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## Department of English and Foreign Languages



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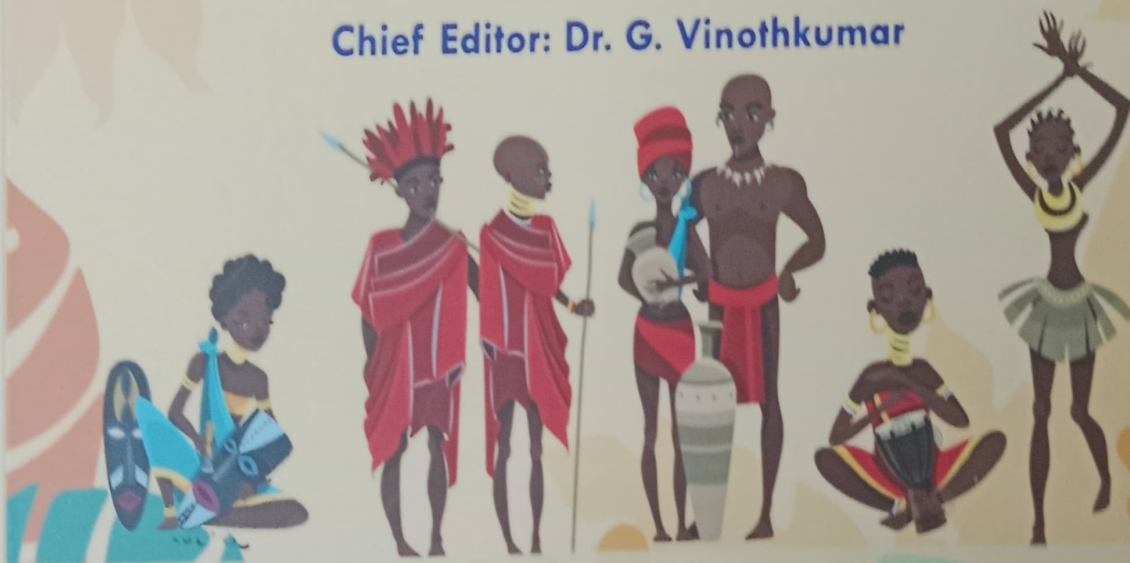
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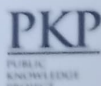
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# An Ethnographic Study of Kattunayakar and Irular Tribes: Cultural Practices and Traditions

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## Abstract

A tribe is a group of people or community that shares common ancestry, culture, language, and often territory. There are more than 476 million indigenous tribes people living in about 90 countries across the world, with more than 5000 distinct groups and speaking 7000 languages. They form 6.2 percent of the global population. India has about 700 tribes and over 1500 tribal languages. The second-highest number of tribal populations are found in India. India has numerous tribes spread across different regions of the country. The indigenous sects in India are naturally isolated from the main stream. Lack of education and communication barriers made it difficult for tribes to compete with the outside world. This limits many opportunities for tribal people. According to the 2011 census, 40.06% of tribals live below the poverty line. Education, one of the fundamental rights of human beings, has the power to change the course of one's life. Education can uplift tribal society, and knowledge of the world paves the way for them to have strong self-esteem and self-employment.

**Keywords:** Tribal, Kattunayakar, Irular, Education, Society, Schools

## Introduction

The word tribe stemmed from the Latin term 'Tribus'. Tribe is a group of people or community who shares common ancestry, culture, language, and often territory. W.H.R. Rivers (1914:50) described a tribe as "a group of a simple kind, always in Melanesia settled in a definite locality which speaks a common language and is capable of uniting for common action as in warfare." There are more than 476 million indigenous people living in about 90 countries across the world with more than 5000 distinct groups and speak 7000 languages. They form 6.2 percent of the global population.

