

SHEME MARY P. U. "GLOBALIZATION OF CULTURE: A STUDY OF THE INFLUENCE OF CHILDREN'S PICTURE BOOKS ON THE TRANSFORMATION OF CULTURE IN THE GLOBAL AGE". THESIS. RESEARCH CENTRE, DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH, ST. THOMAS' COLLEGE (AUTONOMOUS), UNIVERSITY OF CALICUT, 2019.

## Chapter 5

### Conclusion

The inevitability of 21<sup>st</sup> century is that as Steger commented, “people everywhere on this planet are inextricably linked to each other through the air they breathe, the climate they depend on, the food they eat, and the water they drink” (86). The interrelatedness of people around the globe is inevitable; the enhanced integration of human life in the new era leads the way to globalization and makes global culture irreversible. The scenario of global culture influences the masses from the juvenile to the grown up. This perspective was undertaken and the analysis of picture books for children in this study is attempted in this regard.

The strategy of the study was to understand how globality is enforced in the society through picture books for children with the aesthetic, emotional and affective content analysed in the socio-cultural context in the background of cultural theories of globalization. Located at a point of intersection between cultural globalization and children’s picture books, the research tend to be a part of an extensive study drawn largely on children’s literature with direct thrust on picture books, narratology and cultural studies. In particular, this study concentrates on tentative influences picture books could initiate in children, especially toddlers, in developing and understanding the cultural difference, bringing about a transformation resulting in globalization of culture. For the

study, popular children's picture books irrespective of the time frame has been selected and analysed with the theories of globalization on culture applied to observe the embedded themes. The books belonging to different genres were appraised thematically, conceptually and aesthetically. The key question addressed in the research was how does the picture books becomes a decisive factor in encouraging the globalization of culture; together with attending to the issue of ethnicity which gained a momentum in the era of globalization. A comparative study of globalization and ethnicity is weighed with the representation in picture books from the readerly and writerly positions.

The broad aim of this study as stated in the initial chapter was to examine the cultural aspect of globalization especially that is actualised through children's picture books by emphasizing the influence these books have on the lives of children. The investigation included the thematic analysis achieved through narrative techniques and the illustrations of the selected picture books produced at various periods of time. These books were selected on the parameters of how these books reflect the cultural difference causing an emphatic response among children through the theme, characterisation, and cultural back ground of the characters depicted, settings and multiple similar factors. The study in total analysed three major concepts; primary focus of the study was to observe picture books in the lives of children, second was the wider concept of globalization as encapsulated into the background of the study and

the third and final focus of the study was culture as evolving and influencing in the changing epoch. Based on these concepts the chapters of the thesis were devised.

The first chapter of the thesis proposed an introduction to the study proposed. The chapter discussed the various concepts related to the study. The history of children's literature especially the picture books was traced. It looked in to the current scenario of children's literature globally, with special focus to the contribution of Indian picture books for children. The idea of globalization propelling the momentum in children's literature was delineated thoroughly. The cultural perspective of children's literature along with globalization and the transformations is given proper reference in the chapter. The chapter introduced the major concepts of the study and also the parameters focussed to conduct the study to find out the objectives. The major objectives of the study were to examine how picture books remain culture bound. The study explored how children's picture book aids to understand cultural traditions of humanity and thus helped children to develop an appreciation for culture. The second objective was to explore how children familiarize themselves with many different languages and dialects of cultures around the world through picture books resulting in globalization of imagination and culture. To find out the role and importance of picture books in the life of children formed the third objective of the study. It was also studied how picture books provided visual literacy to

children with stimulation for creative drama, writing, and other forms of artistic expression, and encouraged children to realize people all over the world. Finally, the aesthetic potential of the picture book on the transformation of culture in the global age was also analyzed.

The second chapter studied the process of globalization and how the globality is achieved in the world. The multiple influencing factors of globalization, the concepts like Eurocentric, multicultural, and transnational involved with globalization is discussed at length. The Indian globalization scenario and how literature and globalization remain connected were explained. The third chapter studied the various nuances of culture present around the globe. A deeper look at the issues of under representation of minority cultures, misrepresentation of the races, stereotyping of the marginalized and lack of authenticity in the portrayal of cultures was attempted. Multiculturalism in the truest sense is concluded to be the need of the hour. The fourth chapter discussed the third concept of study that is the role of picture books in the lives of children. Seventeen picture books were selected and analysed thematically and aesthetically to conduct the study. The selected books were grouped to four categories as classical books for which no date of origin can be ascertained; the second category was the popular picture books which always remained close to the lives of children. The third category was the multicultural picture books where at least one multicultural element is present and the last category was the

Indian picture books. The books and the major concepts discussed in them is exemplified in the following paragraph.

