

JUNGLE CHAT: ANIMAL AND BIRDS IN CHILDREN’S LITERATURE: INDIAN PERSPECTIVE

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India is a country of diversity in almost all respects, but the cultural roots are the same. This applies to the children literature of Indian languages(Bengali, Assamese, Oriya, Tamil, Telugu, Kannada, Marathi, Gujarati, Kashmiri, Hindi and other Indian languages) also. For anyone, it is almost impossible to say who composed folklore and oral tradition and when exactly they came into existence which are origin of all Indian poems for children, but no matter what the language , the Indians share a common culture and heritage, values and beliefs. As per the researchers, there are number of similar poems, songs, stories etc. in every Indian language.

Here I must confess that being a Hindi author and in the absence of availability of enough children’s contemporary literature of all the Indian languages in Hindi or English through translation, I can cite few examples only. Further, even in one Indian language like Hindi or Bengali or Marathi etc. the literature is now available in such a large volume that it is again almost impossible to cover the whole in a short paper and time. Even then I shall try to justify to some extent. I may also mention that even in Sanskrit, children’s literature (though rarely) is being written. A story, ‘Mosquito and Wind’ written by Jagannath can be cited as an example. The Indians are particularly grateful to Sahitya akademi and National Book Trust, India who are doing wonderful job in the field of translation also.

The Nature, which includes plants, trees, flowers, mountains, springs, water, sky, sand, animals and birds is not only an inspiring force but also a good company of the men , it is also the best, natural and essential company of children after the mother. **Gulzar**, an eminent author of Urdu language and a filmmaker has proudly shared his experience related to his grandson’s natural and special love for animals. In his words, **“We go out to eat out on Sundays and when he sees the security dogs at the hotels, we feel scared but he rushes towards them. Animals too have an instinct where they will not attack a child. He loves feeding toasts to Rakheeji’s cow and copies his nani (grandmother). He loves his fish and his rabbit . He loves pets just like Bosky (his mother) used to and like his nani and dadi.”** (Delhi Times, The Times of India, Sunday 26 April, 2014). It reveals clearly that generations change but not the love for animals and birds and other natural gifts of the nature among the children in particular. It has been rightly said and I quote from an article **“Animals as People in Children’s Literature (Carolyn L. Burke who is a retired professor of education, Indiana University and Joby Ganzauge Copenhaver who is a lecturer in reading and literacy education, State University of New York at Genesco, New York)** that **“Most children are curious about and fond of animals. Many of us share our homes and our hearts with our pets. Certainly our local environments, whether we live in a city, a suburb or the country, are filled with a vast**

variety of animals both large and small. So, it would seem rather intuitive that these same creatures would find a place in the stories that we tell.” I must say that this is true in the literary scenario of India too. Those who believe in dividing the children literature as per age-groups think that up to the age of 7-10 the children are attracted with animals and birds in their literature. One may agree to the fact that as the child grows older, the pattern and themes of verses and rhymes (including other genres) also change- keeping pace with his growing interests. Although in the opinion of some of the Indian children authors, which include prominent ones too, Kings and queens, animals, birds, fairies, plants and flowers etc. have no place in contemporary children literature because they have become stale, outdated and irrelevant for today’s children who are living in scientific age yet there are many who dispute the rejection in absolute form . There are many Indian authors who have written a number of beautiful stories etc. to establish natural love and liking of children towards animals and birds. **Devendra Kumar**, a prominent fiction writer of Hindi, has written many stories related to love of animals and birds with new approach. For example, I may cite his story -“Whose toy” which is a very sensitive towards birds is a story of a child who naturally loves birds and animals. An adult brought a toy parrot in cage to home and hanged on wall. The child Shailly is attracted by it very much. One evening the adult came to home and found the cage of parrot missing from the wall. He noticed with anger that the child had broken the wires of the cage and brought out the parrot in her hands. He had to be quiet when he saw that the child kissed that toy parrot with her lips. Anybody can be stunned to watch such a love .

In spite of the fact that children love animals and birds so much that they want to look at them; they want to play with them; they want to live with them, there are many Indian parents and adults (particularly of the middle class) who are not in favour of keeping the animals in their homes for various reasons including the one that the animals like cats who eat rats and spoil their things. But many Indian authors have taken the side of children in their writings. In this regard, I may quote three stories for now: 1.’Cat’ written by Hindi author **Shriprasad**; 2.’Small cat of Anima ‘by Aasamiya author **Navkant Barua** and 3. ‘Three friends of Aashwin Raja’ written by Maithili author **Lili Ray**. The theme and frame of these stories are almost same. The details, of course differ. In the first story a children want to have a cat as pet but the mother does not like it. The mother thinks that the cat is a dirty animal because that eats mouse and drink the milk. However the mother prefers dog because that may protect the home from the thieves. The children started feeding the cat and the cat starting visiting the home but the mother always opposed. One night at about 1 a.m. the cat started crying . The mother requested the husband to shunt away the cat. The husband got up and found a thief there. Other people also joined. The thief ran away. Now the mother was happy and permitted the children to have the cat as a pet in the home. **The second story** is a beautiful story in which a girl Anima brought a kid cat at her home. Nobody liked the cat. They all were irritated because of naughty acts of the cat which are described by the author in a very interesting way. In this story also the cat was accepted by all when that became the reason for saving the home from a thief. **In the third story**, presence of cat is accepted by all but the entry inside the home was prohibited because of the mother who otherwise liked the play and other interesting actions of the cat and her two kids. She was also kind enough to provide milk for them. One day two big mouse entered the home and they spoiled many valuable things by biting them. Ultimately, the Cat killed the two mouse. Realizing the utility of the cat the mother permitted the entry of the cat inside the home happily. The added beauty of these story is their language. The animals do not use human language to express themselves. We know that love for not only animals but even for the insects who live in a home

