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 Guntenberg 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 Pancatantra, 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 writers 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 velour 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
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 background will still enjoy the richness of the images… (qtd. in Keast 65).
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 impact 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. Mukherji 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, Satyajit Ray, Shashi Deshpande, Salman Rushde 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 explices 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 straightforward. It is only when one takes a closer look at the young hero’s milky innocence with it’s 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 gapes-the assumptions of the author do not intrude forcibly enough to detract from the joys of pure fantasy (Srnivasan 50).


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 Assames 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 Rashild’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 Bandyopadhayay, 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 Chakrabarthi. 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, Panchopakhyya* 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 into 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 into Telugu Language. *Budugu* by Mullapudi Venkata Ramana, *Pillalu Puvvalu* by Bujjaji, *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, Bujjaji, 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 Ketkl 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- Hoshruba* 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 *Ulta 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 Sandoqhi*. 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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