The Khoikhoi and San termed the "Khoi-San" are the oldest tribe found in Africa, the original natives of Southern Africa. They have distinct culture, tradition and continued to live liked the first humans in the world. There are still about 100 uncontacted tribes that never evolved across the world. Most of them live in Guinea, Amazon,



Congo, off the Island of India and Bangladesh. They are voluntarily living in isolation and have avoided contact with the outside world for years. Many tribal groups believe that if they have contact with the Western world, they will be prone to many uncured diseases. Each group has their own language for communication, follows many traditions and have prominent muscles. Songs and music are an integral part of their culture. Their main occupation is farming. Tribal people live closely to nature, mainly known for their agricultural practices. Tribes have their own system of governance, culture, and traditions that they practice till date. vanavasi (forest dwellers), adivasis (first settlers), anusuchit janjati (scheduled tribes)

In Tamil Nadu, there are 36 scheduled tribal groups and six particularly vulnerable tribal groups. The six particularly vulnerable tribal groups in Tamil Nadu are Todas, Kotas, Kurumbas, Irulas, Paniyas, and Kattunayakas. Under Article 275(1) of the Constitution of India, the Ministry of Tribal Affairs had set up 197 Eklavya Model Residential Schools (EMRs) to provide free quality education to tribal communities. In Tamil Nadu there are total of 8 EMRs schools to empower the tribal community. This paper gives a descriptive study of the Kattunayakas and Irulas societal and educational status.

### Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups

In India, particularly vulnerable tribal groups make up 8.6% of the total population. In 1975, the Government of India identified the less developed tribal groups and categorized them as Primitive Tribal Groups (PTGs). In 2006, the Government of India renamed Primitive Tribal Groups as Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs). In total, there are 75 particular tribal groups spread across India. In Tamil Nadu, there are 36 scheduled tribal groups and six particularly vulnerable tribal groups. The six particularly vulnerable tribal groups in Tamil Nadu are Todas, Kotas, Kurumbas, Irulas, Paniyas, and Kattunayakas.

### Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups:

1. Isolated themselves from the main stream
2. Small population
3. Slower rate of Change
4. No written language
5. Simple technology

### Kattunayakar

The word Kattunayakar means 'King of the Jungle' They are hunter-gatherers and expertise in honey collection. Kattunayakan, one of the 75 "Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups" is a designated scheduled tribe inhabit the Indian States of Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Andhra Pradesh, and Karnataka.

### Kattunayakan's in Tamil Nadu

In Tamil Nadu, they live in Gudalur and Padalur taluk in Nilgiris. Their language is an amalgamation of Malayalam, Tamil, Kannada languages. According to the latest India Census date there are around 79,000 kattunayakan population in India and 55,000 in kattunayakas in Tamil Nadu.

### Occupation

They grow coffee, Green, Pepper, and banana. Their chief occupation is hunting and collecting honey. They stay in forest for 4-5 days to collect money. Some kattunayakas act as mahouts.

### Deity

99.14% kattunayakar follow Hinduism and 0.49% follow Christianity. They worship Lord Shiva and Nayakkar and other natural creations like animals, birds, trees, rocks, and snakes.

### Culture

Kattunayakar performs the 'koonatta' dance at marriage and during narmamodey ceremony. The dance crew consists of 10 members and is performed by men. They dance in a bent position making moves to the instrumental beats of 'Kolalu', 'dumbetta', and 'chilanka'.

### Irular Community

Irular refers to the 'darkness of their skins or night' Irulas are one among the six primitive tribes in South India who have been categorized as Scheduled Tribes by the Indian Constitution. They are also known as Kavalkaran, kattukaran, and Pambukaran.

### Irulas in Tamil Nadu

Irulas inhabit the northern part of Tamil Nadu. They live across Krishnagiri and Dharmapuri districts in the west to Ariyalur and Cuddalore districts in the South and Tiruvallur district in the north.

### Occupation

The main occupation is catching snakes and rats and collecting honey. They work as laborers during the harvesting season.

### Language

Irulas communicate in Irula language a mix of Tamil and Malayalam which can only be spoken. The language is also called by Eravallam, Eruka, Irava, Irulikka, and Korava. UNESCO has declared this language as endangered.

