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CHAPTER -3

Culture: Framing Stereotypes under Imperialistic Transformations of Culture Readdressed with Multiculturalism

Introduction

This chapter would study the various phases in cultural reality as observed in children's picture books. It will also probe in to how these picture books cater to cultural globalization. The diversified nature of culture around the world leaves no chance for uniformity. The evolution of culture during different periods acquired different dimensions; previously culture was synonymous with human society while the recent notions view culture and society as two systems act in relation, and culture majorly exhibits the diversity of the society. This suggests that every action in the society bears a cultural significance. Culture demonstrates the connections within a social system and suggests a larger frame of a community including the life, daily activities, and experiences of the individuals. Common culture – in British cultural analysis, the idea of a common culture has been connected with the valued cultural life of a 'community' and with the commonness of its everyday meaningful activity - as in Raymond Williams' dictum that 'culture is ordinary'. He writes in *Resources of Hope: Culture, Democracy, Socialism*,

In talking of a common culture, then, one was saying first that culture was the way of life of a people, as well as the vital and indispensable

contributions of specially gifted and identifiable persons, and one was using the idea of the common element of the culture - its community - as a way of criticising that divided and fragmented culture we actually have (35).

Every community holds its own set of values and ideals along with its own way of living, which all together constitutes its identity.

Demographic changes around the globe have accelerated an increased need of authentic multicultural literature. The need arose out of the traditional Eurocentric literature which otherwise acts as an extension of cultural colonization. The picture books for children are chosen based on the mainstream curriculum and are mostly influenced by the concepts, patterns, events, and paradigm of European and American culture. These books fail as the experience of human diversity is lacking, hence multicultural should focus on shifting the thrust from Eurocentrism, integrating the historical perspectives and literature acting as a representative of the cultures of all children. Homogeneous culture in a global age should act as an all inclusive phase where the voice of different cultures should be heard. The marginalized culture and the mainstream culture should be amalgamated to result in cultural globalization. Only then children are likely to develop valuable insights into the cultural identity and historical experiences of the ethnic group as well. Thus the children from the mainstream know a culture other than theirs. And similarly the children from

the ethnic group see themselves worthy to be represented in literature. They get to see their own image and realize themselves to be a part of the greater reality. In most of the picture books especially award winning or recognized popular works as we could see the marginalized are not represented accurately which poses a great issue in the days of globalization.

Cultural studies: theoretical background

The discipline of Cultural Studies examines the ways in which culture is constructed and organized and the ways in which it involves and changes over time. The study of culture spurs from sociology and ends in politics. It studies the evolution and thereby remain connected to the human history. Cultural studies look at culture not in the narrow sense, as the objects of higher excellence nor as a process of aesthetic, cognizant and spiritual development; but culture understood, according to Raymond Williams's famous appropriation from anthropology, as "a particular way of life, whether of a people, a period or a group" (90). Cultural studies are mostly associated with the study of popular culture alone, but it is not all, rather it includes the popular culture and studies the factors responsible for it. "Cultural studies is a discursive formation, that is, 'a cluster (or formation) of ideas, images, and practices, which provides ways of talking about, forms of knowledge and conduct associated with, a particular topic, social activity or institutional site in society'" (Hall 6). All social practices can be observed from a cultural point of view, which are in turn effected by the

texts to a greater extent. “But the ultimate object of cultural studies is not . . . the text, but the social life of subjective forms at each moment of their circulation, including their textual embodiments” (Storey 2). Culture should not be addressed as something generated from a collection of canonical works because culture is not about carrying the notion of high culture alone, it also incorporates the everyday and ephemeral cultural experiences of the masses. “Cultural studies seeks to keep in equilibrium the different moments of cultural production - material production, symbolic production, textual production, and the 'production in use' of consumption” (Storey 2).

The methodology of cultural studies involves on the whole, qualitative methods focusing on cultural meaning. A text in cultural studies has to be approached with three methods and they are categorised as 1) ethnography, where the text has been often linked with culturalist approaches; 2) multiple textual approaches, which have predisposed to draw from Semiotics, Post structuralism and Deconstruction; and the 3) makes a series of reception studies. The first approach ethnography is a practical and theoretical approach. It tries to explore qualitatively the values and meanings in the context of a 'life' – that is, ethnography asks questions about cultures and identities. While the second one that is textual approach, offer understanding and analyse rules of reference about the way the social order is constructed through the narratives. Stories take different forms with narration and stylistics to deploy the subject matter and

utilize a variety of characters, and situations. The third approach, reception studies is meant that audience act as creators of meaning in relation to texts. The meanings are constructed by applying previously acquired cultural competencies on texts, resulting in differently constituted audiences work with different meanings for the same text. A significant strand of work in cultural studies is mostly theoretical than empirical. Theoretical understanding is arrived with narratives that seek to distinguish and elucidate general features that describe and define the perceived occurrences. Cultural studies coheres around the representation of culture through signifying practices in texts, the articulation of which is consumed by readers.

Does the culture embedded books strive for ethnicity amidst globalization or do they move towards a world with one identity shedding the divergence? This tantalizing question is to be answered with thrust upon the factors that leave a picture book not as a children's first world of knowledge. "Studies show that young children are also developing their own racial identities, as well as racial attitudes. Therefore, the stories and illustrations within picture books that depict diverse racial populations are likely to have an influence in shaping children's racial attitudes towards others, and their own racial identities" (Wilson 11).

The concept of text in cultural studies is a meaningful artefact of culture and not merely a written language. The analysis and interpretation of text at the

level of production, reception, and cultural significance creates literature as a culturally signifying practice. As Richard Johnson argues, “the situation . . . especially in literature . . . on the one hand, the development of immensely powerful tools of analysis and description, on the other hand, rather meagre ambitions in terms of applications and objects of analysis” (94). Cultural studies subvert the distinctions of ‘high literature’ and what were considered to lower forms that appeal to a much larger body of consumers.

The connection with children’s literature and culture is clear: how do books reflect the desires and anxieties of children? More importantly, how do the books to which we expose our children influence the way they think and act as individuals and members of a social group? Simply put: how do books and other cultural products manage our fantasies and our children’s fantasies (Mc Gillies 348).

These concepts answer the cultural anxieties in the cultural globalization scenario. This leads to the concepts of cultural homogenization, and cultural heterogenization that are brought to surface as social realities. *Pinocchio* or *Heidy* the popular classics of children’s literature always spoke loudly of their countries and conveyed the culture and history sustaining the national soul. These books projected their countries as a whole to the world, but in their own countries they validly represented only one facet of a complex social system. The construction of culture and its sustenance through literary works are greatly inclined towards

homogenization of culture with a voluntary or involuntary erasure of the specific culture.

