CHAPTER I

WRITING FOR THE YOUNG READER
INTRODUCTION

Writing for the young readers has not only assumed global importance but also challenged the creativity of the authors, the aesthetics of the artists, and the sympathy as well as excellence of the publishers. In the West, this form of writing for an adolescent reader in the age group of 13 to 19 has been recognized as a special genre, as different from the writing for the adults and small children. They have well-developed literary criticism and a harvest of good literature whereas in India, we have a paucity of such material.

Ruskin Bond, being the first and foremost among the writers writing for the adolescent readers in India has authored a number of good books for these readers. A study of his fiction shows the type of writing that can hold an adolescent's interest. His writings are distinctly Indian. Winner of the prestigious John Lewellyn Award for his maiden novel The Room on the Roof, at the age of seventeen, he has been writing steadily and meticulously for the teenage readers in India. He has successfully overcome the problems faced by an Indian writer writing for the young reader in India.

Children's literature as a distinct area of English Literature has found universal acceptance recently. Its origin can be traced back to the classics of the 18th century England. Though the authors did not write them exclusively for the children, Daniel Defoe's Robinson Crusoe (1719) thrilled the children's imagination. Jonathan Swift's Gulliver's Travels (1820) was read and enjoyed by the children.
Washington Irving's *Rip Van Winkle* (1830), and Lewis Carol's *Alice in Wonderland* (1865) unfolded endless joy for the young readers. Mark Twain's *Adventures of Tom Sawyer* (1876), and *Huckleberry Finn* (1884) and Robert Louis Stevenson's *The Treasure Island* (1883) charmed children with their picaresque adventure, haunting vistas and flawless style.

In the twentieth century, we have a number of classics beginning with O'Henry's collection of short stories, *The Cabbage and the Kings* - 1904, though not written exclusively for children, held great attraction for them. In India, literature flourished thousands of years ago but no line was drawn between children's literature and literature for adults. Our classics contain stories full of myth and fantasy along with adventure, which are the main ingredients of children's literature.

Publishing for children began with the advent of print media. But the Children's Literature in the present context began recently in India. That is why we have a paucity of source material compared to the well-developed literary criticism in the West. Therefore it is necessary to analyze Children's Literature in the context of Western literary criticism in order to highlight the need for such literary criticism in Indian writing in English.

Fiction being the most popular genre with the young readers, it has been chosen for discussion while analyzing the problem of writing for the young reader of Indian English Literature. The serious readers...
of fiction are the teenagers and it is necessary to analyze their reading habits, interests and requirements that help us to connect them with the existing literature available in India.

Children’s literature is different from the mainstream writing for the adults mainly because the readers are a different group of audience with specific needs. They have to be addressed in a different way. For doing this, the author has to understand the psychology of an adolescent and his or her behavior. Creating literature for this special category of reader demands a re-entering into the child's mind, analyzing the psyche filled with the fascinating vistas of adventure and growth.

Adolescence is a stage in life where an individual goes through many changes, physical as well as emotional. He is neither a child nor an adult. It is an impressionable age eagerly absorbing everything good and bad. It also works as a stepping-stone to adult life. Hence the responsibility of the writers is greater while writing for these readers than writing for adults.

In India we have yet to recognize the existence of teenage culture and acknowledge the needs of adolescent children. Their problems have to be addressed directly and sympathetically. Due recognition has to be given to the area of writing called teenage fiction. The phenomenon like the ‘Harry Potter Effect’ can take place in India only if we give due importance to this target group of adolescents.
While writing for the young reader in India the writer is faced with a number of problems. First and foremost is the need to understand childhood and the type of literature that can be called as children's literature. Having analyzed and arrived at the genre one has to recognize the reading child who is able to select the book and enjoy reading it. These readers are grown up and have attained certain proficiency in the language. They are just out of their early childhood and on their way to adulthood. They have certain special needs, which the writer has to recognize and acknowledge. In the West there is a well-developed literary criticism where as in India we have yet to recognize the need for such a literary activity meant exclusively for the teenager.

Another major problem faced by the writer is the language. Though the child has acquired certain amount of proficiency in English language, it is still a foreign language for him. Communicating Indian sensibilities in a foreign language also poses a problem. The writer has to overcome his hesitation in depicting Indian sensibilities in English. He has to accept the language as his own and adopt a descriptive method to create the atmosphere. The language has to be simple and direct. This method is used extensively in the fiction of Ruskin Bond. He has successfully tackled this problem in his writings by creating an atmosphere, purely Indian.

The contemporary trend in the children's literature in India reveals that the writers have a certain hesitation in accepting this child who is mature and is eager to face new challenges of life. The
comparison between the themes handled by the Western writers and the ones handled by the Indian writers reveals a wide gap.

Adventure, romance and mystery form major part of adolescent's reading interests. They also want to know about the realities of life and how to face the challenges. They want to see themselves in the stories. They do not like to be told to do certain things. Talking down to them drives them away. They have to be treated with sympathy and understanding. The writings of Ruskin Bond are good examples of the type of fiction they want to read and enjoy. He is one of the most popular and prolific writers of fiction for the young reader in India.

In his fiction Ruskin Bond deals with the issues that are close to the heart of an adolescent. The recurring themes in his novels and short stories are, travel, adventure, exploring, alienation, loneliness, homelessness, running away from home, human relationships, infatuation, physical attraction, love, friendship, family and parental failure, separation, the pain and pleasure of growing up. On the other hand almost parallel are the themes of nature with the hills, mountains, rivers and forest, trees and birds, which add an extra luster to his stories. Nature comes alive as one of the main characters in his stories.

The survey conducted to assess the reading habits of adolescents in India is encouraging, as the result indicates that majority of them like to read books, especially fiction, during their leisure time. It is the responsibility of the writers to provide them with good books.
THEORY AND CRITICAL APPRECIATION

1.1. DEFINITION OF CHILDREN'S LITERATURE AND CHILDHOOD

The definition of 'children's literature' as a category of books written for a particular reading audience—children, and the existence of which absolutely depends on supposed relationships between the two—the young reader and the book, lies at the heart of this endeavor. Children's literature is created for a specific reason—to bring the book and the young reader together. A purpose or desire therefore dictates the definition of 'children's literature'. It wants to be something in particular, as different from other categories of literature. Its intention is to connect with that reading audience—'children'—with which it declares itself to be genuinely concerned. Hence it is a literature with purpose.

Categorization of Children's Books:

Now that the purpose of children's literature is to connect with the special audience called children, it becomes imperative to analyze the categorization of children's books. Is a children's book, a book written by children or for children? It becomes crucial to know what it means to write a book 'for' children. What if the book is read only by the adults? Will it be still a children's book? What of those books written for adults but read also by children—are they qualified to be called as 'children's literature'? As Townsend puts it:

"Surely Robinson Crusoe was not written for children, and so the Alice books appeal at least as much to grown ups; if Tom Sawyer is
children's literature, what about *Huckleberry Finn*? If the *Jungle Book* is 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.\(^1\)

The categorization and definition of texts becomes important when it comes to children's literature. For a critic it is a necessity, as s/he has to know which books are 'children's books'. For this s/he identifies it in its most fundamental sense, in terms of books which are good for children, especially with emotional and moral values. According to Canadian critic Michele Landsberg,

"Good books can do so much for children. At their best, they expand horizons and instill 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 human sympathies. No other pleasure can so richly furnish a child's mind with the symbols, patterns, depths, and possibilities of civilization".\(^2\)

**Interpretation of Children's Literature:**

The interpretation of children's literature as 'books which are good for children' further indicates that the two constituent terms - 'children' and 'literature' - within the label 'children's literature' are not two separate terms which can be traced back to their original meanings and then reassembled to achieve a greater understanding of what 'children's literature' is. On the other hand they supplement and complement each other's meanings and transform into a different area.
of literary consciousness. In short the 'children' of 'children's literature' are those 'children', not necessarily similar to other 'children' (for instance those who are non-readers of literary works). The 'literature' of 'children's literature' is a special concept, which is different from any other form of 'literature' created for other categories of readers.