### Deity

Most of the Irulas practice Hinduism. While some Irulas worship Vishnu, others still follow animistic practices and consider the tiger as their god and worship its footprints.

### Culture

Masi Magam, the greatest festival of Irulas celebrated on the tamil month of masi, where irulas from all parts of Tamil Nadu get together and worship the seven sisters or the seven virgins. They follow many rituals during that period. Cleansing is the significant part of the ritual.

### Challenges faced by the Tribal People

1. Illiteracy among the tribal youths
2. Lack of basic facilities
3. Financial instability
4. Communication barrier
5. Identity crisis

### Importance of Education

Education is one of the fundamental rights of human beings and has the power to change the course of one's life. Tribal people are well known for their herbal medicinal and cultural practices. Language being a fence makes it unattainable to the world. Education can uplift social and economic



status of the tribal society, and knowledge of the world paves the way for them to have strong self-esteem and self-employment. It also helps them to distinguish between the right and the wrong, create opportunities and overcome constraints. Education can brighten up the lives of tribal people in so many ways. It breaks the communication barriers and lifts up their trading process. It helps some disadvantaged tribes secure an identification certificate to get access to their basic needs and fight for their rights.

Droupadi Murmu, the 15th President of India, is the second woman president and the first president from a tribal community. She is from a Santhal tribal family. She was in various positions and fought for the rights of tribal people. Golmei Gaiphulshillu Kabui, a Naga woman, becomes the first tribal woman appointed as a judge of the Manipur High Court. Sreedhanya Suresha Kurichiya, a tribal woman from Wayanad district, is the first tribal woman from Kerala to clear the Civil Services examination and is currently serving as a sub-collector and sub-divisional magistrate of Perinthalmanna.

### Eklavya Model Residential School

Eklavya Model Residential Schools (EMRs) were implemented in the year 1997-98 by the Ministry of Tribal Affairs in the States/UTs under Article 275(1) of the Constitution of India to enhance the quality of education of the Scheduled Tribes. There are about 401 functional EMRs in India and 8 EMRs schools in Tamil Nadu. The objective of the Eklavya Model Residential Schools is to bridge the educational gap and provide free quality education to tribal communities. They provide customised and holistic education to children. In some Eklavya Model Residential school students are admitted through entrance examination.

**List of Tribal Schools in Tamil Nadu**

S. No	Name of the School	District	Status
1	EMRS Vellimalai	Kallakurichi	Working
2	EMRS Abinavam	Salem	Working
3	EMRS Kodampundu	The Nilgiris	Working
4	EMRS Athipattu	Thiruvanna Malai	Working
5	EMRS Vishamangalam	Thiruppathur	Working
6	EMRS Sengarai	Namakkal	Working

### Conclusion

Tribal people are unique for their special connection with nature and animals. They are well known for their indigenous practices, including apiculture, pisciculture, weaving, pottery, and jewelry making, using things they get from the flora and fauna. They prepare traditional medicines directly from the medicinal plants, roots, and seeds that they have followed for ages to cure diseases. Mostly, there are no written documents for all the art skills and traditional medicines they produce, they are passed down orally from generation to generation. Tribal people have unique traits like common religion, culture, language, unity, equality, self-sufficiency, strong relationship with nature and protecting it. Tribal people's shyness to communicate with a wide group of people, geographical isolation, and communication barriers are identified as indications that they are not able to come out of their shell. The main stream of people collapses and invades the tribal world, making them homeless and forcing them to move to the city. Main stream people not only make their lives difficult but are also notable to accept them as part of their society.