Leslie Edmonds in her article, titled, "The Treatment of Race in Picture Books for Young Children" explains that the fictional picture books published between 1920-1984, with human characters could be identified with white children in as much as 57%. Among them the multicultural stories were only 27%, of which, only 75% were about Blacks; while 5% focussed on Asians and much lesser percentages about the rest of the communities. She also found that half of the characters in multiracial books were whites. This is a substantiation that white culture predominates in books. Characters other than white people were stereotypes in roles, cultures and colour. Further, the depictions of Asians were limited to Chinese and Japanese characters with inaccurate representation (32). This study by Edmonds highlights three important aspects of children's picture books of twentieth century, one, the minorities are hardly represented; secondly, the representations are mostly inaccurate; and finally, they are generalised to stereotypes. Emphasizing multiculturalism sounds to be the only solution for the issues mentioned in this regard to promote social equity and equality.

Cultural Homogenization

Homogenization includes a number of spheres like sports, food, and technology in these days. Local identities and cultures are slowly disappearing.

Different countries have "soft power" one such power is popular literature from powerful countries. These stories are infused gradually and imbibed unknowingly by the masses just like an American Hollywood film or Chinese food or Paris fashion or *Yoga* hailed from India. Cultural homogenization enables diffusion of many ethnic cultural notions and popularization of ideas and values of mainstream culture. The cultural transformations are guided by the dominant culture absorbing and disseminating. Cultural homogenization thus caters to assimilation to authorised norms and exchange of various cultural components towards the direction of universalization around the globe. Cultural globalization if aims at a homogenization of culture, the norms and patterns from the orient to the occident should be infused and without any bias, people all over the world are cognizant of it. Cultures are not closed systems, it dynamically evolves and combines the elements of various cultures and tends to act intercultural and results in transcultural.

The important particle of culture is language which enables the expression of cultural patterns in a society. Culture is a social product and the culture of the community is mirrored through language. With an accepted lingua franca the oneness is reinforced. English spoken around the world enjoys the privilege of global language today overshadowing the vivacity of other languages. This asserts the power of the Anglo-American culture industry to get English the privileged position. The significance of English language gains momentum from

the days of colonization. The number of people who uses English as their mother tongue steadily increased over the period of time. "By the 1990s, this number had swollen to over 350 million native speakers, with 400 million more using English as a second language. Today, more than 80% of the content posted on the Internet is in English" (Steger 84). While examining the evolution of dictionaries, the number of words adopted, accepted, and included in the dictionary shows how other languages were treated with least priority for communication. People around the world are forced to use English language directly or indirectly narrowing down the dynamism of their native language. Homogenization of language thus tends to end up as stamping upon the masses by the foreign or even alien language under the garb of universal language.

The globalization of culture also undergoes the same situation.

Homogenization or cultural globalization limits itself to stamping the powerful notions of the mainstream culture upon the marginalized giving them hardly any representation. Like language, culture too is dynamic in nature ever evolving and changing, but the process is narrowed down and limits the horizon by neglecting the scope of other. The culture of the globe should be all inclusive as the global society includes every entity. "Only by making international/ global studies an integral part of the curriculum can schools hope to meet today's challenge of preparing students for effective citizenship in an economically integrated, but politically divide world" (Becker 56). Unfortunately the divide

exists between the 'makers' and 'readers' of the literature. The one, who has the potential to create, ignores the 'other' and leaves the creation so powerful and propelling that it is stamped permanently upon others leaving no choice. For example, Carrolls' *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* sounds didactic at points; similarly the other popular works *The Diary of a Wimpy Kid* indirectly impose the cultural consciousness familiar to the western ideologies excluding the other specific cultures. The homogenization towards the cultural identity takes place more among the youngsters and this acts as a strongest tool that fights against heterogeneity of culture. The disappearance of local cultures should be observed seriously to maintain the balance of varied cultural traits.

Ultimately the readers are not effectuated to be benefactors, instead, remain as a forced part-taker. Boutte et al. explain, "children's literature presents society's overt and covert values and often explains and justifies appropriate patterns of behaviour and belief. Because children's literature is a vehicle for the education and repository of cultural values, it should represent broad range of diversity in a society" (943-44). The books for children must include characters from specific diversified culture without being stereotyped so as to render the cultural consciousness among children. It helps the specific group to judge themselves developing a cultural consciousness while the rest of the group is given a cultural understanding.

Fostering cultural awareness is set as an aim specially targeting the children. Children develop an identity by themselves more in relation to who they are NOT- than with who they are. The inculcation of desired awareness should begin at an early age so that the adaptation would be natural. The children are expected to recognize and appreciate other culture at school as well as in their social interactions. The book *The Story of Ruby Bridges* throws light into this serious issue. What is looked ahead is a global citizenship in the transformative phase of global community. In the days of convergence there is an urgent need for children to look beyond the borders and recognise the divergence.

Representation of culture in children's picture books

According to Noll, culturally authentic literature has the "capacity to break down negative stereotypes and encourage understanding and appreciation of different cultures" (183). Bishop states that if "multicultural literature is to . . . help readers gain insight into and appreciation for the social groups reflected in the literature, then the literature ought to reflect accurately those groups and their cultures" (16). Norton cites Carlson's eight aspects in which children's understanding of the world is increased through narratives: stories help children understand cultural traditions of early humanity, show children the interconnection of different types of tales and motifs, teach children about cultural diffusion, help children develop recognition for culture and art of

different nations, provide children with realistic information about different countries, familiarize children with the different languages and variations of cultures around the globe, provide children with inspiration for creative drama, writing, and other forms of artistic expression, and encourage children to understand people all over the world have innate goodness, mercy, courage, and industry (282-84).

