows in the house seemed a little less menacing to me after that day” (LS 145). On the commemoration of her mother’s demise, Neera melancholic but finds music in rhythms and rhymes of sitar

As I looked at Sallu. I could almost physically feel the hard walls around my heart soften and start to melt away.

Time moved on. It was now exactly one year since Sallu had come to our house...I also felt the big turnaround she had managed inside me (LS 146).

Feeling thrilled and excited, Neera is grateful to her stepmother Sallu, and the sitar reminds her of mother, Neera opens a bangle box that she had bought for her mother and gifts it to Sallu mother, who without any delay wears her new gift. A hug is exchanged and Neera says ‘Thank you Sallu Ma’. The beginning of new life has started and Sallu’s endurance has rewarded. A mother is given her rightful place. Dr. Renu Malaviya writes

In extreme traumas or even in the case of consistent unresolved often ignored or ‘invisible-to-the-society’ traumas, the child/adolescent tends to lose the drive to continue to shape oneself and take advantages of new emerging circumstances. They tend to lose the

‘power-within’ to fight the difficult circumstances. Books for healing ‘carry’ the child readers and often help him reignite the ‘power-within’ (27).

The tale encourages readers the good figure of the mother, and rejects the ambivalent feelings of children towards stepmothers. Earlier step mother was regarded as other, as Ann Alson writes in *The Family in English Children’s Literature*, “The imposter mother in literature constitutes a threat to the family. Children’s literature constantly warns children about these dark figures” (23). But here the writer glorifies the character of the step mother in order to relieve the children from these kind of images.

Feeling Good (Meera Bhatnagar)

This is a story of Kanita Bali, the best all-rounder of the academic year, who returns home and meets with a horrifying accident that leaves her without a leg. Her world comes to a stop as she thoughts of volcanoes exploding and gulping her in it. Her parents try to keep her calm. A professional story teller is appointed to revitalise her sprits and each day they have a session of stories. Kavita though listen these stories doesn’t respond to them. Perna Lal, the story teller tells her a story of a tiny frog that accidently injures his leg. The story was pertinent and appropriate and it inspires Kavita, and suddenly she tell her parents to help her walk again.

The story struck her thoughts like a pillar of strength....For a change when the story ended, Kavita had a broad smile on her face. She lifted her hand for the first time in many days, and holding Perna’s hand said, ‘Thank you for coming’ (LS 155).

Johanna Slivinske and Lee Slivinske writes in *Storytelling and Other Activities for Children in Therapy*

If a traumatic event has occurred, experiencing the trauma again through reading, interpreting, and retelling of the stories allows the child to reprocess the traumatic event in a protective setting, which aids in resolving issues and emotions surrounding the trauma. Healing can occur as children learn identifying with characters in stories that enable them to recover from traumatic experiences (12).

Slowly and gradually with practice, she recovers and learns to walk again. This is how stories work in the life of children. Life becomes something to look forward to again, and she feels good. This a simple story that brings hope or at least fix anything awful that can happen in one's life.

The Waves (Indira Baghchi)

An exciting narration, a well knitted story that takes one by wonder, about how one escapes from a sudden adversity. It describes a family adventure. The two children Rachit and Mini enjoy in the steamer sailing from Kolkata to the Andaman Islands for a vacation. They are happy under the blue sky and the vast oceans. The last evening of their adventure results in grief and suffering on the island, and the sea and the skies look menacing and threatening. The family retires to bed only to wake up to the babbling of waters and uproar of the sea. A tsunami has struck and all are asked to rush to the adjoining airport to leave straightaway. Within no time they leave the lethal waters they find that the earth is spread with human and cattle debris floating everywhere. Rachit is frightened and the images of destruction do not diminish away. The school teacher intervenes to bring out his old self again and tells tales of gallantry and heroism so that he loses his inner fears. At the end of the story Rachit chooses to go with Aunt Benu back to the islands to provide support to the homeless. He is stunned

at the degree of damage that the children are surviving with and it reliefs him to be of help.

All made a circle and sang, ‘*we shall overcome*’. At the moment, Aunt Benu realised that Rachit had overcome the fear of the killer waves (LS 168).

***Mission Affection* (Nupur Awasthi)**

One more narrative of tragedy, grief and affection, Aranyadeve is shaken at his father’s death. Life turns to as usual but for Dev it is never the similar again. He roams here and there, and one day he is drawn towards a house, with a board ‘Aashraya’ outside it, and at the entry of the house was a cradle with a bell. Dev comes to through in charge of the house how all the little babies there have been orphaned by one vicious turn of fate or other.

Dev is dazed and decides to help out. Every week, he makes it a routine to go and support in the orphanage and that prominently boosts his spirits. He feels privileged to have received father’s love and the reliability and safety of family.

In comparison to those he felt lucky to have enjoyed the luxury of his father’s and mother’s love-and to have someone to call his own. All of a sudden, a resolve arose in his mind, unfolding layers of calm in his heart and spreading a warm affection all over him. Dev had made up his mind (LS 176).

Dev involves his friends in contribution to the organisation and in return Dev heals in his ‘Mission Affection’

***Suresh’s Springtime Blossoms* (Debashish Majumdar)**

A striking story, talks about Suresh, who has lost his mother to cancer at the young age of ten. After three years, with all good intentions, his father remarries Mala who has a

twelve year old son named Prakash. Suresh and Prakash relish and adore each other's company and are brothers in spirit, but when their father leaves the country for work, the true colours of stepmother Mala emerge. Mala takes attention of every need of her son spending on Suresh presence irritates her. Prakash is aggrieved at this conduct. Suresh has become introverted the pain of being loathed is agonizing. He recollects how generous his mother was and he misses her presence. He finally discloses his sorrow to Prakash who realises and commiserates with him. Suresh speaks to his mother, "How would you feel if I were to lose you... and be treated in the same way like ...had I lived with Suresh and his mum?"(LS 182). Suresh looks at his mother's collection of books he picks up a book from library titled 'Some Mothers are Born Late' "Suresh could easily identify with Roger, in this story- his feelings, misery and yearnings" (184), he happily passes it on to Mala and in good characteristic she read it. The book make such an imprint on Mala that she welcomes Suresh as her son with enthusiasm and happiness. She felt sad not being responsive to the child's sentiments and needs. Mala affirms herself fortunate and blessed to be the proud mother of two beautiful sons. Mala says

"this little picture story has taught me a wonderful lesson. We must love those who have no place to go to, no one to turn to...even for a sprinkling of love... 'Some Mothers are Born Late... Mala's eyes were moist as she spoke May b I am one such mother... don't you agree?' Suresh felt grateful. He was sure that he could see lucidity through his mind's eye-his spring time love blossoms" (LS 185).

