India 'Re-Visioned': A New Look at Indian Children's Fiction in English from 1957- 2000

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CERTIFICATE

Date:

This is to certify that I, Pallavi Borah, have carried out the research embodied in the present dissertation “India ‘Re-Visioned’: A New Look at Indian Children’s Fiction in English from 1957- 2000” for the full time prescribed under the Ph. D ordinances of the University of Hyderabad.

I declare to the best of my knowledge that no part of this dissertation was earlier submitted for the award of a research degree of any university.

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INTRODUCTION

My interest in children's literature fuelled my desire to collect as many children's books as I could afford. My bookshelves for a long while proudly exhibited an assortment of children's books mostly from the West. It took me a while to realize the missing Indian authors from my collection. Besides impelling enquiries into the numerically small number of Indian authors, it has prompted critiques of institutions that adjudicate literary merit and cultural significance.

In recent years, despite the homogenizing qualities promoted by globalization and trans-nationalism, a strong consciousness regarding nation, national identity and culture has been a worldwide phenomenon. It has had literary, social and educational manifestations. This aspect finds an echo in children's literature as well. It has rightly been said that,

> No images in literature are more compelling than those found in literature for children as they formulate how children come to see and understand the world.
> (Austin and Whatley, 2001: 3)

Literature for children is thus very important because it works as a mediating factor or as an interface between the child and the world around them. In other words, it also defines the child's identity (in terms of culture and nationality) in this world.

My aim in carrying out this project, entitled 'India Re-Visioned: A New Look at Indian Children's Fiction in English from 1957- 2000' is to study the concept of the 'Indian' nation as it is constructed in Indian Children's Fiction in English. I shall examine works of fiction written and published (post 1970's) meant for the age of ten to fifteen years. I also intend to interrogate the same in the formation of 'national character(s)' and the identity of an 'Indian' child. This study will also allow me insights into the readership of this genre. For my purpose I will look at

collection of short stories, novellas and novels. The texts that I propose to look at are: *Indian Tales* by Romila Thapar, *Tales and Legends from India* by Ruskin Bond, *Folk Tales and Fairy Stories* by Sudhin Ghose, *Akbar and Birbal Tales* by Monisha Mukundan; *The Narayanpur Incident* by Sashi Deshpande; *A Pinch of Salt Rocks the Empire* by Sarojini Sinha; *The Kaziranga Trail* and *The Blind Witness* by Arup Kumar Dutta: *Haroun and the Sea of Stories* by Salman Rushdie; *The Chandipur Jewels* by Nilima Sinha and the *Juneli* school series by Swapna Dutta. These are some of the texts that I have identified. However, the above mentioned list is not an exhaustive one, it is representative. Also, this might seem to be a limited selection of forms of writing for children, I am aware that there are other important forms of writing like children's magazines, comics and picture books. It is true that there has been a lot of research work done on the above mentioned forms of writing, especially *Amar Chitra Katha* on the lines of nation and nationalism, but it is also imperative to study the other forms of Indian children's fiction in English along similar lines.

For my research I use three primary terms of reference: culture, nation and children's literature. It would be imperative for me to clearly point out the link between these three terms as I see it. Nation is the habitat where we live and culture is the entire gamut of our national life. Children's literature is one of the primary means by which the young adolescents are trained to internalize the notion of national culture. Thus the three categories are inter-related. Indian Writing in English has gradually gained ascendancy in world literature in English and has successfully blended the three terms mentioned above. However, Indian children's fiction in English has not enjoyed similar status, but promises to be a rich but unexplored area, offering immense possibilities for research.

Indian children's literature in English is a fairly recent genre, dating back to not more than five to six decades. Like the English language, the concept of children's literature, as we understand it today, was borrowed from the West. Prior to this, in India, all entertainment was designed traditionally for the entire family. As Berry explains, "our early stories were in actual fact meant for everyone…(and) contained several levels of meaning. Each age group…applied its individual levels of meaning" (Berry, 1999: 168).Children listened to grandmothers tales (mostly orally handed down tales) which were usually different versions of the religious epics like the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata,* mixed with regional colouring. These along with folk tales from various parts of India made up the gamut of children's literature. Though Sanskrit has a tradition of prose fiction, reflections of an oral literature can be seen in *Brahmana* texts (1000-500 BC); *Brihat Katha* or *The Great Story* attributed to Gunadhaya; *Katha Sarit Sagara* (11 AD) by Somadeva; the *Panchatantra* and the *Jataka.* All these texts embody the art of storytelling in ancient India. There was, however, a paucity of creative writing, rooted in contemporary reality for children.

The origin of English language and of children's books in India can be traced back to the missionaries, who arrived with the zeal to proselytize and in the process familiarize the natives with their tongue. The first books to be printed for children in English in India were by the Missionary Book Society in Calcutta in 1817. Macaulay's *Minute of 1835* and Bentick's subsequent educational policy began "the process of producing English bi-linguals in India." By 1917, English education became uniform almost in all the colleges and it also became a symbol of prestige in the elitist society of India. With the coming of the British, books exclusively meant for children, apart from myth and epics stories, began to be written. In Bengal, especially, the School Book Society published textbooks for children. *Peshawali* the first Bengali children

magazine was published. Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar, regarded father of children's literature in India published *Betal Panchabinsati, Akhyan Manjari* and *Bodho Daya.* Abanindranath Thakur wrote stories like *Raj Kahini* and *Buro Angla.* Rabindranath Tagore published two short stories, 'The Homecoming' and 'Kabuliwallah', which portrayed childhood trauma in a Western form of writing and heralded the beginning of Indian children's writing in English.

By 1947, the year India achieved independence, English language had already become indigenous; it acquired 'Indianness' and it was taught in school, college and at the University levels. Sarvpalli Radhakrishnan's Report of the University Education Commission (1950), stressed the role of English in India and prescribed, that "English be studied in high schools and in Universities in order that we may keep in touch with the living stream of our growing knowledge" (Srinivasan, 1998: 11). Similarly, the National Policy on Education stressed on the importance of this language. It clearly said that,

> The world knowledge was growing at a tremendous pace. India should also make her own significant contribution to it. For this purpose, study of English deserves to be especially strengthened (Srinivasan, 1998: 11).

As the English language became established in academic curriculum, there was a growing need of English language books for children. Jawaharlal Nehru in 1957 established the National Book Trst (NBT) of India. On NBT, he said, "…lay the onus of inculcating the book reading habit, and help the child see the world through Indian eyes" (Srinivasan, 1998: 12). One of its main aims was to promote national integration. In the same year, the Children's Book Trust was established by noted cartoonist Sankar Pillay, who wanted to promote "well written well illustrated and well designed books for children" (ibid). He always expressed a concern for the expansion of individual reading beyond text book material. The decade from 1950-1960 saw the establishment

of institutions which were responsible for promotion of children's books in English and in Indian languages. But the dawn of Indian children's writing in English is considered to be around the 1970's (Rosalind Wilson, ex-editor of *Target,* identifies the year 1977-78). This gap of nearly a decade is difficult to account for. Bibliographic search has revealed that this decade saw the publication of Indian children's literature in English no doubt, but cannot be counted as 'fiction' because most of them were textbooks and informative books which more often than not, lacked in illustrations, colouring and other attributes which attract a child's attention.

The colourful books which were published with the establishment of NBT and CBT, also ensured that these children's books could become sites of negotiation and transformation and that every text they encounter lead them to new literacies. In the absence of imaginative texts, children acquire a kind of dominant literacy which reinforce the same values and morals of the popular culture they have been exposed to. This often tends to continue unchallenged for the rest of their lives. Class, caste and gender stereotypes and biases are further reinforced and seldom challenged by the books they read. The different literacies some children come with, often rich and culturally rooted, that is outside the prevailing dominant literacy, are subsumed by an alienating literacy at school - a literacy delivered through an unimaginative education system and reinforced by equally unimaginative books. Children's books seem to be an offshoot of popular culture rather than a creative alternative. To understand why this is so it is useful to explore the historical and sociological reasons briefly.

Children's books and magazines in India written in regional languages have a long history. Riddles in verse written by the Urdu poet Amir Khusro in 14th century, is one of the earliest that we know of. I am not including here the oral literature, *Panchatantra*, *Ramayana*, *Mahabharata* and so on which existed long before that. The history and rise of children's

literature are discussed at length in my next chapter.

Every kind of genre has been explored by writers both in regional languages and in English. In languages like Bengali, Malayalam and Hindi the publishing scene has been very vibrant. But if we look at the sheer volume of titles produced and the range, the number of books that stands out as exceptional, or even good, children's books is shockingly few in number. There are a handful of titles in the regional languages, and fewer still in English. As Radhika Menon, publisher of Tulika Books laments

> What we have is this huge mass of standardized, unimaginative, largely didactic and often imitative books. This, in spite of the fact that we have had extremely talented writers and illustrators, now and in the past. But children's publishers in India, with their limited and narrow understanding of children's literature, have failed to tap this talent to create a modern, relevant, responsive, Indian literary resource for children. (Menon, 2003: np)

Though the marginalized status of children's literature is a lament one hears from publishers and writers from everywhere - including from the UK and USA - in India children's literature seems to belong outside the realm of literature. They are more in the category of textbooks whose role is to inform and improve reading skills. And in a country where the textbook culture in schools is a continuing legacy of its colonial history, offshoots of this culture, which is how children's books are seen and conceived, reflect the same values and standards. To understand why this is so, there are two things we need to look at. The concept of childhood varies from period to period, place to place, culture to culture. Literature for children will therefore reflect this variety. First, we need to understand the perception of childhood in India and briefly the history of school education in India. Both have had a strong influence on the growth and development of children's publishing.

In the Indian closely-knit large joint families there is continuity in the adult and child

worlds. In a typical Indian family, small or large, there is always a head of the family, in most communities male. In his eyes adults and children are merely people of varying ages; the relationship and behaviour of the senior and other members of the family are defined by this perception Thus the thirty year old father is treated as an older child while the eight year old is treated as a younger child by the 'head of the family' - a grandfather or a granduncle. The head of the family is a benign autocrat and children, young and old, are not encouraged to ask questions or make independent decisions. Child marriage and early parenthood pushed children into the adult world as early as twelve or thirteen years. It is not surprising, then, that fantasies and role-play in children were often confined to imitation of adults in the family. A lot of stories in the early books and magazines for children were role-model based. For e.g., Gandhi's childhood was a favourite and numerous abridgement of *My Experiments with Truth* appeared. In fact, the portions which dealt with Gandhi's childhood were prescribed as compulsory reading as a part of the school curricula.

The influence of English being as Indian as the other Indian languages cannot be denied. Indian writing in English used the language creatively, with a lot of energy and dynamism by writers, but the same was not incorporated by children's writers. Their writing style by and large continued to be archaic, or over-simplified and bland, deliberately shorn of any cultural inflections. Worse still, the symbolisms and references are still Western and alien to a large number of children - spring, autumn, meadows, and daffodils all against an Indian backdrop. Thus the heavy burden of children of having to learn about their cultural heritage through the most unimaginative and didactic writing, which started to proliferate as a reaction to colonial textbooks and writings - inspirational biographies of 'great' men, stories of devotion and sacrifice, either for the nation or for the gods, stories of impossibly good children, retellings of

Panchatantra, the *Jataka* tales with great emphasis on the morals, stories from the *Mahabharatha* and *Ramayana*, to give some examples. This was not a sustained effort but was produced by different authors and publishing houses in different languages. It is not until recently that a lot of imaginative books for children have entered the market, but it is therefore all the more essential to question, what kind of 'India' do they project for young minds to inculcate and what kind of 'India' should be portrayed in Indian children's fiction in English.

Indian children's fiction in English can be said to share its ground with two 'marginalized' (until recently) genres of writing: popular literature and children's literature. Generally, classified as a specialized form of writing, children's literature, like popular literature, caters to leisure reading, which till recent times was considered unworthy of serious academic attention. It has to be stated here that I am using the term 'popular' in a broad sense. When I say, 'popular' texts for children in India, I do not mean that such texts are read by majority of school going children in India. Thus, popular texts for children for my purpose refer to those texts read by relatively limited socio-economic strata of Indian society. Nevertheless, despite the elitist bias, the study will be useful because children from these schools constitute the bulk of the ruling cultural elite of the Indian nation.

The following three sections deal with my primary terms of reference and chart out the conceptual framework with which I shall begin my study.

I

In order to fully comprehend the meaning of 'popular culture' (of which popular literature is a part of) it is imperative to explore the multifarious definitions of culture and also to trace its historical constructions. It has been said that:

> The concept of culture is at least complex and at most so Divergent in its various applications as to defy the possibility, or indeed the necessity, of any singular designation. (Jenks, 1993:1)

Thus, it is neither feasible nor desirable to arrive at a single definition of culture. Jenks, however, suggests that a classification of culture as a concept, which refers to the norms, values, beliefs, or expressive symbols of any particular group or society is more acceptable as starting point for analysis. If we examine the trajectory of the term through history, it takes us from a concept, which refers to a model of 'high' culture that celebrates the 'best' that has been produced in any given age, to a contemporary concept which acknowledges the complexity inherent in societies where distinctive cultures impact on each other. I will, however, begin by examining the tradition in which the term 'culture' is used to describe a tangible set of ideas and practices, which are exclusive to particular groups of people.

One of the first significant staging posts in the journey towards a notion of elite culture was Plato's *Republic*. Plato created a vision of a social order in which a group of men without family or personal wealth, described as 'philosopher kings', were specially trained to guard the moral integrity of society.

> Only the man who has a taste for every sort of knowledge and throws himself into acquiring it with an insatiable curiosity will deserve to be called a philosopher. (Plato, 1976:167)

This vision of culture was taken up prominently by a number of writers and philosophers in England in the nineteenth century.

Coleridge described the notion of culture as a process of 'cultivation', an agricultural term which was appropriated in the attempt to account for the process of developing a refined sensibility. Like Plato's 'philosopher kings', Coleridge proposed that an elite group, which he named as the 'Clerisy', should be accountable for ensuring the cultural heritage of a nation.

Matthew Arnold, like Coleridge, felt that traditional values were being displaced in the rush to mechanization and industrialization. Arnold attempted to hold on to visions of culture, which had not been tarnished by day-to-day issues of power and commerce. In *Culture and Anarchy* he asserted that culture seeks to "make the best that has been thought and known in the world everywhere; to make all men live in an atmosphere… where they may use ideas,…., freely-nourished and bound by them.'' (Arnold, 1963: 70). He felt that the artefact of high culture could only be appreciated by a particular kind of cultivated sensibility. In other words, celebrating an intelligentsia who would know better and preserve cultural traditions.

In the early years of the twentieth century, celebrated poet and critic T.S Eliot, took up Arnold's argument and suggested that it was appropriate that culture could only be produced and appreciated by a select few. In his *Notes Towards the Definition of Culture* (1962) Eliot argues that the nation's cultural heritage must be upheld for the good of the society.

F.R Leavis extended and adapted Arnold and Eliot's work to argue for the recognition of a canon of English that worked to exclude popular cultural texts from educational institutions. Though Leavis was not against 'mass production' of culture, what concerned him was the loss of a tradition. Tradition, for Leavis, was 'spiritual, moral and emotional' and it "preserved

"experience of ages" regarding the finer issues of life" (Leavis: 1933, 81). A popular view at that time was that leisure reading compensated for the boredom of work. But for Leavis, leisure was as dehumanizing as work, particularly because leisure pursuits such as popular fiction, debased language by appropriating it wholly for commercial ends. Hence, like Arnold and Eliot, Leavis argued for the recognition of a canon of English literature that worked to exclude popular cultural texts from educational institutions.

Working against the Leavisite approach to literature and culture is the well-known Marxist critic Raymond Williams. His *Culture and Society* (1958) explores literature by relating books and authors to the broader historical and social development of ideas, and to culture as a 'whole way of life', 'a mode of interpreting all our common experiences' (Williams, 1958: 18). As seen here, culture is not the culture of an elite but one that embedded in everyday experience and activity. The culture that Williams is interested in is the culture that emerges as a complex criticism of industrial capitalism. The work of Williams was important in that, amongst other things, he suggested that the concept of mass culture was fundamentally flawed. He argued that, 'there are, in fact, no masses'', only ways of seeing people as masses' (Williams, 1958: 289). His analysis led people to question the assumption that mass culture can be defined, or that we can determine who constitute the masses. Society is not a concrete amorphous lump, which can be neatly packed into sections, but a complex web of constructed social identities, which overlap and interrelate. A key term introduced by Williams is that of culture as 'structures of feeling': the lived experience of a particular moment in society and history.

Williams's 'structures of feeling' can also be seen as a basis for Stuart Hall's study of culture where he identifies media as important culture-makers. At the centre of Hall's work is the analysis of the way in which culture organizes everyday life. While Hall has not published a

book length study, he has written and edited a significant number of essays and collections, which have marked key points of development in Culture Studies. These include 'Television as a Medium and its relation to Culture' (1971) which theorized the centrality of television to popular culture and 'Encoding and Decoding in Television Discourse' (1973), which opened up semiotic approaches to the consumption and production of media messages, recognizing the complex social influences that are present in the audience's understanding of a text. Crucially Hall's work also explores the intersections of race and imperialism.

From the arguments presented above, it can be clearly concluded that, culture, be it 'high' or 'popular' is, "… the constant process of producing meaning of and from our social experience, and such meanings necessarily produce a social identity for the people involved" (Fiske, 1991: 1). Any social system needs a cultural system of meaning that serves either to hold it in place or destabilize it, to make it more or less amenable to change.

A social system that we conform to or consciously resist is the idea of a 'nation'. This concept along with the idea of 'national identity' is fostered by popular culture. As Isaac Sequeria says,

> The most effective way of studying a nation is to study its Popular culture, "the world in which its people live, relax in And have fun in". such a study would deal with areas like popular art, architecture, leisure-time activities…bestsellers and comic…(Sequeria, 1976: 1)

A close study of 'popular' literature for children is thus essential for a study of Indian Children's Literature in English.

Defining popular literature as the literature, which finds favour with a large number of people, would not be adequate. The concept could be fully comprehended only in its dialectical

relationship with its elite counterpart namely, 'high literature'. As John Fiske suggests, popular culture (in this case literature) perpetrates the oppressive ideologies of hegemonic forces, it can also offer resistant readings, according to the nature and circumstance of its production. Texts can also be read in different ways by different groups of people. Literary theorists like Iser, Fish and Eco assert that the reader brings a particular cultural context to each new text and a personal reading of history which influences how he / she makes sense of it. It is inevitable, therefore, that the texts of popular culture will provide a range of experiences for individuals.

With popular texts meant children, this aspect becomes even more complex. Adults generally produce popular culture texts for adult consumption. Adults produce much of popular and 'high' literature for children, and this circumstance changes the fundamental nature of the discourse. It leads us to focus on the manipulative element of the popular literature industry for children. Stephen Kline's analysis on the toy industry led him to conclude that: "children's culture has always been primarily a matter of culture produced and urged upon children…. Childhood is a condition defined by powerlessness" (Kline, 1988: 95). Childhood, in Kline's analysis, is a 'condition', a term redolent with images of temporary illness, in which children are dependent on the whim of adults.

The above-mentioned view raises many questions on the very idea of childhood and on the genre of children's literature. It would be important to examine the place of a child in the genre. These have been taken up in the following section.

II

On the face of it, the definition of children's literature seems to be self-evident. It can be, simplistically, defined as books meant for children but if we look closer, this definition does not

appear to be sufficient, and raises many questions. These include questions such as, whether a children's book is written 'by' children or 'for' children; whether a book written 'by' adults can be considered a children's book; whether a children's book can be read by adults; and if so is it still a children's book. As British critic John Rowe Townsend points out:

> Surely Robinson *Crusoe* was not written for children, and do not the *Alice* books appeal at least as much to adults? If *Tom Sawyer* is children's literature, what about *Huckleberry Finn*? If the Jungle books are children's literature, what about *Kim or Stalky*? (Townsend, 1980: 196)

Hence, categorization of a part of literature a 'children's literature' poses a problem. The most satisfactory way of defining this extremely complex term is to perhaps look for certain qualities and assumptions by which this categorization takes place.

When we look for the most important quality, which defines a children's book we might think of books, which are 'good' for children and most particularly 'good' in terms of emotional and moral values. We can see this view as reflected in Canadian critic Michele Landsberg's belief that:

> …good books can do so much for children. At their best, they expand horizons and instill in children in children a sense of the wonderful complexity of life…. No other pastime available to children is conducive to empathy… furnish a child's mind with the symbols, patterns, depths and possibilities of civilization. (Landsberg, 1987: 34)

The meaning of children's literature as "books which are good for children" in turn crucially indicates that the two constituent terms – 'children' and 'literature'-within the label 'children's literature' cannot be separated and traced back to original meanings and then reassembled to achieve a greater understanding of the term. Within the label they mutually qualify each other

and transform each other's meaning for the purposes of the field. In short the 'children' of 'children's literature' are constituted as specialized idea of children, not necessarily related in any other way to other 'children' (for instance those within education, psychology, sociology, history, art or literature) and the 'literature' of 'children's literature', not necessarily related to any other 'literature' (particularly adult literature).

The first and the most basic step critics take in defining 'children's literature' – is to differentiate books used for didactic or educational purposes from 'children's literature'. F.J. Harvey Darton clearly outlined this split that critics make between didactic books and children's literature. He says that by 'children's literature' he means printed works produced ostensibly to give children primary pleasure and not just to instruct them to be good or quiet (Darton, 1932: 1). The outstanding quality of 'children's literature' according to most critics is that it is supposed to speak to the reading child through amusement and inherent appeal, and not through primarily didactic messages. As Margery Fisher says,

> We should not expect children's stories to be sermons or judicial arguments or sociological pamphlets. As independent works of art they must be allowed to appeal to the imagination, the mind, the heart on their own terms. (Haviland, 1973: 273)

This is how children's literature defines 'literature': as something that in itself is good for children – that affects children better or more than other literature. Charlotte Huck sums up this view by saying that "good writing or effective use of language…. Will help the reader experience the delight of beauty, wonder and humour…" (Hunt, 1999: 20). This will enable the child to broaden and enrich his / her imagination.

Children's literature becomes defined as containing both in form and content, the 'needs' of children' and therefore this is how 'children's books' – written, published, sold and usually bought by adults – come to be spoken of, as if the child were in the book. As the New Zealand critic Sydney Melbourne states while discussing the portrayal of the Maori in children's book, "What are we after? Not just cultural trappings, for sure. The essence of childhood? Yes…. " (Melbourne, 1987: 12). The intimate interconnection between the definition of reading children and children's literature is fully evident here: in many ways critics define them as one and the same thing and children's literature is often spoken about, as if children, expressing their needs, emotions and experiences, had written it. Myles Mc Dowell, for instance, describes his 'child' in the book when he claims:

> Children's books are generally shorter, they tend to favour an active than a passive treatment, with dialogue and incident…child protagonists are the rule… they tend to be optimistic rather than depressive… (McDowell, 1976: 51)

American critic and author Natalie Babbit, on the other hand, argues with respect to these types of criteria- and her 'child in the book' – that children's books are neither necessarily less serious than adult books, nor necessarily concerned with 'simpler' or 'different' emotions: '… there is, in no point of fact, no such thing as exclusively adult emotion, and children's literature deals with them all' (Babbit, 1973: 157). Similarly, content too, according to her, is not very varied, "… war, disability, poverty, cruelty all the harshest aspects of life are present in children's literature, as is fantasy" (Babbit, 1973: 157). Language usage too does not seem to Babbit necessary to distinguish children's literature from its 'grown up' counterpart (adult literature). As Babbit says, "A child's book uses simple vocabulary geared to an untrained mind? Compare Kipling to a little Hemingway and think again (Babbit, 1973: 157). In children's literature the

didactic – literary split continues and maintains its career as one of the ultimate judgments of the values - and hence definition – of children's literature. As Shiela Egoff says:

> May I suggest that the aim of children's writing be delight and not edification: that its attributes be the eternal childlike qualities of wonder. (Egoff, 1987: 355)

Finally a word, which is the mainstay of children's literature critics, is identification. The idea of 'identification' as an exploration of how and why the child reads, in turn supports the assumption that the 'child' is in the 'good children's book': the child is supposed to be inherently and voluntarily attracted to books in which it recognizes itself. As the critic Adir Cohen claims,

> Writers have become aware that, for the child a book is a source of satisfaction that derives from identification and participation and an expansion of his own experience. (Cohen, 1988: 31)

The issue of 'identification' is caught up in the same debate as that definition of the child that the critics employ. Different definitions lead to different evaluation of a book's ability to lead to the child reader achieving 'identification'. The emphasis on the assumption of the existence of an essential child cannot be denied because an essential child in fiction is supposed to be recognized by the reading child as real. Donna Norton describes 'identification' as a "…process which requires emotional ties with the model…" (Norton, 1983: 20). On the other hand, American critics Judith Thompson and Gloria Woodard draw the conclusion from the premise that "… one limitation to books, however, is their emphasis on, identification with, and relevance to only middle class children. For too many black children, they depict an environment removed from their immediate experience" (Thompson & Woodard, 1972:23).

Indian children belong to a generation fed for a while-at a most impressionable age- on an exclusive diet of books published and imported from abroad (before Independence). As Radhika Menon, editor of Tulika Publisher, says that children are more "…familiar with Kirrin island, English boarding school life, birch trees and outdoor heather beds" (Nayar, 1998: np). Life around us (Indians) probably did not make for good stories. Radhika Menon questions the very essence of multiculturalism and questions whether only the above-mentioned qualities could provide for a good children's book. This made her root around for "samosas and gulab jamuns…this means culturally relevant books, books with an Indian idiom" (Menon, 2003: np).

On the other hand, Prema Srinivasan in her doctoral dissertation titled *Children's Fiction in India*: *Trends and Motifs* gives detailed account on the beginning and the development of children's fiction in India in English. She neatly categorizes this fiction into slots, and stresses upon the 'Indianess' of the themes and the motifs in this genre. Similarly, Indira Kulshreshtha's thesis titled *Children's Literature in English: With Special Reference to India* asserts the importance of reading for a child. She also stresses on the kind of books a child should read. She highlights the immense potential the genre of Indian children's literature in English has, especially in a country with a rich cultural heritage. She underlines the need to produce quality books for children, by paying close attention to illustration, language and content of the book. With special reference to content, Meena Khorana, editor of the journal *Bookbird* gave a sobering presentation on the perils of biased and ignorant writing for children. Khorana urged the teachers to 'pay close attention' to the authors qualification as well as the book. According to the, 'the best authors guarantee factual accuracy through use of consultants versed in cultures and history of India'.

This ‘Indian idiom’ is particularly important so that our children can at least grow up with a wholesome sense of identity with things Indian. Along with foreign publications, children’s books, which are India centric, ought to be produced. These books should not only talk about the heritage of India but also highlight the present. As Radhika Menon says, “for to grow up strong in one’s culture surely gives one the confidence to accept others…” (Menon, 2003: np).

Given the importance of the genre, Indian Children’s Literature in English, it would be useful at this stage to relate it to the concept of the nation and particularly to the formation of the Indian nation.

III

It is well known that much of our received wisdom about the concept of India as a nation or India as a nation-state is derived from the West and is based on Western experience. But along with this fact co-exists another; the experience of India as essentially different from the West. However, to be able to fully comprehend and understand the meaning of the two terms, it is essential to equip ourselves with a complete understanding of the idea of the nation as posed in the West.

The Oxford English Dictionary defines the nation as, “a community of people of mainly common descent, history, language etc forming a state or inhabiting a territory.” Though these are ingredients of nation-formation, they are not all. Nation, the very term, brings with it a multitude of notions and images. As Homi K. Bhabha says, ‘Nations like narratives lose their origin in the myth of time and fully realize their horizon in the mind’s eye’ (Bhabha, 1990: 1). In other words, a nation has to be invented, through various strains of political thought and literary

languages. Nationalistic discourses have persistently tried to produce the idea of a nation as a continuous narrative of national progress, the narcissism of self-generation. The most comprehensive account of the definition and constituents of a nation was give by Ernest Renan in his essay "What is a Nation?" (1990). Though Renan talks about various factors such as race, religion, language etc as the necessary characteristics of a nation, he also stresses on the point that due to the adoption of a common language and religion, these do not matter after a time. Ernest Renan also points out other factors such as dynastic basis, race, state religion, state language, geographical boundaries and a community of interest as being the binding forces of a nation, he argues that its foundation and soul, is its spiritual principle. According to Renan,

> A nation is a soul, a spiritual principle. Two things which in truth are but one constitutes this soul or spiritual principle. One lies in the past, one in the present. One is the possession in common of a rich legacy of memories: the other is present-day consent, the desire to live together, the will to perpetuate the value of that heritage that one has received in an undivided form. (Bhabha, 1990: 19)

To build upon this national idea, one has to look back to the history of one's ancestors. The 'social capital' on which one builds up the idea of the nation is a heroic past with great men in all their glory. Far more valuable than a glorious past is the fact of sharing or the fact of having suffered, enjoyed and hoped together. As Renan says,

> A large aggregate of men, healthy in mind and warm of heart, crease the kind of moral conscience, which we call a nation. So long as this moral consciousness gives proof of its strength by its sacrifices, which demand the abdication of the individual to the advantage of the community, it is legitimate and has the right to exist. (Bhabha, 1990: 20)

But a group of people however similar in thought needs to be led. Nation-building is not sudden but is a long, time consuming process. The process by which a 'nation' becomes a 'nation-state' (people who are motivated by national ideas to form a political unit) is called 'nationalism'.

Nationalism is hence an important concept whenever we talk of a particular nation or a nation-state. The *Dictionary of Modern Politics and Political Sociology* defines it as, "… an awareness of membership in a nation together with a desire to achieve, maintain and perpetuate their identity, integrity and prosperity of that nation (Singh, 1987: 187). The concept of nationalism for some is also analogous to patriotism or to others as a combination of patriotism and nationality.

Various theorists have put forward their views on Nationalism. It would be interesting here to look at theories put forth by Benedict Anderson and Ernest Gellner, particularly with respect to print media. This is of vital importance because we are trying to look at the construction of the nation through the medium of print.

The basic premise of Benedict Anderson's theory, as he puts forward in *Imagined Communities*, is that the decline of religion and growth of print made it possible to imagine the nation. With the fall of 'religious imagined communities' like Christendom based on shared languages such as Latin, and with the growth of print capitalism, Latin lost its monopoly as the 'lingua franca' of the followers of Christianity. New works were published in vernacular languages, which gave the reader the idea that there existed, simultaneously in time, a group of readers like them consuming the same cultural manufactures. Following the same language gave the readers a 'sense of unity', 'a sense of oneness' which is the hallmark of all modern nations. He says:

> At the same time, the newspaper reader, observing exact replicas of his own paper being consumed on the subway, the streets, the barbershop…is continually reassured that the imagined word is visibly rooted in everyday life.
> (Anderson, 1983: 39)

Nationalism was thus, as Anderson argues, the result of a fusion between the decline of religion, growth of human diversity, development of capitalism and the technology of print.

Ernest Gellner's *Nations and Nationalism* is another prominent theoretical work on nationalism. Gellner, it seems, almost picks up the strain of his thought from where Anderson leaves it. His main focus is on the growth of nationalism as a result of Industrialization. Gellner defines nationalism as "…primarily a political principle, which holds that the political and national unit should be congruent" (Gellner, 1983: 1). Progress of industrialization meant that a high level of technical skill is required. This necessitated a kind of egalitarianism. It also necessitated general training before specialized training, in order to allow changes in occupation. This showed a definite development in education. Education now defines the status of the individual, whereas in agro-literate societies kinship was the defining factor.

Growth of industrialization and the technology of print formed the bridge between the people of a nation spread over time and space. It has been able to do this by the use of a common national language. This aspect can hold good in the West but may appear to be an insufficient formulation with regard to India where numerous cultures and languages co-exist with one another.

There have been several attempts to conceptualize Indian nationality, given the multiplicity identities in the region. The following theorists and national figures I have used are part of significant example one can gather of the larger realm of work on Indian nationalism.

Besides Partha Chatterjee, Jawaharlal Nehru and Sri Aurobindo, I am aware that figures like Tagore and Gandhi will also have to be included.

One of the Indian theorists of nationalism, Partha Chatterjee, speaks of nationalism in the non- European world as:

> ….the assertion of national identity was,…a for of the struggle against colonial exploitation. Yes an assertion of traditional cultural values would often be inconsistent with The historical progress (Chatterjee, 1986:18)

There is a dilemma between "the modern and the traditional trends of nationalism" (Chatterjee, 1986: 18) between the rational and the secular and the modern trends in nationalism and the traditional cultural systems of the non - European world. Partha Chatterjee resolves this dilemma in this essay, "whose imagined communities?" he writes, "…here nationalism launches its most powerful, creative and historically significant project: to fashion a "modern" National culture that is nevertheless non western (Chatterjee, 1994:6)". He thus finds new meanings to Benedict Anderson, s definition of the nation as an "imagined political community …" (Anderson, 1983: 6). Anti colonial nationalism divides:

> … the world of social institutions and practices into two domain- the material and the spiritual … the spiritual…is an "inner" domain bearing the essential marks of cultural identity. The greater one's success in imitating Western skills in the material domain, therefore, the greater need to preserve the distinctiveness of one's spiritual culture. (Chatterjee, 1994: 6)

The need to preserve India's spiritual culture', as Partha Chatterjee puts forth is also reminiscent of Gandhian philosophy and also of Jawaharlal Nehru's concept of the Indian nation in his dissertation titled *Discovery of India*.

Gandhi's, thoughts of *Satyagraha* and *Ahimsa* have pervaded the Indian nationalist fervor. These ideas find root in the Hindu concept of 'satya' or 'Truth'. *Ahimsa* or 'non-violence' is a common enough word in ancient Indian literature and Gandhi claimed to be following in up-to-date form of ancient Indian ideal, which he had also read in the teachings of all the greatest teachers of the World- Zoroaster, Mahavir, Daniel, Jesus, Muhammad, Nanak and a host of others. Gandhi's non-violence differs from the orthodox Indian concept of *ahimsa* in that it is conceived in positive terms and can serve as a very effective political weapon. Gandhi believed that the self-sacrifice of one innocent man is a million times more potent than the sacrifice of a million men who die in the act of killing others and goes on to say that far better than violence or cowardice is non-violence, which is the antithesis of cowardice, the summit of bravery. Similarly, the idea of *Satyagraha* is seen to be rooted in India philosophy and thought, and a distant relationship between *dharma* and *prayopavesa* and *Satyagraha* can be seen. Though Gandhi dismissed the idea of *dharma* as 'a crude way of coercion', yet the technique of civil disobedience's similarity to it cannot be denied. Gandhi gave those old Indian practices a more moral consent by insisting that civil disobedience volunteers should, as far as it lay in their power, cherish thoughts of love and benevolence towards their prosecutors. This high ethical tone is certainly in keeping with the Sermon on the Mount but it is equally consistent with Hindu *bhakti,* as exemplified in the Gujrati verses quoted by Gandhi himself in his *Autobiography.* Gandhi's nationalism and his philosophy, may have been learnt partly from the West, from the activities of the Irish rent-strikers and British suffragettes and the writings of Thoreau and his own experiences in South Africa, but the practice of *Satyagraha,* dependent as it was on the belief in the 'soul-force' was in no way un-Indian. Gandhi's nationalism was more derived from the soul of Indian philosophy and way of life.

Jawaharlal Nehru's idea of Indian nationalism was very different and yet similar to Gandhi's sense of nationalism. In the book *The Discovery of India*, Nehru is in search for the vital strength that gives India her unique identity as a nation. He gives a panoramic picture of India right from the period of the Indus Valley civilization, stretching through the Vedic, the Upanishadic, the Epic, the Gupta and the Mughal and ending with the anti-colonial struggle. He writes about the spirit of the synthesis and assimilation of India, her unity and diversity, her mixed culture of races as well as her urge for freedom and liberation. His search behind the "complex and mysterious personality of India" (Nehru, 2010: 59) leads him to the unique nature of the nation. This inner spirit of oneness right from the early period is due to the all-embracing characteristic of India. Nehru writes, "…a country with a long cultural background and a common outlook on life develops a spirit that is peculiar to it…" (Nehru, 2010: 59), a spirit that is inherent in each and every person even though he has broken with the past. As he observes:

> It was this spirit of India that I was after… because I felt that it might give me some key understanding of my country and people, some guidance to thought and action. (Nehru, 2010 : 59)

This inner spirit, according to Nehru, gave the cultural oneness or unity to India. Though Nehru wrote in the pre-independent era, he assumes the role of a post-colonial writer, when he tries to narrate the identity of a third world nation. The primary step towards a postcolonial narrative is to reclaim one's own past. "Characteristically" postcolonial writers evoke or create a pre-colonial version of their nation. Rejecting the modern and the contemporary, which is tainted with the colonial status of their countries" (Barry, 1999:193). But, for Nehru, there is a double identity, a hybrid nature as both the colonizer and the colonized, and "it is the recognition of such double identities which is one of the strengths of the post colonialist view" (Barry, 1999: 194). Nehru's double identity is the result of his aspiration for a mixed culture, a synthesis of the

East and West, tradition and modernity. He wants India to adopt modern science, technology, industry and moreover the liberal and rational ideas of democracy, socialism, secularism etc as a panacea to the ills of the Indian society of his time. Nehru's dream is to see an advanced Indian nation, built on the debris of the wasteland, which he considers as the outcome of the British rule. According to him, this can only happen, if, as he says:

> …the vital energy of the people must overcome the obstacles in the way and fill the lack…nothing can be clearer than the fact that India has the resources…has the accumulated cultural and spiritual experience of ages behind her. She can progress both in scientific theory and applications of science and become a great industrialized nation… it is significant of what will happen when the energies of the nation are released and opportunities provided. (Nehru, 1981: 526)

Nehru outlines hard work, enthusiasm and vitality of the citizens for the advancement of the Indian nation. This can only be possible with a cultural and spiritual unity.

Like Nehru, another thinker who conceptualized the nation, as an evolving one is Sri Aurobindo. The idea of the nation can be seen evolving throughout his life and works. Born in Calcutta on 15th August 1872, Sri Aurobindo spent most of his early life in the company of English children and completed his education at King's college, Cambridge University. He did not have any grounding in his native tongue, Bengali, until his return to India and knew very little of Indian traditions. After his return from England in 1893, he joined the Baroda civil service and learned Bengali and read extensively on Indian culture. It is here that he began his brief political career as a revolutionary. He excelled in his translations of the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata* and the Indian sacred texts.

Sri Aurobindo's utterances in the Indian Majlis debates at Cambridge during his joining the revolutionary 'Lotus and Dagger' group in London and his writings in the *Indu Prakash*

(1893-1894) reveal his political ideas and ideals. In a series of articles titled "New Lamps for Old", his political ideals were vividly portrayed :

> He laid great emphasis on self-help, on sincerity, on building up national strength and on character. He condemned the moderate leadership… (Diwakar, 1976: 37)

Sri Aurobindo took some steps towards organizing several revolutionary groups. Though he himself never took part in arms training, the making of bombs, collection of ammunition or military studies, he directly inspired and strengthened the moral fibre of those who wanted to join these groups. He visited some of the districts of Bengal during his vacations and contacted several potential recruits, who would enlist in these revolutionary groups for the freedom of the country. With the proposal of the Partition of Bengal in 1905 during Lord Curzon's reign, the stage was set for a spontaneous movement, which led to the spontaneous Swadeshi Movement. Sri Aurobindo emerged into the World of turbulent politics. He was already writing in the Yugantar, a revolutionary weekly started by his brother, Barindra Kumar Ghose and at the request of Bipin Chandra Pal also associated himself with the English weekly *Bande Mataram*, of which later he become the editor.

Sri Aurobindo's speeches in Bombay in the year 1908 spread the gospel of nationalism and spoke of Indian independence a more than a political programme. During this period he used a vocabulary and idiom that had Hindu connotations, which he outgrew in the later years. He even said that he was pro-violence since the *Bhagvad Gita* allowed it if it was for a right cause. Sri Aurobindo was arrested as one of the prime suspects for the Maniktolla bomb case. Subsequently he was imprisoned in the Alipore jail. This turned to be a turning point in his life. Thanks to the intervention of C.R. Das he was released. Sri Aurobindo emerged a changed man as he declares, due to a divine vision that he had. The speech he gave in Uttarpara on 30th of May

1909 talks about this vision and the realization he had attained. Though *Bande Mataram* had ceased publication during his incarceration, Sri Aurobindo launched *Karmayogin* and *Dharma* to spread his newly attained gospel. He continued to champion, practically single-handedly, the nationalism, which he had built up but his stress was now more on the spiritual approach. As he says, "It is the Spirit alone that saves, and only by becoming great and free in heart can we become socially and politically free…" (Sri Aurobindo in Diwakar, 1976: 66). His nationalism also aimed at a fuller and wider life in the human family, when once India has regained her lost soul. The individual is never lost in the family, or the family in the country.

Even though Sri Aurobindo at this point in his life spoke about the freedom of his country and also about nationalist politics he was drawn to a spiritual life. In 1910 he left for Pondicherry. As evidence in his later writings, Sri Aurobindo, in his Pondicherry days, began to transcend the early idea of the nation to a higher plane of internationalism and the ideal of human unity. These ideas were published in the *Arya* (1914-1920). The articles in the journal dealt with subjects of philosophy, religion, ethics, sociology, art, culture, literature and so forth. Sri Aurobindo's evolving concept of nationalism can be aptly explained with regard to what he ways with regard to religion. From a 'religious nationalist' who primarily borrowed his symbols from the Hindu religion, he goes on to foresee a 'religion of humanity', which would be common to all men.

> A religion of humanity may be either an intellectual and sentimental ideal, a living dogma with intellectual, psychological and practical effects, or else a spiritual aspiration and rule of living, and partly the sign, partly the cause of a change of soul in humanity. (Sri Aurobindo, 1976: 541)

He contrasts it with 'orthodox religions' and says that the success of 'religion of humanity' is its 'faith in humanity', whereas orthodox religions "looked with eyes of a pious sorrow and gloom on the earthly life of man" (Sri Aurobindo, 1976:542). He talks about 'unity', which is at the center of things and the foundation of all things. As he says, "unity the race move towards and must one day realize" (Sri Aurobindo, 1976: 490). It is this 'religion of humanity', which will bring forth the principles of freedom, equality and brotherhood. According to him, all men should try and incorporate the larger picture of, "…humanity as a single race of beings with a common life and a common general interest…" (Sri Aurobindo, 1976: 543). This will help man to be able to reach the goal of what Sri Aurobindo terms as 'Internationalism'. According to him,

> Internationalism is the attempt of the human mind and life to grow out of the national idea and form and even in a way to destroy it in the interest of the larger synthesis of mankind. (Sri Aurobindo, 1976: 525)

This 'synthesis', according to him, "would make a better, purer, more peaceful and enlightened race…" (Sri Aurobondo, 1976: 525). Thus the evolution of Sri Aurobindo's ideas on nationalism can be clearly seen. If his contribution to *yugantar* and *Bande mataram* were replete with a vigorous nationalism of an inspired partriot, comparable with that of Guiseppe Mazzini, if his writings in *Karmayogin* and Dharma embodied theactivist philosophy of an intensely patriotic Vedantin nad in *Arya* we see a consummate and complete picture of his wider vision of humanity.

The essence of Sri Aurobindo's writings lies in the Spirit of Man, of self realization. As he explains in the ideal of *Arya*:

> Unity for the human race by an inner oneness and not only by an external association… for man's unity and man's self

> transcendence can only come by living in the spirit.
> (Quoted in Diwakar, 1976: 77)

Thus, in moving from the domain of Hindu Nationalism to a wider realm of internationalism founded on a spiritual view of life. Sri Aurobindo attempted to redefine the concept of the Indian nation and nationalism. In effect he seemed to advocate the need to go beyond all forms of nationalism to Internationalism and unity of mankind.

IV

> …someday, somebody'll
> Stand up and talk about me
> And write about me….
> I reckon it'll be me
> Yes, it'll be me. (Hughes, 1994: 1724)

Langston Hughes wrote this in a completely different context but the question of 'identity' can be applied to Indian Children's Literature in English as well, particularly during the post independence period.

The emergence of this genre re-asserted the importance of this newly independent nation and sought to revive, as Indira Kukshrestha says:

> … old customs, beliefs, art, social institutions etc which are characteristics of our society- the society which is so different from Western society both in its philosophy and culture. (Kulshreshtha, 1989: 50)

Hence, seeped in a unique culture, this body of writing is an excellent way of examining the 'Indian' culture or 'Indianness' which is the basis of the Indian nation. This is essential because it brings to the child, at the most impressionable age, elements that are 'Indian', culturally, geographically, politically and socially. In this section of the chapter, I shall outline the research methodology that I shall use for my study.

