STORYTELLING IN RURAL LIBRARIES: ANALYZING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF FOLKTALES AND LOCAL NARRATIVES IN PROMOTING LITERACY AND CULTURAL AWARENESS

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Abstract: A kid can be given verbal explanations of concepts through storytelling. It is a practice to transmit histories and tales orally among the populace. The family is the smallest yet most important component of a community. Because they can quickly recall stories and reanimate their content, youngsters are efficiently educated in moral principles and character development through storytelling. Children will develop trust and confidence via storytelling, as well as a love of language, and an attitude of gratitude, and respect. These benefits support the use of stories in character education. They advise using picture books with stories to teach preschoolers morality, values, and ethics. The world's knowledge is contained in stories, which also impart cultural values. Story strengthens bonds between people, acknowledges cultural diversity, and protects cultural identity. A story is a tool of epiphany in hidden truth situations. Storytelling improves literacy and fosters metaphorical thinking.

Keywords: Folk Media, Traditional Media, Storytelling, Urban Storytellers, Teleconferencing, social media

1.0 Introduction: Children in underdeveloped countries are far more likely to have a variety of emotional, psychological, and health issues, but they also have limited access to counselling, clinical therapies, and other forms of care. Traditional play therapy methods that might involve toys and other objects are not available because there are so few resources. The play-based intervention described in this study is low-cost and was designed to address some early learning and developmental problems by allowing children to naturally exercise their imaginations and play skills[i].

Fortunately, storybooks come in a wide range of printed and digital formats and are widely accessible. Additionally, narratives and stories are powerful tools for teaching morals and virtues to students of all ages.

The intervention also draws from the oral storytelling custom that exists in the area. We think it's important for play therapists, teachers, and charitable foundations in the West to be aware of these initiatives to raise the socio-emotional, academic, and financial standing of preschoolers. In order to significantly improve the lives of these preschool children, their families, and communities, it is hoped that this study will encourage others to apply play-based treatments in rural village libraries and schools in those nations.[ii]

2.0 Research Objective

- To analyse the importance of storytelling in rural India?
- The ways in which stories are being told and how these methods are being preserved in present times?
- What is the role of digitalization in art of storytelling?

3.0 Research Methodology

Doctrinal, observational, and analytic approaches are used in this study. Blogs, essays, study papers, treatises, government records, case statutes, and magazines have all been used.

3.1 Literature Review

- According **to Andriyani (2018), Santosa (2015), and Aslan (2019)[iii]**, modifications will be needed if moral principles are to be effectively nurtured, taught, educated, and cultivated in the next generation of technology-driven children. Andriyani contends that the family, the smallest part of society that can offer Gen Alpha dependable, robust, and lifelong learning opportunities, should be the source of moral nutrition. Andriyani suggests a number of methods for millennial parents to use when raising these kids: First, these parents should uphold traditional values (such decency, honesty, and diligence) that were acknowledged before the advent of technology. They should also schedule regular sharing and discussion times with their children (for instance, once a week or twice a month). Second, parents should include technology into storytelling-based participation activities. Another advantageous tactic is to establish family technology contracts, such as rules stating that everyone in the family must put down their phones at home two hours

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before bedtime. Monitoring digital content and usage patterns actively is another tactic. On many modern electronic devices, parental controls or children's viewing options are available for smartphones and other gadgets. However, in both situations, parents should set a good example for their children by using technology responsibly first. The goal is to educate kids about the positive use of technology without sacrificing real-world experiences or physical activity.

- Technology has been included in the education sector's storytelling technique in classroom settings. The idea of digital storytelling is also helpful for preserving lost cultural heritage. Digital storytelling can also improve students' motivation, engagement, and success in the classroom **(Smeda et al., 2014).**[iv]

- The fundamental goal of storytelling is to educate; for the benefit of the young listeners, stories frequently incorporate positive examples. Children are encouraged to acquire and copy positive traits through storytelling **(Meretoja, 2017).** As parents support their children's early literacy acquisition, their knowledge of literacy education develops Even when the stories are passed down orally, home literacy includes storytelling. Children learn to think critically through the use of narrative **(Cremin et al., 2013**). Storytelling is an opportunity to find out what children think about the characters and their personalities since children will have questions regarding the story to satiate their curiosity). The kids' levels must be considered when adjusting these questions. In addition, storytelling helps two to four-year-old youngsters become more verbally fluent **(McGrath et al., 2004)**[v]. Children frequently listen to stories and folktales, and if the storyteller clearly pronounces the words in the story, the children's speaking skills will develop.

