

Indian Folk Literature and its place in education – Challenges & Recommendations

Richa Verma

School of Languages
CSJM University, Kanpur

Kavita Bhalothia

Amity University, Jaipur
Rajasthan

Abstract

India has a significant role in the history of world folklore. Indian fables have affected the entire world's folktale literature. The origins of Indian folk literature can be traced back to the ancient educational system. Students come from a variety of backgrounds, and folktales promote multicultural values. These are the primary sources of socio-cultural information, and utilising the multifaceted elements of folktales can assist learners in understanding multiculturalism's values. "Folk" denotes "people in general" according to the Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary. It denotes "people of a certain sort or from a particular location," according to the Macmillan Dictionary. The majority of 'people' or 'folk' in India are illiterate, unable to read or write, and rely on what they see, hear, remember, and imitate to learn. Folk literature is created and carried on from generations to generations from a historical and geographical perspective. Folktales are stories that have been passed down orally over time. It can be found in almost every society's language and culture. It is passed down by word of mouth and comprises of both prose and verse narratives, poetry and songs, myths, dramas, rituals, proverbs, riddles, and the like, as does written literature. They usually contain a moral lesson and reflect the values of the culture from which they originate. Indian folk tales are rich in mythological figures providing moral values; they were written to narrate history, stories about wise people, and religious rituals and ceremonies from various regions of India. Indian folk literature has a significant educational role as the folk tales pique children's interest. They learn about human action and reaction in various situations through animal-themed narratives. Such stories benefit children's brain development and help them deal with real-life situations. Folk tales originated in rural areas where the people were not much educated formally. Over the centuries folk tales travelled around the world and became very famous in cultivating values and also enhancing children's speaking and reading skills. This paper aims to focus on various aspects of Indian folk literature and its place in education, it will also deal with the challenges faced in the current scenario and recommendations required shall also be discussed.

Keywords: Indian folk literature, oral literature, role in education, folk tales, challenges and recommendation

INTRODUCTION

The concept of 'folk', as well as the word itself, has a wide range of meanings and connotations, ranging from 'natural' to 'native' to 'traditional' to 'rustic,' and even 'from the heart.' Folklore is the result of native or traditional people's "outpourings from the heart."

Oral traditions are the lore, traditional knowledge, and beliefs of societies that do not have a written language and are conveyed mostly through word of mouth. They feature both prose and poetry narratives, as well as myths, dramas, and rites, similar to written literature. Folklore is a part of every culture. Literature, on the other hand, is traditionally defined as any written work. Folklore and oral traditions are preserved through literature in written form. Without this type of literature, practically all of the world's folk and oral traditions would have perished. India continues to be one of the world's most prolific suppliers of folktales. Not just folktales, but all types of oral traditions — proverbs, aphorisms, anecdotes, rumours, songs, and spontaneous folk street plays – reflect the culture and values of the region in which they are performed. (India Culture)

ROLE OF FOLK LITERATURE IN EDUCATION IN ANCIENT TIMES

Since time immemorial, folk culture and tradition have played an important role in Indian society and civilization. It has been discovered in all levels of our educational system, from gurukuls to current smart classes. It has always been important in moulding people's ideas and disseminating information. The gurukul system of education is also mirrored in Vedic literature, which is depicted in epics such as the Ramayana and the Mahabharata. This education system covered a wide range of topics, including herbal medicine composition and application, emotional training, indigenous knowledge use and practises, as well as socioeconomic and political training.

CURRENT RELEVANCE IN EDUCATION

In the twenty-first century, curriculum and education have undergone a paradigm shift. While science and technology remain the primary focus, people's attitudes and preferences have

shifted. Folktales are widely used in literature and education. Indian folktales such as the Ramayana, Mahabharata, Bhagvat Gita, Panchatantra, and others are ideal for children since they are rich in moral lessons. These tales inform us about our past, our way of life, our morals and values, and, ultimately, who we are.

IMPORTANCE OF FOLK LITERATURE IN EDUCATION

Curiosity is piqued by the story's flow, which is related to the mental and bodily pleasure it offers. It's a verbal art form in which the story content defines the aesthetic component and elicits emotion and sensuality. It stimulates creativity in two ways: first, through the art of narration of the concept, and second, through the beauty of the form.