My bibliographic searches reveal that there has been insufficient critical work carried out in this area. So far, as already mentioned, there have been two dissertations by Prema Srinivasan and Indira Kulshreshtha, and both of which seem to be general in nature. They mainly deal with the themes and general trends of this evolving genre. With regard to the concept of the Indian nation, there has been no work carried out in the Indian children's fiction in English.

One of the aims of this dissertation is to study the dominant ideologies in children's literature, an understanding of the concept of "ideology" and the manner in which it is employed in my work becomes crucial. Attempts to pin down the term to a single meaning have not been very successful this far. The difficulty in clarifying this term is probably compounded by its internalization (as commonsense) even by those who seek to define it. However, it is perhaps the very plurality of meaning that surrounds the term, its very flexibility, which make it such a useful tool for cultural analysis.

As Raymond Williams argues, Marxist writing commonly uses three versions of the term 'ideology': a system of beliefs typical of a certain class; a system of illusory beliefs of what is known as "false consciousness", as opposed to true, scientific knowledge; or the general production of meaning and ideas. He identifies certain twentieth century tendencies in understanding the concept of ideology: a positive or neutral sense of the term as a class belief without any implication of falseness, ideology as a product of doctrinaires and as a dimension of social experience in which meaning and values are produces.

With Louis Althusser, there is an important shift in the conceptualization of 'ideology'. The debate becomes increasingly focused on its material existence and its role in constructing people as subjects. In his essay, "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses", Althusser breaks

with the essentialist concept of ideology, which sees ideology in terms of "illusion" as opposed to "reality". According to Althusser, ideology represents, "not the system of the real relations which govern the existence of individuals, but the imaginary relation of those individuals to the real relations in which they live" (Althusser, 1984: 39). Ideology is no longer simply seen as a system of false ideas (commonly referred to as "false consciousness") masking the real material structure. As Peter Hulme would argue, when ideology is seen as opposed to "truth", it relies on some "master-signifier", which could be God or experience or History, which are seen as outside deconstructive analysis. Althusser proposes that to study ideology is not to study ideas, but to study their workings in the material practices of certain Ideological State Apparatuses (ISA). These apparatuses present themselves in the form of distinct, specialized institutions like the church, the school, the family, and so on, which function predominantly by ideology.

A class cannot hold onto state power over a long period of time, argues Althusser, without exercising its hegemony through the ISA's. The ISA is not merely the stake but also the site of class struggle. The ruling class cannot lay down the law in the ISA. It can do so only in the Repressive State Apparatuses (RSA), which consist of the army, the administration, and the judiciary and so on. The RSAs function predominantly by repression and secondarily by ideology. The reverse is the case with the ISAs. According to Althusser, this is "not only because the former ruling classes are able to retain their strong positions there [in the RSAs] for a long time, but also because the resistance of the exploited classes is able to find means and occasions to express itself there…" (Althusser, 1984: 21). Althusser makes special mention of the ideology of the school which he perceives, in some senses as a universal ideology and which, like other ISAs contribute to a reproduction of the existing capitalist relations of production. Its influence is stronger than that of other ISAs because of its huge "obligatory" audience, children, whom it can

hold captive for long periods of time. As is argued in the following chapters, the dominant nationalist and state sponsored ideologies are reinforced by State sponsored institutions like CBT and NBT.

Marxist critics have also pointed out inconsistencies in the argument that literature is outside ideology because the literary genius as well as the literary critic are by nature indifferent to social and political affairs. This argument, regarding the autonomy of literature and the poet/ artist from the context in which he/ she is writing, is derived from the Romantics and is current even today. Though I do not believe in a reductionist or determinative approach, it is important to take note of it. As Raymond Williams argues, when the writer's work was the beginning to be commodified with the establishment of the literary market and at a time when there was such an intense awareness in all of the major Romantic poets of the social and political turmoil of their times, paradoxically the artist "is describing himself as a specially endowed person, the guiding light of the common life" (Althusser, 1958: 36).

The concept of ideology is closely related to the notion of the "subject", another concept which is central to my work. In fact, Althusser argues that "there is no practice except by and in an ideology" and also that "there is no ideology except by the subjects and for the subjects" (Althusser, 1984: 44). It is in this sense that the term "ideology" is used in the dissertation. The individual in society is seen as participating in 'certain regular practices which are those of the ideological apparatuses on which "depend" the ideas which he has in all consciousness freely chosen as subject' (Althusser, 1984: 41). Catherine Belsey argues that "within the existing ideology, it appears obvious that people are autonomous individuals, possessed of subjectivity or consciousness which is the source of their beliefs and actions" (Belsey, 1980: 58). Althusser, arguing on similar lines, says that the presentation of ideology is itself forced to recognize that

every person endowed with a consciousness and believing in the ideas that his consciousness inspires in him and freely accepts, must act according to his ideas, must therefore inscribe his own ideas as a free subject in the actions of his material practice.

Althusser argues further that while "the category of the subject is constitutive of all ideology", it is so only "in so far as all ideology has the function (which defines it) of 'constituting' concrete individuals as subjects" (Althusser, 1984: 45). For this dissertation, it is important to assess, for instance as to how texts in English for children have helped in forming and mapping the Indian nation with particular notions of gender, class, caste and race. Etienne Balibar and Pierre Macherey's essay "On Literature as an Ideological Form" rejects the conventional categories of aesthetics and literature. Accepting the view of Althusser that ideology is manifested through the material practices in the ISA. They argue that, "the objectivity of literary production is inseparable from given social practices in a given ISA" (Balibar and Macherey, 1981: 84). According to them, literature is "historically constituted in the bourgeois epoch as an ensemble of language or rather of specific linguistic practices- inserted in a general schooling process so as to provide appropriate fictional effects, thereby reproducing bourgeois ideology or the dominant ideology" (Balibar and Macherey, 1981: 84).

A notion which is closely related to that of 'ideology' is hegemony, emphasized by Gramsci. As Williams argues, hegemony corresponds to the reality of social experience much more clearly than any notions derived from the formula of base and superstructure for it 'deeply' saturates "the consciousness of a society" and even "constitutes the substance and limit of commonsense for most people under its sway" (Williams, 1980a: 37). Ideology may have been easier to overthrow and society easier to change if it had merely been "some abstract, imposed set of notions" (Williams, 1980a: 37) or "if our social and political and cultural ideas and

assumptions and habits were merely the result of specific manipulation, of a kind of overt training…" (Williams, 1980a: 37). Hegemony, therefore, is "not to be understood at the level of mere opinion or mere manipulation" (Williams, 1980a: 38). Williams argues that hegemony "constitutes a sense of reality for most people in society, a sense of absolute because experienced reality beyond which it is very difficult for most members of the society to move, in most areas of their lives." (Williams, 1980a: 38). Ideology therefore need not be viewed as an "optional extra, deliberately adopted by self-conscious individuals…, but the very condition of our experience of the world, unconsciously precisely in that it is unquestioned, taken for granted" (Belsey, 1980: 5). Since ideology and hegemony operate as commonsense they are also seen as very difficult to resist. For instance, middle class Indians were given English education as part of colonial policy. Gradually, the attitude that English was absolutely necessary if one was to acquire the mark of being "civilized" and that it was superior to regional languages had passed into the common sense of urban, middle-class Indians. It is this "common sense" which projects children's literature in English as propagating universal values and as accessible to every child, irrespective of race, class, caste or gender.

The dominant ideology is never all powerful. For every system of beliefs which protects and supports ruling class interests, there are several opposing, and even resistant ideologies. As Williams argues, there is need "to recognize alternative meaning and values, the alternative opinions and attitudes, even some alternative senses of the world, which can be accommodated and tolerated within a particular effective and dominant culture" (Williams, 1980a: 39). Williams contends that for historic analysis, one must recognize elements outside a specific domination, like emergent and residual cultures. A residual culture, though formed in the past, is still active in the cultural process and works as an effective element in the present. It may either be

incorporated into the dominant culture, or have a relationship of opposition to it. This culture is incorporated selectively if it is considered a risk to the dominant culture. An emergent culture consists of new meanings, values, practices and relationships which are continually being created. As in the case of residual culture, an emergent culture might be incorporated into the dominant culture. With particular reference to urban children, oral literature for children in regional Indian languages, as well as songs, rhymes and stories that children compose for themselves may be seen as instances of culture that are outside the dominant culture. Large pockets of resistance and alternative ways of perception regarding children's literature exist. Not only is the dominant ideology constantly being contested and reworked, it also varies temporally and spatially. Within the Indian context for instance, colonial and bourgeois-nationalist ideologies inform the social formation and practices in many ways.

These ideologies which appear in all forms of cultural dissemination be it books, newspapers, journals etc. creates a subject, who is informed and well aware of the discourse within which he/she exists. Following and applying Foucault's influential account of the interconnections among power, knowledge and the subject, in the Indian multilingual, multicultural and multi religious context, is crucial. Power/ knowledge is the term Foucault uses to indicate how the production of knowledge is wedded to power. Modern power requires increasingly narrow categories through which it analyzes, differentiates, identifies and administers individuals. Famously, he writes that power is exercised, rather than possessed and also insists that power is not repressive but 'productive'. Power, hence, manifests itself through the various social institutions and exercised by innumerable replaceable functionaries. Foucault stresses on modern power's capillary 'micro-techniques', its ubiquitous reinforcement of the norm at every step, its direct work on the 'docile' bodies. Foucault is exposing- and questioning-

our era's capillary 'macro-techniques', its ubiquitous reinforcement of the norm at every step, its direct work on the 'docile' bodies. He is exposing- and questioning- our era's most fundamental assumption about the bodies/ subjects/ individuals, about who and what individuals are. These, according to Foucault, are the founding principles of the 'social sciences'- what the French call the 'human sciences'. In the Indian context, these questions carry a lot of weight because there is a constant tug of war for power and a constant battle of identity politics. Hence, defining and recognizing one norm or one identity becomes extremely problematic. A constant battle for 'power', in the mask of dispersing 'knowledge' among 'selves', is clearly seen in Indian Children's Fiction in English. The need to 'catch them young' in order to train and mould them, according to the 'norm', needs to be examined. Hence, it is absolutely essential to examine the idea of national identity through the prism of what Foucault terms as "Power/ knowledge".

Relying on studies by Michel Foucault, it will also be important for us to examine the role of the author and of language on the construction of identity. A persistent Foucauldian preoccupation is the social construction of the 'subject' (Structuralism's preferred term for the self or the individual). In, "What is an author:" Foucault writes that the subject should not be entirely abandoned but should be reconsidered. Though anti-humanistic "deconstruction of the self" is characteristic of French post-structuralism, Foucault insists on keeping the category of subject as a means to study the historical discourses of power and knowledge that constitute it. Hence, language along with the subject plays an important role if we are to understand the concept of power/ knowledge and subject in Indian children's fiction in English. As we have already discussed, children's literature has always been discussed along the lines of 'good' or 'bad' and / or along the lines of 'right' and 'wrong'. Disciplinary power is so pervasive that,

according to Foucault, meaningful resistance appears impossible. This point requires careful examination as it questions the very basis of Indian nationhood, its democracy.

Keeping all these issues in mind, it becomes pertinent to look at the construction of the Indian nation as portrayed in Indian children's fiction in English. In the next and the last section of this proposal, I shall put forward the tentative chapter outlines for my study.

The introduction of my dissertation introduces my project; discuss Indian popular children's literature as an emerging genre and as an important way of looking at the construction of the Indian nation for children.

Chapter one will chart the beginning and the growth of Indian children's fiction and will attempt to tie itself with Indian history, right from the Vedic age to the present. It will discuss at length the various eras of Indian history which have contributed greatly to the genre. By looking closely at the eras of Indian history, it will also be interesting to note the kind of diversity present in this country for centuries, which will give us clear insight into the way texts have been chosen/ differentiated/ selected to represent India for children.

Chapter two will focus on the construction of the Indian nation with the help of myths, legends and the re-telling of epics, particularly *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata.* These epics, legends and folk tales of India are the manifestations of a rich and ancient cultural tradition. Sudhir Kakar defines the role of myths, especially those of religious derivation, as one of "integrating the traditional elements and the common features of identity and society in *Hindu* India- certainly in the past and in most parts of the community till today…" (emphasis mine) (Kakar, 1976: 38). This 'integration' is clearly seen in the collection of short stories, *Indian Tales* by Romila Thapar and also in Sudhin Ghose's *Folk Tales and Fairy Stories from India.*

Most of the stories collected for these two anthologies are drawn from the Indian epics and other texts like *Panchatantra, Katha Sarit Sagara* and the *Jataka.* This raises many questions about culture and seems to be one-sided. What happens to the identity of child, who does not belong to a Hindu family, and belongs to a 'minority' culture? What is then the meaning of 'secularism'? What kind of a nation is being constructed for whom? It also raises essential questions about identification and alienation as well. An attempt will be made here to resolve such questions. It will concentrate on the visioning of the nation carried out through historical fiction for children based on ancient and medieval history and with stories based on the Indian struggle for Independence. As Nehru says, "History does not consist of battles and a few persons who became kings and generals; history should tell us of people of a country: how they lived, what they did, and what they thought" (Nehru, 1973: 96).

Chapter three explores the idea of nation-formation through realistic fiction. These fictional works highlight the social evil that plagues the society, hampering the development of the nation. These fictional works have been drawn from different categories of writing for children, particularly from adventure and fantasy. There has been much debate among educationists regarding the degree of exposure to realism necessary for children. In the last decade or so, the campaign against social stereotyping in books has led to a greater range of depiction of life. Not too many Indian writers, to my knowledge, have so far attempted a full length realistic fictional account on the under privileged girl child, or the child with divorced parents or the victims of drug abuse and so on. But some writers have used the category of adventure and fantasy to highlight the various issues of the society. In Arup Kumar Dutta's *The Blind Witness,* the child protagonist, as well as the readers, are made aware of the strengths and loyalty of a differentl- abled child. *The Kaziranga Trail* by the same author highlights the evils

of poaching and induces in children a love for flora and fauna. In *Village by the Sea,* Anita Desai has portrayed the young adult in a sociological role. She is concerned with the issues of ecology, child labour and villages in the throes of urbanization. Adventure stories such as *The Chandipur Jewels* and its sequences provide keen insight into elements of class or caste and education for all, besides stressing on the importance of historical Indian artefacts and the importance of preserving them. This chapter also examines the very popular *Juneli* school stories by Swapna Dutta and the manner how she subverts the Western school story genre to suit Indian needs.

The concluding chapter sums up my major findings. It provides us with an insight into the importance of Indian children's fiction in English and offers a comprehensive picture of India as a nation as seen in the same.

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Chapter One

Locating the Sea of Stories

> Culture is a historical process of human objectification, and the level and quality of a national culture depends on the socialization developed by human beings to integrate young members into the society and to re-enforce the norms and values which legitimize the socio-political system and which guarantee some sort of continuity in society. (Zipes, 1983: 54)

A major part of the critical response to children's literature, in the past decades, has been the recognition of the importance of the critical study of the impact of ideology in fiction produced for children and young adults. It is grounded on the premise that what this otherwise rather amorphous body of texts has in common is an impulse to intervene in the lives and thought process of children. That is, children's fiction belongs firmly within the domain of cultural practices which exist for the purpose of socializing their target audience. Childhood is seen as the crucial formative period in the life of a human being, the time for basic education about the nature of the world, how to live in it, how to relate to other people, what to believe – in general, the intention is to be able to identify oneself and to one's 'national identity' is a crucial point in this regard. The intelligibility which a society or a nation offers to its children is a network of ideological positions, which are constructed through centuries of history. Following this strain of thought is Indian children's fiction in English, which strives to be in Andersonian terms, 'a force for imagining the communities that are nations', and draws upon the 'history' of Indian myths, legends and history to construct an 'idea' of India for children to internalize. This chapter seeks to interrogate the idea of India as seen through the history and development of Indian children's fiction in English.

The first hurdle one would face in a task such as this would be whether to consider the 'idea' of India from a civilizational idea or the concept of India as a nation/nation-state, which is a relatively newer concept. With the emergence of Indian children's fiction in English in 1954 (i.e. in the Indian nation-state), it drew upon the civilizational aspect of the nation and built upon it, created a past that was essential to sustain and forward the nascent Indian nation and nation-state. In 1954, two path-breaking institutions in the field of children's literature in India, Children's Book Trust of India and the National Book Trust in India, were given the onus of bringing up this baby. CBT roped in various well-known authors in English to write for children. There were, no doubt, adaptations and abridgement of various English classics, but side by side we witness the emergence and proliferation of writing which was essentially 'Indian', which tapped into the history of the subcontinent and presented to young readers, a country which traced its roots to time immemorial. Mulk Raj Anand, a well-established writer, for example, wrote a picture book for children titled *A Day in the Life of Maya of Mohenjo-Daro*, which depicts the life of a young girl in Mohenjo-Daro, which was one of the major cities of the ancient Indus Valley Civilization. The picture book depicts Maya and her family in images, which can be identified with any rural/agricultural family of India. It is also interesting to note that the Indus Valley Civilization should be chosen to depict an 'Indian' family, almost suggesting that the similarities between the erstwhile civilizations could be the root of today's political India. As Jawaharlal Nehru says in *The Discovery of India*,

> There is an always underlying sense of continuity, of an , unbroken chain which joins modern India to the far distant period of six or seven thousand years ago when the Indus Valley Civilization probably began…how much there is in Mohenjo-Daro and Harappa which reminds one of persisting traditions and habits – popular ritual,

> craftsmanship, even some fashion in dress.
> (Nehru, 2010: 67)

Keeping these similarities in mind perhaps, this civilization and its people are considered to be the 'indigenous' inhabitants of India.

Other than drawing stories from different aspects of this civilization, the beginning of this genre in independent India is marked with stories and tales drawn from the Vedas, the Upanishads, and the great epics of India, the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*. These texts were written in the Epic Age, which followed the coming of the Aryans into this geographical area. The Aryans came to 'India', in successive waves from the northwest. This migration, according to some, took place around 1000 years after the Indus Valley period. As Nehru muses, "…people came to India from time to time, as they did in the later ages and became absorbed in India." (Nehru, 2010: 69). The successive infiltration into 'India' and the assimilation of all these cultures into the power of Hinduism, lead into multicultural mosaic of present day India. It is essential here, to distinguish the concept of Hinduism as a religious concept and Hinduism in the widest sense of Indian culture. 'India' has also been referred to as Hindustan, which would translate as 'the abode of the Hindus', but originally the word Hindustan stood rather for the people living on the other side of the Indus river. This word is derived from, Sindhu, the old as well as the present, Indian name for the Indus. From this word, came the word Hindu and Hindustan, as well as Indus and India.

The geographical extent of 'India' during this period is not clearly known. Though, it is believed by some that the Aryans came to India in groups that settled in the areas of North-Western Province in Pakistan and the Punjab which they had then named Sapt-Sindhu or the 'land of seven rivers', namely, the Indus, the Sutlej, the Ravi, the Beas, the Chenab, the Jhelum

and the Saraswati. Later, they called this area Brahmavarta or 'the land of Brahma'. The Aryans were found to have been occupying the whole of the present region of Punjab from about 1500 B.C. The period between 100 B.C. and 600 B.C. during which the Aryans settled in the Gangetic valley, was known as the later Vedic age. The most important gift that the Aryans made to 'India' is perhaps the Sanskrit language. Sanskrit, the mother of all almost all the regional languages of India, was also the language of the *Vedas*. *Vedas* are the oldest sacred books of Hinduism. Indian literature begins with the *Vedas*. They were probably composed beginning about 1400 B.C. The *Vedas* were a series of sacred texts used in religious rituals and sacrifices and composed in an early form of Sanskrit (Vedic Sanskrit). Even in modern times, the Vedas are regarded as the cornerstone of Hinduism. They *Vedas* include the basis of the doctrines concerning Hindu divinities. They also present philosophical ideas about the nature of Brahman, Hinduism's supreme divine being. The word Veda comes from the root '*Vid*' which means knowledge. In the *Rigveda,* whose compilation can be placed within the range of 1500-1000 BC, there are hardly any territorial names, even 'Sapta Sindhava", meaning still the Seven Rivers rather than their region, the Punjab.

The first reference to kingdoms and republics are found in 600 B.C. onwards, it is from this point onwards that Indian history took a definite shape. In the preceding century India had seen an age of political contradiction as tribal organization came into contact with a new political phenomenon, the monarchy. Permanent settlement in a particular area gave a geographical identity to a tribe or a group of tribes and subsequently this identity was given a concrete shape in the possession of the area, which was generally named after the tribe. To maintain possession required political organization, either as a republic or a monarchy. Whereas the monarchies were concerned in a Ganges plain, the republics were ranged round the northern periphery of these

kingdoms - in the foothills of the Himalayas and just south of these, and in the north-western India in the modern Punjab. The first evidence of the 'idea of India' (courtesy, Sunil Khilnani) is, perhaps, no older than Gautam Buddha's time, some two thousand five hundred years ago, when we first have the lists of the 'Sixteen Mahajanapadas', which together comprised Northern India and parts of Afghanistan. There was yet no name given to this collection of regions, though a cultural unity of some sort seems to be assumed.

Besides the four important Vedas, the Vedic Age also consisted of the two major epics of India, the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata,* and also of the Upanishads and the Puranas. More than the religious tracts of the *Vedas* and the *Upanishads*, it is the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata* and the *Puranas*, which forms the major collection of Hindu lore and religious debate. Purana means that which renews the old or 'ancient lore'. The *Puranas,* which were probably compiled between about A.D. 500 and 1000, use popular legends and mythology to illustrate and expound the philosophical and religious ideas of the *Vedas*. Together with the *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*, the *Puranas* are the origins of many of the stories and anecdotes of the social, religious, and cultural history of India. It is from these ancient texts that writers over the past few decades have sourced their material for the development of Indian children's literature in English. But, despite their influence on the realm of children's literature, these epics have also contributed a great deal to the understanding of this area as 'India'. The most well-known of all is perhaps, the term 'Bharat-varsha' which we first encounter in the *Vishnu Purana*. Bharat-varsha has been described in the *Vishnu Purana* as a land which gives individual the capacity to move towards heaven and gain eternal salvation. It is debatable how far in the succeeding centuries the notions of Aryavarta or Bharat-varsha gained currency as the name of the country. The latter undoubtedly acquired its popularity due to the *Mahabharata* epic, which

centered on the feud between the two Bharata cousins, that involved in its story all the tribes and people known to the epic composers. The epic seems to have been composed and enlarged in its present form over a long period, possibly 200 BC to 400 AD; and it is likely therefore that its listing of peoples participating in the battle was based on the perception of India as a country. But, more than describing/ re-iterating the contours of a geographical entity, the *Mahabharata* outlined ways and methods of living a good and clean life. The most famous addition to the *Mahabharata* is the *Bhagavad-Gita*. It occurs in the sixth book and is now the most widely recognized of Hinduism's sacred texts. The *Bhagavad-Gita* tells how Arjuna, the third of the Pandava princes, has misgivings about whether he should be fighting his cousins, the Kauravas. Krishna, speaking with the authority of the god Vishnu, persuades him that his action is just, and then Arjuna's military skill becomes a deciding factor in the ensuing Pandava victory. The teachings of the *Bhagavad-Gita* are fundamental to modern Hinduism. Prior to the *Mahabharata,* the epic *Ramayana* consolidated and illustrated several ideals of human behaviour. The story of *Ramayana* has held the attention of Hindus over the centuries, and the moral lessons it contains have had a deep and lasting effect. It remains one of the most popular tales of moral perfection in Hinduism. These three texts are not only important in understanding the concepts or teachings of Hinduism, but also their influence in the field of Indian children's fiction in English cannot be overlooked. The epics, legends and folk-tales of India are vestiges of this rich and hoary tradition. The mythological stories of the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata* were a part of the traditional life of every Indian child. These epics were orally transmitted, digressive in nature, assimilating inputs from successive generations they continued to speak to mankind in many voices regarding issues of fundamental significance. The *Mahabharata,* which comprises eighteen books, has also been looked at as the fifth *Veda,* and is also considered as a

record of the self-view of the dominant Brahminical tradition. But, what these two texts did to the realm of children's literature, is that it brought forth the universal theme of the defeat of evil and the establishment of good, a theme that pervades through all children's stories. The epic stories also presented "a continuity and development of theme and form that spans many centuries of literary activity in India."

Keeping in tandem with the two epics of the Vedic Age, Sanskrit literature also had a tradition of prose fiction, and reflections of an existing oral literature can be seen in the Brahmana texts (1000-500 BC). The most famous example of pure narrative in ancient India is the *Brahat Katha* or The Great Story, attributed to Gunadhaya and Somadeva's *Katha Sarit Sagara* (11 AD). These texts existed in the oral form long before they were actually penned down. The *Katha Sarit Sagara* or the ocean of stories, which must have influenced Salman Rushdie's *Haroun and the Sea of Stories,* contained many of the motifs and techniques like the use of flashbacks and the emboxing of story within story, associated with modern fiction. In Indian culture, the art of story-telling has always been a popular mode of entertainment:

> It is not surprising to find that the characters in the stories themselves are given to the telling of tales. At least provocation, a person recalls a tale, so that stories, and sometimes stories within stories, become embedded in the narrative itself. This is the technique that the western reader knows from the *Arabian Nights,* one which, considering the influence that the Indian story has had on the Middle East, probably originated in India.
> (Dimock, 1974: 203)

The story form, then, is a universal favourite, which has been acknowledged as one of the greatest gifts of India to the world. No list of ancient India tales can be complete without mentioning the *Jatakas* and the *Panchatantra.* Stories from both these collections have found

way into thousands of collections for children in India and across the world. The *Jatakas* or the 'Birth stories', were originally amongst the earliest Buddhist literature (4 BC). There are over 500 of these *Jataka* tales. The tales describe how, through human and animal forms, Gautama attained the moral perfections needed for a final birth. These moral perfections are qualities such as generosity, patience, and loving kindness. These tales were the stories with which the early Buddhist preachers taught their religion. Towards the end of the 10th century, when Buddhism was no longer the religion of the elites or the aristocracy but was widespread among the common people, wandering monks carried their sermon stories far and wide. These stories, which recount the various births of Buddha, are a running commentary on life itself, with all its "perils, rewards, follies, virtues and general unpredictability." These stories travelled as Buddhism spread and could have possibly encompassed Greater India, the extent of which perhaps began in Persia in the Hindu Kush and Pamir mountains to China, Indonesia and Philippines in the East. The *Jatakas* were popular stories, different from the great epics, and appear in Pali rather than Sanskrit which is removed from its popular context. The *Panchatantra,* which is also based on older oral traditions of storytelling, like the *Jatakas,* is an ancient Indian collection of animal fables in verse and prose, in a frame story format. These stories have been translated into numerous languages like Persian, Arabic, English, French, Latin and Greek. The *Panchatantra* seems to have influenced many animal fables across the world, including the *Aesop's Fables* and is considered as the "chief source of the world's fable literature" in *Funk and Wagnalls Standard Dictionary of Folklore Mythology and Legend.*

> The ease with which Indian stories could get into some of the most famous collections in the world, the *Arabian Nights,* the *Fables of La Fontaine,* the stories of Grimm, the fairy tales of Andersen, proves the immortal appeal of

> the stories that are India, only in so far as they originated there. (Dimock, 1974: 203)

The original Sanskrit work is believed to have been composed around the 3rd century BC by a Pandit named Vishnu Sharma, who was supposed to teach three princes '*niti-shastra'*. The first chapter deals with the 'alienation of friends'; the second teaches the art of contracting friendship or alliances and the third treats of matters of war and peace. The fourth, which has the ubiquitous monkey and the crocodile stories, are cautionary tales on the various means by which one should safeguard one's possessions. The fifth book deals with the repercussions of ill-considered actions. In a world where everyone is out to get the other, these stories have found relevance in each and every age and have had universal and enduring appeal.

By the time these ancient texts upto the *Panchatantra* was compiled/ written, 'India' had seen varied changes. The first reference to kingdoms & republics are found in 600 B.C. onwards, it is from this point onwards that Indian history took a definite shape. In the preceding century India had seen an age of political contradiction as tribal organization came into contact with a new political phenomenon, the monarchy. Permanent settlement in a particular area gave a geographical identity to a tribe or a group of tribes and subsequently this identity was given a concrete shape in the possession of the area, which was generally named after the tribe. To maintain possession required political organization, either as a republic or a monarchy. Whereas the monarchies were concerned in a Ganges plain, the republics were ranged round the northern periphery of these kingdoms - in the foothills of the Himalayas and just south of these, and in the north-western India in the modern Punjab. Besides political changes, we also witness the birth of two most important and widespread religions of the world, Buddhism and Jainism. The Mauryan emperor, Asoka, was mainly responsible for the growth and spread of Buddhism,

which opened up to Greater Asia, the idea of 'India'. This encouraged travelers to come to 'India' from far corners of the world and muse about this land which in a way gave sense of commonality to the people of this region. The travel writings of Hiuen Tsang, a Buddhist scholar, who came to India during the Gupta period clearly, give interesting insights into the ancient 'India'. As J. S Grewal says,

> …that Hiuen Tsang equated India broadly with the Indian subcontinent. Significantly, however, its north-western frontier was situated in Afghanistan. It is difficult to think that his criterion for this demarcation was geographical, or even political. He seems to have been guided by cultural considerations. There were regional variations in India in terms of physical features, climate and vegetation. Geographically, the people were not conscious of a pan-India identity. (Habib, 2005: 80)

Prior to Hiuen Tsang, we find mention of India in some of the texts which were written by the Greeks, who came to 'India' in 327 BC, with the expansion campaign of Alexander the Great. The most famous amongst them was Megasthenes, a Greek envoy to the court of the Mauryan Empire. In his four-volume *Indica*, he gave a full account (thought to be the five affluents of the Indus, forming the Punjab region), and proceeded from there by the royal road to Pataliputra. There are also, accounts of Megasthenes having visited Madurai (then, a bustling city and capital of Pandya Kingdom), but appears not to have visited any other parts of 'India'.

After the decline of the Mauryan empire, which extended way into the Southern Peninsula (Ashoka in his inscriptions refers to the kingdoms of south India the region comprising modern Andhra Pradesh, Madras, Mysore, and Kerala as those of the Cholas, Pandyas, Satiyaputras, and Keralaputras), a much smaller Sunga dynasty emerged. In the Mauryan South, first two of the kingdoms came to dominate the east coast and were associated with the

emergence of Tamil culture, called after Tamil, the predominant language of the Dravidian group. The historical records of the time are contained in the Sangam literature - anthologies of poetry similar to the Vedic sources. Tradition has it that many centuries ago three successive assemblies (Sangams) were held at the town of Madurai. All the poets and bards of the south gathered at these assemblies and their combined compositions constitute the Sangam literature. According to the mythological the first assembly, was attended by the gods, but the poetry composed at this session has not survived the winds of time. At the second assembly, the Tolkappiyam, the earliest Tamil grammar, was supposed to have been written. At the third assembly the Eight Anthologies were compiled, consisting of over 2,000 poems composed mainly by bards and these have survived. Contemporary poetry got newer depths in Tamil Nadu, during the time of the Vakatakas and the Ikshvakus (contemporary with the Gupatas in the North). One of the outstanding poem of that era being *Shilappadigaram* (The Jewelled Anklet). It is set in the city of Kaverippattinam. Kovalan, a young, wealthy merchant falls in love with a royal courtesan and neglects his wife, who is devoted to him. The poem ends tragically with the death of all three, but husband and wife are reunited in heaven. A second poem, Manimegalai, was written as a continuation of the first, the heroine being the daughter of Kovalan and the courtesan, and an ardent Buddhist. Drama (nataka) was mastered through the Sanskrit plays of Ashvaghosha and Bhasa. No two playwrights could have been more vivid. Manuscripts of Ashvaghosha's plays originally written in the first century A.D. were found in a monastery in Turfan (central Asia). Both plays deal with Buddhist themes, one of them being a dramatized version of the life of the Buddha. Ashvaghosha, who wrote during the Kushanas, faithfully followed the rules laid down by Bharata in his 'Study of Dramatic Arts', Natyashastra - the Natyashastra having a position in Sanskrit literature similar to Aristotle's Poetics). But Bhasa

writing a couple of centuries later made little use for these rules. Bhasa's plays are either based on incidents from the epics, the *Mahabharata* and the *Ramayana*, or are historical romances most of which depict the amorous exploits of king Udayin of Avanti. Bhasa wrote for the limited audience of the court circle, whereas Ashvaghosha's plays could well have been performed at religious assemblies, before a wider audience.

After the Mauryan period, the Golden Age in ancient Indian history is considered to be that of the Gupta dynasty. The period of the Gupta rule is the brightest feature in Indian history. In fact the period from 320 A.D. to 480 A.D. is known as the 'Golden Age' of Indian culture. This period has also been called 'the Hindu Renaissance' or the revival of Brahmanism in India. During this period, India had peace, progress and prosperity. There was an all-round progress in art, architecture, literature and science. Also, after the Ashokan zeal for Buddhist expansion had faded, the Brahmanism revived in the Gupta period. Great poets, dramatists, grammarians, playwrights and astronomers too lived in the period. Poetry and prose in Sanskrit were encouraged on a lavish scale, through royal patronage. It was the literature of the elite, the court, the aristocracy, and those associated with such circles. The name which immediately comes to mind is that of Kalidasa, regarded as the most outstanding writer of classical Sanskrit. His most famous work, the play *Shakuntala*, later came to be known in Europe through the impact it made on Goethe. The fables of the *Panchatantra* were elaborated in various versions, and stories from this collection became the nucleus of a number of further anthologies. Literature was judged by the manner in which it depicted emotions (rasa), and the test of good literature was that it should provoke an emotional response. Kalidasa’s *Shakuntala* has been appropriated for children by many writers, more so, because of Bharata who is always hailed as the founding father of Bharat, Bharata. The most famous figure of the Gupta dynasty in the realm of Indian children’s fiction is

perhaps Chandragupta II, who is better identified by children as Vikramaditya of the Vikram and Betal fame. The legendary King Vikram, promises a *vamachari* (a tantric sorcerer) that he will capture a *vetala* (or *Baital*), a celestial spirit who hangs from a tree and inhabits and animates dead bodies. King Vikram faces many difficulties in bringing the vetala to the tantric. Each time Vikram tries to capture the vetala, it tells a story that ends with a riddle. If Vikram cannot answer the question correctly, the vampire consents to remain in captivity. If the king answers the question correctly, the vampire would escape and return to his tree. In some variations, the king is required to speak if he knows the answer, else his head will burst. In other versions, the king is unable to hold his tongue if he knows the answer, due to his ego. Regardless of the reason, he knows the answer to every question; therefore the cycle of catching and releasing the vampire continues twenty-four times. On the twenty fifth, attempt the vetala is caught for good. These stories have been an all time favourite with children and they impart to young minds the path of the good and the righteous. As Suchismita Banerjee says, "These tales do not merely recount the virtues and exploits of a glorious king. They remind us that the qualities of humility, genrosity…the values that define Indian civilization and culture" (Banerjee, 2002: ix).

Post Gupta Period of Indian history was the one that saw the influx of people from across the borders. It saw the coming of the Huns from across Afghanistan and more importantly a number of central Asian tribes and peoples, some of whom remained in northern India and others moved further to the south and the west. Among them were the Gurjaras, who rose to eminence a few centuries later. Some of the tribes who lived in Rajasthan fled from their homeland when they were displaced by the new tribes who became the ancestors of some of the Rajput families, and again were to dominate the history of the north in later centuries. In the previous century, the Arab armies had overrun Persia and had forcibly converted large numbers of Zoroastrians.

Many, however, in the early eighth century fled by sea and by the coastal route from Persia to western India, where they settled after having been given asylum by the Chalukyas, and took to trade and were the founders of a community later known as Parsis, after the land of their origin, Persia. In the collection of short stories titled, *The Forbidden Temple: Stories from the Past*, the author T. V Padma, mentions in her Introduction that she chose only those periods in Indian history that awoke the most meaningful questions in her mind. She includes in her book stories like 'A Question of Belonging', which tell us about the descendants of the Greeks soldiers and their children who were called Yavana; 'The Storm', which tells us about the Zarathustrians and 'For Love of a Game' which talks about the Mughals and their authority over the land.

While Harsha was ruling over India and Hieun Tsang, the Chinese scholar Pilgrim was studying at Nalanda University, Islam was taking shape in Arabia. Earlier in the 8th century AD, the Arabs had reached Sind and occupied it. Though it fell soon and turned into a small Muslim state it was not until 300years later that Sultan Mahmud Ghazni of Afghanistan began his raids into India. The repeated incursions from the north-west brought many elements into India's closed thought and economy. Above all they brought Islam, in 300yrs, to the accompaniment of military conquest. This would continue to invade Indian consciousness for centuries to come. After these repeated invasions by various rulers over the centuries, the Afghans had settled down in India and had become Indianized. Though a lot of water flowed under the bridge, Muslim rule in India is usually equated with that of the Mughals and quite rightly so, because their rule over India was perhaps the longest and the most fruitful. The most beloved Mughal rulers of Northern India was perhaps Akbar, who is known in the genre of Indian children's fiction as the beloved emperor of the *Akbar and Birbal* tales, which have continued to enthral children across decades. The major achievement of Akbar may be described as the re-creation of the imperial idea in

India. The early Hindu emperors had surrounded themselves with an aura of sanctity in tune with Hindu ideas. The Muslim sultans were venerated by their subjects; each dynasty was forgotten within a generation of its overthrow. Akbar restored this concept of imperial sanctity. It is this purpose that lies behind the otherwise strange episode of Akbar's 'Divine Faith' or Din-Illahi. This episode sprang from his undoubted interest in religion and tendency to free thought and mysticism. Akbar's kingdom spanned from the Ahmadnagar fort in the south up to the present-day Bengal in the East. The reign of Shah Jahan, the fifth emperor, was the golden age of Mughal architecture and the arts. The Mughal Empire reached the zenith of its territorial expansion during the reign of Aurangzeb. By the mid-18th century, the Marathas had ravaged the Mughal provinces from the Deccan to Bengal, and internal dissatisfaction (as well as separatist agendas from the Rajputs, Sikhs, and Jats) arose due to the weakness of the Mughal Empire's administrative and economic systems. In 1739, a weakened Mughal Empire was defeated in the Battle of Karnal by the forces of Nader Shah. Mughal power was severely limited.

For three hundred years after the mid sixth century three major kingdoms of south India were involved in conflict. These were the Chalukyas of Badami, the Pallavas of Kanchipuram, and the Pandyas of Madurai. The Chalukyas built their kingdom on the ruins of the Vakatakas, who in turn had built theirs on the remains of that of the Satavahanas. The Vakatakas, who were in alliance with the Guptas, decline when Gupta power was on the wane. South India was ruled by various dynasties like the Pallavas; the Kadambas in now Karnataka; the Rashtrakutas and finally the Cholas in now Tamil Nadu. All these dynasties contributed to the rich literature and architecture of Southern India which finds mention in a few texts of Indian writing in English. Rise of the Muslim kingdoms in the medieval era marks the rise of the Vijayanagara Empire which was founded to stem the tide of Muslim power over running in South India. This empire

lasted for more than 200 years. The rise of Maratha power under Shivaji also influenced South India. If ever Indian history has seen phenomenal rise of Hindus as a united force then it must be in Maharashtra. The biggest movement of all, which has attracted the major share of historical attention, was that of the Marathas. They consisted mainly of a minority of highly intelligent and exclusive Brahmins and a majority of the Shudra or cultivator class. They were short and stocky, unhandsome in appearance but wiry and enduring, tenacious, enterprising, and preserving. They lived in a poor country, had few monuments of the past and little taste for the graces of the life. Hitherto they had no history, but they had the sense of belonging which is one of the prerequisites of national feeling. The most well-known figure of the Marathas, Chattrapati Shivaji finds mention in almost every second book on legendary figures in India, and is also hailed as one of the greatest Hindu nationalist leaders of medieval time. As Nalini Taneja writes,

> The homogenised and predominantly Hindu picture of Indian identity these texts present is contrary to facts and to peoples' historical experience. Inspite of their verbal diatribe against Macaulay, they adopt, lock stock and barrel, the Orientalist Western British Imperialist sponsored theory that sees Eastern societies as unique and incapable of modern development independently. They have also conveniently appropriated the British divide and rule paradigm of Hindus and Muslims as separate civilization entities that cannot survive together in peace. How much of their ideological ammunition has its source in the most reactionary theories of imperialist domination is a fact that should be talked about much more and be exposed for what it represents… Shivaji and Rana Pratap were fighters for national liberation. All the 'Hindu' kings who fought for their kingdoms against the Mughals are presented as such. (Taneja, 2001: np)

The Maratha kingdom saw a stupendous rise and saw expansion which covered most of India. The Maratha supremacy was finally put out by the Third-Anglo Maratha war. This war resulted in the loss of Maratha independence: it left the British in control of most of India.

The British, East India Company, came into India as a part of their expansion and to trade. Its first headquarters (from 1612) was at Surat which was moved to Bombay in 1674 (a wedding gift of Charles II's Portuguese queen Catherine transferred to the company). India opened up to the Western world and as happened in the other parts of the world, the Missionaries soon entered the country for the proselytizing purposes. Along with their main purpose entered English/ Western forms of education and aspects of Western culture and thought. Throughout the history of imperial expansion, missionary proselytising offered the British public a model of 'civilized' expansionism and colonial community management transforming imperial projects into moral allegories. Missionary activity was, however, unavoidably implicated in either covert or explicit cultural change. It sought to transform indigenous communities into imperial archetypes of civility and modernity by remodelling the individual, the community, and the state through western, Christian philosophies. In the British Empire, and particularly in what is historically known as the 'second' era of British imperialism (approximately 1784-1867), missionary activity was frequently involved with the initial steps of imperial expansion. Missionary involvement in British colonial policy and administration varied according to the impetus, funding, and intent of individual colonial projects. Early British involvement in India through the East India Company, for example, specifically prohibited the evangelizing of the Indian public until the early 1800s, in line with the company's policy of cultural non-interference to facilitate commerce. After the early 1800s missionaries gained better access to India. Although William Carey (176I-1834) is often described as the father of modern Indian missions, he was, in fact, one of a long line of missionaries. Nonetheless, his work is considered as representing a turning point in the evangelization of the sub-continent.

