



Enchanting Mythologies and Folktales: From Timeless Treasures to Contemporary Classics in Children's Literature

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Evolving Narratives of Indian Folktales in Children's Literature through the Lens of
Devdutt Pattanaik and Sudha Murty's work

Introduction

Children's literature in India is a vibrant and rich tapestry, deeply rooted in the country's folklore, mythological heritage, and cultural traditions. Throughout history, India's literary landscape for children has been a treasure trove of tales that not only entertain but also impart essential moral and ethical values, shaping young minds in the process. This unique blend of storytelling has been a hallmark of Indian children's literature, allowing young readers to explore the diverse and enchanting world of the country's myriad cultures.

Children's Literature" is frequently described as works written or produced for the amusement of children or young adults. Children's literature includes fiction in numerous genres such as fantasy, folk stories, fables, folklore, legends, myths, epics, rhymes, picture books, and so on.

One of the most iconic and beloved contributions to Indian children's literature is Amar Chitra Katha. This comic book series, founded by Anant Pai, has been a household name for generations. It has introduced children to the timeless tales of gods, heroes, and mythological adventures, ensuring that these stories remain alive in the hearts and minds of Indian youth.

Another timeless classic is the Panchatantra, a collection of fables that has been passed down through generations. These stories, often accompanied by animal characters and clever moral lessons, continue to be an essential part of Indian children's literature.

In recent years, Indian authors like Devdutt Pattanaik and Sudha Murty have played a crucial role in rejuvenating these age-old narratives. They have taken the rich tapestry of Indian mythologies, folktales and retold them in contemporary contexts, making them more accessible and engaging for today's young readers. Through their efforts, these authors have bridged the gap between tradition and modernity, ensuring that the essence of Indian and mythologies and folklore remains relevant and captivating for the digital age.

In this intricate interplay of folk narratives and mythological stories, children's literature in India continues to evolve, offering a diverse and enchanting landscape that celebrates the country's cultural heritage while embracing the ever-changing tastes and needs of its young audience. This genre remains a powerful medium for nurturing young minds and fostering a deep connection to India's rich cultural tapestry.

Objective of the Study:

This study aims to achieve several key objectives:

- The primary objective is to delve into the depths of children's literature in India and understand how it is intricately woven with the country's folklore, mythological heritage, and cultural traditions. This involves a comprehensive examination of the various elements that contribute to this rich tapestry.
- The study seeks to analyze the pivotal role of traditional narratives, in entertaining, educating, and shaping the moral and ethical values of young readers over generations.
- It aims to assess how modern Indian authors, notably Devdutt Pattanaik and Sudha Murty, have revitalized Indian mythologies and folktales by reinterpreting them in a contemporary context.
- The study aims to explore how these contemporary retellings bridge the gap between tradition and modernity, ensuring that the essence of Indian folklore and mythologies remains captivating and meaningful for today's youth.
- Lastly, the study underscores the educational and cultural significance of children's literature in India as a powerful medium for nurturing young minds and fostering a deep connection to the country's rich cultural tapestry. By addressing these objectives, the study aims to provide valuable insights into the multifaceted world of children's literature in India, shedding light on its enduring appeal and the ways in which it continues to shape the literary landscape and cultural identity of the nation.

The significance and relevance of the study

- It explores how these stories contribute to character development and cultural preservation.
- This study will shed light on how children's literature acts as a medium for passing down traditional stories, folklore, and mythologies, ensuring their continued relevance and significance in contemporary times.
- The study's insights can inform educators and parents about the importance of these stories in character development, contributing to the ethical foundation of young readers.
- By examining the efforts of modern authors like Devdutt Pattanaik and Sudha Murty, the study showcases how these narratives are adapted to contemporary contexts. This adaptability is crucial for ensuring that children's literature remains engaging and relatable for today's digital-age readers.
- The study underscores the bridging of generational gaps through storytelling. It reveals how these stories continue to resonate with young readers while connecting them to the cultural traditions of their ancestors.

- The study encourages the promotion of multicultural understanding. It fosters an appreciation for the country's myriad cultures and traditions.

Method and material

A qualitative research approach is employed, with a specific focus on utilizing secondary data as a methodological tool. By examining and interpreting existing data and scholarly materials related to Indian children's literature. It includes the study of academic papers, books, articles, and critical analyses to build a foundational understanding of the subject. Secondary data analysis allows to draw from the wealth of existing knowledge and identify gaps in the current research landscape, which can inform the study's direction and focus. Through this qualitative research approach, the study aims to offer a well-rounded understanding of the cultural and educational dimensions of children's literature in India.

