

## Cultural Reminiscence and Values in Children's Literature

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### Abstract

Social values are commonly found in Children's Literature in all languages. Malayalam and Tamil are two important languages in Dravidian family of languages. Although different from other Indian languages, the two languages have many similarities in the language and culture of the surrounding areas. It is in its back-story that such an idea become relevant. But in contemporary children's literature, there are very few presentations that evoke old memories of our culture. The resulting loss is the pledge of a generation. It is this common sense that keeps the works of early childhood writers alive today. Those works are timeless.

**Keywords:** Cultural Identity, Cultural reminiscence, Child domain, Malayalam, Tamil.

Malayalam and Tamil are two important languages of the Dravidian linguistic family. Researchers observe that Kerala was a part of Tamilnadu and that the antiquity of Malayalam belonged to Sangam Literature. There have been many acquisitions in the literature and culture of these two languages belonging to the same family. It continues to be so even in this day. It is not possible to calculate exactly when such linguistic combinations began. It is clear, however that it is more conveyed through literary works. The genres of short stories, novels and poetry are at the forefront. However, this study examines some of the trends in children's literature that are largely ignored in literary works today.

Childhood is said to be the most basic stage in personality development. Studies show that a child who adjusts his mind to his surroundings and social changes will gradually become a citizen. The child should automatically identify such social 'spaces', and the adult should create the conditions for it. It is in this context that children's literature becomes important.

We have to change our thinking and style of life and do self-examination as to whether we are doing something according to their mental enjoyment/cognitive ability. There is a need to change the

public spaces of the children in such a way that they stand out from the social environment and connect their thinking with the love of the world. What is needed from the family is conscious interventions to develop children's view that the family does not consist only of father and mother, and that life is about taking social responsibilities and fulfilling those responsibilities by relating them to life.

Nowadays children have all the possibilities for their holistic development at their fingertips. But the lesson of how to engage with the external world should be learned from nature. Today, the child has become a social being alienated from such interactions. Writers have a good role to play in correcting these. Looking back at the extent to which we have such cares as the writers of the past have reserved for us today testifies to the extent to which we fulfill our responsibility for future generations.

Today, the eminent writers and others longed for the upliftment of children. M.T. Vasudevan Nair, ONV Kurup, Karur Neelakandapillai, G. Sankarakkuruppu, Kumaranasan and Ulloor S Parameswara Iyer are all familiar with the children's literature of Malayalam. The works of Subramanya Bharathiyar, Kavimani Desiyavinayakam Pillai, Kuzha kathiresan and Azha Valliyappa are also famous in Tamil. All of them are not looking for the subject of creative work but are clearly exposing the children to the "spaces" around them.

When we search for the roots of any literature in India, we come to the folk tradition. Oral stories and poems reveal the culture of folklore. As in Malayalam, the story tradition of Tamil begins with the 'Panchathantra stories', the Aesop stories and later the 'Thenaliraman stories'. 'Vikramadithya stories' and folk tales are also available in Tamil. Such stories, borrowed from various sources are still perpetuated by each language, giving each language its own cultural identity. Apart from this, there are many stories in Tamil today based on Ramayanam and Mahabharatham.

The message of love in all works is to treat and help all our fellow human beings around us with love. Early writers in their writings convey all the values that need to be inculcated in children at an early age. In addition, they were committed to imparting the elements of God, love, patriotism, religion, education, and adulthood.

**'Keep in Mind the Purity of the Village'**

The line ‘Keep in Mind the Purity of the Village’ is taken from famous Malayalam poet Vailoppilli Sreedharamenon’s ‘Vishukkani’. It reveals that we should always be a part of nature in all aspects. Non-mythological stories such as *Sumangala* in Malayalam, E. Santhosh Kumar’s ‘*Kakkaradeshathe Urumbukal*’, Subhsah Chandran’s “*Akkudumuyal Appam Chuttu*’, K. Sreekumar’s ‘*Pattuthoovala*’ touch on the depth and breadth of rural holiness in contemporary children’s literature. Sumangala’s stories strongly portray the home atmosphere. In each case, they have seized it, despite obstacles we come across and imagine. At the same time, they offer us an opportunity to experience the abilities of each animal and their limitations, behaviour and qualities. Recently, she focused mostly on mythological stories.

All the talents of Gajaveeran (Elephant) are explained in the collection of stories ‘Unnikalkkoru Anappusthakam’ by Sippi Pallippuram. Subhash Chandran’s ‘Akkudumuyal appam chuttu’ has a narrative style that entertains all children. Children are not made part of the story or the situation. R.S. Lal’s ‘Kunjuniyude yathrapusthakam’ is a modern work but a return to the tradition, it literally means return to the nature. It has a narrative style that children can enjoy, and it amazes them with.



