

THE BOOK REVIEW

CHILDREN'S BOOKS SPECIAL

NOVEMBER 1993

VOLUME XVII - NUMBER 11



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Subscription Rates

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Rs 10.00

ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTION (12 Issues)

Individual: Rs 120.00/\$30/£20.00

Institutional: Rs 150.00

(Inclusive of bank charges and postage)

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HISTORY AND THEORY: A Critique of Development Economics

Prabhat Patnaik

SELECTED ECONOMIC WRITINGS

By Sukhamoy Chakravarty

Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1993, pp. xxxii + 591, Rs. 490.00

Professor Chakravarty was the most outstanding economist in the country in the post-Mahalanobis era. His erudition was immense; indeed in the entire economics profession whether in India or abroad it is difficult to think of anyone else who was as well read on as wide a range of subjects, covering not just economics but also philosophy, physics and mathematics, as Professor Chakravarty. Though he occupied, until his untimely death at the age of 56 in 1990, a number of important policy-making positions which included membership of the Planning Commission and Chairmanship of the Prime Minister's Economic Advisory Council, his fascination was for the realm of ideas. His acceptance of official positions derived from a desire, common to many of his generation—though misplaced, some might feel in the contemporary context—to use his knowledge of economics for improving the human condition; but he never subordinated his wider interest in ideas to the demands of these offices upon his time and energy. And it is as a critical historian of ideas that he is really unparalleled, a fact amply borne out by the volume under review.

The papers included in this volume were selected by Professor Chakravarty himself early in 1990. They are concerned exclusively with themes in development economics which explains the absence of his classic *Econometrica* article of 1962 exploring the logical foundations of optimum savings models. The absence of his Marshall lectures delivered in 1989 at Cambridge however is rather surprising. The volume is divided into four parts, the first two parts dealing respectively with theoretical issues in development economics and in development planning. The third part is an analysis of development problems in India and abroad, while the last is a collection of tributes, mostly in the form of obituary articles, to some prominent economists: Kaldor, Myrdal, Joan Robinson, Hicks, Rosenstein-Rodan and Mahalanobis.

Central to Professor Chakravarty's approach to development economics, and by implication to economics in general, is a certain position on the relationship between history and theory. Theory is concerned with exploring the state and the movement of a system which is char-

acterised by a set of institutions and modes of behaviour (both of individuals as well as of these institutions) that are bequeathed by history. Mainstream neo-classical economics based on methodological individualism dissolves institutions into the praxiological behaviour of individuals. The *raison d'être* of extant institutions derives on this view from the fact that "maximising" individuals arrive through experience (e.g. through "repeated games") at the conclusion that these institutions promote their objectives in some definable sense. They are therefore derived from the praxiological behaviour of individuals which is absolute and ahistorical.

His position on the other hand differs from that of Marxism (notwithstanding his deep sympathy for Marx revealed in a number of papers in the volume) insofar as the latter tends to dissolve individual behaviour into an abstract dialectics of institutions. Though this point has been made by many heterodox Marxists, it would be unfair to classify Professor Chakravarty among the latter. The heterodox Marxist position emphasises *completely* but believes in the existence of certain strict historically-defined limits to the range of possibilities open to a system. The emphasis in Professor Chakravarty's analysis is on *novelty*, i.e. the range of possibilities open to a system is not a strictly bounded one. *Conjunctural factors* also play a crucial role in determining the trajectory of development of a particular society. He quotes Schumpeter to the effect that every business cycle is a "historic individual" and adds: "In a way the same applies to the pattern of growth displayed by a particular country". This does not preclude the role of theory. On the contrary since the scope for historical comparisons is by no means nullified, theory has to analyse these conjunctural factors as well in order to enrich our understanding of history. What is novel today becomes assimilated by theory after a time-lag without the process ever being complete.

In a way his position is similar to that of radical institutionalists like Joan Robinson. The difference lies, first in the fact that he expresses his methodological predilection more clearly (having had an abiding interest in methodological prob-

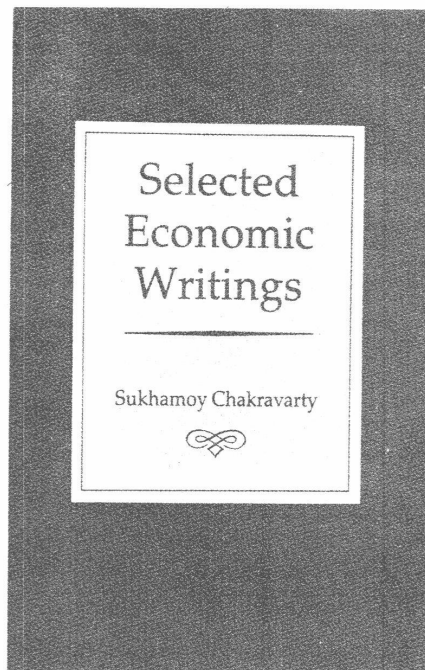
lems), secondly, in the specific articulation of his position in the context of the problems of developing economies, and thirdly, in his also turning for inspiration to Schumpeter whom the Keynesians generally derided. While this derision arose from the specificities of Schumpeter's theory of development which undoubtedly suffered from the weaknesses of ignoring all problems of effective demand, Chakravarty is perhaps right in seeing a similarity of *approach* between Schumpeter and the Keynesians, no matter how unfair the comparison may appear to the latter. The same residue of inexplicability about the growth process which underlies Mrs. Robinson's concept of "animal spirits" also characterises the Schumpeterian concept of innovativeness. The Marxist critique of both would be *inter alia* that this residue does not preclude the concept of a potential immanent in the system.

Professor Chakravarty's commitment to development economics as a discipline arises from this approach. The origin of this discipline lay in an appreciation of "market-failure", namely in the view that for a variety of reasons ranging from "indivisibilities" to "external economies" to the existence of "uncertainties", the market did not actually function in the manner highlighted by the dominant tradition in economics for three quarters of a century after Jevons, and that the phenomenon of underdevelopment was a classic and concentrated expression of

this failure. A belief in the role of the State and the necessity of a policy-regime that consciously promotes growth instead of "leaving things to the market" became an integral part of development economics, which had its political correlate in social democracy. Needless to say, a major intellectual inspiration behind this position was the Keynesian Revolution.

This view differed on the one hand from the staunch neo-classical view articulated for instance by Peter Bauer of London or Theodore Schultz of Chicago which continued to uphold the virtues of the free market and attributed lack of development initially to the insufficiency of the spread of the market and subsequently to the very fact of State intervention in the functioning of the market. It differed on the other hand from the Marxist view which likewise subscribed to monism in another form, namely that development and underdevelopment were dialectically related, were two faces of the same phenomenon which had its roots in the process of development of world capitalism; the way out of underdevelopment lay therefore not in overcoming market-failure through State intervention but in the ushering in of a new mode of production transcending the existing relationship with world capitalism, a proposition argued strongly by Paul Baran.

The fact that development economics has run into a crisis today together with the crisis in Keynesianism is obvious. The



roots of this crisis lie in the fact that State intervention, instead of being the panacea so enthusiastically and universally prescribed in the aftermath of the Keynesian Revolution, brings its own quota of problems. One may analyse these problems differently from the way that contemporary "marketist" orthodoxy does, but there is no getting away from them. Professor Chakravarty accordingly sets out a new agenda for development economics while reiterating his commitment to the discipline, an agenda that calls for a deeper study of economic organisation transcending the crude Plan-market dichotomy, that emphasises a richer analysis of the factors underlying the genesis, appropriation and diffusion of technological progress, and that requires a more sophisticated theory of the State.

His insights into the functioning of the Indian economy are to be found in a group of papers in the third part of the book, which also reproduces his well-known paper on the "Growth Process of the Indian Economy". His argument here is that if the terms of trade move against industry and in favour of agriculture, then given the fact that real wages are generally fixed at some subsistence level (he was abstracting from productivity growth but the argument can be easily reformulated to take account of it), industrial wages rise in terms of the industrial product itself squeezing the surplus of this (non-agricultural) sector and giving rise to economic atrophy. He was writing this of course in 1973 when the terms of trade had moved sharply in favour of agriculture for over a decade, but the point I think is more general, namely that industrialisation in a country like India has to be "agriculture-led". His emphasis on this parallels a similar discussion around the same time by Kaldor, who argued that the rate of growth of the manufacturing segment of the world (i.e. the North) is tethered to the rate of growth of the primary-producing segment (i.e. the South). Whether or not this is accepted as an analytical-descriptive proposition, hardly any sensitive observer of the Indian scene, I imagine, would have any quarrel with it as a normative proposition. In a period when the emphasis in economic policy has shifted towards "export-led industrialization" oriented towards the international market, the insight that the "exports" in "export-led industrialisation" should be oriented instead to the market provided by the internal non-industrial sector (provided of course the pressures arising from the balance of international payments are kept within control), is a particularly valuable one. For anyone interested in development issues the volume under review constitutes a treasure to possess.

Prabhat Patnaik is a Professor at the Centre for Economic Studies and Planning at the Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi.

Dealing With White Collar Crimes

S. Ranganathan

OFFENCES UNDER ECONOMIC LAWS

By T.S. Balaraman and
T.C.A. Ramanujam

Taxmann, New Delhi, 1993, pp. 556.
Rs. 250.00

It is common knowledge that incalculable damage has been caused to the economic fabric of our country by what have come to be known as "white collar crimes" which pose a serious threat to democratic institutions and to the very existence of our social order. This category of crimes does not have an overt, physical or oppressive impact on society or the individual like the traditional crimes of murder, dacoity, or theft. But they are more organised and their effect is more insidious and far-reaching. Their perpetrators play for high economic stakes and make enormous personal gains at the expense of the State and the community. As a sound economy is as vital to a nation as the maintenance of public order, there is great need for the law to take note of the dangers posed by the various categories of social and economic offences and to take steps to tackle them effectively.

Social and economic offences, which constitute the root cause of the widely rampant evils of hoarding, profiteering, black-marketing, corruption, abuse of power, tax evasion and black money, have been broadly classified under the following 8 headings: (i) offences calculated to obstruct the economic development of the country and endanger its economic health; (ii) evasion and avoidance of taxes lawfully imposed; (iii) misuse of position by public servants in the making of contracts, disposal of public property and in the issues of licences, permit and other matters; (iv) delivery by individuals, industrial and commercial undertakings of goods not in accordance with agreed specifications in fulfilment of contracts entered into with public undertakings; (v) adulteration of foodstuffs and drugs; (vi) theft, misappropriation of public property and funds; (vii) trafficking in licences, permits, etc.; and (viii) profiteering, black-marketing and hoarding.

But this list is clearly not exhaustive. One can easily conceive of various other types of social and economic activity in which such offences thrive. Thus, business frauds in relation to bonds and investments (as exemplified by the "scams" that have surfaced in India recently), unfair trade practices, misleading advertisements, professional malfeasanances of

various kinds, formation of trusts, cartels and syndicates, frustration of land laws by various devices, "pseudo-cooperative" activities, and damage to public property have been brought under this head in other countries. In India, legislations like the Monopolies Act and the Consumers (Protection and Redressal of Grievances) Act have attempted to impose curbs and fix civil liability in respect of some of these categories but the criminal overtones are yet to be tackled specifically and effectively. It is time to attempt a review of the Indian legislations in this regard and their effectiveness. However, the sweep of these categories is so vast that it is impossible to do justice to all of them in a single volume. Perhaps because of this and perhaps also with a view to concentrate on their own field of expertise, Balaraman and Ramanujam (both former officers of the Indian Revenue Service) have chosen to confine themselves (in the book under review) to a discussion of the offences relating to direct and indirect taxes and exchange control.

The Indian Government has been quite active in this sphere in the last few years. It has employed all the four strategies of *sama, dana, bheda and danda* to tackle the situation. Its spokesman have constantly pleaded and requested the public to be frank and straightforward in its tax compliances. It has made attempts to induce delinquent assesses to come forward with true and voluntary disclosures, going so far as to promise them concessions and immunities of various kinds, a policy that attracted considerable flak from the public and disapproving criticism from the Supreme Court: (*R.K. Garg v Union*, AIR 1981/SC 2138). It has attempted to create disputes in the ranks of dishonest assesses by encouraging disgruntled employees and business rivals to turn informers by offering them substantial rewards, again a policy which has invited mixed reactions. It has appointed several expert committees to delve deep into the reasons for indiscipline in these areas and to suggest means and measures for enforcing a substantial degree of compliance by the public with the provisions of the fiscal laws. The Santhanam Committee Report (1962), the 29th Report of the Law Commission (1966), the Wanchoo Committee Report (1971), the 47th Report of the Law Commission (1972), the Report of the Economic Administrative Reforms Commission (1981-83) and the Report of the National Institute of Public Finance and Policy (1985), went exhaustively and comprehensively into all aspects and made recommendations for legislative amendments which have also been accepted and implemented by the Government in a large measure.

It is interesting to trace the slow, stage by stage, evolution of the history of criminal prosecutions in India. Initially, the statutory provisions relating to offences were practically a dead letter and were rarely invoked. With the outbreak of the Second World War, evasion of tax be-

came more common, but the authorities were quite happy to levy pecuniary penalties and rarely thought of resorting to prosecutions. It was only later, when the proliferation of "black" money became so widespread to suffocate the normal economy of the country, that the importance of prosecutions was realised. To begin with, prosecutions were not very successful. The authorities felt that the rules of criminal law demanding a high degree of proof of offence and a slowness on the part of courts to realise the gravity of this category of offences, were hurdles in their way. This led to the enactment of presumptions (almost reversing the roles of the prosecutor and the accused) and the prescription of mandatory imprisonments which characterise the law as it stands at the present day. Still, the working of the machinery designed by the statutes is not perfect and some of the drawbacks it suffers from may be touched upon here.

In the 1st place, there is need for a change in the style of functioning of the authorities administering these statutes. These authorities have to be, entrusted with vast powers of investigation, enquiry, search and seizure which, if not exercised with restraint and care, can result in highhanded intrusion into the fundamental rights of a citizen. Till now, fiscal investigations have not been treated as at par with criminal investigations or the authorities exercising these powers at par with police officers. Thus, a Revenue Officer has been held to be not a "police officer" for purposes of S. 25 of the Evidence Act: (*Raj Kumar Karwal v Union of India*, AIR 1991 SC 45) with the result that confessions made before him are admissible in evidence in a court, except where there is evidence to show that such confession has been procured by intimidation, inducement, or undue influence: (*Mohammed v Union of India*, AIR 1992 SC 1831). Although the Supreme Court in the *Nandini Satpathy* case (AIR 1978 SC 1025) considered it fundamental to the rule of law that the services of a lawyer should be available for consultation to any accused person under circumstances of a near-custodial interrogation, that facility has been denied, in the *Poolpandi* case (AIR 1992 SC 1795), to a person called for interrogation in a customs case.

