Abstract
ABSTRACT

The pleasure of reading books is considerably reduced in the modern age. Technological development has transformed the life of man drastically. A mechanical and commercially bound existence in the present milieu has resulted in the sacrifice of aesthetic values. This aspect is very conspicuous by discerned in the reading public. Books, in general, abound in such eternal values like truth, moral, character, dutifulness, love, compassion and the brotherhood of man. An avid reader of books derives pleasure of every sort- aesthetic, mental and moral. Francis Bacon says:

“Some books are to be tasted, others to be swallowed and some few to be chewed and digested”.

Literature has its beginnings in the telling of a tale, also termed as ‘oral literature’. Through the ages the stories and the fables were told orally and preserved in memory.

The next step in this literary art took place when stories were written, compiled and published to cater to the needs of children and teenagers. The tales introduced children to various civilizations and culture of distant countries while simultaneously making them aware of the diversity of their own land. In essence, tales teach children a moral lesson and the ability to recognize moral ethos.
Originally, the stories took the shape of religious instruction, to teach the merits of truth, humility and self sacrifice. But with passing of centuries, many of these stories and fables, particularly those of animals, were created and collected separately not for religious instruction but to train the princes in the art of running a kingdom. The motive behind these educative and entertaining stories were to inculcate a deep sense of high moral and social virtues not only in children but also in the adults.

The thesis entitled, “A Comparative and Contrastive Analysis of Vishnu Sharma’s – The Panchatantra Tales and Aesop’s Fables. Attempts to make an in-depth study of the thematic aspect of the renowned fables of two illustrious fabulists of ancient times. The aim of the research is to highlight the aesthetic and moral aspects of these fables that have stood the test of time.

Chapter I: Introduction. This chapter deals with the importance of children’s literature and the need for it in today’s lifestyle. Media, in its varied forms comprising of television serials, animated cartoon shows and mythologies have made both the young and the old passive receptors, as a result of which story books have been relegated to the mice-infested attic. The chapter exclusively deals with the genesis and gradual development of the art of story – telling. Through the ages, both in the east and in the west, when population was less and mostly inhabited the villages, it was customary for people to assemble under the shade of a gigantic tree in the evenings, to listen to the stories narrated by the wise
elders of the village. From sylvan surroundings, the art extended to the king’s court, wherein the gathered courtiers would be equally benefited.

Chapter II: Vishnu Sharma’s The Panchatantra Tales introduces the, Vishnu Sharma whose historical details are not much known. Yet he is acclaimed to have been the accepted model of an ideal teacher. A master story teller and a firm believer in the karma theory, and most of his fables are only illustrations in defence of virtue and dharma.

Comprising of ninety stories The Panchatantra Tales are divided into five systems. The characters in these fables are animals as well as human beings. The settings are situations of everyday life in towns and village, in palaces, farms and forests. It is of immense interest to know that The Panchatantra Tales is one of the first set of stories to have travelled from one civilization to another through the medium of translation.

Chapter III: Aesop’s Fables. This chapter deals with Aesop’s life and the circumstance that told him into a story teller. He hailed from the ancient civilization of Greece, though much of the life and history of the man is clouded in obscurity. The fables of Aesop consist purely of two parts – the symbolical representation and the moral of the fable. The actions of human beings, their plans, thoughts and follies are described under the covering of animals and birds, endowed with speech and reason.
Chapter IV: The Fables Compared. This chapter throws light on the technical devices employed by the story-tellers. Their manner of presentation and the style adopted reveal much uniformity. The use of Aristotelian principles appears in miniature in The Fables, while The Panchatantra Tales is based on the karma theory. The stories meticulously selected, correspond with one another thematically so as to reveal certain similarities and discrepancies when analyzed.

Chapter V: Summation. This chapter is a summary of what has been discussed in all the preceding chapters. Both the fabulist belongs to different cultures and countries but their contribution to the world of literature has been amazingly immense. Writing animal stories are no longer popular in the present century but it must be emphasized that the fable is not extinct as it is believed to be. The tradition still continues in the comics of Walt Disney featuring Mickey Mouse, Tom and Jerry, and that of Hanna Barbera. The aim of the study is to evaluate the intrinsic value of fable as a work of art that would draw both the young and old alike in the centuries to come.

The scope of the researcher in the future is to pursue on the same lines by taking up a study of the mythical aspects in the novels of J.K. Rowling and highlight the novelist's contribution to the moral growth of society.