is natural among the children. In one of the poems of Hindi poet **Divik Ramesh** “Sabka Ghar yah Payara” (The sweet home of all) this kind of love among children is expressed very artistically. A male child argues with her mother- You always say mom/this home belongs to us only/But how can I accept mom/ this home belongs to so many others. Then he showed the rats, lizard, ants, birds playing in the court yard etc. who are the part of the home . The children like the rats when they play and run and chase. **Ruskin Bond**, a famous Children’s author who writes in English and in whose writings love for all living things is well reflected, has shown his understanding towards the psychology of children in his stories. In *Visitors from the Forest*, he writes, ‘I make things easier for all concerned by leaving most of my windows open. I like to let in plenty of fresh air, and if a few birds, beasts, and insects come in, too, they’re welcome (Growing up With Trees..., National Book Trust, India). There are very good stories in which acceptability of animals in home by all members is portrayed very nicely. In this regard, I may cite a story “Appu Ki Kahani” (Story of Appu (elephant) written by Assamese author **Nav Krishna Mahant**. Care of children’s psychology has been taken very much in this story. An injured baby elephant was brought home by a child Ajaya’s father. Doctor treated him. Milk was given to drink through a nipple. The baby elephant started recovering. He and Ajaya started playing. In fact naughty deeds of baby elephant are very fascinating for children. Of course the elephant has acted as person also. There are very emotional moments like meeting of baby elephant with his mother which are added attractions of the story. The baby followed the (elephant) mother and the father of Ajaya did not stop. Ajaya became sad. One day, all of a sudden the baby elephant appeared again and everybody in Ajaya’s home was surprised and happy. The baby elephant helped in rescuing another strong elephant out of the hands of hunters. Ajaya’s father and elephant became very famous. The father was promoted and the govt. transferred him to some other city. ‘Where to leave the baby elephant’, was the question before him. Ultimately he got a happy solution. On behalf of the President the baby elephant (Appu) was gifted to the children of Japan.

The traditional way of using the nature which is generally visible in folktales may not attract the children of this era. It is also true that the Indian literature has been written with different approaches. **Lakshminath Bezbaroa** (1868–1938) who was a great Assamese personality and pioneer of modern Assamese literature has also written stories for children many of which are related to the animals. Approach of this author seems to be quite spiritual which may look like obsolete in spite of morals like a saying, as you sow so shall you reap therein. Even then it will not be a wise step to deprive the children of the nature altogether. Instead the authors must work on the new treatment. By treatment or approach I mean a new style with new tools of expression. I agree that the literature which promotes blind beliefs, undemocratic values, feudal outlook, absurdity (unreasonable) and so and so forth are not required for the present child but to throw out the above i.e. animals, birds, insects etc. blindly out of the world of the children treating them merely as subject is also not desirable. Why? Because we must understand that the process of creative writing (poems, stories etc.) for children and adults is almost same. No one write on the subject but it is the writer’s experience of the subject which inspires the writers to write and the artistic expression thereof matters more. To simplify, we may call that expression a subject too but in real sense the so called subject no more remains in its real physical existence in creative writing. To elaborate this I may say that an animal or a bird or a tree or a season or even king etc. are subjects in their natural world but when they take place in the creative children writing they become something else. A power of imagination, a new treatment or approach , author’s vision , new way of expression etc.

transform the ‘subject ‘ to something else which can be named as original creation. Moreover, not only in the case of nature but in the case of other source material also the authors must take care of the fact that whatever they write that should be **trustworthy for** the children. In fact the ‘original creation ‘ must have foundation of reliability and logic for which scientific outlook also contribute. So long element of reliability prevails, any kind of imagination becomes acceptable and to bring reliability along with imagination in the creation is a great challenge which any aware author faces. In the name of science literature one cannot afford absence of creative imagination to favour stereotype monotonous dry informative literature. Eminent children’s **authors of Bengali Ashapura Devi and Lila Majumdar** have underlined the need for more and more children’s literature for the Shishu or child who is not a teenager and who is being neglected in the present Bengali children’s literature. In the absence of this, the literature is flooded with mystery, detection, adventure, science fiction, and information . Therefore, such literature is threatening to drown children’s imagination, and wash away their quality of innocence. Where is the fancy-free child or a child with a child-like sense of wonder? It is said that literature’s prime purpose is to save humanity in the human beings. In the same way we may say that children’s literature’s main purpose should be to save innocence of childhood in the child who is being loaded with so called harsh realities in the name of psychology, science etc. In the words of prominent children’s author from Orissa, **Manoj Das**, “ ...no scientific or technological discovery or invention can alter the basic human emotions, sensations and feelings. Social, economic and political values may change, but the evolutionary values ingrained in the consciousness cannot change---values that account for our growth.” As per a great Hindi children’s author and well wisher of children, late **Sh. Jaiprakash Bharati**, “the main voice of the children’s literature has been courage, faith, will to live, inspiration to struggle in difficulties. The children’s literature has played a great role in awaking the sensitivity not only towards human but also towards animals and birds in human beings.” “ **Manushiya Puthiran**, an important voice in the new generation of Tamil poets thinks that children must grow as children. . It is good that now many authors agree that along with the help of science and technology, role of feathers of imagination which brings freshness and originality is also vital in today’s children’s literature which includes the literature with flavor of animal and birds too. No doubt, as one of the leading fiction writer of Hindi **Amritlal Nagar** who has written a number of stories including stories related to the animals etc. has said that the children like freshness in their literature. And the freshness can be brought in the stories etc. by the alarmed authors by using the fresh yet believable imaginations. **Amritlal Nagar’s story “Monkey in Space-suit”** is a good example from this point of view t. In this story, a monkey used to see a girl of the space wearing and putting off her space suit. She came on the earth with help of a space machine and was helped by a ‘baba’ (saint) in her need. One day the monkey took away the suit and wore the same and started the space machine. Somehow the monkey was escaped. The girl left for her place. After sometime, she came along with her parents on the earth and meet the saint. They offered a space suit to the saint and requested to enjoy a space journey. But the saint declined the same politely saying that he would enjoy the journey in future after discovery of the space suit by Indian children. The story no doubt suggests so many other virtues also like love for nation, care of the guests, self confidence, faith in one’s own children but the imagination part is also very powerful and central force of the story. It is generally agreed that Bangala, Kannad and Malayalam languages are very rich from the point of view of Science fiction. Now Hindi language is also not very behind. Here I may say very humbly that these are not the scientific or technological equipments but the scientific outlook which matters more in the children’s