Classical picture books category studied the famous fairy tale *Cinderella* and *The Little Red Ridinghood*. These books suggested a clear bias towards a euro centric tradition as they were produced to please the white childhood. The popular picture books category studied three popular works namely, *The Tale of Peter Rabbit*, *A Cat in the Hat*, and *Babar, The journey of an Elephant*. These books showed the traces of cultural imperialism in content, theme, characters, and settings. The third category of the picture books selected was multicultural picture books; where one set of works displayed under representation, misrepresentation, and stereotyping. These books were *Five Chinese Brothers*, *The story of Little Black Sambo*, *Brother Eagle Sister Sky*, and *Smoky Night*. The second set of multicultural picture books were *Snowy Day*, *Grand Father's Journey*, and *Yo!Yes?*. These books were found to describe the positive aspects multiculturalism exhibiting the details accurately and authentically, in theme message and characters. The last category discussed was Indian Picture books. One series of books comprising three books that is, *A Gift for Gita*, *Roses for Gita and Lights for Gita* and other two books *The Toy Horse*, and *Raju's Ride* were studied. These books are found to be culturally relevant by depicting the cultural details of India successfully. But these books were not able to match the

circulation of the other popular western books and hence could not affect any changes in the cultural outlook of children.

The larger spectrum of children's literature forms the foundation of the research that moves towards globalization of culture focussing on picture books. The general milieu of the study is children's literature which we often know is over shadowed by the obscurities generated out of the objective of those who work behind them. Children become a part of it only at the last point of the scale. Furnishing the final role of beneficiaries, children actually gratify the varied hidden interests of the writer, publisher, parents and teachers. The study was intended to analyse the children's picture books from these perspectives and the unspoken role of these outlooks resulting in the globalization of culture.

Globalization is the movement of the world by emerging out of the divergence and enhancing the convergence. It reduces the world into one globe than many varied entities. Culture, the set pattern of living, is constructed with various social driving forces. So the social force of globalization naturally results in globalization of culture too, where the people adapt to the culture around them towards which they are exposed. The influence of the changes taking place around the globe have an influence on lives of children especially in the early years of development and by the experience they are given in form of interaction with people around, books, and other medias. As picture books are introduced at a very young age and forms a greater part of literature for the toddlers, it plays a

major role in shaping their socially relevant attitudes. The major part of the ever evolving culture is claimed by children all over the world without proper deliberation.

Transformation of culture is a natural process, constructing culture to remain dynamic. The movement of the world towards globalized world is a natural evolution. The world tends to develop more affinity with the increased interrelatedness as a result of series of changes taking place around. From the internet to the international trade policies and international politics to international peace forums all involuntarily produces or rather reduces the world to a small entity. The association with children of an early age necessitates this study and develop the insight positively towards globalization of culture. The schema of the research can greatly contribute to our understanding of how texts represent cultural diversity along with stereotyping and western meta ethic. The study identifies how readers respond positively or negatively to these representations

Children's literature has always been fascinating for both children and adults. But at the same time children's books were given only a limited perspective. And it has never been considered to be a part of a higher literature. The difference that is found between the adult literature and children's literature is that in the former, the communication between the author and the intended readers are direct and no mediation takes place. Whereas, in children's literature



there is an interference of adults instructing the intended readers as what to read and how to read. The mediating role is based on the generalizations, which adults make about children and their ability to comprehend. When it comes to picture books, the dictum is that picture books are easy to understand; it rests on the assumption that children have a visual imagination and pictures are automatically understandable.

Children easily get attached to the cultural attitudes exhibited by the characters of the stories they read and can develop social consciousness in a greater or lesser degree. The children who are given this exposure can broadly be classified into two sections the first group, whose life is reflected in the picture books the real benefactors of the cultural transformations; and the second, who remain as onlookers and never given a chance to partake in the cultural evolution and likely to develop a distorted view of the world. So the first group never get to know that there exists a marginal group with different cultural values and patterns. Whereas for the second group the world belongs to a powerful majority and they had to strive to be one among them forgetting their roots. As picture books are considered to be powerful tools for transferring the ideas and values of the world to which children are initiated, these books should include the occurrences from cultures around the world with a judicious balance and with due representation to all communities. The balance is difficult to be

accomplished as the number of books exploring tribes, people, voices, of minority cultures are not encompassed either completely or meticulously.

Varied and diverse experiences they receive at an early phase of their life offer the learner the ability to answer questions that stretch throughout their educational life. It improves their ability to review intelligently and take decisions about the issues they face in a broader spectrum. The aesthetic judgment children employ in picture books by analysing the illustration, and by correlating between the illustration and the text involve critical thinking skills which in turn extend for a whole life span. Illustrations in picture book offer the reader a variety styles which include author's and illustrator's point of view in viewing the situations and the responses. The illustrations in children's books offer a variant point of view, by presenting information about cultures other than the one with which the reader is familiar with, and provides a chance to critically observe the changing nuances. The critical observation is exercised on analysis of objects of artistic merits and decoding them with personal interpretation. Along with developing the aesthetic acumen, it is expected to incite a cultural awareness, cultural understanding and acceptance of other culture evolved with their exposure to other cultures through picture books. A variety of methods which helps to contribute to the development of experience is necessary for children to find their faculty to use imagination in learning domains.

Amidst the accelerated momentum of cultural globalization, the traces of cultural imperialism, transnationalism multiculturalism, and ethnicity are evolving. Globalization of culture manages on a line between pro-social and anti-social line. The two broader terms that of multiculturalism and transnationalism must be placed side by side to cultural globalization. Children's books addressing multiculturalism give space for diverse voices while transnationalism transcends the geographical boundaries towards unified whole. Writers of children's fiction began to appropriate multiculturalism in their writings thereby, multiculturalism "was strongly advocated as a desirable social value and one to be inculcated in child readers" (Stephens 180). The notions of culture need not be nation specific always; for example, family, society, generation, school education all are common to all cultures. So being culture specific would definitely lead to find a commonality among different national cultures.

The contentions on two crucial issues discussed in this study one, how picture books could be influential and two, how does it accelerate cultural globalization found the rationalization with the investigation of the picture books. The wider reach of the influence of picture books is a highly determining factor in the era of globalization. The divergence is giving way to new thoughts and universalization is reflected in all spheres including culture. The world with one culture is not a faraway dream. But will that be a melting pot of all or just the mouthpiece of the powerful is the tantalizing question attempted.

Primarily picture books are ideology laden, but it also carries inherent cultural elements meant to influence the young minds. This cultural load should be balanced and unbiased concurrently so that the resulting globalization of culture is encompassing all the colours of the rainbow. It has been identified that 'massive cultural influence' (Hunt 2) is possible through illustrated texts. It is proven that the literature children experience at an early stage of their life, when the necessary cognitive developments are taking place, are overtone with racist tropes and images. This literature includes even the classic and most loved tales of all time. These works are continued to be in the list even in the digital age amidst a bundle of newly produced works.

It can be reasoned that accurate and positive racial representations can cause dramatic changes in the way children perceive race, and ultimately how they view their peers and themselves (Wilson 5). By creating a balanced representation of similarities and differences between cultures and races, Sands-O'Connor argues racial and multiracial representations will be framed in a more positive light and will promote positive racial attitudes and racial identities for, and towards, multiracial children (414). But the major hindrance to this is, the dominant white publishers who remain deaf to the necessity of the time and as long as the publishing industry is controlled by White employees as well as White authors, the, authenticity, and racial representations along with accuracy is often not sufficient.

Globalization of culture necessitates global citizenship towards which children should be sensitized. The sensitivity could be nurtured at an early age with proper unbiased understanding of the world and cultures and people around. Children should be exposed to multiple texts from multiple cultures and countries because one book alone cannot accurately represent the collective experiences of a racial group or culture. The books should incorporate stories embedded with intercultural experience discussing the commonality of life which the children can relate to. "Globalism consists of powerful narratives that sell an overarching neo liberal world view, thereby creating collective meanings and shaping peoples identities" (Steger 112). The exploration of culture should be capable enough to create a possibility to bring about a change in the perspective of children towards their own culture and that of others, and see how they remain interconnected across the globe.

The number of books published for children has increased considerably which is a sign on the growing importance of this genre. Children's books are always equated with education and enjoyment. These primary goals perform on aesthetic and instructional levels. It helps children to construct the knowledge about people and world in all diversity.

Language is a socio cultural product. English as a lingua franca does not majorly belong to individual national cultures yet cannot be separated from the

mainstream of socio cultural life of the world today. Hence the learning of the language both national and also international could be effectively facilitated through illustrated picture books. The representation of an alien world in an alien language would leave negative impacts at the emphatic level. The representation in the picture books cannot be connected and identified by the children who are expected to be the beneficiaries. Hence the change should ring by bringing in familiarity in a few respects thereby helping the language construction through cultural construction effectively.

The major contentions in the chapter on globalization were placed from literature point of view and state the cultural phase of globalization in general while specifically evaluating children's picture book. There are two aspects of globalization from the literature point of view one is how literature get globalized through the processes of production reception and translation of works across the globe; and the second is a more contemporary feature where the literature projects the images of a globalized world. The changes reflected in literature are simultaneously reflected in children's literature too. The era of globalization necessitates developing a new perspective towards children's literature. Globalization, in view of children's picture books, is acting as a textual characteristic. Some texts directly thematize globalization in content and background while, a few other texts indirectly accelerate the pace of globalization.

The nationalizing and transnationalizing upshots are placed side by side in the literature for children. While enhancing the national and cultural spirit they transcend the national, linguistic and cultural boundaries and turn transnational. The globalizing aspects of children's literature emphasize the relation with historical process of globalization which remained unnoticed for a long time. But with the advent of globalization, children's literature deal with issues of universality and specificity and childrens literature goes global and local at the same time. The local and the global tensions as part of globalization find place in children's literature. The global outlook of children's literature is often confronted on account of the universal childhood which remains Eurocentric. The most important use of globalised literature is that, children should have the potential to find a balance between the cultures and thus capable to unlock cultural barrier between sameness and difference. Children's literature is global and local in the global era. This scheme of global culture is found nowhere and so is the global child. What we have is a set of features which sound global. The so called globalized features are mainly drawn from mainstream American and European culture which does not always represent the larger spectrum of childhood and life across the world. The idea of global literature for children raises a few thoughts on national literature and culture too; it also asks about how national literature acts as ambassadors in a foreign land. It should also delineate about whether the other cultures are treated diminishingly or with due representation. National cultural voice of the developing countries is

not heard much. This leads to a condition that the emerging literary voices that have the power to shape the global outlook is from mainstream countries alone. The reasons for this condition are noted in the following paragraphs.

The concepts and themes should suit to the major market in order to keep the publishing business viable is the prime criterion in the discipline of literature; the receptors of the book are kept in mind while preparing the content. The children from minority culture are not considered to be the feasible receptors to meet their requirements in the books for children as the market in their country would not support the business to a greater extent. The nature and cultural content of the books produced is greatly determined by the leading countries who act as the single biggest market and producer of books.

The strong appeal of globalization is resisted and a surge to promote local flavour is widely seen in the present literary scenario. Globalization thus caused the contesting scene between global and local. The idea can be explained as the world holds a new era of identity, and that identity is proclaimed with differences found at the local level and not at the national level. Thus the global children's literature and especially picture books are challenged by the literature that portrays specific cultural instances. These books struggle to get noticed among the international or global market but their goal is to stand the test of time and affirm the cultural subjectivity of the group who are likely to be erased in the advent of globalization of culture. The globalised scene in literature is opposed



with a counter measure from cultural specificity and leaves the national literature off the scene. Ethnic approach is a constructed power structure by humans who think of ethnicity as a tool to counter the voluntary or involuntary collective force of common culture. It is concluded that cultural particularism or ethnicity is a forced reaction from globalization. Ethnicity refers to a set characteristics defined by racial, cultural and historical elements.

The concept of globalazation of culture needs to include various nuances of culture. The concepts of culture, and formulations into varied stages are analysed in this study. Recognition of homogenous culture as an off shoot of globalizational practices, heterogenous culture as a resistance to globalization of culture and multiculturalism as the need of the hour are the important findings of the study. Demographic changes around the globe have accelerated an increased need of authentic multicultural literature. The need arose in order to counter traditional Eurocentric literature which otherwise acts as an extension of cultural colonization in the marginalized nations. The picture books for children are chosen based on the mainstream curriculum and are mostly influenced by the concepts, patterns, events, and paradigms present in European and American culture. But it fails as the experience of human diversity is lacking. As we could see as part of the study in most of the picture books especially award winning or recognized popular works the representation of the marginalized are limited to misrepresentation, under representation and stereotyping. This diminished

portrayal poses a great issue in the days of globalization. What is expected as the outcome of the cultural globalization is the amalgamation of the marginalized culture and the mainstream culture. This in turn helps to develop valuable insights about cultural identity and historical experiences of the ethnic group among our children. Thus the children from the mainstream realise how to prioritise a culture other than theirs. 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.