- It is important to remember that a child's memory plays a crucial role in directing the child's moral character in order to support the development of empathy in early infancy. Deep personal feelings are produced by the combination of memory and imagination that are sparked by emotions. Memory aids in storing and recalling memories of prior emotions, ideas, and experiences **(Hustvedt, 2011).**

4.0 Folktales And Stories
Numerous folklore genres are present in the storytelling customs of various cultural groups around the world**. This has motivated the use of folktales from all over the world as sources of information and understanding of other cultural groups within the context of multi- or multicultural education. This theory is frequently supported by published collections of folktales and fairytales written for both children and adults because they "presuppose a relationship between folklore and culture, either directly or implicitly**.

Folktales have also been used as a source of knowledge and comprehension of other cultures by education scholars. It is claimed that they instruct students on the social skills and cultural norms of various cultural groups, including their traditions, beliefs, and worldviews, as well as their aspirations and phobias. Folktales are said to foster empathy for people from other cultures and an understanding of the realities of human diversity. These notions about folklore are frequently influenced by the research of mythologists, folklorists, and anthropologists who examine orally transmitted stories as potently effective human practises for conserving and transmitting cultural knowledge, values, and beliefs[vi]

The greatest intercultural educational potential of these materials can be found in the variety and multiplicity of interactions that youngsters have with folktales. It is crucial that all children learn "that texts can make the possible intense personal experience" even when their personal experience deviates from hegemonic cultural norms" in order to prepare them for life in culturally diverse, literate democratic societies, and that all children are given the chance to actively participate in the cross-cultural exchange of knowledge and understanding with one another.

5.0 Origin Of Folktales
An elderly man once invited his son to approach him as he was ready to pass away in the Himalayan highlands. The old man said in a low voice as the son got closer, "Son, I have only one piece of advice for you, sweeten your madua before you eat it."

The man passed away shortly after, leaving the son with some questions regarding his final words. The son tried eating madua (finger millet, also known as ragi), as instructed, with various sweeteners like gud, honey, and sugar. The son eventually forgot about his father's intriguing advice as the years passed. He went to the forest one day to gather firewood. He put a lot of effort into his task, and by the time he finished, it was dark, leaving him hungry and exhausted. He remembered he had some stale madua rotis tied in a cloth with him. He opened the cloth with a sense of relief and thankfulness and began munching on the rotis. He was in awe. Madua had never tasted sweeter, reminding him of his father's comments. He now realized what the elderly man had been attempting to explain. In order to fully experience the sweetness in you

This tale by Hirma Devi Sumtiyal, also known as "elder mother" or "thul aam" by many residents of the Munsiyari hamlet of Sarmoli. She had not, however, made anything up. During one of the innumerable aan katha sessions, she had heard it. On cold winter days, aan katha sessions would begin in the evening and last well into the night. During these sessions, the elders would frequently mock and challenge the younger people with riddles and puzzle stories. maybe they once did. Families and cultures have discovered alternative means of amusement and education in the age of omnipresent televisions and cell phones.

Different types of storytelling can be heard in every region of India, where stories have been passed down orally from one generation to the next for ages. Their variety of format (which can include songs, couplets, riddles, or lengthy prose) and substance (which can be romantic, humorous, sorrowful, practical, just plain amusing, adventurous, or even propagandist) is rich.

In the **history of humanity, stories have always played a significant role. Author of the book Sapiens Yuval Noah Harari claims that "Any large-scale human cooperation, whether it be a modern state, a medieval church, an ancient city, or an archaic tribe, is rooted in common myths that exist only in people's collective imagination."** He contends that our capacity for fiction-believing underlies everything from nationalism to religion to even our belief in justice and human rights. His reasoning suggests that conflicts such as wars, invasions, conversions, and even political elections may sometimes be about the clash of competing narratives.

6.0 Importance Of Folktales In Rural Areas

We may have gotten the idea to test storytelling as a PRA technique from a romantic desire to be a part of this secret society. But on a more practical level, we believed that key purposes for storytelling in rural development work:

6.1 For instruction: It is possible to create an image in the listeners' brains through the use of stories that are specifically created for this purpose. Compared to direct teaching, storytelling can allow for much deeper and more informal communication. A problem that could typically create discomfort or conflict can be readily brought up for a half-hour discussion with the help of a good narrative and a competent storyteller. Direct questions like[vii] "Don't animals have rights too?" or "Do you think you should protect nature?" would be ineffective in achieving this.