The story brings to light a traumatic situation and offers a solution which is natural logical and convincing. Children often have to face truths which can be devastating. Stories such as these teach you to look for solutions which are extrinsic as well intrinsic.

***On a Summer's Day* (Mira Garg)**

The story talks about time being the chief healer of anguish, grief and personal loss. The story is a third person narrative of a little girl, who observes her mother falls into gloom and pain of ordeal, only to be rescued by the loving comfort of family. The narrative is all about significance of family. Later after realisation the mother tells them that God makes life beautiful with small compassions. And the children too comprehend that their mother's essential being is regenerated again.

***A Bigger Win* (Kiran Kasturia)**

Divorce and separation is another life changing event for individuals and this issue is being dealt in children's stories. Children of divorce have less self-confidence, misbehave, and can be academically challenged. Sweety's world is devastated and crushed the day she returns home to discover that her father has fight with her mother and he is no more staying with the family. She is about to disclose her selection for the Inter School Badminton Championship news that especially her ex-national champion father would have been delighted to hear. But things went otherwise. She grieves and suffers silently, finally gives up going to school, uncomfortable and humiliated to face scornful crowd. She disclosed everything to her close friend Medha. She emphasizes Sweety to absorb in school and play and continue her normal routine again. Sweety works hard for the matches, but she feels disappointed and performs poorly on absence of her mother in the spectators. Just then her mother's voice from the spectators gave her new strength to play. "The cool wave of satisfaction swept through her tense nerves, relaxing her. Ma and Pa might have their differences – but they both loved her, didn't they? Sweety smiled to herself contentedly" (LS 204). To her amazement, the familiar voice of her father was also audible there. Sweety is pleased and joyful she realised the

love of her parents in spite of the differences. The story, though simple in plot, reflects the effect of divorce and separation of parents upon children.

***Barkha's Dairy* (Divya Jain)**

Contemporary society has many issues which has to be addressed, insecurity has increased for children and young adults. Children fell prey of juvenile prostitution, child abuse, child pornography and child trafficking. Growing awareness of these issues has extended and writers for children has also bring forth these issue in children's stories in order to create awareness among children. *Barkha's Dairy* is a very appropriate and significant story of sexual molestation that has become a domestic and everyday issue.

Frances b Cacha writes in, 'Book Therapy for Abused Children'

Girls in the middle grades may be sexually abused by their fathers or other male relatives. They are told frequently to keep it "their little secret." As the girls are taught to obey and respect the adult family members they are caught in a dilemma; they seem to have no avenue of escape.....Re-gardless, these children are in desperate need of psychological assistance. At the present time, just as with physical abuse, there is no way of identifying all the children who are subjected to sexual abuse (200).

The story is a portrayal of a young girl Barkha who has lost her mother. After losing her father too she became helpless and extremely petrified. She falls prey to her tutor Khanna Sir's 'Feel Good' game. He asks her not to reveal their 'game' to anybody else.

An excerpt from a hidden diary mentions

[Emphasized in Text] *This game is very important for you,' he said. That's why God took your mother away. If you play this game regularly, things will be alright. You will become good again. But the*

rule of the game is you cannot talk about it anyone. If you do, something can happen to your father too. This is a secret game between us to make things right with you. Swear over your mother you won't tell anyone' (LS 214).

Barkha hates his tutor's tactics and feels sick with his advances. She is tormented and fearful. Her adored cousin Anu and her mother rush to help her. Barkha's conduct has changed she feels strangely at every hug and pat from Anu. "Barkha jumped out of bed, swirled around and shouted, 'DON'T YOU DARE TOUCH ME!'" (LS 208). Barkha discloses the reasons and had written, "[Emphasized in Text] *but as she put her arms around me, I was reminded of the 'Feel Good' game. I didn't like that*" (214). The real story reveals when Anu read a Barkha's private diary. Anu provokes and addresses Barkha and shared with her experiences where she had been fostered by her mother to fight back. She encourages Barkha and every girl child,

'You can and you will. I know you are afraid, but I want you to face what you are afraid of. And you can do it. Headlong collision with fear is what I believe in' (LS 216).

Supported and with a new determination, Barkha screams for help, both the girls throw the teacher out of the house. The writer emphasises that children who feel such kind of incidents should speak out.

No, not at all! But she did say that I should remain more alert, alert, and next time, God forbid, if a situation like this were ever to arise, I should raise an alarm. I came out wiser and stronger after that incident. Then a few months ago, I did a two week 'self-defence' course. Just let anyone touch me now, I'll set him right!' (LS 215).

Such kind of stories provide information and at the same time provide inner strength to speak about to children who are victims of evil.

***The Blaze* (Swapna Dutta)**

The Blaze is a story based on the ever customary Hindu Muslim differences it and focuses between two friends who are far removed from such distinctions. But they have been unwillingly directed towards a breach. Sam a Hindu and Sammy a Muslim have similar opinions and ideologies even their names are same. Sam is knocked down ruthlessly, both the boys are victim of the huge and raging mob. “Sammy had been knocked down..... he had read about violence and riots but had never seen them happen before his eyes” (LS 243). At the end, safe and energised, the two friends make their way back home as the turmoil appears to have ended. These boys were inquisitive they questioned, “It was so unnecessary – this entire riot and fire! Why couldn’t people settle their differences quietly and try to see each other’s point of view” (LS 248). They promise each other to remain firm against such irrational violence and play their part in preventing any type of event communalism. For children know better, they do not breed any bias or differences. They do what their hearts tell them is right.

The two friends looked at each other intently. Children have an innate sense of what is right. Love and friendship comes to them as easily as breathing. It is outsiders who plant seeds of hatred in later life. And these seeds take root-and here was the result! Destruction, death and misery! (LS 249).

The story is a ride of pain and pleasure, a ride that in spite of the turbulences leaves one feeling light and heady. The writer of the story tried to show children should be aware of this issue and should not indulge in such menace

Those who have seen communal rites from up close, can recreate the unpleasant pictures a small spark can flame.

According to Roberts and Crawford (2008) “reading a book in which the characters deal with stress can be timely and helpful, providing a number of literature alternatives allows children to choose what they want to read. Through exposure to non-traditional books, children can produce a positive change in self-concept, reading readiness, and achievement” (18).