literature. I may quote **my own poem** ‘Fire Engine –the Extinguisher’ as an example. In this poem a child visits Zoo and see an elephant there. The elephant takes water in his trunk and showers on the visitors. Looking at this the child reacts joyfully—Look o brother Ranjan/ there is animal’s Fire Engine!’ The scientific outlook can be seen in literature of many Hindi authors of today. For example we may read a story “Rakhani Hai Saaf Safai” (We have to keep cleanliness) related to louse written by **Manohar Chamoli ‘Manu’**. In this story the author shares even historical information related to louse but he has knitted the same in such a way that it does not look like an imposed one. If an author creates literature keeping keen observations of an animal in centre then that literature too may come under the science fiction. There is story “Our Cat” written by eminent Marathi author **Vijya Tendulkar**. In this story one can find the natural behavior of animals based on keen observation in a very interesting way, yet it speaks a lot beyond that. For example, about a cat who liked to sleep on the top of a T.V. to enjoy warmth of the same the author writes, “As soon as the T.V. started..., the cat used to climb on the top of and enjoyed sleep without any botheration. She had nothing to do with the programmes. She left the issues of quality, characters, direction, TRP etc. with us.”

Animal and birds rhymes have been very popular in Indian languages which have been very lovable to children for their fun . Have a taste of some of them: ‘Oh Mithu popata (parrot)/ why is your mouth so red?/ From where did you eat a paan(betel leaf)’ (**Marathi**), ‘Oh, cat, you look like a tiger,/But do not boast that you are one./ I know your power/ you can merely catch mice’ (**Kannada, Ch. Vasudevayya**), ‘How much innocent, How much lovable/ Unique is cow among the animals/ she gives us whole milk / let us give her tea to drink (Hindi, **Sherjung Garg**). For other poems popular with tiny tots, I may refer to animal fantasies by Bengali author **Jogindranath Sarkar**. His poem ‘The wedding of Mr. Grasshopper’ reads as ‘Ah, it is the wedding day of the grasshopper/ The lizard has put a cap on and is playing the drum./ The cockroaches have turned bearers and they are carrying the palanquin...’. One of the pioneers poets of Hindi, **Vidyabhushan Vibhu’s** poem ‘Ghoom Haathi Jhoom Haathi’ (Rotate Elephant, dance Elephant) is full of music and is still liked by children. To enjoy its music I may put few lines of it in roman script: Haathi Jhoom-jhoom-jhoom/ Haathi Ghoom-Ghoom/ Raja jhoome raani jhoome, jhoome raajkumar/ ghore jhoome Faujein jhoome/ jhoome sab darbaar!/ joom jhoom ghoom Haathi, ghoom jhoom-jhoom Haathi!/ Haathi jhoom-jhoom-jhoom!/ Haathi ghoom-ghoom-ghoom). Hindi poet **Balswaroop Rahi’s** poem ‘Camel’ is full of fun which has introduced the strange shape of camel innocently. Great grandfather of Hindi Children’s literature, **Nirankar Dev Sevak** has written many beautiful poems making animals and birds as characters . One of his such poems is ‘**Chiriya**’ (**sparrow**) which reads as: ‘One sparrow came and sat on the wall of roof and said- how beautiful is the house , how beautiful the boy who lives in the house. I will marry him and will give butter and biscuit to him’ . I may also quote a beautiful poem with grand imagery , Titali (Butterfly) written by poet of Malyalam language, **Kumaran Aasan**(1873-1024) who is known as the first modern malyalam poet: **Ei Valliyil ninu chamme/Pukkal pokunnita parnmme./ Tetti ninakkunni! Chollaan/Pumpaatt kalleyitella** (The child tells his mother that look, so many beautiful flowers are coming from creeper. The mother tells that son, you are mistaken! These are not flowers but butterflies). This image has reminded me a description made by **Ruskin Bond**(1934-) in another context. We all know that trees are the integral part of birds and animals. The man keep on cutting them for selfish motive which harms the cause of animals and birds too. In his book *Our Trees Still Grow in Dehra*, he writes, “Rakesh calls the maples the butterfly trees because when the winged seeds fall, they flutter like butterflies in the breeze.” Well, these are few examples to have an idea. Otherwise I

may quote several beautiful poems of several poets. I may also add that particularly in rural and tribal India the animals and birds like dogs and cats etc. belong to the community and the community take cares of them.