Sumangala (1934-2021)

Courtesy: <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/kerala/sumangala-passes-away-at-88/article34425633.ece>

The uniqueness of Sumangala's stories from the new writers is that all the elements of the region are the subject to the stories. Stories that focus on the region, house, trees, birds, animals, beliefs, superstitions, domestic issues, place names, conflicts, celebrations and also spiritual matters are presented for children to enjoy.

The story 'Nadavu' written by Shankar Aswin in Tamil is completely reminiscent of folklore. The plot is about seedlings. It is a story about how children can experience the reality of rice and paddy. Originating in a social atmosphere, this story touches on the emotional areas of children in the developmental stage of children. The story 'Cuckoo' deals with qualities of the bird. They are often performed in songs and children's poems. But this story presents a different kind of human interaction. The story 'Raasaathi' tells the life of a village girl. Narrative language and culture give all the colours and happiness of the village.

In Tamil, one of the highlights in this area is the story 'Sanjeevi maama' by Ko. Ma. Ko Elango. In Malayalam, the theme reminiscent of Takazhi Sivasankarapilla's 'Thottiyude makan'. Sanjeevi maman is like Gandhiji to those natives as it is to India. Sanjeevi is the uncle of all locals because of the greatness of his work. Ayisha Natarajan's famous story 'Ayisha' is reminiscent of Shankar Aswin's story 'Raasaathi'. It is the story of family struggling to make ends meet. In the stories of Vishnupuram saravann 'Vathurja' and 'Vithaikara sirumi', the region is indescribable.

Only a handful of new stories like this deal with rural beauty and the social environment. Most of the stories, like in Malayalam, are adapted to the changes of new age. Ko.Ma.Ko Elango's 'Jeemavin kaipesi', Balabharati's 'Aamai kaattiya arputha ulakam', Marappachi sonna rahasyam', and Ramesh Vaidya's 'Irttu enakku pidikkum' are the forefront of this field.

### **Women's Contributions**

It can be said that we have only a few women writers in children's literature in Malayalam and Tamil. Although women are making their own contributions in all other fields, it is necessary to investigate why they are not many in this field. If we look at the list of recent Malayalam children's literature award winners, you will understand the seriousness of this situation. Every year in Malayalam, Children's Literature Institute announces the awards in different categories. In 2020

women were awarded for Story/Novel by Maina Umaiban, Science - Sandhya, Narration - Sheeja E N and Cognitive Science - Dr. TR Jayakumari. There has been creative work only in the story/novel genre. In 2021, women received the award only in the retelling category. (Saga James- Birbal Tales). And in Tamil, Salai Selvam, N Kalaiyarasi and Sarita Jo are currently writing in this field. The fact that Tamil does not have a Children's Literature Institute like in Malayalam also exposes the seriousness of this issue. Moreover, the awards are given in ten categories in Malayalam: story/novel, science, poetry, drama, cognitive science, biography/autobiography, illustration, picture book, book design and retelling. But the absence of such twists and turns in Tamil is also a hindrance to the growth of children's literature. It is worth mentioning that Devi Nachiappan received the Sahitya Akademi Award (2019) for the total contribution in Tamil Children's Literature.

### **Divergence of Children's Literature**

In the field of literature, children's literature is growing with all other fields. But their growth is subject to a variety of abnormalities and thematic variations. With the advent of science and technology, children's literature is also subject to such topics. Today, things like mobile phones and the internet are becoming more and more popular. Most of them are myths that tell the story of how they do good, harm, and subjugate man. Due this tendency, the enjoyment of topics that are intertwined with one's own culture decreases and along with it frequency and opportunity for reading decrease. Stories about adventure, the world of magic, travel, animals, treasure hunts, jungle, pirates and overcoming danger are generally alien to children today.

### **Conclusion**

It is undisputed that we, as social beings are inextricably linked with society. It is this consciousness that enabled early writers to engage in their creativity by engaging with society. Children of the new age are losing similar experiences. The inadequacy of tacit knowledge given to children by tradition and norms can even undermine their socio-historical construction. The current trend of cultural extinction needs to be taken seriously. In modern society, children are slowly drifting away from practical knowledge and wealth of experience. It is important to examine the extent to which children are using its potential in this age of e-reading. Children's literature is a question mark for future culture, just as children are separated from the primary things of environment, culture, local knowledge, games, love of nature and love of the world. The cultural similarities found in these two languages belonging to the Dravidian family are two manifestations of the same culture.

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