Stories have a quality that can touch our souls, hearts, they can reach us, move, and heal, at many stages. Children mostly can be benefited significantly from hearing and reading therapeutic stories newly produced for our contemporary time and place. These stories written for specific challenging behaviours in young children, help to calm an over aggressive child; to helping groups of children develop awareness; to helping to heal the pain and fear caused by sexual abuse. In every example the ‘power of story’ makes a significant difference, a significant healing. There is an amount of hope that is splattered generously in all these stories.

World over, attempts by children’s writers and therapists towards developing a wealth of reading material for children is underway. In India, writers such as Premchand may not have heard the term ‘book therapy’, yet had churned out excellent reading material in Hindi, not only for adults but for children, which helped and increasing the positive self-esteem and mental health for readers (Malaviya 23).

Thus book therapy and book reading help children to paraphrase their thoughts and evolve a better conceptualisation of their world. Dr. Renu Malaviya writes in ‘Reading to Recover: Reaching out to the Child in Traumatic and other Difficulties Psycho-Social Situations’

The traumatised person has to induce to move out of the impermeable cocoon the personal is weaving around oneself. When a child's physical and psycho-social environment has major conflicting situations which could be family based (death, child abuse, child neglects, bullying, etc.); society based (terrorism, violence, discrimination), environmental based, manmade or natural (floods, tsunami, earthquake, poisonous gases from factories, etc.), the child has to learn to re-adjust not only to oneself but to the changing environment. Books which facilitate this, provide underline strategies for understanding others in new context (27).

These stories are well crafted by these writers and can offer a voice for those children who may feel alone, children who feel they are not understood, children who feel isolated in grief, and children who feel that they have no source of support. Roberts and Crawford in 'Real Life Calls for Real Books: Literature to Help Children Cope with Family Stressors' says, "Most children enjoy and engage more fully with authentic literature that is crafted well and addresses challenging issues within the framework of a well-constructed story line" (16). These are crafted straight around stressful situations, and all the stories mentioned above address real-life situations, addressing a wide range of age levels, and evoke real feelings. They allow children to see painful changes or losses, disappointments, and other emotional stresses and to consider possible ways to solve problems. In *Using Trauma-Focused Metaphor and Stories* Pernicano states,

The impact of therapy stories is both cognitive and emotional, some metaphors hypnotically going in the back door to tap into right-brain emotional and sensory processes. It is often during the reading of a story or in the weeks following this that a family, child, or caregiver

experiences a breakthrough, gains and acts on new insight, or experiences emotional growth. Attachment (sensed safety, love, and felt security) develops in the right-brain limbic areas, particular in the amygdala, and therapy stories seem to have the power to emotionally trigger interpersonal awareness and relational change (20).

These stories address children to find and achieve a basic human need to discover the truth, to understand, to find an explanation for painful experiences, and even to challenge injustice or lack of meaning. Through connecting with the story and identifying with the character, the young reader is able to visualise the tactics used to help the character, master his/her problems and overcome obstacles. The child then applies these strategies to overcome his/her own stumbling blocks in life. As we have seen in the above stories. Roxanne Carlson and Nancy Arthur writes in their paper 'Play Therapy and the Therapeutic use of Story'

The fictional characters in books are therapeutically offered as models of positive, adaptive behaviour with which the child can identify....This provides children with a corrective experience and gives them the opportunity to apply what they have learned from the stories to their own real-life situations (216).

In all the stories above we find the course of action silently stresses upon inculcating trustworthiness, honesty, tolerance, respect, sense of fair play, responsibility and empathy through conflict resolution and release of emotional burden with the progression of the plot. Hope and optimism absorbed through the plots reflect in positive thinking. The characters and the situations in the plot lead to emotional catharsis or unblocking of the emotions amounting to attitudinal change.

The literature for children or the stories above paraphrased and analyzed may be used for developmental issues such as safety issues, school-related issues such as bullying, self-esteem, new sibling at home, bedtime fears and so on and it can be used to cover other issues such as adoption, AIDS and HIV, child abuse, conflict resolution, death, disability, floods, riots, tsunami, aftermath of divorce, sexual abuse, suicide and so on.

Stories also may make children feel less alone in the world. This may be especially true in instances of child abuse, substances abuse, or domestic violence. In these instances, children are likely to believe that they are not only ones that suffer from these particular problems. They may be relieved to find that other people experience the same issues. This may allow them to divulge or share more information about their own situations....books and stories may also be used to educate children regarding appropriate behavior. These may be utilized to address various issues such as “abuse, violence, social skills, anger management, sex education, separation, divorce and death” (qtd in Slivinske 13).

Bibliotherapy is very productive in children, a grief-stricken child who reads a story about another child who has lost a parent will obviously observe him/herself less alone in the world. Ira Saxena in a key note address in an international conference on, “Book Therapy, Reading is Healing” notes

AWIC reached out to the distraught children with gift of books and setting up small libraries during Gujarat Earthquake in 2001 and the Tsunami affected children of Nagapattinam and Andamans in the Indian Ocean for ‘Reading to Recovery’ initiated by IBBY in Southeast Asia. The entire motivation of reading promotion activities

underwent modification with the launch of AWIC Book Therapy Project after terrorist violence of 26/11 in 2008. A series of Workshops for Book Therapy sought pragmatic solutions to sensitise the creators' of literature on one hand and facilitate a simple procedure in reading with the use of selected books, on the other, for structuring hope and healthy mental development of children (6).

These stories we can say are influential tools to heal trauma and make a positive difference to human lives. During natural or man-made disasters, literature for children offer relief from shock and trauma. In all these stories we find that almost all the protagonists or the main characters suffer and at the end they find solace. Ramendra Kumar writes,

Stories can help in making the child realise that he/she is not alone in facing trauma in the world. There are many others caught in circumstances similar to his/hers or trapped in situations worse than those he/she is experiencing. The child is thus able to empathise with the protagonists who are in a similar predicament and draw solace, succour and strength. Such tales also help him/her in getting out of the 'why me' and 'poor me' syndrome and look at things in the proper perspective (30).

These stories will have positive results for the target readers, Pat Pernicano in *Using Trauma-Focused Therapy Stories: Interventions for Therapists, Children, and their Caregivers* writes

Stories seed possibilities and new ways of looking at things, and the emotional identification with story characters triggers memories of past relationships with abusive others. Stories address barriers to

change and suggest solutions, some of which are processed non-consciously and others that relate more directly to thinking and behaviour. At times therapy story may serve as the guide for a goal-directed task such as trauma narrative work (19).