These rulings are based on an underlying assumption that interrogations under these enactments, which are not by the police and which are directed generally against affluent persons, are likely to be conducted with a velvet glove rather than an iron hand. There are good reasons to question the correctness of this assumption. The authorities in many cases rely heavily on the confessions obtained from the parties but these confessions are often retracted, a situation for which there must be some good reason. The harassment and hardships that can result from over-enthusiasm and over-zealousness on the part of officials in organising and conducting searches and seizures have

been pointed out in *Gupta* (1992-194 ITR 32) and other cases. *Sawinder's* case (1992-6J.T.271) indicates that inquisition into fiscal offences can be no less awe-inspiring than a police investigation. These circumstances clearly underline the need for safeguards in these areas; and the fact that the authors, two former senior officials of the Income Tax Department, feel the need for a reconsideration of *Poolpandi* (pp. 462-3) is not without significance. It is time for the authorities to realise that an indiscriminate use of force and intimidation will not always, or necessarily, yield satisfactory results in investigations. The emphasis should shift to sustained investigation, painstaking collection of relevant material, correct perspectives as to the nature and extent of the evidence required, skilful examination of the parties and full use of scientific and electronic equipment, wherever possible. The investigative machinery needs reorientation accordingly.

Reference can next be made to a handicap that hampers a proper and effective trial of these offences. The officials constituted under these statutes, who are charged with the collection of material, view their duties only from the Revenue angle. They are not courts and conduct their proceedings with a good deal of informality; their powers and training are adequate to deal with the civil and financial aspects. But, to bring home the offences under the Acts, they have to move the regular criminal courts and establish their case by production of evidence that can pass muster in such courts. They realise, when they go in for a prosecution, that all the material collected by

them cannot be relied on as evidence. They thus suffer a disadvantage which could have been avoided had they been aware even at the time of the assessment and levy of duty of the material needed for a successful prosecution. Likewise, the lawyers conducting a trial, well versed as they are in trial procedures under criminal law, do not usually have adequate knowledge of the intricacies of the tax laws while those dealing with the same matter at the assessment stage are exclusively concerned with civil consequences and neither foresee the need to prepare the case for a trial in the event of a prosecution being launched nor possess a sufficient background of criminal law and trial procedures. This chasm has to be bridged and it is necessary that every tax authority and tax practitioner (why, even the tax payer) should acquire a comprehensive knowledge of the substantive as well as procedural law in this regard.

One of the greatest hurdles in the successful prosecution of social and economic offences is the interposition of a company so as to enable the real offenders to carry out their nefarious activities behind the shelter of its corporate personality. Though a principle has been evolved and approved by our Supreme Court in *Meenakshi Mills* (AIR 1967 SC 819) and *Associated Rubber Industry* (AIR 1986 SC 1) that it is open to the Courts to pierce the corporate veil in appropriate cases—including cases of tax fraud—the precise manner in which this principle could be applied in prosecutions of this type is yet to be examined. The law is, therefore, constrained to impose vicarious liability on the directors and senior officers of the

company for its offences. Thus, S.278B of the Income Tax Act provides that, where an offence is committed by a company, every person who was in charge of, and was responsible to, the company for the conduct of its business when the contravention was committed, shall be deemed to be guilty of the contravention. It casts a liability on them not only when they have knowledge of, or connive at, the offence but also where the offence is attributable to any neglect on their part. This deeming fiction is supplemented by a further statutory presumption (S.278E) that the culpable mental state alleged by the prosecution is deemed to exist and that the onus of proving to the contrary shall be on the accused. These are very stringent provisions and cast an onerous burden on all directors (though, as sometimes happens, they may be only directors in name having no actual control or real voice in the affairs of the company) and the senior officers. It seems too extreme to vest mere negligence, inadvertence or lack of due diligence with criminal culpability. But there is need for far-reaching provisions to adequately grapple with this class of offenders and only the practical working of the provisions for some time can show whether their rigour should be toned down.

The book under review deals with these topics adequately. Its contents can be broadly divided into two parts. The first nine chapters deal with the substantive law relating to tax offences while the other five deal elaborately with the procedural law, with a special chapter devoted to the liability of company directors. The statutory provisions relevant to

both are set out as appendices. The treatment is systematic, analytical, cogent and clear. Important topics, such as, the grant and cancellation of bail (and anticipatory bail) the weight to be attached to retracted confessions, the statutory presumptions which operate, the principles to be followed in awarding sentences, the usefulness of accounting documentation and the circumstances in which the court could quash a complaint, receive detailed treatment. The authors do not appear to have left out any important topic but a discussion on the Conservation of Foreign Exchange and Prevention of Smugglers Act, 1947 (COFEPOSA), a reference to the Smugglers and Foreign Exchange Manipulations (Forfeiture of Property) Act, 1976 and a discussion on the admissibility in evidence of information collected in the course of searches or seizures, which are later found to be tainted or illegal, could have been usefully added.

Taxmann, the well-known firm of tax publishers, have made the volume attractive with its smooth and glossy paper, bold print and fine get-up. One is only tempted to add, without detracting from the value and usefulness of the book, that the satisfaction of the reader would have been more complete if an index of cases, indispensable to any law book, had been included and even the few typographical errors seen—such as in 1 of p. 145, 18 of p. 441, 12 and 27 of p. 444 and in the citations of *Pratap* case on p. 127 and the *Badaku* case on p. 300—had been avoided.

Justice S. Ranganathan, a retired judge of the Supreme Court, is currently a member of the Law Commission.

Spread over 326 pages, *Reforms for Women: Future Options* is an anthology of over 50 papers and speeches arranged under an impressive chapterization covering human resource development, planning, sports, media, entrepreneurship and national productivity—all prefixed with "women and". Among the contributors are PM Narasimha Rao and several past and present members of his cabinet, sitting and former members of Parliament and state legislatures, office-bearers of many governmental and semi-governmental organizations and a few journalists and academics. Based on the proceedings of a one-day seminar held in August '91 to commemorate the late Rajiv Gandhi "the progress and development of women was very close to (whose) heart", the book has been edited by one of late PM's ardent admirers, politician-turned scientist Najma Heptullah.

As the few exceptional pieces penned by social scientists remain eclipsed by the overwhelming number of ministerial and bureaucratic contributions, a major portion of the book reads on first impression as an election manifesto or a political party's plan of action. Papers highlighting problems of the girl-child, working women, sportswomen businesswomen

Reforms For Women: Future Options

Tahir Mahmood

REFORMS FOR WOMEN: FUTURE OPTIONS

Edited by Najma Heptullah

Oxford & IBH Publishing Co., New Delhi, 1992, pp. 326, price not stated.

SOCIO-LEGAL STATUS OF MUSLIM WOMEN

By Muniza Rafiq Khan

Radiant Publishers, New Delhi, 1993, pp. 136, Rs. 150.00

and media-women, etc., however, do have their utility. Empirical sidelights provided by some contributors are exceptionally useful. Read as a whole the book must arouse a general consciousness about the multitude of women's multifarious problems in contemporary India.

While Najma Heptullah's book relates to Indian women in general, Muniza Rafiq Khan's book deals with an important segment of the female citizenry of India, viz. Muslim women. It analyses in some depth the social and legal rights and disabilities of women-followers of Islam in this country. The study is somewhat different from traditional-style works on the subject in that it presents its subject-mat-

ter in a dispassionate manner and sets it in an empirical perspective. Though scanty in its treatment of the basic issues relating to its subject-matter, the book is quite useful for non-experts.

Too much has, in my opinion, been read by the critics in Manu's exhortation relating to women. By declaring "*Pita rakshati Kaumarey...* (the father protects her during youth...)" the father of Hindu jurisprudence was providing social security to the weaker sex at all stages of life and did not mean to enjoin subjugation of women by male relatives. Manu's western translators and Indian misinterpreters joined hands to give rise to a distorted picture of women's rights, which

unfortunately became the order of the day in the course of time.

Distortion of truth has been much worse in the case of Muslim women. Its origin embedded in the age-old hostility of the Christian church to rival Islam, the distortion here is largely attributable also to the failure of those converting to Islam to adopt in practice the true teachings of the new religion on the rights and status of women. What the Muslims of this country have been practising is indeed an adulterated *Shariah*—not the true *Quranic* law.

It is this junk of long history of distortion, misinterpretation and misapplication of Hindu and Islamic religio-legal texts that is to be cleared up in order to restore to the Indian woman her rightful place in the society. A checklist of major problems facing women, a survey of the progress so far made in solving them, an agenda for future action and a scrutiny of where religion and law can help in this adventure—all are a must as a preliminary exercise to achieve the goal. Najma Heptullah's anthology and Muniza Khan's monograph both represent serious attempts in this direction.

Professor Tahir Mahmood is Dean, Faculty of Law, University of Delhi.

A Saga Of Triumph and Frustration

Jagdish R. Hiremath

QUEST FOR EQUALITY: ASIAN POLITICS IN EAST AFRICA—1900–1967

By Robert G. Gregory

Orient Longman, New Delhi, 1993, pp. x+231, Rs. 175.00

The saga of the Indian settlers in East Africa is a sad mixture of triumph and frustration. Their induction into this part of the burgeoning British empire of the last century began in the late 1860s with the export of almost 40,000 indentured labour. They were recruited to help open up the interior of that vast and thinly populated territory whose extensive resources had yet to be fully explored and tapped. The jungle had to be cleared and tracks laid for a railway line from the port city of Mombasa, all the way to distant Kampala nestling on the shores of Lake Victoria. There was also an important geopolitical motivation involved. It was felt that as Uganda is the source of the Nile, whoever controlled its upper riparian waters could easily control the Sudan and Egypt. In this way, the sea route through the Suez Canal to India, "brightest jewel of the British crown", could also be safeguarded.

The indentured labour that were taken to East Africa were mostly drawn from the Punjab, unlike in the case of South Africa where the recruiting agents opted mainly for the Tamils to work in the 'semi-tropical sugarcane and sisal plantations of that country. But as in the case of Natal, so also in that of East Africa, the large work force was soon followed by voluntary migrants from the Gujarat region who went there for a variety of reasons, the most important of which was "a hope of rising above the poverty level" (p. 6). For their part, the doughty Sikhs won laurels for themselves by their courageous cutting of a swathe through the thick, lion-infested jungles of Kenya and Uganda, thus paving the ground for the East African Railway. Many of them lost their lives in the process and came generally to be known as *kala singhas* or black lions for their bravery and indomitable spirit. When the railway work was over, a large number stayed on as artisans and mechanics, craftsmen and transporters.

On the other hand, the Gujarati migrants, contrary to the conventional wisdom on this subject, had not been traders in India by custom and tradition but sons of poor peasant families or landless farm labour. They turned to trade in the new environment in which they found themselves in their adopted land and thus satisfied a growing need of both the blacks and the whites. But it is obviously a subjective over-statement to claim, as the

author of this book has done (p. 20), that they "left India imbued with the concept that the best government is that which governs least" and that they therefore skirted or violated every possible government regulation in the quest for a quick buck. Penetrating deep into the East African terrain, even as the railway advanced westward, they introduced the indigenous people to the concept of a cash economy and, gradually, they also made them aware of the larger world that was beyond their ken.

A third and relatively smaller stream of Indian settlers who went to East Africa were from the then Portuguese colony of Goa. They were better educated, more westernised, and hence more easily absorbed in the colonial administration at clerical or lower administrative levels.

In time, all the various streams of the Indian migration prospered, often only in the second or third generation, merely to see their prospects diminished or even ended after the Second World War by a combination of British colonial policy and a resurgent African nationalism.

Quest for Equality is a vivid and detailed account of what its sub-title proclaims as "Asian" politics in East Africa, but which is described by the late Apa Pant in his Foreword to the book as "an excellent account of the efforts by the Indian immigrants to come to terms with their physical, political, economic and cultural environment in Africa" (p. viii). The author explains his own terminological preference in the very first paragraph of his introductory chapter by stating that the settlers were known as "Indians" before 1947 but as "Asians" thereafter. While commending Professor Gregory for his political sensitivity, one cannot help commenting that as at least half the book discusses events prior to the Partition, it does seem incongruous to come across long descriptions of how the "Asians" went to East Africa by dhow in the 1880's, or that they were "of humble and diverse origin", and other such details about them.

Robert Gregory is well known to students of Indo-East African affairs. His deep immersion in this subject dates back to 1962 when he started work on his seminal 555 page volume, *India and East Africa—A History of Race Relations within the British Empire, 1890–1939*, which was published in 1971. Gregory is universally respected for his erudition and painstaking work, qualities that are more than apparent in the present slim volume under review on "Asian" politics in East Africa during the years 1900 to 1967. His researches for this book, along with its two companion volumes (namely, on the "Asian" contribution to philanthropy in East Africa, and an economic and social history of "South Asians" in this region) commenced immediately after the publication of his 1971 *History*. In the two decades since that time, he had gathered so much more material from primary sources and from extensive interviewing of the people involved, or of their associ-

ates, and even of their descendants in some cases, that Gregory had to pour out the accumulated information and the analytical insights gained by him into three separate volumes. *Quest for Equality* updates the historical account in the earlier book right upto 1967, focussing primarily on political developments involving the "Asian" community. As their participation in the political process manifested itself largely through the trade union movement and through journalism, *Quest* contains a detailed account and review of those two areas of Indian activity, primarily in Kenya which was the main scene of action, but also in Tanganyika, Uganda and Zanzibar.

The two companion volumes of *Quest* have apparently been published, or are in the process of being published, in the US. But the present reviewer has had the opportunity of seeing proof copies of those books and was surprised to notice that most paragraphs in the introductory chapter of *Quest* are exactly the same as in *Economic and Social History*. I presume it would be uncharitable to find fault with this as one doesn't plagiarise oneself and a factual account of events must remain the same, even if an author writes about them in another book. In any case, the final text of *Economic and Social History* is not yet available for scrutiny in India.

Professor Gregory's pen portraits of the outstanding "Asians" figuring in East African politics during the period covered by this book are indeed heart-warming. Pio Gama Pinto, for instance, has been described as "a man of many talents, an outstanding journalist and one of the most important trade unionists as well as a politician" (p. 97). He had been assassinated a few months before I joined the Indian High Commission in Nairobi during 1965. Gregory confirms the popular assumption of that time that Tom Mboya had master-minded Pio's murder (p. 15). But he fails to mention anywhere in the book that Mboya too met his own nemesis by becoming the victim of a political assassination some years later. The courageous exploits of Makhan Singh as the principal initiator of the trade union movement in all of East Africa, and of his persecution, exile and incarceration by the colonial government are depicted with great sympathy and understanding. Numerous other Indians who held the political stage in the stormy years prior to Kenya's independence also find detailed coverage in the book. There are a few factual errors like, for instance, the reference to "Fitz" de Souza as "Speaker of the House" of independent Kenya when he was actually the Deputy Speaker (pp. 86, 175 and 196) although such a title is not conferred on representatives to countries that are not yet independent. But these, of course, are minor technical matters.