Literature Review:

Shalini R. Sinha, 2013. This study examine the current resurrection of interest in our own mythology and demonstrate how it corresponds with the nation's economic prosperity and so shows the people's self-confidence. In the intensely competitive modern world, a few management experts employ mythology to give guidance and direction. The study intends to focus on the works of prominent writers such as Amish Tripathi, Ashwin Sanghi, and Devdutt Pattnaik and investigate the reasons behind their current popularity. This study also examines how increased knowledge, education, and exposure have driven the modern reader and writer to strive to comprehend the profundity of Indian myths and tales and apply them to day-to-day living difficulties.

Sucharita Sarkar, 2014. In this study author focuses on the efforts of Indian publishing houses, such as Katha (New Delhi, founded in 1980), Tara (Chennai, founded in 1994), Tulika (Chennai, founded in 1996), and Pratham (Banglore, founded in 2004), to reconnect today's children with their Indian cultures, specifically through the medium of picture books. Growing up in an India where children's fiction choices and availability had a clear colonial bias.

Xavier Mínguez López, 2014. This study investigates the role of children's literature in education. It examines how, Children's literature, like any other type of literature, has a distinctive educational component. The more particular educational component that it entails is the development of literary competence, since children and young people are citizens in training and must acquire the required abilities to interpret and comprehend literature in a deeper sense. As a result, while teaching literature, instructors should emphasise these types of values rather than moral or social values, which are common in casual discourse about literature or other disciplines.

Research Gap

The research gap in the study lies in the need for a more comprehensive exploration of the contemporary landscape. While there is a rich understanding of the historical and cultural significance of classic works like Amar Chitra Katha and the Panchatantra, there is a dearth of research that delves into the impact of contemporary authors like Devdutt Pattanaik and Sudha Murty. This study aims to bridge this gap by investigating how these

authors have rejuvenated age-old narratives and how children's literature is evolving in the digital age, ensuring the genre's continued relevance in a changing world.

Re-contextualizing the significance of Indian mythologies and folktales in children's literature.

Recontextualizing the significance of Indian mythologies and folktales in children's literature is a transformative endeavor that bridges the timeless wisdom of the past with the evolving needs of the present. These narratives, steeped in tradition, carry within them a treasure trove of cultural, moral, and philosophical insights waiting to be unlocked for young minds. By weaving these age-old tales into the fabric of children's literature, we impart to the new generation the keys to understanding their heritage and appreciating the global tapestry of humanity.

Through these stories, children are not merely entertained but are invited on a journey of self-discovery and empathy. The characters, rich in depth and diversity, provide a platform for discussing inclusivity, tolerance, and the importance of ethical choices. The moral lessons embedded within the narratives impart values and virtues that shape the character of the young readers. In an era of globalization, these tales offer a window into India's rich cultural mosaic and encourage a spirit of intercultural understanding, fostering an appreciation for diversity.

Moreover, these narratives serve as a canvas for nurturing creativity and critical thinking, making children active participants in the storytelling process. Thus, recontextualizing Indian mythologies and folktales in children's literature is a profound commitment to nurturing well-rounded, culturally aware, and socially conscious individuals who can appreciate the profound lessons that history, culture, and tradition have to offer.

The emergence of Devdutt Pattanaik and Sudha Murty as prominent authors in the genre.

Devdutt Pattanaik and Sudha Murty have emerged as prominent figures in modern children's literature due to their exceptional talent in retelling and adapting traditional Indian mythologies and folktales. Their work resonates with young readers by making complex narratives accessible, instilling moral values, and celebrating India's rich cultural heritage, contributing significantly to the genre.

Findings and Discussion

The relevance of studying their works to understand the evolution of Indian folklore in modern children's literature.

The study of Devdutt Pattanaik and Sudha Murty's works is of paramount significance as it provides invaluable insights into the evolving landscape of Indian folklore within contemporary children's literature. (Tasnova Sarmin, 2022) We tend to believe that children's books are meant to be pleasurable and morally uplifting. On the surface level, it may seem like these books are for the entertainment of the children only but often they are bound up with the education of one kind or another. Children's Literature can be the significant bearer of knowledge and information about the changes in the culture, present, and past.

These two prolific authors have effectively bridged the gap between the timeless treasures of Indian mythology and folktales and the discerning sensibilities of today's young readers. By adapting and retelling these narratives in an engaging and accessible manner, they have ensured that the rich tapestry of Indian culture and heritage remains not only preserved but also vibrant and relevant.