We can employ *bibliotherapy* as an expression to offer guidance and resources required by children to firmly find a way to coping and healing. Our survival rests within the lives of our children. We need to offer them problem-solving skills, as well as unlimited possibilities. *Bibliotherapy* is a means we can use to build confidence and hope into the lives of children. These tales are interlaced with a delicate fabric of love, joy and hope creating a literature that is lasting, endearing and eternal. Today when child is passing through far threatening times, when the relationships are becoming ever so flimsy and delicate, when love and connect between hearts and minds is being sacrificed at the altar of success, it is time for us storytellers to reach out and make a difference. It is time for us to create a literature which is contemporary in theme but eternal in time, which heals hearts and above all resurrects hope. Wendy M. Smith and D' Arezzo writes,

Selecting literature that depicts children from many social classes, cultures and races allows children to see themselves in the stories they are reading. Understanding the nature of violence and abuse is important in helping children realize that it happens in all families, all places in the world, and we are all impacted by it in one way or another. Issues of violence can be difficult to talk and think about, but when we open up discussions about readings that are powerful, children recognize they have a safe place in which to discuss their thoughts, experiences and feelings, and develop an understanding of

advocacy for others. If carefully and thoughtfully done by the teacher or other adults, children will be provided with a sense of control and hope (17-18).

There are stories in abundance written by Indian writers which may heal children. Writers currently have target readers and focus on a particular aspect which need to be addressed. Earlier Indian writers did not focus purposefully on children but we can say we find a touch of excellence for children when we read Children's Literature.

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Chapter 5

Conclusion

Let us give our children hope. Let's fill them with stories that tell them, over and over again, that peace is important, possible, worth striving for. Let's give them stories that allow them to understand the differences that separate us, to experience the humanity that connects us (Bauer n.p).

Children's Literature encompasses multifaceted associations between three components, the literature, the children and the adult critic, because childhood and 'child' are challenging to define. Though the notion of 'children's literature' faces problems related to its definition, it is often accepted and discussed by critics of the genre. As discussed in detail children's literature is not clearly defined as mentioned in the first chapter of this study. 'Child' has been used in this current study from the age of eight to sixteen and teenagers are accommodated with in this term. 'Children's Literature' used in this study has many facets. It discusses the problems faced by children in the spheres of society, it instructs and makes them aware of they being children; science throws light on children's literature and ecological consciousness, liberates child, gives him freedom through adventure, improves wit and makes children 'curious to know things (world)' through detective stories, and lastly provides resolution to conflicts which are with in the mind of child and attempts to satisfy psychological and emotional needs. In this regard we can say children's literature conveys and is designed to teach children how to become active members of society and maintain holistic interaction with society in which he/she lives. The main functions of children's literature are socialisation and education. Children's literature is written

by adults to forward information which is important for a child to learn in order to become a functioning member of the society.

There is a well-developed literary criticism in children's literature in west where as in India we lack a literary critical discipline. There is a need of such discipline meant entirely for children. In India literature for children is recent phenomenon, and literary criticism on children's literature has not developed yet.

In the second chapter I tried to focus on the importance of classical children's literature of India in connection with global classical children's literature and contemporary children's literature and survey how classical literature shaped the contemporary children's literary scene and how gradually 'children's stories' or 'children's writing' as a specific genre emerged in Indian context, particularly in English. It also provides some light on children's literature in Indian regional languages and gives clear overall understanding about the Indian children's literature and its roots. Throughout the globe literature for children abounds with retelling and adapting the accustomed stories of a culture like folktales, legends, stories of religious scriptures, stories about historical and fictional characters celebrated for their valour or holiness, adventure or mischief. India's classical literature and oral tales have played a vital role in the development of children's Literature in India. The existing oral tradition of India present from generations is now available in printed form. Michelle Superle writes, "This influence, which has had an impact at least equal to that of the ancient Sanskrit texts on the development of Indian Children's Literature, began in the colonial period. By the time the British arrived there were well-established traditional narratives in circulation, both written and oral" (21). These stories serve important literary and social functions, inducting its readers into social, ethical and aesthetic values of producing culture.

India appears to continue to remain fascinated with moralistic and didactic stories like *Amar Chitra Katha* on one hand and colonial inherent stories on the other. But Publishers and organisations are trying to set new trends and create space for realistic stories. Realistic fiction is the product of social and economic changes.

We cannot deny totally the absence of didactic and moralistic literature for children. As Manasi Subramaniam writes “walk into any bookstore in India and the children’s section will be filled with dozens of different retellings of the *Panchatantra* and the *Jatak*. While this is a powerful and important shift, it has its disadvantages. Contemporary, original children’s writing in India seems to have taken a backseat” (32). “The didactic influence of these ancient texts and the oral tradition seems to affect the contemporary novels in this sample, many of which do prescribe current strategies for “intelligent living,” now on a national scale” (Superle 20). Didacticism and pleasure has close proximity with children’s stories. As Darton et al writes, “Many teachers would reject didactic literature with a moral or ethical message that is too overt. Yet children’s literature has always been intended to instruct as well as to delight” (qtd. in Sipe 124). There is a noticeable shift from didactic and aesthetic to more pedagogic and social relevant issues in children’s literature in India. Although the writers borrowed techniques and literary forms from west but they shaped it to suit the local colour and setting. Literature for children does not remain only in the periphery of aesthetic pleasure but has crossed the threshold and focused on the minute as well as grave current social issues prevalent in society related to children. Ira Saxena writes about the growing reasoning capacity of the modern child and role of the realistic stories for children,

Today the intellectual level of the child has improved. He is definitely more aware and more exposed to the world around him. His thinking

is logical and permeated with scientific temper. In towns and cities, parent-child relations have undergone a change, sex roles are changing. Children in particular are extremely involved with the growing society. Anything away from present trends seems distant to them. Real life stories are an answer to their individuality with entertainment. Anything deprived of casual relation and reasoning is unacceptable. Even the underlying ideals and values bear no meaning for them until its pros and cons are weighed and found convincing. Today's children know what they want (16).

The question arises here if the children are given adult positions, is the child's innocence lost because of the narratives/stories which make him aware of the social evils in advance before they enter in to the adult world or is he or she be able cope up with this situation. The situation is unclear and it needs to be clarified in order to get answers. Literature should not obstruct and mar the innocence of a child. At times the child does not like to be with characters he finds identical to him in the story, and may like to be in an imaginary world. In Adventure and mystery novels the child steps out from confined places, and no longer remains restricted to social, geographical, economic and socio-political spaces. Children's literature does produce such literature where the child finds solace in dream lands, magical elements that are entertaining and thrilling, and captivates him to live in a world of mystery and adventure in novels.