The reading 'child' of children's literature is primarily a child with emotional responses and consciousness with certain levels of cognitive development, which is necessary to understand the contents of a book. These areas are regarded as the province of child psychologists, which are not held to fall within 'children's literature'. In fact, in the actual discussion of the works of children's literature, the critic's attention is primarily focused on whether and how they think the book will attract the 'child' - whether the 'child' will 'love' or 'like' the book.

Though the idea of 'children's literature' might pose problems of definition, it is often accepted and discussed by critics. The definition of the 'child' in 'children's literature' has posed equal - if not greater - problems of definition. Historians such as Philippe Aries and anthropologists such as Margaret Mead and Martha Wolfenstein have argued in classic studies that - at the very least - definitions of 'childhood' differ throughout history, and from culture to culture. As Aries writes:
"The point is that ideas entertained about these (family) relations may be dissimilar at moments separated by lengthy periods of time. It is the history of the idea of the family, which concerns us here not the description of manners or the nature of law ... The idea of childhood is not to be confused with affection for children: it corresponds to an awareness of the particular nature of childhood, that particular nature which distinguishes the child from the adult, even the young adult."³

Aries makes it clear that the 'family' and 'childhood' are concepts that function within cultural and social frameworks and represent changeable social, moral, and ethical values and motives.

The 'Child' in the Children's Literature:

The 'Child' as an entity that needs to be addressed is based on an assumption. The notion that children are a homogenous group of audience, waiting to be addressed is also a far-fetched one. Children differ from one another in age gender and culture. Psychologists have analyzed the difference among the adults on the basis of social and geographical background. But this is more visible among children. Apart from that the fast pace of growth among children makes them different from their own kith and kin. They mature as they grow and their attitudes and mental make up change. A child who is 16 years old is twice as mature as a child eight years old.

The British theorist Jacqueline Rose further analyzing children's literature within Western culture, argues that:
“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. It is an idea whose innocent generality covers up a multitude of sins.... Peter Pan stands in our culture as a monument to the impossibility of its own claims - that it represents the child, speaks to and for children, addresses them as a group which is knowable and exists for the book.”

According to Rose, class, race, ethnic origins, gender, and so on divide 'children'. At the same time she argues that, the 'child' is a construction invented for the needs of the children's literature authors and critics, and not an 'observable', 'objective', 'scientific', entity. The adult's needs are discussed within a Freudian terminology involving the unconscious. Thus there is a need for constructing the child and childhood in children's literature.

The Australian critic Barbara Wall analyses children's literature as "adults.... speak differently in fiction when they are aware that they are addressing children... (This is) translated, some times subtly, some times obviously, into the narrator's voice..." But the British critic Nicholas Tucker points out that "although most people would agree that there are obvious differences between adult and children's literature, when pressed they may find it quite difficult to establish what exactly such differences amount to."
As it is the self-imposed task of children's literature critics to judge which books are good for children, they invariably make both implicit and overt statements concerning the definition of 'children's literature', 'children' and 'literature'. When they state in some way or another that a book is good for children it actually means that the book is good because of what they think a book does for children, based on their perception of what children are and do, especially when they read. Joan Aiken, for instance, says that she does not purposefully incorporate moral messages into her books because she feels that 'children have a strong natural resistance to phony morality. They can see through the adult with some moral axe to grind almost before he opens his mouth' but Rosemary Sutcliff writes, 'I am aware of the responsibility of my job and I do try to put over to the child reading any book of mine some kind of ethics.'

Pamela Travers, creator of 'Mary Poppins' feels that 'you do not chop off a section of your imaginative substance and make a book specifically for children for - if you are honest - you have, in fact, no idea where childhood ends and maturity begins. It is all endless and all one' and E.B. White states that 'you have to write up, not down. Children are demanding... They accept, almost without question, anything you present them with, as long as it is presented honestly, fearlessly, and clearly . . . They love words that give them a hard time.' The Austrian critic Maria Lypp, in line with Travers and White,
argues that the adaptations children's authors introduce to children's literature depend on an 'asymmetrical relationship' which forms the 'core of children's fiction', but that there is an 'ideal of symmetrical communication' which implies true understanding between author and reader, and this becomes Lypp's prescriptive criterion for children's literature. However, Barbara Wall argues in contrast to Travers, White and Lypp, that:

"All writers for children must, in a sense, be writing down. If they write with an educated adult audience in mind - their own peers - their stories will surely be, at best not always interesting and probably not often intelligible, and at worst positively harmful to children even when a child appears as a central character, as in The Go-Between or What Maisie Knew. Whenever a writer shows consciousness of an immature audience, in the sense of adapting the material of the story or the techniques of the discourse for the benefit of child readers, that writer might be said to be writing down, that is, acknowledging that there is a difference in the skills, interests and frame of reference of children and adults."

Gillian Avery in turn believes that '(The child) has his own defense against what he doesn't like or doesn't understand in the book.... He ignores it, subconsciously perhaps, or he makes something different from it ... (children) extract what they want from a book and no more.' Nicholas Tucker explains one aspect of this as follows: "Trying to discover some of the nature and effects of the interaction
between children and their favorite books is by no means easy... One simple-minded approach to the problem has always been to ask children themselves through various questionnaires and surveys, what exactly their books mean to them. Turning a powerful searchlight of this sort onto complex, sometimes diffuse patterns of reaction is a clumsy way of going about things, however, and children can be particularly elusive when interrogated like this, with laconic comments like 'Not bad' or 'The story is good' adding little to any researcher's understanding. 14

However it is the existence of the 'child' as a generic universality in children's literature, which connects the children's literature criticism all over the world. Children's literature criticism in different cultures is united by speaking of the 'child' as an existing entity- even though this 'existing entity' may be described differently in different cultures as it is described differently within cultures.

The existence of such a thing as a unified, consistent, 'objective' 'child reader' together with the capacity for knowing it that each critic claims for him or herself, forms the basis of all children's literature criticism. This holds true for all children's literature critics, even if they claim to be 'literary' critics of children's books, because the 'literary' is defined in terms of how the book is supposed to affect the 'child'.

It is important for critics while defining 'children's literature' - to differentiate books used for didactic or educational purposes from
'children's literature'. Darton draws a clear line between didactic books for children and children's 'literature': "By 'children's books' I mean printed works produced ostensibly to give children spontaneous pleasure and not primarily to teach them, not solely to make them good, not to keep them profitably quiet.\textsuperscript{15}

**Characteristics of Children's Literature:**

The outstanding characteristic of 'Children's Literature' is that it should speak directly to the reading child in an interesting voice. It should have an inherent appeal, and not sermonize through dull and didactic messages. This also incidentally becomes the main means of indicating the 'literary' qualities of children's books.