William Carey established the Serampore Mission—the first modern Protestant mission in the non-English-speaking world—near Calcutta on January 10, 1800. Due to the experimental and often ill-informed nature of Indian missions and intense local resistance to Christian evangelizing, missionaries learnt to adapt their formal policies to local situations very rapidly. Education thus became a crucial feature, and Hindus were the main religious group targeted for conversion. The evangelists admitted that their object in conducting this [educational] institution is not to impart a very high intellectual training; but as much as possible to fit them for a better and more Christian-like exercise of those duties, which, will devolve upon them in their particular sphere of life. The first and most important aim of education was to make conversion possible. It could be done only if the Scriptures could be understood and preferably read. Bible study was the central aim of all Protestant mission education. In this way, literacy and the central and symbolic role of texts were fundamental to missionaries' educational and evangelical projects in India. Small schools were established in villages near the missions and these schools were often supervised in part by the missionaries' wives. Education of Indian children became gender-segregated, leaving the missionary wife to attend to girl students whilst the male missionary would supervise boys. As Reverend Edward Storrow, a LMS missionary in Calcutta from 1848 to 1866, describes it, "the earliest mission schools were intended for both sexes and all castes and classes; but increased knowledge and experience convinced the missionaries that prejudice was far too strong for their good intentions" (Storrow, 1898: 189). Partha Chatterjee suggests that middle-class Indian men saw missionary schools as representing a dual threat of both proselytisation and the exposure of women to

harmful western influences." (Chatterjee, 1993: 128)

Pedagogic practice itself was highly gendered and details of the differ- ences in curriculum in male and female schools reveal a great deal about the missionaries' expectations of their charges. Girls were predominantly educated to a level of basic literacy and numeracy, with an emphasis on domestic skills including housekeeping, sewing, and lace-making. These skills were seen as crucial to their future roles as wives and mothers of the modern Indian nation; like British women, Indian mothers were expected to fulfill their national duty by giving birth to the new generation of Christianized (and concomitantly Anglicized) Indians who would serve and support the British administration. Boys, in contrast, were exposed to broader academic disciplines, including science and geography. Importantly, they were also encouraged in a concomitant training of the physical body by proponents of muscular Christianity. But more importantly, it was the texts that the missionaries used. Christian texts were used as pedagogical tools across both curricula. The press published religious Christian tracts, Indian literary works, translations of the Bible in twenty five Indian vernaculars and other South Asian languages, but the major contribution of the press was printing vernacular textbooks. The press printed books on grammar, dictionaries, history, legends and moral tales for the Fort William College and the Calcutta School Book Society. At the beginning of 1804, the missionaries decided to publish translations of the Bible in Bengali, Hindoostanee, Mahratta, Telinga, Kurnata, Ooriya and Tamul. By 1804 the Bible had been printed in Bengalee, Ooriya, Hindoostanee and Sanskrit. Ralph Wardlaw Thompson and Arthur Johnson note disingenuously that “the religious aim was in many mission fields helped by the fact that the only reading book available was a translation of one of the Gospels, or of some other portion of Scripture” (Thompson, 1899: 118). In fact, as they

later explain, this was hardly a matter of chance, because evangelicals believed that "the puerility and impurity of Indian literature has made it impossible to adopt it for reading purposes in mission schools" (Thompson, 1899: 126). It is significant that Indian textuality was seen to embody the corruption of the Indian culture as a whole, a corruption which could only be eradicated by immersing Indian students in British, Christian texts. Texts became invested with crucial symbolic weight in missionary writing. Texts which were published by the Christian Societies in India are a perfect example of such ideology. *Balaker Pratham Paribar Bahi* [The Child's First Reading Book] published by the Calcutta Christian Tract Society in 1836, is a perfect example. As Gargi Gangopadhyay says about the book,

> The book over and above being didactic in spirit has a pronounced Christian bias. The first prose lesson titled 'On the Creation of the World' begins: "What the Hindu *shastras* say regarding the creation of the world is incorrect and irrational…and none but a man of poor intellect would ever believe that. This world was not made by any *devata* [Hindu God]…it has been created by God, who, as is written in the Bible, said 'let there be' and so was born the earth. With His infinite power He thus created heaven and earth, the sun, the moon and the stars, men, animals and insects….(Gangopadhyay, 2012: 154)

Similarly, the book *Collection of Rhymes, Hymns and Tunes for Bengali Infant Christian Schools* published by the Calcutta Christian School Book Society in 1859 are prayers for different occasions and for different times of the day, Biblical hymns and songs on evangelical themes. Mount Zion, Canaan, From Egypt, Heavenly Flame, There is a Friend, Weeping Willow (death of Christ), Around the Throne, Heavenly Path, Christian Warrior, Mother's Care, Rainy Day, Children Go, Rousseau's Dream are some of the many song titles. The book

also includes ‘God Save the Queen’.

In the early decades of the nineteenth century along with a new print culture, there was the inception of an English schooling system. Breaking away from the traditional educational systems like *pathshalas* or *makhtabs,* the new curriculum emphasized a rationalist pedagogy and initiated a whole new order of disciplines that were far removed from the prevalent indigenous ones. With such a momentous change in schooling and education, the norms dictating juvenile education as well as juvenile conduct underwent radical changes. Simultaneously, there remained, till the late years of the nineteenth century, residues of thriving pre-print traditions that surfaced in the form of the widely available cheap *Bat-tala* books and also continued as popular forms of entertainments and practicing folk rituals like *jatra*, *kathakata* and *panchali*. The numerous memoirs, biographies and autobiographies that recall a period of growing up in mid or late nineteenth century Bengal record this simultaneity of traditional and new-fangled elements. These writings speak of both indigenous and colonial cultural aspects as important influences moulding contemporary middle and upper-middle class Bengali childhoods. For the newly formed urban middle class, children increasingly became a subject of special concern and childhood an area of growing importance. Manuals for parental guidance advocating a hygienic practice and a rationalist discipline for child-rearing (for instance, *Paribare Shishu Shiksha* (Child Education in the Family, 1890) or *Santaner Charitra Gathan* (Developing a Moral Character in Children,1912) began to be published. The puritan and reformative elements of Brahmoism did much to usher in a modern childhood in the Bengali society. By the turn of the century, a flood of children’s books from Brahmo households and Brahmo authors like Pramadacharan Sen, Rabibdranath Tagore, Abanindranath Tagore, Gnanadanandini Devi, Shibnath Shastri, Yogindranath Sarkar,

Upendrakishore Raychaudhuri enlivened the juvenile reading sphere with entertaining, light-hearted writings and attractive pictures. They brought to the children's domain a playful spirit and endowed it with much of the innocence and happiness that became intricately associated with the cult of the modern child.

Thus as winds of change blew over Bengal, the societal norms were reviewed and reformed. Along with the shifting dynamics of the institutions of home and family the paradigms of childhood too signalled a change. The rigorous discipline and the severe penalties of *Branaparichay*(1855) are tempered by a cheerful indulgence in the happy rhymes of *Hasi Khushi* (1897). The children's periodical *Sakha* (1883) carried the Wordsworthian dictum "The Child is father of the Man" as its epigraph while Tagore's romantic apotheosis of the child found repeated expressions in numerous works, most famously in *Sahaj Path* (1930) – an innovative alphabet book that was unlike any other. Periodicals like *Amar Desh* (1920) hailed their young readers – the boys and girls of Bengal - as the future citizens of a nation. In nineteenth century Bengal, 'child' and 'children's literature' were re-formed and reinterpreted in the cultural and intellectual climate of colonialism. This reformation and radical change was fraught with complex anxieties that infected both the children and their guardians. Asis Nandy notes that,

> with greater and more intense cross-cultural contacts, childhood now more frequently becomes a battleground of cultures…the Indian middle-class child became, under the growing cultural impact of the British rule, the arena in which the battle for the minds of men was fought between the East and the West, the old and the new and the intrinsic and the imposed. (Nandy, 1987: 65)

Instead of one homogenous idea of the child or a single precept of childhood, there existed simultaneously, fragments of different versions of childhood – be ithey indigenous or Western,

traditional or modern, idyllic or realistic.

The integration of Bengali language and Western/ British ways of cultural expressions is almost chronologically synonymous with the Bengal Renaissance. This refers to a socio-cultural and religious reform movement during the nineteenth and early twentieth century in undivided India's Bengal province, though the impact of it spread in the whole of India. The Bengal Renaissance is said to have begun with Raja Ram Mohan Roy (1775–1833) and continued until the death of Rabindranath Tagore in 1941.The Renaissance was a revival of the positives of India's past and appreciation of the impact of the Modern West, as it had emerged since the fifteenth century European Renaissance. Thus, the Bengal Renaissance blended together the teachings of the Upanishad in order to create public opinion against Hindu superstitions including Sati, infanticide, polygamy, child marriage, caste-division, inter-caste hatred, untouchability etc. and the efforts of the Christian Missionaries and the British Colonial Government who introduced Western education, politics and law to administer all those who indulged in superstitions and caste-based Hindu medievalism. The first phase of the Renaissance coincided with the rapid transition from medievalism to modernism in early 19th century India. The most prominent exponent & inaugurator of this transition may be said to be Raja Ram Mohan Roy. His program of religious reform also led him to embrace social reforms. His alert mind perceived that without knowledge of the fundamentals of modern sciences Indians cannot participate in the social transition from the medieval to the modern. To achieve modernization, therefore, grounding in Western systems of thought was absolutely essential. He, along with Dwarkanath Tagore and other Bengalis, founded the *Brahmo Sabha* in 1828, which engendered the Brahmo Samaj, an influential Indian socio-religious reform movement during this time. Raja Ram Mohan Roy's impact on modern Indian history concerned a revival

of the ethics principles of the Vedanta school of philosophy as found in the Upanishads. He preached about the unity of God, made early translations of Vedic scriptures into English, co-founded the Calcutta Unitarian Society, founded the Brahmo Samaj, and campaigned against sati. He sought to integrate Western culture with features of his own country's traditions. He established schools to modernize a system of education in India. Many Bengali intellectuals who were part of this radical thought wrote actively for children and in their literature combined 'ancient' literature with 'modern' thinking. Books like *Chelle O Chhabi* (Children and Picture) by Ashutosh Mukhopadhyay note that, 'that there are plenty of pleasurable picture books for children in England and in other foreign nations. Such a literature that is at once agreeable, pleasing and instructive hones the readers' mental faculties and helps to initiate a moral education. The book has been published to fill up - to a small extent - the dearth of a similar entertaining juvenile literature in Bengal.' Similarly, *Bododhay* (Dawn of Understanding) by Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar, who in association with Drinkwater Bethune established the Bethune College for women, wrote this primer in 1857 aiming to initiate readers in a rational system of knowledge, the volume, as stated by the author, was compiled from several English sources. It presents an assortment of chapters that introduce the basic ideas about animate and inanimate things, vegetation, and mankind, the senses, shapes and forms of objects, counting numerals, buying and selling, monetary systems and property and labour. In the preface the author opines that such knowledge would be far more beneficial for the boys and girls than the ideas nurtured by reading absurd and imaginary tales. These books and the varied impact of the proponents of the Bengal Renaissance like the Brahmo Samaj spread to other parts of the country and initiated a number of reforms including changes in literature and the role of literature.

The understanding that emerged from the Bengal Renaissance, from the introduction of Western culture, science and education which led to a major transformation and development of Bengali society also prompted the stirrings of understanding nationalism in various parts of British ruled India. The exposure to British thought and political philosophies exposed the East to 'Western form of nationalism.' It would not be an exaggeration to say that this 'progressive' form of political idea, for the making and unmaking of cultures and societies in the modern world. Indian nationalism, which as already mentioned has been derived from the Western ideas of nation and nationalism. Partha Chatterjee in *Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World: A Derivative Discourse*, complicates the relation between western nationalism and Indian nationalism, showing the latter as a derivative of the former, and also shows that the idea from which it is derived is discontinuous with its own society. That is, the idea of nationalism is not only oppressive/dominating in its application to the third-world but it also seems to be inherently so.

Indian nationalism, as Partha Chatterjee says, draws from the views of the Enlightenment which was based on rationalism and man's a-gentiality, ethical principles, etc. However, according to Chatterjee, the relation between the concerns of Indian nationalism and the thematic idea of nationalism imported from the West quite complex and ambiguous. Indian nationalistic thought is deliberately selective and is not wholesome. In order to constitute itself as nationalistic, it affirms itself as being spiritually superior to the West while accepting the latter's superiority with regard to material progress. This ambiguity of Indian nationalism gave rise to various strands of nationalisms that continue to influence modern India. Gradually the English educated Indians became the torch bearers of Indian nationalism.

The period from the later eighteenth century through the nineteenth and early twentieth century witnessed the creation of a usable modern past for India different from earlier accounts. It became a tool in the hands of Indian nationalist bourgeoisie to reinforce a concept of Indian nationhood. The influence of the Enlightenment concepts of liberty, freedom and nationalism through literature pervaded the social and educational fabric of the country. They aimed at arousing the mass to oppose British rule. By 1835, even before Macaulay's 'Minute', a vocal and articulate bilingual intelligentsia in Bengal created a discourse of nationalism. They owned newspapers, journals and presses and this was one crucible of ideas where an emergent nationalism articulated itself. As the historian Sanjay Joshi (Joshi, 2001: 2) has argued, the power of the middle class in colonial India was based less on economic power—constrained and limited under colonialism—than on 'the abilities of its members to be cultural entrepreneurs'. What they had, above all, was the ability to define what it meant to be 'modern', to have a 'history', and, consequently, what it was to be 'Indian'.

One of the most important voices of colonial Bengal and of India also was Gurudev Rabindranath Tagore. Tagore was a believer in an interactive, dialogic world, given to a deep sense of sympathy, generosity and mutuality, and in which nations would not be parochial, xenophobic and centripetal, or guided by mere selfishness and self- aggrandizement, but poised towards a morally and politically enlightened community of nations through the espousal of a centrifugal outlook, multilateral imagination, principal of universality and reciprocal recognition. He rejected the 'nationalism' which was a source of war and carnage, death, destruction and divisiveness, rather than international solidarity that induces a larger and more expansive vision of the world. Radical nationalism that acted as opiate of the people, making them irrational and fanatical, blind to the senses of truth and justice, and willing to both kill and die for it,

perpetuating a logic of "lunacy" and war, instead of a cycle of freedom and peace, was an anathema to Tagore. He spurned it as "a cruel epidemic of evil . . . sweeping over the human world of the present age and eating into its moral fibre" (Tagore: 1994, 9), a terrible absurdity that is seeking to engulf humanity in a suicidal conflagration. Three of his novels - *Gora* (1909), *Ghare Baire* (1916) and *Char Adhyay* (1934) - were seen as direct attacks on hard-edged, masculine nationalism. Tagore called into question both the constructed aspect of nationalism, which stifled the innate and instinctive qualities of the human individual, and its overemphasis on the commercial and political aspects, at the expense of man's moral and spiritual qualities. Both of these limitations reduced nationalism to an incomplete, monolithic and unipolar ideology - essentially inadequate for human beings given to an inherent multiplicity and seeming contraries, that needed to be unified and synthesized, through a process of soulful negotiation and striking of an axial line between opposites, to create the whole and wholesome person. Tagore's unending influence on Bengali and Indian children's literature cannot be denied or argued. He 'synthesized' and 'combined' the opposites, of the East and the West to create a 'wholesome' literature for young children, which dips into the very essence of Bengali imagination and paints a vision with all the elements of classic children's literature from the real world. In the Preface that he wrote for *Thakurmar Jhuli: Banglar Rupkatha* (Grandmother's Bag: The Fairy Tales of Bengal) compiled by Dakshinaranjan Mitra Majumdar succinctly summed up its significance. His elaborate introduction projected the volume not simply as an archive of national treasures that were fast fading into oblivion but most importantly, as a cardinal architect of a an indigenous cultural identity crucial for overwriting the English influence: "In our country, could there indeed be anything quite as *swadeshi* as this *Thakurmar Jhuli*? But alas! Nowadays even this wonderful bag was being sent to us manufactured from the factories in Manchester.

These days, the English 'Fairy Tales' are increasingly taking over as the only refuge of our children. Our very own indigenous Grandmother & Co. is rendered utterly bankrupt" (Mitra Majumdar, 1998: 9-10). Around the time of the book's publication, the term 'Swadeshi' was the watchword in Indian nationalist politics and in Bengal it was especially charged with a nascent and fiery patriotism following the popular anti-partition agitations of 1905.*Thakurmar Jhuli* was variously proclaimed as marking "an epoch in Bengali literature", as "the public book", as "Bengal's eternal flute", as "a people's identity" and as "a Nation's attractions" by eminent nationalists and esteemed intellectuals like Surendranath Banerjee, Aurobindo Ghosh, Chittaranjan Das, Rabindranath Tagore and Rameshchandra Dutt to name a few. Apart from such magnificent endorsements, in the coming decades the fairy-tale anthology was widely advertised as "our nation's wealth", as "the golden book *of* golden Bengal", and as "the dream-castle of Bengali literature". Mitra Majumdar was exalted as 'the Grimm of Bengal' and "his wonderful volumes" were seen as "the Bengalees' Books" and hailed with the fervent nationalist slogan "the Bande Mataram".

Keeping in tandem with the nationalist fervour is another prominent Indian whose motto for Indian nationalism has been hailed across the world, M. K Gandhi, popularly called Gandhi. Gandhi's thoughts of *Satyagraha* and *Ahimsa* have pervaded each and every literature that has been written after those times. These ideas find root in the Hindu concept of 'satya' or 'Truth'. *Ahimsa* or 'non-violence' is a common enough word in ancient Indian literature and Gandhi claimed to be following in up-to-date form of ancient Indian ideal, which he had also read in "the teachings of all the greatest teachers of the World- Zoroaster, Mahavir, Daniel, Jesus, Muhammad, Nanak and a host of others" (Gandhi, 1922: 85). Gandhi's non-violence, *ahimsa*

and his idea of a non-violent protest *Satyagraha* is seen to be rooted in India philosophy and thought.

Gandhi's influence on literature generally and the Anglophone novel more particularly is best understood in terms of the pivotal role he played in decisively bringing together diverse communities under the rubric of the 'India' possessed, according to him, of a civilizational and spiritual unity that long preceded 'English' rule. The historian, Percival Spear, observes that Gandhi's great work was to bring together masses and elite classes in the freedom struggle; thereby 'the Mahatma gave a nation to the country' (Spear, 1965: 200). More recently, the political theorist, Partha Chatterjee, has argued that 'Gandhism provided for the first time in Indian politics an ideological basis for including the whole people within the political nation (Chatterjee, 1993: 110, original emphasis). This necessitated bringing the peasantry as a whole into the movement and addressing social divisions, in particular what Gandhi deemed the 'deadly sin' of 'untouchability', whereby entire groups of people were cast beyond the pale of society altogether. Spear also comments on Gandhi's unique methods of bringing people together in common cause:

> He dramatized his ideas by a constant stream of articles, speeches and declarations, and above all, by his own example. Gandhi, in the peasant's loin cloth and shawl, sitting at the spinning wheel, writing notes on his weekly day of silence, sitting lost in contemplation or lying exhausted during a fast, were all ways of getting his image across to a largely illiterate population. They were not Brahminic, priestly ways, but ways which made an immediate appeal to the ordinary man. (Spear, 1995: 199)

It was inevitable then that the literature of the time would respond, not only to the heightened sense of nationalism that dominated the decades from 1905 to Independence, but also to the presence of a figure of such legendary proportions with a penchant for both narrative and

performance. It was not only the literary writers who played an active role in reflecting the then Gandhi-mania of the entire country but also the nationalist Press and local newspapers and journals which portrayed the 'bhakti' cult of the Mahatma through different anecdotes, feature articles, soft news and of course, snippets, thereby proving the immense popularity of the political figure who was slowly turned into a divine entity, a messiah who was sure to bring a revolution in human history as Buddha or Christ could. Newspapers like the 'Swadesh', 'Aaj', 'Abhyudaya', 'Gyan Shakti' and local dailies, pamphlets etc all contributed accordingly and respectively in portraying the local reactions in favour of Gandhiji and thereby popularizing him. The myth of the Mahatma was a result of the projections of the existing patterns of popular beliefs about the worship of the holy miraculous sages in rural India. Gandhi-teachings became so popular that they were pronounced as everyday bread and butter facts and the more they got discussed the mode did they gain in importance, magnitude, and matter.

Gandhiji insisted on high thinking and simple living which was also reflected and highlighted by the literary English authors of the time, mainly Raja Rao, Mulk Raj Anand, R. K. Narayanan, who in their novels and stories portrayed the real picture of the the-then society from various perspectives, thereby presenting the influence of Gandhi on Indian villages and towns, letting us a scope to probe how Gandhi's ways of developmental communication created effects on human lives bringing a sea change in their thoughts, views and living. This is also the main cue of Gandhi's sense of Indian nationalism. Gandhi's nationalism stemmed from the 'Indianness' of his own identity. Gandhi always willed to make India a Gandhian country or Ramraj, garneted with everything very 'Indian' in nature. Gandhi as a figure and as a thinker is a prominent figure in Indian children's fiction in English. He has been quoted and his struggles for Indian Independence form an important part of the Historical fiction for children after

Independence. Sashi Deshpande's *The Narayanpur Incident* and Sarojini Sinha's *A Pinch of Salt Rocks the Empire* are texts that allude to the Indian Struggle for Independence which relied heavily on Gandhian philosophy. The former is a story about a young boy and a girl in the times of the Swadeshi movement. Though Gandhiji is not explicitly mentioned, the Gandhian philosophy comes through very clearly. The latter is a beautiful depiction of the Salt Satyagraha that Gandhi undertook in the 1930's to non-violently revolt against the Salt Tax imposed by the government. In one of the most well-known novels for children by R. K Narayan, *Swami and Friends*, the innocence of a child during the Swadeshi Movement is beautifully portrayed. Swami during the movement bunks school to feel at one with the elders and gains a sense of importance after he joins in the procession. The whole country during this Movement rose as one for Gandhi's call to ban foreign goods. Swami in his innocence could not distinguish his Khadi cap from foreign clothes and flings it on the pyre. The main point that comes to mind is how Swami in all his innocence wants to follow Gandhi even though he does not fully comprehend Gandhian philosophy. This is how most of Indian English writers constructed a common man's interpretation, reaction and understanding to Gandhian philosophy.

Jawaharlal Nehru, though a great admirer and follower of Mahatma Gandhi, and the first Prime Minister of independent India, wrote widely and addressed a number of areas that facilitated and illustrated his erudition as well as understanding of events that had a lasting impact on world history. *Glimpses of World History* (1934) was written serially in the form of letters. In this book, Nehru tried to write an Indian history of the world, to produce a universal history from the Indian point of view. As Sunil Khilnani says,

> Unlike the philosophical histories of Hegel, Marx or Spengler, which were built around the advance or decay of a single subject (reason, forms of production, culture) Nehru's accounts of

> historical movement did not identify a single active principle. ..He aimed more simply to show the chronological adjacency and simultaneity of events across the world…it was to claim that the centre of gravity of world history was shifting away from Europe and towards Asia and Africa. (Mehrotra, 2006: 149)

Nehru's awareness of the history and heritage on India also manifests itself in his third book *The Discovery of India* (1946). From the outset, however, Nehru admits that his approach to India was that of "an alien critic . . . a friendly westerner"(Nehru, 2000: 50). Equally, he is uncertain as to whether he really knows the country, and expresses a desire to discover its material realities as well as its essence. Surprisingly as it may seem in someone with an acute sense of history and a deep appreciation of the need to activate 'historical memories' and the 'sub-conscious mind', Nehru took little interest in culture as one of the bases of national unity. Nehru's reasons for ignoring culture seem to be varied. Though familiar' with the classical Indian culture, he lacked Gandhi's familiarity with and high regard for the folk culture. He also seems to have accepted the Orientalist view that the traditional culture was ill-suited to modern India and best left alone to die an inevitable historical death. Indeed he thought that apart from a couple of brief periods in ancient India, the rest of its history was a story of degeneration and decline. Whatever his reasons, Nehru's India was unable to integrate its past and present, with the result that it lacked cultural and historical depth. It was intensely obsessed with the future and remained deeply nervous and ambivalent in its attitude to the past. The vision that Nehru saw for India, as a newly independent nation, was that of a modernized and industrialized India along the lines of the highly developed European world. The modern world was industrialized, and a country that failed to keep pace with it remained weak and vulnerable to foreign domination.

> We are trying to catch up in India with the changes that came in the world hundred or hundred and fifty years ago. That is, the industrial revolution... And what does it mean? ... It means

> exploiting the mighty forces that lie hidden in nature.. . As a result of that western nations became powerful, became rich, and the gap between them and the non-- industrialized nations became a tremendous, ever-growing gap... Now... another mighty revolution is constantly coming over the world and setting the stage for additional changes all the time... So we have to go through not only one revolution but two. We have to cover the track of the 19th century and having reached the middle of the 20th, we have to function in this jet age, atomic energy age and the like.
> (Singh, 1988: 202)

These views of Nehru were later on incorporated into the kind of books that were published for children after Independence. With the establishment of NBT and CBT, in 1954, children's writing in India gained an impetus and the kind of books that they published in their early day mostly leant towards science and modernization.

From the late 19th century onwards, all Indian thinkers and political figures faced a fundamental problem. How to discover or devise some coherent, shared norms - values and commitments - that could connect Indians together under modern conditions, that could define a public sphere for Indians? This wider and deeper theme of our intellectual and political history has too often been subsumed within the story of nationalism- as the search for what could unite Indians in terms of a common identity. Yet, as the question to which nationalism was a response has receded, as we are faced with the fundamental and routine questions of political life lived anywhere and at any time- how to create and sustain a moral public life, we need to recover this other history, to reconstruct its shape. What we find in Tagore, in Gandhi, in Nehru, (as well as in many others: I have chosen to focus on these three because they lend themselves most clearly to the argument I wish to make), in their self-criticisms as well as in their critical debates with one another, is a search for a modem morality. They sought principles and practices through which Indians could engage in the public political life to which they were now, through the

presence of a state, necessarily condemned and committed. Tagore, Gandhi, and Nehru: each represents an important moment in the making of a tradition of public reason- the creation of an intellectual space which allowed morals and ethics, and the political choices these entailed, to be debated, revised and decided upon. Tagore, Gandhi and Nehru represent a broad and diverse set of positions, and they frequently disagreed. But together, they are the most notable examples in our history of the effort to invent a modem ethics for Indians and India.

Gandhi, Tagore and Nehru were not just nationalist leaders but were prolific writers too. They wrote extensively and articulated their visions about their philosophy and their ideas about India in particular. As mentioned earlier, Gandhi was already a popular figure when we look at the number of Gandhian novels that were published. But, Nehru too wielded sufficient influence on Indian English writers with his very Western ideas of India and of socialism. As Leela Gandhi says,

> In most of these novels [Gandhian fiction] the impact of Gandhism is measured not only in terms of its anti-imperial content but also- and perhaps more significantly- for its impetus to the programme of internal national reform. By and large, the social realism of contemporary fiction seeks its materials and gains its inspiration from the nationalist mobilization and 'upliftment' of women, workers, untouchables and peasants. At best, these narratives tend to represent the colonial encounter itself as a shadowy plot to the larger story of socio-economic transformation. And in this regard, although Gandhi continues to be treated as the ethical centre of the purported turning-upside-down of old hierarchies, a distinctly Nehruvian vocabulary gains currency in the novels of this period. (Mehrotra, 2006: 171)

Raja Rao's *Kanthapura* is a perfect example of this choice between the distinctly non-modern imperatives of Gandhi's *Hind Swaraj* and Nehruvian modernity. One of the most poignant books written about children, and could also be looked at as a 'children's book, was R. K Narayan's

Swami and Friends, which clearly describes in its narrative the attraction that Swami feels towards the 'urbanizing' India, with its promise of stability and solidarity. For Swami, Rajam, the police officer's son, with his bungalow and toy rail engine were the symbols of the world of colonial progress and modernity that Swami is asked to enter.

Newspapers, mostly in vernacular languages, also gave rise to the wide spread nationalist feeling and managed to reach out to a wider audience across India. The Indian Press played a notable role in mobilizing public opinions, organizing political movements, fighting over political controversy and promoting nationalism. Newspapers like the Indian Mirror, Ananda Bazaar Patrika, Bombay Chronicle, The Hindu and Kesari exposed the excesses of the British administration. Press became the primary medium of public education and probably played the most important part in forming public opinion. In India between the 1850s and the 1930s, the 'child' was re-examined and reinterpreted in the cultural and intellectual climate of colonialism, and the 'new children' that emerged from these interrogations found various new uses in colonialist and nationalist projects. As the uneasily shared wards of British and Indian elites, native children became embroiled in debates about race, nature, civilization and the impact of colonialism upon the modern self. With the growth of print culture in the early 20th century, a journalistic venture emerged in the public sphere that was closely tied to the nationalist project: children's journals. The method of these experiments was to generate a powerful set of geographies of childhood, in which Indian elites might locate not only the defeated present and the modern future, but also the pre-modern, pre-colonial past. As a part of the juvenile periphery, Bengali children's literature in particular, enabled certain experiments with transformation premised on the plasticity of the child. The method of these experiments was to generate a powerful set of geographies of childhood, in which Indian elites might locate not only the

defeated present and the modern future, but also the pre-modern, pre-colonial past. The literary child moved constantly between these geographies, fleeing the anxieties of colonialism and chasing its pleasures. The landscapes of the past were typically constructed as the innermost refuge of the colonized child: a space charged with escapism, innocence, femininity and other 'mindsets' that might be experienced as nostalgia. At the same time, this landscape generated unease, which stemmed not from the anti-modernity of the past, but from its perceived implication in a pathological modernity. Examples of these ‘nationalist’ journals for children exist till date especially in Hindi and in Bengali. A Satadru Sen says,

> By the first decades of the new century, the literary parenthood of the native adult had been established in children's magazines with subscriptions that ran into the thousands: Sudhir Sarkar's *Mouchak*, Upendrakishore Raychaudhuri's *Sandesh*, and Hemen Ray's *Rangmashal*, to name but a few. While these magazines are not all the same (*Sandesh* and *Mouchak* might be considered more cosmopolitan than the aggressively nationalist *Rangmashal*), they are not consistently different either. They collaborated broadly in the construction of a literary and pedagogical child that is generally Hindu and middle-class: Muslim children appear very infrequently, the occasional Christianity of the protagonist is carefully understated even in a Church-affiliated journal such as *Balak*, and non-bhadralok children feature either as servants or as outsiders. The childhood imagined is broadly but not simply gendered: protagonists are not inevitably boys, and the reader is only inconsistently imagined as male. Girl children, not surprisingly, appear as the bearers of 'tradition' and domesticity, but they also make occasional appearances as incompletely domesticated carriers of a middle-class modernity that might challenge colonial assumptions about Indian femininity in the era of Katherine Mayo and *Mother India*. (Sen, 2004: np)

A staple feature of all the magazines is the exploration narrative: stories about travel to particular geographies, and stories that located the reader's home in relation to places that were clearly not

home. The meanings of these juvenile geographies can be decoded within the twin contexts of colonialism and the uncertainly political child. Ray's editorial is a nearly explicit critique of colonialism as a kind of children's prison. By presenting his magazine as a solution to the problem, Ray portrays the ability to imagine and emulate what is on the outside as a heroic and necessary form of escape. This escape can be in any number of directions, including the metropole itself. In the stories about European children, and native children who have gone abroad, childhood is imagined as sufficiently universal that the desirable white spaces and modern content of the metropole might be rendered cosmopolitan and accommodating. In the geography of the familiar and envied metropole, whiteness, masculinity and modernity existed as admirable assets that were accessible to the plastic child to an extent that they were not to the naturally hardened, politically disenfranchised native adult. The political context of the desired movement is critical, because the stories about the good life of metropolitan children were produced and consumed at a moment in the colonial relationship when native adults were typically restricted from accessing the metropole either as a space or as a 'natural' set of racial and gendered identities. This was not simply on account of British exclusionary attitudes: in the political climate of the 1930s, Rabindranath Tagore wrote his nephew Abanindranath, "building bridges between ruler and ruled" had become untenable, not only because the individual Indian was only too aware of the misery of the imperial relationship, but also because any Indian bridge-builder would be ostracized by his compatriots. The child, however, could go (and become) where (and what) the adult could not.

Hindi children's journals, like *Khilauna*, *Kumari Darpan* and *Kanya Manoranjan,* propelled the view that it lay in the hands of children to support and eventually accomplish Indian independence. They emerged in the Hindi public sphere of the early 20th century in a

period of colonial Indian history that was marked by the rise of nationalist thought and activism. The scope of this new publishing enterprise was to provide children pedagogically sound entertainment and instruction. Children's journals were edited by prominent figures in the Hindi public sphere, like Pandit Omkarnath Vajpeyi, Ramji Lal Sharma and P N Dwivedi, and brought out by publication houses that stood close to the nationalist project. Central to the editorial framework of the journals was the uniting force of nationalism. It is well worth considering that the children's journals were a new publishing enterprise in the Hindi literary sphere. Hindi was gaining acceptance as a language of progress in the modern socio-political and scientific discourse of the early 20th century. It was thus even more important to address the future citizens of the country in a language that had the potential to become a national language. It has been shown in the works of Vasudha Dalmia (1997) and Francesca Orsini (2002) that from the mid-19th century Hindi was sought to be projected as a language that was capable of transmitting rational and scientific thought. This development is also visible in children's journals. Like other periodicals, they projected Hindi as the common language of the people of India. Thus, the children's journal *Khilauna* explains to its readers,

> In Punjab one speaks Punjabi and one speaks Hindi in the United Provinces, Central Provinces and Bihar, Bengali in Bengal, Tamil and Teiugu in Madras and Marathi and Gujarati in Bombay. Hindi is a language that can be understood by everyone. Once upon a time, Sanskrit was the only language in all of Bharatvarsh. [...] Today, Hindi is Bharat's national language. The language that can be understood and spoken in all parts of the country is called the national language. Through the national language all brothers and sisters of a country are united. In Bharatvarsh, Hindi is this language. (Shiv, *Khilauna, 6/1927:* 190-191)

In Hindi children's journals the assumption of language as a unifying factor of the Indian people loomed large. This awareness was sought to be created amongst children, as well.

Children's journals' texts provide much information on how childhood was conceptualised in colonial India. The 'discovery of childhood' was also a result of changing social structures and ideas of the family. Urbanisation and modernisation in Europe of the Victorian age, for example had caused massive changes in the conception of childhood (Aries 1962). As Sudhir Kakar has shown in his socio-psychoanalytical study of identity-formation in childhood, concepts of Indian (elite and middle-class) childhood also relied on cultural knowledge of child development. Indian traditional notions of childhood - such as the mother-child dyad that, according to Kakar is central to a child's early stage of socialization (Kakar, 1978:27) were also visible in the conception of the children's journal as a companion of children and mothers. Such conceptions met western Victorian conceptions of childhood, from which emerged a blend of traditional learning and western-style education peculiar to children's journals. Hindi children's journals were thus also discovering stories from the west as a new fund of literature to impart scientific, moral and didactic teachings. Such stories accompanied stories from the Indian/Hindu cultural heritage such as the Mahabharata, the Ramayana or stories and fables from the *Panchatantra* and Hitopadesha. Common to both types of literature for children was their pedagogic-didactical style. Children's journals engaged the changing concepts of child-hood that can be described as a shift from the assumption that children were 'incomplete adults' to the perception of childhood as an autonomous stage in which children required apposite child rearing.

There existed an interrelationship between the institution of the family and the nation. In nationalist discourse, the family was conceptualized as a protective unit. It saved its members from harm of the public world. It is within this protected sphere that education and codes of conduct could best be disseminated. More than that, children were assigned a role within the

family. This was due to the conceptualization of children as the future citizens of a nascent nation. If the household was the embryonic reflection of the nation, as Tanika Sarkar has suggested (2001: 36), then the family members were its patriotic subjects. This assumption is a vital constituent of the children's journals: Children were the future citizens of the imagined nation. Sociologist Pradip Bose asserts that the 'new family' as it emerged in late 19th century Bengal attributed a special importance to child rearing and the character formation of children (1996). "It was only through a certain practice and strategy that the child's character-building exercise was to be pursued. In this process, the (male) child was required to be segregated from premature contact with various corrupting influences and subjugated to a regime of love, affection, discipline, and punishment" (Bose,1996: 118-19). Bose's investigation of the discourse on the family as it acquired public and national significance in colonial Bengal describes the education of male children as an enterprise laden with modes of surveillance, guidance, and punishment. Reading the educational tracts about child rearing through the Foucauldian notion of discipline and punishment, he identifies a rigid system of control:

> The needs of the nation and the model of national cultural im-provement were thus projected and tried out on children. In a sense, the conceptualization f moderna dulthoodw as impossiblew ithout the conceptualisationo f modernc hildhood.T he child became the source that could be used to satisfy the grandest of national aspirations. Childhood became an arena of adult experiments in colonial India. (Bose, 1996: 120).

As cultural historian Dipesh Chakrabarty in his analysis of Bengali children's primers of the mid-19th century also notices a regimen of regulations and prescriptions directed at male children. Children were envisioned as the pride of the country. It was important to safeguard them from

corrupting influences so that they would develop into ideal citizens. To achieve this goal, some degree of surveillance was required.

The Hindi journals mentioned in this chapter, like *Kanya Manoranjan, Kumari Darpan* and *Khilauna,* also projected models of national and cultural progress onto children (and mothers). Children were expected to meet the requirements of a colonial society in transition. They were taught obedience and socialized into their future roles as women and men of an independent nation. But besides their nationalist outlook, the children's journals acknowledged that childhood was to be differentiated from adulthood and that boyhood and girlhood - in spite of their similarities in regard to virtuous and moral behaviour were also inherently different, which is mirrored in the domestic advice that solely addressed girl readers and their mothers.

Kanya Manoranjan mainly dealt with the conditioning of young girls as women in the future years and their conditioning to become ideal ‘domesticated’ women. Besides the emphasis on house-keeping, several contributions in girls' journals add courage to the list of desirable virtues. 'Ghar me Chor'('A Thief in the House') is introduced as the true story of a theft that occurred in Kashi (Benares), in which Jayanti is a courageous young woman who saves not just herself but her family from theft. Through the children's periodical, the stories of Jyanvati and Banubai were recounted beyond the locality in the entire United Provinces and became part of the readers' shared memory. Periodicals had traditionally published biographical narratives of both mythological and historical Indian women who had gained popularity. They also reported on contemporary women (and men) who made individual careers. What is new in the children's journals is how they appeal to the readers to go public with their deeds and submit other true stories of courageous girls. The children's journals therefore not only offered role models but

also encouraged the girl readers to create them. The readers no more solely identified and sympathized with the characters of a fictional story but also with other readers' lives. New heroines were recruited from different age groups and classes.

The heightened spirit of nationalist thought and the nationalist movement also increased in editorials and news items. Until the mid-1910s, children's journals refrained from making direct references to oppressive and exploitative practices of British colonial rule. In 1917, however, the journals took on a more explicit and overt political tone that brought colonial rule under scrutiny. Triggered by the advent of Mahatma Gandhi on the national political stage and his first call for 'satyagraha'(' truth-force' in the meaning o f non-cooperation and civil disobedience) in Champaran (Bihar) in 1917, Svarup Kumari Nehru critiqued colonial politics in *Kumari Darpan*. In the article 'Deshbhakti' she refers to the nationalist developments in India and calls upon her readers to practise' deobhakti', which literally means devotion to the country but is generally translated as 'patriotism':

> Patriotism is to be practiced with the body, the mind, and one's possessions. As for economic wealth, there is nothing left in Bharatvarsh, which is why not everyone can serve Bharat by means of material belongings. But everyone can serve by means of his/her body and mind. Whether the person is old, young, or a child, rich or poor, it is the dharma of every person to serve the country. Whosoever wants to practise true devotion should first make the effort to wear svadeshi clothes, eat svadeshi food and advise friends to do the same. (Svarup Kumari Nehru, *Kumari Darpan* 10/1917, p 30)

By the mid-1920s, when nationalist campaigns had gained momentum throughout the subcontinent, the format of children's journals had changed significantly. *Khilauna* (Game) was a children's journal first published in January 1927, more than a decade after journals such as

Kanya Manoranjan and *Kumari Darpan*. *Khilauna* did not address issues specific to girls or domesticity. It contained a copious entertainment section (games, rhymes, riddles). The nationalist passages in *Khilauna* amply illustrate the development of the children's literature genre since *Kumari Darpan*, which began a decade earlier. The following citation from a column, titled 'Desh ki Baat' (trans. Nationlist Matters) illustrates how patriotism and nationalism were planted into the minds of children.

> Our country is very big. When we were fewer (in number) we lived in only one place. But slowly as our brothers and sisters began increasing, they spread to the entire country. There are all sorts of places and areas in our country. Some are cold, others hot. There are mountains, deserts, fertile, and barren regions. In some places it rains more, in others less. As long as we populated one place, we had shared customs and traditions, ways of living and modes of conversation. But when we separated, our ways of living, modes of conversation, and customs began differing from each other. After a while, outside people migrated to our country. They intermixed with us. Their customs and traditions inter-mingled with ours. This is how different types of people began living in our country, even though they were all the offspring of one mother. On the grounds of these differences different provinces were formed. Today, there are fourteen provinces in our country. The major provinces are Punjab, the United Provinces, Bengal, Bihar, Bombay, Rajputana, Central Provinces, and Madras. The Punjabis are strong and simple, those from the United Provinces are very devotional, the Bengalis fearless and intelligent, the Rajputs heroic, the Madrasis simple, and the Mahrattas heroic and clever. (Shiv, *Khilauna* 6/1927, pp 190-191**.)**

One cannot fail to see the nationalist vigour of this passage. From the geographic and ethnic boundaries and regional particularities of the subcontinent, to its exclusively Vedic history and colonization, the article explains to children the cultural diversity of the country. The sense of a

'we' (projected against an inherent 'them'), a common history, and a single national language (in spite of the vernacular languages) were projected as the uniting factors of the Indian people.

We notice then that the East- West conflict of values resulting from the spread of English education, as in the case of missionary writing; the nationalist consciousness, which is reflected in vernacular writers like Abanindranath Tagore, Rabindranath Tagore and Hemen Ray in Bengali; the emergence of the new middle class which was also literate and fluent in English (products of the Bengal Renaissance) and the extension of the reading habit into all classes and age groups, prepared the ground for the establishment of Indian children's literature in English in India. Even as the novel made a late beginning and a gradual progress in India, fiction for children rooted in contemporary reality was attempted, in India, only after Independence. Perhaps, Dhan Gopal Mukherji, an Indian immigrant settled in the United States of America, can be considered as the first Indian writer to write in English for children. His jungle books, *Kari, the Elephant* (1922), *Jungle, Beasts and Men* (1923), *Hari, the Jungle Lad* (1924) and *Ghound, the Hunter* (1928) belong to the category of wildlife stories with an authentic setting revealing the author's knowledge of India. His novel *Gayneck* (1928), is a translation of his earlier work in Bengali called *Chitragreeb,* is the story of a pigeon (Gayneck) from Bengal that becomes a courier of military dispatches in the Great War. Gayneck is another bird's-eye-view of a tranquil domesticity that disintegrates into a geography consumed by horror. It is a scathing attack on technological civilization and modern warfare. In *Hari, the Jungle Lad*, which is an intense, vivid story of a young boy's life in the jungle, Mukherji uses archaic poetic prose, which seems to be strangely in tune with the story fabric. *My Brother's Face* deals with the East-West relationships and the trauma of alienation experience by the expatriate India. Mukherji, as Srinivas Iyengar says, "can almost be called the Indian Kipling- sometimes, indeed more

satisfying than Kipling." (Iyengar, 1962: 514). The novelist has also pondered over the questions of fear, hatred and the essence of true civilization. According to Meena Khorana,

> Both non-violence and destruction are integrated in his overall vision of harmony; everything is a face of the divine. With the present threat of the nuclear war and the problems of poverty, racism and destruction of ecology, Mukherji's message of oneness with creation where humans, animals and birds can live in peace, is still relevant. (Khorana, 1989: 193-201)

Another Indian expatriate, who wrote for children in collaboration with Eloise Lownsberry, was Reginald Lal Singh, and his book was titled *Gift of the Forest*, published in the year 1910. Bim, the hero, adopts a tiger cub and his ensuing adventures as well as the varied reactions of the people towards jungle life are explored in the book. It is obvious that both Mukherji and Singh had in mind a non-Indian readership. Like the colonial novels of Kipling, they evoke an exotic jungle atmosphere Indian in character, tantalizing to a Western audience.

Another form of writing was the 'missionary literature' pouring out of India in the first half of the nineteenth century. Missionaries in India, a missionary boasted, "have done much towards drawing the attention of the Christian world to the claims of Hindustan upon their sympathies and prayers" (Mullens, 1852: 40). Without doubt, textual representations of missionary work in India influenced both British imperial policy and missionary society practice. As Johnston quotes from Jane Haggis who says that the missionary account of India and its women was, if not the main, then undoubtedly a primary contributor to the public perceptions of India as an appropriate subject of British imperial rule. India was a highly productive field of missionary textual production, and also played a key role in 'educating' the natives in school and outside it. These texts mainly dealt with A standard narrative pattern recurs throughout such texts

and indeed different volumes are often almost interchangeable. In summary, these studies construct a historical narrative tracing the 'plight' of Indian women from ancient times to the nineteenth century: a narrative critically focussed on negative aspects of Indian women's lives. Writers frequently invoke an idealized time of equality and openness in the Vedic Age, thus establishing a kind of native precedent for Christian attempts to ameliorate the condition of Indian women. Examples of these texts are Edward Storrow's *The Eastern Lily Gathered: A Memoir of Bala Shoondoree Tagore* (1856), *Our Indian Sisters* (1898); Mrs Hannah Catherine Mullens' *Faith and Victory: A Story of the Progress of Christianity in Bengal, Phulmani and Karuna: A Book for Native Christian Women* (apparently translated into twelve Indian languages); *The Missionary on the Ganges* (published both in English and in Bengali); and *Missionary Pictures; Or, Word-Painting of Scenes in India, for the Young.* There were books that were specifically targeted at the younger children as well. *Jothy: A Story of a South Indian Jungle* (1933), written by Charlotte Wyckoff may be classified as a 'missionary novel', as Jothy the heroine is redeemed from poverty and indignity only after the family adopts Christianity. Earlier missionary novels, as Meena Khorana says, "clearly state that if Indian villagers are happy to have lives, they must convert to Christianity" (Khorana, 1991: 8). Christianity then, was an antidote to all the ills of a superstition-laden, poverty-stricken Indian multitude. However, it must also be mentioned that in books like *Children of the Wolf,* side by side with the educating of two children from the Sal forest in Bengal, there is also a focus on the inner growth of a young student in the orphanage who is unable to communicate initially. Most of these missionary novels were authored by Westerners and convey historical circumstances from their angle of vision.