Research has been regarded as a potential instrument for bringing about improvement in any human activity. It is particular so in the field of children's literature where a growing generation is involved and publishers are required to be familiar with the latest trends and problems of children's literature. It is encouraging to note after independence few research works have been conducted in Indian children's literature. The main focus

and emphasis of this research is that child has a separate entity and recognition. The origin of children's literature is in oral forms, folk tales and religious tales. It has a long heritage and tradition. It has been felt imperative to encourage the workers in the field to conduct active research by focusing on the strengths and weaknesses of children's literature and identify the actual needs and requirements of children in the emerging world of science and technology, mass and electronic media, social troubles and turmoil's. The findings of such research studies could provide future directions, insights and guidelines for the development of children's literature in India. It is gradually being realised that adequate and objective research studies are essential for bringing about desired development of children's literature in its various aspects and dimensions.

There are number of themes and trends involved in different categories of Indian children's literature in English ranging from fantasy, realistic, sci-fi, informative, didactic, historical, folk, mythical, fables, environmental, and so on. The study focused mainly on the themes which are related to current situations prevailing in Indian society. The contemporary children's literature on children and childhood in India has concentrated on issues of child labor, preservation of ecology, breaking stereotypes of presenting the girl child and the themes which have holistic developmental attitude towards children. Children's literature in India is a mirror of contemporary social problems in India and are delivered to children through literature. These new themes are being reflected in Indian children's literature.

In conclusion, therefore, Indian Children's Literature today has considerable variety. The authors have explored almost every category ranging from myths and classics-retold to adventure, fantasy, stories of realism, both historical and biographical. Their approach to the themes is in keeping with the direct approach adults

are using nowadays in their relationship with their children. And with children absorbing more and more of the adult problems, the 'happily-ever-after' tag has been replaced by a more realistic rounding off (Menon66).

After 1970's literature for children in India developed and addressed contemporary issues and themes, intermingled with recurrent ethics and values. The shift from traditional literature to social concerns peculiar in Indian society like problems of untouchability, caste, communal tensions and riots figure in much of our contemporary children's fiction. The other issues like disparities between rich and poor, the problems of the differently abled, child labour, environmental degradation are also being highlighted. "Apart from those in detective and adventure fiction, however, one can hardly locate in children's literature any overtly larger cause that completely outside what affects the child protagonist directly. However, in rare instances, some injustices in the outside world provoke the child protagonist sufficiently in order for her/him to mastermind and lead a crusade on behalf of communal harmony, social equality, human rights, gender-sensitivity or some equal important cause. Such socially conscious campaigns, therefore, are more serious and crucial in the larger context than the voice of individual protests she/he registers in order to improve her/his own quality of life in an adult-dominated world" (Sen 180).

Child has a blank subconscious mind, and has nothing in store which he/she may relate with the outside of his/her mind, and does not have enough experience to know the world. Hence his discernment of human experience contrasts with adults'. "Childhood is the time to learn bridging the immense gap between inner experience and the real world" (Emmatty4). Children's literature conditions child through the stories in order to make him aware of society. As Weinreich claims, "the child ... must be regarded as

a necessary condition which the author consciously or unconsciously relates to in the creative process” (127).

These stories have fundamental ideologies and communicates individual hope. Thus contemporary literature for children is woven around contemporary issues. In order to do justice to the child Indian writers for children are more focused on child centered stories. These stories have provided new dimensions to the genre. Children’s literature has become a platform for introducing children to a world as it really is.

Speedy economic development has made India affluent, but spiritual discomfort and frustration have spread extensively, and many social difficulties and problems are prevalent. Adults don’t want children to fall prey to these issues which can halt the progress of the young fertile mind. Children’s Literature can work as a catalyst in addressing these issues in this regard. This study tries extensively to bring forth and highlight these issues. Children’s literature increases vocabulary or other language oriented enhancement as most parents/teachers have a notion that children’s literature, or children’s literature are not mere stories to read, but allows them to speak their voices, comfort them mentally, give them space in imaginary worlds; like any other discipline. Children’s literature is changing day to day, and new themes are being incorporated in it. Writers are conscious that they should not restrict children to imaginary world only. The imaginary world does not remain once the child faces reality. Imaginary world can expand the horizon of imagination in child and at the same time socially relate through narratives and make them conscious of the society they live. Adults should not shield the negative aspects of the society, as there are chances if given early, the child may become aware about them. So in this way children’s literature promotes understanding too. It has been seen in children’s literature, new themes such as divorce, the loneliness of the aged because of the nuclear family system,

children running away from home or refusing to go school because of bullying, suicide and sexual harassment appear at length. The themes had been considered unsuitable for children's literature and were taboo until recently, but large number of books and stories which provide information such about problems and make children aware are available at present. Contemporary children's literature use tactics to initiate children with such problems. Dr. Ira Saxena writes,

In fiction, authors depict situations, attitudes, problems and experiences, which are similar to those in the lives of readers enabling them to identify with the characters and understanding the complexity of action reactions. The process alleviates hang-ups, informs viewpoints, makes them understand themselves and others eventually softening stress, in other words offering Book Therapy in the process (8).

The tendency today in India is to introduce serious subjects for younger children. The aim is probably to create early awareness about social problems like violence, drug crimes, divorce and the new family structures. A new range of themes, related to sexual abuse alcoholism are appearing in the literature for children. "They [writers] forget that their readers are, in the main, highly perceptive, intelligent children who are aware of being surrounded by family planning posters, talkative, indiscreet relatives, indifferent teachers, bullying classmates, quarrelling parents, none of these unsightly things can be wished away, or concealed under masses of candy floss words" (142). These books and stories aim to help a child cope with life from his earliest years, to understand risks and find survival. Nita Berry writes in her article, 'The Loss of Innocence, Theme: Are Children's Books Still an International Issues'

Let us give children frank stories that reflect their worries and heartaches-but let us also give them a world which dares to dream, where there is still beauty and wonder, where timeless values are not discarded forever and where role models still exist. Let us write a literature of hope that reflects faith in their resilience. Perhaps then we may give back in some measure their lost childhood-before our social fabric falls apart and it is too late (34).

Only recently social and psychological complications faced by children have begun to find their place in the Indian children's literature. Major and sensitive issues like divorce and violence are being highlighted in the fiction of India. Social taboos like child abuse and sexual pervasiveness and related problems are being covered by these writers intensively. As Radhika Menon,

How else do we equip children to deal with death, divorce, class and gender inequities, communal and religious tensions, AIDS, teenage pregnancies, sexual abuse, the dangers of consumerism ... the list is endless. If the world has to be seen and portrayed to children in the light of the present day through books, taboos have to be breached and new styles and devices (n.p).