Professor Gregory's description of Apa Pant's dynamism and innovativeness, his empathy with the black Africans, and his youthful but paternalistic advice to the Indian community on how they should comport themselves during those trou-

bled times are given ample coverage (pp. 86, 89 & 197). It is difficult, however, to agree with the author that "the fact that so many Asians a generation later, following their exodus from East Africa, were able to establish new homes in Britain must be ascribed to Pant's foresight" (p. 87). We are told that, unlike Jawaharlal Nehru, Apasaheb had foreseen the potential hazards for "Asians" in independent Africa and had cautioned them against forsaking their British citizenship for an Indian passport (p. 197). In fact, it was Panditji's consistent policy to advise Indians settled abroad to identify themselves entirely with local people. That meant retaining British colonial travel documents prior to the independence of East African colonies and consequential acquisition of local citizenship after independence in the early 1960s. But if many of the Indians preferred to apply formally for British citizenship (to which they were legally entitled) when independence came to East Africa, it was because of their own assessment of their possible future in the former British colonies. Many of them even divided their bets by opting for Indian, British and local citizenship for different members, all within the same family! It is useful to recall here that Whitehall soon amended the British Nationality Act, restricting free entry into the U.K. to only those of its citizens that had a "continuing relationship with Britain". This meant that most of the people of Indian origin became ineligible to go there freely as very few of them had British-born parents or grand parents!

There is yet another assertion of Gregory's that deserves to be noted for rebuttal, namely, that "the African opposition to the Asian drive for an East African colony is what first attracted them to politics" (p. 44). The author has said nothing to substantiate this allegation, except to remark at one other place in the book (p. 23) that a three-fold question had arisen in the inter-war period: "of whether East Africa should be developed primarily as an Indian colony serving as an outlet for India's surplus population", or held in trusteeship for the indigenous blacks, or transformed into a white dominion. Obviously, those options were for the British colonial administration to choose from, not for the small Indian minority that was itself also at the receiving end of white racist discrimination, even if some of them may have entertained such an outrageous aspiration!

We may overlook this facile and perhaps unintended allegation about the Indian settlers as Gregory more than compensates for it by describing in detail how the "Asian" example of resisting discriminatory legislation, organising themselves in trade unions as an alternative to the banned political parties, and giving loud expression to their grievances through the medium of newspapers established by them, gave inspiration and leadership to the indigenous people of East Africa. In time, the settlers also made common cause with the blacks in agitat-

ing for independence. There is, of course, much truth in Gregory's assertion that with the start of the Mau Mau revolt, some "Asians" became fearful for their future in life after colonialism, especially as their relative prosperity could act as a magnet for black anger and reprisal. This is in fact what actually happened. But it is unrealistic to imagine that if the "Asians" had remained solidly with the Africans, much of the future resentment against them might have been avoided (p. 82). On the whole, *Quest for Equality* is both interesting and instructive. Coming as it does, even as South Africa is preparing for its own transition to democratic rule, the reader will find the book very topical and thought-provoking.

Jagdish R. Hiremath, a retired Foreign Service officer, is currently a Jawaharlal Nehru Fellow researching on South Africans of Indian origin.

Two Inches of Ivory

Sarvar V. Sherry Chand

TARA LANE
By Shama Futehally
Ravi Dayal Publisher, Delhi, 1993,
pp. 174, Rs. 90.00

"Our lane was a small arid one, made of yellow dust pitted with stones. During the day the strong sunlight gave it a kind of incandescence. But in the evenings it looked dusty and purposeless". This quiet, visually vivid opening epitomises the trajectory and tone, the sustained intermingling of light and shade that characterise Shama Futehally's first novel, *Tara Lane*. As the first person narrator, Tahera, informs us a few lines later, "it was my lane". This affinity comes from the fact that they share a name. The emphatic possessive, along with the "our" of the opening sentence, while expressing the little girl's sensitive empathy with her environment, also adumbrates what in effect is the crucial concern of the novel—possession, property, the problem and the mystery of having and not having.

A banal summary of the story might call it 'the tale of an upper-class little girl who grows up'. Tahera, the elder daughter of the factory-owning, extremely upright, extremely refined Mushtaq family lives in a snug, secure world comprising a beautiful house and garden and Dadi's "enormous mansion" on the one hand and the "magic darkness" of Ayah's hut on the other. "Life", however, as Tahera knows, "was like a piece of cloth which was stretched too thin so that any moment you could discover a large

hole underneath you"—not to mention the "tiny dark worm" which has squeezed itself into the narrator's mind: fear and guilt. As the novel proceeds, the tightly stretched cloth tears from time to time and is patched up, the worm in the mind twists and turns and is stilled: there is Samuel's marriage to which the parents must not go; Imran Chacha with his "aura of wrong-doing"; Irshadullah and the striking factory workers; the lost gold bracelet and the tyranny of possessions; Suti and her thieving son; Mr. Gonsalves and his family packed into a one-room flat, the new-born grandchild shielded with a newspaper against the spattering from the stove; Tahera's husband, Rizwan, who ends the strike through bribery; finally, the servant's little boy Anton who dies in hospital even as the hitherto upright Mushtaq Saab finally succumbs to the pressures of corruption to save the factory and the aristocratic way of life.

The simplicity—even thinness—of the main story line with its immediate focus on the Mushtaq family, makes for a clarity of outline. Around it spread the shadows of the other world which it is indecorous even to talk about—the world of poverty and squalor, of slums and starving factory workers upon whose suffering the graceful world of the Mushtaq is built. This awareness, however, filters understatedly, gradually through the half-realizations of Tahera's perceptions: "I was so very nervous of our being collectively and unwittingly in the wrong"; "the source of all good seemed to be so entirely my father... It would have been reassuring to learn... that a lot of people did what they were supposed to do...". But reassurances, such as they are, are momentary. Increasingly, the novel communicates the impression of both worlds trapped in a web of no one's making which draws the poor—embodied in the utterly vulnerable figure of the child Anton—inexorably towards starvation, illness and death; and the rich towards a choice between losing their souls and going mad. All this, with no bitterness or cynicism or sentimentality or melodrama. In fact, the world of the Mushtaq is presented with a profoundly loving irony which implicates the narrating self even as it criticises.

This blend of love and irony is most evident in the handling of character. Regal old Dadi with her memories of her husband establishing the factory and her perpetual fear of being robbed of sugar by Roshanbi; Amma, the acme of style and refinement whose very sanity depends on the house and garden and the well-trained bottling of Samuel; Baba reading Robin Hood stories to the children, safely despatching Guy of Gisborne—the man who never had a "single naya paisa" unaccounted for, deluding himself, giving in to the ways of the business world "for Amma's sake".

As a whole, the novel communicates a sense of precision combined with com-

plexity. This is largely the result of a narrative style which is able, often simultaneously, to convey sadness and humour, ironic critique and sympathetic involvement as well as the in-between nuances of feeling. Above all, there is an unobtrusive wit. The relatively 'unimportant' incident of the bracelet lost on the train while reading a D.H. Lawrence novel, communicates, at the same time the naturalness of the family's shock and horror, the white-hot idealism of Tahera—"Would you make such a fuss over a starving child?"—lashing out at the family's materialism, but with an undertone of self-righteousness which evokes sympathy for the parents. "I was terrified of possessions", concludes Tahera. "Never could you say about them that they were only objects. They were all imbued with significance, significance which inhered in them like a scent and which had to be guarded devotedly in order to prove that you were an adult. You had to make sure that the object in question was locked away against thieves, wrapped up against monsoon damp, moth-balled against termites, guarded from stains, not paraded before servants. And possessions had a way of slipping, elfin-like, out of the net of precautions you created around them... The only thing certain about possessions was that they would come out on top".

The characteristic strengths of the novel also, inevitably, make for its limitation. Since the perceiving/creating sensibility is Tahera's and the integrity of the novel derives from her experience, characters like Ayah, Samuel, Gauri, even little Anton, tend to remain one-dimensional, and figuratively, rather silent. Unlike the family who give the impression of an independent existence, the servants, including Mr. Gonsalves, the secretary, although individualised with great affection, exist only in their interactions with Tahera and the family. The 'workers', 'strikers', except for Irshadullah, remain a silent, anonymous mass. So do the nameless carpenters, plumbers, tailors who manufacture the creature comforts of the Mushtaq world. However, the narrative strategy, through juxtaposition, through direct or oblique comment, often draws attention to these silences indicating a self-aware acceptance of this limitation.

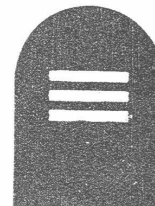
Having reached the end of the novel, one's overriding impression is one of a wholeness and integrity of experience facing a "normal" future, from which "one little photographic chemical had now gone, so the picture was black instead of white".

Tara Lane's restraint and simplicity, its irony and accuracy are often reminiscent of Jane Austen's two inches of ivory. But the social securities and ethical certainties of Austen and her landed gentry give way, in Futehally's novel, to an unflinching presentation of a self-deluded and self-destructive gentility, based on the deprivation of the mass. In so doing, it

mirrors the break-down of the moral fibre of post-Independence India.

Dr Sarvar V. Sherry Chand teaches English Literature at St. Xavier's College, Ahmedabad and at Gujarat University. She has also taught Social Analysis, Marxism and Feminist theory in the Fellowship Programme in Social Management run by the Behavioural Science Centre, Ahmedabad. She has published articles on literary and sociological subjects.

Essays on
HINDUISM
KARAN SINGH



BY



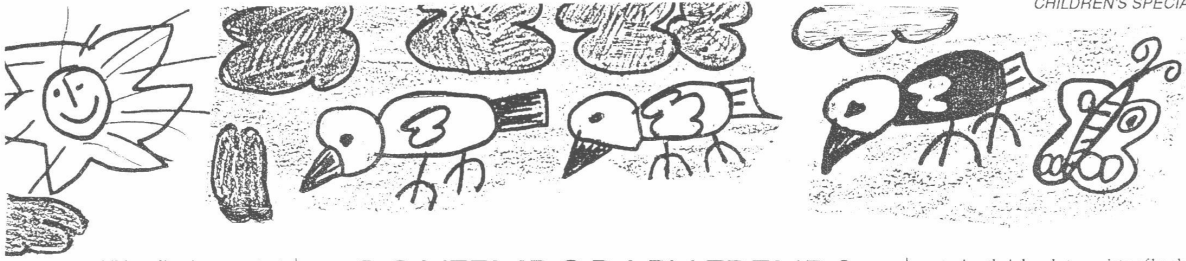
PUBLISHED BY



Ratna Sagar P. Ltd.

VIRAT BHAVAN, MUKHERJEE
NAGAR COMMERCIAL COMPLEX
DELHI 110009
PHONES: 7122505, 7216094
BRANCH: NO. 24, RAMANATHAN
STREET, T'NAGAR, MADRAS 600017

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"Our children live in a constant din of electronic noise, their eyes glazed with channel flickering images of fragmentation and visual chaos. Is there any room left for reflection, dream and curiosity?" Paula Fox, American author of children's books raised this very valid question. Apart from the attractions of the electronic media, in the past decade the market has been flooded with commodity books based on cartoon film characters. Paperbacks are fast growing in popularity at home and abroad, and are commercially important to publishers. As mass media makes subversive inroads into the everyday lives of children, they are exposed to a wide variety of printed matter, which cannot be classified as "literature". Only books which can speak to the children in a voice they can recognise and to which they can relate and respond, will be remembered as classics. When sound contemporariness unites with a more fundamental universality, a classic is born and by speaking profoundly to the "inner child" gets absorbed into the realm of "literature".

Literature for children is part of the larger world literatures and has recently become a legitimate area of study. The serious academic pursuit of children's literature is a rapidly expanding field, rich with possibilities. There has been a tremendous increase in the global awareness of the importance of children's literature and this is echoed in the Indian Book scene as well.

"Children's books are part of literature, just as children are part of humanity", declares Townsend, author and critic and the recognition of its importance to child development is spreading through the range of professionals involved with children's books, worldwide. In the Indian context, improved literacy, coupled with the enhanced purchasing power of the middle-class, has encouraged this book buying trend. The devaluation of the rupee has further indirectly promoted the indigenous publisher, by making the imported books prohibitively expensive.

The most striking present-day trend in the book scene is one of internationalism, resulting from the breaking down of

CONTEMPORARY TRENDS English Writing for Children

By Prema Srinivasan

geographical boundaries. In the multilingual Indian context, there has been a demand for books in all the regional languages as well as English. Translations of world classics into English has activated regional language translations as well. The growth of merged publishing houses, the invention of technical processes applicable to book production, awareness of sociological needs, have all contributed to the promotion of children's books. Changes in the format as well as the narrative pattern and motifs are evident, which is in keeping with the changes in the reading patterns of children themselves. Writing for children, universally, has tended to be a reflection of the prevailing social conditions and it is in the history of a society that the roots of children's literature are established and the changing values get reflected.

The traditional concerns about the suitability of language for children or the choice of subjects, have been replaced by issues of racism, sexism, communal harmony and identity crisis. Enid Blyton, despite being popular with children for decades, has been severely criticized for the racist, sexist bias projected in her Noddy books. Generally progressive views on self-fulfillment have displaced conventional concepts of heroism and the fleeting comfort afforded by the "happily everafter" tag is discarded in favour of a more realistic rounding off. The popular themes of scientific speculations as well as the ever spiralling sociological concerns handled by Indian authors, are an attempt to cater to the changing needs of the child reader.

Ruskin Bond, who is the best known writer of children's books in English in

India, has been writing on ecology, long before it became a fashionable cult in India. This beautiful planet, earth, is slowly getting impoverished of its vital energies and beauty in hundred million ways. The younger generation, who are the inheritors of the earth need to be reminded of this denuding process, through the power of the written word. Ruskin Bond, in his books for children, communicates his extraordinary empathy with nature in sensitive prose and intense verse. *Our Trees Still Grow In Dehra* (1991) won the Sahitya Academy award for the author's tender miniatures in prose, autobiographical in content. Almost everywhere in his writing Bond has celebrated the endurance of nature against the transience of humanity.

Arup Kumar Dutta won the prestigious Shankar's gold medal in 1979, for his *The Kaziranga Trail*, which ushered in a new kind of adventure story that was not only satisfactorily Indian in tone and texture but sought to promote an awareness of the environment among the youthful readers.

Ever since Shankar Pillai, founder of Children's Book Trust, instituted the competition for writers of children's books in 1953, authors committed to quality writing for children have established a small but visible group. They attempt to recreate the Indian cultural milieu in English and are evolving a language in which they can go beyond the surface and express themselves in a real and credible manner.

The nineties find Indian English Fiction firmly established in the literary map of the world. Writers feeling more assured of their craft as well as the readers

are trying their hand at a variety of books. In this era of multicultural writing, there are books for every kind of reader. Indian authors have explored all categories of children's books ranging from myth and classic retold to adventure, fantasy, stories of realism, historical and biographical fiction.

In the category of adventure story, besides the Enid Blyton clones, Satyajit Ray and Arup Kumar Dutta have succeeded in rendering the mystery element within a credible Indian milieu. Ray's *The Imperial Ring* (1965), written in Bengali, at first, made an impact on the children's book scene and the later English versions of the Feluda novels remained popular with a generation of youthful readers. Indi Rana in *The Devil in the Dust Bin* (1992), makes imaginative use of the eternal theme of isolation and acceptance, which is discussed in terms of childhood and peer pressure. The latter day adventure story shows that the genre has come a long way from the former clear-cut lines of the classic formula. Fantasy intrudes into all classifications, and as the post-modernists would have it, there is a blurring of boundaries.

Fantasy in the guise of science fiction seems to be the popular trend for the future and the present day writers have found a rich source material in the areas opened up by science and technology.