Children listen to folklore without prejudice, distinguishing between fact and fancy, and comprehending the underlying message for the most part. Early childhood schooling is the most crucial time for character development. Education and recollections from this time in one's life are a subtle window into one's personality. Folklore and folktales can have a variety of benefits in early childhood education. Making folklore a part of early school studies might be a better approach to education.

Mythology, epics, and folklore can all be used to delve into the encyclopaedia of Indian civilisation. The incredible story restores the story's eternal beauty by bringing history, art, and culture to life and also describing the legends, religious activities and ethical principles, The Indian mind has been ruled by a conscious value system since ancient times; every aspect of folk tales not only emphasises learning, but carried an immense appeal in literary depiction. What differentiates Indian literature is the purposeful component of the storyline. The Panchatantra stories, folk tales, and epics all highlight moral values, a code of conduct and a set of ideals for a learned community. Respectful behavior toward elders, deep veneration for teachers, value for visiting guests, honouring the given word, valour, cultivating esteem, honesty, and forgiveness are all themes that arise frequently in the stories and do not fail to communicate their value in life. It has endowed society with a moral stature and a sense of self-identity that it cannot reject.

Most generations have connected to the rich legacy of storytelling, which has found value in a variety of social contexts and ages. Dramas, musical ballet, and classic theatre have all incorporated the age-old oral heritage. Books on mythologies and epics or stories from folklore and epics takes an interesting approach to the tales, that are stylistically and artistically acceptable. (Saxena)

ROLE OF FOLK LITERATURE IN HAPPINESS CURRICULUM

Folk literature can help people cultivate happy thoughts. The importance of folk literature in education is so great that it has a positive impact on teaching and learning even now. To encourage cheerful learners, the Happiness Curriculum in Delhi Schools integrates varied folk literature. Academically, a happy youngster will always excel. In light of the positive impact of happy curriculum, UP and Chhattisgarh schools are planning to incorporate it in their classrooms.

“One incident I can’t forget is when a girl told me about how the happiness classes had given her peace of mind from the strife at home because of her being a girl. She told us that her brother, being a boy, was sent to a private school while she was sent to a government one. Not just that, in school, she would often stew with resentment because of the favouritism shown to her brother at the breakfast table. Since the happiness class started, she has been able to leave her resentment behind in the very first period. It helps her focus on her studies. It is saddening that this discrimination is happening even in the capital of the country but it brings me joy that the happiness class is bringing some respite.”

– Manish Sisodia, *Shiksha: My Experiments as an Education Minister*, 2019

This curriculum is divided into three sections: inspirational stories, mindfulness meditation, activity-oriented conversations and reflections intended for children in grades 1-8. The first section of the Happiness Curriculum focuses on inspirational stories and mindfulness meditation. The story section of this curriculum consists of 20 stories taken from real life situations and folklores. Some of these tales are also drawn from folklore, which is still

relevant after all these years. We can understand the place and importance of our folk literature in education. (Datta)

India is a country with a great deal of cultural diversity. Since India's independence, the gathering, preservation, analysis, and study of popular literature has got a lot of attention throughout the country's major languages. The use of elements from folk literature for educational objectives at various levels of education, on the other hand, is quite limited. These are also known for instilling morals, types of language, and a variety of other crucial learning items in the minds of students. People's literature can be used as a powerful educational instrument in the three types of education: non-formal, formal, and informal, which range from teaching literacy to literature and other topics. Academic institutions and universities around the country began to establish folklore departments in their distinct regions over time. Folklore has resurfaced inside and among the people to urge their true meaning. This is an important development in the field of folklore. (Oza)

ROLE OF FOLK LITERATURE IN EDUCATION - WHAT EDUCATORS BELIEVE?

