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Depiction of Indian Cultural Valuesin the Popular Cartoon Program "Chhota Bheem" – A Content Analysis

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ABSTRACT

Studying the content of children's television genre has become an interesting area in the field of academic research. Today children see hundreds of virtual characters with different assigned behaviors through cartoon programs. Watching cartoon programs aretheir favorite pass time. But, children's television programstoday are not only sources of entertainment; ratherthey teach many things to our children. Earlier, parents taught moral values and cultural ethos to our children.In the present scenario,television gives them opportunity tolearn several values such as punctuality, discipline, obedience, humbleness, unity, and hospitality through the effective way story telling by the cartoon characters. The present study tries to identify the indigenouscultural values portrayed in Chhota Bheem cartoon program.The study adopts content analysis method to identify the Indian cultural values emphasized in this program.

KEYWORDS : Television, Culture, CartoonPrograms, and Children

Introduction

In the olden days, parents, teachers and relatives were the source for the children from whom they learnt moral values. According to Young (2012)creating a bond with children by telling stories has been practiced for several centuries. The story telling process is not merely a pass time. Through telling moral stories, we couldcultivate positive values on children. Today, television also has taken an active role in teaching many things to children such as how or not to deal with others, solve personal problems, make friends and simple decision making skills etc.,In the present scenario, watching television is not only an entertainment; rather it reflects the socio-cultural phenomenon of the society.

Review of Literature

The consequences of television have been analyzed by parents, media specialists, practitioners, communication experts and social reviewers from the year 1950 onwards. Television has the control on children's metacognitive, shared, expressive and other behaviors (Mares & Woodard, 2001).Children show more interest in watching television programs which consists of several child characters (Schmitt, Anderson & Collins, 1999).

Morals are the inevitable component of culture and it also passed on to generations. According to Brinkerhoff, Ortega, White, and Weitz (2011), 93 percent of people in India agreed that their culture is superior to other culture (as cited in Pew Research Centre , 2007).The present study did not focus on ethnocentrism rather it is focused on how culture is depicted in Chhota Bheem cartoon program("Moral Stories for Kids," n.d.).

According to Bennett (1995) children must hear moral stories in order to develop good values and moral literacy. Believers of conventional character education state that, listening to moral stories in one of the important aspect of moral education. A child acquires idea about how vital it is to "live" with a good quality and getting a better comprehension of the moral life by reading or listening to a moral story (Narvaez, 2002).

Chhota Bheem was started to telecast on 2008 and it belongs to comedy and action genres. Earlier the program was available only in Hindi, English and Tamil. Now it is available in other regional languages like Malayalam, Telugu, and Kannada. Though there are lots of cartoon programs are available for them to watch, children prefer Chhota Bheem as their most liked cartoon program.

Need for the study

Today plenty of stories teach by television programs. Indigenous cultural values could easily be nurturedin children's minds through cartoon television programs. The purpose of this study is to provide much more specific way of looking at the content of children's most favorite cartoon television program - Chhota Bheem, to determine the degree and form of moral values in a story to children. Hence considering children as a vital social element is significant in the multiethnic society.

Research Questions

The study was done based on the following questions.

1. Does Chhota Bheem program teach moral values to children?
2. What are the moral values that Chhota Bheem program have?
3. Do the content of Chhota Bheem appropriate to children's day to daylife?

Methodology

This study analyzed the content of Chhota Bheem cartoon program which is aired in the POGO channel. 40 episodes have been recorded for a period of four months from June to September 2013. Repetitions have not been taken in to account. Each episode runs approximately to 12 minutes to 14 minutes time duration. The study analyzed totally 520 minutes of the 40 episodes. Each program is analyzed based on the verbal and non-verbal elements which consist of moral values.

Theoretical Perspective

Social learning theory

According to Albert Bandura (1977), social learning theory establishes the relationship between observation and observers action. Also observers learn many things by observing what the fiction character does in the program.For example, "Chhota Bheem," a children's television program, the protagonist present with a condition of how to tackle the situation and how to be an honest person and maintaining friendship forever. The result is,children learning problem solving techniques, and the quality of being honest are done by observing the actions presented by the actors. This way the concept of social learning is applied.