As Margery Fisher writes:

"We should not expect children's stories to be sermons or judicial arguments or sociological pamphlets. As independent works of art they must be allowed to appeal to the imagination, the mind, the heart on their own terms.... If a writer cannot say what he really feels, he cannot be serious in developing a theme.... (If he has in any way to minimize) that approach to books for the young must eventually dilute their quality as mainstream literature."\textsuperscript{16}

This is how 'children's literature' defines 'literature' as something that in it self is good for children- that affects children better or more than non literature - and this of course implies a world of assumptions about what the reading 'child' is and how it reads. Charlotte Huck sums up this view when she writes, "good writing, or
effective use of language will help the reader to experience the delight of beauty, wonder, and humor. He will be challenged to dream dreams, to ponder, and to ask questions to himself.17

This emphasis on the 'literary' can lead to a peculiar problem to a literary critic of children's literature. Having accepted the existence of 'child' as a consistent and coherent entity and the concept of a specific 'literature' for this child, one has to realize the ways in which the 'child' and 'literature' mutually qualify and construct each other within children's literature criticism. Joan Glazer and Gurney Williams, for instance, first state that good children's books are characterized by 'strong materials- good plots, rich settings, well-developed characters, important themes, and artistic styles... bold and imaginative language. 18 and that this 'freshness...comes from the author. And for this, the author has to understand who the child is. Then they continue, however, by arguing that even if children do not like these books which are good for them, they may still be 'good literature.... built of strong materials...the likes and dislikes of children do not determine the quality of literature... Books must be judged as literature on their own merits. And children should be given excellent literature.'19

'Children's literature' thus defined as - Containing, both in form and content, the 'needs of children' and, therefore, this is how 'children's books' written, published, sold, and usually bought, by adults, come to be spoken of as if the 'child' were in the book. The
relationship between definitions of reading children and children's literature is fully evident here. Critics treat them as one and the same thing. This further leads to the misconception of children's literature, which is often treated, as if children expressing their needs, emotions and experiences had written it.20

Myles Mc Dowell, too, for instance, describes his 'child in the book' when he claims that:

"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 schematization which much adult fiction ignores. Children's books tend to be optimistic rather than depressive. 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."21

However it is important to portray life through the eyes of the child so that the child reader can easily identify himself. _Alice in Wonderland_ is a classic example. Lewis Carol demonstrated this craft effectively.

The American critic and author Natalie Babbitt, on the other hand, argues with respect to the type of criteria, in her 'Child in the Book', that children's books are neither necessarily less serious than adults' books, nor necessarily concerned with 'simpler' or 'different'
emotion: 'there is, in point of fact, no such thing as an exclusively adult emotion, and children's literature deals with them all. Babbitt then claims that there is also no genuine disparity in range or scope, 'Every man' being just as present, for instance, in The Wind in the Willows as in, say, James Joyce's Ulysses. Further more, to Babbitt, there are few differences in content between adult and children's literature: 'war, disability, poverty, cruelty, all the harshest aspects of life are present in children's literature' as is fantasy. She feels that even language usage does not necessarily distinguish children's literature from adult literature.

"A children's book uses simple vocabulary geared to the untrained mind. Compare a little Kipling to a little Hemingway and think again. The opening sentence of A Farewell to Arms: "Now in the fall the trees were all bare and the roads were muddy". The opening sentence of How the Rhinoceros Got His Skin: 'Once upon a time, on an uninhabited island on the shores of the Red Sea, there lived a Parsee from whose hat the rays of the sun were reflected in more-than-oriental splendor'. So much for that.

Barbara Wall, for instance, explains the classic status of Alice in Wonderland, by arguing that

"Alice's became the first child-mind, in the history of children's fiction, to occupy the center.... No narrator of a story for children had stood so close to a child protagonist, observing nothing except that
child, describing, never criticizing, showing only what that child saw."\textsuperscript{25}

The critics' didactic-literary split continues in the definition of 'children's literature'. It is in these statements that each critic defines the 'child' in the book - in all its various manifestations -. As Sheila Egoff, rightly points out:

"May I suggest that the aim of children's writing be delight not edification; that its attributes be the eternal childlike qualities of wonder, simplicity, laughter and warmth and that in the worldwide realm of children's books, the literature be kept inside, the sociology and pedagogy out."\textsuperscript{26}

This further leads to what critics call 'identification'. The idea of 'identification' as an explanation of how and why the 'child' reads. The 'child' is supposed to be inherently and voluntarily attracted to books in which it recognizes itself. As the Israeli critic Adir Cohen claims:

"Writers have become aware that, for the child, a book is a source of satisfaction that it derives from identification and participation, and an expansion of his own experience. They provide him with an opportunity for catharsis, self- knowledge, and broadening his psychic experience. The process of reading, identification, participation and relating brings the reader into the reality of the book in dynamic fashion.\textsuperscript{27}

The problem of identification which makes the child see himself in the book may further factor of fantasy. The middle class child
would like to read a book that deals with an altogether different world from its own. Here the identification is with the character who is an adolescent, and not with the plot or location which is exotic adding an element of romance.

The explanation of 'identification', as in Adir Cohen's statement, holds a key to the 'child' in children's literature. Donna Norton describes 'identification' as a 'process (which) requires emotional ties with the model. Children believe they are like these models and their thoughts, feelings, and characteristics become similar to them'.

The British critic Robert Leeson further adds a new dimension when he describes 'identification' as a description of the central mechanism of the emotional process of reading by pointing out that although he feels the 'child' needs 'to recognize himself or herself ...it is (also) argued that the working-class child does not want "only to read about itself and likes to escape into a different world in its reading ... to escape and have vicarious pleasure and thrills."'

For Leeson, the good book for the 'child' offers not only what the child knows and recognizes in order to make it familiar and comfortable, but also should meet the requirement of the 'child' to know about something which is not familiar in order to expand its consciousness, (which is not itself), 'new, or escapism, or what D.W. Harding has called 'imaginative insight; into what another person may be feeling, and the contemplation of possible human experiences which we are not at that moment going through ourselves.'
In this context it is also important to understand how the child's perception of human experience differs from that of the adult's. As it is the domain of psychologists, they have established theories regarding a child's experience of time and space, which differs. The child lives in the present moment, as it has no past. As one grows older his past grows longer and occupies more space in his subconscious mind. Hence a period of time which may not be long for an adult may turn out to be endless for a child.

Therefore it becomes necessary to understand the child's mind in order to do justice to the child in the children's literature. The definitions of children's literature and childhood complement each other in the discourse of children' literature. They mutually qualify each other.

References:


23. *ibid*

24. *ibid*


1.2. TEENAGE FICTION : THEORY AND CRITICAL APPRECIATION.

The term children's Literature includes in it the connotation that children are a homogeneous group of readers who enjoy reading a special form of literature called Children's Literature. The assumption itself leads to complication while defining children's literature. The rate of growth that takes place from infancy to adulthood is amazingly fast compared to that of adulthood to old age. Hence childhood can have different stages of growth like infant, toddler, child and teenager. As reading child we can safely take the last two distinct categories:

a) Children below the age of 13
b) Children of 13 to 21 age group.