A major shortcoming of cultural homogenization is that it might cause a cultural loss. And on the other side there is a cultural gain. On the surface level, cultural homogenization is equated with fast food, internet and yoga. The food culture diverse and loaded narrowed down to pizzas and Coca cola. McDonaldization, the concept introduced by George Ritzer, and Coca Colonization left the vibe quite prominent that, it was reasonably obvious for young ones from a distant land to miss these words. In the sport of cultural gain and cultural loss, most people conform to homogenization practice and accelerate the process further, while a few chooses to be different, but their non conformity is hardly noticed and recognized to generate any change. Such resistance comes from elder group but the younger children scarcely realize that there is a room for non conformity. A popular children's classic *Little Red Riding Hood* is challenged mostly, at a later stage, on the grounds that there is a bottle of wine in Ridinghood's basket prepared for the grandmother. The idea that the consumption of wine as something normal enroute from the culture which produced the book. The story went circulated so widely that the matter left

unnoticed in the initial phase and accepted in terms of the story line or the message which instructs that strangers shouldn't be entertained. And in many parts of the world the story continues to be a well loved tale. A challenge on the popular tale arises at a point where the targeted group for whom the book is produced, is fascinated and carried away with the illustrations and the adventures of the central figure. A biased outlook on the values of childhood is suggested here, and hence, a culture which does not entertain alcohol consumption on any grounds at any situations will find it difficult to bypass this notion. The initialisation of children to social values through literature fails at this point. Howard argues that, an authentic book is one in which a universality of experience permeates a story that is set within the particularity of characters and setting. The universal and specific, come together to create a book in which, "readers from the culture will know that it is true, will identify, and be affirmed, and readers from another culture will feel it is true, will identify, and learn something of value about both similarities and differences among us" (92). The books should discuss situations that are universal and characters authentic to their setting together transfer the properties of culture to the readers. This ultimately leads to the understanding of similarities and differences that exist in the universe.

The confused childhood brought up on double standards would find it difficult to place themselves on the right track. The world of children is too small

and they make it big with their imagination. A polarised imagination would definitely create distortions. In the setting of cultural homogenization, if the culture the children are born into and the culture they are exposed to through various manifestations are in an eternal clash, the children will obviously face difficulty to place themselves meticulously. Moreover, they do not see themselves as they were told to them through the cultural patterns and symbols. Cultural homogenization in picture books is challenged on these grounds.

Children's books keep alive a sense of nationality, but they also keep a sense of humanity. They describe their native land lovingly, but they also describe faraway lands where unknown brothers live. They understand the essential quality of their own race, but each of them is a messenger that goes beyond mountains and rivers beyond the seas to the very ends of the world in search of new friendships. Every country gives and every country receives- innumerable are the exchanges- and so it comes about that in our first impressionable years the universal republic of childhood is form (Hazard 146).

The innocence, imagination, and fascination of childhood transcends borders and remain universal. The story that they read about themselves and about others should resonate. Homogenization should give room to assimilate from both ends. The values, ideals, and patterns that exist in different cultures should be focused on. Homogenization in the real sense results from the cultural

exchanges. A major shortcoming in this regard is faced as the major part of the production of children's picture books remains focused on a few developed and mainstream countries. The weightage given in the books would be naturally towards the culture which produced it. If at all they attempt to produce the books about other cultures, they all tend to be stereotypes. Another issue coupled along with this, is the books from these nations enjoy wide circulation even today. They remain to be well loved and accepted. Children when continue to read more books on a particular pattern, the mental conditioning is likely to be influenced by it. "Literature can be one of the most powerful tools for combating the ignorance that can breed xenophobic behaviour" (Jacobs and Tunnell 179).

The over whelming number of books with biased reinforcing, the children are unknowingly forced to suspend their own culture, support a foreign culture and welcome the codes and mores of it. A child from Indian context, fifty years back, cannot relate to a ball party at night as suggested in *Cinderella*; but over these years the events need no explanation. We notice similar unfamiliar episodes and mores in *The Three Little Pigs*. The book has been challenged due to various reasons including religious reason; stating that the book is culturally and religiously insensitive by using pigs as the characters. Discussing the plot, the book strongly imply the idea of separate settlement of the new blood at a very early age which could prove to be unwarranted concept for a society where family bonding is considered supreme. On the other hand, the culture which produced the book never consider the idea offensive. The idea is followed in the

community and children from such community could identify this notion without being heuristic about it. The views in the book operate contrastingly only when children from different cultures approach the same book. The situation becomes grave as the publication industry is active in a few main stream countries only and it is likely to promote the publications from limited range that is profitable. This leads to a persisting influence and the resulting cultural homogenization ends up biased. The problem is that most of the people imitate without any real experience of Western life. All they could see is the projected realities and could develop a feeling of inferiority on their own leading to the rejection of one's culture by accepting the mainstream mono-culture. A superior self perception is achieved by the younger ones in the dominant culture while a negative self perception is obtained by the minority group as a result of the uni-directional cultural globalization that lack multi ethnicity.

The flow of culture in cultural homogenization is unidirectional. The process includes less and excludes more the practices around; thereby, results not in amalgamation of practices leading to homogenization but rather acts as a powerful extension of cultural colonization. The occupancy of this element alone challenges the authenticity of cultural homogenization. The potential of cultural homogenization as the most sought after phase in cultural globalization loses clarity and resisted largely on this ground. The cultural flow is defended and

responded with ethnicity. Cultural authenticity includes the power of imagination and creative perception (Hearne 36).

The culture is self expressed by the values they embody and enforce. They are reflected through language, dressing, food and life style. When an opposing notion from a foreign culture is presented to children and brought to the reconciliation at the end they likely to foster a positive attitude towards it and is assimilated to the foreign culture. In the 1954 formulation by the Social Science Research Council (SSRC), acculturation was defined as, "culture change that is initiated by the conjunction of two or more autonomous cultural systems. Its dynamics can be seen as the selective adaptation of value systems, the processes of integration and differentiation, the generation of developmental sequences, and the operation of role determinants and personality factors" (974). The process of acculturation acquires a dual approach. Socialising takes place by the norms, practices, and patterns of the culture to which they are born and to the culture they are exposed to through various means especially literature. Marden and Meyer extend to say that, acculturation is inevitable, "who take over traits from another culture" (36).

Heterogenization, the upshot from homogenization

Cultural heterogeneity refers to the presence of multiple different cultures in a given population where each member is given a home and in return defends the community against external influences. Culture is a shared experience ever

evolving. Culture is a pattern evolved from conventions and practices that create distinct groups of communities enmeshed in boundaries. It produces various norms which in turn guide and influence the commonality. The cultural environment hence is an important factor and cannot be overlooked. When it is said that culture is not static it doesn't mean that we should not try to conserve some of our cultural traditions that we hold dear. The path to cultural understanding, leading to assimilation, is slow but faces many challenges that include racial and ethical. Appadurai addresses culture as an adjectival phenomenon rather than nominal artefact. According to him, "the central problem of today's global interaction is the tension between cultural homogenization and cultural heterogenization" (32). This tension aggravates with the resultant instability and prominence one achieves over the other.