I may say that nobody can deny that animals and birds have always been a great attraction for the children. Their shapes, their behavior, their sounds etc. astonish them. They become objects of entertainment for the children. The children like to copy them and also imagine something new about them. One can experience this fact in their drawing books too. The Indian authors understand this interest of the children and try to create such literature which may increase their entertainment and love for the animals, birds etc. as fellow living beings. They have made the animals and birds as participants of the festivals and many other events in their literature. **Generally, the Indian authors have realized and expressed the same in their literature that man has been cruel to animals. He is the only animal who has been hunting for pleasure while all the other animals hunt for food.** Paro Anand who writes in English has conveyed this fact through her story 'Now I am old.' in which a Lion tells about the cruel and war-loving nature of man, who does not fight for food like animals, in autobiographical style. Of course, through their literature the authors may suggest some good ways of life also without making them so loud that the children run away. It is good that in Indian contemporary children's literature much care of this is being taken. In fact, Indian authors of today are opposed to imposition of moral or education or preaching, if any, and consider this an outdated style. It should be inbuilt and look like natural. Moreover, emphasis on entertainment or joy is being given more. As an example, I may cite one of the stories, 'Shabash Cuckoo!' (Bravo Cuckoo!) written by Oriya writer **Das Benhur**. The story is written in a dialogue form. It is a small story, I quote: Early one morning, when the sun was still half asleep, a cuckoo sat on the branch of a mango tree, Singing.

"Ku-oo, Ku-oo !" the cuckoo sang.

Just then, a little sparrow flew down and sat next to the cuckoo.

"Come, Let's go !" the sparrow said to the cuckoo.

"Go where ?" the cuckoo asked.

"Oh. nowhere !" the sparrow said. "We'll just wander around, hop around, play, have fun !"

The cuckoo said "No, I can't come with you, sparrow. It's time for me to practice my singing."

"What good will that do ?" the sparrow asked, "I don't practise anything, and I never have any problems."

The cuckoo laughed and said "There is a time for everything, sparrow. There is a time to practise singing and a time to play. Why should I listen to you ?

"People love me because I can sing sweetly, and that's because I spend so much time practising !

"You can do what you like, but let me do what I am supposed to do. Now go away!"

And a tender leaf of the mango tree said: "Shabash, cuckoo ! Well said !"

The sparrow said nothing and flew away.

And the cuckoo went back to his singing practice.

"Ku-oo ! Ku-oo !"

We may notice that what we learn from this story is noticeable but it is not imposed at all. And there is no direct interference in other's thinking. This is an modern approach.

Well, now we all know that Nature (trees, flowers, birds, animals, the sun, moon and the like) plays an important role in the world of children along with new themes. The child tries to establish dialogue with animals, birds, flowers etc. I may also add that as per a survey, we have in India 68,300 species of animals of which 60,000 are insects, 1600 species of fish and 372 species of animals. An animal which is on the endangered list and is found only in our country is the black buck. The black buck is a creature of the open plains and avoids forests or hilly areas.

Whenever a talk related to animals and birds in Indian children's literature begins, we cannot remain without mentioning some of our great world fame classics written in Sanskrit and Pali languages. These are considered as the source of children's literature of all the Indian languages. These classics are "**Panchatantra**" (*divided in 5 parts written by Vishnu Sharma more than 2000 years ago to educate mainly the politics including manipulative powers, importance of human intelligence etc. to 3 idiots or ignorant young princes of a king in six months through stories with animals and birds as characters. There are 87 stories.*) , "*Hitopadesh*" (*a short or little changes form of Panchatantra written by Narayan Pandit*) , "*kathasaritsagar*" (written by a resident of Kashmir, Somdev) in Sanskrit and "*Jataka*" (refer to a voluminous body of literature native to India concerning the previous births of the Bodhisattva. These are the stories that tell about the previous lives of the Buddha, in both human and animal form. The future Buddha may appear in them as a king, an outcast, a god, an elephant—but, in whatever form, he exhibits some virtue that the tale thereby inculcates.) in Pali. At the same time great epics like Mahabharata and Ramayana etc. are also big source of stories for children and animals and birds have played an important role in them.

If we look at the children's literature as whole, we will find that it falls under two broad categories . Under first category we may put that literature which was not specially written for children but still has capacity to entertain and educate the children after some editing and rewriting and thus making them relevant for today's world of children. **There is a story from Ramayana** in which intelligence of a dog is shown in such a way that intelligence of highest cast persons and officials proved dim. The dog was abused, insulted and beaten up by a Brahmin (Priest) out of high anger for no fault of him to the highest extent. His fault was only this that he came on the way of the priest. The dog went to Rama, the king, for justice. The Priest was summoned. After hearing the side of the Priest, Rama fixed his crime because his act was due to his anger. Rama consulted members of his court to suggest punishment but no one could suggest because as per the tradition the no punishment could be given to a priest. It was only King who could give any punishment. Then the dog was allowed to suggest a punishment. The dog requested the king to assign the highest post of a learning institute to the priest. Everyone there was astonished to know such a punishment which was like a reward. The king laughed at the innocence of the members of his court and said that do not think the dog as insignificant because he is a dog. He is very intelligent and knowledgeable. He has understood the psychology of the priest. Then he requested the dog to reveal the mystery behind the punishment. The dog revealed that before this birth he was the head of the same institute. Perhaps, unknowingly he committed a mistake and for that he is a dog in this birth. Now you may understand what will happen to the priest who is in a habit to act as per his anger on this and that small thing. Everyone was surprised on the intelligence of the dog. By interpretation this symbolic story is quite relevant to the present Indian society also which is still struggling with so many contradictions related to harmony of relationship. **The second category of children's literature**

