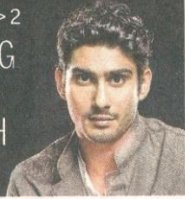


CITY > 6
NO SPACE FOR STATE'S STARVING KIDS



HITLIST > 2
SHARING THEIR WEALTH



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SACHIN'S TOE WOES: HISTORY REPEATS



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JACK AND JILL, HUMPTY DUMPTY HAVE A GREAT FALL



SCHOOL OF THOUGHT: Other schools too are slowly switching over to these new rhymes like crows, mangoes, beaches and bhelपुरi. REPRESENTATION PIC

In pre-schools, that is... in a bid to familiarise students with their own culture and traditions, pre-schools are increasingly discarding the English nursery rhymes, and preferring ones with a distinct Indian flavour

KRANTI VIBHUTE
krantivibhute@mid-day.com

DID you know that the popular nursery rhyme 'Ring-a-ring-a-roses' alludes to the Great Plague of 1665, which claimed an estimated 1 lakh lives in London? Or that 'Jack and Jill', a staple in any book of rhymes, carries veiled references to King Louis XVI of France and his wife Marie Antoinette, and the brutal deaths they met when the guillotine beheaded both during the Reign of Terror?

Setting aside the fact that most of these fairy tales have very disturbing, macabre subtexts, they are also rather culture-specific — it's almost impossible for Indian kids to relate to the London Bridge or Father Christmas, without some kind of initiation. There is also the danger of cultural colonisation — the kids learn about other cultures in their formative years, ignoring their own in the process.

Keeping these factors in mind, some pre-schools in the city have decided to switch over to rhymes that deal with Indian themes, in a bid to help the toddlers learn more about their own culture.

These rhymes will revolve around more familiar themes and topics, such as mangoes, beaches and even bhelपुरi.

The SERRA International chain of pre-schools, which arrived in Mumbai this year, has opted for the switch. These schools follow the Reggio Emilia approach, their curriculum putting emphasis on the child's need to develop respect, responsibility, and community through exploration and discovery — as such, the children enrolled in these schools are taught to communicate in different languages, and also to express themselves through involvement in dance,

songs, plays, rhymes, arts and crafts.

Barkha Gulani, executive principal, SERRA International Pre-schools, Mumbai region, said, "Our curriculum ensures holistic development of children. Even the poems and rhymes included in our curriculum reflect this philosophy. We do not teach rhymes with undertones of violence in them, such as Jack and Jill, Humpty Dumpty, and London Bridge, as they all end on a destructive note."

Attitude of prejudice

"Even the rhyme 'Ba Ba Black Sheep' is avoided in our pre-schools, as it reflects an attitude of prejudice and racial discrimination. Instead, we use international rhymes, but after contextualising it to the local setting. For instance, we teach them the rhyme 'Here we go round the mulberry bush,' but we replace the proper noun 'mulberry' with the more familiar 'coconut.' We also introduce them to rhymes sung by popular Indian artists such as Usha Uthup. Some of the kids' favourites are 'Kites Kites Everywhere', 'Sa sings the Sunflower', 'Toot Toot', 'Chugga Chugga', 'Hot Potato' etc. Teachers often compose the rhymes themselves, and sing them to the tune of popular rhymes," added Gulani.

Other schools too are slowly switching over to these new-fangled rhymes. Swati Popat, director, Poddar Jumbo kids pre-schools, Santacruz, said, "Schools are now preferring these new rhymes, free from the colonial hangover. Rhymes like 'London Bridge' were tools used by the British to propagate their culture among Indians. Our rhymes discuss crows, mangoes, beaches and bhelपुरi. Though the medium is English, the themes are Indian."

DOCTOR SAYS

Anjali Chhabria, psychiatrist, said, "These British rhymes have very little connection with life in India. Moreover, concepts like the evil stepmother or the evil stepsister are discriminatory and send out a wrong message to children. It is commendable that the pre-schools have started taking up rhymes with Indian themes and are trying to strip them clean of macabre or discriminatory references."

PRIZE MONEY (SCHOOLS)-
1ST PRIZE: A SCHOLARSHIP OF ₹1,00,000 AND MUMBAI DREAMZ'S ROLLING TROPHY WITH CERTIFICATE.

SOLO (COLLEGE)-
1ST PRIZE: ₹1,00,000 CASH PRIZE AND MUMBAI DREAMZ'S ROLLING TROPHY.

DUET (COLLEGE) -
1ST PRIZE ₹75,000 CASH PRIZE, MUMBAI DREAMZ'S ROLLING TROPHY.

GROUP (COLLEGE) -
1ST PRIZE: ₹1,50,000 CASH PRIZE AND MUMBAI DREAMZ'S ROLLING TROPHY.

Registration : 31st August
Preliminary Round : 15th Sept.
Semi Finals : 24th Sept. to
GRAND FINALE : 30th Sept.

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