Pattanaik's meticulous interpretations and Murty's regional storytelling have reshaped traditional narratives, making them more relatable and appealing to the modern youth. Their work carries the dual responsibility of preserving the essence of Indian folklore while addressing contemporary issues and cultural diversity. In a rapidly globalizing world, their contributions foster cross-cultural understanding and appreciation, transcending borders and age groups. By delving into their works, we gain a profound understanding of how folklore can be transformed into contemporary classics that continue to educate, entertain, and instill moral and ethical values in children, all the while celebrating the rich and diverse cultural heritage of India.

Devdutt Pattanaik's Contributions: Devdutt Pattanaik, a renowned mythologist, has played a pivotal role in adapting ancient myths and legends for children. His notable works, including "Pashu: Animal Tales from Hindu Mythology" and "Jaya: An Illustrated Retelling of the Mahabharata" offer fresh perspectives on timeless stories while retaining their essential cultural and moral elements. This paper explores how Pattanaik's storytelling enriches children's literature by making traditional narratives more accessible and relatable.

1. "Pashu: Animal Tales from Hindu Mythology (2014)"

Simplicity and Accessibility: "Pashu" is a collection of stories that introduces young readers to the fascinating world of Hindu mythology through the perspective of animals. Pattanaik simplifies complex narratives, making them relatable and accessible to children, ensuring that the stories are easy to understand.

Moral and Ethical Lessons: Each animal tale carries valuable moral and ethical lessons. For example, the story of the wise turtle in "The Churning of the Ocean" imparts the importance of patience and perseverance. These lessons serve as an educational foundation for young readers.

Illustrations: The book is adorned with vibrant and engaging illustrations that complement the narratives, enhancing the visual appeal and aiding in comprehension. The visuals make the stories even more captivating for children.

Cultural Sensitivity: Pattanaik's treatment of Hindu mythology is culturally sensitive, respecting the traditions and values while ensuring they are understandable and inclusive for a modern, multicultural audience.

2. "Jaya: An Illustrated Retelling of the Mahabharata (2010)"

Complex Narrative Simplified: "Jaya" presents the epic Mahabharata in a simplified form for young readers. Pattanaik skillfully distills the intricate and extensive storyline, making it digestible without compromising the essence of the epic.

Character Development: The author delves into character development, offering insights into the moral dilemmas, virtues, and flaws of the Mahabharata's characters. This approach provides children with a more profound understanding of the epic's complex personalities.

Visual Storytelling: The inclusion of illustrations in "Jaya" enriches the narrative. These visuals not only aid in comprehension but also serve as a bridge between the written word and young readers' imaginative minds, making the story more engaging and memorable.

Cultural Preservation: "Jaya" contributes to the preservation of the Mahabharata, one of India's most treasured cultural and literary works, by introducing it to a new generation.

In both "Pashu" and "Jaya," Devdutt Pattanaik adeptly combines storytelling with cultural sensitivity, moral teachings, and visually engaging elements. These works serve as a testament to his ability to adapt and retell traditional Indian mythologies in a way that makes them not only accessible but also educational and appealing to contemporary young readers. Through these books, Pattanaik continues to play a crucial role in preserving and sharing the rich heritage of Indian mythology with the younger generation.

Sudha Murty's Contributions: Sudha Murty, a prolific writer and philanthropist, has also made significant contributions to Indian children's literature through her retellings of folktales and mythological stories. Her collections, such as "The Magic of the Lost Temple" and "The Magic Drum and Other Favourite Stories," bridge generational gaps, ensuring the transmission of traditional narratives with enthusiasm and understanding. This research delves into how Sudha Murty's works engage young readers and connect them with their cultural heritage while conveying valuable moral and ethical insights.

1. "The Magic of the Lost Temple (2015)"

Fostering Regional Connection: Murty's "The Magic of the Lost Temple" explores a young girl's adventure in a Karnataka village, instilling a deep connection to regional Indian culture and traditions. The book provides a window into the lives of rural children and the beauty of Indian village life.

Strong and Relatable Characters: The protagonist, Noonni, is a relatable and strong character who embarks on a quest of self-discovery. She is a young girl curious about the world, which resonates with young readers, especially girls, encouraging them to explore and learn.

Moral and Ethical Values: The story imparts valuable moral and ethical lessons about honesty, responsibility, and respect for one's cultural heritage. These lessons are subtly woven into the narrative, making them accessible to children.