The concept of young adults as a separate group to be addressed and instructed was put forward by the American educationist Sarah Trimmer, as long ago as 1802. She drew a dividing line at 14 and suggested that 'young adulthood' should last until 21. As far as publishing specifically for that readership was concerned no positive effort was made. Writers wrote for them naturally, seeing them as an eager audience and one that needed to be well influenced. As Julia Eccleshare puts it, "The demarcation of reading by age is always a tricky one, perhaps especially so when it comes to teenage fiction. What is at issue is not so much the teenage of the reader as the teenage or 'Young adulthood' of the characters. The expectation is that teenagers should read about the things that they themselves are doing or would enjoy doing if only they could. For this reason, teenage
fiction has evolved as the most narcissistic of all the fictions as, in its current form at least, it seems primarily directed towards mirroring society and in so doing offering reassurance about ways of behaving.

**Definition and Background: The Western Outlook.**

As it is difficult to define teenage culture one has to resort to obvious settings or situations, which would appeal directly to adolescent readers. Writers like Hughes in *Tom Brown’s Schooldays* (1857) and Talbot Baine’s *Reed in the Fifth Form at St Dominic’s* (1887) chose the stories about school days which were very popular at the time of their publication have remained classics of their genre. R.M. Ballantyne’s *Coral Island* (1858) and Robert Louis Stevenson’s *Treasure Island* (1883), *Kidnapped* (1886) and *Black Arrow* (1889) offered adventures and the experience gave joy to reader of all ages. The characters of Jim in *Treasure Island* and David Balfour in *Kidnapped* became popular with generations of teenagers all over the world. Stevenson wrote directly for his 12 years old stepson, Lloyd. His American counterparts are Mark Twain’s *Tom Sawyer* (1876) and its sequel *Huckleberry Finn* (1884).

William Golding’s *The Lord of the Flies* (1954) and J P Salinger’s “*The Catcher in the Rye* (1954) were initially published for the adults but they made their impact on the adolescent reader who identified himself with the adventures of the protagonist. William Golding’s *The Lord of the Flies* (1954) shattered the illusion about childhood innocence. This might be the reason for its strong appeal to
readers who have begun to recognize this loss in them. J.D Salinger's *The Catcher in the Rye* (1954) made even greater impact with its stream of consciousness, first person narrative of Holden Calisfield. Its treatment of the adult world with its detached and critical view had a liberating effect. The fact that the later novelists imitated this, shows its powerful impact on the adolescent mind.

It took a long time for publishers to accept the idea of teenagers as a separate group of readers with their own tastes, demanding a style of writing directed specially at them. Till recently they had not established an identity of their own and found a suitable space in libraries and bookshops. Giving a name to this genre posed further difficulty. 'Teenager', 'Young Adult', 'Adolescent Reader' What was this audience to be called?

Another problem that crops up is how to ensure that only those children above the magic age of 13 will be reading these books? What if the children below the age group get hold of these books? Should their innocence be shattered at the tender age? Should their paradise be lost so early, throwing them out of the garden of Eden? Do publishers have a responsibility? Should they avoid including 'unsuitable' material for them, or should they label these books with a warning that this is intended for teenagers? Naming and marketing of these books became an important issue as these books for teenagers became increasingly daring in terms of explicit writing about sex in the 1970's and violence in the 1990s.
The teenager as a separate entity was first recognized in USA. Hence it is not surprising that the concretization of teenage fiction into named series, and acceptance of teenagers' need for books about their own experiences had come gradually and had started in the USA. The teenagers of the post world war period were distinctly different in their attitudes and were more demanding and independent than their predecessors. Their experiences had never been explored in fiction so far. 'Teenager' became a separate entity during the post war period. They began to express themselves and their needs in a more vociferous manner than their predecessors did. Gradually their feelings and experiences were being recognized and got place in fiction published during this period. The teenage culture as a separate entity was accepted.

Teenage Fiction in Europe and America: Romantic Novels.

The process began in the mid-fifties and the social liberation of the sixties and seventies further enhanced the growth, which led to a series of publications meant exclusively for this group of readers. As these books made their way into the market serious writers recognized the potential for the writings for the sensitive and eager readers. These were sophisticated audience eagerly waiting for books and absorbing the complex emotions with growing awareness of their identity and experiences. Writers were faced with a problem of handling these subtle and delicate emotions. They had to tread softly as they were treading on the dreams of this group of vociferous dreamers. They had
to handle them with great sensitivity and understanding, develop a style of writing which answered their questions, solved their doubts, avoiding at the same time too much of moralizing.

Considering the age of the audience full of dreams, it is but natural that the romantic novels paved the way for teenage fiction in the market. Beverly Cleary published one of the first novels *Fifteen* solely meant for teenagers, in 1956 in USA. The novel was about a girl's desire for a boyfriend and the ensuing relationship between the two. The delicate handling of the theme of romance with the treatment being 'decent', qualified it to enter the list of Peacock books.

The 'decent' and 'modest' books of mid-fifties were followed by a series of more sophisticated and complex themes of love and relationships. They varied from dealing with the first stage of relationship between a boy and a girl to the ground reality of teenage pregnancy. K.M Peyton handled the aftereffects of teenage romance with characteristic ease, in his series of novels. The young protagonist, with his rare talent for playing Piano, in "*Pennington's Seventeenth Summer"* graduated himself through "*Beethoven's Medal*"(1971) into "*Pennington's Heir*"(1974). His girlfriend of the first two novels is seen as a struggling young wife with a small baby, changing nappies against the backdrop of the grand piano. As it was a depiction of the girl's ultimate destination of being a mother and homemaker. It had social acceptance of the time.

From the mid 1950s, with the increasing social liberation of
the 1960s and 1970s, books for 'young adults' were making their mark, attracting serious writers who recognized the potential market with intelligent, sophisticated readers who needed books that would acknowledge their growing awareness of complex emotions and events they were experiencing. Writers needed to understand the dilemmas that were posed to this generation by their new freedoms and to offer sensible discussions of choices without too much moral instruction.

Initially, the prime thrust of books for the new teenage market was romance. The range of books reflecting contemporary mores as well as eternal truths gave a bold and realistic picture as against the soft romance of contemporary teenage life.

*My Darling Villain* (1977) by Lynn Reid Banks used romance to tackle parental control and particularly parents' view about class and social status. Fifteen-year-old Kate is allowed to give her first adult party in which some less-than-middle-class lads make a forced entry. After the ensuing chaos one of them, Mark, stays behind to tidy up and they start going out together: Marks working class background comes in the way of their romance as it was deplored by Kate's parents. The theme of loving against wishes of parents is perennially popular with the younger generation of all times.

Judy Blume's *Forever* (1975) was perhaps the most controversial publication of the time, which depicts the joys and disappointments of first love in the story of Michael and Katherine. The joys and disappointments of their first sexual encounter are described explicitly and easily. The fact that *Forever* was readily
accessible to pre-teens too made it more controversial. Though Judy Blume has been heavily censored throughout the USA for her frankness, *Forever* has earned an important place in the canon of teenage fiction. At the same time her boldness of purpose and her directness of style were appreciated and welcomed in many circles at that time.

Accepting the existence of physical attraction during teenage period as natural phenomenon leading to admitting that sex among teenagers does take place was an important breakthrough for both writers and readers. This made it easy for writers to acknowledge fully the reality of teenage relationships and to recognize the pressures that teenagers have to cope with and the choices they have to make.

Due to the fact that girls were the prime readers of romances as in the case of their romantic predecessors, experiences were predominantly retold from the girl's point of view. Boy's feeling about sex and relationships were rarely explored. It was often reflected in whatever the girl at the center of the story was thinking.