At length discussions on cultural homogenization can be summed up into breaking the geographical boundaries through increased global interactions on multiple spheres resulting in universal patterns of existence inclusive of subtleties of thinking. Cultural homogenization spur when cultural uniformity is forced upon pushing away the ethnic identities. As a result of globalization, what happens in specific local places can be deeply influenced by processes taking place globally. Globalization thus includes the local practices and responses to the global. It is a kind of resistance towards the invasion of the dominant culture out of the fear that the local identities might be eliminated from the scene. It is

also viewed as enhancing cultural diversities in between the growing similarities in the global scene. The local identities, perspectives, experiences all are replaced with universality of culture. Cultural homogenization and heterogenization move in opposite directions. Heterogeneity in culture is manifested through resisting the force from the dominant culture and by reinstating the local practices. The collective and individual efforts in the multifarious realms reflect how monopoly is challenged. Homogenization of literature is the sum total of the monopoly of the publishing houses from developed countries like US, UK and Australia hold, giving little space for the 'other literature' to flourish. Heterogeneity questions this autonomy stressing local cultural identity. Children's literature is also not exempted from this.

The diverse cultural voices find a place in children's literature realizing the potential of literature to influence and condition the attitudes and lives of children. Local identities are stressed, yet the access to these works remain limited to the local scenes only hence one cannot suggest to children of the main stream countries about the real situations that existed. The illustrations, however, offer stereotypes; for example, Australian Aboriginal peoples, the natives of Africa and indigenous peoples of the Americas are frequently depicted wearing historic clothing, further, they often appear with stereotypical physical features and sharing no eye contact to the reader implying the inferiority of their culture for others. We have specific instances of culture in children's picture books for

the immediate targeted group along with distant future of culture. For instance, the book *The Lights for Gita* delineates the way how Indian culture and people gets along in a foreign land through the occasion of festival and giving glimpses of immigrant life in Canada. Picture books around the world with diverse cultural portrayal make room for authentic depiction of the marginalized. Allen Say's impressionistic work *Grandfather's Journey* shows the power of cultural difference. Say remembers his grandfather's journey between America and Japan and the cultures of the West and the East. "The themes of the book centre on to places, two worlds. . ." (Kiefer 130). Resembling approaches are found in the works like *I Hate English* and *My Name is Sangoel* where the protagonists exhibit cultural identity powerfully. The books that discuss multicultural experience give children the sense that their cultural identity equates with the social identity for others.

Interference of the publishers is one reason mostly remained unnoticed in connection with the books produced for children with content that lack cultural identity. Their interest mostly concerned with the business than with the cultural consciousness of the readers goes with the cultural representation with more of western inclinations. The picture books are quite expensive in terms of production because of which the publishers want to generate higher profit out of it. Due to this, they insist not to include any material that projects the local identities but to make it all more global so that they can sell it to as many

publishers as possible around the world. All manner of do's and don'ts for illustrations germinate at the book editors' offices whose prime concern is business and they never prefer to include any local visual references. "People won't pay so much for this book. It needs to be smaller" (Salisbury and Styles 170). They look for stories that can happen anywhere or everywhere that any reader can easily identify and relate to. But most of the time these global outlooks remain limited to somewhere between North America and Northern Europe. The publishers also look for a market in translation of these works; where the nations that could accommodate the translation would come forward which depends largely on the neutral setting of the story.

Dilution of domestic culture is viewed as a threatening situation with the unidirectional flow of culture. Globalization is invariably related to the lessening consortium of the state which is negatively assimilated to cultural imperialism while positively viewed as internationalism. There exists an increased integration of people turning into global society where the culture is unified but, unfortunately not enriched by absorbing the various elements from the increased integration. The cultures are not bound to geographical fringe but rather related to the time frame they exist. Accordingly, cultures hover in an emergent state. These various situations related to culture, challenge the cultural values, patterns, and identities of existence. Heterogeneity does not emphasize for a society with multiple cultures making communication difficult in an ever

growing world. What we need today is a society that thrives together. A picture book that sheds some light on the culture of a distant land is sure to incite in the minds of children an abstract idea making the land no more unknown.

Hybridization a midway?

Hybridization of culture cannot be synonymous with integration; because integration stand on interdependencies from both sides. Hybridization is different in terms that it is evolving into a new phase of culture. Hybridization, however, is not merely the mixing, blending, and synthesizing of different elements that ultimately forms a culturally faceless whole. In the course of hybridization, cultures often generate new forms and make new connections with one another.

Globalization is equated with a borderless world by many where the territorial divisions are seemingly irrelevant. Pronouncing the rise of a borderless world, hyperglobalizers seek to convince the public that globalization inexorably involves the decline of bounded territory as a meaningful concept for understanding social and political change (Steger 61). The much debated term globalization could find a lot many characteristics. According to Ritzer and Malon, "it is the transnational flow of people, financial resources, goods, information and culture and have recently been increasing in a drastic way and have profoundly transformed the world. This phenomenon has been labelled Globalization" (160). Finally there is a flow of culture but ethnicity resists the

unidirectional flow of culture from western meta ethics threatening the localized one. The cultural flow around the world is also seemingly influenced by globalization. The cultural globalization is often entangled with the set practices and symbolic expressions of life which remain enrooted in culture. The inception of cultural globalization went unnoticed initially and later on, apart from the civilizational exchanges in addition to new technologies, consumerism, and similar symbolic practices the cultural transformations were stamped as cultural globalization. Further, the technological advances like internet accelerated the pace of the same. "Cultural theories of globalization tend to line up along one of three positions according to Tomlinson and Nederveen Pieterse; the three positions suggested by them were (1) that of homogenization theory which sees global cultural convergence resulting in a uniform pattern of existence. (2) Heterogeneity theory or approach maintains the cultural difference and establishes the autonomy of the local culture. Finally, (3) hybridization stresses a new and constantly evolving cultural forms and identities produced by manifold transnational processes and the fusion of distinct cultural processes (Robinson 140). The surfacing through globalization over the years is likely to realize in hybridization than any other. In an era of convergence and divergence the two former positions that of homogenization and heterogeneity is dubious to take place; as the former, homogenization is an improbable situation. The uniform pattern of existence is always challenged by heterogeneity of local culture. The major points of debate in cultural theories of globalization are universalism and

particularism. As culture continually evolves, the authenticity of the local culture will also be lost and likely to embrace new forms which in turn lead to hybridization. The continual conflict between homogeneity and heterogeneity for authority levels on synthesizing both to a new connection and giving a new form of cultural hybridization; though the claim for the other two continue to exist. As Giddens comments, globalization is becoming increasingly decentered; its effects are felt as much in Western countries as elsewhere (Curran and Park 7).