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# Connecting Cultures and Building Character: The Efficacy of the Panchatantra in English Language Teaching

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## Abstract

Education plays a crucial role in any individual's life, apart from providing knowledge it also helps in building moral character. Ancient Gurukula system nurtured the students with quality education, wisdom, moral and life lessons. Due to modernization in education system, the essence of education is at vague. English Language Teaching focuses on developing pedagogical materials that not only promote linguistic competence but also foster character development and intercultural understanding. Panchatantra, initially called as Nitishastra, is considered one of the oldest collections of Indian fables, which is capable of enlightening an individual's mind through its moral stories. Originally compiled during 300 BC by Pandit Vishnu Sharma, an orthodox Brahmin, it edifies the values and as its Sanskrit title justifies, it is a book for wise conduct of life. This paper extensively concentrates on imparting Panchatantra tales into the ELT classroom, to enrich the experience of learning beyond language and linguistic proficiency, contributing to the holistic development and cultural insights of Indian culture.

**Keywords:** Panchatantra Fables, Story-Telling, English Language Teaching, Moral Development, Pedagogical Tool.

## Introduction

English Language Teaching has evolved remarkably over the decades. Earlier, functional and structural approaches were of main focus, but in the contemporary ELT pedagogy, the importance is given to linguistic competence, critical thinking and intercultural awareness. It is the need of the hour, not only to communicate effectively in English, but also develop the ability to connect with people culturally, ethically and to inherit the quality of living a moralistic and holistic life. This shift ultimately results in the exploration and integration of teaching materials that can enhance linguistic skills and impart humanistic values. A significant challenge in ELT is finding authentic, engaging and culturally rich teaching

materials that can be implemented in ELT classrooms regardless of the proficiency levels of the learners. Panchatantra is one such a source, in this world where digital resources dominate. Vishnu Sharma's Panchatantra stands out as a powerful pedagogical resource. It is one of the highly translated literary works in the history. This paper posits the effectiveness of Panchatantra fables in ELT classrooms, when adapted and integrated thoughtfully.

### Theoretical Frameworks

The efficacy of Panchatantra in ELT can be understood through varied theoretical frames. Stephen Krashen in his Second Language Acquisition states that language is acquired through comprehensible input. His input hypothesis strongly emphasizes on acquiring language through contexts that are slightly beyond the level but understandable. Panchatantra with its engaging storylines and comprehensible contexts provide the learners opportunity to acquire language.

Output hypothesis by Merrill Swain emphasizes the importance of producing language. The fables in Panchatantra serves as an excellent material that pushes the learners' creative ability, summarizing, re-telling and thereby promoting language output and skills development.

Intercultural Communicative Competence model by Michael Byram suggests that attitude, behaviour, cultural connection are also important apart from building linguistic competence. These lifskills can be improved using stories in Panchatantra. Egan and Mallan in their articles strongly putforths that story-telling boosts the language and life skills of the learners. Panchatantra produced in India reciprocates the Indian culture and cultural awareness.

### The Panchatantra

Originally written in Sanskrit titled as 'NitiShashtra', it was written for the unmotivated princes to culture their minds. It is divided into five tantras.

- Mitra-bheda: The Separation of Friends
- It cautions against the consequences of losing friends and the inportance of choosing friends wisely.
- Mitra-lābha or Mitra-samprāpti: The Gaining of Friends
- It speaks on the importance of gaining and maintaining a good companionship.
- Kākōlūkīyam: Of Crows and Owls
- It explores the themes of war and peace and also elaborates on how misunderstandings and deceit can weaken the unity of people.
- Labdhapraāśam: Loss Of Gains
- It warns about the dangers and effects of losing something what one has gained.
- Aparīkitakāraka: Ill-Considered Action
- It focuses on the importance of careful and shrewd planning to avoid rash actions.

The tales in the Panchatantra are exceedingly interesting, it includes clever animals outsmarting the strong ones, remarkable storylines and the surprising twists attracts the learners. Anthropomorphism is also followed by Vishnu Sharma to explore intense human behaviours and motivations through animal characters in a less direct and engaging way. The stories mainly focus on the morals framework of life, Niti. It speaks about the socio-cultural connection and ethical lifestyle. As it is born from the culturally rich nation, India, it never compensates in delivering the richness to its readers. The references in the fables are from the flora, fauna, social structure and philosophical concepts that are followed by the ancient Indians.



