



Role of Folk Tales in the Development of Culture through Moral Values

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Abstract

Culture is the ideas, customs and social behavior of a particular people or society. It refers to the collective mixture of knowledge, experience, beliefs, values, attitudes, religion etc. acquired by the group of people in the course of generations. The core of the culture is framed by values and practices. Although, there are many ways to develop the culture, Literature especially, folk literature plays a vital role in developing the values among the people. This study is an attempt to prove that folk tales as a pathway to develop culture through values. This paper focusses on Indian folk tales like Hitopadesha tales, Jataka tales and Panchatantra tales by throwing light on the moral values which are common for worldly beings.

Keywords: *Culture, Values, Folk literature, Folk tales, Hitopadesha tales, Jataka tales, Panchatantra tales*

Full Text

Introduction

Tales are meant for pleasure reading. It also develops one's reading habit, creativity, imagination, painting etc. Its vital role is in developing the ethical values of the people. Here, animals are personified as humans. Indian stories develop the culture of people. It brought up every child, may be a boy or a girl. The folk tales teach the literary work. Let us discuss the importance of such tales in the development of culture.

Culture

Culture is the ideas, customs and social behavior of a particular people or society. It refers to the collective mixture of knowledge, experience, beliefs, values, attitudes, religion etc. acquired by the group of people in the course of generations. The core of the culture is framed by values and practices. So, this study focusses on the development of Indian culture through moral values.

Indian Culture is characterized by its simplicity. It is called as the Aboriginal culture and acts a basis of the world culture. To the villager the old culture is instinctive, a part of his being and a pattern of his life. In Indian culture the basis is religious and so also the village life is primarily religious. There is much more superstition about village religion but the villagers are familiar with the great truths of India and in their own ways they express them in worship, in rituals, in songs, dance and drama.

Indian Culture

Indian culture has been shaped by its long history, and its diverse geography. The ancient heritage of the Indus Valley Civilization has been preserved even while absorbing customs, traditions, and rituals from both immigrants and invaders.

India's different religions followed by its vast populace have contributed to making its culture as diverse as it is unique. The epics of Hinduism – the Ramayana and the Mahabharata which serve as folk epics have greatly influenced Indian culture.

Folk Art in India

The Indian villagers have their own art. Its main features are Simplicity and beauty. We live in harmony with the fundamental processes of nature. We have a serenity of life which provides them an instinctive opening for beauty, an instinctive grasp of beautiful forms and decorations. Music is the greatest of all Indian art. The air of the villages is filled with music, love songs, lullabies, and songs of ploughing, planting and reaping, rejoicings over births and weddings and aspirations towards God. Most of these songs spring from the soil. Music is transmitted through the

ages. The great classics like the Ramayana and the Mahabharata have become part of their inheritance. Rabindranath Tagore Many of these dances are performed in groups, some are accompanied by music with a leader and a chorus and whole stories are related in this way. Some songs are improvised on the spur of the moment. The harvest dance of the west-coast is a highly developed art. It is a round dance performed by young girls, arms and bodies swing with vigor while the foot has a rhythmic pattern. Our art act as a way to convey the ideas to the people. These art forms are also a kind of folk literature.

Folk Religion in India

Religion is one of the major source that is used to transmit culture to the people. They convey the message in their devotional songs, dramas, in the life history of gods etc... It makes the listeners more interested to lead their life in a successful way. In religion, besides worshipping great Gods animals are also worshipped like the cow or the serpent. In fact, all sorts of animals, things and elements of nature are deified. The philosophical idea behind the worship of these is that they are all expressions of God and by worshipping them the Supreme Being is offered worship and devotion.

Economic troubles, moral degradation and the evils born of the present transitional stage of our culture have also infected the villages. With the competition of the machine-made goods the seeds of decay have entered in the folk-life. The villager prefers to purchase the cheap machine made articles. Religion has become very conservative and sometimes even reactionary. The need of the hour is to disengage the more stable and perennial elements of the folk culture from the impermanent and the superstitious aspects. In modern India there is a revival of interest in folk-culture and some great men like Rabindranath Tagore, Uday Shanker, Jamini Roy with their music, dances and pictures have contributed immensely to this. They have taken many of their themes from these people. In many states the village songs are being edited and printed.