In his novel *Red Shift* (1973), Allen Garner gave a male perspective, which was refreshing. His main theme in the novel being narration of parallel historical events—one set in Celtic Britain and the other in English civil wars. Aiden Chambers, too, was an important contributor to the teenage fiction of that time. He describes a boy's sensitivities in his novel, *Breaktime* (1978). Julia Eccleshare describes him as a writer dealing with themes so far treated as taboo.
"Like Garner, Chambers is a demanding writer. His account of Ditto’s sexual initiation and the subsequent reassessment of his life, and especially of his relationship with his father, is retold in a complex but thrilling narrative which offers insight into ways of reading literature as well as speaking openly about sex. In *Dance on My Grave* (1982) Chambers is bolder in both subject matter and style. Hal has known for some time that he is gay but he has not acknowledged it openly. When Barry appears, the two recognize their need for one another, but also acknowledge that they may not be faithful forever.”

The narrative technique adopted in *Dance on My Grave* is introverted and complex. Jean Ure’s *The Other Side of the Fence* (1986) is more easily approachable. In the story Richard’s girlfriend Jan turns out to be a polish boy is revealed only at the very end. This makes the story more didactic than instructive. Both books are remarkable as they were written on a theme like gay sex during a period before the widespread knowledge of AIDS. This made such fiction even more controversial.

The theme of relationship between two teenagers became more explicit in their desire to grow intimate and the openness about such relationships marked an important change in the way teenagers and the kind of books they might want to read were perceived. But at the same time the upsurge of writing about teenage relationships was a difficult concept to accept and was considered as a distortion of the realities of society.
A Very Long Way from Anywhere Else (1976) by Ursula Le Guin was about teenagers who were happy to have a strong but wholly platonic relationship. The theme provided an excellent antidote. Owen and Natalie, both intelligent and highly motivated, have an entirely different path to pursue. But they share a strong bond which is both stimulating and enriching. They help each other to find what is really fulfilling and satisfying. But they find it difficult and extremely uncomfortable to accept the pressure on them to recognize the physical aspect of a relationship forced on them by their peer group and even their parents.

By now the idea of two people having common interest and purpose can have a strong and powerful relationship that may lead to powerful friendships, which have nothing to do with sex, also got acceptance. Paul Zindel relates a similar theme in A Begonia for Miss Applebaum (1989) in which Henry and Zelda tell the story of their friendship with Miss Applebaum, their teacher. In alternate chapters, they reveal their thoughts and the developing emotions for each other. In the process they acknowledge and admire the amazing things they find out about the life of their teacher and learn to come to terms with her death.

Once the physical aspect of teenage relationship was explored and accepted as a part of the teenage writing, the writer could proceed to discuss the complexities of such relationships in an interesting way. In Dear Nobody (1992), Berlie Doherty critically analyses a girl's
choices when she discovers that she is pregnant. The heroine Helen takes a bold decision of keeping the baby and the anguish that it causes, is resolved only at the end. Her diary reveals her painful moments and her steadfast belief in her right decision. However Chris's responses are understandably different. He is most of the time worried about losing Helen. He has understandably, a viewpoint and even though he is not as mature as Helen, he is definitely caring about her.

**Realities of Life: Changing attitudes.**

The dangers and the spreading awareness of AIDS and society's changing attitudes to sexual freedom, in the next generation of teenagers brought a discernible change in the girl's position in society. Her role as a homemaker and a mother, which were the themes of earlier novels, changed. It also led to a slowing down in the number of books where ‘the relationship’ is the center of the narrative. Larger issues like deeper understanding of the world and the responsibilities which writers took up for teenagers, marked a change in their writing style.

The allegation that teenagers wanted to read about themselves alone, amounting to making them narcissistic had to be reconsidered. The writers were to explore possibilities of their sensibilities that went beyond the limitations of poor relationships. Books for teenagers became an excellent vehicle for exploring all kinds of relationships with other members of the family and friends of other age groups.
A major development of the recent times is the recognition of the developing intellectual and emotional powers of adolescent readers. It is the time when they move out of a relatively safe world in which decisions are made for them, into one of infinite variety of choices which they are encouraged to make. It offers the writers thoughtful and wide-ranging themes, which provide scope for analysis and challenges. The most challenging of the themes being the relationship within the families, especially as the breakdown of traditional and close-knit family is taking place. The pain and trauma that is caused due to the acknowledgment of parental failure is an extraordinarily difficult thing for a teenager to cope with and many stories have served as valuable conduits for analyzing it.

During the late 1970s the theme of unhappiness and self-examination became predominant. It went to the extent of belittling teenage readers in a misguided attempt at social realism. Books were written with the main intention of devoting to the fragility of traditional family values. Teenage readers were in need of high-quality writing and thinking, providing a new dimension to the genre. Robert Westall's *The Scarecrows* (1981), in which the author effectively depicts the pain of 13-year-old-Simon's traumatic emotional ride as he rejects his stepfather and conjures spirits from the past whose powers threaten to overwhelm him. The emotional force combined with powerful imagery turns the depressingly routine subject matter into a book of enormous power and importance.
In both *Madame Doubtfire* (1989) and *Goggle-Eyes* (1992), Anne Fine tackled the breaking up of a family in a different way. Her wit, insight and subtle handling of the theme set her books apart from the rest and do much to restore the balance. In *Madame Doubtfire*, the estranged father, desperate to spend more time with his children, comes back disguised as a housekeeper and takes charge of the children while the mother is working. The deception is deftly handled with the children acknowledging and distancing themselves from the intrigue in almost equal, and perfectly convincing manner.

Cynthia Voight takes a completely different approach. In *Homecoming*, she handles the theme with much warmth. It is a long and profoundly touching story of four children abandoned in a car park by their mother who could no longer cope with the problems of being a single parent with meager support. Dicey, the oldest, leads the others on a journey to find their grandmother. Their trek takes them many miles to Maryland and their experiences on the way are a convincing mixture of meeting with people, some good and some bad. Most importantly, the journey is an opportunity for the characters of the children and their interaction with one another to be developed. It adds a positively optimistic angle to the painful breaking of family and the child victim. Cynthia Voight has written a story that is full of hope about sibling support and their ability to redefine a family in the absence of parents.
Cynthia Voight further allows each of the four Tillerman children to get plenty of room for development, through a series of her interconnected novels after the first novel *Home Coming*. The personal growth of her characters, and particularly of the two boys when they go in search of the father they know they need in *Sons From Afar* (1989), makes them fascinating models for all adolescents, not just for those who are in need of fictional role models to help them resolve their own problems.

Friendship is one of the most important aspects of adolescent life. Treatment of such a simple theme becomes problematic as one tries to delve deep into exploring the complexities of friendship and the important place it occupies in different aspects during emotionally charged adolescent reader's life. It is every bit as important as delving into the more obviously traumatic areas of the problem novels mentioned above.

**War and Violence in the Adolescent Novels:**

In Robert Cormier's *The Chocolate War* (1975), *Beyond the Chocolate War* (1985) and *We All Fall down* (1992) the picture of teenage interaction is bleak. In *The Chocolate War* (1975) Cormier writes about the corruption-ridden American Catholic High school and the merciless persecution of one boy by the powerful secret society. The novel is almost unremittingly bleak in both style and content. It offers the reader an insight into the cruelties, which one teenager can inflict upon another.
Cornier continues to expose how evil teenagers can be. The theme is expanded in *We All Fall Down* (1992). In an act of mindless violence four teenagers 'trash' a house. Apart from the damage to the property they cause, they push 14-year-old-Karen down the cellar steps leaving her smashed and helpless. The danger lies in the chilling amorality of stories, which may make them unreasonably frightening for unwitting readers.

