

Volume 3 : 12 December 2003

## **USE OF FOLK LITERATURE FROM A PEDAGOGICAL PERSPECTIVE**

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### **1. FOLK LITERATURE - AN INTEGRAL PART OF OUR CULTURE, BUT NOT USED EFFECTIVELY AS A PEDAGOGICAL TOOL**

Folk literature is part and parcel of the language and culture of our society. The three models of education, non-formal, formal, and informal that go from teaching literacy to literature and other subjects, can make use of folk literature as a powerful educational tool. These may be used to imbibe values, style of language, and many other important learning items in the minds of learners.

Since Independence, collection, preservation, analysis, and study of folk literature have received a lot of attention in all the major languages of India. For example, in the last thirty years, studies in Kannada folk literature have made significant contribution to the understanding of Kannada culture and mind. However, use of materials from the folk literature for purposes of instruction at various levels of education is rather minimal.

### **2. THE CURRENT STATUS**

Folk literature is studied for its intrinsic merit and for enjoyment, more as an independent literary genre, but using these materials as an integral part of our educational and socialization process is conspicuous by its absence. The stories that are included in elementary school textbooks years ago continue to be repeated, even with newer discoveries of folklore materials. We are yet to recognize the pedagogical potential folk literature offers for creative language curriculum, rhetoric, history, socialization, civics, and related subjects.

### **3. FOLK LITERATURE IN NON-FORMAL AND FORMAL EDUCATION**

In this context I like to examine the role of Kannada folk literature in non-formal and formal education in Karnataka. The points raised in this short paper are equally applicable to the state of affairs in other Indian languages as well.

1. Some of the observations made by language teachers and critics of textbooks are that:
  - i. The Lessons included in various textbooks including language teaching textbooks fail to attract and retain the attention of the learners till the end, both in their content and presentation.

- ii. Lessons do not use the type of language that is lively and is common and has the flavor that is easily understood and imitated.
  2. From the point of view of language pedagogy, major characteristics that can be identified in the folklore are:
    - i. Use of the spoken form of language.
    - ii. Choice of lexicon and sentence patterns that are more frequently used in daily life.
    - iii. Natural form of presentation.
3. **NON-FORMAL EDUCATION: LITERACY**
  - i. During the National Literacy Campaign - A Campaign model was adopted to make the illiterates literates. In the first phase of creating awareness among the people about the need for literacy, many forms of folk arts are adopted. Even innovative ideas of **akshara dosa, akshara rangoli** have created an indelible mark on the minds of common people.
  - ii. In the second phase, three primers (*Savikalike*: Mandya district, Karnataka) with 14, 12, and 12 lessons respectively were used to impart skills in reading and writing. These lessons were written in the speech form of the target population.
  - iii. An analysis of the texts of three primers indicates that not even a folk story of any category has made its way into the lessons. The stories that dealt with the message of development did not use even a single proverb. Thus the current model materials for non-formal education have altogether ignored the potential of folk literature as a pedagogical tool.
4. **FORMAL EDUCATION** - A careful reading of the syllabus, textbooks, teaching practice, and evaluation process adopted in the formal education from standards 1 to 10 reveal certain important trends.
  - i. The first, second, and third language syllabi include folk literature, as one of the important components for language education.
  - ii. However, when the syllabus is converted into lessons for teaching purposes, the prose pieces from folklore undergo major changes in their language. These stories are rendered in standard language retaining only the story line, thus dissolving all the peculiarities, nuances, and imaginative word play it had in its original form. It appears that these are chosen more for their ethical or some such similar values but not as an instructional tool to achieve educational goals relating to language use, concept formation, etc. As ethical tools, the stories lose their attractiveness mainly because these are now presented in a very dry language.
  - iii. The curriculum that prepares teachers for the teaching profession does not include a methodology that helps the teachers to exploit folk literature as an important pedagogical tool.
  - iv. The existing evaluation system literally caters to the general tests that students are required to take and score high in order to get into appropriate professional or other careers. The evaluation tools do not focus on the natural elements of folk literature. Even the exercises of the lessons prepared to practice the texts do not highlight the characteristics of folk literature.

- v. Though, unlike non-formal education, materials for formal education include folk literature in their various components, they nevertheless do not offer any special mechanism to use the materials properly.
5. **Pedagogical Tools** Potential of linguistic aspects of folk literature as pedagogical tools are yet to be exploited to their maximum extent in Kannada. The way it has to be done also needs to be discussed.