Adaptations: Retelling or translations?

Childhood cannot be enmeshed into geographical boundaries because this natural phase is common to all cultures and same everywhere. The spirit of childhood is present in different cultures of the world especially in the narratives about them. These narratives are original to childhood and only adaptations and retellings in different cultures. The origins of many stories are still unknown and claimed by many countries and cultures. Though the kernels are unknown the roots are strongly grounded on childhood and it has grown and spread over, branches reaching over to other cultures, like a huge tree giving shade to all, encompassing everyone. If the elements of childhood are similar all over then why do these retellings and adaptations originate is an introspective element. The central values and assumptions common to childhood are common to all cultures and still the retellings show up over and again. The concrete images and abstract symbolism particular to each social heritage comes afloat making each

retelling bound to the social conditioning. The meta narratives thrive on global platform while each adaptation forcibly clings on to local entity. "Two versions of a story involving the same characters, settings, and events can differ substantially in their implications or significances" (Stephens and MacCallum IX).

An ever evolving pattern exists for literary works and they are modified from time to time moving from one form to another. The oral tradition of literature was adapted to written form with fundamental and appurtenant transformations. Retold stories take different forms as they travel from one land to another, while the translations of the literary works in to different languages, leave the original story retold in the target language. In the case of picture books even the illustrations accompanied with the text would be changed accordingly to suit the target audience. The adaptation of stories should be carefully made keeping the authenticity to reflect the culture and origin keeping in view of the value implications in the recipient culture. It should be culturally credible. Another method of reversion is adaptation into multiple forms like films, narrative books to picture books and vice versa.

Retelling takes place often with the primary objective of cultural reinstating. The concept on reworking on stories started with biblical stories, classical stories, folktales, and legends and all of them which bear a literary value. The two possible motivations behind this are, one, the stories mirror life

and also the aspirations of the society; two, they transmit cultural traditions and significances. The relation that a retold text holds with the pre text is that of aesthetic, social, ethical and at times dominant with cultural overtones (Stephens 93). We have an androcentric, ethnocentric, and class based assumptions according to John Stephens which ultimately persist into retellings of the metatexts. There is a penetrating tendency for the adaptations to produce a modified social conservatism and cultural heritage. A story meant purely for the children helps them to initiate to the experience or situations discussed, while, a story retold induct the audience to the social and cultural values of the producing culture. The social issues and social maturation make the retellings for children a special area. Ethnic groups are frequently defined in cultural terms, they refer to “a segment of a larger society whose members are thought, by themselves and/or others, to have a common origin and to share important segments of a common culture and who, in addition, participate in shared activities in which the common origin and culture are significant ingredients” (Yinger 200).

The translations form a major part of literary tradition and same for children’s literature too. The literature in translation throws light into the lives of people living in the other parts of the world. The experiences mirrored in literature receive a new insight with the new cultural perspective added to the translation of that literature. The rendering of the work in the new language and

culture leave a chance to know the unknown realms and identify how the same experience find a new voice in a culture vastly different. "Translation is not merely matter of shifting linguistic gears. It is also a shift from one culture to another from one way thought into another, from one way life into another. What may be strange and exotic must be made to seem, if not familiar, at least rational and acceptable" (Fenton 639). The books perform as carrier of one culture and spokesperson of the other at the same time. When it comes to the translation of picture books there is an additional challenge, as the Finnish translator Ritta Oittinen observes, "when the translator sees the original text with certain illustrations, the pictures influence solutions. This affects not only the choice of words, but also the style of writing throughout the book" (15).

Retelling of the works indirectly reinforces the ethnicity, they also familiarise the foreign experiences and themes comprehensible to the children of target language. The unfamiliarity of the unknown experiences might make the messages obscure and comprehension of ideas difficult. In the case of picture books, translators need to address visual elements and preserve the intricate relationship between image and text intact. "Studying different illustrated versions of the same folktale can help children to see how artists make choices to convey meaning and how various choices can enhance and extend different parts of the story" (Kiefer 165). The children are also given to see how these modern versions were evolved from the traditional ones. They realize how the sequels

were developed; the regional versions came to life; how the reversals, as mostly in the cases of the Disney films we notice how the stories take unexpected turn of events, were constructed.

Considering the popular classic, the *Cinderella* story, was actually a very late production by Charles Perrault in 1605. The story started circulating from the Egyptian tradition and it follows as how a slave ended up ruling the kingdom. The feature that remained intact throughout the numerous versions is how serfdom gave way to kingdom. But each version of the story is rich in cultural significations and people keep it close to their lives. The sense of culture is effectuated with the narrative frame, thus the process of retelling is always involved in the processes of cultural formations. That is the reason that the eagle who took away the sandals in the Egyptian version gets replaced as a carp, a reincarnation of the dead mother in Chinese *Yeh-Shen* which further projected as a fairy god mother in the Perrault's version. *Little Red Riding Hood*, a popular fairy tale too has undergone similar variations with multiple retellings. Among many, Potter's *The Tale of Jemima Puddle Duck* and *Lon Po Po* by Ed Young are the most popular ones. The original version can be traced back to the 10th century. Even then the version remained close to the children. The popularity and acceptance created a space for retelling of the story under different garbs. All of them followed the same thread line of the story identifying it, as holding a powerful message to be communicated to children yet each of the retellings

remained uniquely different grounding firmly on the cultural roots. Beatrix Potter's *The Tale of Jemima Puddle Duck* (1908) is modelled after *Little Red Riding Hood* and the fact was admitted by Potter herself, where she replaced the main character with animals. Another version modelled on the same story was produced by Pat Mc Kissack who created a more logical support to the reasoning faculty. *Lon PoPo* by Ed Young, a Chinese sequel of the *Little Red Ridinghood* story the main character was replaced by three sisters and the problem and solution both are evolved at their intervention. Many versions still continues to be produced in recent years too. Recent retellings are placed on the chances of popularity of such works and the realization that a reproduction of the same will definitely enrich the literature of their country, culture along with the idea that the values of their culture can travel to children more efficiently through a successful medium or an accepted chronicle. The retellings help to confine one into his own culture; it also spreads globalization, making each anecdote reach millions and bring them all to one greater reality and unified whole.