The Indian adoption of Western culture, especially in the realm of children's literature, remained frozen in the Victorian era. Overtly didactic, covertly prescriptive fiction was written for children by adults with an insatiable desire to improve their minds. With the advent of Independence, the memory of the colonial past slowly began to recede, but it left behind a backlash of values which guided writers in the days to come. A category of fiction was envisaged, a fiction that was meant to educate as well as delight, for young minds of Independent India. Moreover, the English language was becoming more and more indigenous, evidence of which can be found in the ever-growing genre of Indian writing in English of this period, acquiring Indianness, it was taught with varying degrees of competence at school levels. S. Radhakrishnan's Report of the University Education Commission (1950) stressed the role of English in India and prescribed that 'English be studied in High Schools and in the Universities in order that we may keep in touch with the living stream of our growing knowledge' (Kachru, 1983: 9). Bilingualism which was already introduced with Macaulay's Minute on education, now changed with the introduction of the three language formula (introduction of Hindi as the National language), the National Policy on Education decided that, "the world knowledge was growing at a tremendous pace. India should also make her own significant contribution to it. For this purpose, study of English deserves to be specifically strengthened." (Sinha, 1978: 3). Although there was much controversy around this issue, a consensus was achieved, despite the prevalent multi-lingual context. English was one of the languages to be learnt. After a decade and a half of active contact with the English, the creative as well as the functional use of English as a pan Indian link-language has continued in the post Independence years.

In newly independent India the project of nation-building has lain at the heart of its educational policy since 1947. In some sense, every society treats education in an instrumentalist

way to further the agenda of the State. In a newly postcolonial nation, however, this impetus has a greater immediacy. India's experience is a microcosm of an uneasy and contestory process, characterizing the evolution of political decolonization. Between the conflicting claims of the English speaking intelligentsia and the proponents of Hindi; the secularists and the revisionist Hindu state governments; the urban middle class and the newly powerful rural elite, education has been the site of multiple definitions of the nation. Various claimants to power, each with their own vision, have attempted to lay their imprint upon education, mould it in their own way and inscribe it with their own agenda. Therefore, people in power had to bring all these factors into consideration and put forth a literature that furthers the agenda of the State and not of individuals alone. Immediately after Independence, the State in India saw the education system at large and textbooks in particular, as a means to spearhead a program of national construction: in many instances, as our first Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru advocated, was seen as the crucial element to shape national culture. Keeping the role of education and books, Nehru established three 'national' institutions which pioneered the rise of children's literature in India.

In 1957, Jawaharlal Nehru, determined that only an atmosphere of knowledge could lay the foundation for a truly democratic and cultured society, envisaged the National Book Trust of India (NBT). NBT was conceived as an autonomous organization under the Ministry of Human Resources Development. On the NBT lay "the onus of inculcating the book reading habit" (Vasu, 1990: 42) among the literate of the country. In the early years, the NBT's emphasis was on publishing, and books specifically for children were published from 1969; their objective was a laudable one, to "help the child to see the world through Indian eyes." (Vasu, 1990: 42) One of the main aims was to promote national integration, and translations in many Indian languages were brought out for this reason. Another State based institution for children and education is the

National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT), which was set up in 1961, by the Government of India as an autonomous organization to assist and advise the governments at the Centre and in States in the implementation of their policies for education, especially to bring about qualitative changes in school education and teacher preparation. In 1963, when the NCERT was just a two year old institution, it undertook projects on "Why, What and How to write for children". About 4000 children's books in Hindi, English, Bengali, Kannada, Punjabi and Gujrati were screened to select good reading material for children of various age groups. As a result of the various seminars and projects, there was a glut of titles which had to be carefully analyzed. Another non-government organization that stresses on publication for children is the Children's Book Trust founded by Shankar in 1957. Pioneer publishers of children's books in India, Children's Book Trust has set for itself an ambitious target to promote the production of well written, well illustrated and well designed books for children. In furtherance of this objective, the Trust brings out books that are easy to read and easy on the eyes, including books that enable children to have a better appreciation of India's cultural heritage. CBT started with publishing playful animal fantasies that were published as *Panchatantra* tales or the retold folktales that even today make perennial favourites and gradually steered its energies towards reality issues like teenage problems, scientific and technological advances, school and sports dilemmas, contributions of eminent men and women in India's progress, the changing mindset of ordinary people and the evolution of their thought. The subjects were diversified to make a much wider spectrum. This now comprises General Fiction, Science Fiction, Indian History/Heritage, Natural History, Travelogue, Non-Fiction/ Information, Popular Science, Great Institutions, Short Stories/Humour Stories, Short Plays/Dramas, and Read-Aloud Books/Picture Books. These

are published not only in English and Hindi, as was the case earlier, but in various Indian languages to a certain extent.

Books were seen as an important part of national construction and these 'national' institutions forwarded the national ideal that the ruling class believed in. Official state policy- especially the ones articulated by the Congress Government which have dominated the ruling polity for four decades after Independence- tended to strive towards a singular, unambiguous and monologic identity. As early as 1952, this is spelt out in the Secondary Education Commission Report (popularly known as the Mudaliar Commission Report):

> The aim of secondary education is to train the youth of the country to be good citizens who will be competent to play their part effectively in the social reconstruction and economic development of the country. (Secondary Education Report, 1952: 5)

The educational agenda that is consequently outlined, projects the nation as monolithic and unitary, not as an entity which is made up of diverse elements and different groups with their own vision of the world. It is perhaps inevitable that in the early years of Independence, the nation is conceived of as a single and undifferentiated entity and education is expected to create good citizens whose primary and preferably sole identification was to be with the nation. In fact, the conflicting and contesting identities which inevitably exist are generally seen as divisive and dangerous:

> There has been an accentuation in recent years of certain un-desirable, tendencies of provincialism, regionalism and other sectional differences. This situation is fraught with serious consequences and it is as much the duty of statesmen as educationalists to take steps and re-orient people's mind in the right direction. If education fails to play its part effectively in checking these tendencies, if it does not strengthen the forces of national cohesion and

> solidarity, we are afraid that our freedom, our national unity as well as our future progress will be seriously imperiled. (Secondary Education Report, 1952: 6)

National education therefore remained an exercise for forging a homogenous national identity, reaffirming it relentlessly against imagined threats and potential divisiveness. This view of the role of education and of the Indian nation is in tandem with the then PM Jawaharlal Nehru's idea of modernity and progress, which was commonly known as Nehruvian Socialism. Nehruvian Socialism was based on democracy, science and technology, industrialization, agrarian reforms and most importantly Jawaharlal Nehru articulated India as pluralism vindicated by history, seeing the country as an "ancient palimpsest" on which successive rulers and subjects had inscribed their visions without erasing what had been asserted previously. A generation of secular nationalists echoed him, making "unity in diversity" the most hallowed of independent India's self-defining slogans. The Nehruvian ideals which tilted towards science and technology is obvious in the kind of titles that the NCERT and the NBT published in their nascent age. Some of the titles are, *Marine, The Romance of Banking, Bird Migration, The Fight Against Disease* and so on. Books like these continued to be published till the early 1970's, books that heavily leaned towards science and the necessity of modernization to form a country that was economically strong and could dictate its own terms to the rest of the world. But, as the exuberance of the Nehruvian age began to wane, there was a distinct shift in the kind of books that were being produced for children.

Rarely, however has a connection been made between the extraordinary rise of this genre in the 1970's, and the other great event of the decade, the now widely-discussed break-up of the post-independence consensus of the 1950's and 1960's. Historians and political commentators seem largely agreed that the late 1960's and early 1970's mark a major turning point in national

life. The exuberance and hope that characterized the Nehruvian era rapidly gave way to disillusionment among various sections of the society. The government had not been able to live upto its promises of social or economic justice. The centralized mechanism of planning and the developmental initiatives of the State failed to take into account the crucial particularities in the will of the people or the localized, immediate context of their lives. The mixed economy model proved inadequate to set the country on the path of redistribution of wealth. By the late 1960's, economic growth slackened and prices soared. Widespread dissatisfaction led to an explosion of initiatives, both urban and rural in which marginalized section of the society. This genre flourished at this historical conjuncture when many of the resolutions that formed the basis for governance in the post Independence years had come into questioning in the post Independence years had come in for questioning both from the right and the left.

Indian children's fiction in English post the Nehruvian era, started widening and engaging with many customs and traditions old and new, and in the process gave rise to books for children that were ideologically loaded and required a thorough reading, so that the influence of such literature could be actively gauged and innocent minds put on the track towards wholesome development.

To conclude, this chapter tries to go back to the roots of Indian history and culture and interrogate the culture and literature and see the way it has been adapted for children, in both regional languages and in English. Most of the books in the genre, Indian Children's Fiction in English, allude to the beginnings of India as from the time of the Indus Valley civilization. This chapter also tries to succinctly put forward the various influences, both foreign and Indian, to both Indian history and therefore to this genre as well. The 'Indianization' of foreign characters, for eg: the Yavanas (part Greek and part Indian), and of Vasu who was Persian, as portrayed in

The Forbidden Temple: Stories from the Past contributes to the rich mosaic of the Indian nation. The coming of the British and their literature and religion leaves an indelible mark on the children's fiction in India. British missionary writing and British literature like *Aesop's Fables* leave their imprint on proponents of the Bengal Renaissance and the literature they wrote for children in Bengali, for eg: *Aesoper Nitigatha* by Bishnucharan Bhattacharya, which was printed in the year 1912. Western education and Western knowledge also led to the stirrings of nationalism, and also reflected in numerous books and journals for children. By the time India gained Independence, literature for children, especially in regional languages had made their mark. Nehru, then set up the NBT, NCERT and CBT to publish books for children in English too, so that he could help and modernize the Indian child and open Indian thought to the Western ideals of modernization.

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Chapter Two

Through the Child's Eye: Epics, Legends and Historical Fiction

> Narrative without an ideology is unthinkable: ideology is formulated in and by language, meanings within language are socially determined, and narratives are constructed out of language (Stephens, 1992: 8)

> The new India must be served by earnest, efficient workers who have an ardent faith in the cause they serve and are bent on achievement, and who work for the joy and glory of it. . . .Freedom for a nation and a people may be, and is, I believe, always good in the long run; but in the final analysis, freedom itself is a means to an end, that end being the raising of those people to higher levels and the general advancement of humanity. (Nehru, 2003: 31–32)

As outlined in the previous chapter, Nehru set up the NBT and the CBT with a specific purpose in mind. It was to further "new India" into a 'modern' scientific era, by making English and English books available to all children. This is also seen, as mentioned, in the various education reports that followed after India's Independence. The use of story as an agent of socialization/ education is a conscious and deliberate process. In practice, it ranges from the didactic extremes of "bibliotherapy", books which aimed to help children confront and deal with specific problems in their lives, to books with no obvious intent to be exemplary. Every book has an implicit/ explicit worldview, or ideology, usually in the form of assumed social structures and habits of thought. The aim of this chapter is to elucidate and explain the effects of the "nationalist-ideology" of Nehru on the literature that was made available to children and enquire into the kind of nation that was constructed for children. This chapter will look at the construction of the nation in the various collections of epics, myths, legends and historical tales and figures, namely Ruskin Bond's *Tales and Legends from India,* Sudhin Ghose's *Folk tales and Stories from India*,

Romila Thapar's *Indian Tales*, Sashi Deshpande's *The Narayanpur Incident* and Sarojini Sinha's *A Pinch of Salt Rocks the Empire*. It would be useful here to clearly state the reasons behind the choice of these texts. These books were all written and published by well-established writers and therefore were the choice for 'adults' who bought these books for children. Also, these books were all published before the age of liberalization which almost signalled the end of the Nehruvian vision.

Despite its foundations in the pre-Independence period, it was not until after Indian independence that children's literature became recognizable as an established, widespread enterprise—a thriving area of publishing with its own conventions and characteristics (Menon, 1999: 25). In the long, slow process by which a body of children's literature became firmly established in India, its proponents recognized that it had a role to play as part of a nationalist project. For instance, in a discussion in the article titled "The English Language Novel", a scholar of Indian children's literature Meena Khorana makes explicit a widely held belief, on Indian children's literature, that "Indian youth reflects the promise of a New India after 200 years of foreign domination" and represents "a symbol for the moment of change for India" (Khorana, 1988: 8). This idea was paired powerfully with a strong belief in the power of children's literature as an effective vehicle for ideology. That power is consistently mentioned in discussions about Indian children's literature, which is seen by many to have "a special significance . . . as it very specifically reflects the totality of the mentality and values held by the society" (Bhatnagar, 1992: 19). In this context, the early insistence upon developing a body of contemporary, realistic Indian children's literature was clearly motivated by postcolonial leanings:

> [T]here was not enough indigenous literature for children in India apart from the epics and folklore and myths and legends. They were brought up on Western writing. . . . As a result these children were more conversant with Western life styles than with the way of life of children in other parts of their own country. (Shankar, 1999: 260)

It is important to note that implicit within the urgent goal to employ children's literature as a vehicle through which to disseminate Indian culture and socio-political goals was the assumption that it should reach as many children as possible. Several critics, like Navin Menon and Ira Saxena, have noted of Indian children's fiction that some of it is specifically designed to foster national pride. Therefore, readers must know that while children's literature is enjoyable as art, it is also immensely powerful as ideology—what Althusser called an ideological state apparatus.

It would be useful here to understand the meaning of 'ideology' and 'hegemony' with respect to the concept of 'nation-building'. The idea of 'ideology' finds its roots in Marxism, when Marx spoke about the historic and social reasons for the appearance of particular ideas and forms of cultural practice, such as art and literature. According to Marx and Engels, "The ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas . . . the class which has the means of material production at its disposal has control at the same time over the means of mental production" (Marx, 1977: 176). Marx and Engels claim that the ruling ideas "are nothing more than the ideal expression of the dominant material relationships, the dominant material relationships grasped as ideas" (Marx, 1977: 176). In other words, the ideas of bourgeois thinkers are simply reflections of bourgeois social life. Over the following decade, Marx's thoughts on ideology built towards the arguments that not only are modes of thought determined by economic relations, but various institutions have developed to disseminate these ideas and to maintain an unequal class society. Marx's argument turns on the existence of a level of primary

economic activity, what he calls the ‘base’ or ‘structure’, which determines all legal, educational, artistic and political activities and these he named ‘superstructure’. To truly change society, the base would have to be fundamentally changed and this for Marx, writing in the context of industrial society, entailed workers seizing control of the ‘means of production’. The failure of a number of workers revolt, led Gramsci to invert the base–superstructure relationship by arguing that civil society, rather than the economy, is the motor of history, for this is where the meanings and values that can sustain or transform society are created. Though the world of labour and production cannot be abstracted from culture or creativity in quite so total a way, production is organized ‘culturally’ and the design, purchase and use of commodities are themselves perceived as ‘cultural’ activities. Gramsci explicitly deals with base and superstructure as levels that interact as a circuit, rather than as linear determinants of each other. He develops the notion of the historical bloc to explain that base and superstructure have a ‘dialectical’ or ‘reflexive’ relationship. Without falling into the mistake of thinking that cultural practices are entirely autonomous of such structures, we can suggest that they have what the later Marxist thinker Louis Althusser (1918–90) would call ‘relative autonomy’ from the base. One relatively autonomous cultural area that had a particular resonance for Gramsci was the question of nation, which had become central to various political and aesthetic movements in his lifetime.

Whereas much Marxist thought is internationalist, Gramsci posed questions of culture and politics in national and regional terms, particularly in terms of Southern Italy’ exploitation by the North, particularly by the spread of Northern Italy’s industry and culture. In our own time, the issue of globalization poses a very similar problem: a globalization that ignores national, regional and local difference is not one that will engage the hearts and minds of subaltern and subordinate people. For Gramsci, this failure of communication between various groups had

taken place not only in the Italian language but also in Italy's characteristic forms of literary and popular culture. He argues (and we might want to critically interrogate this assertion), that other European countries developed a more truly 'national-popular' literature. Shakespeare provides an example of national-popular cultural production, as do Tolstoy and Dostoevsky. For Gramsci, these writers and their audience or readership held the same conception of the world. This was not the case in Italy, where writers had no 'national-educative' function and did 'not set themselves the problem of elaborating popular feelings after having relived them and made them their own' (Gramsci 1985: 206–7). According to Gramsci, folk-lore could prove to be the basis on which this 'national-popular' could be built.

Gramsci's conception of folklore corresponds in many respects to the more expansive category of popular culture. He notes that while most intellectuals view folklore as 'picturesque' and old-fashioned, his own conception treats it as a living 'conception of the world and life' which stands in implicit opposition to 'official' conceptions of the world (ibid.: 189). Because subjugated people, and particularly semi-literate or illiterate people, lack the centralizing institutions (such as printing) which could standardize their conceptions of the world, folklore is unelaborated, deeply traditional, unsystematic and many-sided. Yet it is not dead or limited, for new scientific and social understandings will be incorporated into it, in however haphazard a fashion, and it is 'tenacious', providing people with a rich cultural and emotional orientation towards the world which is extremely difficult to change. Gramsci's purpose is not to simply endorse folklore, for he acknowledges that much of the culture of subordinate people is deemed as conservative and fatalistic. Instead he proposes that such 'fossilized' conceptions be disaggregated from those 'which are in the process of developing and which are in contradiction to or simply different from the morality of the governing strata' (ibid: 190). Only by doing this

could peasants and intellectuals be organized into part of the coalition in which communication could take place. In India, this 'organization' took place through the medium of print, and the circulation of the ideas created in Andersonian term "imagined communities". Such cultural projects, according to Gramsci, could not be some avant-garde movement imposed upon people, instead it had to be rooted in the "humus of popular culture as it is, with its tastes and tendencies and with its moral and intellectual world, even if it is backward and conventional" (ibid: 102). Therefore, Indian children's literature in English, did not make a fresh start, nor did it start with alien ideas and concepts, it was linked to the images and ideas of the folk that most of the society is aware of. Children's books that were published from the 1950 borrowed heavily from folk-lore, particularly the *Ramayana, Mahabharata, Jataka, Panchatantra* and the *Katha Sarit Sagara.*

Linked closely to the idea of the 'national-popular' is the idea of hegemony by Gramsci, who was influenced by Leninism as well as by Jacobinism. The starting-point for Gramsci's concept of hegemony is that a class and its representatives exercise power over subordinate classes by means of a combination of coercion and persuasion. In his notes on Machiavelli's Prince, Gramsci evokes the mythical Creek centaur, half animal and half human, as a symbol of the 'dual perspective' in political action—the levels of force and consent, authority and hegemony, violence and civilization. Hegemony is a relation, not of domination by means of force, but of consent by means of political and ideological leadership. For Gramsci, a bourgeois hegemony is secured not by obliteration of working-class culture but through its rearticulation in bourgeois culture and ideology

Gramsci's work, while on the one hand a political tool for the construction of a revolutionary popular coalition, is also a tool of historical and cultural analysis, enabling us to

evaluate those strategies by which different groups attempted to form hegemonic blocs in the past. Hegemony has a national-popular dimension as well as a class dimension. It requires the unification of a variety of different social forces into a broad alliance expressing a national-popular collective will towards socialism. In the Indian context for Nehru, socialism was not just an economic doctrine, nor just a form of social organization, but a 'new civilization' based on a radically transformed 'humanity'. It was classless, casteless and democratic, provided the material and moral conditions necessary for the fullest development of the human potential, and encouraged co-operative and non-acquisitive impulses.

It would be useful here to mention that this ‘new civilization’ that Nehru foresees was based on modern technology. In the 1950’s, India as a new nation-state required a medium that would put it on the path of development and growth in all spheres. In Andersonian terms, print capitalism was the essential not just for the birth of nationalism but also to sustain it after the nation-state was formed. The establishment of the NBT and the CBT was a conscious move towards this kind of a ‘print capitalism’ by Nehru. Literature can contribute to this ideological goal when narratives that celebrate the nation encourage child readers to feel national pride, thus priming them to be receptive to national aspirations. Several critics have noted of Indian children’s fiction, like *The Toy Horse*, *Panchatantra*, numerous editions on Gandhi and Nehru, *Bhagat Singh, Chitra Ramayana* , are few titles which are specifically designed to foster national pride. On this basis, I argue that the majority of English-language children’s novels published in India over the past decades can clearly be seen as part of a nation-building project. These texts not only demonstrate the cultural worth of Indian art, architecture, food, and other cultural markers in historical and contemporary contexts, but also, and perhaps more persuasively, they feature admirable Indian child characters with whom the intended Indian child readers can

identify and who act heroically to fulfil national aspirations. In *Trends in Juvenile Literature in India* (1976), Ajit Kumar Das called for children's literature to act as a nation-building tool:

> [T]he tender children of today build up the mighty future of a nation. So, juvenile literature plays a great role in giving a proper shape to the mind of children. . . . [A] new social consciousness has peeped in, so we are not far from the time when we should think of social development by means of children's literature. (Das, 1976: 33)

Das recommended that this literature be realistic rather than fantastic and was confident that it would result in a "bright future of a free and democratic India" peopled with "worthy citizens" who can "build up a happy future for the nation" (Das, 1976: 36). Though this was the 'ideal' vision for the role of children's literature as a nation-building tool, one cannot negate the various socio-political factors that also impacted on books publishing during the following two decades.

In post Independence India, the political order that came to power after Independence did not attempt to radically transform the institutional structures of bureaucratic authority established during the colonial rule. The new government opted for the passive revolution of capital as it remained dependent on existing pre-capitalist form of social power to mobilize electoral support for it through landed proprietorship or caste loyalty or religious authority. It simply sought to contain the powers of pre-capitalist dominant classes through contingent strategies of neutralization, concession or selective attack, all these being to keep them in the position of subsidiary allies in the reformed state structure. Nehru's supporters pushed for a state-directed reformist strategy, unlike Sardar Patel's liberal form of capitalist programme. Therefore, a number of strategies for development were based on the assumption that there was a scientific approach to modernization, and that planners and experts could set up schemes for the problems that people faced (Kaviraj, 1997: 62). Nehru's socialism and his stress on science and on

modernization are evident in the Second Year Plan which emphasized the development of heavy industry. Importance on science and on industry is evident in most of the titles published during this period of Indian children's literature on English.

By the late 1960's, the contradictions inherent in the post- Independence resolutions and the Nehruvian State had started becoming apparent. Economic growth slackened and prices spiraled; food riots took place across the country; 1974 railway strike which was suppressed with violence; peasants' movement across India; widespread anti-government agitations led by students inspired by Jayprakash Narayan's call for 'total revolution' and the participation of women in these movements demanding the inclusion of women's issues on their agenda led to the government responding with all the might of its repressive mechanism to suppress these movements and finally declared Emergency in 1975. The crisis of the 1970's was also evident in the 'cultural' domain. Consider, for example, the move of the Congress secularism. The general tendency is to look at secularism and communalism as two diametrically opposite trends. Yet increasingly it is being argued that in many ways the state-sponsored ideology of secularism provided the Hindu right with a well-made foundation. For example, the Hindu right does not pit itself against the ideal of a secular state but against those who term them as 'pseudo-secularists':

> …in its most sophisticated forms, the campaign of the Hindu right often seeks to mobilize on its behalf the will of an interventionist modernizing state, in order to erase the presence of religious or ethnic particularisms from the domains of law or public life, and to supply, in the name of 'national' culture, a homogenized content to the notion of citizenship….From this position, the Hindu right can not only deflect accusation of being anti-secular, but can even use the arguments for interventionist secularization to promote intolerance and violence against minorities. (Chatterjee, 1998: 230)

On the other hand, according to Ashis Nandy, both statist secularism and Hindu nationalism have regarded religion as an ideology rather than as faith. For Nandy, religion-as-faith refers to a way of life that is pluralistic and tolerant while religion-as-ideology regards followers of faith as cannon fodder for a movement that is political and non-religious. Despite their many differences, both Nandy and Chatterjee have argued that the politics of secularism and Hindu nationalism are part of the rationality of the modern state. The genre of Indian children's fiction in English is not just a nationalist project but also a cultural project which highlight ideals if individual grit and masculine strength which is contiguous with the conservative ideological formation that come to fore in the 1970's and is more and more aggressively articulated in the 1980's and in the age of liberalization.

It would be useful to mention here that most of the early literature in the genre of Indian children's fiction in English was mainly restricted to collections of short stories which were taken from the repertoire of the rich folk culture of India, particularly from the epics, legends, fabular tales of the *Jatakas* and from the lives of heroes of yore. The form of the collection of short stories gave ample scope to the writer to choose at his/her 'will' which is articulated by numerous factors and reasons. As Romila Thapar, says in her Preface to *Indian Tales,* that her purpose is to "retell some of the stories with which I grew up, irrespective of the source or category" (Thapar, 1991: 9). Similarly, Ruskin Bond, articulates his need to write a collection of short stories. In the Preface to the collection, Bond talks about the locus, which has inspired most of his work. He says:

> I am fortunate to be living and working in the mountains, in full view of the majestic snow-peaks of the furthest Himalayan ranges- those same peaks where the gods and

> goddesses of Hindu mythology have their abode. (Bond, 1982: 10)

The "foothills of the Himalayas" is the locus from which Ruskin Bond has told his stories. Bond's love for India is unmistakable and inspiration for many of his work. In the Prelude of his memoir titled *Scenes from a Writer's Life*, he confirms his attachment to the land: "And as I grew out of my teens I began to love this country… (for India is an atmosphere as much as it is land)- with the result that, no sooner had I set foot in the West, that I wanted to return to India and to all that I had known and loved" (xxv). Many writers have cited various reasons for choosing to tell India tales, but the most common reason for all was similar to the one that Ruskin Bond mentions, to return to children the enjoyment of these stories chosen from the ocean of ancient tales of India. For instance, Suchismita Banerjee in her Preface to *The Throne of Vikramaditya and Other Stories* says,

> India has a rich treasure of myths, legends and tales for children. These tales are of ancient origin, yet they continue to fascinate the young and old even today, because their themes are universal and timeless. (Banerjee, 2002: vii)

One aspect we must note in all these excerpts is that all these writers at some point or the other mentions that these books are meant for children and that they are meant to re-capture some of India's old magic. It was only Sudhin N. Ghose, in *Folk Tales and Fairy Stories from India* who recognized the vastness of this field and says that the "repertory of Indian folk tales and fairy stories is so vast and varied that it is impossible to make a truly representative selection within the compass of a single volume" (Ghose, 1983: np). All the writers have voiced their need to return to the oral and written collection of folk tales as well as historical characters and incidents, mostly to nationalistic struggle to represent India for children. As Sashi Deshpande says in her Introduction to *The Narayanpur Incident*,

> Let me assure you that most of the incidents that you will readof in this book did infact happen. And while Narayanpur, as also Mohan, Babu, Manju, Vasant, Shanti and all the others are my own creations, the incident with which this book ends did take place in a small village. (Deshpande, 1981: viii)

The above statement lends an authenticity to the text and therefore re-tells history in a way that would be most acceptable to children. It would be absolutely essential here to justify, the choice of historical texts alongside stories from folklore. History, as defined in the Webster International Dictionary, is "a narrative of events connected with a real or imaginary object, person, or career" (Gove, 1993: 1073). Early Indian historical fiction in English presents history as an unabashed narrative of heroism, courage and sacrifice, be it in the form of *Rani Lakshmibai*, or in the form of Mahatma Gandhi. It is counterpoint to the school textbooks which unlike fiction is drab and uninteresting. They do not leave any imprint on the child's mind, and this defeats the very purpose of history- to charge the events of past with ethical and moral significance. Education, such as this which was outside the class room, must bring about a desired change in behaviour and these books were a crucial part in doing so. The historical collections for children trace their continuity with nationalist historiography, to the historical novels and romances in the nineteenth century and early twentieth century. The historical novel or the romance both demonstrates the inextricability of politics from fiction in the history of nation-building. For an emergent nation, the fictional form can generate a history that can give it the much needed legitimacy, and direct it towards a future ideal. The nineteenth century nationalist historian borrowed freely from the spectacular and sensational elements in pre-novelistic narrative forms in India, making it difficult to sift history (in its modern, positivist sense) from myth and legend. These forms basically dealt with adventure, chivalry and magic, and revolves round the achievements of a hero of extraordinary valour, as Meenakshi Mukherjee

says, “the framework of history afforded the novelist a way to glorify the past…any tale of past bravery or heroism vindicated present servitude” (Mukherjee, 1985: 46). Mukherjee also points out that history-writing in India, also borrows from the Sanskrit literary tradition of *itihasa*, which connotated a literary genre straddling both chronicle and fiction (Mukherjee, 1985: 41). For example, in Bankim Chandra’s novel *Rajsimha* (1881), a glorious and masculine Rajput identity merged into a Bengali identity. The nationalist historians of Bengal welded ‘natural’ links between the ancestry of the Bengali and that of the other communities in India, thereby creating a narrative mode of fiction which was able to persuade the Bengali reader to identify with a national history. In Indian children’s fiction in English, it is almost impossible to delineate folklore from legends and legends from history, the only thing, perhaps that could to some extent draw a distinction between the three, is time. For e.g.: *Akbar and Birbal Stories,* have been entertaining children for over decades, the paradox here being that Akbar and Birbal were both historical figures of the Mughal period and Birbal’s witticisms have become legendary stories. So, labeling them as either legends or as ‘historical fiction’ eludes logic. Therefore, ‘historical fiction’, as much as legends and folklore, contribute to the nation-building project.

Folklore as a necessary tool to build upon a nation’s literature is a point of view that has emerged from the beginning of folklore studies in the eighteenth century. As Richar M. Dorson says,

> Folklore has throughout the history of its study been connected with national issues and concerns. The appearance of folkloristic as a discipline coincided, not by chance with the heightening of nationalism in the countries, since folklore tradition could help reinforce the sense of national identity, once the intellectuals and policy-makers became aware of their existence. (Dorson, 1978: 38)

The idea that the major literary values of a nation are defined by its folklore and folk customs forms an important segment of any discussion on folk culture and its influence on literature. The assumption that the roots of a national culture might be derived from its folklore draws from the belief that folklore transcends the experience of the individual to represent the 'folk'. For as Gene Bluestein puts it, the individual is "…more than a mere performer, he is a 'representative man'" whose lore "provides an insight into 'the spirit of the people'" (Bluestein, 1972: 1). Folklore is the past, the set of "cultural systems" (Anderson, 1983: 19) and the "soul, spiritual principle" (Renan, 1990: 19).

As, already mentioned in my previous chapter, Indian children's fiction in English, from its inception, abounds in various renditions of the folk traditions of India. It is closely entwined with the fate of the oral folk tale, constituting a major segment of fiction which is rich with wisdom and the values of which have been stored with communities through generations. Fiction for children in India was cultivated from traditional literature that was rooted and seeped in the oral tradition, which differed from region to region in presentation, locale and characters. This folklore consisted of fables, legends and myths from the two great epics the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata. Mahabharata* in the words of Sri Aurobindo, was "the creation and expression of not a single mind but the mind of a nation; it is a poem of itself written by a whole people" (Saxena, 1990: 117).

The purpose of this chapter is to discuss summarily the role these folk forms play or have played in the present context of Indian society. It will also examine whether these texts of folk metaphors have "overshadow(ed) all diversity" or whether, despite diversity, they are being able to provide a unified view of the Indian nation. This, in my opinion will show us the status folk

metaphors have in the actual regularities of Indian society and civilization, both synchronically and diachronically.

From its inception in 1957, a cursory glance at the kinds of books being made available for children through decades will reveal the dominance of stories from the mythic past. Just like the *Bhakti* poets tried to build and shape modern Indian society based on its ancient glorious past, so did this genre of fiction for *Indian* (emphasis mine) children. However, parts of this glorious past were deemed undurable or ill-suited for the new era, which India was being ushered into. Therefore choosing carefully from this glorious store and that which suited the new environment and its legitimization was necessary. In this effort, ancient myths and epics were rationalized as truths of the past so that they would suit the present: a phenomenon, which was not unknown. According to Linnekin, "symbols of collective identity are particularly prone to reconstitution and reconstruction" (Linnekin, 1983: 249) so that the present day signification of the freedom, nationalism and similar ideologies are legitimized. In India during the freedom struggle and after freedom was won, this choice was carefully exercised. A glance at the kind of books that were published from 1957 till about the 1970's, would give the readers some kind of idea about the kind of books that were published for children and also as to how the choice mentioned above was exercised. For example, *Arjun and Eklavya* (1969), *The Story of Gandhi* (1961), *Bapu* (1970), *The Bhagwat Gita* (1965), *Canopy of the Heavens* (1969), *Leonardo, the Inventor* (1961), *Nehru for Children* (1961) and the first book by CBT to be published in English is *The King's Choice* (1961).

The texts which, employ Indian plots and motifs can be best described as a welcome change for Indian children who had grown up with Western stories, who are overfed on a diet of overgrown bean-stalks, pied pipers, frog princes and talking mirrors which answers the

oft-asked question about, “Who is the fairest of them all?”. These Western stories have no doubt regaled several generations of children worldwide but also have been done to death in study and have been over-used. The various collections of Indian tales offer a reorientation in thought for Indian children who have otherwise been fed on a diet of Snow-Whites and Cinderella’s. These books also gives us tales in time set in a familiar atmosphere in tune with Indian customs and values, therefore urging the child to return to one’s roots and understand life as it is lived in India. This method of storytelling brings children closer to the cultural heritage of India. Cultural heritage in broad and simple terms incorporates the complete spectrum of the essence of a civilization, of which its living intangible heritage of its myth, folk life, customs, beliefs and values form an important part. Though these cultural traditions remain the same synchronically, diachronically these traditions are improvised to suit the contemporary needs and to add values to impart to children.

A careful study of various stories published for children, either in the form as a story book or as a collection of stories, reveals that the Indian epics, *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*, were the favourite choice. The historical, political, religious and a variety of other factors, as we know, shape the growth, development and popularity of an epic. Scholars have also observed that ballads and epics grow and flourish during periods of political upheavals. It is difficult to know what pressing political, social, cultural needs or political upheavals of India forced the simple folk narrative of Rama, Krishna or Arjuna to become the basic frame for a mass of mythological, historical, religious and social data and become the most important epics of India. However, one factor is clear that both the stories of Rama and Krishna must have become *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* respectively when India’s cultural identity, nationalism, value system, social structure and the norm of kinship might have been threatened; even if temporarily;

and when India, perhaps, needed strong cultural heroes who could re-establish the traditionally conceived and accepted ideal social norm. *Bhagavad-Gita,* the most revered treatise on Indian values, morality, life style and indeed closely affiliated with *Mahabharata,* repeatedly reminds the national consciousness: "Whenever and wherever there is a decline in value system (*dharma*), and predominant rise of bad value system (*adharma*), at that time I descend myself."

It was natural, therefore, that these epics would be preferred in times of national crisis and disorder or during times of asserting one's identity. They were bound to succeed in giving rise to nationalism, reconstruct the cultural identity and lost glory of the nation. Hence, once India as a political entity was formed, it became imperative for the newly formed nation to be able to assert and display its own identity and the uniqueness of the same to the world outside. In addition, India had to break free from the numerous forms of colonization that the British had imposed, literature being one of them. India had to educate its young about the importance of the new nation and had to awaken in them the feeling of nationalism, which was primary for the development of the nation and the nation-state. However, it needs to be remembered that not all metaphors of these two epics were chosen for shaping the present and the future of India. The choice was exercised very carefully. The *Ramayana* was preferred over the *Mahabharata.* The politics of non-violence, ideal home, ideal kinship etc was more suited to a brutally tortured and almost disintegrated nation than the themes of violence, sibling rivalry, and regional conflicts of the *Mahabharata.* Above all, the metaphor of the just, pious, honest king-hero in the form of Rama was missing in the *Mahabharata.* For example, viewing structurally, it is the threatened kinship order and the disequilibrium it can cause to the family and the society, which seems to have surfaced prominently in the *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata.* Attempts for re-establishing

order and maintaining equilibrium become the main tasks of these stories and the metaphors they carried.

Another problem of kinship, which seems very peculiar to *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata,* is one of siblings. A common element in folklore, which we may recall, is that in all fairy tales the youngest brother is always victorious in performing tasks, which his elder brother or brothers fail to perform. Since, fairy tales is a kind of fantasy against oppression, in which normal roles are reversed, the younger brother, particularly in the Indian context, represents his low status in the real sibling hierarchy and social context. The *Mahabharata,* for example, is the epitome of sibling rivalry. *Ramayana* on the other hand, reorders sibling relations into positive forces as a supportive device for establishing equilibrium in the overall kinship norm. The ordinal position of brothers is often used as a vehicle for constructing cultural models. Siblingship usually conveys moral responsibility and shared rights and understandings. Here, it is the type of human bond that can import meanings when used as a rationale for some wider set of social relationships that is crucial. As a metaphor for encompassing hierarchies or for authority and control within a local setting, a reference to brotherhood seems more than the recognition of kin bonds per se. Lastly the norms that both these epics put forth from the base for the kind of values and laws that people abide by. These folk metaphors have been renewed and reused with the help of popular culture, particularly the print and the television industry. It is ultimately these forms of mass media, which are crucial for the formation of identity, be it that of a person or that of a nation.

In all these mythological stories, magic as a vital ingredient has become acceptable to children. Children also attribute human thoughts and feelings to most things within this magical

universe, be it animate or inanimate beings. Nicholas Tucker accounts for the enduring appeal of these fables:

> This whole idea of a pre-lapsian paradise, where man and beast converse and live together in peace, is one that can be found in many myths and religions as well as in the Bible, and is obviously a vision that has a strong appeal. (Tucker, 1982: 75)

The earliest and most popular stories of this kind in India are *Panchatantra* by Pt. Vishnu Sharma and the Buddhist *Jataka* tales. The *Panchatantra,* like the *Aesop's Fables,* has held captive generations of readers and has provided food for thought for the young and old alike. *Panchatantra* literally means 'five books', conceived of by Vishnu Sharma, to educate the three sons of King Amarshakti. The fabular elements of the stories are not only present in the stories which are drawn from the *Jataka* or the *Panchatantra*, like 'The Blue Jackal', 'The Mice that set the Elephants Free' or 'The Mongoose whose Loyalty was Doubted', but in many other stories which draw from folklore. Stories like 'Lionel's Foster-Mother was a Lioness', 'The Wonderful Horse', 'The Happy Herdsman', display talking animals, who are attributed with human qualities of not just speech but also of wit, intelligence and stupidity. The magic of these tales is further heightened when they share a conversational relationship with man, portraying them as intelligent beings, governed by the human codes of conduct.

Each tale in these collections of stories has a lesson to convey, a certain precept to instruct in itself, so that each child can emulate them and become ideal citizens of India, teaching us the do's and don'ts of life. They inculcate values and principles and show the difference between right and wrong. The great Indian epics like the *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* is based on the very age old motto of "Good overcoming evil" and expounding the fact that *dharma* always wins over *adharma.* Ravan in *Ramayana* is slain by Rama at the end of the war.

Similarly, all the Pandavas are welcomed in Heaven by the gods, but even there, except Yudhishthtira (who is allowed into Heaven in his mortal form), all the other brothers and Draupadi have to atone for their sins before they are allowed entry into Heaven. In the last journey that the Pandavas and Draupadi undertake, one by one each of them fall prey to Death. Perplexed as to what *adharma* they had committed, they asked Yudhishthira the reason for their fate. He said,

> He (Bheema) composed himself and asked Yudhishthira why Draupadi who was faultless should fall down dead. Yudhishthira said: "Bheema though we were all her husband she was more fond of Arjuna. That is the only sin she committed."…Sahadeva was the next to fall. It was because he was proud of his wisdom that he too had to fall, Yudhishthira said. Nakula died next. Yudhishthira told Bheema that Nakula was vain about his beauty. Arjuna's turn came next. Bheema was told that he had to fall because he had sworn that…he had insulted all other heroes by his remark. Bheema was the last to fall. On being asked why, Yudhishthira said: "My beloved Bheema …the only fault I could find in you was this: you would boast about your strength. You were a great eater too."
> (Subramaniam, 1995: 843)

This shows that even various forms of Gods are not spared for their shortcomings. They are punished and have to pay for their misgivings. The qualities of humility, simplicity and virtue are extolled in the epics. This same strain of good/ bad runs through simple tales also. They simply tell what has been told and taught repeatedly but which, nonetheless, make a fresh impact with every fresh reading for different readers. In Ruskin Bond's *Tales and Legends from India,* tales like "The Crab and the King" drive home the point that vices like greed, deceit and lust do not go unpunished. King Vishwamitra and his followers are literally "shown the door" by the all-giving cow Surabhi in reaction to the King's high and mighty behaviour in "The Cow of Plenty".

The tale also shows the triumph of wisdom over physical force or mind over the body. As the sage Vasistha puts,

> A warrior's strength lies in the force at his command. A hermits' strength lies in the spirit of forgiveness he shows. (Bond, 1982: 25)

In 'The Wicked Guru', the Guru is killed by a bear as a just punishment for the evil machinations employed by him to marry the princess. In the story, the Guru has evil designs on his disciple, the Princess. The Guru tricks the king into believing that it is not the right time for the Princess to wed and that she should be set afloat on a box in the ocean. The Guru plans to take her away and wed her. But a neighbouring prince thwarts his plans by taking away the Princess instead. Similarly, 'The Crane and the Crab', a well-known beast fable in the *Jataka,* draws upon the following moral:

> The villain though exceedingly clever,
> Shall prosper not by his villainy.
> He may win, indeed, sharp witted in deceit,
> But only as the crane from the crab. (Bond, 1982:150)

While King Vishwamitra's arrogance is humbled, the crab is taught a lesson by the Crane for deception and for devouring all the fishes in the pond, by tricking him. The Guru is likewise, punished for flouting the Guru-Shishya relationship revered and looked up to in the Indian tradition. Even the sages and the gods are not spared for their arrogance. In *The Monkey God and Other Hindu Tales*, Debjani Chatterjee re-tells a story from the Vedas where Narad, the son of Lord Brahma, was punished by Lord Vishnu for his arrogance and vanity. Chatterjee writes,

> "Narad has always been rather proud, but these days he seems to have quite a swollen head," said Vishnu. "He is boasting a lot and this worries me."…Although Narad was

> dear to them, both Vishnu and Lakshmi agreed that he needed to be taught a lesson. (Chatterjee, 1993: 5)

Similarly, in Debjani Chatterjee's *The Monkey God and other Hindu Tales*, the story 'The Drink of the Gods', a Brahmin Utanga is punished for being proud about his birth. Though he was liked by Krishna, Utanga fails miserably in the test set to him by his Lord. After revealing his divine form of Lord Vishnu to Utanga, Krishna wanted to bless him with a boon. Utanga at first refused but on Krishna's insistence "…he asked him, as a boon, to always receive water, wherever he was if he needed it" (Chatterjee, 1993: 75). One day when Utanga was meditating in the desert, he felt very thirsty. Chanting Krishna's name, he closed his eyes and wished for water. When he opened his eyes, he saw a hunter walking towards him with a "dirty foul smelling bag" and offered him some water. Utanga was aghast at accepting water from one so disgusting. He refused repeatedly till the hunter went away. He implored to Krishna for not fulfilling His promise. Suddenly Krishna replied that he did offer help but he did not accept it. He said,

> "The hunter's way of life is not yours, but it is not for you to judge him wicked or unworthy!" Then the voice became… sorrowful. "What a heavenly gift you turned away Utanga! …I asked Indra himself to go and offer you *soma,* the ambrosia of the gods to drink…Indra ddid not want to give you a man, *soma* to drink…But because I asked him, he agreed to do so on the condition that your faith and tolerance be tested. Alas! they were found wanting! (Chatterjee, 1993: 77)

Though the hermit wept bitter tears, he realized that he was far from perfect. But Krishna assured him that no matter what he would remain to be Utanga's friend and guide. Everything that is important and sacred to Indian thinking is upheld and espoused in these tales. This espousal of Indian values and customs helps to define the cultural ethos of India and what India stands for.