Findings and Analysis

The title song consists of 54 consecutive shots and among those 12 shots deal with good behavior such as helping others, taking responsibilities, protecting people and friends etc., Visuals contain 60% of positive values such as kindness to people and animals, showing responsibility, being generous, tolerance and unity; remaining part consists of negative values such as fighting with people or animals, showing eating too much of laddoos, bullying others and gender discrimination.

The overall analysis ofChhota Bheem program represent that 90 percent of episodes teach moral values to children. Relatively positive values dominated the negative values. This signifies that the portrayal of the characters in the scene and the way they taught stories help the viewers to develop moral values. There is a significant difference in showing positive values and negative values in the program.

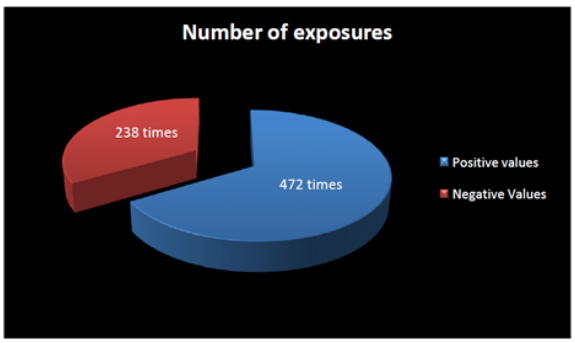

Figure I: Exposure values shown in the Chhota Bheem program

Figure II represent that the principal character "Bheem" and his friends are portrayed as good children and they followed moral values in their day to day life. In all the episodes of Chhota Bheem program, the values such as kindness to others, responsibility, veneration to elders, generosity, helping tendency, giving equal importance to other gender, protecting people, hospitality and spiritualismare emphasized.These values have been considered as positive values.

On the other hand, fewer children in Chhota Bheem program are portrayed as negative characters and having negative values such as telling lies, possessiveness, bullying others, and gender bias. But at the end of the story, characters who have moral values win over the negative characters. The ways followed by the protagonist to defeat evil characters and to prove justice is highly notable factor. The stories of Chhota Bheem series replicate the old system of governance and also the artifacts used by the characters in the programs are also not applicable to the contemporary period. But the values shown in those programs could be applied to the present situation.

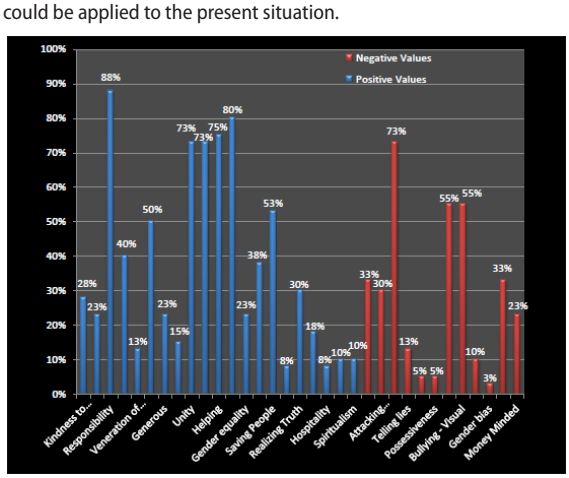

Figure II: Positive values and Negative values shown in ChhotaBheem program

Conclusion

To conclude, the study confirmed that Chhota Bheem cartoon program teaches many things to children. Bheem takes this opportunity to tell several positive values. At the same time there are some contradictions in the way of portraying Bheem and other characters in the program. Children ought to be children in the age of nine, though he has more strength than others; he has been shown as fighting with animals and villains in order to protect his friends or other people. Children will get the notion that fighting is the only way of solving the problems. This may lead children to act aggressively even when they face simple problems. On the other hand, teaching moral values through telling stories such as what our parents told us about Thenaliraman stories, Aesop stories and Panchatantra tales. India is the country first to teach ahimsa to the entire world. Mahatma Gandhi proved to the world we can reach our goals through non-violence. Unfortunately Chhota Bheem believes only muscle power. Though Chhota Bheem is an indigenous product which depicts many moral values, it does take children to a fantasy world where they get strength through eating laddoos; children take up the role of adults, over take elders in many ways. To sum up, the portrayal of Bheem in many episodes does not fit in to the real life situations.

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