We can say that Literature is dedicated to the growing adolescence and these sensitive teenage years, which hang between childhood and adulthood can be considered an unsure, and often affected with physical, mental and social worries. These writers could provide an insight into relationships and teenage problems. On Indian setting Vrinda Kumble writes,

The first step is to encourage writing and publishing for children here, in our own land. Our readers deserve honest books that squarely face

the realities of life in India today that relate the readers' own situations and surroundings that introduce them to other ways of life.

In our own and other countries, that entertain and make them laugh, that refuse to talk down and try to "improve" them (7).

Apart from these themes writers mostly tend to provide stories from their own culture. There is a growing agreement among the writers of Indian children's literature that the use of texts representing the child's culture will help the child develop better attitude towards over all development. If children do not find characters alike in stories they may feel that they are of less importance to the world they live in. They feel prejudiced and suffer the grief of being marginalised, and isolated. It affects their confidence and sensitivity. The cultural symbols are more important and necessary in children's books.

Rudine Sims Bishop writes in *Kaleidoscope: A Multicultural Book list for Grades K-8*

Literature is one of the vehicles through which we adults transmit to children our values, our attitudes, our world views, our philosophies of life. The cumulative message inherent in years of schooling in which children seldom see anyone in a book who resembles themselves and who shares their cultural values, attitudes, and behaviours, or in which children see themselves portrayed as laughable stereotypes, is that these children do not count and are not valuable by society at large. We should not be surprised, therefore, when such schooling also results in negative attitudes towards that society and institutions, and to literature itself (xiii-xiv).

Dr Shoba Sinha writes in her article, "Cultural Understanding through Stories"

It is important that the stories are about characters from diverse cultures. If the details about the culture depicted in a story are not

authentic, they can mislead the readers instead of creating opportunities for cultural appreciation and understanding (124).

It has been observed that an awareness and attentiveness regarding children's literature is growing in every country throughout the globe. Literature is the product of an age. Children's literature in India, as in every other country, is influenced by many changing social factors. Children's literature reflects the standards and beliefs of societies and communicates these standards to children. Adults are more aware now that children's literature is a part of the mainstream literature. Like adult literature, it is worthy to think about what are the functions of children's literature and what it delivers upon children. Among publishers the importance of literature for children is evident. Now children's literature is rapidly becoming a field in itself. Indian children's literature is now moving towards a significant leap forward. A good number of writers, young and old, have devoted themselves to writing for children. Number of publishing houses have started publishing books for the young readers. And few Government organisations have been developing and bringing out books and journals for children. With a view to bringing about improvement in human endeavour, research is regarded as a potential instrument or a necessary tool to accelerate the pace in the desired direction. It is only since a few decades attempts have been made for conducting research studies in the field of children's literature. There is much scope in conducting a survey kind of research in this field particularly urban rural reading habits among children and reading materials available for both. Research can also be conducted at individual level of writers. Conducting research at age group level, researchers should go deep into the field of the study and should ponder over, "What children really Read? "Sub Genre's liked by children" "Attitude of children towards reading" "whether they prefer animated stories or reading?" "more realistic or didactic"

The Expansion and growth of Children's Literature is connected to social, educational and economic factors. The publishing trend gives the idea and status of children's literature and it somehow indicates how much has to be added to it in order to gain overall growth. Publishers are mostly interlinked to growth of children's literature. It takes considerable efforts to support the production networks. Children's Literature is more dependent on Publishers as compared to adult literature and one of the most dominant factor is economic factor. Manish Chaudhary writes, "All children's publishers face challenges.... With scattered information about different languages and socio-economic and regional variations, devising a marketing strategy is a hug difficult task.... There is always a tension the financially pragmatic decisions in the present moment" (n.p).

The published Children's literature in India bears a history of hardly 150 years. But the post-Independence, children's literature in India has witnessed a steep growth and development, despite several hurdles. Children's literature in India has now gained a new dimension since it was considered as the sole preacher of didacticism earlier. The shift has changed from didactic approach to deliver more realistic narratives.

The third chapter of this study is "Contribution of publishers to Children's Literature in India" and gives detailed information regarding children's publishing scenario in India. As the second chapter of this study discusses, it is necessary to keep abreast with the distribution of children's books. It is not only the author's but also publisher's decision that decides what children's book are. So in this regard publishers and publishing institutions are involved in the growth of children's books. It is also been observed publishers and institutions who publish children's books encourage writers, artists for developing suitable materials for children. Few conferences and seminars are being conducted in higher institutions like universities and colleges in India. On the contrary

publishers are somehow keen on observing the status of children's literature in India and they organise workshops, national seminars for discussing the problems related to children's literature. Although Indian publishers are making their best efforts to spread their literature but there is lot more to be done. Manasi Subramaniam, writes, "It's industry that is currently showing spectacular growth, and while that could very well change, especially given the ever-dynamic economy of the country, there's plenty of reason to be optimistic for now" (28). The changing scenario of technology and its influence on every aspect of the life and on the children's interests too is apparent. Interests of children has changed towards digital and electronic gadgets. These electronic devices has occupied the keen minds. Writers, publishers and policy makers should come forward to inculcate interesting study material for young minds. S. K. Ghai writes, "We, as the participants in the children's publishing industry must make sure that these hearts and minds are not deprived of their childhood delights of travelling to fantastic lands.... We as publishers and authors have the responsibility to continuously innovate and evolve to make sure that books remain children's best friend" (269-270).

Children's Literature depicts scientific themes significantly and influence child's personal understanding. A good children's science fiction expands awareness in children, broadens children's understanding not only of themselves, but also of the world at large. "Science fiction for children reflects the implications of technology and the possibilities for the future. Through it can be provided a method of developing an awareness of some of the alternatives of the world's future" (qtd. Grady 195). These stories does not scheme to encourage and infuse morals but deal with weighty realities about life. These stories portray distinctive characters or situations from a unique viewpoint, it helps in stretching the minds of children, supply them new ways thinking

about the world. The selected stories are laden with spatial and temporal frame of narratives. The recurrent motifs of these stories are robots, and they permit writers to generate cognitive estrangement; a state that places children in a world dissimilar than their own, letting them interpret or observe from their own point of view. “This is an exciting genre for them. It meets their needs to verbalize societal concerns” (Grady 195). Children’s Literature focussing on science can be a stirring force to cultivate satisfying knowledge and information as well as arouse a sense of curiosity about the natural world. Children become inquisitive and their cognitive level gets enhancement. “Children’s literature supports children’s science learning by offering opportunities to make observations, raise questions, and reach conclusions from evidence in an environment that is meaningful” (Castle and Needham 217).