If there are vices that are punished then there are also virtues too which do not go unrewarded. The epics *Ramayana* as well as the *Mahabharata* abound in instances where good deeds have been extolled by the gods themselves. The value that a man is not born great but becomes so only by his deeds and action is repeatedly stressed. Vibhishana in the *Ramayana,* was born a demon and was the brother of the formidable warrior Ravana, whom Rama defeats and kills in the end. But, due to Vibhishana's gentle nature and his righteousness, he is blessed by Rama himself and is instructed to follow the path of *dharma.* The story of Kalidas, one of the nine jewels in King Vikramaditya's court, is a very poignant story told in Chatterjee's *The Monkey God and other Hindu Tales,* which extol the virtue of devotion and faith. Kalidas, at the beginning of the story is a fool but a devout follower of goddess Kali. Kamala, one of the wisest women in the kingdom and Kalidas was tricked into marrying each other. Kamala soon realized her folly that she had married a fool and she was extremely hurt and angry. Kalidas wanted to end his miserable life and decided to commit suicide. In the process, Saraswati appears before him, in the form of a little girl, and decides to remove the "darkness of ignorance forever!" (Chatterjee, 1993: 49). In Ruskin Bond's *Tales and Legends from India,* stories like 'The Hare and the Moon' and 'Seven Brides for Seven Princes' shows that virtuosity has its own rewards. The hare is rendered immortal for its nobility and unselfishness, thereby reiterating what is known, told and practiced: "Give to others and God will give to you" (Bond, 1982: 65). In 'Seven Brides for Seven Princes' the Prince is rewarded by winning a fairy Princess in marriage, for being kind to a monkey. When the king announces that each of the Princes will marry the girl upon whose house the arrow falls, it seems to everyone that this plan will fetch a bride for each prince. No one thinks that the arrow of the youngest Prince would find a monkey rather than a princess. When given another chance, the Prince refuses and decides to keep the monkey as a pet

and remain unmarried for life. The Prince is eventually rewarded when the monkey turns into a fairy Princess. The Prince's strength to accept anything that comes his way and kindness towards the monkey is thus rewarded. Similarly, Princess Maya in 'How Princess Maya Got Her Deserts' in Ghose's *Folk Tales and Fairy Stories from India,* is rewarded for her kindness and presence of mind, when after being married by her father to a beggar realizes what was ailing her husband cures him of his curse, only to realize that he was a Crown Prince of Avanti. The value also abounds in the story of 'Birbal, the Detective', where he saves his friend Anwar Ali from being imprisoned by the Mughal emperor on account of a theft, he had not committed. He also manages to nab the real culprit of the crime. Similarly, in the story 'A Rose for the Princess' from the collection *The Sword of Dara Shikoh,* the faithful gardener is saved by Princess Jahanara from being banished to another garden for 'supposedly' attempting to kidnap the Princess. Princess loves the roses the old gardener brought her everyday and returns his affection by letting him stay in the rose-filled gardens for the rest of his life. In, all the other historical fiction which centers around the Freedom struggle, the viciousness of the British is always pitted against the 'goodness' of Gandhi and his followers. In *A Pinch of Salt Rocks the Empire,* the incident about Gandhi going for the Round Table Conference is mentioned. The sheer high-handedness of the King to refuse to invite Gandhi to the Buckingham Palace is brought forth when he says that he could not invite him because he was "without proper clothes on and bare knees" (Sinha, 1985: 77). At which, Sir Samuel said, "Your majesty, he, not you, will feel the cold, so why worry?" (ibid). Gandhi took all these jibes sportingly and when asked whether he felt the cold, replied "No, His Majesty had enough clothes on for both of us" (ibid). The difference between the two approaches highlights the greatness of Gandhi, vis-à-vis the harshness/ indifference of the other. Though not explicitly, this text implicitly differentiates the

thin line of difference between good and the bad. In *The Narayanpur Incident*, clothes play a secondary role, when during need a friend helps another, despite his loyalties being elsewhere, sub-Inspector Patil who came to warn Amma against the brutality of the British. He was a friend of Appa's and wanted to do as much as he could to shield Appa's family from harm. As he explains to Amma,

> 'Yes, we were in school together. Oh, he was far above me. He was a scholar and I was one of the dunces. He always helped me, though. God knows how often I would have been caned but for him.'… 'There's going to be a search in your house.' (Deshpande, 1982: 42)

Though Mohan continued to be skeptical about Sub-inspector Patil, and did not wish that his Amma give him information about the cyclostyling machine, she does and Patil gets it out of the way before the police conduct the raid. As he explains to Mohan,

> The man touched Mohan on the shoulder. 'Mohan, you're still very young. There are many things you don't understand. I am a policeman, but your father was and still is my friend. And this is my country as much as it is yours…' (Deshpande, 1982: 43)

Deshpande espouses the virtues of kindness and friendship in *The Narayanpur Incident*, and through the example of Sub-Inspector Patil re-instate the adage that a 'Friend in need is a friend indeed.'

Another very important feature constantly used in children's literature throughout the world is the use of proverbs. They either may be stated in the story or may also be stated in a very subtle manner. According to John Warren-Stewig, the proverb can be defined as, "…one or two succinct sentences about some aspect of life, represents some conventional wisdom of a culture passed down to the young" (Warren-Stewig, 1980: 162). Though proverbs are universal,

the difference lies in the way they are narrated or put across to children. Authors of children's literature make ample use of proverbs to put forth the 'moral' of the story. As already mentioned one overtly used theme for most writings for children is the theme of 'victory of good over evil'. Children, though familiar with the proverbs being used, narrating them through the means of a story making proverbs much more acceptable and identifiable. Indian children's literature authors also put forward these proverbs to his young audience in an Indian idiom, hence making them more identifiable too. 'Garib and the Forty Thieves' from Sudhin N. Ghose's *Folk Tales and Fairy Stories from India*, is a story about, 'the prettiest bride of Bijapur', Sitara and her poor husband Garib. Sitara forces Garib to try out different professions for the want of wealth and more money. Garib tries these professions out and once when he saves himself from impending death and realizes his folly he asks the king to issue an order debarring him from astrology. Sitara also realizes her folly and accepts her husband for what he is. She ceases to be lazy and tries to make her husband and home happy. Ultimately, it is said, "A good wife makes a good husband" (Ghose, 1983:143). The story 'The Woodcock that Refused to be Fooled' from the same collection makes the point that,

> When an enemy flatters, its wisdom to be
> As deaf as an adder: now don't you agree?
> (Ghose, 1983: 150)

In Ruskin Bond's *Tales and Legends from India*, tales like 'The Superior Man', 'A Battle of Wits', 'Who'll Buy My Mangoes?' and 'The Ugly Prince and The Heartless Princess' ascertain the saying that "Pride goes before a fall". In 'The Superior Man', a shopkeeper's sincere rendering of everyday chores denotes more value than an arrogant ascetic's rigorous meditation and self-discipline. It is the ascetic's pride of being the most knowledgeable man that is humbled by the shopkeeper. The beautiful princess in 'The Ugly Prince and the Heartless Princess'

realizes that “Beauty is only skin deep” when her ugly husband proves through his love, kindness and compassion that the beauty of the heart is more valuable than that of the skin. In a story in *More Akbar and Birbal Tales*, Birbal, as usual through his witticisms enlightens the Mughal emperor about another kind of beauty, which arises out of love. On being sent on another, impossible task of finding the most beautiful child in the city, Birbal returns to the court with his own son at which the Emperor laughed out loud and said,

> Suddenly Akbar gave a roar of laughter and understanding. ..“Oh, you fools, don’t you understand what Birbal was telling us? To every parent his child is the most exquisite being in creation; for beauty is in the eye of the beholder. We cannot judge beauty or have absolute standards, because each person has his own sense of what is beautiful.” (Mukundan, 1999: 28)

It was this idea of beauty that led a king to marry a fruit seller in the story, ‘Who’ll Buy My Mangoes?’ in the collection by Sudhin N. Ghose. This is a tale of a fruit-seller who becomes arrogant after she becomes the queen. Besides the lesson in modesty and humility, the tale is also about forgiveness. The badly insulted king, nevertheless, forgives his wife after her repentance, thereby exemplifying the dictum that “To err is human, to forget divine.”

In addition to stories, which show the supremacy of humility over arrogance, there are tales, in all the collections, which celebrate the triumph of love and friendship. “To be capable of steady friendship or lasting love, are two greatest proofs, not only of goodness of heart, but of strength of mind,” says William Hazlitt (Hazlitt, 1997: 1). One of the greatest friendships, perhaps, in India mythology is that of Krishna and Arjun in the *Mahabharata.* So great was their friendship that words were not required to communicate each other’s thoughts. Before, Krishna left his mortal form, he remembers only Arjun and requests him to come and take care of his

affairs. Krishna in the *Mahabharata* is always present for any of the Kaunteyas and Draupadi. It was none other than Krishna, who Draupadi calls out for help when she was being disrobed by Dusshassana. Tales of friendship and love abound in the two epics. Bond voices the opinion of Hazlitt in the tales 'Love Conquers All', 'Friends in Need', 'Shakuntala' and 'Nala and Damayanti' where the characters are bestowed "divine blessings in reward for their loyalty in 'Nala and Damayanti' and Shakuntala is re-united with her husband after a long spell of separation in 'Shakuntala'. These characters suffer long agony and hardship in pursuit of love but are eventually, granted what they desire. The story 'Friends in Need' is a lesson in friendship and is illustrative of the maxim that "Friends in need are friends indeed." This also reminds us of Hanuman in *Ramayana,* who is granted immortality by Rama for his unflinching devotion and love. Hanuman's presence in the world even today is driven home by the story, 'The Listener in the Crowd' by Debjani Chatterjee. This is a story of the strong monkey-god disguised as an old man, who saves a drowning storyteller and is invited to listen to the *Ramayana*. While Hanuman was listening to the story, he got into an argument with the storyteller about the colour of the flowers around Sita, during her captivity. The storyteller soon realized that the old man was none other than Hanuman and seeked his blessings:

> The silver-haired Hanuman smiled at the storyteller and raised a large hand in blessing. "I love Rama and Sita with all my heart. Wherever and whenever their story is told, I always come to listen." (Chatterjee, 1993: 84)

Stories about Hanuman abound in folk tales of various regions and most of them uphold his love and devotion towards Lord Rama and Sita.

Another important function of myths and folktales is to explain the origin of natural phenomenon, like thunder, fever and so on. For example, Ruskin Bond tells stories which are

created to communicate useful wisdom. For instance, 'Shiva's Anger' explains the formation of an ailment like fever, 'A Demon for Work' explains the custom of nailing a handful of hair to a tree in which evil spirits are supposed to dwell in order to drive them away, and the songs of 'The Whistling Thrush' explains the curse on the whistling Thrush of Malabar. The whistling Thrush or 'The Idle Schoolboy' is a bird found in the wooded hills of western India, whose birth is the result of Lord Krishna's curse on a boy who tries to play His flute. Krishna says, "For ever try to copy the songs of the gods, but never succeed" (Bond, 1982: 145) and the boy is transformed into a bird, which can never complete any tune. Similarly, Debjani Chatterjee in her collection reminds us about the origin of thunder. In 'The Message of Thunder', she tells the creation of thunder by the god of creation Brahma. It is believed that *asuras* man and *devas* approached Prajapati (Brahma) to ask a solution for their discontent and pray for peace of mind. Brahma utters one word 'da' and the sound of thunder echoed in the distance. All of them acquired different meaning from the syllable and found their purpose fulfilled. Hence, according to Hindu mythology, the sound of thunder is to remind one and all the virtue they should practice in order to be happy. These tales are told / re-told with a strong Indian Idiom and reflect the various myths associated with common things and in the process offer to children a new way of experiencing Nature around them.

Building interpersonal relationships is an important function of folktales. Perhaps, one of the most important evils in India is the caste system if not articulated and used with care. According to Romila Thapar, in ancient India, the caste of a particular person did not strictly determine his standing in society, but just defined the profession he belonged to. In the time that followed this became more stringent and came to be understood, as we know it now. The two most heart-rending example of the caste system is to be found in the *Mahabharata,* in the

example of Karna and Ekalavya. Karna, born of Kunti, when she was still a maiden was abandoned at birth. He was brought up by a charioteer and his wife Radha. Even on proving himself an excellent archer, he was taunted and jeered at being a 'sutaputra' (one who is of born of a charioteer). It is only after Arjun kills him that Kunti reveals that Karna was actually the eldest Pandava. The story of Ekalavya, a Nishada, is one where the son of a 'low-born', a tribal, wished to learn archery from Dronacharya, the royal teacher. On being refused, just because he was a "…Nishada and not a Kshatriya…" (Subramaniam, 1995:48), he builds a statue of Dronacharya and starts practicing the art. His mastery of archery is revealed to Drona, when he comes across the dog whose mouth was filled with arrows. On trying to find the source, Dronacharya asks Ekalavya who his teacher was. On realizing the boy's potential, Drona was filled with pride. But, just because he had promised Arjuna to make him the best archer in the world, Drona asks for his *gurudakshina*. He asks Ekalavya, for the thumb of his right hand. Ekalavya, without thinking twice cuts off his thumb. We cannot, but flinch at the highhandedness of Drona and the misuse of his stature and position. The misuse of one's birth is quite common in the folktales of India. The epic, *Ramayana*, however tries to tell us otherwise. Rama on being exiled from Ayodhya takes refuge with Guha, king of the Nishadas. In different versions of the epic, Guha is treated in many ways. In Lakshmi Lal's version of the epic, he is just given a passing reference. In the version written by Bulbul Sharma, we get a clearer picture of the Nishadas. She describes, Guha, as a friend of Ram. She also describes at length how, Guha welcomes Ram according to their customs and concurring with Valmiki's version says how Rama spends the night with the Nishadas, partaking all the simple hospitality being given to them. Keeping in mind the socio-political milieu of the changing times cutting across caste boundaries becomes crucial for the all round development of the nation. Struggles for identity

have become an inseparable part if India politics today. Hence, Bond tells stories such as 'How a Tribal Boy Became a King', 'The Happy Herdsman' and 'The Ghost and The Idiot' where men belonging to 'low' rank of the society such as tribals and herdsmen go on to become kings, becomes essential. There are a number of stories which illustrate the notion and idea that justice, law and correctness of behaviour is not dependent upon the class of a particular individual. *More Akbar Birbal Tales* are also subversive in nature, where the ruler Akbar is constantly being teased and his intelligence undermined by Birbal's wit and intelligence. This is illustrated beautifully in Akbar and Birbal tales, particularly in the story, 'Birbal the Detective', mentioned earlier. This classlessness in favour of justice is also portrayed beautifully in 'The Carpet Seller', where Birbal rescues the rich carpet seller from the poor, but untruthful, boatman. The courtiers present were fooled by the poverty of the boatman, and thought of the carpet-seller as the thief, until Birbal proves it to be the other way round. As Birbal explains,

> "I used my eyes and my brain…I met these men in the city and spoke to them. The boatman has no idea about the value of the merchandise. He is out to sell it as fast as he can and make whatever money he can out of it. The merchant knows each carpet and values of each one…We will see who knows it well, and which of them can tell us the true value of each carpet!" (Mukundan, 1999: 13)

The honesty of the carpet-seller was soon discovered and the boatman punished. Birbal's intelligence and wit is always heralded by the emperor. This same appreciation of intelligence and wit is seen in the story 'Painting the Breeze', where the Chief wife of Ashokavardhana appreciates the pottery of two young children, Parvati and her older brother Laxman. More than their painting being appreciated, the fearlessness of Parvati to speak without fear and her courage to speak up to the impertinent soldier impressed the lady. She also admired the thought behind the paintings of the pots and admired them for their beauty. Soon after the children realized that

they had become "potters to the royal family" (Gupta, 1992: 45). Cutting across discriminating class structures, these stories depict India's democratic spirit. The most pertinent example of portraying India as a classless society is evident in Sarojini Sinha's *A Pinch of Salt Rocks an Empire.* In this fiction, we read about the Salt Satyagraha which Gandhi had undertaken during the Quit India Movement. Though Gandhi, fought equally hard against untouchability in Indian society during those times, this fact is not included here, and various classes seem united against the British in their quest for independence. As Sinha recalls Gandhi's speech,

> "Hindus should give up untouchability. Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs, Parsees and Christians should all achieve unity of heart…Let students leave government schools and colleges and government servants resign their services and devote themselves to the service of the people and we shall find that *Purna Swaraj* will come knocking at our door."
> (Sinha, 1985: 59)

Similarly, in *The Narayanpur Incident* which is based in Karnataka, we barely hear or read of characters being spoken of as belonging to a particular caste/ class. Everyone seems to let go of class affiliations for the greater good of the country.

It is not a matter of surprise that authors of children's literature in India, like Ruskin Bond, Lakshmi Lal, Kamala Subrahmanyam, Debjani Chatterjee etc with a long experience of study, scholarship and writing would incorporate ancient tradition, philosophy and a nationalist fervour into their tales. The traditional or mythical stories engender and awaken in us, besides pleasure, an understanding of life, death and destiny and instil in the child a feeling of patriotism (almost synonymously used with 'nationalism') which will remain with the child till adulthood. The storyteller or the '*kathavachaka'* always held a specially revered place in society for playing a vital role. During festivals and religious functions, he narrated stories, which were moral,

religious, mythological, didactic, patriotic and also entertaining. As Nita Berry says and reminisces,

> Our early stories were, in actual fact, meant for everyone, young and old, from the learned intellectual to the simple, unlettered villager. No doubt, these often contained various levels of meaning. Each age group or class of listeners applied its individual level of comprehension to the stories and these became a texture of life. (Berry, 1990: 168)

A serious reading of these otherwise simple tales, which are woven into the fabric of our life, places us in a labyrinth of philosophical questions and metaphysical reflections, which is again, an inseparable element of Indian thinking.

The narration of these tales is not without a purpose. In the narration of the tales, writers narrated India and "Indianness". Their identification of "Indianness" however is not all-inclusive, where the layered and plural identities are subsumed under the label of one culture, one history and one identity. Keeping in mind the socio-political milieu of this period, writers instead tried to locate the multiple identities and voices present in India. These texts also provide a post-colonial reading of nation-space. The Eurocentric notion of a national identity always included European norms and practices and imposed them on non-European nations. Edward Said's *Orientalism* identifies a European cultural tradition of identifying the East as the "Other" and as inferior to the West. The Orient, he says, features "as a sort of surrogate even underground self" (Said, 1978: 3). This explains why Western folkloric characters like Cinderella, Snow-White or Red Riding Hood are better known than characters from the East. This can also be attributed to the long era of British colonization. Writers of this genre repudiate this dominance of Western folklore by choosing to tell only Indian tales. On the surface, these Indian tales inspired from various regions and communities speak for a multicultural "India"

where no sect is rendered absolute or definitive. In these tales, each community, region and caste seems to find and equal representation and thereby seems to go against the nationalist discourse of unifying diverse identities in favour of a monolithic image of the Indian nation. Partha Chatterjee's *The Nation and its Fragments* gives an insightful rendition of the beginning of Nationalism in India. It indicates that the Nationalist Movement began on a premise of "difference" with the West is and what it stood for. To form a distinctive national identity, the nationalists in the early nineteenth century created two domains- the material and the spiritual. They then associated the material with the West and the spiritual with the East. In forming a nationalist identity, however differences and identities of class, caste, religion and language were not recognized. As Chatterjee says, "…this function was to be guaranteed by its indifference to concrete differences between private selves – differences, that is, of race, language, religion, class, caste, and so forth" (Chatterjee, 1997: 10). Though, Indian nationalism attempted to be "different" from the West, failed to voice the "differences" in religions, traditions and cultures of its people.

The textual absence of religion can be largely explained by the fact that India was constitutionally structured as a secular nation-state after Independence. At that time, the powerful middle class that "dominated the independence movement" supported a secular liberal democracy because it "seemed then to be both a necessary and an adequate guarantee of sanity in a country that had experienced vivisection along communal lines" (Gore, 1992: 170). Many Indians believed that no other political philosophy could accommodate the religious, ethnic, and linguistic diversity of India (Gore, 1992: 55). In the Indian context, secularism means not only that state government is free of religious dominance but also, and equally important, that every citizen is free to practice his or her own religion and is constitutionally obligated to accept the

religious practice of others as equally valid and valuable. Indian secularism has not provided the panacea it seemed to offer, and many critics now question its role in India. In practice, Indian secularism "meant only that the Indian State was not theocratic and, further, that it guaranteed an individual's and a community's freedom to follow its own religion"; in addition, "[e]ven today, in India, secularism does not mean freeing the life of an individual from religious dogma or from dominance and control by a priesthood" (Gore, 1992: 178). The result is "a state without a religion but not a political system which is insulated from religion" and a daily social life that is far from secular (Gore, 1992: 178). Further, many of the egalitarian rights guaranteed in the secular Indian constitution have not been realized for all citizens, as traditional practices that preclude them continue despite the legislation of a secular government. Thus, although India is politically shaped by a secular constitution, it remains in daily practice a deeply religious society, as the vast majority of Indians actively practice one of the main religions, notably Hinduism, Islam, Sikhism, Christianity, Buddhism, and Jainism. One disturbing inequality perhaps enabled by Indian secularism, according to some critics, is Hinducentrism. Even more importantly, powerful Hindu political parties wield enormous influence nationally. In fact, political theorist Aditya Nigam has argued that "secular-nationalist discourse . . . was undergirded by a Hindu ethos and helped to preserve the power of the upper-caste Hindu elite" (Nigam, 2006: 310). Both Nigam and Gore also identify the hegemonic power of Hindu political parties and recognize that some Hindu fundamentalist politicians currently seek "to make religious identity— Hindutva— the core of our national identity" (Gore, 1992: 178). This issue has subtle implications in the contemporary English-language children's novels from India, as many authors and characters are Hindu (a fact made clear even when characters do not actively practice the religion in daily life). As Romila Thapar, the historian clearly outlines in the Introduction to her *Indian Tales*,

> Some are taken from mythology and are narrated as I remember them from many years ago. Another story comes from the *Mahabharata,* which has a vast number of stories slotted into the main narrative….Such stories are often about heroes and heroines, their adventures, misfortunes and triumphs….(Thapar, 1991: 9)

Though Romila Thapar seems to borrow stories from her childhood and re-write them, we cannot ignore the presence of Hinduism. It is in no way presented as superior to other religions, and the texts do not generally seem to promote "Hindutva" as a core characteristic of national identity, but its textual dominance is worth noting. Deepa Sreenivas in her book *Sculpting a Middle Class: History, Masculinity and the Amar Chitra Katha in India,* clearly outlines the Hindu centric concerns and ideology in the famous *Amar Chitra Katha,* which dominated Indian children's fiction in English for over two decades. The discussion of Indian secularism is complex and multi-faceted, and a multitude of potential problems with this philosophy, in particular its alleged role in perpetuating communalism. My focus is on one shortcoming of secularism which is particularly relevant to the children's novels in this sample, that the attempt to disinvest Indians from religious identity can result in a homogenized national identity, as it does in many of these children's novels. Because religious, linguistic, and caste loyalties are perceived as conflicting not only with one another but also with national loyalty, the Nehruvian perspective encouraged only national loyalty (Gore, 1992: 121). It is thus possible to view the hegemonic perpetuation of this doctrine of national unity in diversity as "a homogenizing project" (Nigam, 2006: 310). In such a system, encouraging Indians to identify first and foremost as *Indian*, rather than as members of specific religious, regional, linguistic, or caste subgroups becomes the key to building a national identity. In essence, this "homogenizing project" values unity over diversity. As the Marxist critic, Adorno argues that the culture industry commodified and standardized *all* art. In turn this suffocated individuality and destroyed critical thinking. *The*

Culture Industry is an unrivalled indictment of the banality of mass culture. Adorno (1903-69) argued that capitalism fed people with the products of a 'culture industry' - the opposite of 'true' art - to keep them passively satisfied and politically apathetic. Adorno saw that capitalism had not become more precarious or close to collapse, as Marx had predicted. Instead, it had seemingly become more entrenched. Where Marx had focussed on economics, Adorno placed emphasis on the role of *culture* in securing the status quo. Popular culture was identified as the reason for people's passive satisfaction and lack of interest in overthrowing the capitalist system. Imagination, according to Adorno, was

> …replaced by a mechanically relentless control mechanism which determines whether the latest image to be distributed really represents an exact, accurate and reliable reflection of the relevant item of reality. The only remnant of aesthetic semblance here is the empty abstract semblance of a difference between culture as such and practice as such, the division of labour as it were between different departments of production (Adorno, 1991: 64).

The culture industry in its postmodernist phase has achieved what the avant-garde always wanted: the sublation of the difference between art and life. And this must signal a kind of ‘end of art’. Therefore, through mass production, everything becomes homogenized and whatever diversity remains is constituted of small trivialities. Everything becomes compressed through a process of the imposition of schemas under the premise that what's best is to mirror physical reality as closely as possible. Psychological drives become stoked to the point to where sublimation is no longer possible. This homogenization is seen by many as highly problematic. Whereas the idea of unity in diversity was “so central to the years of nationalist struggle and the building of the new nation state,” it has recently “been displaced by an urgent need to question the nature of that unity” (Mee, 2003: 318). However, such questioning is largely absent from

many Indian children's novels in this sample, which primarily imagine India as unified, although in actuality it is comprised of many different groups whose interests may range from unrelated to competing.

India as a nation is a secular country and is one that houses numerous religions and faiths. For instance, the exclusion of any Islamic folk tale from the books is quite stark. For a nation, which has a sizeable Islamic populace, it is unfathomable that writers have gone to all lengths to collect tales and stories for their books have not found any texts worthy of choice from the Islam. Many could argue in Bond's favour that the tale 'The Lost Ruby' is of Mughal origin and can be considered as an Islamic folktale, or the fact that *Akbar Birbal Stories* portray the Mughal era. Though we could give in to this logic, at this stage, the next question that would arise that throughout the book all the kings and queens as well as the common folk have been assigned names either in the main body of the story or in the 'Notes and Sources', but this is not the case with respect to the particular Moghul ruler. It is shrugged of as, "…a popular folk tale in northern India during the 19th century, when the Moghul kings were the rulers" (Bond, 1982: 151). The only thing that could give away the fact that the story was about an Islamic ruler is the illustration preceeding it. The illustration depicts a king and, perhaps, his minister standing in the balcony of a very typical Persian archway dressed in the garb of the Mughals. This is reminiscent of the kind of exclusions present in the nascent times of Indian Children's Fiction in English. An examination of the kinds of books published between 1954 and 1975 raises uncomfortable situations where books about Hindu mythology and epics abound but none in the Islamic tradition. Urdu, the most popular language used by the Muslims in most regions of India, is of Indian origin and many writings for children abound in this language as well. The growth and development of this genre is also similar to the one under study. As Dr. Muzaffar Hanfi, in his

article, 'Urdu' says that the early writings for children in Urdu could be traced to Persian and were modeled on them. However, the growth of the language in the Deccan, at the end of the seventeenth century, saw the important book being written for children, *Maa Baap Nama* by Shah Hussain Zauqui. The growth of children's literature in Urdu has been immense, with numerous books being published. As Khushlal Zaidi in his article, 'History of Children's Literature in Urdu' says,

> Like in other Indian languages, in Urdu too, the pace of development of children's literature before 1857 was slow. But almost all important Urdu writers and poets for adults have definitely written something or the other for children… (Jafa, 1990: 3)

However, for people not familiar with the language these stories are not known. The equivalent of folk tales and myths that we have been examining so far has their counterparts in Urdu as well and they are called *Lok Kahaniyan.* These can be further divided into *Pari Kahaniyan* (fairy stories), *Djinn Kahaniyan* (stories about genies) and *Shezade aur Shehzadiyon Ki Kahaniyan* (stories about princes and princesses). Urdu literature for children abounds in verses and couplets more than stories. Except for one story, written about the Prophet by Bilkiz Alladin, we have not come across any book or story being printed for children on the life of the prophet. Children's literatures in Urdu abound in *'Hamd's* (poem about God) and *'Nath'* (poem written about the Prophet). These texts have never been translated for children to enjoy. Therefore, we are also not acknowledging a huge section of our country. Children belonging to this populace will never find their 'identity' in the books they read and will never be able to identify with the ones they read about, because books we hear or read when we are small stay with us all our lives and if we miss them, we miss them forever. The exclusion of this particular section of the Indian populace does not help portray a 'true' picture of the Indian nation but adds

oil to the fire of Fundamentalism, be it Hindu or Muslim, and defeats the purpose of 'secular' nationalist leaders like Zakir Hussain, Abul Kalam and many more, who are proud to be Muslims but also agree that they are Indians first. Abul Kalam in his 'Congress Presidential Speech' says,

> I am a Musalman and am proud of that fact. Islam's splendid tradition of thirteen hundred years is my inheritance. I am unwilling to lose even the smallest part of my inheritance. The teaching and history of Islam, its arts and letters and civilization are my wealth and my fortune. It is my duty to protect them.
>
> …But in addition to these sentiments, I have others also which the realities and conditions of my life have forced upon me. The spirit of Islam does not come in the way of these sentiments; it guides and helps me forward. I am proud of being an Indian. I am part of that indispensable unity that is Indian nationality. (Mittal, 2006: 239)

Kalam's exuberant speech as being as much a 'Musalman' and Indian at the same time is an earnest request to people of his religion and community not to fall prey to the 'Divide and Rule' tactic that the British tried to employ.

These sentiments that nationalist leaders have voiced seem to find no place in the huge body of writing that have evolved for children. The notion of 'India' that is being portrayed in these books excludes this facet of India's heritage and culture. In the same vein, South Indian folk stories rarely find a place in a collection of folk stories of India. In these collections under scrutiny, very few stories find a place for themselves. These stories too belong to a single source, namely the *Telegu Vaishnavas.* We hardly find any stories from the other south Indian regions, like Tamil Nadu, Kerela or even Karnataka. The other most obvious exclusion is of tales and oral narratives from the North Eastern part of the country. The North East region, which has a

veritable mine of oral and folk narratives rarely feature in any of the collection of tales and regions of the country. So, the question that arises here is what kind of a nation are we portraying to young people of the nation? What kind of values are we imparting to them? What kind of an identity will they develop for themselves? Will they be able to 'identify' themselves with the characters in these books or will they treat them as things, which are alien and foreign? In that case, what happens to the idea of the 'composite culture of India'? Keeping in mind the socio-political milieu and the various voices of dissent echoing from various parts of the country, it is essential that we at least start trying.

Another crucial feature of 'homogenization' that we see in these tales for children is in the way gender specific roles are prescribed for children. The nationalist discourse, that is also present in these collections of stories, of the so-called "Indian renaissance" tried to assign roles for women by imagining an Indian past based on mythology, folk tales and fables. This discourse was primarily phallus-centered, thus constructed an identity of the Indian woman. Partha Chatterjee in *The Nation and its Fragments* talks about the material/ spiritual or outer/ inner dichotomy within which the Indian woman was placed. The material or the outer domain according to the nationalist discourse was primarily a male-space and the spiritual or the inner domain belonged to the female. In order to retain the cultural and spiritual distinctiveness of India as against the material domain of the West, the Indian woman was typified in the representation of Indian culture. Chatterjee explains:

> The world is the external, the domain of the material: the home represents one's inner spiritual self, one's true identity. The world is a treacherous terrain of the pursuit of material interests, where practical considerations reign supreme. It is also typically the domain of the male. The home in its essence must remain unaffected by the profane

> activities of the material world- -and woman in its representation. (Chatterjee, 1997: 120)

This representation, he says later, led to a ‘new patriarchy’ which was constructed in the attempt to make a distinction between an Indian and a Western culture. The first image of a woman, regarding India and Indian nationalism, is the portrait of the country as a woman, as Bharat-mata. “Have I not told you that in you, I visualize the Shakti [the female principle] of our country?” By the time Rabindranath Tagore wrote these lines in 1915-1916, the practice of imagining India as a female entity, the goddess Bharat Mata, 'Mother India', had become a habit among patriotic Indians. By the 1920s and 1930s, through the various visual paraphernalia of nationalism, the association between the map and the mother had become intensely intimate. The map of India became a regular feature of Mother India's iconography from the 1920s because it facilitated her presentation to the viewing public as a goddess of territory and polity. It also helps to set her apart from the innumerable other Hindu goddesses-Durga, Lakshmi and others-with whom she could otherwise be confused. Mother India was constituted through the course of the twentieth century as a territorial deity, presiding over the national space of 'India'. It is surprising, however, to note that despite such elaborate and serious portrayals of the figure of the woman in the throes of nationalism, the woman figure in Indian children’s fiction in English has mostly been relegated within the four walls of the home. In *The Narayanpur Incident*, Amma is equally interested in the Indian struggle for Independence. Even then she is never portrayed as an active participant in the numerous violent and non-violent movements against the British government. She comes across as a woman who is always at home and ready with food to serve the male members or the children in the family. The only time when she does actively participate in the movement is when she is asked to translate a copy of the Mahatma’s speech. As Mohan, her son tells her,

> ‘Well, it’s this speech of the Mahatma’s. We want to translate it and make as many copies of it as possible so that it can reach everyone. Dinkar-kaka was to do it, but they arrested him. Suman is going to do the translation. Can you help her?’ (Deshpande, 1982: 32)

This is reminiscent of Woolf in her essay ‘Professions for Women’, where she says, “Writing was a reputable and harmless occupation. The family peace was not broken by the scratching of a pen. No demand was made upon the family purse. For ten and sixpence one can buy paper enough to write all the plays of Shakespeare--if one has a mind that way….Killing the Angel in the House was part of the occupation of a woman writer” (http://iws.collin.edu/grooms/wl2woolfpw.pdf). The ‘image’ of the woman going out of the home and working for India’s independence was unpalatable to many, despite the presence of figures like Sarojini Naidu, Kamla Nehru amidst others. As the young girl Manju says, in *The Narayanpur Incident,* “Girls can do anything, Amma says. Look at Sarojini Naidu. Look at Kamala Nehru. And…” (Deshpande, 1982: 32) and Babu added “The Rani of Jhansi,” (Deshpande, 1982: 32). Similarly, later in the story when Amma tries to convince young women to join the Movement, she says,

> ‘When there is so much work to be done, will we sit in front of our fires thinking of nothing but what to cook for the next meal?’ she asked them.
>
> Some women found it difficult to accept the idea that they could be of any use outside their homes. But many others, specially the younger women and older girls, responded enthusiastically to Amma’s talk. They were thrilled by the thought of being of some use to their country. (Deshpande, 1982: 121)

The idea of being at home and working from home is usually drilled into the female child as an essential part of ‘socialization’. Therefore, breaking out of the hearth and raging herself into various struggles of the ‘outside’ world was incomprehensible for most women. The world of the

'outside' was strictly reserved for the man, head of the family, be it the father or the husband. As Tanika Sarkar says,

> The karta, therefore, becomes within the home what he can never aspire to be outside it- a ruler, an administrator, a legislator or a chief justice…. If the home was not merely an escape from this world but its critique and an alternative order in itself…and the exercise of power needed to be replaced with the notion of self-surrender and general self-fulfilment. (Sarkar, 2001: 38-39)

The idea of 'self-surrender' was reserved for the women-folk of the house, who we more often than not, in the 19th century Bengali households child-brides. The 'home' being the realm of the woman, finds expression in almost most of texts towards the beginning of the genre. In the story 'Who'll buy my mangoes?' from Ruskin Bond's *Tales and Legends from India,* the lady who becomes Queen has no voice when her husband throws her out on the streets for her pride and haughtiness. She quietly accepts her fate and returns only when he forgives her. Women, in most of the stories in collections such as *Indian Tales, Tales and Legends from India,* and *Folk Stories from India* only feature in stories which are related to marriage or strictly related to the domain of household life. The stories which Ruskin Bond has chosen in his collection from the epics are 'Nala and Damayanti', where a woman is faithful to her love and chooses a mortal over Gods, 'Love Conquers All' which is the story of Savitri and Satyavan and the story of 'Shakuntala' who refuses to be recognized by her husband and forgives him easily once he realizes his folly. The 'identity' of a woman in these tales is never bereft of a protector figure, never without a man. One may argue that in the story 'Brave and Beautiful', the princess Sunderbai, proved to be brave without her husband even realizing that it was his wife. But, ultimately, the Princess had to prove the worth of her words to a husband, who refused to give her her dues, but was ready to severe her head at the slightest of doubt in his mind. As Sunderbai says,

> Birsing looked into Sunderbai's face…."Confess, my lord," said Sunderbai teasingly, "that I have redeemed the pledge I made in my father's garden, and that women can be every bit as brave as men." (Bond, 1982: 117)

The Gramscian idea of 'hegemony' is upheld in the gender power structure in these stories. Even in stories of women's exemplary courage, be it in the story of Rani Lakshmibai or in other female freedom fighters, they belong to the elite or the upper class, implying that only women of a particular class are allowed to step out of their homes and work /die for a cause. Most of the women in these stories do conform to the early Indian nationalist definition of them being relegated to the home-space, or to areas which prove to be an immediate threat to this space, which would rob them of their identity as a 'woman'.

The question of 'identity' gains further importance particularly when we talk about writing for young children because though the 'literary-didactic split' continues and maintains its career as one of the ultimate judgments of the values- and hence definitions of children's literature, the mainstay of children's literature is identification. The child is voluntarily attracted to books in which it recognizes itself. 'Identification', as Donna Norton describes, is a "…process which requires emotional ties with the model…" (Norton, 1983: 20). Portraying the 'Indian idiom' in Indian children's fiction in English, is therefore particularly important so that our children at least grow up with a wholesome sense of identity with things they can relate to and then with tales from larger India. Anderson, of course, locates the emergence of the imagined community with the spread of print capitalism; reading and belonging to the nation thus go hand in hand. Though Nehru does not imagine the nation in terms of print capitalism, he nevertheless understands it as a literary community, albeit one in which oral transmission plays an important role. He draws primary evidence for the existence of India as both a discrete and totalizing cultural entity from literature. The ancient epics, he asserts, "represent the typical

Indian method of catering all together for various degrees of cultural development, from the highest intellectual to the simple unread and untaught villager" (Nehru, 2010: 100). The Mahabharata, according to Nehru, shows the process whereby an "all-inclusive" civilization in which "different and even contradictory beliefs were tolerated" was brought into being (Nehru, 2010: 107). As Madhu Kishwar says that the twentieth-century inheritor of this inclusiveness is "modern Hinduism," whose eclecticism is at odds with the entire notion of Hindu fundamentalism. Furthermore, despite the heterogeneity of the *Mahabharata*, he claims that in the epic "a very definite attempt has been made to emphasize the fundamental unity of India." The assertion of intentionality is noteworthy; given the absence of a single known author for the text, this is a particularly gross example of the intentional fallacy. Sanskrit drama is also portrayed as an "all-India" phenomenon that bridges the cultural gap between castes and classes (Nehru, 2010: 161–162). This overlaying of Hinduism and nationalism is inevitably at odds with the multicultural ideal. Nehru's reading subsumes the violence implicit in the Aryan subjugation of the Dravidians that, some scholars argue, the *Mahabharata* depicts. Though Nehru acknowledges the facticity of invasion and war, he sees the conflict in question as responsible for the initial emergence of a distinctive sub-continental perspective. This transformation prefigures India's emergence as a modern nation under the yoke of the British. Though Nehru has rightly been praised for bringing the high Sanskritic tradition to the attention of a generation that had nearly forgotten it, his decision to position the *Mahabharata* and the *Bhagavad Gita* as the nation's foundational texts is highly problematic. As Aijaz Ahmad points out, this privileging of the high Sanskritic tradition originates with the Orientalists, who ignored more democratic and syncretic aspects of India's literary history, particularly the bhakti tradition. In the process, they created a canon of South Asian literature that reflected European preconceptions of the Orient

but not the range of literary production and experience, obscuring particularly secular and multilingual practices of literary production and circulation (Ahmed, 1992: 257). Also, he does not include Muslim or non-Sanskritic texts in the national canon. In contrast, Gandhi describes all scriptures as divinely inspired (Gandhi, 1991: 64). The concept of "creative energy," which Nehru employs throughout *The Discovery of India* as a marker of cultural value and associates with these high Sanskritic texts, is thus fraught with ambiguity. Losses of culture and of freedom go hand in hand for Nehru (Nehru, 2010: 224) and, as such, nationalism "heightens cultural creativity" (Kumar: 1983, 14). Historical study, which he never finally undertakes, similarly provides a framework for constructing, and inserting, the self into the nation. Therefore, it is essential and in the interest of both, to children and the State, to bring forth to children a picture of India, which is not a homogenous one, but a country where multiplicity thrives and brings about peace and development. Indian children's fiction in English, in its early stages, as we have described, has homogenized the diversity in Indian culture and thought.

This chapter discusses at length the direction Indian children's fiction in English takes after the establishment of the NBT and the CBT. It also illustrates, by citing examples, from varied texts as to the influence that the state sponsored ideology, particularly the Nehruvian vision, had on the proliferation of this genre. But, contrary to Nehru's vision of 'Unity in Diversity' and Anderson's theory that literature could instill a sense of unity/ nationalism, in the multi-cultural and multi-linguistic nation such as India, this idea is not a feasible one. Indian children's fiction in English soon changed its stance, which is concomitant to the changing socio-political milieu, and gradually started celebrating the multiplicity/ diversity of India.

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http://iws.collin.edu/grooms/wl2woolfpw.pdf

Chapter Three

Contemporary Fiction: Beyond the Nehruvian Ideal

> We had so many interests in common: Pokemon cards and Beyblades; we thought Enid Blyton old fashioned and Hardy boys boring; as for Biggles, he was archaic. Instead, we preferred Philip Pullman and Roald Dahl, Tolkien and Jonathan Stroud. Best of all, we loved Harry Potter. We even invented a game where I was Harry and Alise, Hermione. (Nair, 2007: 46)

> Everything is possible. . . . For India to achieve all the goals … and more, all it requires is concerted effort by the people of India, especially the youth who form more than fifty per cent of the population. A major mission-oriented program needs teamwork. (Abdul Kalam, 2005: 95)

Nehru's 'ideology' of establishing and furthering English books into the curriculum and into the reading habits of children, as suggested in the previous chapter, was to promote the idea of 'Unity in Diversity', so that the emphasis of the populace would always be on the growth and development of India as a nation and as a nation-state. Despite this call, the idea of a homogenized India gained ground in many of the books that were published during this age and also in Indian children's fiction in English. With the end of the Nehruvian era and the beginning of the age of liberalization, we see a drastic change in Indian children's fiction in English. The aim of this chapter is to examine the kind of 'exclusionist' literature, in contrast to the the 'inclusionist' politics of Nehru (as mentioned in the previous chapter), which was produced for Indian children, thereby constructing a nation which recognized and acknowledged the multifariousness of India. The shift in Indian children's literature in English affected not just the content of the books but also in the various forms of writing that appeared within the genre. This chapter will examine the 'diversity' of the Indian nation in the fantastical, adventurous, scientific and realistic books that were produced mostly post 1985, namely Salman Rushdie's *Haroun and*

the Sea of Stories, Anita Desai's *A Village by the Sea,* Arup Kumar Dutta's *The Kaziranga Trail* and *The Blind Witness,* Nilima Sinha's *The Chandipur Jewels* and Zai Whittaker's *Andaman's Boy.* Besides these core texts, I will also be substantiating and illustrating my findings by referring to many texts outside my time frame. Most of these texts were written and first published after the mid 1980's, and a few have been reproduced in various subsequent editions or form parts of various anthologies, particularly books published by the CBT.

Despite its humble inception and its quiet beginnings, the genre of Indian children's fiction in English is gradually trying to make its mark by addressing the various cultures and voices within India. This allows not only for a diversification of the genre but also enables for a more vivid and varied story telling patterns. For example, in Salman Rushdie's *Haroun and the Sea of Stories,* we find multiple strains of storytelling traditions which have been woven into the body of the story, particularly the story telling tradition of the Katha Sarit Sagara and that of the Arab world in the form of the *Arabian Nights*. Though there is a single narrative in the novella, we are constantly made aware of the multifarious traditions that he refers too. In both fiction and theory, coming to terms with diversity within the nation is inexorably linked to the negotiation of public and private spaces. Bhikhu Parekh, for instance, while critiquing the division between the public and the private as untenable, acknowledges the need for shared public institutions, relevant to all citizens, regardless of race, religion, or ethnicity. He maintains that the public and the private spheres are not those of the Victorians or Indian nationalists and suggests the need to regulate public expressions of difference in keeping with national collective values. There can never be one common concern, as Nancy Fraser suggests in her essay, 'Rethinking the Public Sphere', with the problematic definition of "common concern" (Fraser, 1990: 70). She argued that marginalized groups are excluded from a universal public sphere, and thus it was impossible

to claim that one group would in fact be inclusive. However, she claimed that marginalized groups formed their own public spheres, to discuss, counter, subvert and voice their aims and needs which is almost counter to the way they are represented. This group she termed as a *subaltern counterpublic* (Fraser, 1990: 67). Literature which forms an important space of the public sphere is a crucial factor in the formation and dissemination of values both of the 'majority' as well as of the subaltern.