is that written specially for children. **In the modern children's literature we may locate both the categories.** For example there are some stories of leading Hindi fiction writer **Premchand** which are written for the adults but can be enjoyed by the children too. Only some editing will be required. In my opinion they must not be treated as children's stories as it is. Premchand was the first Hindi author who wrote first novel of Hindi for children and the title of which is "**Kutte Ki Kahani**" (story of dog). His 12 stories in which role of animals is prominent are collected in his book "**Jangal Ki Kahaniyan**" (Tales of Jungle). Hunting is one of the dominant factor in some of these stories. Somehow I could not appreciate a story "Hunting of Crocodile". No doubt the story is full of thrilling and adventure and one can learn how to hunt a crocodile but from the point of view of children it becomes a very cruel scene of hunting for hunting sake of an innocent crocodile and cruel use of a goat for the same and that too in this age of ban on cruel hunting. But there is another story "Mitthu" who is a monkey. Monkey belongs to a circus. Gopal, a child, liked him much. He used to feed him bananas and other fruits. One day he came to know that circus is going to be moved from there. He became sad and wished to buy the monkey and got the money from his mother. He went to circus and tried to locate the monkey. While he was searching the monkey here and there his hand was about to reach in the cage of a tiger. All of a sudden the monkey jumped and saved him. In this operation the monkey was injured and even became unconscious. The monkey was alright after getting the treatment. The owner of the circus gave the monkey to Gopal free of cost. They both were very happy. This is a good story of mutual love, sense of belonging, friendship, importance to obligations between an animal and human being. The story is not at all unnecessary loud in its message and hence without extra burden. In the opinion of Premchand, children should be taught how to defend their lives themselves. They should have wisdom to differentiate between good and bad. If we study the opinions of other stalwart authors of other Indian languages we will find them similar to the above opinion. **Giju Bhai** (1885-1939) of Gujarati who himself a very popular children's story writer, felt that the personality of child is independent. In his words, "Do not tell stories as scholars. Do not try to nail the wisdom (in children). Do not impose. It is a flowing Ganga (river). First you take a dip in it and then allow children to take bath". I may also mention that there is also a non Indian great book '**Aesop's fables**' the stories of which have strong resemblances with the stories of Panchatantra and the same were translated in many Indian languages long back. This is a collection of tales from the Greek story teller, Aesop. Aesop was a slave in ancient Greece. He was a keen observer of both animals and people. Most of the characters in his stories are animals, some of which take on human characteristic and are personified in ways of speech and emotions. Each fable has an accompanying moral to be learned from the tale. Aesop, believed to have lived in ancient Greece between 620 and 560 BC. The stories have also influenced the Indian children's authors. **We may easily say that Panchantra, kathasaritsagar, jatak kathayein etc. on one hand and Western children literature which was made available in translation from the very beginning and classics of so many other languages of the world on other hand has influenced the Indian children's literature.** Literature of Russia, China, Japan and Korea etc. have also influenced the Indian children's literature.

I must mention that some authors including the prominent ones, though they are exceptions, **still write under the strong influence of the stories of Panchatantra, Katha Saritsagar etc.** Sometimes they seem to copy the idea and some details of those stories in the name of their own stories which is unfortunate in my humble opinion. I think in such cases credit must be given to the source books. Otherwise for the enlightened readers that may give an

unfavourable reaction. We may take the example of two stories “speaking Cave” and “Bride in Box” written by a very respectable Oriya author **Manoj Das** and which are compiled in his book of stories, the Hindi title of which is “Sanduk Mein Dulhan Tatha Anya Kahaniyan” (Bride in Box and other stories). The first story is available in Panchatantra and the other story is available in Katha Sarit sagar. If you compare the two texts, we will find that except some expansions in the description there is nothing new. However, in both the stories role of animals like Lion, Jackal and monkey is very interesting. There is another example of an **Asamiya** story “Saha Aru Kachar Daur (Race of Rabbit and Tortoise) written by **Kiran Tamuli**. This story is based on a story “ The Tortoise and the Hare” from the Aesop’s fables through which a lesson of ‘slow and steady wins the race’ has been taught and which is very popular among the Indians. One day a hare was bragging about how fast he could run. He bragged and bragged and even laughed at the tortoise, who was so slow. The tortoise stretched out his long neck and challenged the hare to a race, which, of course, made the hare laugh. The proud rabbit who could run very fast was defeated by a tortoise who could run very slowly. Thinking that tortoise walk very slow, the rabbit liked to take a nap in the race whereas the tortoise kept on walking and ultimately won the race. The author first of all gave the indication and credit to the old story and then keeping the main frame as it is changed the description and angle in such a way that it has become a fresh story for today’s children. In this story the Rabbit was determined not to commit the earlier mistake i.e of sleeping during the race. But this time, he started preparing himself for the race by eating more and more. He became very fat and due to the fatness he started panting during the race. He felt giddiness and could not move. Again the tortoise won the race. Preparation of the race and active participation of other animals which are very closed to Indian children like squirrel, bear, deer, lion, elephants, crocodile, monkey, porcupine (Sahi) is very interesting. The presence of these animals are missing in the source story .**Vishnu Prabhakar**, a prominent Hindi author who has written some stories related to animal and birds has also direct influence of the classics. Some stories are quite similar to Panchantra’s stories. But because of little new style they have become interesting. Vishnu Prabhakar’s main contribution is a character ‘Gajmandan’ based on symbol of Asiyad Games, ‘Appu’, the elephant. The stories of Gajandan are very humorous. This character also shares something useful also to the children. Sometimes the authors have used light glimpses of the characters of stories from classics like Panchatantra in their stories in a new way. For example we take example of a beautiful novel “River and Jaungle” related to animals and birds written by **Vinayak** in Hindi. Here , in a light mood, an animal character, Lioness of this generation want to remind a crocodile jokingly of his ancestor who tried to pursued a monkey to go to his home in the water on dinner on request of his wife who wanted to eat delicious heart of the monkey who used to eat and offer delicious fruits to the crocodile. The old story has been used only as an hint. Another young generation Hindi author from Rajasthan, Dinesh Panchal has also used the same story in his novel ‘Flying of tortoise’(कछुए की उड़ान) but in a little changed way. In fact, mainly these novels depict the problems of animals which they are facing for their existence. Animals have their own world and importance and need sensivity. Briefly I may say that children’s literature inspired by the stories of above mentioned classics have been repeated and rewritten with a brush of local colours and the powerful writers know how to use the source material effectively and appropriately.