Professors in higher education in the United States are always looking for new ways to engage their students. Academics struggle to keep up with new teaching methods and strategies as educational policies and trends shift, in order to optimise the impact of their teaching. Innovative approaches in pedagogical philosophy and educational and developmental psychology have transformed twentieth-century practises, resulting in newer avenues of teaching such as "flipped classrooms," "developmentally appropriate practice," "connected learning," increased interactivity, "blended learning," to name a few. Teachers act as "guides on the side" rather than "sages on the stage," implying a more constructivist approach to train minds and student learning. Another source of inspired and responsible teaching is to look at "literature" that has been passed down verbally for generations as folktales. These stories have survived because they are good stories that address important intellectual, social, and moral issues, the bulk of which began in oral traditions. Inherently, storytelling is about teaching and learning. Different types of stories provide us with different types of learning opportunities. Despite the fact that none of these folktales were situated in a formal educational setting like a school, several of the "students" in the stories learnt by listening to the teacher's words.

For instance, a young man decides to seek his fortune in an Indian story "The Five Wise Words" (Sideman), but he must first obtain permission from his teacher. The teacher gives him five bits of advice: obey whoever you are serving, never speak badly of others, never lie, and listen intently if you see someone reading from a holy book. In the face of adversity, the young man travels the world, following his teacher's directions and succeeds at every stage. Hence, the importance of folktales in education and the moral message conveyed through such stories cannot be ignored. (Nelson)

CHALLENGES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Folk literature is explored for its intrinsic value and delight, more as an independent literary genre, but it is conspicuously absent from our educational and socialisation processes. Even with newest discoveries of folklore materials, the stories that were published in elementary school textbooks years ago are still being told. Folk literature's educational potential for creative language curricula, rhetoric, socialisation, civics, and other topics has yet to be recognised. The prose pieces from folklore endure significant language alterations when the syllabus is transformed into lessons for teaching purposes. These stories are rewritten in ordinary English, with only the plot retained, removing all of the peculiarities, complexities, and innovative word play that existed in their original form. These appear to be selected more for their ethical or similar principles than as an instructional tool for achieving educational goals such as language use, concept formulation, and so on. The stories have lost their appeal as ethical aids, owing to the fact that they are now delivered in a rather dry tone. The teacher education curriculum does not offer an approach that enables teachers to use folk literature as a valuable educational method. (B. Mallikarjun)

Like most folk literatures around the world, Indian folk literature has been progressive, revolutionary, and rich in terms of themes, storylines, and issues. Indian scriptures, in fact, are a source of inspiration for folk literatures all across the world. India holds a unique position in the history of world mythology. Folk literature had an important place in ancient education system and India was known for its unique teaching style. Indian folk literature has its root in education. Folk literature is oral literature and people, whether in families, societies, or schools, need to keep connected with one another. Education has undergone a

significant transition. The voices of the teacher and parents have been substituted by numerous apps and technology. In today's world, folk literature must take on a new form that is compatible with technology.

Indian Folk literature curriculum can be built to fit into education on the basis of happiness curriculum. Folk literature needs a special design and plan as today's student live in a virtual world and is sceptical of folk tales. One of the reasons pupils are unfamiliar with our folk stories is the falling tendency of reading among students. School libraries are extremely important in education, and modern libraries lack sufficient collections of Indian folk literature works. Furthermore, libraries have evolved into e-library. We need to have a good digital collection of folklores. To keep folk literature alive and bring it back into education, society and educational institutions must work together. There may be volunteers from the Society who wish to start various clubs themed on Indian folk literature.

CONCLUSIONS

Folk culture and tradition have played an essential part in Indian society and civilization since time immemorial. It's been found at all levels of our educational system, from gurukuls to today's smart courses. Curriculum and education have experienced a paradigm shift in the twenty-first century. People's attitudes and choices have altered, despite the fact that science and technology remain the dominant focus but in literature and education, folktales are widely employed. The Ramayana, Mahabharata, Bhagvat Gita, Panchatantra, and other Indian folktales are perfect for youngsters since they are full of moral lessons. These stories teach us about our history, culture, morality and values.

Indian Folk literature is studied for its intrinsic value and pleasure, rather than as a literary genre, but it is noticeably lacking from our educational and socialisation systems. The pedagogical potential of folk literature in terms of creative language curricula, rhetoric, socialisation, civics, and other issues has yet to be explored.

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