In Marxist theory, the civil sense of the term *Subaltern* was first used by Antonio Gramsci (1891–1937), possibly as a synonym for the proletariat. The notion of the subaltern was first referred to by the Italian Marxist political activist Antonio Gramsci in his article "Notes on Italian History" which appeared later on as part of his most widely known book *Prison Notebooks* written between 1929 and 1935. Gramsci's standpoint is fundamentally instrumental to reach an understanding of the origin of the notion of the subaltern. The subaltern classes refer fundamentally in Gramsci's words to any "low rank" person or group of people in a particular society suffering under hegemonic domination of a ruling elite class that denies them the basic rights of participation in the making of local history and culture as active individuals of the same nation. Gramsci became interested in the study of the subaltern classes of consciousness and culture as one possible way to make their voice heard instead of relying on the historical narrative of the state which is by the end, the history of the ruling and dominant classes. In this study, Gramsci says,

> The subaltern classes by definition are not unified and cannot unite until they are able to become a "State": their history, therefore, is intertwined with that of civil society, and thereby with the history of States and groups of States (Gramsci, 1971: 14).

Gramsci also argued that the subaltern classes have the same complex history as that of the hegemonic classes, although the latter constitutes the most officially accepted. The dismantling, of the power structure, is to be realized within Gramsci's theoretical framework, by releasing the subordinated consciousness of non-elite group from the cultural hegemony exercised by the ruling class. His well formulated ideas, especially those written during his imprisonment, about the class of peasants as a social, cultural and political force aware of its distinct consciousness of subalternity made other subsequent 20th century scholars working on the issue of Indian peasantry historiography became important in this context. These scholars led by Ranajit Guha came to be known as the Subaltern Studies Group.

Subaltern Studies, as Ranajit Guha puts it, is a 'child of its time' in the sense that it came into existence at the historical conjuncture of the questioning of tradition and history that marked the 1970's, as a result of the disillusionment that set in the youth born immediately after Independence. He says,

> Born to citizenship, they had their nationhood with all its promise already constituted for them. It was a promise that relied on the nation-state for its fulfillment. Since that failed to materialize even two decades after Britain's retreat from South Asia, the despair that seized the younger generation in the 1970's could truly be ascribed to a disillusionment of hope. (Guha, 1997: xii)

Most statist histories of the period have dwelt on the dramatic Naxalite encounters with the apparatuses of the State and the repressive counter insurgent measures adopted by the latter. Guha draws attention also to the fact that there was an angry questioning by the youth of all sanctified authorities of the civil society (ibid.). Such questioning lead to many gestures of rebellion such as the beheading of the statue of Vidyasagar in Calcutta.

This questioning lead the subaltern group to question and critique Indian nationalist historiography: 'The Historiography of Indian nationalism has been for a long time been dominated by elitism- colonial elitism and bourgeois-nationalist elitism' (ibid.: xiv), the former attributed nationalism in India to the British administrators and the latter to Indian elite personalities, activities and ideas. These historians challenged the 'sacredness' of such historiography by claiming that the domain of politics in India was structurally split into elite and subaltern:

> What clearly is left out of this un-historical historiography is the politics of the people. For parallel to the domain of elite politics there existed throughout the colonial period another domain of Indian politics in which the principal actors were not the dominant groups of the indigenous society or the colonial authorities but the subaltern classes and groups consisting the mass of the labouring population and the immediate strata in town and country- that is the people. This was an autonomous domain, for it neither originated from elite politics nor did its existence nor did its existence depend on the latter. (Guha, 1982: 4)

Guha uses the evidence of subaltern politics to reject the claim of nationalist historiography that the Indian bourgeoisie played a hegemonic role in the anti-imperialist struggles and hence their dominant role in post-colonial India was achieved through the consent of the subaltern classes. Guha introduces the concept of 'dominance without hegemony' to characterize the nature of the leadership of the middle-class in Indian politics.

Subaltern studies forced attention to the other domain of subaltern agency which was so far ignored and suppressed. It also introduced a critical dissonance into the study of history and initiated radical ways of conceiving the past which made possible a questioning of the 'normative' power relations of the present. Indian children's fiction in English also tries to

narrativise history, by drawing from the lives of great men and women, and the impact is far reaching because it takes history right into the domain of popular culture, and thus engages and reshapes the commonsense of the people. In fact it constructs the very hegemony on the post-Nehruvian period that Guha claims the middle class in India lacks.

Gramsci's notion of hegemony is a departure from earlier Marxist traditions of conceiving ideology as a totalizing and subordination as static and passive. For Gramsci, a bourgeois hegemony is secured not by an obliteration of working class-culture but by its rearticulation in bourgeois culture and ideology. By representing its goals as universal the bourgeoisie can forge strategic alliances with the other groups and lay claim to leadership. Thus, hegemony aims at winning moral, cultural and ideological leadership for the dominant class and is distinct from economism which only concentrates on class interests. Therefore, 'popular culture' or the 'public sphere' is a major site of political intervention. In Gramsci's words, popular culture "…is viewed as a force-field of relations" (Bennet, 1986: xii) within which the reformulation of society takes place. In a Gramscian frame, popular culture is seen as addressing the concerns and contradictions of the society. Therefore, role of popular culture as a powerful tool of hegemony cannot be under estimated. The effect of Subaltern studies, as well as the various socio-political uprisings around the country can be very strongly felt in the various books that were published in Indian children's fiction in English. Instead of books and titles which were all inclusive, we see a varied collection of titles from across the country. Titles such as *Birsa Munda*, the tribal freedom fighter; *Tribal Freedom fighters of India, Stories from North East India, Babasaheb Ambedkar* and saints and well known personalities from the South of India also began to be represented as compared to the typical, homogenized picture of an Indian in the previous decades.

It must also be understood very clearly that 'subaltern' also presupposes a position in a relationship, and one that describes the situation of many who are not at the bottom of one giant social heap. Secondly, dominance and subordination - the relation of subalternity - is produced historically, and therefore may also be altered historically**.** The main point is to recognize the variation and sophistication of inherited histories and cultures, religious, political and economic rituals, states and state policies, and to underline the highly differentiated character of subaltern groups and their politics, without losing sight of the undoubted facts of immiserization, oppression or marginalization. The relationship which is mentioned above is seen in many Indian children's fiction in English, particularly in books such as *Andaman's Boy*, *The Search for the Miracle Herb* and also in recent publications for children like *No Gun's at my Son's Funeral*. For years the struggles of the oppressed and subordinated were seen as struggles for recognition as equals. The history of these efforts appeared as a history of sameness, and the right to sameness: "one man, one vote", equal pay for equal work, the need to overturn inherited structures of power, to capture state power, and so on. In the later decades of the 20th century, the battle was extended self-consciously to encompass another demand - the demand for a recognition of difference - as the awareness grew that differences of gender, of communal practices and ways of being, even of incommensurable languages and beliefs, have provided the very ground for the diversity, density and richness of human experience. As Gyanendra Pandey says,

> It is my belief that there is a critical and still largely unexplored relationship between dominance/subordination and the categorical attribution of difference. Difference, one might say, is the mark of the subordinated or subalternised, precisely because it is measured against the purported mainstream, the "standard" or the "normal". And it is in the attribution of difference that the logic of

> dominance and subordination has always found expression. Men are not "different"; it is women who are. Caste Hindus are not "different" in India; it is Muslims, and "tribals", and dalits who are. (Pandey, 2006: 4740)

He also discusses about the situation of the doubly subalternised. The tribal peasant woman: "different" as tribal and "different" again as woman. Or women of colour: subaltern twice over. Subalternity and difference rolled into one, difference as subalternity and subalternity as difference. These relation of the woman/ girl child as being a 'subaltern' because of her gender as well as her class is depicted clearly in *The Village by the Sea* by Anita Desai and in recent fiction such as Shashi Deshpande's *A Summer Adventure* (2006), where the rescue of Shanta, a servant girl living in slave-like conditions, is the story's secondary plot and provides its happy ending. In order to be able to celebrate this diversity, 'history' needs to be re-defined and re-written, where 'diversity' in not homogenized and subsumed under 'one' culture but where this diversity is celebrated as parts of a culture, to recall the idea of America not as a 'melting pot', which was used in the 1780's but as a 'salad bowl'. Though diversity, in and of itself, has not been subject to the same scrutiny and debate as the concept of nation, since it has been used primarily as a descriptive term, discussions about non-homogeneity almost inevitably extend beyond the merely observational into the discourses of ethics and politics. Therefore, in order to describe/ include various groups which were excluded/ misrepresented/ sidelined, anew for on Indian children's fiction in English was written which proposed a new form "Indianess" which signified a new found culture for diverse India.

History and pedagogy are always inextricably linked in children's literature. Narrative/story has a pivotal role in an enterprise that consciously foregrounds the pedagogic value of history by attempting to teach through ideals. Indian children's fiction in English

invokes a past that can signal attention to the present. Its inspiration comes from nationalist historiography; the nationalist historian used myths and legends alongside 'facts' and fashioned history into a dynamic tool of politics that challenged the proclaimed superiority of the colonizer. Similarly, writing history for children emphasizes the instructive rather than the informative potential of history.

In, 'The Small Voice of History', Ranajit Guha's critique of the grand narrative of history can be seen against the absolute primacy of history-as-story in Indian children's fiction in English. 'The Small Voice of History' foregrounds the affiliations between the idea of statism and the discipline of historiography- both of which have accompanied the ascendancy of bourgeoisie in Europe, and was crucial in securing a stable base for the state. It became the burden of history to carry out complex negotiations between citizens and the State. History instituted the grand narrative of reason and progress, the *telos* of which was the nation-state. Guha points out that the introduction of the study of history as a 'highly institutionalized and statist knowledge' by the British in the nineteenth century was characterized by a 'lack' given the fallacy that marked its origin (Guha, 1996: 3)

> The consent which empowered the bourgeoisie to speak for all citizens in the hegemonic states of Europe was also the license used by the latter to assimilate the respective civil societies to themselves. But no such assimilation was feasible under colonial conditions where an alien power ruled over a state without citizens, where the right of conquest rather than the consent of its subject constitutes the charter, and where, thereof, dominance would never gain the hegemony it coveted so much. So it made no sense to equate the colonial state with India as constituted by its own civil society (Guha, 1996: 3)

Indian colonial historiography, thus underscored and authorized by statism, pre-figures the events that are to be granted the status of the historic and does not allow us to choose 'our own relation to the past' (Guha, 1996: 3). 'The Small Voice of History' renews the subalternist demand for historiography to address the politics of the people. The 'narratological point' Guha makes at the end of this charged essay contains the prescription for counter-politics in the face of the dominant trend of statism in historiography.

> If the small voice of history gets a hearing at all in some revised account of the Telengana struggle, it will do so only by interrupting the telling in the dominant version, breaking up its storyline and making a mess out of its plot. For the authority of that version inheres in the structure of the narrative itself – a structure informed in post-enlightenment historiography, as in the novel, by a certain order of coherence and linearity. It is that order which dictates what should be included in the story and what should be left out… (Guha, 1996: 12)

The move here is to break down the narrative, break down its 'orderliness'. It brings forth the disturbing dissonances which challenge the singularity of historical narrative. The time and the milieu in which these (Indian children's fiction in English) books were given to children questions the very centrality and efficacy of narrative as an instrument of hegemony and reiterates that it can never be escaped. Therefore, with the focus shifting from homogeneity to portraying multiplicity, narratives, be it historical fiction or otherwise have to incorporate/ include figures from the 'margins' who, were previously not recognized. Therefore, within Indian children's fiction in English we see figures like *Birsa Munda*, Jatra Bhagat, Rajmohini Devi and others being portrayed. Well-known nationalist figures from erstwhile Assam, namely Lachit Borphukan, Joymati and Gopinath Bordoloi find mention in different collections including the *Amar Chitra Katha*. This 'inclusion' re-iterated the point that Guha was trying to

make, that the Indian independence did not happen only because of the well-known nationalist figures, but there were figures from across the classes who worked bravely at the grass-root level to bring about this change. It is also interesting to note that authors of children's literature also brought to children around this time figures like *Mulla Nasiruddin,* who almost equaled Birbal in wit and humour. The Children's Book Trust brought out a series of short stories collection from across India, and illustrated the cultural markers of that particular state to precision. *Tales from Kerela*, *Tales from Tamil Nadu*, *The Gujjars*, and *Tales from Nagaland* are a few examples which showcased to children the wide diversity of the country.

As already mentioned, children's literature in formerly colonized nations, like India, is largely imitative of western models. From the nineteenth century onwards, a significant volume of western classic and popular children's literature has been imported into India, where it was and is both distributed in English and translated into Indian languages. Until the 1970s, children who wanted or needed to read literature in English primarily turned to western sources (Srinivasan, 1998: 24). This history provides some explanation for the level of imitation, which Sunder Rajan neatly summarises:

> Though the majority of children's books in India are adaptations, retellings, and even comic-strip renderings of Hindu myths, classics, and folklore or are Indianized versions of children's genres popular in the West (school stories and adventure and detective stories, for example), a small number are now specifically written from within a realistic, contemporary Indian context. (Sunder Rajan, 2003: 101).

McGillis reports that in the past twenty years literature from India and other former British colonies "reveals an interest in national identity and pride separate from an attachment to England" (McGillis, 2000: xxiii) and that one of the central functions of multicultural children's

books is to "deal sensitively and accurately with cultures other than the dominant Anglo-European culture" (McGillis, 2000: xxv). More specifically, Jean Webb contends that formerly suppressed cultures reflect "on landscape and a sense of cultural self" in their children's literature (Webb, 2000: 72), which suggests a need to establish cultural representations independent of the oppressor. This is a crucial undertaking in the novels published in India. Further, in a multicultural literary context, parallel cultures have a similar need to reflect on place and culture, due to their position in relation to the dominant culture. In fact, the task of textually imagining Indianness may be an impossible one, given this fact that despite the homogenizing doctrine of unity in diversity, there *is* no single experience that can be considered "Indian," due to the vastly different situations of Indians from a multitude of backgrounds. The need to display recognizable cultural markers may lead to an essentialised portrayal of Indianness. In fact, rarely do the novels in this sample convey the sense that Indianness, if it could be said to exist at all, must be considered multi-faceted, constructed, and ever-changing, in the way that Stuart Hall describes cultural identity (Hall, 1996: 2–4). Rather, Indianness generally tends to be conveyed as positive, and as a static fact, in that certain qualities, behaviours, or objects seem automatically to convey it. Indianness is often oversimplified, and sometimes even essentialised or exoticised, with the result that readers may be persuaded to conclude that Indianness can be reduced to eating Indian food or dress, for example. The epigraph from *Maya Running*, for instance, seems to suggest that Indianness is synonymous with listening to certain music, wearing certain apparel, and consuming certain food. The argument here is not to portray Indianness as a single unit but to introduce multiple cultural markers and identify them as Indian.

There is significant pressure on the children's authors in India to provide a strong sense of Indianness in their texts. Because Indian children's literature in English is heavily influenced by its western counterpart, there is a complex relationship of imitation and invention which results from this connection. Critics of Indian children's literature are aware of this imitative tendency, positioning it specifically in relation to language: "[c]hildren's books in English by Indian authors are obviously inspired by English and American authors" (Mohanty, 2004: 71). This legacy has led to debates in which many critics have argued that foreign influences must be resisted and supplanted with Indian content: "The aim should not be to hermeneutically seal off children from such influences (even if it could be done) but to promote, somehow, the equally attractive alternatives" (Sengupta, 1995: 82). For example, the very popular, *Juneli Series* written by Swapna Dutta, imitates the Western school genre but in the imitation also subverts the Western school story writing tradition by appropriating it to the Indian situation and milieu. As Juneli says,

> "Well, *Malory Towers,* for instance…"
> "Not quite," said Rita at once. "I'm sorry if you're disappointed Juneli, but there is bound to be a lot of difference between a school in Cornwall and one in India! Our pattern of education is quite different and we don't play hockey or lacrosse in our school either." (Dutta, 1992: 23)

The characters in the *Juneli* series are no different from the ones in Enid Blyton's school stories but the very act of imitation and appropriation undermines the superiority of the Western school story. Pedagogy and national and imperial benefit not only influenced the developing curricula of British girls' schools, but were used to advocate for improvements in girls' education. These associations are rendered in fictional terms, with the fantasy of girls' education extending on these precepts to celebrate protagonists who moulded traditional femininity with modern

girlhood. The idea of the nation in school girl stories is amply reflected in the *Juneli* series too, with a multiplicity of cultures being reflected in the characters of the school. Juneli herself is born of a Bengali father and an Assamese mother. Other than the protagonist we have Christians, Punjabis, Bengalis, Muslims and Parsees who live together amicably in the school environment.

In considering India's diversity and multicultural, it is important to recall that the term "multicultural" began its life as a descriptive term and, since its inception, has been associated with antiracist activity. I use the term multiculturalism not in order to refer to any one theorization of cultural diversity, but to stress the need to positively value and respond to diversity, rather than to merely acknowledge its facticity. Though the term multicultural has been applied repeatedly to India, and the catch phrase "unity in diversity" made familiar to every Indian child (often via Nehru's writings), Indian cultural diversity has not been extensively theorized. What theorization of India's diversity does exist offers tantalizing possibilities for reexamining the multiculturalism debate as a whole. Atul Kohli, for instance, characterizes India as multicultural in his discussion of ethnic nationalisms, but does not posit multiculturalism as offering a singular response to such conflict. Similarly, Rustom Bharucha notes that, despite the absence of any official policy of multiculturalism in India, "multiculturality" is "an indispensable component in the rethinking of [Indian] secularism" (Bharucha, 1999: 4). When speaking of India's diversity in a global, comparative context, it is essential to realize that recognition of multiple identifications is intrinsic to the Indian political system. Furthermore, numerous other pan-regional identities are enshrined in Indian law, which grants overt recognition both to religion and to groups with such designations as "backwards castes" and "tribals," and to a degree not replicated elsewhere. This multiplicity and plethora of cultures are also reflected amply in Indian children's fiction in English post the Nehruvian era. As already mentioned, not

only the Indian nationalist struggle is re-articulated by representing the tribal leaders from across the country, but the outlook towards the less able, poor classes also seems to have changed. We find a multitude of portrayals of people across classes and cultures in books such as *Haroun and the Sea of Stories,* where we see a Muslim boy trying to resurrect his fathers story telling ability; *The Village by the Sea* where we see the struggles of a lower class fishing family trying to make ends meet; in *The Hunt for the Miracle Herb* where three city dwellers find a herb to cure cancer with the help of the tribal servant who informs them that this cure was known to their tribe for centuries and also in *Andaman's Boy* where the tribes of the Andaman and Nicobar islands are discussed at length and described. These stories not only highlight these tribes that have rarely featured in writings for children, but by the very act of representation inform/ educate the children to value a sense of equality that the Indian constitution expects of its citizens.

Children's literature, as already mentioned shares an inherent relationship with the disbursal of values, and Indian children's fiction in English is no exception. Universal values such as 'Good overcoming evil' and the idea of 'Vices being punished and virtue being rewarded' has always been there, as highlighted in the previous chapter, but the recent publications in this genre foreground values of co-operation and friendship so as to allow the idea of communal harmony and stresses upon the sense of equality. By "cooperation," I mean the act of various people working together for a common purpose, or to secure a mutually beneficial result. Most readers of contemporary, English-language Indian children's novels in English would likely interpret this foregrounding of cooperation as well suited to children's literature, as a variety of genres in children's literature rely on this narrative structure, notably the fantasy quest, and thus it would likely resonate as familiar. The idea of co-operation is central to the novel *Haroun and the Sea of Stories,* where the protagonist Haroun is trying to re-instate

his father Rashid's story telling ability. He along with his friends Iff the water-genie and Butt the Hoopoe, restore the source of stories. As he falls through the Sea, he sees the Plug being constructed. Then, as he sinks lower, he sees the Source of Stores, a giant hole in the seabed. It looks like a fountain of shining light. Haroun realizes that if he could prevent the Source from being plugged, everything would eventually be all right again, and he manages to do so. But in order to get out of there,

> Mali could push them no further, he fell across the
> Hoopoe's back, exhausted…
> Just then there was bubbling and a frothing in the water
> beside them; and Haroun recognized, with immense relief
> the many smiling mouths of the Plentimaw Fishes.
> ;Goopy! Bagha!' he greeted them happily. They replied:
> 'Have no worries! Have no Fear!'
> 'We'll soon get you out of here!'…
> So Bagha and Goopy, taking the reins of Butt the Hoopoe
> in their mouths, towed the companions out of the Old Zone.
> (Rushdie, 1990: 175-176)

This use of cooperation might further seem appropriate in children's cultural productions due to its similarity with contemporary attitudes towards childhood, as in reality cooperation is frequently inculcated in children's scholastic and athletic pursuits, as well as in children's literature, and this trend is not restricted to the west. In Swapna Dutta's *Juneli's First Term*, the Carefree Club saves the day by performing for the school instead of the group who fell ill and could not perform. In keeping with the girls and their initiative, as Dutta writes,

> Baldwin (the music teacher) himself offered to play for the
> dances.
> "What about costumes?" asked Mother Benedicta
> anxiously.
> "I'm sure we can manage with what we have inour drama
> cupboard," said Sister Evelina."I'll get Mary and Esther
> and the entire upper school to help with the sewing this
> evening." (Dutta, 1992: 108)

Therefore, the consistent presence of the theme of cooperation of characters across a wide range of texts seems normal. But whereas cooperation may seem almost synonymous with childhood, this apparently normal behaviour is actually a cultivated social value.

The use of cooperation by child characters is portrayed as unfailingly successful in these novels. Although this may seem a naively optimistic device of children's literature, it also shares some basis in reality. In recent Indian history the use of cooperation has elicited extraordinary results, such as achieving Independence. On the other hand, competing communal interests have elicited horrific results, such as Hindu-Muslim conflicts during Partition that left approximately a million Indians dead. Since in the complex, sometimes hostile, Indian sociopolitical context, cooperation seems indispensable and its alternatives seem redoubtable, it is difficult to take anything other than a celebratory stance towards its presence in the children's novels in this sample. However, its implementation in these novels is also problematic, as they are plagued by the portrayal of predominantly middle-class characters cooperating to effect positive change. In the contemporary novels, children remain enmeshed in such social hierarchies. It is usually empowered, middle-class child characters who work together in the novels to address various problems and concerns, therefore a sense of 'equality' need to be stressed upon and a text of children's literature will be able to do so. This equality between different classes and different classes can only be achieved if, as Gandhi who believed that it was the duty of higher-caste Indians to take responsibility for the welfare of the lower castes. This is clearly portrayed in *The Village by the Sea* where Mr. de Silva takes Lila's mother to the hospital in Alibagh and gets her admitted there. Mr. de Silva not only admits Lila's mother to the hospital but provides her drunken father with money to eat. As Anita Desai writes,

> Mr. de Silva seemed to be watching her in the little mirror that hung over the windscreen. 'Don't worry so much,' he said kindly. 'I have given your father a little money for his food since he wants to stay at the hospital. We are paying for the medicines – the hospital is itself free. You will be paid for the work you and your sisters do for us so you'll have something running for your own household.'
> (Desai, 1982: 162)

In contrast to Gandhi's view, the children in this novel also take their emancipation into their own hands. Hari, Lila's brother, who runs away to Bombay lives there for a few months and learns a new trade. He also manages to save a little bit of money which he plans to invest in a poultry farm once he returns to Thul. Not only does Hari think about economic advancement he is also a compassionate brother who buys gifts for all his sisters once he returns, fulfilling their small dreams in the best way possible.

These general principles, that children's agency and their use of cooperation ensure a positive outcome, and that these behaviours are necessary because everyone is interconnected, are promoted to some degree or another in almost all texts published in India, regardless of the specificity of the central conflict portrayed. Indeed, even if humans do not directly benefit, cooperation is still positioned as a useful, powerful strategy for achieving positive change. For example, several of Arup Kumar Dutta's adventure stories focus on the human need to protect the environment through connections with animals. In *The Kaziranga Trail* (1995), three village boys defeat corruption and protect the web of life in the Kaziranga Wildlife Sanctuary by aiding in the discovery and capture of a ring of rhinoceros poachers whose crimes are enabled by a corrupt forest ranger. The boys work closely with one another and in conjunction with the adults to achieve this purification of the Sanctuary, which is framed in the narrative as a crucial, life-and-death battle. In *The Chandipur Jewels,* all the children work together to restore the

traditional jewelry to its rightful place. Contemporary evils are portrayed here as well: the poaching is enabled by the corruption of a minor official. In *The Kaziranga Trail* by Arup Kumar Dutta, the three boys hear and see Mr. Phukan the head ranger dealing with the poachers. As the head poacher threatens to kill him, Mr. Phukan has no choice but to agree to his demands and tells him,

> "We hold a pre-arranged meeting at a bungalow in a tea estate nearby. …Our next meeting is fixed for tomorrow night, at nine o' clock. I am supposed to meet them tomorrow to make the final payment"….
>
> The man smiled as he paused. "You see, Phukan you don't have much choice. Today is the fifteenth. I shall return in disguise on the twenty-fifth. So, ten days later you will come to me with the sixth horn." (Dutta, 1995: 38-39)

Mr. Phukan pays for his sins with his life and is ultimately killed. Throughout contemporary, English-language children's novels published in India, fighting corruption through cooperation is portrayed as a necessary and glorious pursuit. This theme is echoed in a startling number of novels, although the children's texts tend on the whole to be morally oversimplified. For example, police and government officials are often (although not always) upheld as virtuous, despite realities to the contrary in India, and they frequently cooperate with child characters to enact positive change.

Bringing about a positive change is also clearly seen in the way friendships are forged across classes, castes and economic background for the larger good of mankind. In *The Chandipur Jewels*, three middle-class siblings work together, along with a low-caste servant's daughter, to retrieve their ancestral treasure from their grandfather's corrupt doctor. In doing so, they unwittingly engineer a family reunion between their grandfather and his estranged

daughter—their mother—whom he disowned when she married their father because he was of a lower caste. In *The Chandipur Jewels,* acceptance of difference is foregrounded in the opening scene, when the siblings are traveling on the bus to visit the grandfather they have never met, due to his inability to accept their mother's marriage to their lower-caste father. Tellingly, it is the youngest sibling, ten-year-old Sunil, who observes in relation to family history, "[h]ow strange grown-ups were" (Sinha, 1991: 7). His extreme youth emphasizes his uncorrupted childhood status, and even his elder siblings, who support their parents' marriage, show their unconscious absorption of traditional attitudes such as their grandfather's:

> "Don't tell me you don't know, Sunil. A Rajput does not marry someone from another caste," explained Praveen. "Papa is not a Rajput. When Grandfather learnt Mummy wanted to marry Papa, he was furious" (Sinha, 1991: 7–8)

While seeming also to reject them; for example, Praveen later claims that only "old people think of all these things. Castes were invented in the olden days for efficient division of labour. But the old rules don't apply any longer" (Sinha, 1991: 33). Similarly, it is the young Sunil who unquestioningly accepts and befriends the low-caste servant's daughter Munia, a character integral to the siblings' success in retrieving their ancestral treasure. In contrast, Sunil's older sister is shocked by Munia: "'What a strange looking girl!' thought Sarika. She looked about the same age as she was, but what a contrast! Sarika was fair, while Munia was dark" (Sinha, 1991: 13). Sunil experiences no shock, however, and simply accepts Munia as his equal, which he demonstrates by playing games with her outside. Sarika does come to accept the servant girl as well, but their relationship is never equal; indeed, Sarika teaches Munia to read, emphasizing her superior social status. Sarika's impulse to help Munia, which is framed in the text as generous

and thoughtful, also draws attention to her sense of duty—another essential quality of a good Indian, and one that will aid in shaping the nation towards its ideal.

In the same vein accepting a differently abled person into mainstream society is beautifully portrayed by Arup Kumar Dutta. In *The Blind Witness*, a seemingly helpless blind boy helps the police bring to justice a smuggling ring that steals ancient Indian artifacts and exports them to foreign collectors at exorbitant profit. In the conclusions of these texts, a more just and harmonious state than was present at the story's outset is reached, an outcome attributed to children's actions and strength of character. They embody the principle of strength in difference, as the didactic message in both texts is resounding: everybody who wants to contribute to the task of shaping the nation into its ideal form has something valuable to offer. A strongly developed sense of duty is also a central characteristic of Ramu, the protagonist of *The Blind Witness.* This sense of duty bears up even under extreme duress: Ramu feels a compulsion to tell the police what he knows about a serious crime even though he is sure they will not believe him. He also believes it necessary to fulfill their request for his aid in their quest to bring the criminals to justice even though he is afraid because it will put him in grave personal danger: "Ramu was sweating. Yet he felt cold rather than hot. With an effort he said, 'Yes, I will do it'" (Dutta, 1995: 209). By embodying particular character traits and acting heroically, child characters in these novels are portrayed as powerful agents of transformation. They have the ability to secure national aspirations, and they are ultimately glorified in the narratives. For example, in *The Blind Witness* Ramu is rewarded for his actions: "Mr. Lalkaka had even recommended them for medals of valour. The recommendation had been accepted by the government" (Dutta, 1995: 247). When the siblings in *The Chandipur Jewels* act courageously, their grandfather is impressed. He judges their father's worth accordingly and finally accepts

them, leading to a family reconciliation: “What a wonderful father you must be to have such brave children” (Sinha, 1991: 64). The children are thrilled to experience, and to have engineered, this harmonious family state. Thus, the conclusion of *The Chandipur Jewels* presents a symbolic portrait of the family as the ideal, harmonious nation in microcosm: acceptance has finally overcome discrimination, and unity is achieved.

Cooperation and acceptance frequently implies that friendship plays a role in these relationships, a point which now becomes my focus. Friendship is an important means by which Indian children’s authors portray harmonious social interaction, particularly on an intercultural level. In foregrounding intercultural friendships, Indian children’s authors share an approach commonly used by many authors of multicultural children’s literature. Books for children therefore offer aspirational portrayals of intercultural friendship as a means to overcome racism and create social harmony. In many novels from India friendships between characters with different cultural, socioeconomic, and religious backgrounds are often also portrayed in a matter-of-fact, normalized manner. Zai Whittakers’s *Andaman’s Boy* illustrates the development of particularly powerful intercultural friendships and seems to suggest that such friendships have the power to neutralize potentially divisive cultural differences. In *Andaman’s Boy*, intercultural friendship allows the protagonist’s success, in this case in relation to finding a secure home. Arif is a ten year-old orphan who escapes his avaricious, abusive relatives in Mumbai. He travels alone south through India, eventually finding a new home and family with the Jarawa tribe in the Andaman Islands. On Arif’s quest, intercultural friendship allows him to progress, and his ultimate acceptance into the Jarawa tribe in the Andaman Islands grants him a secure home at the conclusion of the narrative. During his journey from Mumbai to the Andamans, Arif makes friends with many people from a variety of class, caste, cultural, and religious backgrounds, each

of whom influences his movements as well as his understanding of the world. Arif's, his first, accidental meeting with some members of the tribe, approaches them with an open, accepting attitude. When he first meets a Jarawa boy of his own age, Eetha Aleho, they are quickly able to find a rudimentary method of communication, and "soon the boys were rolling over and over in the sand, laughing" (Whittaker, 1998: 108). Arif quickly learns the complicated ritual greeting of Eetha Aleho's tribe, and he does his best to perform it respectfully when his new friend introduces him to the members of the group. After some discussion, the tribe decides that Arif can stay with them because of the friendship between the two boys: "Eetha Aleho pinched him. 'Hey, listen. They're asking, will you come with us?''Yes, of course! I want to! Yes, oh yes!' Arif nodded his head vigourously" (Whittaker, 1998: 115). Similarly, in Swapna Dutta's *Juneli's First Term,* Juneli who has never been to school is introduced to a multitude of characters from across India and she has to forge healthy relationships with them based on mutual love and respect, in order to make St. Avila's a home away from home. Viewed on a symbolic level, this text offers a strategy by which child readers could approach social relationships positively—one that makes the principle of unity in diversity a reality through intercultural friendship. As parables, *Andaman's Boy*, as well as *Juneli's First Term* and many others, such as *Caravan to Tibet* promote a clear message: intercultural friendship and acceptance lead to social harmony, in which everyone can find a secure home.

Andaman's Boy is also a progressive text in the sense that it conveys the importance of treating Indian minority groups, such as tribals, with respect and acceptance. The rights of these tribes are protected by the Constitution. This novel supports the multicultural ethos of the Indian Constitution in terms of its ideological message. Further, it critiques the oppressive policies of the Indian government towards many tribal groups (despite the Constitution). This novel is above

all didactic, as its message is highly moral and it has an obvious educational intention to inform child readers about the customs and cultures of the Jawara in order to promote understanding and acceptance. *Andaman's Boy* is one of the few texts that successfully illustrates the rich diversity and multiculturalism of the Indian nation, a premise extended here even to its tribes that are thus accepted as Indian citizens that deserve equal rights. In Swapna Dutta's *Juneli's First Term* , the spoilt child Poonam Punwani takes a dig at Juneli. She says, "Well, what can you expect from a jungle-bred creature? Possibly she doesn't even know what a hot water bath is! said Poonam cattily" (Dutta, 1992: 28). Poonam leaves no opportunity to call Juneli a "junglee" at any point in the novel. But, in the end poetic justice is meted out. Juneli, along with her friends save the day for the school by performing for the annual day function, while Poonam was sick and holed up in bed. Significantly, fictional intercultural friendship and mutual respect are the vehicles that enable this ideology to be conveyed.

It has already been suggested that Indian children's fiction in English like all its other sisters is heavily influenced and largely imitative of its Western counterparts, due to colonization a large variety of books were imported into India, where it was and is both distributed in English and translated into Indian languages. Until the 1970s, children who wanted or needed to read literature in English primarily turned to western sources (Srinivasan, 1998: 24). This history provides some explanation for the level of imitation, which Sunder Rajan neatly summarizes:

> Though the majority of children's books in India are adaptations, retellings, and even comic-strip renderings of Hindu myths, classics, and folklore or are Indianized versions of children's genres popular in the West (school stories and adventure and detective stories, for example), a small number are now specifically written from within a realistic, contemporary Indian context.
> (Sunder Rajan, 2003: 101)

In order to be able to portray the "realistic, contemporary Indian context", which is diversity, Indian children's authors choose to "Indianize" their texts—clearly a crucial task in relation to English-language literature. In fact, Meenakshi Mukherjee argues that the concept of Indianness is relevant *only* to English-language Indian literature (Mukherjee, 2000: 168). These novels contain signifiers of Indianness which are appropriate to, and would likely be easily recognized by, Indian child readers. Such signifiers include Indian settings, names, and the centrality of Indian food or other culturally identifiable objects within the plot. This cultural content positions these novels as recognizably Indian—apparently a sufficient remedy against imitation, although certainly not against potential essentialization or homogenization. For example, one critic suggests that instead of reading Enid Blyton, Indian children should be given "Swapna Dutta's *Juneli at St Avila's*" (1992), which she identifies as "basically a Malory Towers clone, but starring" the clearly Indian characters of "Poonam and Harbinder" (Sengupta, 1995: 82–83). Apparently this Indian Blytonnade is a suitable alternative to Blyton for Indian children solely because of its Indianness. Poonam and Harbinder are attractive alternatives simply because they are Indian, perhaps suggesting that Indian characters inhabiting an Indian landscape provide the appropriate cultural resonance, regardless of the fact that only a minute fraction of Indian girls attend such prestigious, expensive boarding schools. It is the Indianness in these texts, then, that becomes the crucial and valuable component, regardless of nuance, and this is achieved by infusing Blyton's most popular forms, the school story and the adventure-mystery, with an overarching sense of Indianness. The over-reaching influence of the Western children's authors on the India authors cannot be denied or overlooked, but astute authors are well aware of the need to develop this sense of Indianness.

One common technique with which Sinha and many other Indian children's authors create novels that seem "very Indian" involves infusing the plot with tangible objects that are recognisably Indian, which child readers could conceivably imagine themselves touching or consuming, thus appealing to the perceived sensual nature of children. Therefore the heroic children in Nilima Sinha's *The Chandipur Jewels* and in Arup Kumar Dutta's *The Blind Witness* are important historical Indian artifacts. On the contrary, the nature of these objects plays a crucial part in the narrative, reinforcing the nation-building impetus and contributing to the sense of Indianness, even allowing for a sense of diversity in the case of *The Blind Witness*. This is extremely important because the historical Indian artifacts are sacred, and as Partha Chatterjee says, "The sacredness of national icons plays a curious role within the pedagogical apparatus of history …romantic attitude towards the historical object encourages proximity; it invites the reader or viewer to enter the world to which the object in which the object belonged" (Chatterjee, 2011: 23). Therefore, national images and icons form an important part of history and therefore of the 'nation-building' project. Particularly, in *The Blind Witness* particularly, the description of the objects clearly links them with both the Indian past and positions them as symbolic of a diverse nation. The police officer who describes the smuggling operation to Ramu makes this abundantly clear: he begins by explaining, "India, as you know, is a vast country, her civilization dating back thousands of years. We possess a veritable treasure of items of historical and religious value, icons, jewellery, paintings, sculptures and the like" (Dutta, 1995: 191). This is an unmistakable signal to the reader to feel national pride in the country's heritage. So, indeed, is the fact that

> [w]ealthy collectors abroad are willing to pay astronomical sums for such antiques. There has of late been a tremendous interest in the west for Indian things, whether it

> be Indian philosophy, spirituality or antiques,
> (Dutta, 1995: 191)

Even though the foreign demand is shown to be problematic, as the rightful home of these objects is clearly India. The diversity of the objects also provides a clue that all aspects of the nation should be considered equally valuable:

> An ancient Buddhist manuscript disappearing from the Tawang monastery in Arunachal Pradesh. A Shiva "lingam", thousands of years old, taken from a famous South Indian temple. . . . A priceless *hookah*, made of bronze and inlaid with precious gems, used by a Mughal emperor. An ancient sculpture of Surya, the Sun God, on his horse-drawn chariot. A rare medieval musical instrument. A miniature ivory chess-set, used for generations by a royal family in Rajastan.
> (Dutta, 1995: 191–192).

It is not only Hindu artifacts that require and deserve protection, but also Muslim and Buddhist ones. Similarly, non-religious artifacts representing the arts (the musical instrument) and sciences (the chess-set, symbolizing mathematics), are also worth protecting. Here Indianness is infinitely diverse, although admittedly reduced to convenient containment in a few exoticised objects.

In order to find robust method through which to convey Indianness, critics have said that this must be appropriate for and recognizable to a child audience and, therefore, tangible objects such as historical artifacts, clothing, and, most especially, food are particularly well suited to the task, even if this leads to oversimplification or essentialization of Indianness. Perhaps such a signifier is even more effective when it can be recognized by non-Indians, thus imparting a slightly exotic flavour to the texts, which may position them well in the international market. The use of food is, therefore, political, but it also functions more simply to increase verisimilitude. In

many texts, the inclusion of food effectively heightens the representation of daily life in India. For Indian readers, wherever they may be living, Indian food is a familiar signifier of real life. Even more powerfully, it provides a recognizable, shared, unifying feature of the nation. It is also significant, however, that Indian child characters never prepare Indian food; they simply consume it. Other characters, primarily mothers or servants, create Indian snacks and meals, which children passively accept, yet actively eat. The widespread use of food as a signifier of Indianness thus reinforces the paradox of the empowered yet constructed child, constructed by the adult as to what they want the child to become.

It is well established in the study of children's literature that food is a central component in this body of writing as a whole (Daniel, 2006: 2). Whereas seemingly normalised in many texts, food in children's literature is in actuality both powerful and highly symbolic. Food is

> a particularly good vehicle for carrying culture's socializing messages: it acts to seduce readers; through mimesis it "naturalizes" the lesson being taught; and, through the visceral pleasures . . . it produces, it "sweetens" the discourse and encourages unreflexive acceptance of the moral thus delivered. (Daniel, 2006: 4)

More than this, food is a part of cultural construction and a deeply resonant indicator of national identity, with the subtle implication that "certain qualities in the foods traditionally consumed by each ethnic group are manifested in their national culture. In other words different foods *produce* different people" (Daniel, 2006: 14). In Indian children's fiction in English novels, food is a powerful tool that fosters a sense of national belonging, cultural identity, and pride, thereby fulfilling the ideological goals of these texts by establishing a positive sense of Indianness. The use of food is highly effective in children's literature not simply because children have the capacity to respond to it with great pleasure, but also because hunger is an inextinguishable drive

that all children experience. In *The Village by the Sea*, Hari was hungry and tired. Jagu, the restaurant owner,

> …who was serving his customers with bread and a watery curry of lentils on a plate without a word…When he had finished wiping up the plate with bits of bread, Jagu came and tossed him another *chapatti* and Hari ate that too. He was not used to very much better food at home…
> (Desai, 1982: 143)

The meal that Anita Desai describes here is the food for the common, poor man in India. Hari went on to work for the Sri Krishna Eating House of the Gowalia Tank, where situations were not very different. This too was a eating place for cart-pullers, beggars and labourers. After harbouring a romantic notion of the restaurant Hari was surprised when he saw the state of the place and the kind of food it served, "...lentils were cooked all day in a huge aluminium pan and the *chapattis* were rolled by hand and baked" (Desai, 1982: 146). This is in stark opposition to the kind of fare the de Silva's ate. As the cook orders Lila, "…Here are the vegetables for lunch-start washing and peeling them. In the evening will you go and get some fish? And what about bread for tomorrow's breakfast?" (Desai, 1982: 153). The delicacies that were readily available for the middle-class or the upper class children were available to these children only as treats on very special occasions. As Anita Desai describes Lila's happiness on seeing Hari on the eve of Diwali,

> '…And we made sweets for you, Hari – come and eat."….
> Then Lila came towards him with a brass tray on the palm of her hand. It was heaped with the sweets she has made of rice powder and cream, sugar and flour and semolina and coconut." (Desai, 1982: 223-224)

The change in the food habits of the children from cooking only *chapattis* because "there was so little in the house to cook" (Desai, 1982: 155) to cooking sweets and buying fish to celebrate Hari's homecoming, indicate a change of reversal in the fortunes of these children.

Food as an important cultural marker in trying to not just distinguish one class from the other, but also to celebrate Indian diversity is also beautifully portrayed in Arup Kumar Dutta's *The Kaziranga Trail* and also in *Juneli at St. Avila's* by Swapna Dutta. In Juneli at St. Avila's the girls are given domestic lesson which includes sewing, knitting and cookery classes. Though Swapna Dutta has often been critiqued for writing a school story in the Enid Blyton tradition alone, it will be interesting to note that in their cookery classes they are learning how to make *halwa* which is a typical North Indian dessert. Various other foods are also mentioned in the book and a long discussion ensues about the advantages and disadvantages of cooking fish, which is almost a staple for any Bengali family, including Juneli. As she reminisces,

> "The place may smell fishy but the cooked dish smells delicious. I remember my Aunt Alo cooking dried fish once. There was such a horrible stink when she was cooking it that Daddy was hopping mad at the time. Said the whole place smelt like a tannery. And yet, when we had the same dish for dinner it didn't taste bad at all! And what's more, there was no stink." (Dutta, 1992: 63)

The love for fish and dried fish was evident in Juneli's words, but Latha who was a vegetarian was not comforted by the solace she had to offer. According to her the smell of the fish pervaded all that would be present in that room. This implies the kind of choices of food which was present in India. Similarly in *The Kaziranga Trail*, the three friends decide to eat the beautiful fish curry that their aunt cooked. They were also intelligent enough to make a very clear picture

of the poachers by the kind of food leftovers that they found while investigating the killing of the rhinoceros.

> "…You were wondering whether it was a local gang of poachers or a bunch from outside. I have been looking at the leftovers from the food the poachers were eating. They were a dirty lot. They did not even bother to dump the plantain leaves outside after they had finished eating. You can see the remains of their meal on the leaves. Boiled rice and fish in mustard gravy….They also ate *pithas* (rice cakes). There is no doubt they are local people from some village nearby." (Dutta, 1995: 21-22)

These observations that Jonti makes are crucial to the understanding and the tracking down of the poachers who kill the animals for their horns. References to food may be central as in the case of *The Kaziranga Trail* or may be peripheral as in the case of *The Chandipur Jewels* or as in the whole *Juneli* series. In the novels published in India, food is often mentioned casually, as an unremarkable and normalized aspect of daily life. Though there are some favourite for children that are always mentioned such as 'Gulab Jamuns', 'Jalebis' and 'Samosa' which are treated as universal favourites. Textual references to specifically Indian foods are often connected with celebrations, calling to mind the powerful unifying function of food, as well as creating positive associations between food and Indianness. These celebrations can be related to religion, such as *diwali,* to events related with and symbolic of social class, such as an end-of year school dance, or they can even be rewards for excellent behavior. Regardless of the reason for the feast, Indian food adds an integral component to it, linking celebration, food, and Indianness.