Science fiction writers like Dilip Salwi, make use of a "thought-through" interpretation of where today's trends will lead us to tomorrow. Margaret Bhatti's *The Evil Empire* (1992) carries the concept of starwars right on to 3190 and her theory of cloning presupposes serious research on the subject. The tendency to overplay scientific speculation could sometime result in a mixture of whimsy and science, which could be disastrous in terms of readability.

Indian authors have made extensive use of the country's treasure-trove of mythology and folklore. Somadeva's *Katha Sarit Sagara* (AD 11) and the ubiquitous *Panchatantra* (c. 300) and the "jataka" tales have been the source of inspiration for successive generations of writers. The epic and myth stories have been transcended for children, after much in-depth study of the original by Indian authors. Shantha Rameshwar Rao's *The Mahabharata* and Lakshmi Lal's *The Ramayana* (1992) are two splendid illustrations of the authors' professional approach to these primary texts, which lend themselves to various levels of interpretations.

Sudhin Ghose's *The Folk Tales and Fairy Stories from India* is an imaginative rendering of the country's folklore, authentic as far as the text goes, but embellished by the author's language, which gives an immediacy to the tales once heard on the grandmother's knee.

Since the SAARC countries celebrated the "year of the girl child" in 1990, there has been a spate of writing, suggesting ways of escape from the physical, psychological entrapment, that has been the lot of women and children. In Indira Ananthkrishnan's *Nivedita's New Home and Other Stories*, brought out by the Publications Division, stereotyping of roles according to gender differences is heavily underscored, as each protagonist finds a way out of her entrapment. The campaign against sexism is in full swing the world over and Indian authors have stressed the fact that the girl child will no longer remain "voiceless or invisible".

In the earlier books there were few fresh insights into childhood and virtually no exploration of the child psyche. In today's world, adolescents are assuming more and more of the adult problems as well as adult perquisites and they need a different language and approach to storytelling than the previous generation. Adults are using a more direct approach in their relationships with their children, thus loosening the restrictions of childhood as they knew it.

The picture book boom in the West occurred in the seventies and in India the drab format of picture books was slow to change. With the advent of professionalism in the publishing industry, art work has become as important as the text. The concept that good illustration should go beyond mere explication of the text has eventually caught on in the Indian book scene for children. Ashish Bagchi, by

winning the International Ezra Jack Keats Award for *The Yellow Butterfly* (1991) has proved that artists in India can compare favourably in the international scene for children's books.

The comic strip, which is the most potent form of all juvenile reading, has been imaginatively handled by India Book House in their *Amar Chithra Katha* series. Over and above such categorisations, there is a definite awareness that literature should no longer be elitist but must be available to the average child, as it can teach more effectively than any basal reader.

The child reader has been identified as the target audience and writing for children has become a major industry all over the world. The creation of a book follows a pattern of procedure common to all countries—author, publisher, bookseller, reviewer, reader. Apart from the pioneering publishing houses like the National Book Trust, India Book House, Children's Book Trust and the National Council for Education and Research Training, new names have appeared. Thomson Junior Library which made a good start by bringing out quality children's books is no longer active. Ratnasagar, Puffin (an affiliate of Penguin India) and the Indus series, are publishing well-designed books for youngsters. Puffin started publishing in India in 1991 and they have plans to launch two or three books every third month or so for children. Rupa & Co has formed a partnership with the U.K. based Harper Collins and has brought out the attractive Indus Peacock series for children, which, incidentally are "easy on the Indian buyer".

The two major influences that are apparent in the domain of children's fiction are an increased awareness of the need for this genre in a global context and the commercial marketing by publishers through co-publishing and co-production. In the West, the history of children's literature has stabilized to such an extent that prominent landmarks can be identified and established. Here, in India, English language books for children are yet to be included as an integral part of the whole realm of literary activity, to be discussed and judged by the yardsticks that would apply to every other branch of writing. Even as one is aware of the dominance of "social relevance" as regard to the content of the book, it is necessary to remember that traditional values of imagination and style as the essence of children's literature, should not become peripheral but remain central to the concern of the book producer. The book scene for children continues to be energetic and the prolific output of writers needs to be examined with discrimination, if the children are to enjoy a rich assortment of books.

Prema Srinivasan, a research scholar, is currently working on children's books in India in the English language at the University of Madras.

The Real and The Fantastic

Deepa Agarwal

NO TIME FOR FEAR AND OTHER STORIES

By Sigrun Srivastav

Publications Division, 1992, pp. 100, Rs. 20.00

THE MYSTERIOUS NEIGHBOUR AND OTHER STORIES

By Sigrun Srivastav

Harper Collins Publishers India, 1993, pp. 123, Rs. 30.00

THE TRUE ADVENTURES OF PRINCE TEENTANG

By Kalpana Swaminathan

Harper Collins Publishers India, 1993, pp. 111, Rs. 30.00

Many years ago on a visit to the Doll's Museum and subsequently the Children's Book Trust book shop, my five-year old daughter picked up a book—all on her own. It was *My Mother* by Sigrun Srivastav. I was a little startled that she should have such definite ideas about what she wanted to read already. But when I read the book aloud to the children, I understood why she had gone for it.

We are not discussing Sigrun Srivastav's picture books here—but the incident clearly illustrates why she is such a popular writer. It is because she knows what children want to read about. More important, she has the wonderful ability to get under the skin of her child characters, which makes their feelings, problems, fears so true and so credible. Even more important, her characters are real—not the goody-goody darlings often inserted into children's books, because, when writing for children, one has to keep the old nursery rhyme in mind, the one about the little girl, who, "...

When she was good, she was very, very good, but when she was bad, she was horrid." So in Sigrun's stories we have children who tease each other mercilessly, bash each other up, put F.B.'s or farting bags under teacher's seats, but when the moment of realisation comes, display heart-warming generosity, sympathy and courage. We also have a wide ranging vision of the child's world and painstaking attention to detail, which raise her work far above the average.

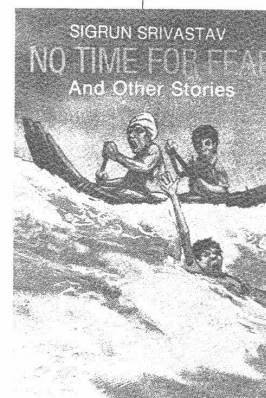
In *No Time for Fear and Other Stories*, there is a whole range of characters who could be found right in your neighbour-

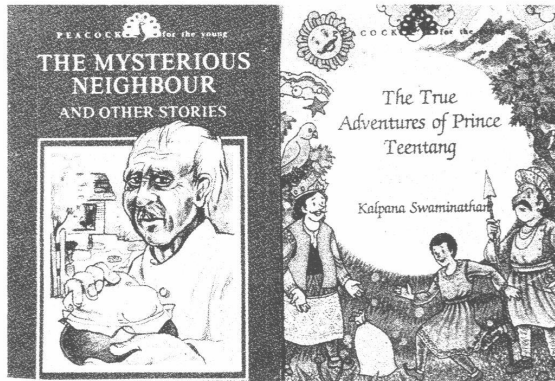
hood. As the title story suggests, most of these tales are of children displaying unusual courage in harrowing circumstances. To begin with, there is Raghu in "No Time for Fear", who ventures out with his friend Venu in a fisherman's catamaran in spite of his superstitious fear of the sea. He's an excellent swimmer but it has been written in his horoscope that he would drown in the sea. Venu thinks it's nonsense. The boat capsizes and Raghu is about to give up when his friend's words echo in his mind. He fights back and saves himself. Bharat in "Time is Running Out" risks his life to flag down a truck to save a seriously injured man. Neeta in "What's wrong, Neeta?" finds the strength to keep things going at home while her mother is ill. She carried on

gamely, in spite of the insensitivity of the children around her and is pleasantly surprised by a birthday party arranged by the friends who sympathise and care.

There is Surbai in "Surbai the Hunter", the adivasi girl who shoots a tiger with a bow and arrow while grown up men run up trees to save themselves. Then there is Jiten in "A Silly Thing To Do", who gathers up the courage to help a poor labourer even while his school mate jeers, "... Jiten the social activist! Jiten the little angel of charity. ..." A brave act, because peer pressure can be as threatening as a tiger, sometimes. There are many more besides, sensitive, thought-provoking stories of children fighting their own little battles and coming up on top.

Unfortunately, the production of the book leaves much to be desired. Suddhasattwa Basu's dramatic cover loses





much of its impact because of the poor colour reproduction. His excellent line drawings do lend life to the stories, however, in spite of the inferior quality of the paper and printing.

The Mysterious Neighbour and Other Stories is another very readable collection by Sigrun Srivastav. Many of these are stories formerly published in newspapers where the word limit can be a constraint. It doesn't allow the writer enough space to flesh out character or build up situations. But being an experienced and skillful writer Sigrun manages to convey much in a few words. Here I would like to mention that some objections have been voiced against authors bringing out old magazine stories in new collections. I don't see why stories which children have enjoyed reading should be compelled to find a permanent resting place in the raddiwala's sack. What's wrong with making them available to new generations of child readers? Particularly since our children have so little available to them in the way of fiction they can identify with and which projects their hopes

and fears with accuracy.

This collection too contains some real gems. Perhaps the best is "How to Make Friends". It is the delightful story of Pammi Seth who wants to make friends with the new girl next door but doesn't know how. With the unerring insight that is her hallmark, the author manages to have a sly dig at the adults who are too wrapped up in themselves to take a child's problems seriously. Pammi formulates a plan of her own and finds that problems have a way of solving themselves.

One of the hardest things to do is to let go of someone you love. Even if the person needs to go away to save him/herself like Arjun's mother in "In a Different Way". In this poignant story, Arjun finds it in himself to understand why his mother has to leave him and go to study at in Santiniketan, even though his heart is breaking. Also to face the needling enquiries in school, from nosy teachers and indifferent classmates. In the end he announces it to the whole class, following the example of a girl with a similar problem and comes up feeling good—in a

different way. This is a story even adults might benefit from—facing sorrow with dignity. "The Mysterious Neighbour" amply illustrates how children can be horrid and then spontaneously turn around to be "very, very good", when a group of children spy on a neighbour and inadvertently unmask a tragedy.

"A Different Person" is the heart wrenching story of a boy confounding the reality of his mother's terminal illness. But stories like "Magic Soap" and "Nimmu's Unlucky Day" don't seem to jell, perhaps because they lack a strong story line. "Piglu finds a Friend", an animal story, seems out of place in a collection of this kind. "Fatima", however, is the extremely satisfying story of a Kashmiri girl who asserts herself to make it in a man's world. All in all, a collection which children would definitely enjoy.

The book is well produced. The cover, designed by Romi Chakraborty and illustrated by N. Sumaty, is attractive and eye catching. The black and white drawings by N. Sumaty, are full of life and movement and would definitely appeal to children. One, however, has been wrongly placed which is likely to confuse the reader.

Of all the genres of children's writing, fantasy is perhaps the most appealing. Indian publishers tend to favour mystery and adventure but children adore fantasy. Witness the immense popularity of Roald Dahl's books. They are read over and over and over again. Perhaps because they are wildly funny, but also because they are so wonderfully inventive. Of course, it would be hard to match a master craftsman like Roald Dahl. But it would be great if more books of the kind were published. Harper Collins Publishers, who have already given children so much variety in fiction in such a short space of time, are to be congratulated for bringing out *The True Adventures of Prince Teentang*.

With its racy, flowing style and tongue in cheek humour, this is a book children of all ages can enjoy. The writer's vivid imagination and effortless writing draw the reader in right from page one. You are carried straight off into the fairytale kingdom of Tintoor. And though it is the story of a cruel and thoughtless king and queen and a reforming prince, it is so comically told, with such a light touch—that it doesn't weigh you down at all. If one has a message to convey, perhaps fantasy is the most effective vehicle, certainly the least obvious.

In the kingdom of Tintoor, the King and Queen feast on 50,000 dishes at each meal while their subjects live in conditions of near starvation. A pernicious state of affairs indeed. But the coming of Prince Teentang changes all that. His birth is the occasion of great rejoicing, because of his extra leg and a rare holiday for the poor, overworked people of Tintoor. Teentang turns out to be an unusual prince in other ways too.

The theme may not be uncommon but the writer's treatment makes it a real fun read. Kalpana Swaminathan is an extremely skilled writer and the book is hilarious from start to finish. Perhaps the King and Queen's change of heart is too sudden to be credible but a certain amount of license can be permitted in fairytale land. Otherwise *The True Adventures of Prince Teentang* has everything to recommend it to children.

The colourful, imaginative cover—designed by Romi Chakraborty and illustrated by Kalpana Swaminathan herself, is appealing. The black and white illustrations also by the author are stylish and elegant, and add to the tone of the book. But again, one or two appear to be in the wrong place.

Deepa Agarwal, formerly a teacher of English, now writes for children in both English and Hindi.

At a time when the reading habit among children is under threat of being snuffed out by the ubiquitous seduction of cable television and video amongst other diversions, any attempt to nurture this "old-fashioned" habit is doubly welcome. The Children's Book Trust (CBT) has been rendering yeoman service in this neglected area and the present crop of books consolidate CBT's position as a quiet leader when it comes to the young reader.

Adventure in Tiger Country and *The School Upon a Hill* are well-told stories in the traditional mould and I am sure there will be many Blyton-fiends who will find familiar parallels and situations. A new child adjusting to a boarding school (the theme of Bhatt's story) and animals being exploited by greedy circus owners (Mohan's thread) are perennial favourites among children and it is to the credit of both the authors that they retain the pace of the narrative till the breathless end.

Wooing The Young To Read

C. Uday Bhaskar

ADVENTURE IN TIGER COUNTRY; By Shailaja Mohan. Illustrated by G.B. Varma and edited by Geeta Parameswaran, 1992, pp. 69, Rs. 11.00

THE SCHOOL UPON A HILL; By Kavary Bhatt. Illustrated by Deepak Harichandran and edited by Navin Menon, 1992, pp. 96, Rs. 12.00

LUSOOMA; By Mathew Panamkat. Illustrated by Sujasha Dasgupta and edited by Bhavana Nair, 1992, pp. 77, Rs. 19.00

THE SECRETS OF INDUS VALLEY; By R. Rajagopalan. Illustrated by Ashish Bagchi and edited by Bhavana Nair, 1992, pp. 77, Rs. 19.00

All four titles published by Children's Book Trust, New Delhi.

Breathless I say since the hall-mark of a good read is when the child-reader merges his/her identity with that of the protagonists—whatever be their race and nationality—and comes out of the adventure triumphant and unscathed: putting

the book down and reluctantly slipping back to real life as it were. Every adventure story must pass this litmus test lest it fall in the flat beer category and both Bhatt and Mohan come out trumps

What is commendable is the manner

in which they have anchored their stories in an Indian context and this trend must be encouraged if our children are to be weaned away from the excessive influence wielded by the Blyton idiom. But in all fairness we must also concede that the 'foreign hand' has perfected the art of story telling for children and there is a hypnotizing professionalism about the unfolding of the adventure story. Our authors would do well to emulate some of these "specifications" to embellish their tales.

For instance, Bhatt's adventure takes off on a high trajectory but ends tamely with Jagan, the young protagonist who runs away from a school picnic, being finally found by his overbearing brother, House Captain Arvind, in a fair. Lot of potential here though, for the spinning out of more stories on the Hill Dale school and its cast. Bhatt's forte is obviously bringing characters to life (Mrs. Lele Fernandes, for example) and needs to

bring the same finesse for the details of adventuring.