All the themes are interconnected with each other and are instructional in nature. Somehow there are contradictions too. The questions arises if children’s literature promotes science through literature does it mean eco-consciousness is anti-science. Climate change concepts are being criticized as anti-science. Although my research is focused on explanatory methods, studies should not conceal these questions. These questions need to be answered in comparative studies between the two themes.

Ecology has been a very distinctive features of many ancient literature and literature for children has not remained divorced from this area. Due to the depletion and degradation of forests and its effect on every sphere of life, number of disciplines of knowledge spread awareness of ecology and relation between man and ecology. The approaching ecological imbalance leaves us no option but to escalate eco-consciousness. Literature has continuously been seen through the lens of ecocriticism. Raising consciousness is a very significant function of ecocriticism. Proper selection of children’s stories to inculcate the importance of nature and its preservations plays a

vital role in awareness of ecology among children. “Children’s literature, intertwined with ecological issues, can render the most valuable service to humanity” (Adugna 40). Indian children’s literature in English has created good number of stories themes related to ecology. Children have close connection with nature and love exciting stories about nature. They love and nurture nature instead of exploiting and destroying it. Children do not see nature and ecology in decay instead they are very much close to it, therefore stories about nature and its preservation at an early stage would be more beneficial. Children’s books provide awareness for children and they influence adults and vice versa. The feeling of oneness with ecology has been generated through children’s literature. The threat of possibly destructive human interface with natural environment exists within the stories of children’s literature in English. Such type of stories influence both children’s observation of nature and their response to it and may affect and change the reader’s attitude towards the environment. These stories in a way are ‘role models’ to bring a positive change. Ambika Bhalla writes,

Children’s literature can be an effective medium in kindling the environment-consciousness. Children’s literature with a tinge of ecological issues can help promote eco-consciousness among the future generations....It will be highly beneficial because if children are encouraged to explore nature from the beginning, they will not face the extreme experiences. Children’s literature, intertwined with ecological issues, can render the most valuable service to the humanity in that context (6).

Children’s literature can be an effective medium in kindling environment-consciousness and the ecological issues can help promote eco-consciousness among the future generations. And lastly children’s literature, intertwined with ecological issues,

can render the most valuable service to humanity. Children's literature is purposefully constructed to invigorate the child's interest. Contemporary Indian children's literature in English explores preoccupations concerning gender, sexuality and other current societal problems. Children's literature is very useful for the development of the individual and other skills related to children, and plays a major role in communicating social culture. Gender roles are a vital part of the society. How gender is described in children's books thus contributes to the image children develop of their own role and that of their gender in society. The stories discussed in the study portray more modern gender roles that carry a consciousness of gender equality among young readers. "If traditional Indian girls were dependent, then new Indian girls are interdependent, influencing as well as influenced by a multitude of relationships. Indian women writers create feminist texts for children" (Superle 50). These messages are provided by these stories to encourage and trigger their minds to be more guarded in future. Stories discussed in the section for gender consciousness plays a vital role to make girls active and participate in activities. Female characters have been given wide space and voice by contemporary writers for children. Marion Bauer, in 'Sexism and the World of Children's Books' writes, "Currently there is a healthy emphasis on finding children's books with strong female characters, books which set the right example for girls and young women" (n.p).

Adventure novels in India has distinct themes, and child characters are from different strata's of life; religion, caste, region. Adventure stories reflect real life, and child readers experience real life incidents and adventure of Indian regions.

In the past, there were certain set and rigid ideas about what should be given to children- an element of overprotection. Lately one finds a change in this attitude.... The leaning is more towards realistic

stories to project to the child that literature does reflect real life (Superle 57).

In adventure, mystery and detective novels girls gained place which was absent in the previous literature on India. “New India girl may be seen as a wish-fulfilment fantasy.... One of the most overarching ways by which the novels convey a feminist position in the creation of a central space for girls character, a consistent feature which extends across genre and place of publication” (Superle 46). In these adventure novels Indian children’s authors create striking child characters that readers can appreciate and confidently match with. All are easily identifiable by the child reader. Children are urban, middle class and created in local setting. They are active, take initiatives in any action and portrayed as strong. This is the reason mostly Indian children love to read adventure tales. They take Indian child to places where they have not visited, like forests, national parks and exotic locales. These stories create pleasure by arousing curiosity, to know ‘what will happen next’. They have ample advantages for the growth of children, and gratifies the psychological requirements providing thrill, and pleasant adventurous situations.

The impact of child psychology, as a result of imposing ideas of adult on children have changed the perspective towards children. New socially relevant books are available in market for children. Bibliotherapy is one more theme introduced in this study. Contemporary children’s literature in English has introduced ample stories/books for the bibliotherapeutic purpose. Through bibliotherapy children finds emotional healing that comes from reading books. Although bibliotherapy is a not new concept but writers for children in India have given it shape and used it to tackle the day today social issues. Children find pleasure and hope to identify themselves with the characters facing problems alike. Child finds ‘shared experience’: identify

himself/herself with the character through a series of shared events within the text. There are stories in Indian children's literature which can be used for therapeutic purpose. Ampaugh-Corson writes, "Today's authors discuss death, birth, anger, mental illness, alcoholism, and brutality more explicitly than was acceptable in earlier times. Adults who have not read recently published children's books may find the realism shocking: nevertheless, contemporary realism contributes to children's self-understanding" (7). Usually these stories share cultural oriented problems which have considerable amount of effect on children. It also points out stories of children from the conflicted zones and the areas affected by natural calamities. The issues discussed in these stories are, school related issues such as bullying, self-esteem, bed time fears, child abuse, death, disability, floods, riots, tsunami, aftermath of divorce, sexual abuse and so on. After reading these stories child finds hope and resolution of these conflicts. In this way children's literature develops children cognitively. Lauren Myracle writes "Adults throughout the ages have viewed books as powerful tools with which to guide children's thinking, strengthen their character, shape their behavior, and, more recently, even to solve their problems" (n.p). Biblio therapeutic is more appropriate for young adults because the period is transition period from dependency to independence, autonomy and maturity. Stories of therapy focus on the cognitive development of the target reader, and these stories are written in order to stimulate cognitive development. Literature of children could be more rich and effective if the writer is well versed in psychology, social issues, and skilled in linguistics so that he can use proper words for children, so that literature for children can contribute to children's cognitive, social, linguistic development. Children's literature is convenient in satiating a number of purposes. Used as a resource for language development, most importantly it provides a prospect for depicting various issues related to society as a whole through selective and

appropriate content for targeted readers. Children's literature is instructional in nature whether it is being read as leisure or taught in the educational institutions, and irrespective of class and gender. Children's literature not only entertains the young mind but it is instrumental in communicating knowledge. It is pivotal responsibility of an adult to make children develop an all-round well balanced personality through education or literature and other relevant activities. It would be wrong to say that children's literature should be only instructional. Children's literature should be 'literature' as the term indicates, and the text should be art based, substantiate and answer children's questions of the world through critical reasoning, should elevate the connection between literature and literacy by developing child's craving and passion for reading.