Though food seems to unify Indian children under one banner by also looking at their diversity, the North-South divide in India and the vastly different cultures is portrayed by the kind of food they ate. Recent novels like *When Amma Went Away* (2002) by Devika Rangachari,

clearly outlines the different kind of food that people in South India ate, but even before this text was published, *Tales from Ithihyamala* published by the Children;s Book Trust clearly demarcate the divide. Unlike the *chapatti* which was considered as he staple in the Northern part of India, in Kerela is was rice, curd and coconut. As the fable, 'Like husband, like wife' illustrates,

> When the Namboodiri sat down to eat, he realized that there was no curry or buttermilk to go with the rice… "We eat rice with coconut milk. I have kept four coconuts there." (Srikumar, 1999: 76)

Food conveys belonging or membership, whether this is regional, as in or national. Therefore, in *The Narayanpur Incident* by Saahi Deshpande, when Amma cooks chapattis in her daily life after belonging to Karnataka, it could be a little jarring to an intelligent reader because rice, and not wheat, is the staple food of South India.

Other than food and dress, one of the most important cultural markers in the Indian context is the numerous festivals that Indians celebrate. We find mention of well-known festivals like Diwali, Holi and Dussehra and we also read about lesser known festivals such as Ganesh Chaturthi, Janmastami, Eid and Bihu. Celebrating all these festivals is a matter of great joy and happiness for the children and adults alike. In *The Village by the Sea,* Hari returns to the Village Thul on the Eve of Diwali and celebrate it with his family and friends. This is also very symbolic as Diwali is celebrated on the occasion of Lord Ram's return to Ayodhya, after completing his fourteen year exile in the forests and killing the force of Evil embodied in Ravana. Juneli and her friends decide to celebrate Holi in secret in *Juneli's First Term* once they hear that the Holi celebrations were cancelled that year. Holi for the children was an occasion of great festivity and happiness. In the festivities, Poonam Punwani, who was the only spoilt brat in their class, also decides to take part because she could not imagine a year without having celebrated Holi. She

volunteers to wake all the girls up at midnight as she was the only one with a small alarm clock. As Swapna Dutta writes,

> In a few minutes, it was impossible to recognize the girls, covered as they were with *haldi, kumkum,* ink, and paints! There were shrieks of glee and protests, but luckily no one heard them from that distance! Suddenly the chapel clock struck one!" (Dutta, 1992: 86)

Though all the girls woke up with a cold or a sore throat or headache and had to miss the actual revelry, they were glad to have had and enjoyed the midnight party. Similarly, regional festivals are also celebrated with equal religious fervour. In *The Village by the Sea*, the day after Diali was celebrated as the Hindu New Year's Day in Maharashtra. The children, Lila, Kari, Bela and Kamal, celebrated it with their parents. As Anita Desai writes,

> …the next morning found Lila and her sisters busily sweeping and cleaning and putting up fresh garlands and drawing new *rangoli* patterns. Later in the day the annual bullock cart races were to be held on the beach and excitement ran high in the village… (Desai, 1982: 249)

And later on their mother goes and prays to the local deity with the other women of the village at sunset. Similarly, *Bihu* is celebrated with *pithas* in Arup Kumar Dutta's *How a Tribal Boy Became King* and in *Trouble at Kolongijan.* India's diversity is seen in the number of festivals that we celebrate. Every little occasion from the harvesting of crops, welcoming the spring or rain, to seeing the full moon lends itself to joyous celebrations splashed with colors, music, folk dances and songs. Even the birthdays of divine beings are celebrated by connecting them with particular festivals. Certain festivals are region specific which have been assimilated by all religions and celebrated alike whereas other festivals are religion specific and are celebrated by members of that religion only.

Children's literature plays an important role in the unification and acceptance of the numerous religions present in India. As already mentioned, early Indian children's fiction in English did not recognize the diversity of religions, but homogenized them under one banner/ portrayed all in strictly Hindu terms, thereby constructing, in Gyanendra Pandey's terms,

> One is that nations are established by constructing a core or mainstream-the essential, natural, soul of the nation, as it is claimed. The other is that minorities are constituted along with the nation-for they are the means of constituting national majorities or mainstreams. Nations, and nationalisms, are established by defining boundaries. However, these are not … sharply or easily defined. (Pandey, 1999: 608)

Therefore, the nationalist core is always invisibly, non-politically or naturally established by numerous factors including the public sphere Even as we speak, in India, the Hindu-Muslim divide that culminated in the Indian Partition continues and this continues to plague the Indian nation. As Gyanendra Pandey argues in his essay, "Can a Muslim be an Indian?" about the mindset of the people,

> …the "us" and "them" of Indian nationalism during the late 1940s served to reinforce the conceptual split between the Hindu/Indian on the one hand, and the Muslim/foreigner on the other. Occasionally, this was presented as a division between the "majority" and the "minorities," as in numer- ous ConstituentA ssembly speeches on the "generosity"o f the majorityt owards the minorities. The easy, almost invisible, construction of the Hindus as the real Indians, and the others-especially the Muslims, who, as we have seen, stood particularly under the sign of a question mark- as communities on trial, is to be found in other kinds of nationalist statement as well. (Pandey, 1999: 621)

Therefore in order to negate the space between the "us" and "them". Indian children's fiction in English has an important role to play by instilling a sense of respect, in the minds of young

minds, towards all religions. This can only be done by a showcasing diversity while believing in a common national goal. Inter-religious friendships and amicable interaction is an important part of initiating this change. In Zai Whittaker's *Andaman's Boy,* during his journey from Mumbai to the Andamans, Arif makes friends with many people from a variety of class, caste, cultural, and religious backgrounds, each of whom influences his movements as well as his understanding of the world. At approximately the halfway point of this journey, Arif is employed to care for some goats on a ship traveling to the Andamans. Out in the middle of the ocean, Arif finds a miniature multicultural utopia, presided over by the ship's captain, a Hindu who demonstrates his commitment to diversity through friendship by proclaiming, "My best friends in my village are all Muslims" (Whitaker, 1998: 41) when he mistakenly takes Arif for a Muslim. In this small, temporary community, harmony reigns. The captain decrees:

> You will be our one and only Muslim. All other religions are there. We also have two Jains, sitting there feeding the mosquitoes and ants. Christians, Hindus, Jains, even Buddhists—see those monks in that corner, they're going to the shrine made by the Japanese during the war. And now you. Our Muslim. In the Andamans everyone gets along, it's a caste-no-bar policy, not like the mainland. (Whitaker, 1998: 41)

Although Arif is not Muslim, he accepts this designation and becomes a productive and cooperative member of the ship's harmonious crew and passengers. Similarly, In Anita Desai's *The Village by the Sea,* Hari learnt the trade of watch-fixing from an old watch mender. As Hari asks him,

> While they worked, Hari said, 'Mr. Panwallah, you celebrate Coconut Day and Diwali and yet you are not a Hindu, are you? I thought you are a Parsee and celebrate only Parsee festivals.' (Desai, 1982: 214)

Hari's question is one that might crop up in any child's mind, about the appropriateness of celebrating festivals which belong to any other religion or community; because the festivals that one celebrates in a way defines the religious community one belongs to. But, Mr. Panwallah's answer is one that only an Indian in spirit could articulate,

> 'Oh no, no, no, boy,' cried Mr. Panwallah comically. 'What would be the fun of that? And why should I miss all the fun of all the Hindu and Muslim festivals? No, no, I believe in sharing everything, enjoying everything. That is why I have so much fun, eh?' (Desai, 1982: 214)

Mr. Panwallah's spirit of oneness with all cultures and religions is also amply seen in the *Juneli* school series by Swapna Dutta, namely *Juneli's First Term, Juneli at St. Avila's, An Exciting Term* and *Summer Term at St. Avila's,* a 'multicultural' microcosm of India is formed, where Christians (in the form of the school administration), Muslims, Hindus, Sikhs and other religions are amply portrayed, who enjoy cooking and consuming food of different cultures and religions. The girls cook stew, *halwa* and *sambar* with equal ease and love and all these are eaten by the whole school. Stories about Buddhism, Islam and Christianity were discussed and equally savoured by all, which would ultimately beget more tolerant and respectable citizens of India. In the novella by Salman Rushdie, *Haroun and the Sea of Stories*, Rushdie has created a complex allegory that emphasizes the importance of exchange between different cultural groupings. At the level of theme, he has shown how Guppees and Chupwalas are able to create a better society when rigorous separation is not enforced; at the level of symbolism, he has given us the potent image of the story sea that is only healthy when stories from diverse places are permitted to intermingle freely; finally, and perhaps most innovatively, he has created a story sea in his own text by drawing eclectically from diverse narrative traditions (Arabic, Persian, Indian, and European) and allowing those traditions to cross-pollinate one another. As Andrew S. Teverson

argues in his essay, “Fairy Tale Politics: Free Speech and Multiculturalism in "Haroun and the Sea of Stories" Rushdie’s,

> …aim is to imagine a form for the nation, if nation is understood not as a unified and holistic entity defined by the exclusion of "others" but as a fluid, provisional entity defined by its capacity to incorporate differ- ence and variation. (Teverson, 2001: 461)

This idea of the ‘nation’ as being diverse and ‘multicultural’ is beautifully articulated in Homi Bhaba’s description of the disseminated nation - a nation that is,

> a form of living that is more complex than "community"; more symbolic than "society"; more connotative than "country"; less patriotic than patrie ... less homogenous than hegemony; less centred than the citizen; more collective than the "subject"; more psychic than civility; more hybrid in the articulation of cultural differences and identifications than can be represented in any hierarchical or binary structuring of social antagonism. (Bhabha, 1994: 140)

Therefore, in *Haroun and the Sea of Stories*, the story sea is not just a metaphor for free speech and free narratives; it also offers a model for an ideal concept of nationhood that permits unlimited interaction and exchange between cultural interests and also different religions particularly in the images of Haroun and Rashid, who are Muslims and Miss Oneeta and Mr. Sengupta who are Bengalis. Therefore, it also offers a model for an ideal concept of nationhood that permits unlimited interaction and exchange, though not always pleasant, between cultural interests. The story sea represents the idea of a nation that is redefined in each moment of its existence and is able to incorporate new strands into the national narrative as they become part of the on- going performance of national life. Islamic stories are no longer restricted to stories about Mughal kings and their courtiers, but more secular figures like Mulla Nasiruddin are included, which makes for informative as well as humorous reading. In recent times, a collection of Sufi

folk tales was published in the form of a comic book titled *40 Sufi Comics Books* (2012) published by two brothers, Mohammed Ali Vakil and Mohammed Arif Vakil, who said that their,

> … introduction to Indian culture came from comics like ACK (*Amar Chitra Katha*), we also read a lot of other comics like Tin Tin, Asterix, Phantom etc. Looking back we realized that the medium of comics is very powerful, and can have a more lasting impression than just text (especially for the younger generation). These days learning has become very visual.
>
> Islam also has a very rich tradition of art, so we thought of using an art form to narrate these stories. In our latest book the inspiration came from Persian & Turkish miniature paintings. The Qur'an & Hadith are written by hand in Islamic Calligraphy. And no, we had not come across anyone putting these stories in comic format. (http://twocircles.net/2013jul14/spreading_islamic_values_through_comics.html)

But other than including just Islam, very secular versions of the *Panchatantra* written in the fictional format, titled *Nyagarodha*, has been published for children. Similarly, Buddhism as a religion which is practiced by a very small group of people in India also is fictionally depicted in *Caravan to Tibet* (2007) by Deepa Agarwal, which is a historical fiction where Debu makes two friends, one a Buddhist lama and another a Tibetan trader, when he sets out to search for his father. Only together, Agarwal demonstrates, can they make their way peacefully and productively through the trade route. Sonam Darka's aid and support are integral to Debu's ability to succeed in his quest and further ensures social harmony and economic prosperity when Debu's father and Sonam Darka later create a business alliance. *Caravan to Tibet* clearly showcases the benefits of interreligious friendship and the social strength it builds.

The realization of a nation to become a nation-state is not enough, the nation-state and its citizens have to nurture and sustain it based on the values of equality in all fields. Citizens must respect and treasure what the nation has to offer, as is already illustrated in the form of historical and cultural artifacts, which do not belong to just one group but to the nation at large. In keeping with the times and demands of the 20th and the 21st century, a great many of such work have voiced strong concerns about saving the environment and protecting wild life. This is very evident in *The Kaziranga Trail* by Arup Kumar Dutta, where the three boys bust a poaching racket in the Kaziranga reserve. Dutta stresses on the human need to protect the environment through connections with animals. In *The Kaziranga Trail* (1995), three village boys defeat corruption and protect the web of life in the Kaziranga Wildlife Sanctuary by aiding in the discovery and capture of a ring of rhinoceros poachers whose crimes are enabled by a corrupt forest ranger. The boys work closely with one another and in conjunction with the adults to achieve this purification of the Sanctuary, which is framed in the narrative as a crucial, life-and-death battle. The protagonist of the novel, Dhanai, Bubul and Jonti, were in love with the sanctuary and would do anything to save it. As young boys would, they were looking forward to enjoying their summer vacation there. As Dutta writes,

> They knew the area like the palms of their hand. This morning they had planned to cut across the sanctuary and go right up to the banks of the Brahmaputra river.
>
> Usually the sanctuary is alive with sounds, the twittering of birds, the chirping of crickets and the occasional grunts of a rhino. But this morning a strange silence prevailed. Herds of deer stood still sniffing the air. (Dutta, 1995: 9-10)

Soon, the boys realized that the poachers had killed a rhino, and they ran to Neog mama, the District Forest Officer in charge of wildlife, to inform him about the killing and they decided to

help him nab the culprits. When Phukan, the head forest ranger, questions them as to why they entered the forest Neog replies,

> "Oh, lay off, Phukan,"…"These boys are not tourists coming for a visit. Their village was here long before this became a sanctuary. Kaziranga and its animals are a part of their lives." (Dutta, 1995: 16)

The boys are very much a part of that protected area and do their best to stop the killing of the animals in Kaziranga, not out of a sense of adventure but for love. A similar instance is seen in Anita Desai's *The Village by the Sea* where Hari is taken aback by the strange Mr. Ali. Mr. Ali was an Ornithologist, who had come to Thul to study the nesting habits of the baya birds. Hari remembered him from somewhere but could not place him, it is only later did we realize that it was the same gentleman who spoke against the fertilizer plant being built at Thul. His love for the baya birds, infected Hari too and for the first time in his life, he actually notices these birds. As he notices,

> They were not even pretty birds like the kingfishers or the egrets, but small and spotted and brown like sparrows, although some had yellow heads…how wonderful it was that these small creatures had built this colony of strange nests that swung over the water where no one could get at them and harm the young. (Desai, 1982: 252)

Mr. Ali rued the day the factory would be built because along with the factory and its bearings the environment of Thul would suffer and all its idyllic setting and its cleanliness for bird habitat would be gone. As he describes the dismal situation to Hari, he says,

> 'Everything is doomed. The fish in the sea will die from the effluents that will be pumped into the water. The paddy fields will be built over by factories and houses and streets. My little baya birds will find no more paddy leaves for their nests. Or grain or food for their young. They will have

> to fly away. I may not see them another year.'
> (Desai, 1982: 255)

The love that Mr. Ali has for the birds and the environment of Thul is clearly expressed in the lines quoted above. Arif, the protagonist of the book *Andaman's Boy* by Zai Whittaker, from the beginning shared a deep love for nature and would often day dream about it while he was living with his Uncle and Aunt in Mumbai. He would often daydream and lose himself in thoughts of Nature when his uncle and aunt would scold or beat him for anything. So, it was only natural that once he ran away from his 'home' and smuggled his way to the Andaman Island, he felt at one with the nature and with the simple folks of the Jarawa tribe. He enjoyed being on his own and enjoyed his time, swimming in the Bay of Bengal and admiring the coral reefs, which Andaman is famous for.

> Shoals of busy fish shot past, the first batch being what he called 'taxi fish'. In their speed, colour and daring, they were like Mumbai taxis. The smaller zebra fish brushed past his face. All around, fish of different shapes, sizes, colours, each moving with its own special gait…. It was an underwater amusement park, better and richer than Disney World. (Whittaker, 1998: 106)

Not only does Arif fall in love with the environment and the reefs he also starts respecting the Jarawa tribesmen who adopt him as one of their own. They allow him to cry for the loss of his parents for the first time in his life and his friend's parents adopts him as their son. They teach him "new things about the jungle and the coral reefs every day …he'd seen more than television – even Discovery Channel – could ever have shown him" (Whittaker, 1998: 118). In turn of their kindness and hospitality and the love that Arif felt for them he managed to save them from the slaughtering mainland people who did not care about these people but just about the Jarawa land. As Arif hears them, "So we're going to take them away from their land, their homes, dump them

in a place where we know - excuse me – but we know they're not going to make it" (Whittaker, 1998: 125). Arif not only manages to save the Jarawa tribesmen but also is accepted amongst the forever.

Acceptance into a society in the way you are, as illustrated, is a crucial feature of a 'multicultural nation'. Gender roles also see a significant change in the kind of books that were published for children, particularly after the Nehruvian era. As discussed in the previous chapter, gender roles are not 'homogenized' anymore, but a sufficient space is given for a girl character to grow and develop. Gender equality is not just seen in fiction, but the Government too took sufficient steps to aid the girl child. As Bhadra says,

> [A] series of liberal as well as progressive legislations have been enacted to improve the socio-economic status of girl child [*sic*]. However, effective enforcement of these laws can be guaranteed only by public awareness and mass pressure to provide her with equal opportunities.
>
> The status of girl child is changing mainly due to legislative measures, social development, increasing educational facilities and awareness through media. (Bhadra, 1999: 18)

Steps taken in the field of education and health-care went a long way and definitely improved the situation of the girl child. The image of the girl-child in earlier times was that of a 'doubly-subaltern' which begins to slowly change though a lot is still left to be desired. The role of the female gender cannot be overlooked, in relation to contemporary Indian children's literature generally, "[t]he majority of Indian writers of children's fiction are women, for reasons that undoubtedly have to do with their putative understanding of the child 'sensibility'" (Sunder Rajan, 2003:102). In traditional Indian society, grandmothers played the role of oral storyteller; perhaps women writers are taking up this mantle in the contemporary context. Whereas the

production of children's literature, even when undertaken by women, does not in and of itself constitute a feminist act, the sample novels written by women do seem to make up a feminist literary project, although one that is related to nation-building in complex ways. As in girls' school stories such as *Juneli's First Term* (1994) by Swapna Dutta, Juneli steps out of her comfort zone of her home and the company of her father, to go to a boarding school in St. Avila's and in the subsequent sequels becomes a young, intelligent and trustworthy young girl who is equally good at her studies as she is in the extra-curricular activities. Juneli in the third book of the series titled, *An Exciting Term* also, solves a mystery in the novel, which reveals to the young girl Anuradha that her grandfather had left her a fortune and that she could follw her dreams with the money. As Ina exclaims after solving the mystery,

> "Gosh, how wonderful!" cried Ina. "So your future is settled, after all, and you can carry on with your Art."… "I owe it to all of you, especially Juneli," said Anuradha in a grateful voice. "But for you, I'd never have found it! I just don't know how to thank you." (Dutta, 1992: 97)

Similary, in *The Chandipur Jewels,* Sarika insists upon participating in the mission to re-claim the family's ancestral treasure, countering her older brother's insistence that "girls don't go on dangerous missions" by claiming that "girls can do anything boys can and much better too" (Sinha, 1991: 39). This is reminiscent of what Manju said in *The Narayanpur Incident,* which was discussed in the last chapter. The only difference being that Manju was not allowed to participate because she was a girl and Sarika is allowed despite being a girl. Lila in *The Village by the Sea* belongs to the fishing community and has to take charge of the domestic sphere because her father is a drunkard and her mother is ill. She has to smother all her wishes and desires so that she could provide two square meals for her siblings. Lila has to miss the village play because she has to go and cook for her siblings. As Mina tells Lila,

> … ‘See, Lila, the actors have come. They are going to do a play tonight.’
>
> Lila similed and went up to her friend Mina. ‘Which play? Do you know?’
>
> ‘I don’t know, but it will be the same they always have, of course,’… ‘It will be the Radhe- Krishna story, or the Rama-Sita or the Nala-Damayanti. They always do those, you know.’…
>
> ‘Hari and I cant go out together and leave the little girls alone.’ (Desai, 1982: 38)

The little girl, Lila already has a great responsibility of not just mothering her siblings but to also provide for them. By the end of the novel, the financial independence that these children attain does not enable them to go to school but to buy sweets. So, the idea of the Indian “new woman” still had a long way to go.

The idea of the Indian “new woman” has been discussed by several scholars, notably by Sunder Rajan in *Real and Imagined Women* (1993). Sunder Rajan recognises a national imperative to develop a contemporary pan-Indian identity and locates it in “the Indian *woman*” who is not only “wife, mother and homemaker” but also “modern and liberated,” because only she can balance “(deep) tradition and (surface) modernity” to “[save] the project of modernisation-without-westernisation” (ibid: 130). Sunder Rajan argues that the “construction of a ‘new’ ‘Indian’ woman” is perpetuated in “the contemporary discourse of women in India” and questions the use of this figure in nationalist and capitalist agendas (ibid). She finds it problematic that this new Indian woman is consistently portrayed as urban, middle-class, and educated, in that the dissemination of this idealized figure via print and television media promotes “a normative model of citizenship” (ibid) vis-à-vis the character of the like of Lila and her sisters. When this powerful image of the new Indian woman is dominant, it not only acts to influence and contain Indian women, it also prevents other versions of Indian womanhood from gaining validation. These concerns are also applicable to contemporary children’s novels written

by Indian women, in that they portray a similarly influential and containing fictional figure that have been identified as a "new Indian girl." The "new Indian girl" is always portrayed as they are loved, well-fed, physically competent, secure, obtaining an education, able to take initiative, and supported and respected by both parents. Thus, they are in a position to expend their energy either by helping others to become new Indian girls and/or by improving their communities. In *A Summer Adventure* the children feel "very sorry" for Shanta because she has "a very dirty little face," "torn clothes," and "timid" eyes, which make her appear "a real scarecrow" (Deshpande, 2006: 27). The rescue of Shanta, a servant girl living in slave-like conditions, is the story's secondary plot and provides its happy ending. The resolution is a common one: she eventually becomes a servant in the protagonists' family. This shift in Shanta's status is later portrayed in a sequel as positive and enlightened according to a liberal value system:

> Later, since Shanta had no parents or family of her own, Amma had taken her into their house. Now she had become their friend, pupil (Minu was teaching her how to read and write), admirer, and Ammu's devoted helper.
> (Deshpande, 2006: 103)

Shanta is an orphan and therefore extremely vulnerable, so the family's rescue of her could be crucial to her survival. However, regardless of the improvement in her circumstances, her own desires are never made clear. Though she never vocalizes her personal goals and she remains a servant, the gift o education may someday uplift her status. Similarly, the importance of education for a girl-child in emphasized in *The Chandipur Jewels*, when Sarika educates a servant-girl named Minia. Sarika's gift of education, gives Munia the strength to be able to stand up against the atrocities of her husband and his family and she scribbles a note pleading for Sarika and her family to rescue her, emphasizing her weakness. Michel Superle, criticizes this by saying that, "her status as a Third World girl is re-emphasized, as are the ways this status

renders her powerless" (Superle, 2011: 163). But, Munia being able to write to Sarika and her family is her first step towards independence. New Indian girlhood is most often textually imagined as a state of empowerment, yet though this empowerment is restricted to girls who embody mainstream middle-class attractiveness, they try to move a step ahead and help other girls who are less fortunate than they are, and complete their duty to the communities and nation.

Indian children's fiction in English in the post-Nehruvian era moves a step ahead in its duty of becoming more inclusive and more tolerant towards all the 'unknown' cultures that are clearly mentioned in our Constitution. Writers of this genre have looked ahead of the idea of 'politics of inclusiveness' associated with the idea of 'Unity in Diversity' that was proposed by Nehru and have moved ahead to the idea of the 'politics of exclusiveness' i.e. to celebrate the diversity of the Indian nation and to borrow the phrase, to celebrate the idea of India as a 'salad bowl.' Multiculturalism has come to be associated with the politics of recognition, though Charles Taylor's essay, "The Politics of Recognition," does not use the term. Indeed, multiculturalism is regularly employed in official, governmental discourse to designate the recognition of minorities by the state and its institutions. In order to achieve these goals, Taylor argues that the community at large, at the level of the nation-state, must not only afford scope for the positive representation of difference but actively recognize and promote it. Though, in theory, any such measure threatens to undermine the constitution's liberal humanist basis by subordinating individual rights to that of an imperfectly defined group, Taylor contends that, for the reasons outlined above, our cultural values—which include liberal humanism and its antecedent individualism, but which also encompass an understanding of the universal desire for cultural survival—can be best realized by partially abrogating individualism in this instance.

Furthermore, he argues that, since diversity is an inherent feature of human society, the nation as a whole is bound to benefit from a greater understanding of that fact.

The understanding of the fact of diversity is not enough, what is also required is to portray ‘Indian diversity’ in a fashion that is not didactic and is more acceptable to children. This chapter portrays the manner in which diversity is received and examines the various ways of portraying it. The idea of values and traditions remain unchanged, as discussed in Chapter two, the change is in the way they are disseminated to children, and in this dissemination the cultural, religious, social and tribal diversity that is showcased for young minds to gather and incorporate. Co-operation, friendship, tolerance towards one another are some of the crucial values that are put forth to Indian children through these books.

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CONCLUSION

As we have said in the dissertation, Indian children's fiction in English played an important role in the process of developing an understanding of belonging and differentiation among young Indians in the crucial decades following Independence. Indian English writers both consciously and inadvertently helped to shape the debates surrounding the nation's sense of identity that emerged following 1947. The multi-faceted and sometimes competing ideologies presented in this children's literature all contributed to the construction of new notions of what is meant to be Indian.

In order to define what is 'Indian', writers and cultural historians have always regarded traditional expressions like myths, fables and folktales as 'survivals' of time, within which lies the 'spiritual principle' which unites the nation. The process of self-definition of a nation begins with the search for these forms of folk life which show a group of people as belonging together through the annals of time. The contemporary dimensions of these forms was pointed out by theorists like Meider, who pointed to definitions like "variability and stability", new creations of traditional forms", "traditions and change", "cultural continuity and discontinuity", "simultaneity and modernity of folklore" (Meider, 1987: x) to indicate the cultural significance of these storytelling modes in all planes of time. This appropriation of time within the fold of cultural expressions is also indicated in Thompson's *The Folktale:*

> …like all other elements of human culture, folk tales are not mere creatures of chance. They exist in time and space, and they are affected by the nature of the land where they are current, by the linguistic and social contracts of the people, and by the lapse of the years and their accompanying historic changes. (Thompson, 1951: 13)

The assumption that there is a "connection between child and nation" continues to be used by writers "to make a nationalist point", and the connection between the child and the nation cannot

be ignored. It would be difficult to argue that any nation, no matter how ancient, has a single, fixed identity to which all of its citizens subscribe. Nations are complex and ever changing entities that are not always easily defined. Yet this fact has not precluded a continuing effort to establish and lay claim to national identities, regardless of how imperfect or inadequate they may be. Many of the criteria often used to define a group of people who inhabit a particular territory as a nation, including common ancestry, language, or culture, are insufficient. In nineteenth century India, for instance, much of the population could not claim common descent or language, yet there were stirrings of a national consciousness. Instead, the "nation" appears to be an organizing principle that seeks to order society around a set of core values and beliefs. Laying claim to a national identity can be an important means of promoting these ideals and of fostering a sense of community and common purpose. Given the inherent arbitrariness and instability of nations, a sense of common identity can help achieve a feeling of coherence and unity in an otherwise diverse body of people. National bonds can also be formed through the development of a common culture. Benedict Anderson acknowledges the process of actively constructing national identities and the various mechanisms employed in this quest:

> [s]o often in the "nation-building" policies of the new states one sees both a genuine, popular nationalist enthusiasm and a systematic, even Machiavellian, instilling of nationalist ideology through mass media, the educational system, administrative regulations, and so forth. . . . One can thus think of many of these nations as projects the achievement of which is still in progress. (Anderson 1983: 113–114)

Anderson acknowledges both the natural, organic growth of nationalist sentiment and the "systematic" process by which national spirit is fostered. One important addition to the list of tools that aid the spread of both "genuine" and "systematic" nationalist ideology is literature. Literature is, after all, an important means by which individuals and communities express and

share the ideas and values they hold dear. Literature itself is an important educational device and, given the impressionable nature of young children, children's literature is a particularly powerful tool for inscribing a set of ideals or beliefs in readers. As such, this literature is an important means by which a sense of belonging to a larger national community can be achieved. As children's literature scholar Margaret Meek observes:

> If we agree that literature offers and encourages a continuing scrutiny of "who we think we are", we have to emphasise the part that children's literature plays in the development of children's understanding of both belonging (being one of us) and differentiation (being other). In the outside world, children adopt adult attitudes that their books either confirm or challenge.
> (Meek 2001: x)

Similarly, Indian children's fiction in English 'confirms'/ 'challenges' the adult understanding of the nation. The Introduction of the thesis outlines the beginning and development of Indian children's fiction in English. It also explains at length the ideas, like children's literature, nation and culture that inform this study. This chapter outlines the methodology used in this project.

The first chapter of this dissertation titled, "Locating the Sea of Stories", tries to locate the sea of folklore which could define the nation, across time and space, and illustrates that the major values of a nation resides in its folklore. This chapter also tries to elucidate the various other factors, both foreign and Indian, and the influence they yielded both to Indian history and therefore to this genre as well. This chapter looks at the crucial influence that the missionaries had to the development and proliferation of this genre, particularly in the regional languages. They published numerous books and pamphlets on Christianity for children, particularly of *Stories from the Bible* and *Aesop's Fables.* These texts formed the basis for Indian children's fiction in English.

The process of self-definition can also be one of exclusion and as such, nationalism has come under fierce criticism. Many of the constructions of early Indian identity are competing and contradictory, reflecting a complex process of inclusion and exclusion. This process of inclusion and exclusion is clearly spelled out in the second chapter of the dissertation. Once, writers had identified the rich repertoire of folk tales, which were deemed Indian, it was an uphill task to choose from amongst them. Moreover for a nation that had just gained Independence, a vision was of utmost importance to further the country into an age of modernization. In this case, the Nehruvian ideal provided the much needed thrust. As Amit Dasgupta notes in relation to the power of story in Indian culture, "Every story in *The Panchatantra Tales* . . . helped the child assimilate the societal norms and the acceptable code of conduct and behavior" (Dasgupta, 1995 :2). These texts upheld certain universal values for children. Following Nehru's vision of 'Unity in Diversity', the texts published particularly by the NBT and the CBT followed the hegemonic ideals of what should be included and what should not be. Therefore, in the second chapter, a few of the inclusions/ exclusions have been studied and the implications of such an exercise have been mentioned. The analyses of Bond's *Tales and Legends from India,* Romila Thapar's *Indian Tales* and the other historical fiction used for this study reveals the homogenization of the myriad cultures of India into a more Hindu-centric, North Indian and masculine identity. This homogenization is seen by many as highly problematic. Whereas the idea of unity in diversity was so central to the years of nationalist struggle and the building of the new nation state, it has recently been displaced by an urgent need to question the nature of that unity. However, such questioning is largely absent from many Indian children's novels in this sample, which primarily imagine India as unified, although in actuality it is comprised of many different groups whose interests may range from unrelated to competing.

With the disillusionment of the Nehruvian ideal and the 'singularity' of the nation being challenged by various marginalized sections, Indian children's fiction in English also began to start addressing these numerous voices that were raised. The third chapter addresses the way in which values were being portrayed to children. As discussed in the third chapter, texts such as *Haroun and the Sea of Stories* Salman Rushdie; *Juneli* series by Swapna Dutta; *Andaman's Boy* by Zai Whittaker; *The Kaziranga Trail* and *The Blind Witness* by Arup Kumar Dutta and *The Village by the Sea* by Anita Desai, to mention a few, bring to light the numerous traditions, customs and people who are as much Indian as anyone else. This chapter portrays the manner in which diversity is received and examines the various ways of portraying it. As mentioned, the idea of values and traditions remain unchanged, as discussed in Chapter Two, the change is in the way they are disseminated to children, and in this dissemination the cultural, religious, social and tribal diversity that is showcased for young minds to gather and incorporate.

Multiculturalism is brought to Indian children's fiction in English, as a 'salad bowl', where all the constituents regain their individual taste instead of the idea of the 'melting pot' where all tastes are subsumed for a distinct flavour. Questions regarding gender, differences of class, differentiation based on class and religion have been clearly addressed. It is perhaps this process of reconciling notions of caste/ class/ religion and national identity, which most clearly articulates the means by which national identity can be constructed and developed in accordance with changing needs and attitudes. Of course, such an ideal view of a nation is difficult to live up to. Freedom is tempered by government policy, diversity is not uniformly embraced, and certain linguistic and ethnic groups are excluded from the mainstream. The concepts of national identity put forth in the Indian children's literature in English examined here contain their share of both the very positive and deeply negative traits. Regardless of this mix of elements, this process of

coming to terms with what makes India unique reveals the widespread belief in the nation's potential. Yet the aim of much of this children's literature was not just to celebrate this potential, but to ensure that it would be fulfilled.

The study of the relationship between children's literature and issues of nationalism and national identity in India is one that is worthy of further exploration. Contrary to what some critics have argued, the decades following Independence were not simply ones in which the Indian nation state bowed to the communal pressures, or to the failing economy, it tried to foster a spirit of independence and self-definition. The process of helping to construct and influence a sense of national identity did not end, however, in the early twentieth century. One important question to address, for instance, is the degree of influence other 'identity' movements have been portrayed. How does children's literature in India deal with these conflicts? What impact did debates over Hindu and Muslim identity manifest itself in Indian children's fiction in English? These and other questions need to be answered in order to take full measure of the role played by children's literature in shaping a peaceful and amicable Indian national identity.

The Indian identity is not static nor is it easily defined, yet it is clear that the process of attempting to articulate it has its roots in the nation's earliest days. The stirrings of a national consciousness and the desire to foster a sense of common unity and purpose were an important part of the cultural life of early India. India's national identity remains one fraught with complexities, contradictions, and uncertainties. There is a continuing struggle to find a balance between the country's two main religious groups, there is ongoing adjustment to the ever-changing cultural face of the nation, and there is a lingering fear of loss of traditional values in the wake of globalization. These struggles are not, as some would argue, a sign of the nation's failure to fulfill its potential but are rather an inherent part of India's distinctiveness. They

represent a continuation of some of the national ambitions that were being encouraged in those who laid the ground for modern Indian society: namely, the children of the nineteenth and twentieth century. The presence of aspiration and hope in these novels is of the utmost importance, and it is essential to acknowledge the high value of optimism. Trites suggests that "[o]ne of the most important functions of children's literature is to depict children who enact the agency that children in real life may not have" (Trites, 1997: 29). Their portrayals could begin to inspire social transformation if readers internalize and adopt the textual strategies portrayed in the novels as they are invited to do.

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APPENDIX- Please refer to the seperate folder titled Appendix.

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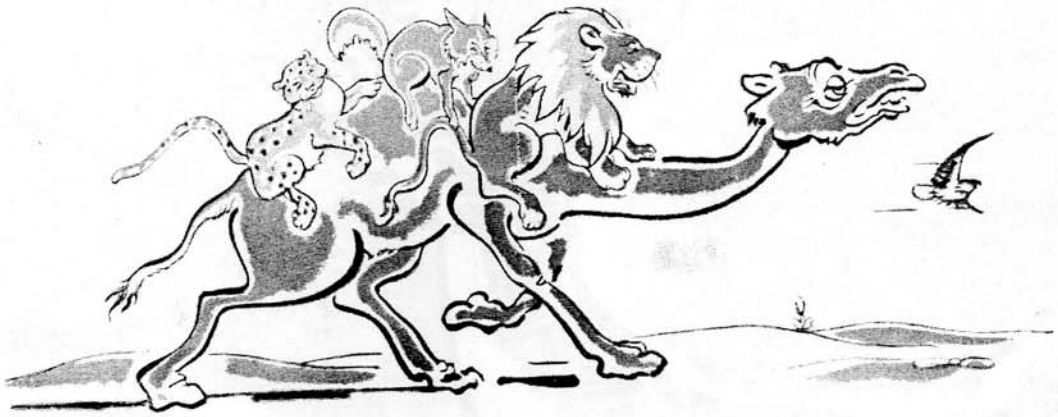
THE KING'S CHOICE

A folk tale retold by K. Shivkumar
Illustrated by Reboti Bhushan



CHILDREN'S BOOK TRUST NEW DELHI

THE KING'S CHOICE

First printed 1961
Reprinted February 1967,
Reprinted September 1968,

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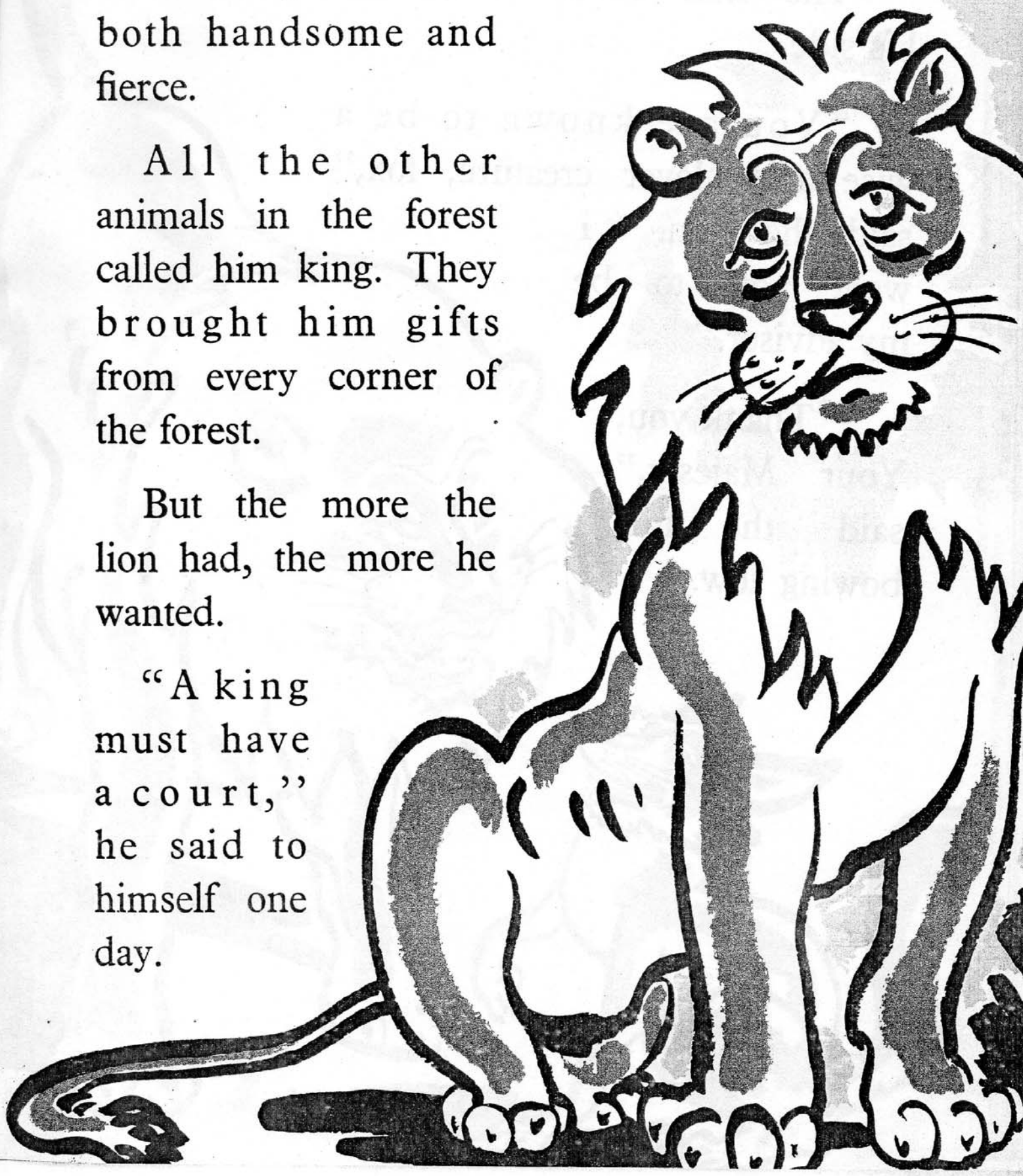
Published by the Children's Book Trust and printed at the Indraprastha Press, New Delhi

THERE was once a lion who was king of the forest. He was big and strong. He was both handsome and fierce.

All the other animals in the forest called him king. They brought him gifts from every corner of the forest.

But the more the lion had, the more he wanted.

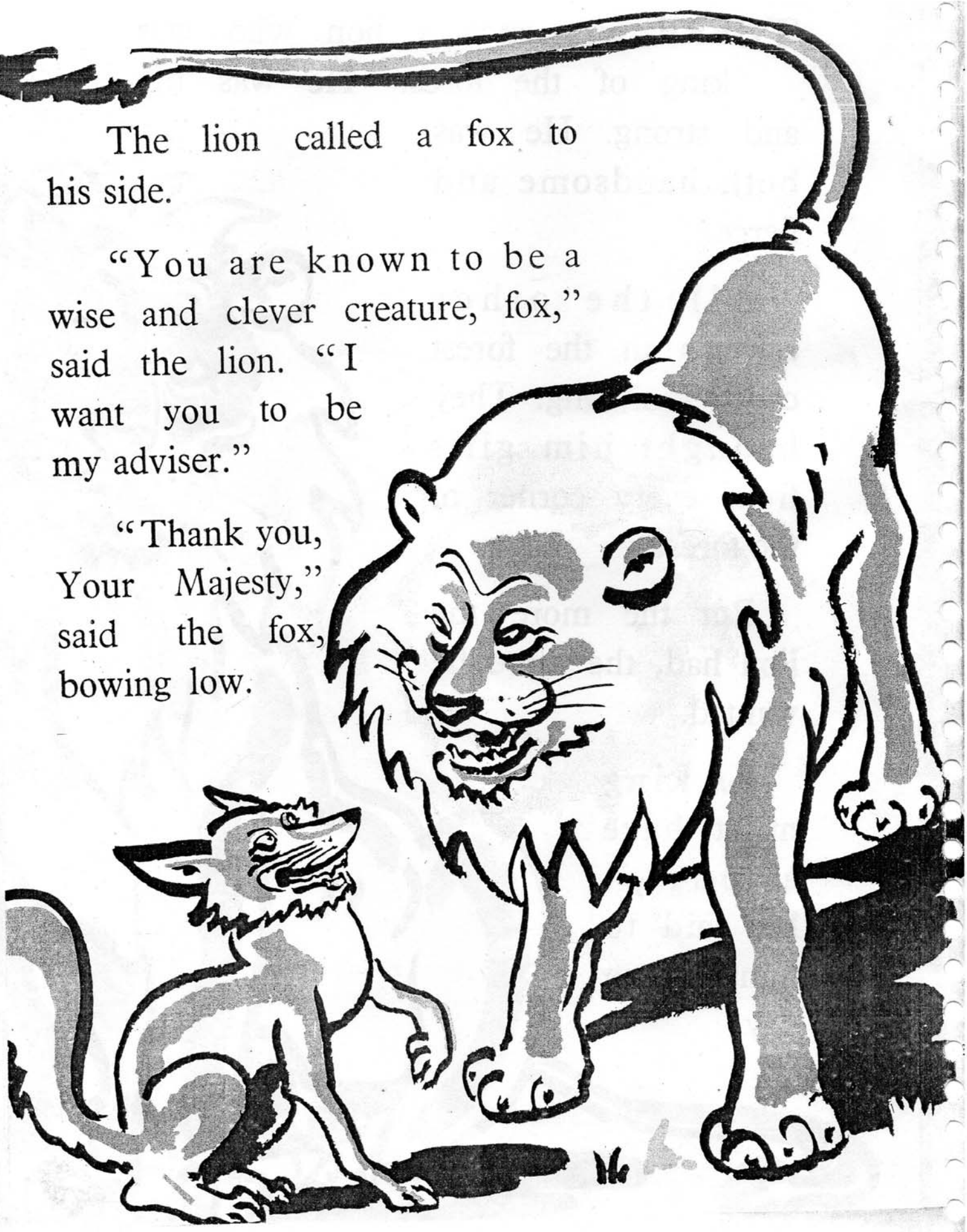
"A king must have a court," he said to himself one day.



The lion called a fox to his side.

"You are known to be a wise and clever creature, fox," said the lion. "I want you to be my adviser."