Mohan's story of the white tiger, Ranga, is a delightful read but here again high-drama, to my mind, has been left untapped. Shikha, one of the protagonists falls into a pond inhabited by crocodiles and is out in seven swift lines (p.23). Too swift, what?

The other two books plough slightly different terrain. *Lusooma* stimulates the minds of the sci-fi buff and Panamkat maintains an even balance between story, suspense and sci-fi. *Lusooma* is located in AD 3098 in the Great Indian Federation and the action is in Delhi with Rashtrapati Bhavan, Qutab Minar and Aurobindo Marg finding mention. Panamkat has a sure hand and deftly takes the young reader through an amazing range of tomorrow's scientific breakthroughs. At a deeper level his inversion of Descartes' famous "I think, therefore I am" is grist for the adult mind and this 'man versus machine tale' operates at various intriguing levels. Is immortality a blessing or blight? Read *Lusooma*.

I was particularly happy to read the Indus Valley 'adventure' by Rajagopalan which incidentally won the first prize in the non-fiction/information category in the X competition for writers of children's books held by the CBT. Recreating the drama of the Indus Valley 'discovery', the author gently educates the reader on the basics of archeology and epigraphy. The import of the Indus valley civilization has always been interpreted to our generation through the western/British filter and it was touching to note Rakkhal Das Banerji (who alas died unsung) get

top billing.

The need to inform our children (and I daresay their elders) about Indian civilization in its myriad facets cannot be over-emphasized and I hope CBT will maintain the tempo in the non-fiction section. Amaravati, Halebid, Nilkanth-Mahadev... it is a list that lies buried and needs to be excavated for the children of today.

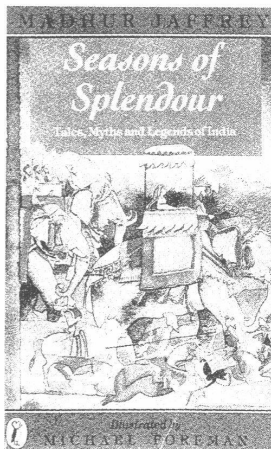
Illustrations are crucial in children's books and on balance the visuals are apt. At the modest prices mentioned it may be unfair to ask for more—but what if the prices went up marginally, the visual contact increased appreciably? Finally, I have a bone to pick with some of editors. All editors are crucial to the book industry but none more so than the editor of a children's book. Totally error-free printing must be the norm and no excuses for slipping up. The book is absolute gospel for the child and compromises on excellence and its rationalisation can come later for the little ones. Thus even the odd printer's devil (p.17, *Adventure In Tiger Country*) must be avoided. And while on the subject of editing, can editors simplify words like 'rehabilitating', 'exquisite', 'decayed' et al?

All these authors are two-book veterans and CBT must encourage them to spin more yarn! And in the present free-market frenzy, the need to aggressively sell these CBT books which are eminently affordable, is an imperative. Tap the idiot box to sell the printed word? More power to CBT.

C. Uday Bhaskar is with the Indian Navy. A regular columnist in many newspapers, he is an art critic and reviewer.

STORIES TOLD WELL

Subhadra Sen Gupta



KINGDOM OF NO RETURN; By Margaret Bhatti, Puffin, 1993, pp. 104, Rs. 50.00

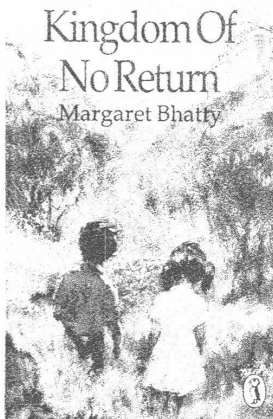
OPERATION DEEP SEA; By Kamla Ramchandani, Puffin, 1993, pp. 93, Rs. 50.00

SEASONS OF SPLENDOUR: TALES, MYTHS AND LEGENDS OF INDIA; By Madhur Jaffrey, Puffin, 1992, pp. 184, Rs. 60.00

Writing for children is the real test of the pure storytelling skills of a writer. Children are not interested in metaphysical discussions by a bunch of angst ridden characters moaning through pages of florid prose. They want to read a good story and one that is told well. And with it, some action, jokes, blood and gore does nicely too,

thank you.

All three books have interesting stories to tell but when it comes to the fine art of telling them, Madhur Jaffrey and Margaret Bhatti show the sure touch that Kamla Ramchandani still lacks.



In Margaret Bhatti's *Kingdom of No Return*, two children on their way back home from school step into a magic picture drawn by their friend on a Bombay pavement and are transported to the fantasy land of Kagaazi. A magical mountain world where they encounter all the characters drawn by their friend—fierce tribal warriors, a benevolent shepherd, a gentle prince, a malevolent hidden enemy and a confused genie in a lamp.

There is non-stop adventure for the three time travellers, one more fantastic than the other. The prince has to be rescued from a vanishing hill fortress, a jewel mountain has to be discovered and finally they have to find their way back to Bombay. After all, their mothers are still waiting at home with lunch.

Bhatti is a seasoned storyteller who knows exactly how to blend action and plot and then season it with humour, while slipping in painlessly, some thoughtful comments on more serious subjects. "The trouble with Tagan is that he takes all these things too seriously. Frontiers, border-posts, checkposts, outposts, are all part of the grand game of war. If we did away with all of them, we'd have to live together as friends. What a bore that would be!"

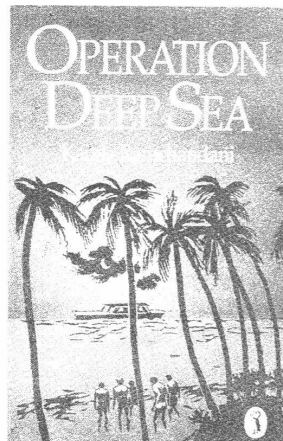
Bhatti's dreamlike fantasy is a racy, well paced read and the illustrations by Subroto Gangopadhyay capture the mood of the book beautifully. The cover illustration is particularly attractive.

Kamla Ramchandani has an action packed story to tell in *Operation Deep Sea*. It begins with a group of teenagers diving off the coast of Bombay who are threat-

ened and roughed up by a bunch of fishermen. Suspicious of their motives, the intrepid investigators track down an intricate conspiracy of kidnapping, traitors and a treasure lost at sea. Ramchandani perks up her narrative with regular doses of fistfights and mobike chases.

What bothered me about this book was the oddly cryptic, nearly comic strip style of narration—full of exclamation marks and action described in sudden capital letters. Any moment you expect the superhero like hero to shoot out a fist to the accompaniment of a POW! and a BIFF!

Unfortunately, because of this staccato, shorthand style, all you get is the bare bones of the plot. There is a total lack of characterisation and ambience. All the characters stay oddly faceless and the city of Bombay which has such an unforgettable atmosphere comes through as just another anonymous city. What the book needed was another re-write where the author worked at the texture of the narrative—the sights and smells that children like to read about.



Ramchandani has a definite flair for fast paced plotting and can handle action well. And Subroto Chowdhury's dark, stylised illustrations blend nicely with her tale of violent men and intricate crimes.

Anybody who has read Madhur Jaffrey's cook books will recall those evocatively written introductions to every chapter, where she captured her childhood and youth in Old Delhi. In her collection of myths and legends, *Seasons of Splendour*, she uses the same formula with equal success, mixing up her neatly narrated tales with pungent doses of memories: "The plump women of the house would no sooner emerge from their baths in freshly starched summer voile saris, their faces smelting of powder and van-

Writing for children is the real test of the pure storytelling skills of a writer. Children are not interested in metaphysical discussions by a bunch of angst ridden characters moaning through pages of florid prose. They want to read a good story and one that is told well. And with it, some action, jokes, blood and gore does nicely too, thank you.

ishing cream, than we would drag them to a sofa or carpet or divan to tell us a story".

What this does is give her book the flavour of a storytelling session, where you sat around your grandmother, listening to a tale you had heard a dozen times before. But your heart thudded again when the princess was captured by the evil rakshasa and even though you knew all the punchlines by heart, you laughed again with such triumphant glee.

Most of the myths that Jaffrey re-tells are the familiar ones of Krishna, Ram, Prahlad, Savitri and Satyavan. But she has also included some unfamiliar stories that were told in her family. The book has been divided into seasons with the stories connected to festivals of the season being narrated in each chapter.

Though most of the stories should be familiar to Indian children, it is a good buy for our urban, upwardly mobile parents who have little time for telling stories to their children.

More than re-telling stories, Jaffrey is going back to her roots to give her young readers a flavour of a time gone by. A time when no one had heard of WWF Wrestling and going fishing by the Jamuna was the highlight of the holidays. "The stories that we were told were designed not only to separate right from wrong but to prepare us, indirectly, for the vagaries of life and the fact of death".

Michael Foreman's illustrations, though expertly done, are a bit westernised and not always factually correct. For instance, on the cover, I spotted some Mughal looking characters and one of them seemed to be riding a bull! And probably because they were originally done in colour the pictures look rather grimy in black and white. Fortunately Jaffrey's magical writing rises above all this.

Subhadra Sen Gupta is a prolific writer for children.

Communicating With The Young

Vijaya Ghosh

A CROW'S TALE; By Judhajt Sen Gupta
National Book Trust, 1993, pp. 18, Rs. 6.00

THE MYSTERY FLOWER; By Lavlin Thadani. Illustrated by Sheila Dhir
Children's Book Trust, 1993, pp. 16, Rs. 10.00

PAPA BEAR'S SCOOTER; By Geeta Dharmarajan. Illustrated by Deepak Harichandran
Children's Book Trust, 1992, pp. 16, Rs. 10.00

DINKY THE FROG; THE FAT CATERPILLAR; THE SPIDER'S WEB; THE SEED THAT GREW All by Nita Berry. Illustrated by Atanu Roy
Frank Educational Aids, 1993, pp. 12, Rs. 13.00 each.

TREASURY OF INDIAN FOLKLORE
Edited by Sunita Pant Bansal
Frank Educational Aids, 1993, pp. 69, Rs. 35.00

There is no doubt that children's books have finally arrived. Many publishers who earlier did not touch children's writing either because of sheer unprofitability or because it was considered infra dig, are now taking a second look at this genre of writing. Those who have a head start are those who have been in it right from the start—Children's Book Trust, National Book Trust, Frank Brothers, Ratna Sagar and now Penguin and Harper Collins.

One of the shortcomings of children's books earlier had been the shoddy production quality. That lacuna is no longer there. Books are attractively produced and stories are supported by good colour illustrations for younger children with strong visual content for the older ones.

The Bunny book series from Frank Educational Aids are meant to be read-aloud books for the preschool child. They have very attractive, bright covers and superb illustrations by Atanu Roy. The quality of illustrations more than the text is what makes these books exciting.

The language and the story are simple enough for a six-seven year old to tackle. All four stories under review are by Nita Berry. Nita, who has been writing for children for a long time has perfected the art of communication of facts through story-telling. *The Seed that Grew* is all about the life cycle of a plant told as a story through the adventures of a seed. The part the sun, the wind and the rain play are woven into the sequence of events. *The Fat Caterpillar* is about the metamorphosis of a caterpillar into a butterfly. *Dinky the Frog* is all about how Dinky the tadpole changes into a frog.

The Spider's Web is a sweet story about Twiggy the spider who is in great awe of



the female spider who has an enormous appetite. So much so that he fears that she will make a meal of him! Which does happen among certain spiders after they mate. Twiggy decides to find another place for himself. He searches and finally finds a sheltered spot in a flower pot. He spins a beautiful, insect-trap web for himself. And from that day, Twiggy leads a happy, insect-filled life!

There is only one small area where there is room for improvement. It is in the way punctuations are used. For example, in *The Fat Caterpillar*, it says, "Leave him alone", said a passing butterfly. Had this been a one-time error it could have passed as a printer's devil but it happens too often and it is very noticeable. A small mistake, easily rectified with careful editing.

These books are strongly recommended for those with young children.

From Frank Brothers again the *Treasury of Indian Folklore* is a fascinating compilation of stories from different parts of the country. Normally folk tales are full of blood and gore, the general impression being one of great unfairness. This selection has fun stories, most of them dealing with the stupidity of others and how one clever person takes advantage of it and comes out a winner. Stories truly in keeping with modern times!

The two books from Children's Book Trust are meant for two age groups. *Papa Bear's Scooter* by Geeta Dharmarajan is about how the animals in Jungle Jungle acquired scooters all made to size. Little scooters for the ants, somewhat bigger ones for the grasshoppers, even bigger ones for the rabbits with of course the largest scooter being reserved for Yaanai the elephant who owns the scooter shop! Fantasy that kids would love.

The Mystery Flower by Lavlin Thadani has very attractive illustrations but the story, if it is meant to be a fantasy, doesn't touch a chord. One is left wondering at the end of it all what it was all about. If it is not a fantasy and is meant to teach children all about the sun, the method is all wrong. Besides, some of the words used are too difficult for children to understand. They could easily be substituted with simpler words. For example, "As though the rays were aspiring to rise. . ." Aspiring? "Illuminating, "drunk with its golden beauty" . . . surely drunk is not the right word for a five year old? Or, "the waves soothe the fatigue of the great star." Shiela Dhir's illustrations are lovely.

The National Book Trust offering, *A Crow's Tale*, is picture book for preschool children. The story is written in one sentence on the title page: A crow builds a nest, lays eggs and when the chicks appear, feeds and protects them till they can take wing. The illustrations modelled on Chinese ink drawings are fabulous. Yet, one can't get away from the impression that this is the wrong style for such young children. Would they be able to identify the pictures clearly? Would line and colour have been better? Or perhaps, the children can be trained to 'see'. It may in fact open the floodgates of imagination in the odd gifted child.

So, when shopping for books for children, much as one might be tempted to pick up a story about Jane or Harry, it would be well to remember that there is a wide choice for our children in books produced here.

Vijaya Ghosh worked with Children's Book Division, Living Media. She is now Consultant Editor for the Limca Book of Records.

AN ILLUSTRATOR SPEAKS

Poonam Bevli Sahi

I love children. I absolutely adore mine—warts and all. And they have plenty of those. Actually I am a bit confused. I am not very sure if I like mine more—or other people's. Friends' children one can cuddle, and "squeeze till the toothpaste comes out". And then it is "thank you very much, I had a lovely time, now you can go back home". Now, yours you gotta live with—and they are forever—and a bit longer.

Mine are very involved, very passionate and very opinionated about everything especially about my work (I must add here that they are a wee bit proud of my illustrations too—specially when one of their friends tell them—your Mum has illustrated such and such a book. I read her name in the credits).

So here is the scenario. I have my rotating set, inks, colours, pencils, erasers, my paper, set square and drawing board, all set out. I am in the mood to do some serious illustrating.

In comes Ditto (my younger one—she is 6 years old) and plonks down and makes herself very comfortable in a chair next to my table. She surveys what I am doing and keeps still for precisely two minutes, (the condition I have laid down for allowing her to sit next to me is silence). Then the barrage of questions start:

Ditto: Which book are you illustrating mom?

Mom: The kitten in the mitten.