6.2 To stimulate conversation: The ability of the village to help itself can be improved by using stories to describe problems in the community and to serve as a forum for open conversation. A story should be given to the villagers in a style that will cause lively discussion since the story's substance should accurately reflect the community's current circumstances.

6.3 For educational purposes: In this capacity, stories are intended to facilitate communication going the other way from that of "teaching stories," i.e., from the villagers to the researchers. Talking about delicate subjects is especially suited here through stories. The trial tale in Box 1 can serve as an illustration of this, despite not having been written specifically for this goal, since it seeks to raise the subject of religion's influence on environmental issues.[viii]

6.4 Social justice through storytelling: A culturally responsive education that encourages sensitivity and appreciation for diversity can include stories . In their study on teacher-librarians, Bishop and Kimball (2006) stated that sharing stories fosters a sense of cultural understanding and appreciation. Students from ethnically marginalized backgrounds can acquire a positive sense of identity through the inclusion of multicultural stories and proverbs, particularly those that honour the sometimes overlooked Blacks, Latinos, American Indians, and Asians[ix]

Asimeng-Boahene (2010) observed that stories of the winners are common and that history is typically told from the perspective of the victor. Authentic storytelling, proverbs, tales, and myths that provide an alternative reality are all necessary components of culturally responsive teaching. They must also be used to tell stories about problems with underrepresented groups from the perspective of the minority

6.5 Story Strengthens Community: Stories bind people together. Similar to how a culture is bolstered, defined, and connected by the mythological stories of its organization or society, a family's or group's dynamics are derived from the stories they tell about themselves and the common values they convey in those stories.

"Community" or "communitas" is a coming together characterized by equality, openness to all, participation in shared experiences that may be profoundly spiritual, and storytelling. Humans live by their tales, and some are prepared to give their lives in defense of them (Baskin, 2005). They use violence to defend their strongly held cultural, religious, or tribal myths. The Holocaust, the Rwandan genocide, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and the lynching of African Americans in the 19th and 20th centuries in America all attest to this negative aspect of mythologized cultural identity that demonizes the "other.

6.6 Impact on children: Social capital is created via stories. Putnam, citing the well-known children's picture book by Margaret Wise Brown, stated that one of the most important determinants of a child's success would be the amount of time his parents spend reading Goodnight Moon to him in Wente (2012)[x]. Wente (2012) proposed that the "Goodnight Moon gap," which refers to the widening gap between children who have and those who do not, is caused by the immeasurable value of investments like taking the time to read a book repeatedly (and implicitly, to tell stories), provided that this implies that the parent also has the luxury of time to spend). However, the impact continues well into adulthood

Children who have had significant parental time investment—reading Goodnight Moon being just one example—are likely to partner with those who have had similar advantages and pass the tradition on to their children, whereas children who have not reaped the dual benefits of oral literacy and attention are likely to choose similarly disadvantaged partners and pass the deficit to their children.

7.0 Methods and Cultural Importance Of Storying Telling

Because India is a country with many different cultures, each state and district has its own unique storytelling tradition. Some people use narration, while others use puppets, masks, or even musical instruments as props. Some stories are told using dance and music as the primary media.

Hindu rituals include the performance of the Indian narrative genre known as Katha. Professional storytellers who recite Hindu sacred scriptures like the Bhagavata Purana, The Ramayana, and the Puranas are frequently used in this context. Kathas, which feature shorter stories from the genre, can occasionally take place in homes. By outlining how human behaviour (karma) has consequences, kathas develop moral principles.[xi]

Religious speech and storytelling have a long history in South India. The scriptures quoted at temples and monasteries were familiar to religious scholars. at India, wall paintings at temples and shrines are frequently used to interpret and tell stories with a religious context. Katha with imagery in temples contributed to the spread of Hinduism and the development of worshippers' awareness of the characteristics of the deities.

There are three main katha traditions: folk tales, Kathakalakshepa, and Purana-Pravachana.