There are also some views who believe that the great epics Ramayana and Mahabharata is also transferred to the people as a kind of folk literature. The epics include several short stories within it which conveys a lot of messages and teach us the moral values for our better living.

Folk Literature

It is a kind of literature which focusses on the oral form. This is the traditional way of transferring and sharing their knowledge. It can be done through songs, dramas, dances, religions etc. The main form is story telling. During our childhood, we too listen to the stories of our Grandparents. Most of us should hear the story of the old grandma and the Crow. Even though there are several transcriptions now-a-

days, it gives a moral ending as we have several versions for the story of rabbit and tortoise. This paper focusses on such stories but from a compilation like Hitopadesha, Jataka and Panchatantra.

Hitopadesha tales

The Hitopadesha is a significant compilation of moral stories. It was composed by Narayana Pandit, Hitopadesha had its origin around a thousand years ago. In Indian Literature, the Hitopadesha is considered more or less similar to the Panchatantra. In the trace of Panchatantra, the Hitopadesha was also in Sanskrit and it follows the pattern of prose and verse. Hitopadesha tales are written in reader-friendly way, which also contributed to the success of this best seller after 'Bhagvad Gita' in India. Since its origin, Hitopadesha has been decoded into numerous languages to benefit the person who read all over the world.

The term 'Hitopadesha' is the combination of two terms i.e. 'Hita' and 'Upadesha'. 'Hita' means welfare or benefit and 'Upadesha' means advice or counsel. As the word suggests, the Hitopadesha is a collection of stories that counsel and advice for the welfare and benefit of everyone who reads it. Imparting morals values, Hitopadesha is the most widely read Sanskrit book in India. The Hitopadesha is still a popular story book for children that actually help them to develop into responsible and mature adults. Some of the tales like Blind Vulture, Rabbits and the Elephants, Washerman Donkey and Dog, Monkey and Bell etc... Here are provided some popular stories from Hitopadesha.

1. An old tiger and a greedy traveler

There was an old tiger who could not hunt for his food. One day, while he walked on the river side, he found a golden bangle. Through this bangle, he traced a plan to catch his meal. At that time, a traveler passed through that way. The lion convinced him to take the golden bangles from his paw. Even though the man afraid at the beginning while looking at the beast, later his greediness took him over to his death.

This is the story which talks about Greediness. It includes tiger and the traveler as central characters. The story brings out the end of a greedy man. Greediness is something related to the affective domain and reason is related to the cognitive domain. If affective domain overtakes the cognitive domain, the loss will be severe. Always intelligence serve the right purpose.

The moral of the story is "greediness will be punished". This story can be related to the reality in any generation. At present, greediness lies on money, gold, estates, etc. everything that goes beyond the limit reaches destruction. This gives a note to the readers that one should not be greedy.

2. Beware of Mean Friends

One day there lived a lion and his friends, crow, wolf and jackal. These three were in relation with lion for their selfish ideas on food and pride. On other day, a camel came to that forest and lives under lion's care. At the meantime, lion got injured while hunting. So, the lion could not get food for several days. Subsequently, the three friends too did not get any meal. So they planned to kill the camel. After a clever plan, the camel was eaten away by the four animals.

The moral of the story is "beware of mean friends". It means that one should be careful all time. At present, this situation can be compared to any incident. It is very apt for social media like Facebook, twitter, hike etc. One must be beware of having friendship in the media.

3. The Sage's Daughter

It is another interesting tale from the Hitopadesha album. There lived a sage, who did not have children. One day while praying, a little mouse fall on his lap. So, he thought of brought it up. He changed the mouse into a girl and take into his house. Soon the girl grew into a beautiful maiden. The sage planned to marry her off. She refused every gods that sage had selected. Final suggestion was a male mouse to which the daughter accepted readily. The sage too accepted the destiny.

