

The New Challenges: Writing For Children Literature in Manipuri

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Abstract: In the field of Children Literature there is much research, study and promotion is necessary for bringing awareness about it. During Janata Curfew or COVID-19 crisis or in future Children Literature is one of the vaccine to stay at home in peace. Because of parents know the gain or fruitful without text or schooling to their children get all round development during the present hot incidents. In this topic analysis about Manipur's Children Literature, how to get the pyramid goal belongs to childhood, how to growth the Children Literature, where is the hole area in this field etc.

Key Word: Children Literature, Manipur, Manipuri, New Challenges, Writing

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I. INTRODUCTION

Though children literature is an important and enticing genre it would not be wrong to say that it rarely comes to the notice of the readers, intellectuals and scholars. Save a few, writers and scholars have hardly shown their interest and seriousness in the field though writing for children is a rewarding field. Thus much research, study and promotion is necessary for bringing awareness about it.

Categorization is never easy in literature. To draw a clear distinction between children literature and adult literature is difficult and at times impossible for many of the literary works in hand. For example novels like 'Gulliver's Travel' or 'Tom Sawyer' are enjoyed by the children and adults alike. Yet children literature has its own essence, sensibility and character. And here lies the challenge and recompense of writing for children because children literature is written mostly by matured writers rather than the younger lots who are the readers.

A deep understanding of the consciousness and psychology of children, and their emotional response is a necessity for writing children literature. Writing books for children demand skill, technical control and creativity of a different level on the part of the writer. It should be comprehensible, entertaining and good enough to entice them. The writer has to know how children perceive the world and how they think and feel before writing. Moreover the writer should know which themes, plot and stories are appropriate to the children of various stages. Children in the early stage enjoy pictorial stories; those belonging to ten years and above read comics and illustrated books; and those in adolescents may enjoy short stories and novels. In fact children literature encompasses a wide area. Though it has its difficulties, writing for children can be extremely rewarding for the writer.

Children learn the love for reading children and increase their language skill through books. They also become better readers and writers and explore their feelings and emotions. Books written by understanding the emotional response of the children will definitely increase their knowledge, understanding and awareness of the self and surrounding. It can also spark their talents and guide them besides giving them pleasure. But the challenge is to make the books interesting and useful enough for them.

In the west, many eminent writers have contributed immensely to the wealth of children literature. We have children's classics like Lewis Carroll's **Alice's Adventures in Wonderland**, Mark Twain's **Tom Sawyer**, Anna Sewall's **Black Beauty**, J.K Rowling's **Harry Potter**. Indian writers have also written excellent children literature. Rabindranath Tagore and Munshi Premchand have wrote enduring short stories for children; and many renowned writers have contributed to the children literature very early in the literary scene. Other noted writers include Anuj Kumar Dutta, Natasha Sharma, Sudha Murthy, Shashi Deshpande etc.

However children literature is yet to go a long way in Manipur as it is still in the initial stage. There have been some reworking and rewriting of oral literature, folktales and mythology for children in the past. Although folktales, mythological stories and fairytales create an enormous interest among the children, there is also the need of more original and creative children literature in Manipur. Children literature has to go beyond the boundary of folk and oral literature. Thus the need of the hour is to create a corpus of children literature

which would regenerate the habit of reading among children. The writers need to use the already existing tradition of folktales and folklores and give a new perspective to create something fresh and new.

Wangkheimayum Tomchou Singh's **Ibenbokki Wari** (The Grandmother's Story, 1959) is considered to be the first book for children literature in Manipur. So far six writers from Manipur have received the Bal Sahitya Puruskar. Kangabam Ibeyaima, Sagolsem Indrakumar, Raghu Leishangthem, Rk Bhubonsana, Jayantakumar are some prominent writers of Children Literature. Some other writers who received the state award for Children Literature include RK Sanahal, RK Sanatomba, Jamini Devi, G. Ramji Sharma, Satusana Singh, P. Kokngang, Ayam Bungohal and Th. Nodiya etc.

Writers do not always write for awards but awards do encourage them in their endeavor and bring recognition to them for their contribution. The unfortunate scrapping of the State award for children literature is a major setback in this field. One major difficulty in writing for children in a state like Manipur is choosing the right subject matter which will draw their attention and solicit the emotional response of the young readers. Complicated and sensitive issues concerning with administration, politics, terrorism, survival strategy and sexuality are beyond the comprehension and interest of children.

There has been an instance in which a Manipuri writer of Children literature depicting a mother being accidentally killed by her children including terrifying scenes and bloodshed. Even though the story is based on myth books depicting such themes should not be awarded or encouraged. There should be some form of censorship though freedom of expression is necessary in writing. For instance in Canada programs in Cartoon Network are censored for illicit contents before public viewing.

There are various themes for children literature which can be explored. Writers can choose themes and subjects on environment, science, history, myths, legends, heroism, nationalism, patriotism etc. In fact the subject for children writing is vast in store provided that the writer should choose a suitable style of expression and presentation. For example Bhisma Sahni's presentation of history specifically the infamous incident of Jallianwala Bagh in his **Jallianwala Baghis** enjoyed by the young readers too. Book of such standard is yet to come up in the children literature of Manipur.

Some laudable works have come up recently in Manipur. Sagolsem Indrakumar's **Thada Thabaton** (Thabaton on the Moon) is a commendable work on children literature which skillfully blends science and fantasy using a delightful language. It tells the story of a young girl, Thabaton who is carried on a tour to the celestial world and sees the planets and satellites in the outer space. Another remarkable work is Raghu Leishangthem **Patpang-gi Thoibi** (Thoibi of the Lake-side) which depicts a simple and innocent child's life based on the recurring theme of peaceful co-existence of all living beings on this planet.