Apart from the relationships that center stage for many during the years of physical and emotional changes, vital world issues are also deeply important. The teenager's response to issues concerning the environment and the needs of those in developing countries also need to be reflected in fiction. Different issues dominate at different times and books, which deal with them can be important stories of the moment rather than becoming classics.

Robert Swindell's *Brothers in the Land* (1984), one of the many books published within a five year span of the world war, dealt with the dropping of a nuclear bomb. The prospect of the destruction of the world and speculation as to what might survive, provided a good area and led to a number of books being published. The book handled the subject with an exceptionally readable and poignant way. It is a book, which can be read even today. Danny's belief that in an aftermath of the nuclear destruction moral order breaks down and survival depends on selfishness. But he finds the reassurance in the behavior of a handful of the other survivors. Though Robert Swindell wrote the
book, which reflected the mood of the moment, his understanding of how people behave in extreme situations and his faith in humanity has made it a book to last.

Sectarian hostilities do exist everywhere and Joan Lingard's series of four novels deal with the life of a teenaged couple, Protestant Sadie and Catholic Kevin against the backdrop of the troubles in Northern Ireland. Even if the Northern Ireland problem is resolved. *The Twelfth Day of July* (1970) and *Into Exile* offer an insight into what it might feel like growing up in a place where there is civil war.

Growing up and learning to cope with such accepted prejudices is hard for adolescents. They have to learn to accept and develop tolerance. The conflicts are based on crude preconceptions and the resolution depends on the growing maturity of the characters as they realize that individual may be more important than a cause or belief.

Another live issue similar to nuclear holocaust is the apartheid. Toekey Jones's *Skin deep* (1985) and Norman Silver's *Python Dance* (1992), expose the gulf within South African society and the hypocrisy and the false thinking on which apartheid operates.

Writers writing for these teenagers know that most of these issues do not affect them directly. They know about them through newspapers and television reports. But at the same time contemporary domestic issues have been serious issues for teenagers as in Ian Strachen's *Throwaways* (1992). It is about the pathetic existence of three children, who were abandoned (thrown away) by
their parents who could no longer afford to feed them. Sky, Chip and Dig soon learn that it is important to be together if they have to survive against all odds and eek out a living. Another novel, Robert Swindell's *Stone Cold* (1993) deals with the theme of homelessness and its chilling account of the dangers that the young children without the safety of four walls and warm home, have to encounter when life becomes rough.

Like any other reader of any age teenagers also need an element of fiction and romance to sustain their interest. Though it is true that they are more interested in self knowledge they do need to have a wider understanding of all aspects of society in the present, past and future. The impetus for teenage fiction may have come from an intention to tell amusing stories about them, it also becomes a vehicle for introducing them to a world as it really is. But one has to guard against the danger of novels becoming too bleak in an effort to tell the truth about the realities of life like social issues such as homelessness, unemployment and the rest. Hence there are serious concerns about what may or may not be suitable for teenagers. This needs to be a serious concern while offering them a fictional fare.

As Julia Eccleshare puts it "Whatever the direct subject matter of teenage fiction, what remains important is steady flow of good quality writing for an eager but easily distracted age group."
References:

2. Ibid.
3. Ibid.

Sources:

(The titles of books referred in this text are taken from these sources.)


Moss E. *Children's Books of the Year*. Hamish Hamilton, Bodley Hamilton

1.3. **WRITING IN ENGLISH FOR THE YOUNG READER IN INDIA:**

Writing for the young reader in India has yet to be taken seriously by writers and literary critics. They feel that home, food, friends, school, being important elements in a child's life, constitute writing for children. As a result we have very few authors who take writing for young readers seriously.

One of the problems faced by the writers is the expectation to teach something all the time. They are overwhelmed with a sense of responsibility, which sometimes curtails their creativity. Those who write for adults also feel this way. But while writing for children, one is more conscious of it, as if every word that one writes ought to be weighed with the right values, the right significance. The writers have to ensure that the manuscripts they submit uphold the principles of national unity, national and personal integrity, regional and religious tolerance, secularism, international understanding and global harmony. This results in moral science-cum-civics lessons with a thin story line, which our English reading children religiously avoid and go for books that are fun to read, the books from Western authors. Those are fun to read. The author has the freedom to choose a theme, which is exciting, dazzling, serious, lyrical, poetic, and enjoyable. It makes the writing vivid and the book interesting.

The puritan school of writing for children necessarily excludes some aspects of human experience like sex and overt, brutal violence. But they forget that their readers are highly perceptive, intelligent
children who are aware and are being surrounded by Family Planning posters, talkative, indiscreet relatives, indifferent teachers and parents, bullying classmates and the loud television channels glamorizing these unsightly things.

The real world is a place full of wonders. It has gentle, generous people with ideals, hopes and optimism. Some of the writers however, find it difficult to keep a balance and like to play safe by choosing a designer world, where excitement and reading pleasure have to be interpreted in the form of haunted castles, Western clothes, doughnuts, French teachers and the like.

Another problem faced by the writers writing for the young reader in India is, to deal with the harsh realities of life where a child plays mother to her younger siblings while her mother keeps carrying loads of bricks in a construction site. An eight-year-old girl here is no more a child. She is an adult who manages the family in the absence of her working parents. On the other hand is the same child, alone, in a multistoried apartment locking herself behind a grilled door as her parents are away working in an office.

Do we want children to be introduced to suffering so early? The writer in India faces this question because he would rather be writing for those middle class children well fed and pampered. The number is very small. But at the same time they are our readers. Their parents can afford to spend money on books. It's these parents who can send their children to English medium schools so that they can read
books written in English. So if we are talking of problems of writers writing in English then we have to understand this child audience. They like to read about their counterparts in the West with their adventures in the hills going for trekking and exploring clean tunnels, which are in the realm of fantasy. But the boys and girls in Enid Blyton or Franklin Dixon, are children who actually live that kind of life; the houses, the swimming pools, the country side, the schools are real enough. The difference between the world he actually lives in and the alien world depicted by Western writers creates romantic images. It provides an escape to the English reading child in India. As the critics put it,

"Above all, it is this sense of alienation that is the most dangerous. When our national institutions for children hammer on about the need for books on integration and unity, it is this fear that haunts them. The fear that other, more attractive cultures and lifestyles will seduce our children, and leave us with nothing but the last lingering notes of the Pied Piper's melody. If that happens we have nobody to blame but ourselves, for being stuffy, unrealistic and oh, so pious" Poile Sengupta

Very few children's book publishers in India would understand this. They want to sell their book. Children's books are rather like tomatoes, products with a very low shelf life. Children grow alarmingly quickly, and their tastes change. The heads of well-known and well-endowed publishing houses politely insist on the manuscript being
safe, the safety here, being instant and continuing salability. However degrading intellectually it may sound to a writer, book is a commodity to be sold and publisher is a businessman. It is a product that needs to be marketable. If a writer wants to make a decent living, he has to make his book saleable.

In India little importance is given to the sale of children's books which are written for reading pleasure. Why are no marketing strategies thought of? Why is the product given so little publicity? Why are children's books not even reviewed as a regular feature in our newspapers? Why a writer has to make his mark as a writer for adults before his voice as children's writer is heard? In what way is writing for children less than, or inferior to, writing for adults? These questions crop up as we analyze the literary scenario in India in comparison with Western Literary Criticism.