The moral of the story is "destiny cannot be changed". It develops oneself into a spiritual being where everyone should believe that there is a superior power which decides everything. In present world, it can be compared to anything and any actions.

Jataka tales

The Jataka Tales were written for the mankind to gain knowledge and morality during 300 B.C. Since, Jataka tales have become story books that are both pleasurable as well as knowledgeable. It was originally written in Pali language. Those Buddhist tales have been translated in different languages around the world. The luminous fables of 'Jataka' are intended to impart values of self-sacrifice, morality, honesty and other informative values to people.

Jataka Tales are an important part of Buddhist literature not less than 547 in number. Jataka stories represent former incarnations of Buddha, at times like an animal, a bird and sometimes like a human being, the future Siddhartha Gautama. The setting of the stories is made in or near Benares (Varanasi), which is a holy city in north central India. Some of the popular story/ tale from Jatak collection like Power of a Rumour, Elephant and Dog, Cunning Wolf etc... Some of the examples are provided here.

1. The Wind and the Moon

Once there lived two friends. They are the lion and the tiger. Their peaceful life gets into trouble when they get into an argument about the natural changes especially the growth of moon. They stand with their argument which develops their problem more and more. They went to a sage for solution. He concludes that both stand are right. The sage also advised them not to indulge in such silly arguments which will break their relationship.

This story has the theme “Friendship”. Here, the natural elements are taken as metaphorical figures for human beings. Their relationship is explained in the story. It also concentrates on a simple problem which leads to the destruction of friendship. It warns the readers about the problem and make them aware of good understanding in their relationship.

2. The Golden Swan

This is also a story in the collection of Jataka tales. It is the story of a golden swan which helps the poor mother and her daughters by shedding its golden feather every day. The greedy mother tries to kill the golden swan to take all the feathers but unfortunately, all feathers turn into normal feathers. The mother realized her mistake and the swan promises that it won't return.

The moral of the story is “Excess greed bring nothing”. Now-a-days, everyone runs after something like money, promotion etc. These are categorized under greediness.

Panchatantra tales

The Panchatantra is a legendary collection of short stories from India. Originally composed in the 2nd century B.C, Panchatantra is believed to be written by Vishnu Sharma along with many other scholars. The purpose behind the composition was to implant moral values and governing skills in the young sons of the king. The ancient Sanskrit text boasts of various animal stories in verse and prose. During all these centuries, many authors and publishers worked hard to make these fables accessible and readable by a layman. The grand assortment has extraordinary tales that are liked, perhaps even loved by people of every age group.

The Panchatantra is the best guide to enroot moral values in children since its each tale has a moral lesson in its end. The Panchatantra is a great book where plants and animals can speak and converse with human beings too. The etymology of term ‘Panchatantra’ suggests that it is a combination of two words, ‘Pancha’ (five) and ‘Tantra’ (practice/ principle). So, the five principles or practices illustrated by Panchatantra are ‘Mitra Bhedha’ (Loss of Friends), ‘Mitra Laabha’ (Gaining Friends), ‘Suhrubhedha’ (Causing discord between Friends), ‘Vigraha’ (Separation) and ‘Sandhi’ (Union). Here are provided some of the popular tales from Panchatantra.

1. The Hunter and The Doves

It is the story of the doves which overcome the problem easily through unity. This story talks about the theme unity which focusses on the proverb “unity is strength.” Unity is lacking in the contemporary world. It tries to build a better relation among people.

These three tales are the famous folk literature in India. These tales focus on the worldly values. They are quite general and common for all people in all countries.

Conclusion

The above discussed stories are some of the examples. There are several other stories. If we concentrate on superstitious beliefs, there are stories. There are also stories which frames the rules for gender and for scholars and so on. This folk literature is a great collection of literature which gives life to several aspects of life. These stories also acts as a base line for making the men more powerful than women. It can also look in feminist point of view. This is one aspect which only focusses on the moral values. Rules may differ for countries but the values are same. This paper may focus on Indian literature but it is applicable to all countries in the world without any difference. There may be some other attempts like this and this is an addition to those attempts.

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