To write in a simple language and more importantly communicating lucidly to the readers is a demanding exercise. In both fiction and non-fiction, there should not be any obscurity and ambiguity. Books which employ difficult language and style can disrupt the interest of young readers. The basic thing in children writing is to make it simple. A book with a good story written in a simple language, using fewer characters coupled with attractive illustration, cover designs and picture graphics will definitely be able to grasp the interest and curiosity of the young readers. But much needs to be done. The overall design of the children books produced in Manipur is still unimpressive. The quality of paper, illustration and graphics need standardization. Moreover the price of children books is usually high. Children cannot afford to buy costly books with their pocket money even if they want to read them. All these issues need to be addressed and reconsidered to boost the growth of children literature. Manipur has yet to overcome these shortcomings and strive to produce quality children books to cater to our young minds.

In our present times, especially in a place like Manipur we face a lot of challenges with regard to children literature. The greatest obstacle in its development is that the government, literary enthusiasts and other competent authorities have failed to encourage its promotion. In fact there is an acute lack of awareness among the masses about the importance of such literature. No policies are made and no constructive discussions are undertaken for its development. Only a handful of writers are struggling to produce and propagate children literature without getting any support or incentives.

Even the educational and literary academies do not conduct any workshop, seminar, conference or symposium to boost this neglected genre. Sadly, even the literary aficionados have turned a blind eye to the matter. A flicker of hope was seen recently when the literary academy instituted awards for eminent contributors to this field. However, the monetary amount with the award is too less. Here, I would like to ask some questions.

Why can't prestigious awards like Gyanpith Award and Sahitya Academy Main Award be given to the writers of children literature? Won't such a step encourage writers to contribute in this field? To add to this, everyone knows the uses and power to translation. Won't it be beneficial to start a project of translating good children literatures from all parts of the country to various regional languages?

In fact a joint venture is required. The government, literary experts, NGOs, writers and guardians should come together and sit down. They should make a collective effort to improve this neglected corpus of knowledge. After all this venture is directly related to their children, who will be the future of the society; of the

nation. In fact there should be a children literature study centre everywhere in the country. The analysis and study of children literature should be studied as a subject in the universities of our country.

There are about thirty literary journals in Manipur and not a single one is for children. There are some columns for children in the local dailies (Sunday issues only) which print painting or drawing by children. However no poems, articles, fictional or non-fictional stories are published. Lack of preview and review of books, not just about children literature but literature in general, is not good for the growth of literature as a whole. For instance **The Hindu** which is widely read in Manipur takes keen interest in review of books and literature especially in **The Literary Review**. This section is encouraging and such a feature needs to come up in the regional newspapers of our state. Strong critical pursuit and reviews will give the readers the option to choose the best literature in the long run.

Another important case in point is the rapid technological advancement and the hyper-real world of advertisement along with the growing influence of TV and mobile phones. All these factors give a far reaching impact on the minds of the youngsters. Our youngsters engage longer hours in watching TV and playing games in their mobile phones. These activities are driving them away from the enjoyment of reading books. Technological advancement is a curse and boon at the same time. For examples social network sites like Facebook and online applications are very popular these days. And we can make the best use of the internet technology in bringing about the awareness and growth of literature. Internet advertising through a children literary blog or literary podcast for children coupled with an online children library will be a boon in wooing young readers who are tech-savvy. The growing influence of cinema – Hollywood, Bollywood and especially Korean movies and the growing trend of dance or fashion show, fancy dress shows and beauty contests are driving away our youngsters from the world of books to world of glamour. Unknowingly such activities are encouraged by parents who themselves are victims of the glamorous world. The need of the hour is to strike a balance between these two disparate worlds.

Both government and private schools except a few established schools do not maintain a proper library and reading rooms which is detrimental in inculcating the habit of reading from the young age. Except Teacher's Day which is a multi event ceremony in most schools, annual literary meet and academic functions are rarely organized though it is made compulsory by the school boards and councils of education. Thus young students do not get the chance to express and showcase their varied talents.

Educationists and academicians stress on the fact that education should be an opportunity and not a burden. Ironically, our students are too much taxed with the burden of securing higher marks and grades. They don't get the freedom of exploring their creative faculties which is so essential in their all round development. Too much burden on the young minds for bookish knowledge and marks is robbing their freedom to pursue and explore their creativity in the field of fine arts, literature, dance and music in general. The main trend in Manipur is to force the students to opt for science rather than encouraging their real talents and helping them to make a career out of it. And here comes the importance of children literature which will enable the parents to know their children's real potentialities and talents.

To sum up, in the world scenario the Coronavirus crisis is awakening, in a place like Manipur, where bands and blockades also occur frequently due to various reasons, there is a great need for the development of children literature. The logic is that COVID-19 crisis or bands directly affect the normal functioning of educational institutions. During such times, the children can spend their free time in a fruitful manner if they can get access to a vast collection of quality children literature on various themes. They would also eventually inculcate the habit of reading. This would fire their imagination; instill in them a love for nature and cultural values. Above all they would know about their nation's great tradition and culture, naturally enhancing their nationalistic feelings.

Instead of forcibly introducing children to the world of literature through school textbooks, children should be induced to love literature by inciting their curiosity, imagination and interest. Indeed inculcating the habit of reading early in life is one of the most important aims of education.

II. CONCLUSION:

As such children literature needs to be developed, promoted and propagated for the advancement of our society. But sadly, today, it is one of the most ignored area in the whole paradigm of education and knowledge.

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