Cultural Preservation: "The Magic of the Lost Temple" plays an essential role in preserving and celebrating the cultural diversity and richness of India. It introduces young readers to the significance of historical temples and the importance of preserving heritage.

2. "The Magic Drum and Other Favourite Stories (2006)"

Diverse Stories: This collection of short stories offers a diverse range of narratives that appeal to a wide audience. Murty's storytelling extends beyond traditional folklore and includes contemporary themes that resonate with modern children.

Character-Centric Narratives: The stories often focus on individual characters, portraying their trials, tribulations, and triumphs. This character-centric approach helps young readers relate to the experiences and emotions of the characters.

Moral and Social Messages: The stories in this collection contain moral and social messages that encourage empathy, kindness, and understanding. They also address relevant issues, such as environmental conservation and gender equality, making them thought-provoking for young minds.

Cultural Sensitivity: Sudha Murty's stories are culturally sensitive, embracing the traditions and values of different regions of India. This sensitivity ensures that her narratives are accessible and inclusive to a diverse audience.

In both "The Magic of the Lost Temple" and "The Magic Drum and Other Favorite Stories," Sudha Murty skillfully blends regional storytelling with universal themes, imparting valuable moral and ethical values to young readers. Her works celebrate the diversity and heritage of India while addressing contemporary issues, making her a prominent figure in children's literature. Through her engaging narratives, she encourages the younger generation to embrace cultural diversity, empathy, and social responsibility, making her stories not only entertaining but also enlightening and enriching for children.

How their work adaptations bridge the gap between tradition and modernity.

Devdutt Pattanaik and Sudha Murty have masterfully bridged the gap between tradition and modernity in children's literature through their captivating adaptations of age-old stories. Pattanaik's reimagining of Indian mythology not only simplifies complex narratives but also infuses them with contemporary relevance. He makes ancient tales accessible to young readers, fostering an appreciation for cultural heritage.

On the other hand, Sudha Murty's adaptations often draw from her own experiences, making them relatable to today's children. Her stories emphasize values, ethics, and the importance of empathy, nurturing the moral compass of young minds.

Both authors seamlessly blend tradition and modernity, enriching children's literature with timeless wisdom while ensuring it remains appealing and enlightening in the 21st century.

Reviving the Joy of Reading: Sudha Murty and Devdutt Patnaik's Impact on Children's Literature

However, in recent decades, there has been experimentation with a wide range of contemporary themes, and the emergence of authors solely dedicated to children's books.

It's amusing, because we live in a time of digitalization, and apparently of a downturn in children's reading habits, which are progressively being supplanted by gadgets like phones and tablets. Despite the threat of technology, there is a concerted effort to instill reading in youngsters, creating for them a magical world that is frequently near to reality. Two notable figures contributing to this noble cause are Sudha Murty and Devdutt Patnaik through their exceptional contributions to children's literature.

Sudha Murty, has created a plethora of captivating stories that not only entertain but also impart valuable life lessons. Her works engage young readers in narratives that bridge cultural and moral gaps, promoting empathy and wisdom. Devdutt Patnaik, with his unique blend of mythology and storytelling, offers children a chance to

explore India's rich cultural heritage. His books provide a captivating introduction to ancient tales, encouraging kids to appreciate their roots.

Both Sudha Murty and Devdutt Patnaik are instrumental in rekindling the love for books among children by crafting stories that are not only entertaining but also enlightening, making reading a cherished and enriching experience in today's fast-paced digital world.

Conclusion

In essence, this study has shed light on the evolving narratives of Indian folktales in contemporary children's literature, emphasizing their continued importance in shaping young minds. Traditional Indian mythologies and folktales, rich with cultural and moral lessons, have been skillfully adapted and retold by authors like Devdutt Pattanaik and Sudha Murty to remain relevant in the 21st century. These adaptations have successfully bridged the gap between tradition and modernity by simplifying complex narratives, ensuring accessibility, and introducing cultural sensitivity to their young readers.

Devdutt Pattanaik's and Sudha Murty's works have played pivotal roles in preserving and transforming these timeless treasures into contemporary classics. Through their storytelling, they have fostered cross-cultural understanding, instilled moral and ethical values, and kindled an appreciation for India's diverse cultural heritage.

Looking ahead, the broader implications of their contributions extend to the future of children's literature in India and beyond. Their success paves the way for more authors to follow suit, adapting and retelling traditional stories that serve as cultural touchstones while addressing the evolving needs and sensibilities of young readers. This ensures that the magic and wisdom of Indian folklore continue to captivate and educate generations to come, promoting a richer appreciation of the past and a more enlightened future.

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