Folk tales are treasure houses of culture, history, wisdom, and values. Hearne points out, "Folktales are not born and nourished in isolation they grow from social experience and cultural tradition" (33). As suggested, childhood is common around the globe so is the folktales about the childhood experiences. The folk tales though differ in the cultural details; they exist as sequels to each other from different traditions which make one suspect that they come from one

origin. A comparative study would definitely provide interesting understanding about the story patterns that exists in many cultures (Kiefer 165). Children attend folktales without prejudice. They hardly pay attention whether it belongs to Grimm's tradition or from African origin. They go for the underlying message. These folktales can prove to be a good tool to teach cultural understanding. Children would recognise the idea how distinct they are and how they are related to the world outside. Further, comparing the art in these tales can often provide details about a culture and how the same is reflected through depictions. When a folktale is transferred from one culture to another, the author or illustrator has to consider the possible value conflict that might take place due to cultural transfer and the recipient culture's capability of accepting the introduced value. Along with the aesthetic understanding the differences of culture and cultural connections that exist in different parts of the world will be realized. The illustrated version of a popular tale thus brings into the understanding about patterns and motifs that cut across many cultures, "and looks that represent an illustrator's use of historical and cultural details in illustrations" (Kiefer 168).

Time and again, each popular story has been adapted and retold in different languages, consequently culture. "These identities - based on common language, collective memory, history, and culture - are immutable and fixed and inevitably result in 'natural' divisions between various groups" (Wolff 33). "The best known classics of children's literature books like *Pinocchio*, *Heidy*, *The Secret*

Garden have been widely translated and always either explicitly or implicitly conveyed the culture, history, and sensibilities of a discrete, albeit exclusivist, cultural or national population at a given time in history" (Stan 3). The cultural adaptation in these stories is at numerous levels, for example, in the German translation of *Pinocchio*, food is made more German. The reference to little creatures is shifted from cricket to Maybug. One is sure to notice the cultural adaptation in the setting of the story too, by taking away the fairy tale to Mediterranean planes. Bierbaum, who brought *Pinocchio* to German tradition, claims that a straight translation was impossible as the original Italian version bears a strong element of national character. The adaptation of a popular work is made with an eye to match the taste and traditions of the target culture. "Instead of the graphic vigour of the original, we find sentimentality reinforcing the moral attitude" (Sullivan 119). The culture imposed translations ultimately lead to retellings of the classics. Hearne noted in her "Respect the Source", that "selection dictates how much a story will need to be adapted to translate from one culture to another and how ready it will be absorbed" (34). These retellings adopt only the story line based on the morals to be imbibed by the children to whom the books are meant to be and to make them realize the universality of human problems; but they differ in all other aspects like setting, dressing, expressions, relationships, and even the names. The examples are ample and many. *Yeh Shen* (1982) a Chinese rendering of the famous children's story *Cinderella*, *Lon Po Po* Chinese version of *Little Red Riding Hood* are a few among them. The cultural

elements are affirmed at many levels in these works. In the former, Young breaks the pictorial plane into panels reminiscent of Chinese scroll paintings (Kiefer 138). "In the theme of the book, its setting in time and place and its overall effect is strengthened by the artists' choice of certain historical or cultural conventions" (138); for example, instead of fairy granting the wishes it's a carp which is a symbol of good fortune according to the Chinese values. The crucial point of the story, the lost slipper is a tiny one reflecting the traditional concept of beauty in China. The creative *mélange* of the motif of fish and the scenes in the story are very poetic and also not out of sync with the story. Therefore, we must judge the book, not as to, whether the illustration match the definition of a particular period or culture but as to whether the artist has chosen elements that enhance and extend the meaning of the book for today's reader. Whereas, in *Lon Po Po*, it is two clever sisters instead of Red Riding Hood takes over the scene. It is self evident through the retellings that the chance of being influenced to a different culture is resisted deliberately and thus the ethnicity of the culture is reinforced. Stories for children perform a major social function as to initiate children into social heritage. Hence the retold stories perform the same function with concrete images of cultural heritage entrenched in them. The discussion on culture would not cease until a proper comment given on ethnicity, the tag of the time.

Ethnicity: Reclaiming the identity

The reflective analysis would fetch the realization that the focus on ethnicity results from globalization. That is until and unless a unified code was regularized and forced, the awakening remained latent. Furthermore, cultural globalization faced the criticism on the questions how sameness is enforced among all cultures and how difference is preserved simultaneously. Among the two which one should be given weightage is still an intriguing question. As long as sameness of culture does not guarantee the due involvement of the local culture with its diversity and conversely effectuate the Western culture or dominant culture upon others, cultural globalization will remain under the shade of doubts. Slowly, taking the garb of nationality, ethnicity became a point of presence. Even though started slowly it was steady, stressing at the social and individual level of identity. The term ethnicity includes the insights, methods, and patterns of cultural interactions, which individualize a certain community from the others. The lack of these distinguishing qualities is often questioned by the pessimistic hyper globalizers. "The pessimistic hyper globalizers argue that, we are not moving towards a cultural rainbow that reflects the diversity of the worlds' existing cultures. Rather we are witnessing the rise of an increasingly homogenized popular culture underwritten by Western Culture industry based in New York, Hollywood, London, and Milan" (Steger 70). Altogether this remarkably lead cultural globalization into cultural colonization. The cultural

colonization is defended against, and ethnicity is preserved in extremism. This tendency to support ethnicity flourishes from the roots of religion through literature and other activities. The multiple issues reasoned for the claim of ethnicity is discussed further in the following paragraphs.

Under representation of the minority in children's picture book

Claim for ethnicity can be reasoned as the under representation of minority culture and also the misrepresentation of the culture in children's picture books. Some have inappropriate depictions of dresses, hairstyles, and architecture, making the Asian cultures as a hurled up affair. *The Paper Crane* is a story where elements of Chinese and Japanese cultures are fused together. A few mixes Asian with Western cultures and these would sound Asian but remain Western. These tendencies mirrored in picture books for children just like any other area. Asians were depicted as looking similar and "choosing to live together in quaint communities in the midst of large cities, clinging to outworn customs" (Harada 137). Nodelman in his book *Words About Pictures: The Narrative Art Of Children's Picture Books* explains how pictures force viewers,

it is inherent in the nature and purpose of the picture books that the pictures in them be specifically oriented towards meaningful elements.

Those picture books that have practical purposes such as alphabet books require their viewers to focus on the names of the objects their pictures convey; picture books that tell stories force viewers search the pictures for

information that might add to or change the meaning of the accompanying text (18).