Ditto: Read it out to me please.

Mom: Ditto, you promised to keep quiet.

Ditto: (Putting on her best 'I'm your little baby act') Please Mom.

Mom: O.K. if you promise to go away after that.

So then I read the story—which she enjoys—and in the meantime my elder daughter Bam Bam (11 years old) strolls in: 'That sentence doesn't sound right' and strolls out.

Ditto meanwhile is still hanging about—and is playing with my rotating pen—point 2 which has a very delicate nib—and needless to say is very expensive. I yell, she gives it back and picks up the inks. I yell again. She calms me down and asks for a piece of paper. In sheer exasperation I give it to her—hoping in exchange I'll get to do some work—but peace is short-lived. I barely manage to do a page when I notice a little head peering over my shoulder: "That does not look like a cat Mom but the Man looks nice". Thank you Ditto. Thank you. I really am grateful for your very expert comments but I did not really ask for them. In the meantime she cozies herself in my

room and starts humming while drawing. At this point I am enjoying myself—really concentrating on the brush work—when the table starts jiggling. My hand moves and yellow ink splatters all over. I scream at Ditto, show the mess that has been created by her, and the poor thing feeling very sorry makes herself scarce.

I survey the damage and find that actually the illustration looks far more interesting than it did before. So I quickly attempt to recreate it in the next one. Yahoo! it works.

Ditto now, after what she feels is a decent interval decides to make a reappearance. Standing well away from my table, she realises that she has contributed to my illustration in a rather nice manner. She struts around and takes all the credit.

But really, illustrating is a serious fun business. Childhood—the loveliest, most innocent phase in a child's life. As an illustrator I would like to think I add my little bit to their joy. Books, a vital part of any child's growing up, stories and illustrations giving wings to his imagination. Maybe I am helping in this in some way.

I remember one of my favourite illustrators as a child was Joan Walsh Anglund. I loved the books she illustrated but never realised the painstaking effort that made the book come alive for me. I illustrate primarily for my children. For the joy I feel in them. By illustrating children's books in some way I am participating in their childhood and perhaps reliving mine.

Life would be wonderful for illustrators. But . . . Why are so few interesting stories written for children? Why don't we borrow from real life situations which children can actually identify with? Why do most stories sound so inane and mundane? Why are they not fun and crazy? We are always, even in our stories, talking at children instead of talking to them. Remember, fun stories make fun illustration.

And publishers, could you please try and improve the production quality of your books. It breaks the illustrator's heart to see good artworks reproduced badly. Pricing the books a little higher could give the child a well produced book.

Yes, and parents should indulge children with more books than ice-creams, toys or appu ghar rides. Books stay with children much longer. Well written, beautifully illustrated and thoughtfully produced books—make reading a pleasure—and a habit that cultivates itself.

Poonam Bevli Sahi is a graphic designer and illustrator of childrens books.

A Mixed Bag From CBT

Anupa Lal

APARAJITA; By Kamala Sharma Chatterji, 1990, pp. 80, Rs. 11.00

AMMA KA PARIVAR; By Saroj Mukherjee. Illustrated by Pramod Kumar 1992, pp. 62, Rs. 15.00

VIGYAN KE MANORANJAK KHEL; By Ivor Yushiyal. Illustrated by B.G. Verma 1992, pp. 78, Rs. 15.50

All three published by Children's Book Trust, New Delhi.

"H onestly, learning can be such fun! Here, just try this book!"

Most publishers of children's books adopt this hearty, sugar-coated pill approach with weary/wary schoolchildren and their over anxious parents. How far does it succeed, I wonder.

Here is another sugar-coated pill, this time from the Children's Book Trust and in Hindi. *Vigyan ke Manoranjak Khel* can be loosely translated as Have Fun with Science. The copious, if somewhat lacklustre, drawings and a "jolly", simply written text tell you among other things how to construct a generator with the help of potatoes, how to transform a shy balloon into a speeding jet and how to turn campa-cola into water (alas! not the other way round)!

All in all, good fun for those 9 to 11 year olds who are scientifically inclined.

Amma's Family is also published by the Children's Book Trust, this time for slightly younger children. Among

Amma's family members are an owl, a chimp, a baby deer and a bulbul who once saved Amma's life! Children can read all about them in this warm-hearted, enjoyable collection of stories. I would also recommend it as good bed-time hearing for toddlers.

Aparajita (The Unconquered) is a well-researched book. But like many other such books, especially in Hindi, which extol, yet again, the virtues of our freedom fighters, there are too many laudatory adjectives and not enough honest, down to earth dialogue, which would have made the characters come alive.

Fulsome praise robs the finest character of verisimilitude—apart from being very boring.

What justification then for inflicting purple prose on children of all people?

Anupa Lal, author of more than a dozen books for children, has been reviewing children's books for the last two decades.

Explorations in English

Jasleen Arora

EXPLORATIONS: ENGLISH WORK BOOK 1, 2, AND 3 FOR CLASS VI, VII, VIII; Madhuban Educational Books, Vikas Publishing House, pp.32 each, Rs.18, Rs.20, and Rs.20

The English Workbooks: Explorations are a gift for a learner of English. The contents of the books lucidly enunciate the word 'Explorations'. The wide field of English language has been successfully explored by the authors.

Some special features of these work books are: the exercises are absorbing as they make for easy reading and are accompanied by numerous illustrations, which can be coloured and annotated; the style of the text is informal, pleasant to read and easy to comprehend and retain; grammar, punctuation, spelling, vocabulary, puzzles and mini projects are all incorporated in this workbook; 'consonant sounds' is a welcome additional chapter hitherto not covered in many workbooks.

These books would stimulate the students to use their own imagination, think carefully as exercises on Parts of Speech, the use of a thesaurus are beautifully presented. The workbooks are reasonably priced.

Jasleen Arora teaches in Carmel Convent, New Delhi.

An Abridgement Too Far

Manjula Padmanabhan

JANE EYRE; By Charlotte Brontë

THE ADVENTURES OF SHERLOCK HOLMES; By Sir Arthur Conan Doyle

THE HOUND OF THE BASKERVILLES; By Sir Arthur Conan Doyle

HEIDI; By Johanna Spyri

THE WIZARD OF OZ; By L. Frank Baum

KIM; By Rudyard Kipling

Madhuban Abridged Classics, all from Vikas publishing House, revised editions
1993, Rs. 22.00, Rs. 18.00, Rs. 18.00, Rs. 18.00, Rs. 20.00 & Rs. 22.00

The six Madhuban Abridged Classics under review have been mistitled. They are not mere abridgements: four of them are long synopses and the other two are severely disfigured versions of the original texts. All six are marked by low production values.

Of the set, *Jane Eyre* is by far the most sensitively written, by Anisha Gadekar. It cannot have been a pleasure to reduce the 443-page fine-print original to 152 pages of twelve-point typescript! Vestiges of the nineteenth century best-seller have survived the compression, but not enough to save it from seeming rather trite. Shorn of the suppressed passions, the keen observations and social commentary of the original, it is just another romance, barely substantial enough to sustain more than a yawn, particularly in these Santa Barbaric times. Either a less ambitious text should have been selected for abridgement or a three-volume set of 150 pages each should have been created to do *Jane Eyre* justice. Anything less must leave the debutant reader wondering where the famed novel's appeal lies.

Of the two volumes of Sherlock Holmes' stories, *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes* is superior, despite the proofing errors which appear even in the introductory note on Sir Arthur Conan Doyle. The text has been rewritten with some care for language, the page design is consistent and the typescript is clear and easy to read. Ideally, however, the title of the book should have been different. There is already an original volume of Holmes' stories of the same name, only three of which are in this "abridged" version.

The Hound of the Baskervilles by contrast, is a blue-pencil adaptation: the original prose has been ruthlessly cut and spliced, leading, in places, to incoherence: "Already I could see the nets closing that lean-jawed pike" reads the eighth sentence on page 79 of the Madhuban book. In the original, this sentence reads: "Already I seemed to see our nets drawing closer around that lean-jawed pike." The copy editing and proofing are exe-

crable. The blocks of text bounce around on the page, in some cases out of alignment with the edges of the page (13, 47, 63, 69—) and in most cases out of alignment with the page printed on the reverse, which is, of course, far more visible than it has the right to be. The right hand margin is supposedly justified, but unexplained spaces appear capriciously at the ends of lines. Page numbers hover uncertainly under each page of text, never maintaining a fixed and definite location on the page. Page 12's fourth paragraph tilts above its successor, while page ten levitates coyly a full two inches above its appointed place. Books like this are better left unpublished because they are an insult to the young reader and a travesty of the original.

Heidi is a stolidly rewritten version by Mridula Oberoi of the story of the young orphan who is left in the care of her reclusive grandfather living in the high Alps of Switzerland. Nothing can dim the sweet wholesomeness of the original story; but the sharp, mountain flavour which was what made the original a special book has, in this version, been diluted. For instance, some names have been altered: Mayenfeld for Maienfeld, Detie for Dete, Uncle Alp for Alm-Uncle, Barbie for Barbel, Bridget for Brigitta, Daisy and Dusky for Little Swan and Little Bear. If simplification were the aim, then there's no explanation for other names, such as that of the village Domieschg, remaining unchanged.

There are minor but pointless inconsistencies: Dete, in the original runs through the village Dorfli to avoid being

asked disturbing questions about her encounter with the Alm-Uncle. In the Madhuban version, she runs to Dorfli. In the original, Heidi is asked to address Clara's grandmother as "madam", in the Madhuban version she is asked to say "Gracious Madam". In the original, Clara feeds the goat Snowflake with leaves, one at a time. In the Madhuban version, she does the same with blades of grass, unlikely though it is that a goat would be interested in a snack so niggardly as a single blade of grass! These and other details lead one to suspect that the Madhuban version is itself based on an abridged edition and a rather inept one at that.

The Wizard of Oz is a fairly competent version of the American children's classic about the adventures of a little girl named Dorothy and her dog Toto, in the magical land of Oz. The story gallops along at a smart pace but here and there are indications that the author's command of English is unstable. On page 14, line 8, Dorothy's tears "seemed to melt the kind-hearted Munchkins . . ." suggesting the disturbing vision of Munchkins lying puddled on the ground. On page 30, line 16, Toto and the Cowardly Lion "turned good friends"—into what, we wonder? On page 61, line 18, the Witch melts into "a heap of brown shapeless mass" even though a heap is usually composed of more than one mass, however brown or shapeless. The line formatting is uneven, with hyphens playing truant frequently through the text. And in the introduction we are informed that Oz is a "modernized fairytale in which joy and excitement are retained, while the heartaches and nightmares are left out"—this, despite the many deaths, the fearsome beasts and the cruel witches which populate the story. The person who wrote that introduction had either not read or not understood the book at all!

And thus to *Kim*. Rudyard Kipling's glorious tale about the orphaned English boy who finds adventure and enlightenment in the company of a Tibetan lama, has been so massacred that I couldn't bear to read it through. Leaving aside the appalling number of proofing errors, the original text appears to have been mauled, then the shreds stapled back together.

On page 32, line 24; "The lama sat down wearily, and began to meditate.

"Huh! It is only a pahari, said Kim over his shoulder."

The same passage in the 1951 Macmillan and Co. unabridged version reads: "The lama dropped wearily to the ground, much as a heavy fruit-eating bat cowers,

and returned to his rosary.

"Stand farther off, beggar!" The order was shouted in broken Hindustani by one of the hillmen.

"Huh! It is only a pahari" (a hillman), said Kim over his shoulder."

The difference between the two versions is the difference between a brick wall and a glass pane. Unless we know that the hillman has spoken, Kim's reaction is meaningless. It is typical of the whole text. A child reading this abridgement could only be mystified by the jerky, incoherent progress of the story. The typesetting breaks out into bold-face randomly through the text, page numbers lurch drunkenly, there are smudges and marks on every second page.

To cap it all, the illustrations have been done by two different artists, neither of whom is named. One is Tapas Guha, whose work is always pleasing even if occasionally uninspired. The other, whose hand I do not recognize, is the kind of artist who leads one to believe that there are indeed extraterrestrials living amongst us. Why else is an artist unable to draw the most standard features of human anatomy accurately? After all, even a hermit-cum-artist, living in complete seclusion, can examine his/her own limbs and be competent to draw at least wrists and ankles correctly.

While on the subject of art let me add that the publishers get my lowest marks for stinting on credit lines. Two authors have been mentioned, but none of the illustrators. The covers are all clumsily and hastily drawn, even the one by Tapas. He signs his work, so I know he did the inside illustrations for *Jane Eyre*, the two *Holmes* books and half of *Kim*. The *Heidi* illustrations bear the name Raturi, who did not notice that the text specifically describes Heidi's hair as short, dark and curly.

Whoever did the unsigned *Oz* drawings did not read the text carefully either. Dorothy's little dog Toto is described as black but appears white throughout. Dorothy is depicted as an open-haired blonde in all the illustrations except in what is meant to be a frontispiece, in which she is a pig-tailed brunette. Though the Madhuban text does not specify the colour of her hair, her dress is described as a blue-and-white gingham and she wears a pink bonnet. No such details appear in the drawings and the famous silver shoes have been rendered in so unremarkable a style that the discerning reader can see at a glance that they cannot possibly be the silver shoes.

I do not lay these shortcomings at the hands of the artist, however. It is an editor's responsibility to ensure that illustrations follow the text. If she/he did not bother to notice that Heidi's hair is supposed to be dark and curly, it can hardly be held against the poor, underpaid, over-worked illustrator!

Manjula Padmanabhan is a cartoonist and writer living in Delhi.

Shorn of the suppressed passions, the keen observations and social commentary of the original, it is just another romance, barely substantial enough to sustain more than a yawn, particularly in these Santa Barbaric times. Either a less ambitious text should have been selected for abridgement or a three-volume set of 150 pages each should have been created to do Jane Eyre justice. Anything less must leave the debutant reader wondering where the famed novel's appeal lies.

Joyous Reading from NBT

Monisha Mukundan

14 MICE MOVE HOUSE; By Kazuo Iwamura, Rs. 11.00

"HELLO MOON!"; By Akiko Hayashi, Rs. 6.00

GUESS WHAT I'M DOING; By Kyoko Matsuoka and contributors from many countries, Rs. 21.00

FLOWERS AND BUTTERFLIES; By Jeyanthi Manokaran.
Illustrated by Sujasha Das Gupta

All published by the National Book Trust.

Of the four titles under review, two are Japanese publications, brought out in India with the assistance of the Toyota Foundation, one is a UNESCO publication for the International Literacy Year, and the fourth is an entirely Indian book. All four are well above the general quality of picture books that are currently being produced in India and the two Japanese publications are exceptionally good for young children. Each one is attractively produced in colour and, being subsidized, is available at a remarkably low cost. Taken together, the books provide ample reason for young children and their parents to cheer.

14 Mice Move House by Kazuo Iwamura "grew out of his own experience of rural life," according to the blurb. And, in addition to being wonderfully authentic in detail and content, the story itself is deeply satisfying. Told almost entirely in pictures, with just one line of text on each page, the book tells of fourteen mice who are forced to move because the trees amidst which they live have been cut down. In one double page spread after another, crowded with rich visual detail, the mice traverse difficult terrain, face dangers and finally find a new home, setting up an innovative water supply system, and stocking up on food for the winter. The cosy sense of fulfillment in the last page, as they settle down to sleep in their new home is universally appealing in its portrayal of security and comfort. Each beautifully textured illustration provides interest and excitement to hold a child's attention and enough action to allow the child's imagination plenty of scope to roam and to share their observations with their parents and teachers. At Rs.11.00, this is a book which will delight young children and all those who care about them.