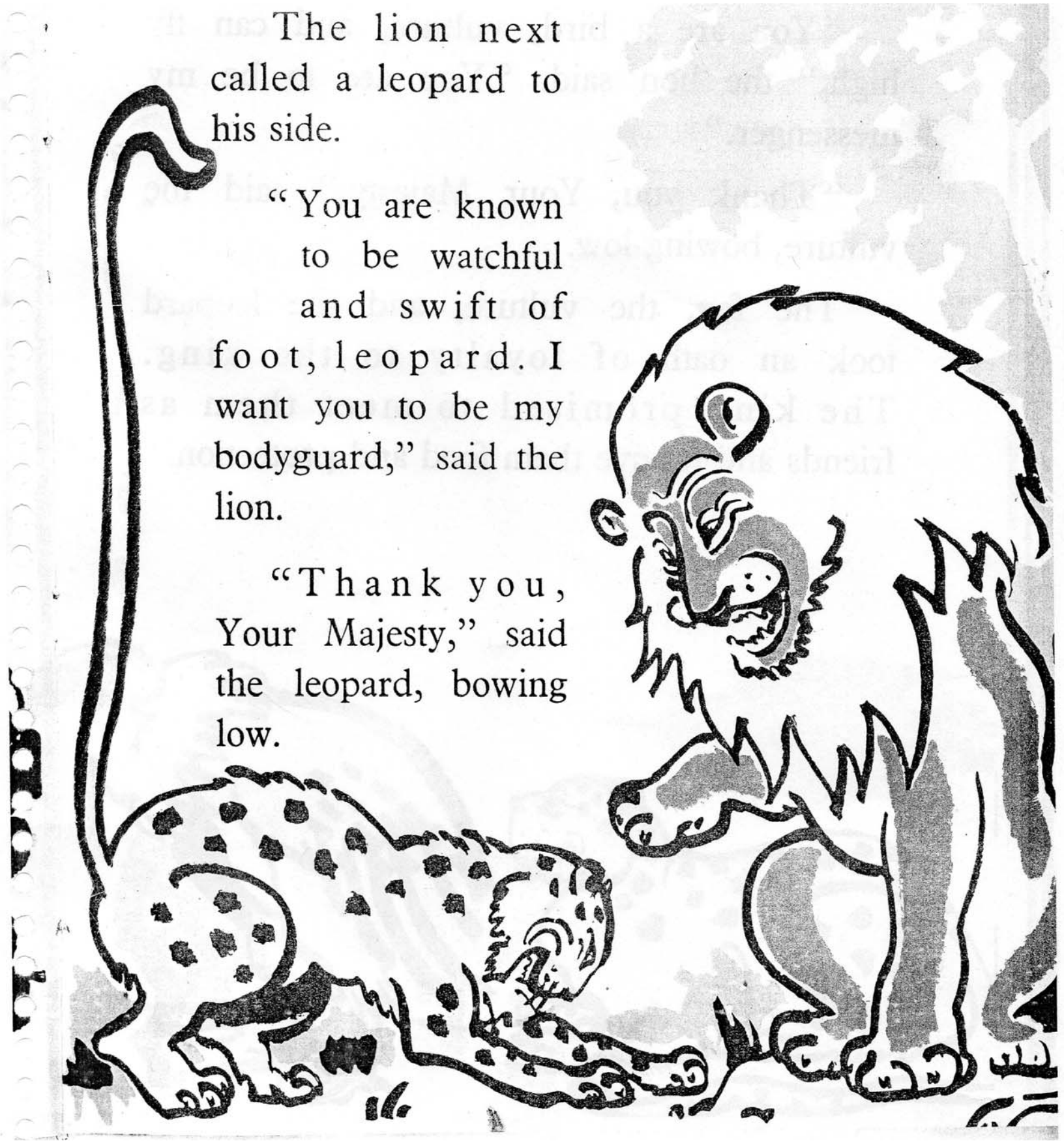
"Thank you, Your Majesty," said the fox, bowing low.



The lion next called a leopard to his side.

"You are known to be watchful and swift of foot, leopard. I want you to be my bodyguard," said the lion.

"Thank you, Your Majesty," said the leopard, bowing low.



The lion then called a vulture to his side.

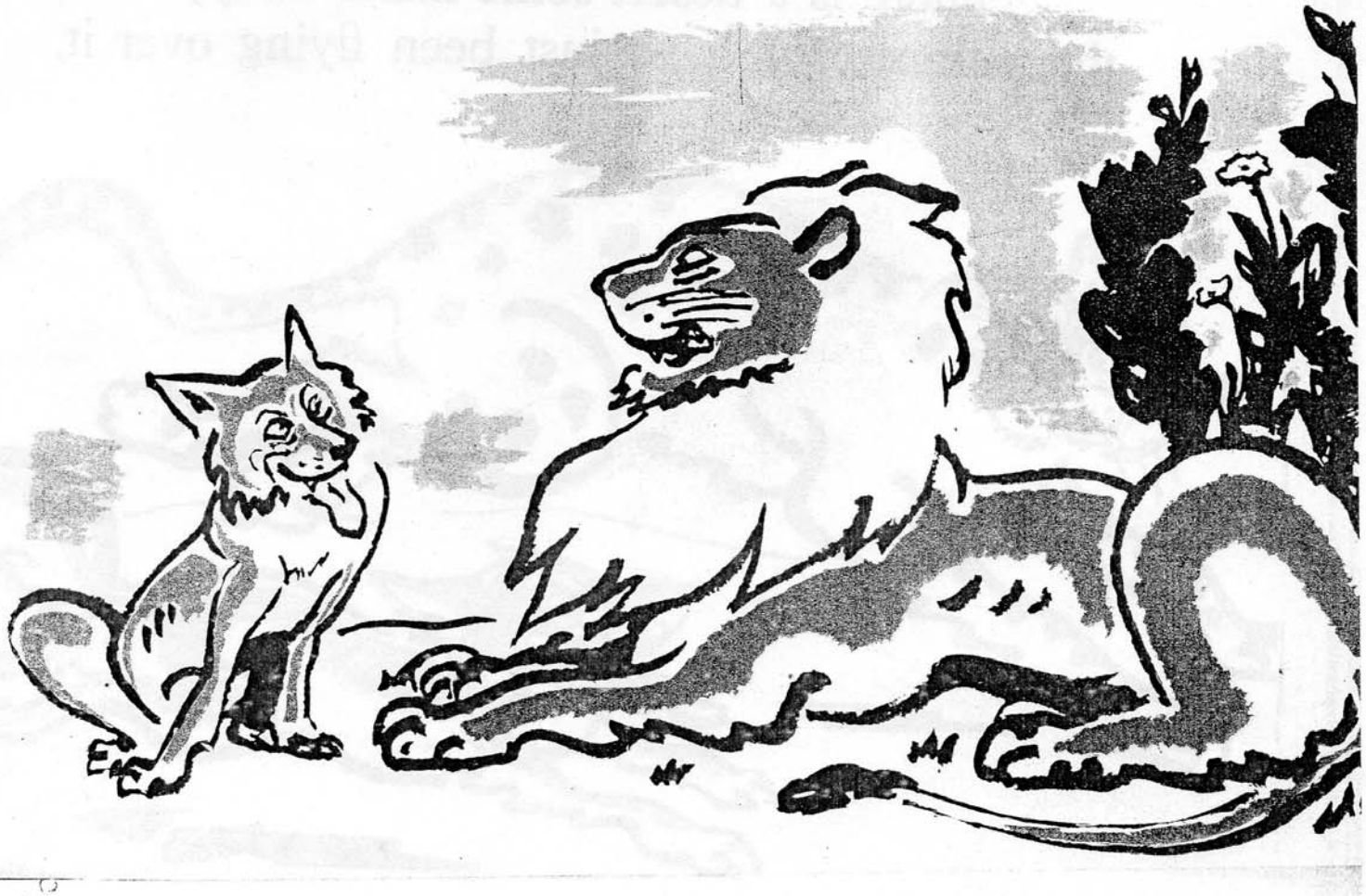
"You are a bird, vulture, and can fly high," the lion said. "You are to be my messenger."

"Thank you, Your Majesty," said the vulture, bowing low.

The fox, the vulture, and the leopard took an oath of loyalty to the king. The king promised to meet them as friends and to give them food and protection.

For some time all went well in the court of the lion king. The three courtiers never opposed the king. His wishes were law. Whenever he roared, they stood in awe. Whenever he took a walk they followed him.

When the lion king went hunting, they found the animals for him to kill. And after he had had his meal, he left the remains for them. So they always had enough to eat.



One day the vulture came back from a flight.

"Your Majesty, have you ever tasted camel?" he asked. "It is very nice. I ate a camel in the desert once."

The lion had never seen a camel, but he liked the idea of trying camel's meat.

"But where can we get a camel?" he asked.

"There is a desert some miles away," said the vulture. "I have just been flying over it.

And I saw a lone camel not far away. It looked big and fat."

The lion looked at his other advisers. They were wise and experienced. He wanted their opinion. Now the fox and leopard did not know the desert. But they did not want the vulture to seem wiser than they. So they said it was a good idea if the vulture would fly ahead and show them the way.

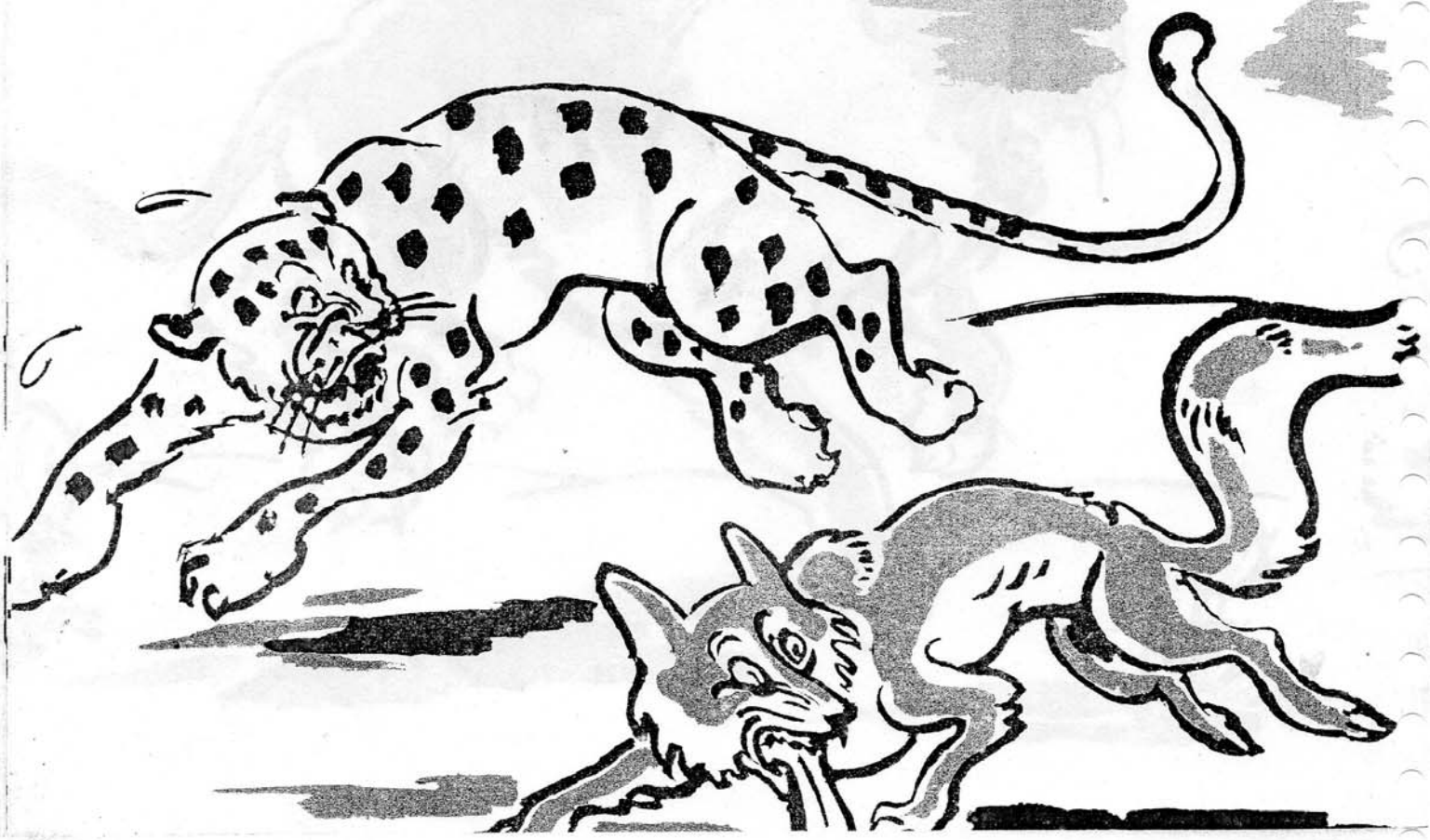
So the vulture's idea was approved. And the next morning the lion and his court started off on the camel hunt.

They reached the edge of the desert easily. But after they left the shelter of the forest, the day became very hot. The sun shone down with fire-hot rays.

High up in the cooler air the vulture flew.

"Hurry along," he called. "The camel is not far off."

But the lion could not hurry any more. The hot sand had burned his paws. He could go no farther.

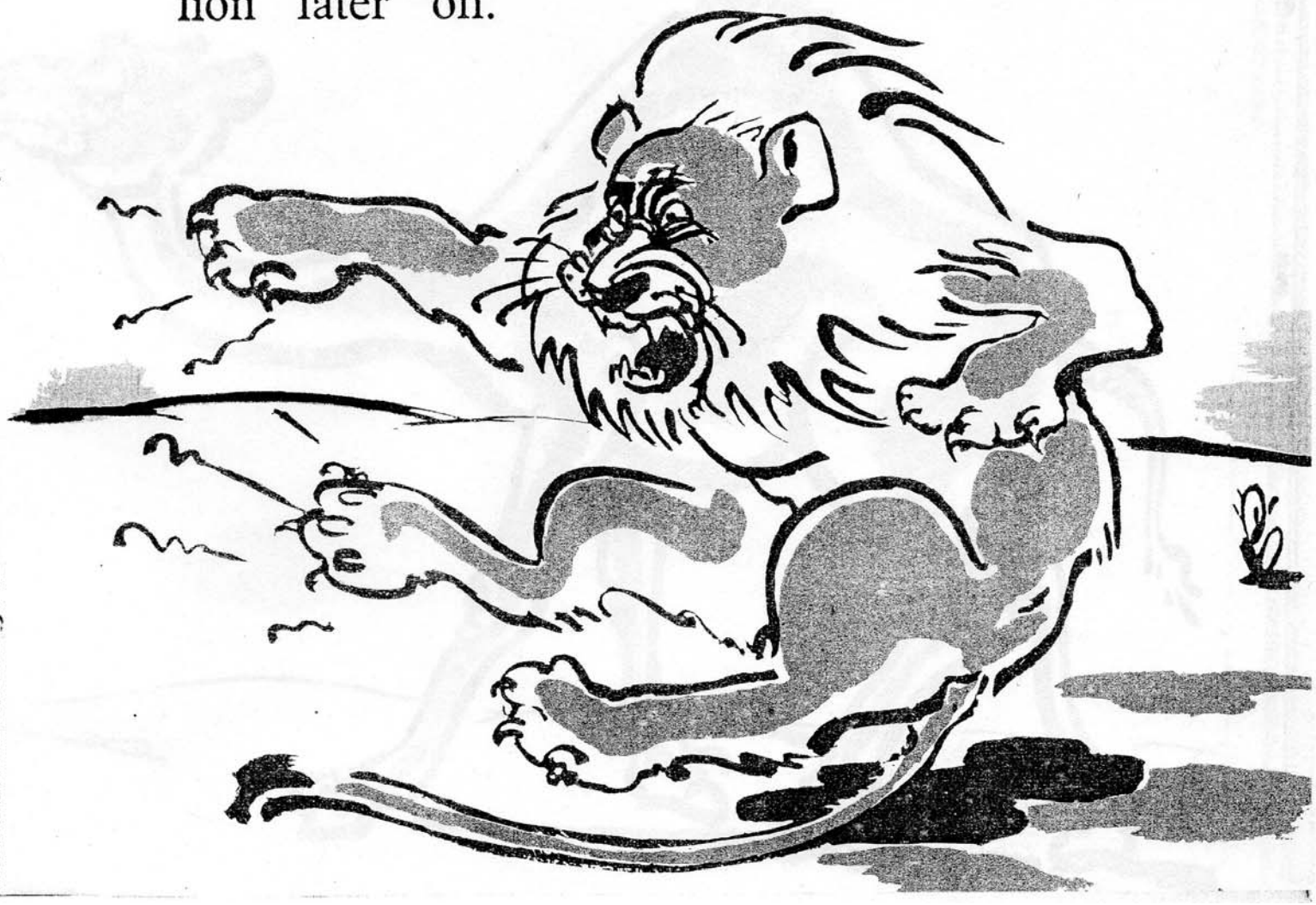


"Stop!" he shouted to the others. "Let us go back to the forest. I do not care to try camel meat."

The lion king's advisers were frightened. The forest was far behind them. They did not know how to get the lion back home.

The leopard wanted to run away.

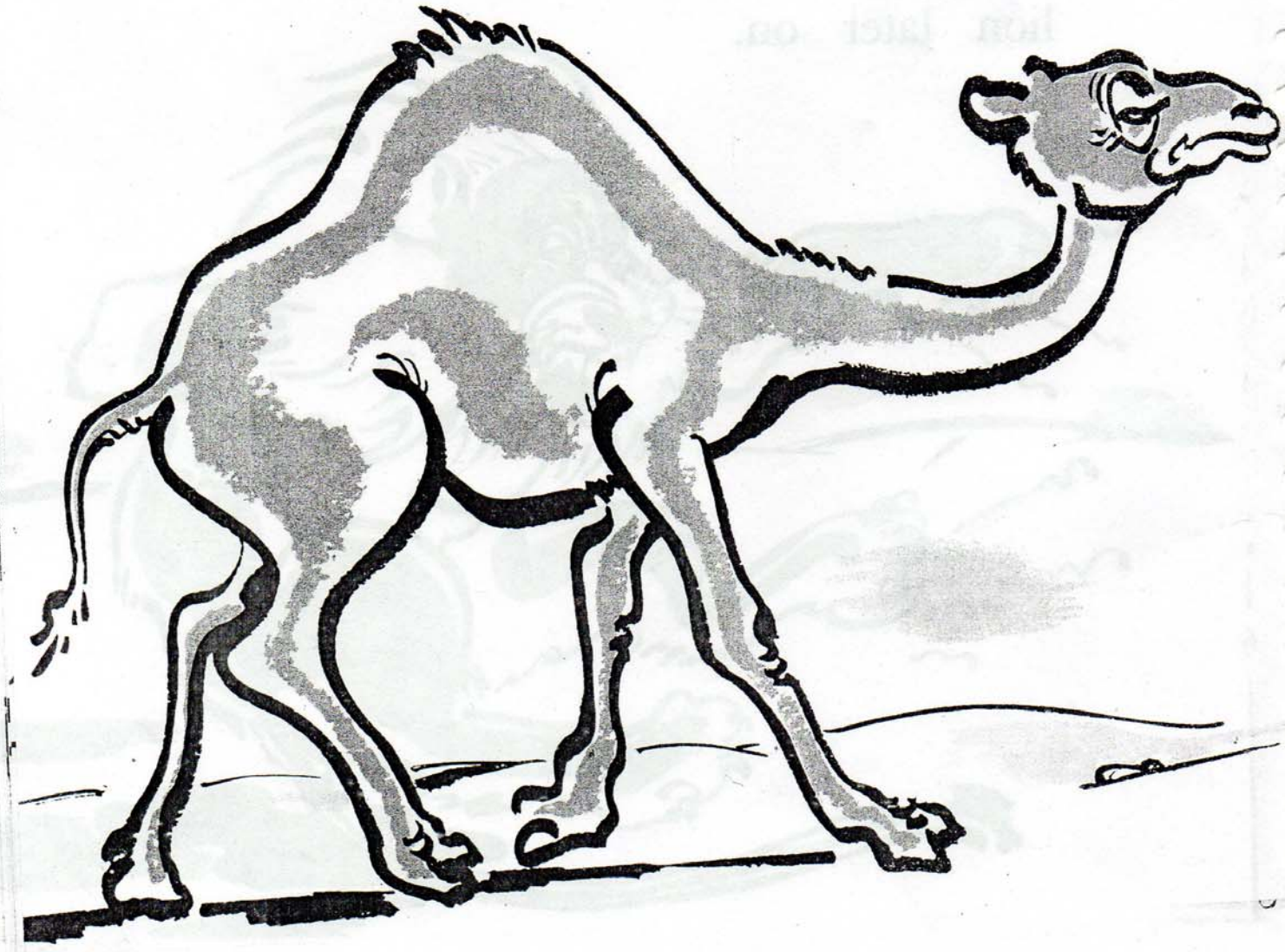
The vulture wanted to watch and wait and eat the lion later on.



But the clever fox thought of a plan. Off into the desert he ran, saying, "I will bring some help."

After running for some time, the fox found the camel. The camel was indeed surprised to see a fox in the desert there.

"Hurry up, friend camel," said the fox. "Our king wants you at once."



"Your king?" said the camel. "Who is that? I do not know any king. I only know my master, for whom I carry goods across the desert."

"Our king the lion has killed your master," said the fox. "Now you are free, and the lion has invited you to live at his court. Come along."

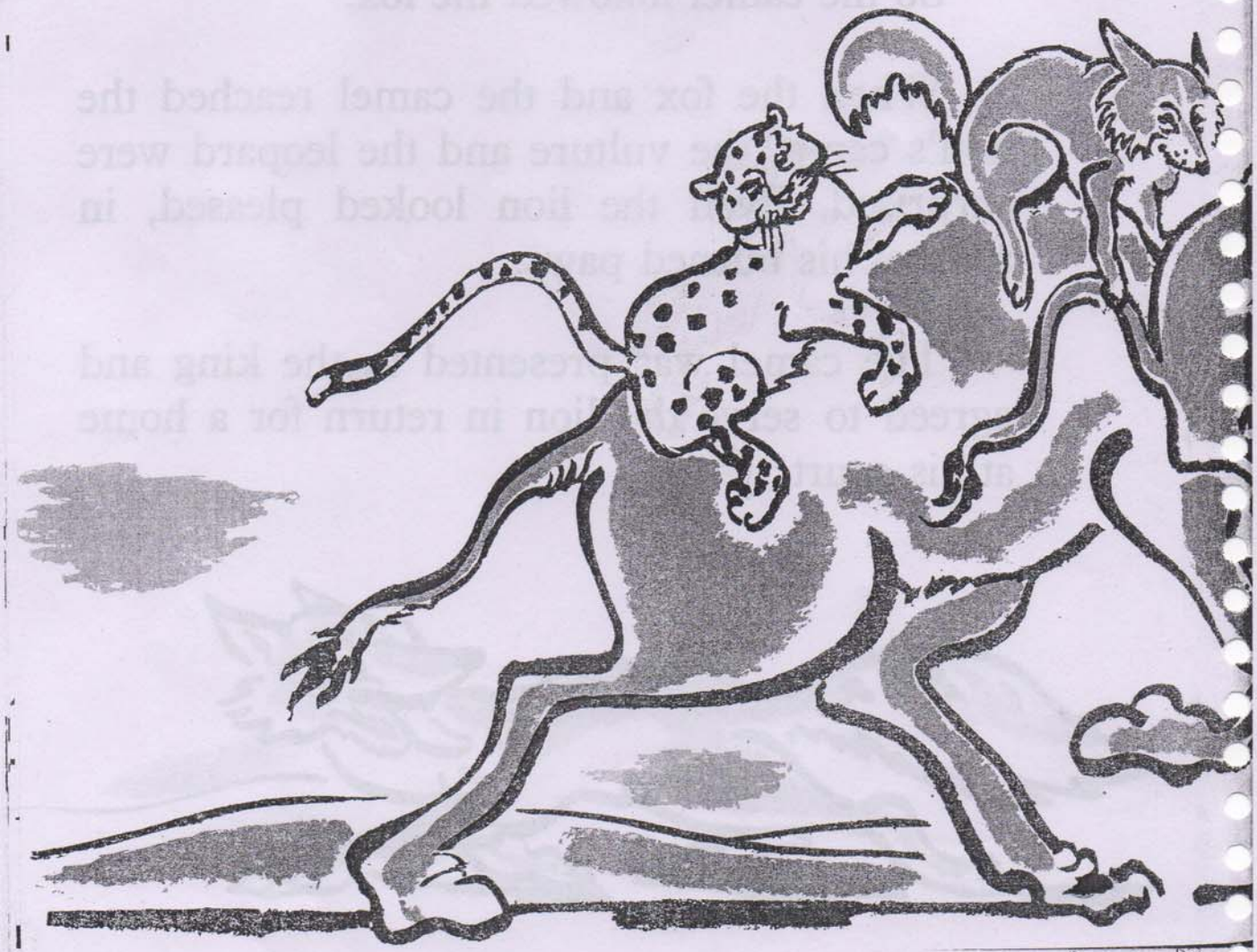
So the camel followed the fox.

When the fox and the camel reached the lion's camp, the vulture and the leopard were surprised. Even the lion looked pleased, in spite of his burned paws.

The camel was presented to the king and agreed to serve the lion in return for a home at his court.

"Get on the camel's back, Your Majesty," said the fox. "We will return home."

The lion at once jumped on to the camel's back. His courtiers, the fox and the leopard, jumped up behind him. And with the vulture flying ahead as a guide, they set



The lion's courtiers were shocked. Had they not risked their lives so that he would try camel meat? And now the king wanted to let the camel live.

This did not please the courtiers a bit. But, after all, the king was the king. They could do nothing but wait.

Now the lion's paws were so badly burned that he could not go hunting. But that did not keep him from growing very hungry indeed.

off on the long journey back to the forest.

When the travellers reached the forest again, they were all tired and hungry after a long day.

The fox and the leopard and the vulture looked at the camel. Then they looked at each other and smiled hungry smiles.

They had brought the camel for the king's dinner. Now it was time for the feast.

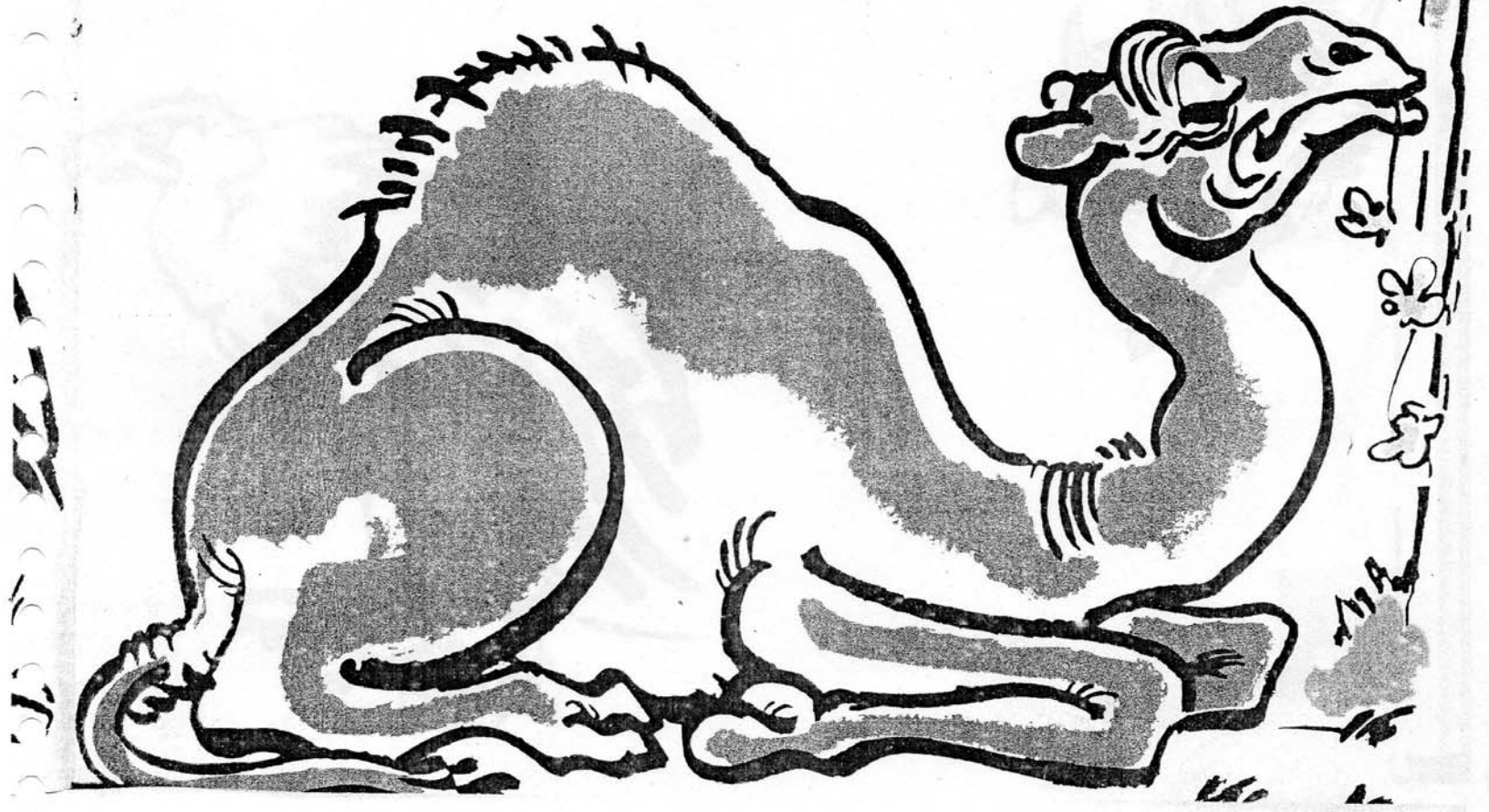
The lion king knew what his courtiers were thinking. He called the camel to him.

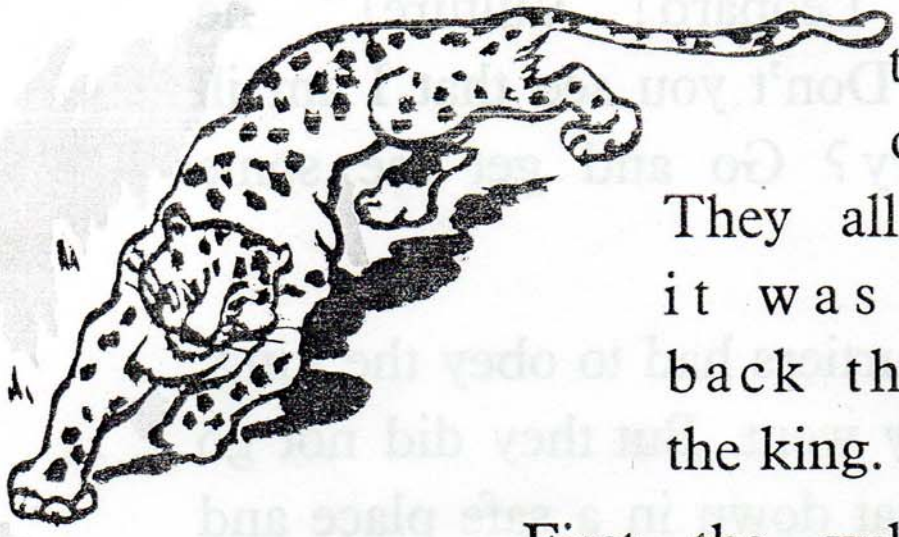
"Friend camel," he said. "I have to thank you for saving my life. You are welcome to live at my court as long as you like. I promise you my protection."

"Fox! Leopard! Vulture!" he shouted. "Don't you see that I am ill and hungry? Go and get me some food!"

The courtiers had to obey the king. So out they went. But they did not go far. They sat down in a safe place and discussed what they could do.

"I know," said the fox after a while. "We shall make the camel ask to be eaten."





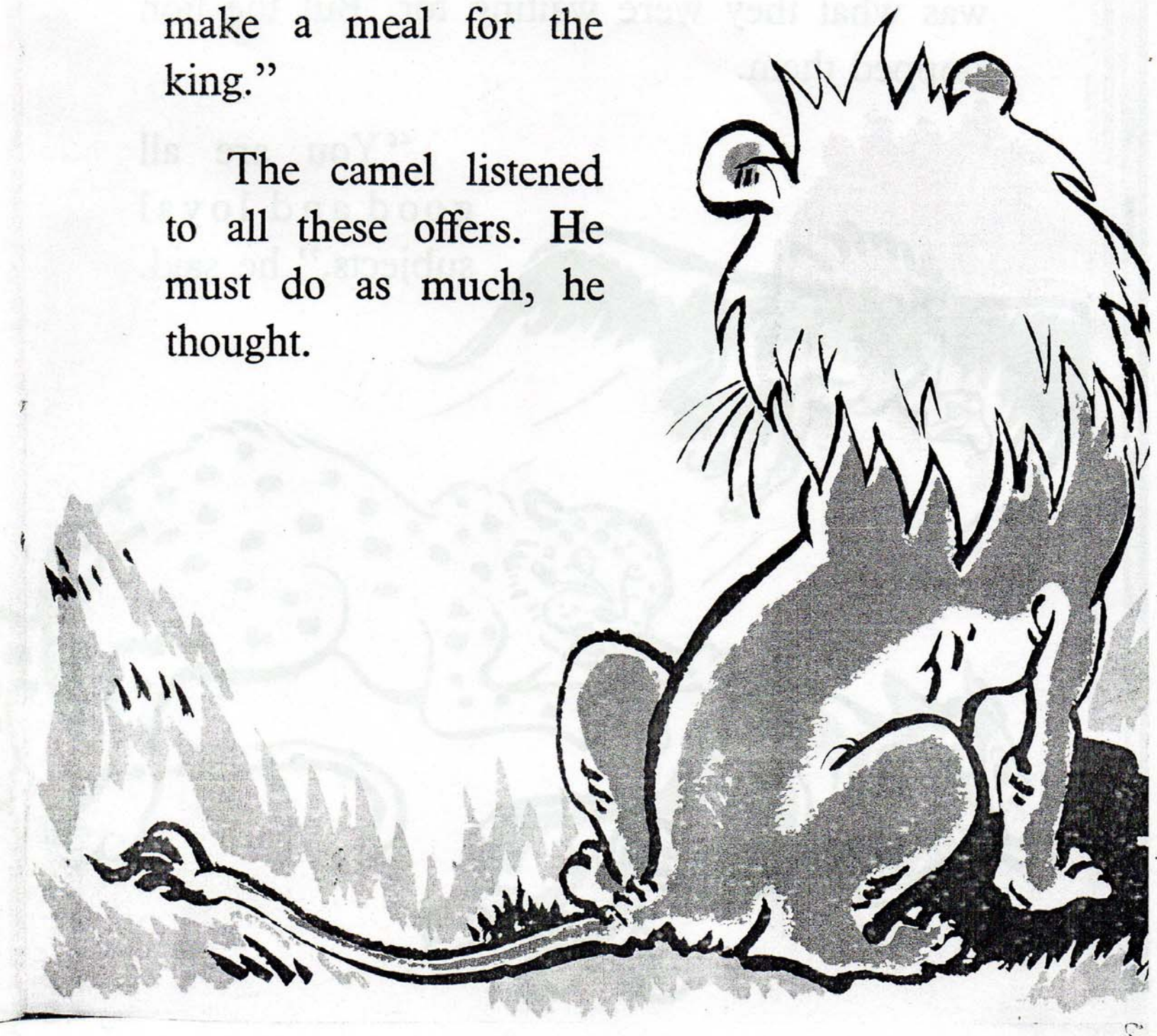
And he told the others of his plan. They all agreed that it was good. So back they went to the king.

First the vulture stepped forward bowing low. "Your Majesty," he said, "we have found no food. But we cannot let Your Majesty suffer. I am a poor creature. Eat me."

The fox pushed the vulture aside. "I have more meat on me," he cried. "Eat me, Your Majesty."

Now the leopard rushed forward. "I am not much good," he cried. "But I could make a meal for the king."

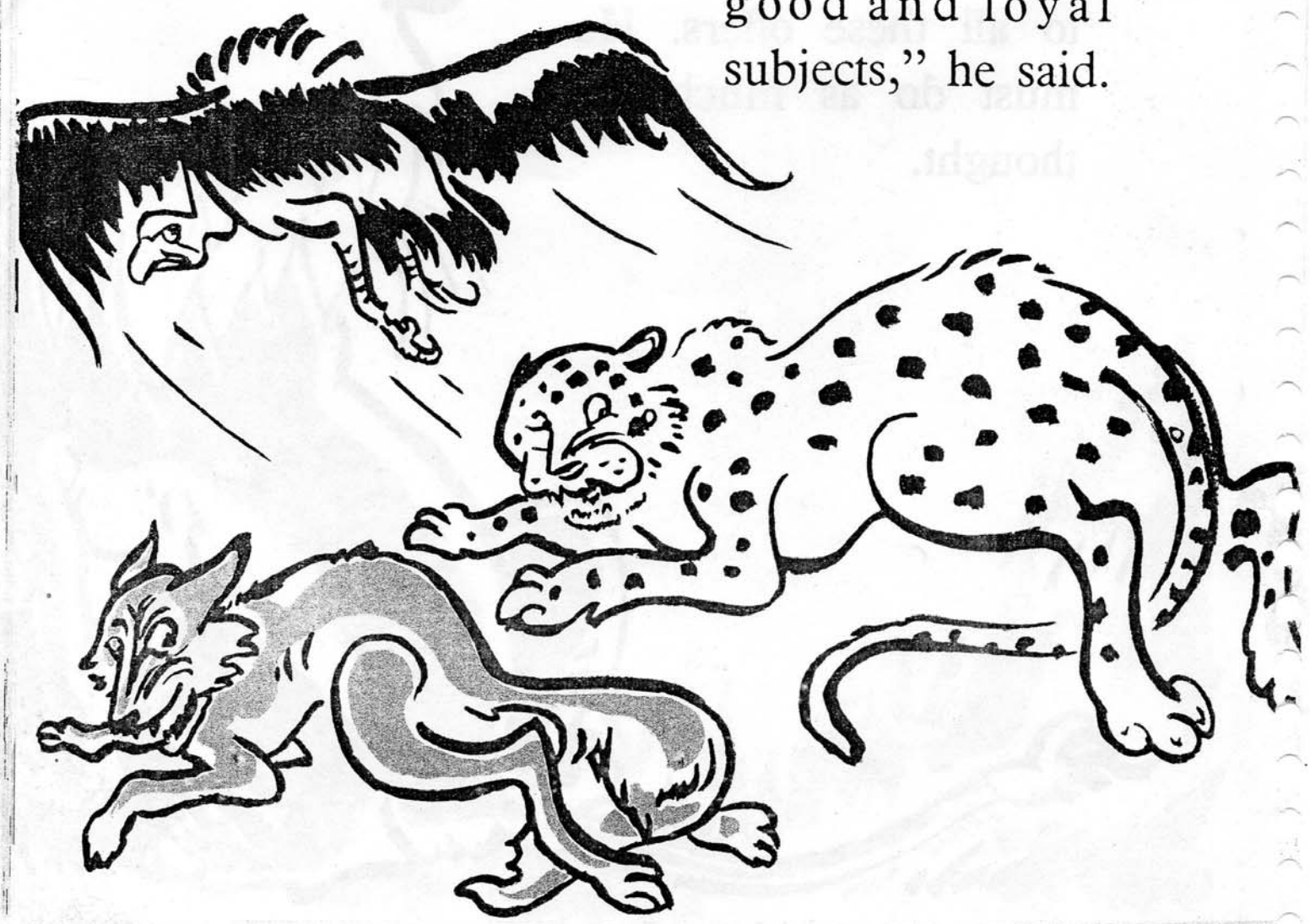
The camel listened to all these offers. He must do as much, he thought.



"Your Majesty," he said. "I too am willing to give away my life to save the life of the king. These old friends are more useful to you than I am. Eat me instead."

At these words the fox, the leopard, and the vulture prepared to jump at the camel. This was what they were waiting for. But the lion stopped them.

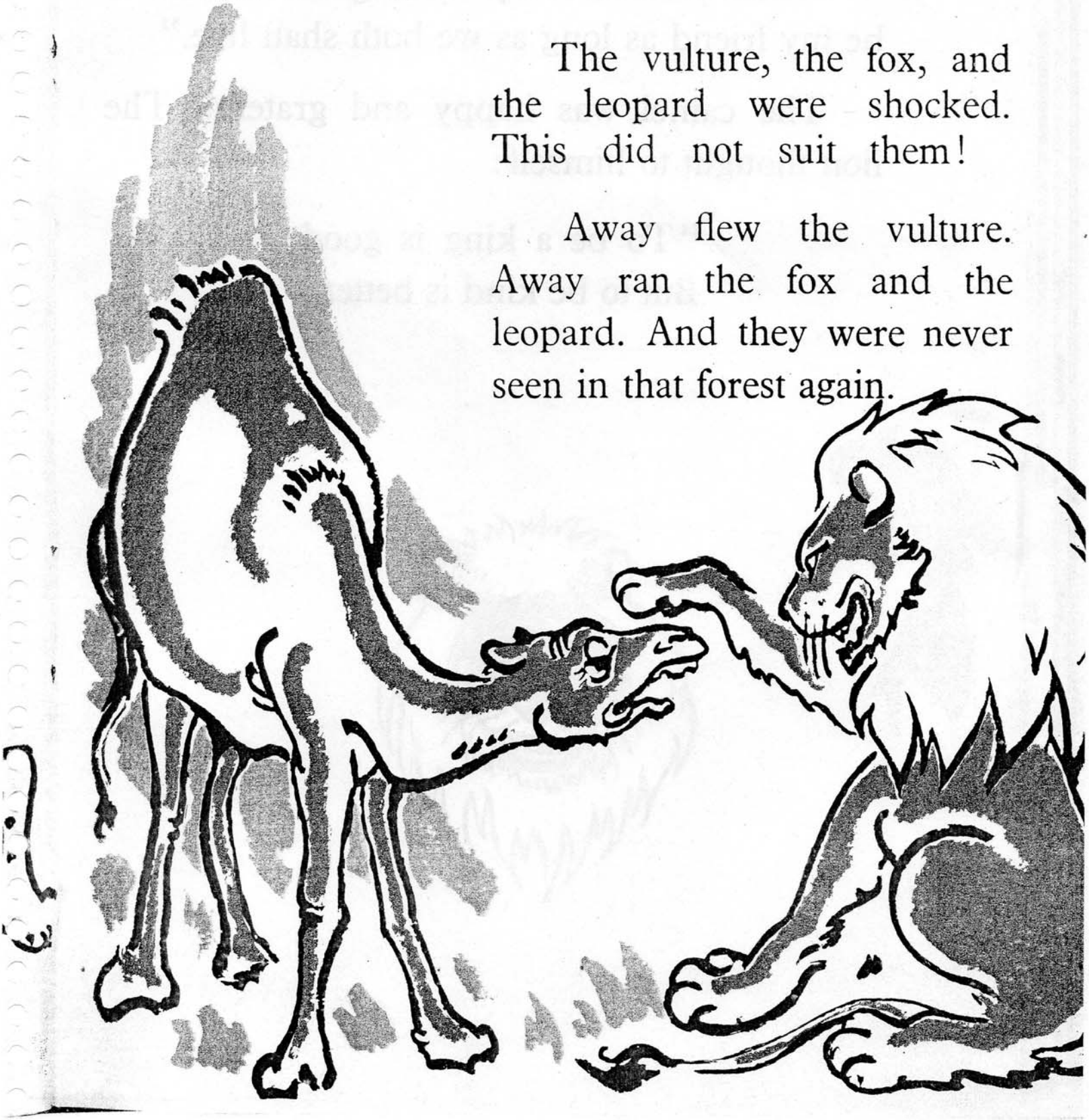
"You are all good and loyal subjects," he said.



"My heart is touched by your offers. I accept them all. I shall eat you in the order in which you offered yourselves."

The vulture, the fox, and the leopard were shocked. This did not suit them!

Away flew the vulture. Away ran the fox and the leopard. And they were never seen in that forest again.



The lion laughed to see them go. Then he turned to the camel and said:

"You have been loyal and good. You shall be my friend as long as we both shall live."

The camel was happy and grateful. The lion thought to himself:

"To be a king is good.
But to be kind is better."

"My heart is touched by your offers. I accept them all. I shall eat you in the order in which you offered yourselves."

The vulture, the fox, and the leopard were shocked. This did not suit them!

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