7.1 Purana-Pravachana
In a lecture on the texts known as Purana-Pravachana, the pauranika serves as a spiritual interpreter of the text. These tales typically have a religious undertone, and they frequently centre on a saint's life or an Indian epic.[xii]

Storytellers go into greater detail on the meaning of the scripture that has been read, offering a variety of perspectives on a passage or word. Sanskrit and Tamil scriptures are the main emphasis of Upanyasa or Pravachanas. The texts are spoken with very little music. Pravachan storytellers employ the technique of reading the scriptures and explaining their significance.

7.2 Kathakalakshepam
In Sanskrit, Tamil, and Hindi, stories including anecdotes are called as Kathakalakshepam. These stories feature a classically trained storyteller who blends music, dance, and asides into the main plot.

Literally, kathakalakshepam means "narrating the stories of ancient texts in a comprehensive manner to the common people." The animated performer recounts, portrays, and offers commentary on scenes and themes from Indian mythology.[xiii]

Theological and literary proficiency are prerequisites for this kind of storytelling. They must be familiar with ancient writings and the epics. A storyteller must be resourceful because they must project the subject through the use of music, spoken word, and acting.

7.3 Folktales
Folktales sometimes feature rulers, queens, daring hunters, or cunning creatures. They contain moral cautions to abstain from lying or stealing, to not be greedy, and so forth. Each town has its own version of the numerous varying tales. These tales were typically told or sung to children and grandkids at home by mothers and grandmothers.[xiv]

8.0 Loss Of Storytelling Culture
Systems that created and disseminated these tales as well as the tongues that spoke them are disappearing. In India, almost 220 languages have vanished in the previous 50 years. Since white settlement, more than 100 Aboriginal languages have perished in Australia, and 75% of the remaining ones are under grave danger. I am aware that many

would argue that it is a necessary sacrifice and a necessary aspect of "evolution." But deep down, we must know enough about ecology to recognise the fallacy in that claim. For isn't there a connection between the forces threatening our diversity of cultures and languages and the forces destroying nature and our environment?

Perhaps the basis of both is our haste for economic expansion and progress, which is rapidly changing and redefining our "needs," social networks, environments, and ways of life. Our coping strategy has been to seek solace in uniformity and conformity and let our folktales echo in their own silences in response to this extraordinary pace of change. What would historians say were the key myths of this century if they were to examine us in a hundred or a thousand years? How have our tales changed? What do we believe?

In storytelling, the storyteller and his audience are in close contact, which creates an intimacy through which they can feed off of each other's energy. The storyteller will adjust his tale in response to the reactions of his listeners. Since the story develops and changes as it is told, there is no emphasis on the initial version in this tradition. The emphasis on originality that is prevalent now is something that has become more significant in contemporary times, but in pre-modern times, the arts—particularly those of the East—were the results of group labour. Because they originated in an oral tradition and were refreshed by the storyteller with each telling, these tales were not created by a single person.

9.0 Ways to Preserve Storytelling

9.1 In his book Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word (Routledge, 1982), Walter Ong referred to mediated speech as "secondary orality," which is experiencing a revival thanks to teleconferencing. People must improve their conversational and storytelling skills in order to benefit from teleconferencing. "Vertical" packages are developing as teleconferencing progresses. Working together, a manufacturer of phone hardware and software, a telecommunications service provider, and a content supplier may be necessary.

The term "storytelling" is now used to refer to or characterize a variety of more intimate narratives or artistic expressions. My style of storytelling is closer to traditional myth telling, where the audience is directly involved and language is alive with meaning. My own research has placed a strong emphasis on cultivating an awareness of the dynamic aspects of spoken story and involvement as an embodied and relational event. [xv]

The Bangalore Storytelling Society (BSS), which was established in 2013, has organised videoconferences on World Storytelling Day (WSD, March 20), using Google Hangouts on Air each year since its launch. Utilizing technology while maintaining the "ethos" of narrative is a difficulty. A number of videoconferences that will contain a mix of storytelling classes and performances are being planned by the BSS. International storytellers will instruct and share. There will be participants in the videoconference from various locations, participants who will be physically present with the trainer or performer, and viewers of the live webcast (and afterward the web archive

9.2 Using the Cloud Storytelling Project for videoconferencing

He started the Cloud Storytelling Project in February 2014, working with several schools in the states of Karnataka and Tamil Nadu from his base in Bangalore. Videoconferencing over Skype is the medium. At a certain time, a storyteller from a different location log onto the conference and begins telling stories to a group of kids there. They then debate the stories together. Children get the chance to develop their listening and understanding abilities with this practise.

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