In contrast to the lovingly detailed illustrations of *14 Mice Move House*, "Hello, Moon!" by Akiko Hayashi delights one with its sophisticated simplicity. To put it baldly, the moon appears, is obscured by a cloud and then re-appears. Yet each page is full of the wonder and joy that every child shares in his or her fascina-

tion for the moon. A stylised house outlined in light forms the base for silhouettes of two busy cats and then for a child and its mother. Shades of dark blue, black and a lighter shade of blue are offset most effectively against the smiling yellow and white face of the moon. Here again, the text is minimal and the pictures tell the story most effectively.

Guess What I'm Doing takes the reader into the lives and environments of children from eleven regions from around the world. Each factual narrative is supported by activities, information and enjoyable puzzles and games. Children are drawn into the pages of the book through appealing illustrations and participatory activities, a far cry from the dull primary school textbooks which try to stuff the same sort of information into overloaded minds with a heavy-handed lack of imagination. It is to be hoped that text book publishers will take a few leads from the cheerful approach to information that is evident in this volume.

Flowers and Butterflies by Jeyanthi Manokaran has been imaginatively illustrated by Sujasha Das Gupta, whose drawings have enlivened a less than entirely satisfactory story. It begins quite promisingly with a brother and sister playing in a garden full of flowers and butterflies, and the girl's realisation that it is wiser to draw butterflies than to catch them. The story then suddenly shifts gear from a factual tale to a fantasy and a dream sequence follows which allows the illustrator to soar with an imaginary butterfly, but unfortunately the fantasy is not convincing and leaves the reader feeling somewhat let down.

Books published by the National Book Trust have often been criticised for their rather dull appearance. These four titles are a welcome contrast to the very idea of drabness, with their gaily coloured illustrations and the joyous interest they will provide to young readers.

Monisha Mukundan is an editor and writer. She has been writing for children for over 20 years.

POPULAR SCIENCE FOR CHILDREN

Shobhit Mahajan

THE WORLD OF TURTLES AND CROCODILES; By Zai and Rom Whitaker and Indraneil Das
National Book Trust, 1993, pp. 62, Rs. 70.00

SPIDERS: AN INTRODUCTION; By K. Vijayalakshmi and Preston Ahimaz
Cre-A, 1993, pp. 112, Rs. 135.00

OUR WONDERFUL UNIVERSE; By Dinesh Chandra Goswami
National Book Trust, 1993, pp. 57, Rs. 30.00

WHAT IS SCIENCE? By Dilip M. Salwi
Rupa & Co., 1993, pp. 221, Rs. 40.00

Good Popular science writing is an extremely challenging task; the author has to simplify and express key concepts in language different from the natural language of science and do this in such a way so that the essence is not lost. Writing popular science for children is even more challenging because here the task is not merely that of making science more accessible but also of kindling the curiosity in the child to go out and explore the subject herself. The style has to be readable and the conceptual and information content have to be balanced.

The state of popular science writing in India has been dismal. Even with a large and impressive infrastructure in science and technology, we have done precious little for science popularization. This is true in both English and the regional languages.

Lately however there have been some attempts by various organizations like the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research, the National Book Trust (NBT) and other publishers to bring out popular books on a variety of subjects.

The World of Turtles and Crocodiles is a part of the *Nehru Bal Pustakalaya* series of NBT and is specially meant for children. It serves to introduce the young reader to the fascinating world of these reptiles. The book is essentially two independent books, one on turtles and the other on crocodiles. The different varieties of turtles from the gigantic Leatherback which can weigh upto a ton to the diminutive cane turtle which can fit into a human palm are described. Their habits, their habitats and their feeding and breeding behaviour are very well explained. The text is supplemented by some wonderful illustrations and photographs. Crocodiles are discussed in the other part of the book. Here again, the authors do an excellent job in describing the habits and habitats of these much maligned creatures. The authors of both these parts seem to be not only knowledgeable scientists but also genuine animal lovers. A strong case is made for conservation of these reptiles which are under a very real threat of extinction because of human activities. The book

has a lot of information which is very well presented and is a good example of how science can be made interesting to children. The production quality is good and it is extremely affordable.

How many of us know that spiders are not really insects but are part of a separate order called arachnids? Or that there are about 30,000 species of spiders found in all possible environments from Mount Everest to the Amazonia? All these and many similar facts about spiders are collected in *Spiders: An Introduction*. This book is essentially a compendium of a large number of facts about these master weavers. The different varieties of spiders with differences in their body structure and behaviour is truly amazing. There are a large number of illustrations and very good photographs which make the book colourful and useful to the amateur naturalist. The usefulness of the book to the interested lay reader is however limited because of the vast amount of information being presented. It is expensive, though well produced on glossy paper and could serve as a useful reference book for somewhat advanced readers.

From the prehistoric times to the post industrial times, human beings have always been fascinated with the heavens. Heavenly bodies and their motions have been extensively studied by the early civilizations as well as by the scientists using the Space telescope today. *Our Wonderful Universe* is an attempt to bring together a variety of information about our universe together. It covers a lot of topics; from techniques of measuring heavenly distances to Life on Other Worlds, from the evolution of stars to the different cosmological theories. And herein lies the problem with the book. It tries and covers too much ground and ends up being too superficial to be of much use. The author does seem to have a good, readable style and it would have been better if he had concentrated on a limited set of topics and covered them in some detail. With such a wide canvass, the author himself seems to have been confused.

One of the most devastating effects of

our educational system has been the misconception about science in the minds of most students. While a large number of them are "scared" of science, most others treat it as a collection of facts to be memorized and not as a method of knowing our world. *What is Science* is a different kind of book which seeks to clarify misconceptions about science. Written by a well-known and prolific science writer, it is in the nature of a dialogue between an interested student and scientists. The actual working of science, both within the laboratories and of the theoretical kind is elucidated well. However there seem to be several curious statements in the book which are definitely misleading to the uninitiated. For instance, to call anthropology a soft science because it is not "tough" like Physics is surely a strange classification. The whole book also seems to be full of naive ideas about the meaning of scientific temper and the interac-

tion of science and society. Written in a pedantic style, the book is in large print with many illustrations. These illustrations for most part are very irritating and inane when they are meant to be entertaining.

The purpose of good popular science writing is to simplify without trivializing, to inspire the reader to read more about the subject and to inform and excite students about frontline research. These books, though of very uneven quality are a modest beginning to change the dismal scenario. One hopes that more and more working scientists will take it upon themselves to treat science popularization also as part of their responsibility towards the society which provides for them the resources to pursue their research.

Dr Shobhit Mahajan teaches in the Department of Physics and Astrophysics, University of Delhi.

AWIC—A Group of Dedicated People Working for Children's Literature

By Surekha Panandiker

India has a rich heritage of literature. But development of special literature for children is a recent phenomenon. After independence our people realised the need for developing literature for our children. The late K. Shankar Pillai took the lead by establishing the Children's Book Trust for the publication of children's books. He organised workshops to motivate and guide writers to write and artists to illustrate books for children.

These motivated writers and illustrators came together to organise the Association of Writers and Illustrators for Children (AWIC) in March 1981. Shankar provided the guiding spirit and inspired the members to work dedicatedly for the cause of children's literature. The main aim of this registered voluntary organisation is to promote and develop creative literature for children. Authors, artists, publishers, teachers, librarians, parents, in fact any adult who is interested, in the promotion of children's literature can become a member by paying an annual subscription of Rs. 100/- or a life member by contributing Rs. 1000/-.

There is an elected executive body but the spirit of team work among all members is the unique feature of AWIC. On every third Saturday at the monthly meetings different aspects of children's literature are discussed. Eminent writers, artists, librarians, publishers, our young readers are all invited to these meetings from time to time.

To guide beginner writers result oriented workshops are organised twice a year. Considering the popularity of Science fiction, a workshop for writing science fiction was organised. A workshop on book production familiarised the authors and artists with the problems and procedures of book production. To get the best literature for children competitions for writers and illustrators are organised by the AWIC. The prize winning stories are first published in the Association's quarterly journal *Writer and Illustrator* and then in the AWIC collections of stories.

The quarterly journal *Writer and Illustrator* is one of its kind in the field of children's literature. Apart from research based articles, it publishes book reviews of sixteen Indian languages. It also publishes profiles to highlight the contributions made by the writers, illustrators, story tellers, playwrights in the field of children's literature.

The AWIC also helps the publishers

by acting as a talent bank. It gets stories, poems, plays and biographies written by its members and submits them to publishers. If desired by the publisher illustrator members of the AWIC illustrate these manuscripts. These collections and anthologies of the AWIC members are in the best seller lists of publishers. Many publishers like CBT, Ratna Sagar, Frank Brothers, India Book Depot have benefited from the works of AWIC members.

The AWIC entered the field of publication by publishing two collections of mystery stories for children. These collections have also been co-published by a Singapore publisher. Another prestigious publication of the AWIC is *Sachitra Hindi Balshabda Kosh*, an illustrated dictionary for children in Hindi. The multi-coloured dictionary is the first of its kind published in India. Fourteen writer members and one illustrator member of the AWIC have prepared this dictionary.

Writing and publishing books has no meaning unless these books reach children. Realising this need AWIC has started its unique project of area libraries for children. After a survey of reading habits and the situation in school libraries, the members felt that libraries should be opened in neighbourhoods so that children can walk down on their own and pick up the book of their choice.

Once this idea of neighbourhood libraries was approved, books were collected from friends, publishers, and well-wishers through donations in cash and kind. They were screened and accessed at the Central office. A library kit each consisting of a bag of 150 books, a display board, a register, hand outs, dairies, membership forms were prepared.

A member volunteer is given this library kit. The member runs the library at his or her house. A nominal fee of Rs. 2/- per month is charged from a child who wishes to become a member of this library. No fee is charged from the children of economically backward families. The membership fee is deposited at the Central office to buy more titles.

Each young reader is given a diary to note down his comments about the book he or she has read. These reactions of children give a good feed back to AWIC members. These volunteers who run the libraries come to the Central office to exchange books and deposit the money once a month on any Wednesday.

The outstation librarian is given the kit on payment as it is difficult to get back

QUIZ

1. Who once said 'I do not trust a Russian, for as soon as a Russian worms his way in all hell breaks loose'?
2. 'Jack and Jill went up the hill to fetch a pail of water'. What is the basic fallacy?
3. The winner of the 200 m. breast stroke in the 1968 Olympics Pepe Munoz was called Tibio (lukewarm). Why?
4. While we're on the subject, which sportsman's nickname was 'stupid feet'?
5. What is arachybutyrophobia?
6. 'A spectre is haunting Europe—Spectre of Communism'. The first lines of a very famous book. Name it?
7. Who would practise taumachy?
8. What exactly is trichology?
9. Princess Aurora is better known as...?
10. Where would you find the following lines—Good friend/For Jesus' sake forbear/to dig the dust enclosed here/Blessed be the man that spares these stones/Curst be he that moves my bones. (The style is a dead giveaway).
11. On which controversial book is Tariq Ali and Howard Brenton's play 'Iranian Nights' (formerly 'A Mullah's Night Out') based?
12. Born Allen Konigsberg, he rather peremptorily dismissed Hitchcock's movies as 'an airport read with no real content!' Who is he?
13. Who wrote 'Verses on the Death of Dr Swift'?
14. Widseth is the first example of what?
15. Who once said 'I am insulted by the persistent assertion that I want war. Am I a fool? War! It would settle nothing?' (Incidentally he preferred his troops to attack on the 7th of a month)
16. Who described golf as 'an ineffectual attempt to direct an uncontrollable sphere into an inaccessible hole with instruments ill adapted for the purpose'?
17. Who once said 'All I know is that I am not a Marxist'?
18. Why are mongoose not affected by snake venom?
19. Who wrote 'Here lies Eric Ambler'?
20. 'Nothing but cabbage with a college education'. Who or what was Mark Twain describing?

Answers on page 22

Compiled by Rishi Iyengar

Age 15

the kit if the library is closed down. 100 books are given to them free. The AWIC helps them to purchase books from the publishers on maximum discount. This is necessary as it is very difficult to collect regional language books at the central office and exchange them regularly. So outstation librarians are given this task of collecting books for their libraries.

The informal atmosphere at the library and the friendly behaviour of the known librarian who is called aunty by the children attract them to these neighbourhood libraries. Book related activities like story telling, painting, recitation, quiz programmes, organised by the librarians retain the interest of children in books and in libraries.

Begun in 1983, today there are more than 55 libraries run by the enthusiastic members of AWIC. Through these, thousands of children are introduced to the wonderful world of books. More than numbers, what is significant is the strata of children whom AWIC members have reached the books. In the far flung colonies of Delhi, where there are no bookshops AWIC children's libraries are the only source of books for children.

In the slums around Delhi where children had never seen a story book, AWIC libraries provide the pleasure of reading these books. Our libraries have provided an incentive to literacy by giving colourful and attractive books. Delhi Saksharata Samiti is making use of our libraries in eight different places. In villages of Punjab and in remote tribal areas of Torba in Bihar we have brought relaxation and pleasure in the tension-ridden lives of the children.

A librarian of the year award is given by AWIC to recognise the dedicated work put in by the volunteer members. We cannot ignore our young readers. An yearly award to given to one child member from each library. The librarian selects the child member who is regular and reads with interest.

This book promotion work of AWIC is now internationally recognised. The AWIC received the International IBBY ASAMI READING PROMOTION AWARD in 1991. To carry this work further it is necessary to motivate parents, teachers, librarians and society in general. To create an awareness about the need for promoting and developing good literature for children, AWIC organises seminars, conferences and get-togethers.

Display of good books and art work of

children's books have a tremendous impact. AWIC has been exhibiting children's books and art work, not only in India but also abroad.

Since 1989, the AWIC has representing India in the international children's book fair at Bologna (Italy). The publishers from all over the world attend this annual fair to sell and purchase publishing rights. No Indian publishers attended it. AWIC took up the challenge. It collects and selects good children's books from Indian publishers, displays them at the Bologna Book Fair. Last year AWIC had the honour of holding an exhibition of the artwork of Indian illustrators of children's books. The beauty of the original artwork of our talented artists does not come out in our children's books as we do not use quality paper and latest technology. When the original work was displayed, publishers, artists and visitors to the Fair were impressed by the high quality of Indian illustrations. Many enquiries were made and we are sure our artists will get international assignments. To promote our artist members AWIC brought out a catalogue of Indian Illustrators on the occasion—the first of its kind.

To have a better perspective and to undertake researches in the field of children's literature it is necessary to have worldwide contracts. By becoming the Indian Section of the International Board on Book for Young People (IBBY) since 1990, AWIC has filled this lacuna.

Today AWIC is looked upon as an important institution by researchers, students and all those who are interested in the field of children's literature.