Children, our future generation, are special people. They deserve good books, as books play an essential role in their upbringing and their overall development. They expand their horizon and helps them to come to terms with reality. Children's literature focuses on physical, emotional, mental, social and spiritual aspects of child's personality. Michele Landsberg, writes "Good books can do so much for children. At their best, they expand horizons and instil in children a sense of the wonderful complexity of life. No other pastime available to children is so conducive to empathy and the enlargement of the human sympathies. No other pleasure can so richly furnish a child's mind with the symbols, patterns, depths, and possibilities of civilization" (34).

Indian children's literature has been used to provide instruction along with pleasure. Children's Literature is most effective and stimulating medium through which adults can amuse children, inspire them and guide them. Shift has changed from creating aesthetic pleasure to more relevant social issues. Moral teaching and sermonisation as in the traditional stories will not help. Children need literature suitable to their needs

and mental development and the literature which reflect present day situation in the society. In a way it is time to give children suitable reading material which could be set in native surroundings. Deepa Agarwal eminent writer of children's books in India writes, "They [children] need stories that deal with current issues, science fiction, the adventures of children like themselves and all the different kinds of stories that are being written for children in the other parts of the world"(11). The concepts related to children and their literature has changed. Children's literature does not focus only on traditional idea and views children's literature as a tool for acquiring reading and writing skills.

The instruction cum entertainment mode of creative writing for children is instilled with a noble urge to motivate and inspire young minds to scale new heights of achievement and become socially and morally integrated individuals. In this respect, the role of children's literature is one of great significance as it involves a sense of social and cultural responsibility contributing immensely to the knowledge system. Translations of local language texts into the global language (English) are an enriching experience, enabling a process of cultural cross-fertilization as it introduces the local to the global (Dasgupta n.p).

Children's Literature in India does not depart from depicting stark realities. The literature for children aim to help a child cope with life from an early age and confront them with realities and help find a way for survival. In children's literature in India more has to be done, and as is evident that many approaches and areas have not been covered yet in the children's books.

The research tries to highlight that children's literature in India may inculcate the life skills. Children's literature empower child through information, education and services that enable children to make informed choices in their personal and public life. This caters to and promotes creative and responsible behaviour for a child's personal growth. The stories discussed in the dissertation in a way tries to develop in children, life skills like, thinking skills, social skills and self-management. Some stories focus on thought process and include self-awareness, critical thinking, problem solving, decision making planning or goal setting. This study tries to highlight the dominant themes present in Indian children's literature in English and their impact on the holistic development of children. Children's literature in a way has instructional elements in it that flows from text to the child reader. It has not remained an element of entertainment and aesthetics but has a purpose to serve. It helps and conditions children on how to deal with societal conflicts. Stephens writes, "Writing for children is usually purposeful, its intention being to foster in the child reader a positive apperception of some socio-cultural values which, it is assumed, are shared by author and audience"(qtd. in Hateley 2). Children's stories dealing with self-esteem and self-confidence are meant for inspiration and intend to empower children to make their own choices, be their true selves, and exhibit confidence in who they are and what they like.

It is therefore recommended that children should be encouraged to inculcate reading skills and motivated to read children's literature. It is noticed that children are usually discouraged from reading fiction as it is felt it will distract them from their academic study. Parents should also be involved and encouraged their children to read children's literature rather help in enforcing them to read. They should be made to realize that children's literature too plays a vital role in their overall growth and cannot be viewed as a waste of time. Suitable strategies for drawing children towards literature can be

adopted. Parents can form a reader's club for their children and encourage them to discuss their views on the stories they have read. Children are drawn towards electronic gadgets rather than reading. Some incentives for reading can be given for children and reading through kindle and other means can also be promoted to develop interests in reading so that they may evolve and grow into a holistic personality. Parents and children can also recommend topics to writers and publishers, they would be interested to read about and the writers and publishers should actively involve children's choice and taste in their writing.

1. Children's literature should be recognised as an important and integral part of nation's culture and should be supported by Department of Culture. There should be national awards for writers, illustrators, publishers and translators for children's books in order to promote children's literature. Certainly in this country, authors, publishers and illustrators of children's books need recognition, but quality of the literature must be ensured.
2. Children's literature should form an essential part of integrated child development programme.
3. There should be an apex body for research in children's Literature in India.
4. In order to promote Indian children's Literature Government of India should intervene and provide financial assistance and awards to Publishers for encouragement as it will provide impetus for further action.
5. Every bookshop should give a space for children's section and reading rooms.
6. Books fares for children should be encouraged in rural towns, unless there is a market for children writers will not be encouraged. Mobile van bookshops should run in the rural areas.

7. Effective steps must be taken to draw more writers for children actively into the field
8. Seminars and conferences must be arranged frequently to bring together those interested in the preparation and production of books for children to discuss common problems.
9. Steps must be taken to provide training for writers for children on technological lines.
10. Literature for differently abled and special children is needed.
11. Academic attention is needed for children's literature.
12. For researchers in higher education studies are needed on rural-urban comparison on children's reading interests and survey on representation of gender in texts and children's books and also a survey of children's reading interests across country.
13. Mobile or Movable Children's libraries should visit remote parts of the country periodically and encourage the habit of borrowing books for children.
14. Technology can help in resolving the rural and urban gap in children's Literature and at the same time media can take up more Indian stories for TV adaptations. There is great deal the electronic media can do in inspiring children to read, and promote good books.
15. Translation from regional languages to English and from foreign into Indian languages and vice versa will of course help in developing significantly the scope of Indian and world children's literature.
16. Through Electronic media and social networking sites children's books should be given promotion.

17. Parents, librarians and teachers as facilitators should provide appropriate books for children.

These are some recommendations that have been made to promote children's literature so as to ensure that the recent trends in children's literature contribute to evolve children into holistic human beings and also ensure that the future writers of children's literature use these contemporary trends, in terms of their themes, style, publishing to produce a literature which make fruitful contribution in developing a child's personality.

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