Two basic concepts related to visual narratives are suggested through this, firstly, how illustrations remain an inevitable part of the story; second, these illustrations must be recognized as what they represent; whereas, the accurate representation is found lacking in most situations. Under representation is a situation where the culture of the minority community hardly get represented in the major works thereby the children really cannot identify themselves with the situations dealt with. The major works of art are produced by the western developed countries and it tends to relate and portray the situations of their culture giving no extra emphasis to the culture of the marginalized and under developed countries. The lack of cultural proximity in these works leaves a kind of estrangement in the young minds.

Misrepresentation of cultural values

Misrepresentation is a further situation where the ethnicity of the minority culture is presented pleasing to the larger spectrum of readers than the real benefactors of the culture. There is an essential difference between the concept of authenticity in literature and the concept of nonstereotyping. The food habits, dressing, customs all produced as replicas of the established stereotypes as illustrated by western artists and appeal to the readers, but unfortunately remain detached from reality. This creates the cry for ethnicity louder. Hearne warned

the writers and illustrators in her article, "Respect the Source", 'to establish their cultural authority' (34). She suggests that the creators of a work should train themselves to identify the values embedded, attitudes to be developed, patterns to be realized, and motifs realized which members of the culture as a whole would weigh "worthy of acceptance and belief". Thomas Hardworth's *Mei-Li* is one work often conflicts with authenticity of the original. The book fails at the point where, aesthetic authenticity clashes with the value authenticity apart from the obvious errors of depiction. The silly mistake of illustrating the fan during the winter time in Peiking, China is an example. Another major short coming that we come across in the book is the bound feet of the protagonist's mother which has ceased to be an accepted cultural value ever since it was officially banned when the Ching dynasty was overthrown. Even though Chinese hates themselves to be picturised like this, the world outside limit the land of Chinese to these exotic and painful practices. Only the accepted cultural values in the work could make it authentic. The major misrepresentations are evident in stories where blacks are characters. They are mostly fitted in menial roles with stereotyped features and dialogues. For a book to be universal; it should be stocked up with multicultural situations rendered authentically and characterised realistically.

Daniel Hade observes, "the mass market place selects which books will survive and thus children's books becomes less a cultural and intellectual object and more an entertainment looking for mass appeal (511). The globalization

brings under its claws the independent interest of creators as well as the children, the target group. The mass appeal towards something in the globalization era tends to lean towards western hemisphere. The idea of globalization is resisted mostly as it is identified with Western ethics.

Globalization is destroying the cultural diversity of the world, declining the local identities, and demolishing the distinctions of the local cultures that form our identity (Tomlinson 269). Globalization also indicates the powerful influence of other cultures bringing about changes in the local culture thereby the cultural peculiarities and characteristics of the society move in tune with the dominant culture. This trend of cultural standardization results in uniformed set of values to which one cannot relate. The inclination against globalization or western universalization reinforces ethnicity.

Stereotyping: A Farce

Diverse cultural voices are not heard much in children's picture books. The reasons are the number of minority authors is few; thereby the minority experience portrayed remains less. The portrayal many a times lacks either clarity or credibility. These inaccurate representations tend to give only a stereotype account of the minority culture.

Stereotypes and prejudice are the results of white people not knowing the life of any black people closely. Therefore, children's books that are accurate and positive in their portrayal of black Americans are intended to help white children

understand black children as they really are and to offer black children stories that reflect their real life and experiences.

Mendoza and Reese have found that even in award winning books inaccuracies and stereotypes are visible. Susan Jeffers' praise worthy picture book, *Brother Eagle, Sister Sky* projects Seattle a Squamish chief from the North West using regalia of the Lakota people the ethnic group of the Great Plains (Creany et al. 190). The illustrations predominantly represent Plains' cultures, which is communicated with the use of horses, headdresses with feathers, and tipis featured significantly instead of Northwest tribal lifestyle. These inaccuracies signify lack of firsthand knowledge about the culture they depict in the books. But it reinforces the stereotype image of the community in front of the world along with catering wrong racial representations in the minds of children. In Lynn Cherry's book, *A River Ran Wild* (1992) an inaccurate portrayal of Native American children painted as wearing feathers. Native Americans are depicted as ghostly spirit beings suggesting that their culture is a bizarre relic of the past rather than a vital contemporary one. An artist can portray a black child with black skin, natural hair, and flat features and make him attractive or make him a stereotype or a caricature child. The child who sees such pictures which ridicule his race may be deeply hurt, feel defeated, or become resentful and rebellious; while the white child, who sees the stereotyped presentation of the black person, begins to feel superior and to accept this distorted picture or type.

Along with misrepresentation under-representation too creates an adverse consciousness among children, the targeted readers of these productions. It leaves a distorted view of the world that it belongs to a majority and that they are not important enough to be portrayed and to be known among the rest of the world. A lighter skin, would create in the minds of the children a biased reflection of the world. The underrepresentation can be explained as the absence of minority character in the title roles or influencing roles and illustrations. Their representation is mostly limited to the stereotypes of occupational roles and passivity.

Picture books prepare young minds with a fundamental understanding of the world and initiate them to a cultural diversification through visual language. We need to understand that the impact left by books in the minds of children is powerful, deeper, and lasts their lifetime. Children begin to notice race by age two, and "by age three, children show signs of being influenced by societal norms and biases and may exhibit 'prejudice' towards others on the basis of gender, race, or disability" (Erin 307). They identify the skin labels and emotionally respond to it where for the minority cultures might develop a conflict within them. It is difficult to alter the impressions so we must be careful to provide with accurate and authentic cultural traditions through the books. It is not a child's play anymore. " These technological, cultural, social underpinnings provide the basis throughout history for the individuals response to image and

ideas now found in picture books” (Kiefer 71). In a study conducted in 1939, to learn about the racial preferences and attitudes, a group of black children were asked to choose between a white or a black doll. Neglecting the self identification, majority of the children preferred a white doll to a black one proving that they experience an internalized racism or prejudice towards their own race. This study thus suggests about an alarming state. To sweep away the particular cultural identity will work against cultural globalization (Wilson 12). The internalized racism is present in white children too, and they develop negative racial attitudes towards a culture and race other than theirs.