Those who write for the young reader have to relive the experiences of their childhood honestly and objectively. Even those who can, find it difficult to narrate the same to their children in a language, which can be simple and interesting. Very few remember that part of their lives honestly and objectively or acknowledge its importance in their self-evolvement. An adult writer may find it easier to write for his contemporaries as he can share with them a certain code of language, experience, manners and an identity. With writing for a teenaged child in India, the country is unmapped, the track unfamiliar, even the compass doesn't read right sometimes. The
authors have to make constant effort to ring true, to use the right words at the right time, and to know when not to say anything at all. The silence within a narrative is probably what gives it its quality. It is perhaps the toughest part of the craft of writing for the young reader.

Writers consciously devise their own methods to ensure success in this area. According to some, the English speaking child should be fed with soups, salads and exotic adventure stories of African jungle with an exciting beginning, a gripping middle and satisfying climax.

"Even the uninitiated writer will realize that there is no surefire method to achieve success, particularly when writing for children. Why are we unable to produce even the Franklin Dixon-Carolyn Keene variety of formula adventure? May be it is because we are still self-conscious about writing in English of what are non-English experiences. Instead of adapting the language to our uniqueness, we tend to go wholesale and adopt the lifestyles and attitudes that are implicit in the language. We have to acknowledge, whether we like it or not, that English has become a part of our inheritance and, for many, their language of creativity. It would be a waste of effort to feel guilty about it whatever state policies might project. But our books must be authentic and they must talk of us, of the way we live and the way we think, not of robin redbreasts and scones for tea. It is time that the English reading world understood that we are capable of producing children's books, which, one day, might be internationally accepted as classics and not, as they are now, exhibited as samples of
Third World imitations of what others do much better." Poile Sengupta.²

However, Ruskin Bond's *The Room on the Roof* and *Vagrants in the Valley* hold an answer to Sengupta's arguments. The author has successfully demonstrated that English can be used for expressing Indian sensibility. He makes eating *golgappas* and *jelebis* as interesting and exotic as eating burgers and scones. The local color of the Dehra bazaar and the description of Holi festival depict the sensibility that is purely Indian. This aspect will be elaborated in the chapter on Ruskin Bond's works.

References:

2. Ibid.
1.4. CONTEMPORARY TRENDS IN FICTION FOR THE YOUNG READERS IN INDIA.

There is a distinct trend visible in the Indian writings for children during the last two decades of the 20th century. Books written in the post independence India were read by children of the parents who had lived during the British period. These were middle-class and rich kids whose families followed the Western style of living. They were conditioned to accept Western norms and values. As the distrust in Western values and a thrust on Indian tradition and culture began to manifest itself in the writings of the latter part of the century, we see books concerned about the cultural roots of India. The Indian ethos manifested itself in the fiction and provided a new and acceptable perspective to the Indian child on the major aspects of current issues.

Few books are available today in the Indian market written exclusively for teenagers. Some of them can be considered here for being influential in some way. Children read them for their inherent adolescent themes, which make them significant over a period of time. The base for critical analysis here is the degree of balance and excellence combined with social relevance evident in the writing. The traditional mode of analysis through thematic and generic grouping also is applied while determining their worthiness as children's fiction.

In the past literary critics in India had a tendency to marginalise the new genre of children's literature with books written especially for
the teenagers. But the modern trend is to strike a balance between the traditional modes and modern day experiments for meeting the requirements of teenaged readers. The adolescents of twenty-first century are a new and emerging group, inquisitive and highly demanding.

While trying to examine some of the so called popular books, it may be noticed that they acquire a serious dimension when the author goes into depth by adopting moral probing. Sometimes it becomes the central theme of the book as seen in the works of Ruskin Bond, which will be analyzed in the later chapters.

The books written in the past projected a conventional, romanticized portrayal of childhood. This concept changed gradually with the changing times and a more realistic portrayal of childhood is being depicted with its problems and challenges of daily life. Once in the periphery of the adult world and inhabiting enclosed spaces, children seem to be emerging out of their physical and intellectual entrapment. What child readers need is exposure to a variety of reading materials in the early years, which aid in identity formation and enhancement of knowledge.

Children need at least two kinds of literature.

a. Books that depict the kind of life they actually live.

b. Books that depict the widest possible range of life-styles.

Children need to be taken into the other world, which is as different as possible from his own in order to enrich his imagination.


**Adventure stories and Science Fiction:**

The adventure stories have been the most popular with the 13 to 16 age groups, and have a strong hold on the young minds of its readers. It started with *Robinson Crusoe*, with the kind of individualism, an individual's capacity to solve problems, to correct wrongs and to control his own destiny. Also the mystery element cuts across all classifications of gender and nations. It has been very popular with the young readers thus acquiring a large readership, the primary reason being the need for escape and relaxation.

The adventure mystery story in particular has been popular with the children of early teens. Even if escapism as a total way of life cannot be advocated, particularly for the very young, the encouragement of the use of one's imagination to construct alternative worlds into which one can temporarily retreat is occasionally found productive. The need for order is tempered by the need for anxiety, uncertainty, risk and jeopardy. These in turn provide the necessary enjoyment and pleasure for adolescent readers.

The literary structure of a narrative is employed in a great number of individual works. Certain story archetypes particularly have been found to fulfill man's need for enjoyment and escape. The classic example is J K Rowling's *Harry Potter* Series. It has captured the imagination of millions of children all over the world. Practitioners of this type of writing follow the formulaic patterns adding their own personal vision. Conan Doyle and Agatha Christie's literary devices
were widely imitated by a whole generation of writers. By invoking in
the reader fear and uncertainty over the fate of the protagonist,
writers like Hitchcock provide a cliff-hanger situation; but there also is
the assurance that finally all would be well. Writers have followed the
conventions but created unique characters within the framework of
the formula, thus satisfying the need of the reader for conventional
expectation as well as variety.

In India writers of fiction for children were initially reluctant to
move away or rework the standard adventure stories with their
winning formulas. *The Chandipur Jewels*¹ by Nilima Sinha, an
imitation of the Western genre, has an Indian backdrop with skilful
use of sociological factors, which give the book an Indian identity. The
dying Zamindar wants the family jewels to be restored to the legal heir.
His three grand children set out to solve the mystery and a treasure
hunt ensues. As a tale of 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

Deepa Agarwal’s *Adventure in the Hills*² published by A’N’B
publishers, deals with the thrill of Himalayan holiday near the Tibetan
border. A good adventure story can stimulate positive attitudes in the
child reader by creating awareness of customary codes and
expectations. As some critics feel, when an adventure story has a
feeling of excitement, a naturalness about it, a quick plunge into the
plot, sparkling dialogue and a swift pace, it’s on its way to finding a
wide audience of children.
Arup Kumar Dutta's *The Kaziranga Trail* is Indian in tone and texture. Without relying on contrivance and co-incidence, the plot moves in tightly constructed episodes. The tribal boys Dhanai, Jonti, Bulbul and their cow elephant Makhoni succeed in capturing poachers who are hunting the one-horned rhinoceros at the Kaziranga game sanctuary. Mr. Neog, the forest officer, is unaware that his assistant Phukan is a crook. The children manage to expose him to Mr. Neog who restores order by nabbing the poachers. Phukan makes a dying confession and Muniya, the chief culprit, is brought to book by the rhino, which acting as an instrument of poetic justice, delivers the hunter into the hands of the Law. The casual use of local terms gives the book an Assamese flavor. The author's familiarity of the jungle terrain adds to the description of the lush vegetation of the monsoon forests, the life-style of the tribal people, and the local customs that add to the element of romance.