## Panchatantra in ELT

The integration of Panchatantra can yield notable benefits across language and linguistic skills, character development and cultural understanding. The fables introduce vocabulary related to animals, nature, emotions in a memorable way. Through the stories, one can learn the past tenses and the arrangement of words, promoting to grammar development. Complex ideas in simple language, aids the learners reading ability. The stories when narrated by the teacher or when played in animated version promotes listening skill among the learners. It also creates opportunities to discuss and debate on the topics promoting speaking skills. Creative writing is boosted using the themes in the fable, moral of the story and character analysis.

The Panchatantra serves as an window to the past, where people lived with morals, wisdom and believed in karma. The authenticity of Indian culture is widespread when Panchatantra is implemented in the classrooms. It also paves way for cross-cultural comparison. Learners can compare the fables and folktales of their mother nation with that of Panchatantra and bring out significant and productive topics for discussion. It develops empathy among the individuals.

Vishnu Sharma's main task was to educate the princes mentally and emotionally. In such a note, Panchatantra serves as a strong piece of art in identifying the moral lessons and delivering it promptly to the audience irrespective of age, gender and nationality. It also helps the learners to analyse a particular situation and provide solutions based on the situation. It is understood better, when the fables are connected with the real-life experiences of people. It also develops foresight, the main theme is to think before action. The mistakes committed by the characters helps the learners to plan and consider thoughtfully. It also offers insights on friendships, alliances and social relationships.

## Practical Implementations

Fables are to chosen wisely in order to receive proper results. Varied activities can be undertaken apart from reading comprehension.

### Role-Play using the Dialogues between the Characters

- Visualizing the structure of the plot.
- Debate on the characters' actions and decisions.
- Writing short note on the characters, writing from the character's point of view and deriving a conclusion or end twist beyond the original conclusion.
- Comparing different tales with similar themes and comparing illustrations from varied editions and cultures.
- Facilitates discussions on specific topics enhancing speaking skills and social connection.

### Scope of the Study

- This study helps in promoting cultural, ethical, moral values apart from linguistic competence.
- It opens opportunity for the foreign learners to dive into the rich culture of India.
- It aids the Gen Z learners and the forthcoming learners to impart knowlwdge about the Indian aesthetics.
- Grammar and other language skills can be improved when Panchatantra tales are used appropriately.
- Teaching-learning becomes easier and entertaining.

### Limitations of the Study

- This study deals with the base for Panchatantra pedagogy.
- The main focus of Panchatantra fables in ELT classrooms is to enhance the language skills and linguistic competence.
- The wise choice of story plays a vital role.
- The text has to be handled with sensitivity and cultural awareness, since there are chances for cultural misinterpretations.
- The archaic language used in the text, though it is translated, it requires detailed explanation.

### Scope for Future Study

- The future researchers may research on the deeper aspects of teaching Panchatantra in ELT classrooms.
- A detailed study on Panchatantra pedagogy can be done.
- The effectiveness of animated version of the story can also be researched.

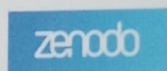
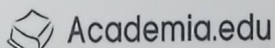
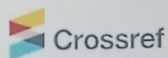
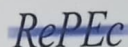
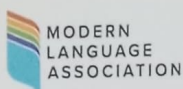
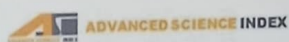
### Conclusion

Panchatantra fables serve as a remarkably potent resource in the search for holistic and engaging ELT approaches. Its unique collection of ancient fables offers far more than just linguistic input. English language and linguistic skills can be fostered by leveraging these fables in ELT classrooms. It shapes the learners' wisdom, ethics and cultural insight. Panchatantra solidifies its place as a culturally rich and character-building language education. It triggers the learners with universal human experiences through a cultural lens, exploring and comparing the contents. The simple language and anthropomorphic plot conveys complex ideas in simple tone. It helps in enhancing fluency and accuracy in English language. Ultimately, the wisdom embedded within these ancient fables continues to offer profound lessons, not just for life, but for learning language in a meaningful context.

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