If we look at the history of modern Children’s literature (in its real sense) of major languages of India like Bengali, Marathi, Tamil, Kannada, Hindi, Malayalam, Oriya, Assamese

etc. we will find that it started at the end of the 19th century and early 20th century. In some other languages it came later. For example in Manipuri, a North-East language, the need for children's literature in printed form began to be felt in the early 1940s to 1950s. After 1947 a number of books on children's literature were brought out. In the case of major languages one of the reasons of beginning of Children's literature was the need of preparing the text books for education. The Christian missionary schools were established and due to them new type of education system inspired to write stories of new style. Further, **Kavi mani Desikavinayagam Pillai and Subramania Bharati** tops the list of Tamil modern authors who gave the lead to contemporary poetry for children. **Truly speaking, without any prejudice towards the best part of classical and early writings for children**, the children's literature which can be said as the most suitable literature and which is not didactic like the old literature and which includes the literature relating to animals and birds etc. too for the contemporary children, is **written in the post independence period of India. It was not wrong if the great Hindi Children's author and editor late Jaiprakash Bharati declared, that era after 1970 should be accepted as golden period of Hindi children's literature.** We may apply the same to the children's literature of many other Indian languages too. It does not mean that the children should be deprived of the knowledge of classics of Children's literature. Now India has the best type of children's literature which may compete the best literature of any language of the world.

Like Sanskrit, Tamil is also an ancient Indian language. An ancient female poet Avvaiyyar (औवैयार) is the mother of Tamil children's literature as in the case of Panjabi it is Guru Nanak, Amir Khusro and Surdas (if we ignore the debate that who should be named as first children's author) in the case of Hindi. Avvaiyyar gave education of morals etc.

In the case of Bengali, a book of stories '**Hansi o Khela**' (laughing and playing) written by Jogindernath Sarkar in 1891 was the first to break away from the class-room tradition and was solely for the pleasure it would give to children. What the child would incidentally learn was an extra benefit. Rabindranath Tagore wrote about this book in the periodical Sadhana in 1893 that "The book is for little children. Bengal needed such a book, all our children's books are for the class-rooms. There is no trace of tenderness or beauty in them...." This comment was a new inspiration and direction to the Indian authors. As per Bengali scholar and author, **Shri Shekhar Basu**, "The Calcutta Schoolbook society was set up in 1817. It employed a host of writers whose primary job was to write textbooks for newly-founded missionary schools. Nitikatha, a moral text, published in 1818 was considered the first textbook in Bengali for school children. Children's literature found a solid base in the hands of Iswarchandra Vidyasagar, a stalwart of this age. He created lucid, well-knit, attractive Bengali talks for children. With **Rabindranath Tagore the golden age in Bengali children's literature emerged. Tagore wrote stories which were free from moral lessons. Reading became an activity for pleasure only.**" (Aspects of Children's Literature Volume II, National Book Trust, India). The children literature written as part of textbooks to teach them is separated from the children's literature created for them as their friend to enjoy the company of the same. I can draw your attention towards a story through which one can understand what a non-educational or academic story means. The story is "**Flower of Camel**" written by Hindi author **Prabhat**. In short, in this story, one day, a camel went to a village of different flowers. Looking at strange creature one kind of flower asked him, "What are you and from which world you have come. I do not know any world except the world of flowers?" The camel replied, "I am of the same world?" The flower asked again, "If you are

of this world then tell me whose flower you are” After a long discussion, the flower could convince the Camel that he was a flower of Camel. The Camel went to the place of Camel to tell the same with a great joy. When he told that “We all are flowers of Camels”, the camels denied to accept this. This story is unique and capable to give pleasure of surprise and new type of imagination. There is another famous story “**And Ballu Dada Was Freed**” written by Divik Ramesh in which the animals of jungle got a strong and kind elephant, who had never quarreled with anyone unnecessarily, freed from the prison of hunters. He loved to take care of the children of the animals. The whole operation looks like a operation done by animals and not by people. Beauty or art of the story lies in the pleasure full enthusiastic functioning of various animals and birds. They act as per their accepted natural strength and behavior . For example, an eagle who can fly high and see from a long distance informs the animals, “When I was returning home I saw some people taking Ballu Dada (the elephant) away.” The rats nibble away all the ropes tying Ballu Dada, the vultures confused the guards by hovering on the elephant as we know vultures normally circle a dead body, wolves raised clouds of dust by thrashing their hind legs vigorously and so and so forth . This kind of animal’s world can be enjoyed more in a drama “**Ballu Haathi Ka Balghar**”(Creche of Ballu Elephant) written by the same author and published by Rajkamal Prakashan Pvt. Ltd., New Delhi, India. An eminent Bengali author **Lila Majumdar** (1908-2007) has written a number of stories related to the animals, birds and insects etc. She has shared factual knowledge related to animals etc. in a very artistic. Her outlook is also scientific. I quote few lines from his book “Large Water’ to have an idea of her outlook- “Spiders are very bad, they eat flies. Sparrows are also bad, they also eat insects.” Kanu said. The grandpa replied, “Small children are also bad, they also eat fish and chicken and goat. In this world, this and that keep on eating someone other. Drink milk and go to sleep quietly.”This can be termed as a logical treatment.