The novel is an example of the new trend with professional approach to children's writing with creative talents. Instead of the motif of one dog with two boys and two girls, there are three boys and an elephant. The absence of a girl protagonist is in keeping with the traditional Indian way of life. An elephant as a pet adds to the exotic element. The author makes a conscious effort to create awareness regarding the preservation of wildlife.

*Revenge* is another novel with a similar theme set once more in the jungle country of Northeast, where the Khampti tribes of
Arunachal Pradesh trap elephants with their involved “khedda” or “mela” operations. The entire story hinges on this elephant-trapping ritual.

*Smack* is a sort of crusade against drug trafficking and the juvenile delinquency. Gulu, a Dhaba boy, unwittingly gets involved with drug-traffickers. But he helps the police to catch the criminals who are perpetuating a heinous way of life. *Smack* may be lacking the true spirit of adventure of the earlier books with its overt moral tone, but it has a social purpose to serve. However drug trafficking is a global concern and the author’s seriousness of purpose enhances the quality of the adventure story.

It has to be borne in mind that the formula writers in turn wrote of the culture to which they catered and became in turn cultural determinants. The adventure stories written in the 80's were products targeted at audience who read them in addition to the books from the West. *Kidnapping at Birpur* (1985) by Margaret Bhatty, *The Mystery of the Missing Relic* (1989) by Simran Kaur, *The Emerald Lingam* (1987) by Madhavi S. Mahadevan, and *The Mystery of the Fake Arjuna* (1982) by Niharika Joshi dealt with the adventure stories as the writers perceived it, relying heavily on traditional narrative patterns. The settings were refreshingly Indian but the plot had yet to shake off the shackles of convention and display the kind of originality that characterized the writings of Ruskin Bond.
The 1990s find Indian English fiction firmly established in the literary map of the world. The writers in India with the introduction of Penguin's new reprint Puffin, and the Harper Collins, Imprint, Peacock, and others are bringing out a number of books. We have fine writing for the young, not only by stalwarts like Ruskin Bond but also by Monisha Mukundan, Sigrun Srivatsave, Bulbul Sharma, Margaret Bhatt, Paro Anand and so on.

Kaveri Bhatt's *Danger in Dead City* (1993) deals with a smuggling racket and the kidnapping of a police officer's son. A young girl simultaneously busts both. The protagonist is a Delhi lad who is assisted by an English girl holidaying with her mother, which adds a further dimension to the mystery element. They rescue the kidnapped Harish, son of a police officer from Madras who is tracking down the smugglers.

*Devil in the Dustbin* by Indi Rana, strongly recalls Blyton's "Quarrelsome Brownies," but the little ones in the story have diverse origins, living in harmony in England. The author uses the image of Brahmarakshasa, who inhabits tamarind trees in India. The little tamarind tree devil Brum is unwittingly carried in the cargo hold of an aircraft bound for London. The little Indian girl, Ranjana, who is the only one to see him, befriends him. Brum explains this odd phenomenon with his characteristic logic. "If humans believe in us, we become visible to them for as long as their thoughts of us are clear. Ranjana believed in me, Ajoy didn't." With Ranjana's help he makes...
his home in an elm tree but feels home sick. The author deals with the eternal theme of alienation, which has been a relevant theme for the 20th century writer with the global migration. Peer group acceptance is vital for every child while trying to establish his identity in a foreign country.

**Fantasy: An Essential Ingredient.**

Recent adventure stories have something new to offer to the Old World charm of fantasy. Fantasy enters almost all forms of writings for children. It is but natural as it is an essential ingredient for holding a child's interest. Fantasy generates suspense and invokes wonder by making the impossible seem familiar and the familiar seem strange. Modern day technology has created a different type of fantasy in the form of science fiction that develops into a separate genre, predominantly speculative, looking forward and outward.

In Indian writing in English for children we notice an obsession with the rich heritage of myth and epic. At the same time there is an attempt to experiment with form and content, using fantasy in the form of science fiction.

Dilip Salwi's *Passage to Antarctica* though classified as non-fiction, gives interesting information in the form of story. It is a story of a less known territory, seen through the eyes of young Neha. The information at the outset in the book "I am Antarctica" read by Neha provides the necessary background for the book. The massive ice
sheet of Antarctica plays a crucial role in the formation of the world’s weather conditions. Even a slight change in Antarctica’s environment may cause changes in the climate all over the world. There is a message to preserve the ecological balance of the continent by keeping it free from pollution. In the course of the voyage, Neha and her cousin learn about important geographical facts about the ‘Continental Drift,’ the ‘Roaring Forties’ and the various constellations visible in the night. Remarkable and authentic details make the reader feel the amount of research that has gone into the book. An element of mystery is also there with the bearded man, who hovers around the children and the tension is heightened when Neha is found missing. The mystery is resolved and the children return home after an exhilarating adventure.

Science fiction with various discoveries is opening up fascinating vistas for the writers in the years to come. Space travel and the invasion of aliens from outer space has been a favorite theme with the modern science fiction writers. In *The Alien Planet*, Krishan Narayan employs the technique of ‘Cognitive estrangement,’ which confronts the reader with new and strange conditions of life outside his own experience. Raju, the deaf-mute boy is the son of a space research scientist Suraj. The crucial question is, among these billions and billions of systems, is it not possible that intelligent life exists in at least one of them?. Raju the deaf mute boy with his inherent empathy with the alien creature who enables him to out maneuver
Hludefi's wicked intentions, releases the spaceship from the orbit in which it had got stuck. Through powerful thought waves accessible only to Raju, the alien is able to guide the boy to manipulate the gravitational pull and return to earth. 'Look inward,' said the creature. 'Raju did so and saw in his mind's eye a marvelous mechanism.' the story illustrates the experimental trend in Indian writing for children.

The new inventions and knowledge of the outer space have greatly enriched the themes and narrative patterns of children's books leading to increased demand. While following established traditions in a system, the author is unconsciously imitating the norms set by his predecessors.

Margaret Bhattys's *The Evil Empire* deals with star wars in the year 3190. A future technology, which could produce clones and bionic human beings, is the theme of the book. The President of the Evil Empire wants absolute power, as his ancestor is none other than the famous general Nimo of the Star Wars. Quite understandably, he wants to rule not only the earth but also all the civilizations in the galaxy. While the global government offers peace, brotherhood and equality for all, the President of the Evil Empire retaliates with an ultimatum of either total surrender or certain doom. The two earth children retained as hostages at Tyrannus are rescued on time and the universe is saved from the threat of a nuclear war.
Another futuristic story, Jayant Narlikar's *The Return of Vaman* explores the grave possibility of the robots eventually dominating man the inventor. The scientists excavating in a remote village in Karnataka for an underground experiment find a container with strange writing on it. The archaeologist and the computer scientist together decipher the code. The first super computer is created. This dwarf who grows much larger than his creator had to be destroyed to ensure the survival of mankind. *The Robots are Coming* by Dilip Salwi is a collection of twelve stories, with sensitive depiction of science fantasy.

References: