

Picture books in Motion: Understanding Transculturality in Postcolonial Children's Picture Books in Hindi from China

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Abstract

Recent scholarship has highlighted a vibrant culture of literary interactions that existed between India and China post 1950s (Jia 2019). This engagement is rather complex and multi-layered, and at times rendered fluctuating owing to political relations between the two nations (Jia 2019). Earlier comparative studies of Indian and Chinese literature have focused on production, translation, and dissemination of religious and philosophical texts, works by prominent authors, travelogues, and more recently, popular fiction (Jia 2019; Mangalagiri 2017; Chung 2011; Das 1993). This paper looks at the completely ignored and unexamined aspect of literary interactions in the form of children's picture books in Hindi that came to India from China in the 1980s. These picture books are one of the manifestations of the globalised aspects of material culture of India and China literary interactions in the second half of the 20th century. Following Thornber (2009), this paper draws attention to various complexities and pedagogic norms that have informed the production of children's literatures in translation to illuminate the highly asymmetrical nature of these cultural interactions within the larger history of India-China literary relations.

Scholars of cultural studies have shown the importance of the 'local' in creation of the 'global'. This paper examines the networks of production and translation of these children's picture books to understand how these texts were shaped in order to be marketed as products of transnational and transcultural enterprise (Jia 2019; Kruger 2011; Thornber 2009). To further scrutinize these children's picture books as globalised products of transcultural reciprocity, this paper employs 'translation' as a metaphor for viewing how cultures interact and the role of translators as cultural intermediaries for literature produced and disseminated for children (Brosius and Wenzlhuemer 2011; Kruger 2011). Using critical content analysis of three picture books available in Hindi translation from the 1980s, this paper argues that these picture books are highly selective and closely tied to the values and ideas of childhood in post-independence India and China (Kumar 1985 and Foster 2013).

Keyword: transculturality, translation, postcolonial childhood, modernity, picture books