The way the children comprehend the picture books today is based on the cultural heritage, social trends, and technological advancements of which they are part of. The literature for children should therefore, embrace cultural essentials equipping them to deal with the issues through their reading and learning. It helps to develop a chance to see the similarity among people around and also appreciate the differences. This could be facilitated when the culturally authentic representations are brought in the picture books for children. The goal should be to affirm the cultural existence of and give voice to the groups of people being erased by the move toward global culture in picture books. Globalization is definitely not a negative growth; but the course of path should be amalgamating both dominating and minority culture alike. What should be

looked forwarded is the fruitful interaction between the particularity of the local culture and the global significance of the local knowledge.

Multiculturalism and Acculturation

Multiculturalism is an all-encompassing term and appears in contemporary social, political, literary, and educational discussions. From the sociological perspective, multiculturalism is a technique for society building. At the same time the political ideology stamped to it. Multiculturalism is presented in a new garb by the Western Governments not only as a new ideology that conceptualizes diversity, but also to address the fact of diversity. The political overtones cannot make the concept under stated. Multi cultural literature is defined as “trade books, regardless of genre, that have as the main character a person who is a member of a racial, religious, or language micro-culture other than the Euro-American one” (Lynch-Brown and Tomlinson 188). Multicultural literature entails with the racial identity other than European or American. Its main aim is to promote children’s literature that would reflect the conditions of living in a diversified culture. Multicultural literature shares a number of positive aspects concerning the acquisition of language skills, personal enrichment, and also to develop a cultural consciousness among children as part of educational ideology.

There is little recognition of the darker side of multiculturalism, of its genesis in the recognition of oppression of ethnic groups by the mainstream as

implied in Donnarae MacCann's definition: "Multiculturalism addresses the warfare waged against specific groups of people – armed warfare, plus aggression implemented through forced labor and forced acculturation" (341). The definition needs to explain the few terms related to multiculturalism of literature especially as a movement in literature and the necessity out of which it was created.

Acculturation process acts as a natural upshot; "the concept of acculturation refers to the social processes by which we learn the knowledge and skills that enable us to be members of a culture" (Barker 2). But most of the time it is a forced one which is resisted strongly in the garb of multiculturalism. The "warfare" as suggested by Mac Cann (341) is waged by the specific group as they undergo the suffrage from forced acculturation.

Analysis of picture books in the light of multiculturalism moves beyond the primary goal of socialisation. The demographic diversity and the cultural hybridization reflected in the picture books have led the way to the rise of the sub-genre of multicultural picture books. These multicultural books help children with cultural relativism. Multicultural literature helps to develop their understanding of others and affirm themselves to diverse backgrounds. The multicultural picture books perform a dual role as that of a mirror and that of window as said by Sims Bishop (16). The children see themselves reflected and they are also able to see the life of others and how the differences and similarities

exist among them. The chance to see and include the lives of minority in the children's picture book makes the multicultural act as a window while earlier it was just the mirror where only the mainstream reflections found a place. The children from other cultures were invisible and they were represented in the stereotypes, that too mostly negative stereotypes. The socio cultural changes taking place everywhere fostered the diverse experiences; "the diverse life experiences, traditions, histories, values, world views, and perspectives of the diverse cultural groups that make up a society" (Grant and Ladson-Billings 185).

The production of multicultural picture books faces a steady increase in the progressive era, still they face a number of criticisms. These include the stereotyping, racial profiling, inauthentic representations, and lack of accuracy. The most critical issue faced in this regard is the representations still equates with the pre conditioned notions of the white world about the minority, because the people who work behind these books are from white culture. The lack of understanding on their part about the ethnic cultural practices and values of the minority reflects as inaccurate and misleading representations of the minority culture. The intercultural nature of the present era initiates a deep understanding of the cultural issues involved by addressing the topics like identity, ethnicity, inclusion along with racial and gender stereotyping. These topics are dealt in detail in the following paragraphs.

Global harmony must be communicated to children from the very early days before stereotyping or prejudices corrupt their mind. Racial profiling is term directly associated with law and order. To a greater degree it is the conviction of the officers that the person from a particular community is likely to be from a criminal background and attempts to take disciplinary measures abide by it. Applying the idea to literature, particularly in children's literature, it indicates the approach of the writers and illustrators that the person from a particular ethnic community is likely to behave in the pre conceived manner. They might incorporate in the texts misleading ideas related to this which could influence the mindset of the children to reach the same sort of conclusions about the ethnic community which is far-flung from reality most of the time. These depictions hinder the possibility of the ethnic community to be identified as the distinctive community with the set practices, customs, and values. Forever their identity remains overshadowed and misunderstood. Charlemae Rollins says,

Writers are now making a conscious effort to reproduce the natural speech of all children who are presented from any particular section of the country. The colourful speech of all who share the same economic, regional, or historical background should be reproduced as faithfully as possible in order to give flavour to the story, but never at the expense of any individual in the group. . . . There is rarely a need to use profanity and obscene language in children's books for the child who finds it there

assumes that it is acceptable and is confused when his use of it is challenged (Baker ii).

The racial consciousness children develop is to be viewed seriously, they learn from the surroundings and jump to the conclusions about life and society. Jed Bland defines gender stereotypes as the behaviours, attitudes, values and beliefs that a particular cultural group considers appropriate. When we address them as boys and girls they build up gender profiling as boys are different from girls; they need to be addressed first, or should be given emphasis, more important and so. Likewise many natural episodes germinate in them the idea of social hierarchy without being endorsed by the adults. The white children always show a pro-white social behaviour whereas the minority children are negatively impacted by stereotyping. Rollins commented that, we have to recreate with conscious efforts so that children maintain an unbiased outlook of the world.

The following chapter would discuss the selected picture books for the study; where the analysis includes multiple cultural and social parameters. The lens through which the analysis of picture books is conducted includes critical content analysis based on culture. The critical content analysis is partially based on the model suggested by Mendoza and Reese in their work. The depiction of the character is analysed to see if it belongs to the main stream culture or marginalized culture. Further it was also studied whether any stereotyping is reflected. The cultural informations received from the books are also considered.

Are the books effective in communicating authentic cultural details in text as well as in illustrations? The questions on what the narratives and these pictures say about race, class, culture, gender, age, and resistance to the status quo are vital factors in the study. The next parameter was the theme analysis to see if the distribution of power is biased or not; does the minority characters in the story are given a supreme position in the narratives is a significant question. The investigation also probed into author's ethnicity and authenticity. It studied to find answers for whether the author belongs to the original culture of the narrative or are they from a different culture? Was the story produced on first hand information, and did they keep up the authenticity of the culture depicted in the narrative. Questions on language used in the narratives are also addressed. It also examined how the stories remain bound to childhood and their experiences.