Exploring the concept of culture from the stand point of Cultural Studies, a text is observed as 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 create literature as a culturally signifying practice. 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. The concept of text in cultural studies is that of a cultural artefact. The connection with children's literature and culture seeks to answer two questions one, how books are reflecting the requirements and apprehensions of children? And secondly rather importantly, look into how the books manipulate our children the way they think and act as individuals and members of a social community. The second proposition implicates how literary

works are greatly inclined to the construction of culture and its sustenance through literary works resulting in homogenization of culture with a voluntary or involuntary erasure of the specific culture.

Three identified shortcomings of children's picture books of twentieth century, in view of the minorities are 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 causes diffusion of many ethnic cultural notions along with popularization of ideas and values of mainstream culture. This simultaneously leads to cultural transformations guided by the dominant culture absorbing and disseminating shoving away the minority. Thus cultural homogenization caters to assimilation to authorised norms and exchange of various cultural components towards the direction of universalization around the globe. The homogenization towards the cultural identity takes place more among the youngsters and this act as a strongest tool that fights against heterogeneity of culture.

The disappearance of local culture should be observed seriously as it upsets the balance of varied cultural traits of the globe giving a chance for the dominant culture to reaffirm the cultural colonization. To resolve, the books for children must include characters from specific diversified culture without being

stereotyped which in turn helps to render the cultural consciousness among children. The two fold results would be the specific group to judge themselves developing a cultural consciousness while the rest of the group is given a cultural understanding and acceptance in a better light. The books should discuss a situation that is universal and characters authentic to their cultural background together transfer the properties of culture to the readers to effectuate a cultural consciousness especially among children. This ultimately lead to the understanding of similarities and difference exists in the universe. The innocence, imagination, and fascination of childhood transcend borders and remain universal. The story that they read about themselves and about others should be resonated on equal grounds. Homogenization should give room to assimilate from both ends. The values, ideals, and patterns that exist in different cultures should be focused on, as not to get lost in the flounce of cultural acceleration. 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.

One reason mostly remains unnoticed in connection with the books produced for children with content that lack cultural identity is initiated with the interference of the publishers. The interest of the publishing houses is primarily concerned with the business than with the cultural consciousness of the readers.

This promotes the cultural representation with more of western inclinations to cater more business. Dilution of domestic culture is viewed as a threatening situation with the unidirectional flow of culture.

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. If a picture book sheds some light on the culture of a distant land they are sure to incite in the minds of children an abstract idea making the land no more unknown. In an era of convergence and divergence the two positions that of homogenization and heterogenization 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. Hence the major points of debate in cultural theories of globalization are universalism and particularism. The central values and assumptions that are common to childhood are common to all cultures and still the retellings show up over and again. But 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. Retelling takes place often with the primary objective of cultural reinstating.

The translations form a major part of literary tradition and so is it for children's literature too. The literature in translation throws light into the lives of

people living in other parts of the world. The experiences mirrored in literature get a new insight with the new cultural perspective added to the translation of that literature. Rendering of the work in the new language and culture leave a chance to know the unknown realms and identify how the same experience finds a new voice in a culture vastly different. Retelling of the works indirectly reinforces the ethnicity, they also familiarises 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. 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. 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 priority is still an intriguing question.

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. As the major works of

art are produced by the western developed countries tend 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 is an additional situation where the ethnicity of the minority culture is presented pleasing to the larger spectrum of readers than the real benefactors of the culture.

Diverse cultural voices are not heard much in children's picture books. The reasons being the number of minority authors is few; thereby the minority experience portrayed remains less. Along with misrepresentation underrepresentation 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. With a lighter skin, the children will get a biased reflection of the world. Picture books prepare young minds with a fundamental understanding of the world and initiate them to 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.

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. Hence, the literature for children should 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. Cultural globalization should cater an intercultural competence, ensuring one group to feel for the others and make the world accommodate the marginal as commons. As Kramsch and Zhu puts it, “the ability to put yourself into other’s shoes, see the world they see it, and give it the meaning they give it based on shared human experience” (42).

Cultural globalization can be effectuated with inter cultural understanding, multiculturalism, acculturation, and transnationalism. Ideally transformation of culture has to take place by admitting the diverse, heterogeneous, multicultural aspects of culture along with the plurilingual situation that exists in reality. These aspects often go beyond involuntarily; hence the diverse voices should be heard to make the cultural globalization to sound a clean event. To sum up, globalization of culture is not viewed as a negative



growth; but the course of path should be amalgamating both dominating and minority cultures alike. In the era of globalization, the inclusion of diverse, heterogeneous and multicultural aspects in picture books facilitate unbiased transformation of global culture.