Before summing up the various forms and styles of existence of animals and birds in the contemporary children’s literature of Indian languages, I would like to introduce some more fine pieces of the literature which I have come across . First of all. Let me take up the story “Laughing Dog” written by grate Bengali author Satyajit Ray (grandson of another great author Upendrakishore) who introduced Professor **Shonku** –a character who is an inventor, and wrote wonderful science fictions. He has also introduced another character **Feluda** (fictional private investigator) in his stories. Feluda’s distinguished presence can be seen in one of his very famous story “ Search of Tiger”. I must mention that contributions in the Bengali Children’s literature of Upendrakishore’s own family are greater and more varied than those of any single family. Well, ‘Laughing Dog’ runs on multi layers. It gives taste of satire, metaphor, humor etc. When readers see Asmanjas Babu so serious again and again about the laughing of his Dog-Brownie , they cannot remain without laughing. First of all the title of the story itself attracts the children. The name of the human character Asmanjus (suspense) itself is very suggestive. Dog also laughs, it is a new imagination. It was a matter of surprise for the people who came across this information because as per their understanding except man no other living one laughs. Once Asmanjus tried to hit a cockroach by his slipper but could not get success. At this, the Dog laughed loudly with joy. We know even the human beings may laugh in this situation. I must say that this is an imagination imposed on the dog by the author but in such a way that it looks like natural and trustworthy and hence enjoyable. Asmanjus talks to the Dog but the dog do not use the language of man which is another beauty of the story. The author gives another flavor to the story by a spice of various references of research related to laughing of a dog. Towards the end of the story, last incident of laughing is very sensitive and suggestive. An American wanted

to buy the dog . The dog laughed. The American asked reason of the laughing. Asmanjus replied-“ Sahib (Sir) thinks that he can buy whatever he likes with the help of money and thinking this the dog is laughing.” Another powerful story is “**Rat and Me**” written by very famous Hindi author **Harishankar Parsai** who is known for his satires. In this story, the author has shown how a fat rat thinks his right to live in his home and eat. In fact the rat owns the house. When the master of the home tried to avoid the rat from eating by adopting several ways, the rat does sit quietly. He kept on struggling for his right in his own way, for example by teasing the master . . The end of this story is also very suggestive and effective. The writer ends the story by these words, “ Is a man became inferior even to a rat? The rat can climb on my head for his right of food.” In this story too the rat does not speak in a language of man. It means the animal is depicted as animal. I may also refer to A noted figure in Marathi Children's literature, **Leelavati Bhagwat** who passed away at the age of 93. In her writing the animals have important roles but they remain as animals. Sometimes the author uses the popular folk - beliefs about the animals to give a flavor of traditional India and then suggest the other logical ways. We may take example of her very popular book “A Night in the Wood”. I quote few lines: “What is it, dear?"/ “My leg! It’s hot and itching,” said Swati./ “It has gone red and swollen too. Did something bite you?” asked Meena anxiously. “A serpent or something?"/ Yamu suddenly closed her eyes and said solemnly, “Astik Astik Kala Dora”. /”What in the name of heavens are you muttering, Yamu?” asked Meena./ Yamu explained, “It is a mantra(hymn). Whenever my mother hears the word ‘snake’, she says these words twice. She says it wards off any harm the snake may do you.” No doubt whatever children see their parents doing, they generally copy. In this story, ultimately a ‘First-aid’ treatment was given to Yamu by Shevanta and everything was alright. I cannot remain without remembering name of another prominent Marathi author **Gangadhar Gadgil** (1923-2008) who has also written children literature and who also portrays animal as animal, and neither treat that as person nor put man-language in that’s mouth. Here I want to discuss briefly his detective novel for children “Pakya aur Uska Gaing” (Pakya and his group) . Role of a dog Khanduaa is very significant in this novel. One of the member of the team always blamed the dog as Idiot. The dog never minded the comment. Rather he helped the team a lot and took dangerous challenges bravely. At the end, the team got success in its mission and the credit was given to the dog for the same. The dog told the story of his bravery loudly but in his own language i.e. “Bhau! Bhau! Bhau!” The deeds of the dogs are very attractive for children. “**Wise Bird**” written by a **Kashmiri author Surayya Rasool** is also a good story in which the small sparrow’s wisdom became reason to save the jungle from fire whereas the king peacock full of pride could not help at all. Among other good books related to animals and birds, I may refer to “Jungil Tapu” (Jungle Island) written by Panjabi writer **Jasbir Bhullar**, “In the nation of Butterflies” by **Sunil Gangopadhyaya**, **Sindhi writer Ishwar Chander’s** joyful story “When Cat wore goggles” in which a message of self defense has been conveyed through deeds of Rat and cat. “Choogh the squirrel” is a story written by English author **Bitti Mithal** in which a female squirrel was ultimately permitted to live in her own natural home. **Tamil** story “ He-calf” written by **J. Yatirajan** is a story in which love for animals is portrayed very well. The style is autobiographical. Children love such stories. In another **Tamil** story “Inspector Uncle” written by **Poovai Amudhan**, again love for animal (here a dog) has been shown. Pathetic reality of dogs in Indian environment is also shown. In this interesting and inspiring story a child saves a baby dog. Knowledge of society which takes care of animals has also been shared. In a story “You get as per your doing” written by **Kannada author T.C. Poornima**, fall of pride of an elephant has been shown. This elephant who got asylum in a beautiful Jungle

became destroyer of the jungle due to his pride for his strength. Ultimately he realized his fault and repented. He became protector of the jungle. The details of this inspiring story are attractive. Here I may cite a beautiful story of Hindi fiction writer **Kshama Sharma**, “**Cat With wings**” also. The imagination in this story is quite fascinating for children. A cat managed to get wings with the help of a child sparrow from latter’s grand mother who had wings of her husband in stock. Of course, Initially the grandmother tried to convince the child not to insist upon this kind of help which can be proved dangerous for sparrows but she had to bow. Her doubts proved true. After getting power of wings it became easier for the cat to reach eggs of the sparrow lying in nest on tree. Fortunately, an ape failed her plan of misuse of the power of wings. The ape snatched out the wings. The cat repented but there was no there to trust her and help. Kshama Sharma has written so many stories using the power of beautiful imagination. Her story “**Pappu Chala Dhundne Sher**” (**Pappu in search of Lion**) is another example. In this story concern towards animals’ existence comes in a very thought provoking way when we learn that Lion can be seen either in a book or in Zoo. In Indian children’s literature, along with beautiful imaginations like playing musical instrument and dancing on that by animals etc, sometime the animals can be found in form of masks also. For example, we may experience the same in a well known novel, “**Ek tha Thunthuniya (There was a Thunthuniya)**” written by noted writer **Prakash Manu**. “**Vah Aa Raha Hai (He is coming)**” written by **Rajasthani** writer **Lakshminaryan Ranga** is a very good story both craft and content wise. The story runs on a style of ‘hearsay’. All animals are informed by one animal to other gradually that “He is coming” but no one knows who he is. They have imagined worst to worst danger including the death, but could not guess till the end of the story. The monkey uncle (In Indian stories monkeys are generally addressed as maternal uncle) revealed that “ man is coming with axe”. Hearing this all the animals starting looking at each other with great grief. This story alarms against the danger of environment raised by selfish man. **Mohan Rakesh**, a leading Hindi author has dealt with problem of survival in one of his story “**Golden Cock, Black Monkey, Tree of Red Guava**” in another way, very nicely. In this story so long these three live together friendly helping each other, they remain safe otherwise they face destruction. Though the characters use man language yet they are not exactly personified. Personification is not imposed. There is an imagination but within the circle of acceptability. For example the tree drops fruit to help. One may say that how a tree can drop fruit on his own. Tree is not a person. But we know fruits drop from the trees and author can describe this fact in an artistic way. One may across such literature also in which traditional thinking imposed on certain animals are changed. For example Donkey or ass is known as idiot, who always carry load of others, in the world of humanity. In one of the poem, ‘Weight Lifter’ written by the writer of this paper, the donkey wants to convince the children to call him weight lifter instead of idiot who carries load of others. That reminds me a story ‘Gaplu, Taplu’ written by Sindhi author **Dr. Hundraj Balwani**. Gaplu and Taplu are two donkeys. Taplu has a complaint that people unnecessary thinks that donkeys are idiot. So much so they address the idiot people as donkey. Ultimately they come to conclusion that donkeys are not idiots. There is another Sindhi poet **Mahesh Nenvani** who has also written similar poem. In his poem ‘Not mustachio but Tail’ one can see a new understanding of relationship against the traditionally known relationship of enmity between snake and mongoose. In a story ‘New morning’ of **Jayashri Nayak** a loin who used kill a number of animals not only for food but also fun is compelled to realize that one should wish for a thing as per requirement only.

Among the Hindi authors, apart from the names already mentioned above, I may add some more names rapidly from the present scenario, like Dr. Nagesh Pandey Sanjya, Swayam

Prakash, Amar Goswami, Baldev Singh Baddan, Vishnuprasad Chaturvedi, Mohamad Asraf Khan, Dr. Bano Sartaj , Shyam Sushil, Surendra Vikram, Dr. Madhu Pant , Parshuram Shukla , Shanta Grover, Shreen Rizvi, Ramesh Tailang and Nrmala Singh who have written noticeable literature related to animals and birds. Of course there are many more names and they are equally important. Likewise names of some other prominent authors other Indian languages like Barqi Iqbal Ahmed (Wise Tortoise), Usha Anand (A Pool in the Jungle, Anita Desai (The peacock garden, A Cat on the Houseboat), Dr. Zakir Hussain (Goat of Abbukhan) ,Tara Tiwari (Sona's Adventures), Lal Singh (Nuskha), Ramendra Kumar (A Tale of Tails), J.B. Sharma (The Lion and the Hedgehog), can also be mentioned

One may also find such literature in which presence of animals and birds are in form of simile or abuse, or useful finished products, pictures etc. Without going into details I may quote a story "Next Day" written by Kashmiri author **Harikrishan Kaul** in which ship is in form of oil, crocodile is mainly in form of information, animal is in form of food. In a poem of Hindi poet **Parshuram Shukla**, a child says to his mom that he has drawn a picture in which a baby elephant is sitting on an elephant. The baby is very naughty and eats leaves by raising his trunk. In Hindi it reads as:

मम्मी मैंने ड्राइंग बुक में ,हाथी एक बनाया |
हाथी के ऊपर हाथी के , बच्चे को बैठाया |
हाथी का बच्चा हाथी पर ,ऊधम खूब मचता |
और कभी वह सूंड़ उठाकर,छोटे पत्ते खाता ||

No doubt, such examples are few.

I may say that we may enjoy various forms and styles of existence of animals and birds (and also insects) in the contemporary children's literature of Indian languages. Sometimes they exist in the form of themselves, sometimes they exist in form of metaphor, allegory, symbol, picture, messenger, toys, mask etc., sometimes they exist in form of person, sometime they exist as themselves but speak in man-language and sometimes they exist totally in new form. It is good that Indian authors keep on experimenting to give such literature a new shape, content, language and approach etc.