We know much has to be done, the field is vast, millions of children who need books are waiting, the advent of TV and cable is threatening the development of book culture, but we have made a beginning. With the team spirit of its 400 members and cooperation from all concerned people AWIC will march ahead to promote and develop good literature for children.

Surekha Panandiker is a well-known writer for children and has many books to her credit. She writes in English, Hindi and Marathi. She is a member of the executive committee of Association of Writers and Illustrators for Children. She is the Convener of the AWIC Children's Library Project. She is also the President of the Lekhika Sangh.

Trapped!

By Sigrun Srivastav

Outside a woman screamed, an excruciating scream that never seemed to end. But when it did, the descending silence was worse than her scream.

Ranjit Singh drew closer to his mother. In the darkness of the bedroom he couldn't see her face, but he knew she was crying. On the cot near the window his grandmother sat, rocking to and fro in prayer. "Sat Guru, Wahe Guru," she moaned, "They are coming to get us."

Ranjit shivered. He wished his father were here. But his father had gone to Meerut and wouldn't return before Tuesday. Tuesday! He might not live to see Tuesday, might never see his father again. A tight knot of fear and frustration churned in the pit of his stomach. He cried out: "That isn't fair. We have nothing to do with the killing of Mohan Lal and his family. They know that! They know us too! We are their neighbours, their friends."

His mother put her arm around Ranjit's shoulders, patted his arm reassuringly. "It's neither the neighbours nor our friends that seek revenge," she answered softly. "It's a group of misled fanatics, driven by personal grievances against society. They stir the mob, they poison their minds and spark off these fires of violence."

"And a good helping of liquor," grimly interjected Ranjit's elder brother from the other side of the room. "That gives them the courage to kill."

"Shh," warned his mother, "don't talk like that. Let us pray, hope and pray, that by the grace of God we will be spared."

She fell silent and the silence hung like a sword over their heads, dark and dangerous. Ranjit too wanted to pray. But he couldn't. He was too scared. He strained to take in every sound that penetrated the bolted doors and windows and waited, waited for the mob.

And the mob came in a torrent down the road—a group of angry, hate filled men—a pack of wild animals lashing and kicking at everything in its way. The men roared, "Get the Sikhs, the dirty killers. Get them all. They must pay with their blood." And some of them bawled, "Hindu Bhai Zindabad! Hindu Bhai Zindabad!" Most of them were drunk and hardly knew what they were doing.

Ranjit's heart missed a beat. Fear like an ice cold hand gripped him by the throat. "Ma", he whispered helplessly. His mother drew him closer into her arms and began to pray aloud, "Eternal god, thou art our shield, the dagger, knife, the sword we wield..."

The mob had reached their house, pushed through the low wooden gate, jostling and shouting obscenities and threats. The men pounded the main door with axes, *lathis* and iron bars. They belatedly, "Open up, you Sikh traitors, open, or we'll smash the door in!"

... to protect us," murmured Ranjit's grandmother, "there is given the timeless, deathless Lord of Heaven..."

"Kick the door in," cried a raucous voice, "Kick it in *yaar*, hurry!"

Some of the men put their shoulders to the door and butted it with full force. The door creaked. Soon, it would give way, soon—very soon.

"Mother," shrieked Ranjit, "they are coming in. What shall we do, Mother?"

"We must hide," returned Ranjit's mother calmly and jumping to her feet she ordered, "Hide Dadima under some quilts, Kuldip. Quickly, quickly and bolt the door."

Ranjit's elder brother shook his head. "No Mother," he whispered, "We shouldn't lock ourselves in. If we do they'll know we are hiding inside and they will search till they find us. No, we must leave the door unlocked and hide." Saying that, he leapt to his grandmother's side and urged her to lie down. Comforting her gently, he piled heaps of quilts on top of her, making sure she had room to breathe. "Don't move, Dadima," he whispered urgently, "Whatever happens, don't move." Then he turned towards his mother and ordered, "Get behind the curtain. And you hide under the cot, Ranjit. Fast, no noise. Not a single sound, or we are lost! Dead!" He squeezed into the gap between the cupboard and the wall to the right of the door. "Shh," he warned once more. Then the room fell silent. Ranjit could hear nothing but the blood throbbing in his temples. "Eternal God," he began to pray, "Thou art our shield, the dagger, knife..." he paused, searching for the words of the well-known prayer. They wouldn't come to him.

The mob was rejoicing. The door had

PLEASE NOTE

Annual subscription for *The Book Review* has been increased to Rs. 120.00 for individuals and Rs. 150.00 for institutions as of January 1994.

come off its hinges and crashed to the mosaic floor of the hall. Suddenly the house was filled with agitated voices, "Now we'll get you, killers, you cowards, your time is up."

And above all those voices thundered one laden with fulminating aggressions, "Down with all Sikhs! Get them, the sons of pigs." Ranjit held his breath.

He knew this voice, knew it only too well. Why, just yesterday, when his bicycle went out of order, the same voice had said, "Don't worry, boy, I'll fix it for you one of these evenings." The voice had been soft, gentle, and affectionate, so different from the one he heard now. Yet it was the same voice—the voice of Surinder Sharma, the eldest son of their neighbour. Ranjit felt the ground give way under his feet. A strange emptiness filled his mind, his heart. Surinder Sharma! Surinder Sharma! So friends did turn into foes, and neighbours did kill neighbours. His mother had been wrong. He himself had been wrong. Everything was so wrong, so terribly wrong and distorted. Oh, how he wished his father were here, if only for a while, for a few minutes, till everything was over.

"Search the house," a voice bellowed, "They must be somewhere."

And Surinder Sharma shouted, "Search upstairs, search the dining room upstairs. We'll get them. We'll get them."

The door to their bedroom was kicked open and in the doorway, silhouetted black against the sitting room light, stood a tall broad, figure—Surinder Sharma. He didn't bother to feel for the light switch. Instead, he sent the beam of his torch travelling through the room. Its light fell on to the cupboard, zigzagged over the wall. It swept over the faded photo of a turbaned old man, it lit the dog eared pages of a calendar. The beam glided over the whole length of the cot and then snaked under it, searching, hunting till it had found its pray—Ranjit. Trapped, Ranjit was trapped! A hot wave of anger and frustration welled up inside him, almost choking him. "Traitor," he wanted to cry, "You are the pigs, the thieves and the killers. Go away! Go away!" But all he could do was to stare wide-eyed into Surinder Sharma's face, his anger giving way to despair.

"Surinder," he whispered, "Surinder." At that moment, Kuldip flew out from his hiding place and flung himself at the young man, going for his throat. But Surinder, more than two years older than Kuldip, shook him off, locked his arms around him, clamping a hand on Kuldip's mouth.

Just then, two men pushed their way in through the door. Surinder flung Kuldip into the dark of the corner, spun around and sent the beam of his torch directly into the ruffians' eyes, blinding them temporarily.

"No one here," he boomed, pushing them back into the hall. "They must be upstairs. The pigs are hiding upstairs. Get them, get them!" He urged the men

towards the stairs, pushing them impatiently. As they raced upstairs, he hung behind. Then he turned, and half shut the door behind him. In a second he was kneeling before the cot and, pulling Ranjit from under it, he whispered in his usual, friendly voice, now strained with urgency. "Come, get out of here as fast as you can." And over his shoulder he called out softly to Kuldip and his mother, "Aunty, you must leave through the window. Get out into the service lane and into our backyard. Fast, you will make it. Oh, hurry, hurry, don't miss a chance."

Ranjit struggled out from under the simple canvas cot, slowly, oh so clumsily.

"Ma," he whispered, but Surinder Sharma pushed him toward the window.

"Dadi?" he called out over his shoulder. He couldn't leave them behind! The young man unbolted the window, pushed it open and lifted Ranjit over the window sill.

"Don't waste a second, boy," he whispered, "Run! Run for your life! The others will follow."

Ranjit fell to the ground with a jolt, was up on his feet again and groped his way through the dark backyard towards the door opening into the backlane. With trembling hands he unbolted it and pulled it open. The squeaking of the rusty hinges sent ripples of fear down his spine. But the uproar of the maddening mob drowned all else. With a desperate effort, Ranjit pushed the door open and was in the lane that ran between the back of the two rows of houses. He stumbled along the boundary wall, over heaps of kitchen waste, over rubbish discarded tins, battered plastic buckets and broken bottles. He stepped into foul smelling drains and slithered over mounds of garbage; hardly noticed. Behind him he could hear the mob rampaging his parents' room, roaring! "Come out, you sons of bitches, give yourselves up or we'll kill you."

Ranjit panted down the lane towards a streak of light falling through a crack in the door. When he finally reached it, he pushed it open and fell into the waiting arms of a woman.

She hugged him close and kissed the top of his head, whispering, "Ranjit, Ranjit. Oh! God. I thought you would never come. Where are the others?" "They will come," replied Ranjit in a hoarse whisper. "I hope they will."

And he allowed Mrs Sharma to rock him gently in her arms. "Don't cry," she comforted, "don't cry."

But he couldn't help it.

Together they listened into the night, to the sound of smashing glass, breaking wood, murderous voices filled with hatred and mindless fury.

And finally they heard a whisper, his mother's suppressed cries. She stumbled through the door. "Ma Ji, Ma Ji," she sobbed, "O God, she will not make it." She swayed and would have fallen had Kuldip not supported her. "Mother," cried Ranjit alarmed and rushed towards her. His mother folded her arms around him

and cried once more, "Dadi Ma, she will not make it."

"She will," returned Kuldip, "She will. She will be here along with Surinder. Believe me, mother, believe me!" "Of course", Mrs. Sharma said quietly and pulled the door shut, taking care not to lock it. When she turned, her face was pale but her voice was warm and reassuring. "They will both be here in a minute," she said, "Let us wait."

Ranjit didn't know how long they waited, listening into the night, waiting with pounding hearts for what seemed an eternity. Minutes ticked by, painfully slow minutes, while a few yards down the lane, the mob looted their home and set it on fire.

"O God," whispered Ranjit's mother, "O God," and she hid her face in her hands.

And then the voices died down; the mob had moved on. Night fell; silent, ghostly silent. The people in the backyard didn't move, staring down blankly at their hands, carefully avoiding each other's eyes.

Finally Mrs Sharma lifted her head. "Let's go inside," she said very softly, hiding her face and her tears.

But there, a sound, rustle at the door; fleeting footsteps, coming to a halt in front of it.

Ranjit held his breath. They were coming for them here. Maybe they had seen them run away.

A knock at the door, soft but urgent. "Open up Ma," they heard someone call out, "Let me in." A small cry escaped Mrs Sharma's lips. She turned, pulled the door open and allowed her son to slip in. Her eyes searched his face eagerly. "Surinder, Surinder? What happened, what happened? O God, you are bleeding, son."

Surinder Sharma pressed the door shut with his back. He sagged against the wood panting and coughing with exhaustion, taking in the people in the dimly lit yard. He smelt of smoke, fire and death—death.

Finally, he pushed himself away from the door and, on unsteady legs, walked towards Ranjit's mother. He looked at her with eyes dark with pain and sorrow and said in a broken voice. "Please, please don't ask me what happened to Dadima. Please don't."

Then, opening his torn and blood-stained jacket, he pulled out a flat packet from inside his shirt. It was wrapped in embroidered silk. It was a book, the book, the Holy Granth, handed down from generation to generation. He pressed it gently into the woman's hands and whispered, "That is all I could save, that and no more."

Signun Srivastav has written and illustrated thirty books for children and has scripted children's films and television programmes. She is also a noted sculptress by profession and exhibits regularly. The present story is to be published in a collection of short stories by her entitled Danger in the Mountains, EPP Publishers, Singapore.

A REPORT

Children's Book Fair 1993

Neeti Malhotra

His eyes said it all. Clinging on to his mother's side as she skimmed through the book he had picked up, he urged her to buy it. She did. His hug squeezed her breath!

Her tiny feet took tiny steps. The large carry bag she was carrying hindered her steps, as it knocked on her knees. Need any help? No way. The little lady wouldn't let Daddy carry her bag for her. It had her brand new prized possession. Her first book.

There are many sayings attached with books. Many of them well-worn. Irving Stonesaid, "There are no faster and firmer friendships than those between the people who love the same books." May be true. The fact is it is books which often become our first friends. The love for books is blossoming even when as toddlers we tear the pages for that exciting, crackling sound. Or when our stubby hands, with dimpled knuckles, turn the pages over with no finesse whatsoever.

And then we're hooked. Reading becomes such an addiction that as grownups we hasten to complete our chores to get back to our books. And it is a love that never betrays us.

It is to 'catch 'em young' for encouraging this love for books that like every year the Rashtriya Bal Sahitya Kendra, National Book Trust organised the Children's Book Fair at the Zoological Park gardens in the capital.

Khelen Padhen—Khushi Khushi' was the theme of the fair. Reading is a pleasure. More profound than the vicarious pleasure children get by plonking themselves in front of the small screen. A medium sadly bordering on voyeurism, courtesy MTV.

In this, a book fair has a significant role to play. How far was this one successful at achieving the same?

The book fair, held from 2nd October to 10th October 1993, had a wide array of books. Catering to all tastes, minds and pockets. About 150 stalls stocked books

on almost every conceivable subject. Although a children's fair, as before, the mela had more attractions from Rupa, Pan, Penguin, Oxford University Press, Sahitya Akademi and others, for the elders accompanying them.

It is heartening to note that the quality of children's literature in India has improved considerably—content, variety, language and illustration wise though the production standard leaves much to be desired. The quality of Madhuban educational books by Vikas Publishing House is a case in point. *The New Nursery Rhymes* brought out by them have pleasing illustrations but fail to appeal because of gaudy colouring. *My Dazzle Book* brought out by Evergreen Publications has a typo in the title itself. Raises speculations about that which is inside the cover.

The obsession of the Indian publishers with English classics was evident. Many publishing houses like Vikas, Book Palace, Dhingra and Parul had titles like *Moby Dick*, *Three Musketeers*, *Gulliver's Travels*, *Robinson Crusoe* and more. You name it, they have it. But when the mother of a teenaged girl came looking for *Malgudi Days*, they looked apologetic. She ultimately found the title with Penguin. Ironical, isn't it?

In this regard, the contribution of Children's Book Trust is noteworthy. Their publications with subjects largely encompassing Indian history, literature, culture and wildlife are beautifully illustrated. Even though they are black and white, one feels like picking them up. The *Nehru Bal Pustakalaya* series of the National Book Trust with about 40 new titles this year, reaffirmed its commitment to creating a treasure-house of enjoyable and informative literature. These books are inexpensive, creatively brought out and cater to age groups between pre-school and 14 years.

A first timer in the fair this year was the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) India. Fondness of children for animals manifested itself in the crowds that thronged the stall. An attraction for the kids were the name-slip sheets and sticker sheets with captivating wild-life pictures. WWF's book series on *Geography Fun* and *Environment* were superbly produced and reasonably priced.

Some of the prominent Hindi publishers at the fair were Sanjay Prakashan, Kitab Ghar, Raj Pal & Sons and Vaneeta Prakashan. *Vigyan Bharti* and *Bharat ke Vaigyanik* series of Raj Pal & Sons were liberally supplemented with diagrams but they were more sketchy than distinct.

Titles from the Publications Division of the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting were superb in every way. With publications in Hindi and all regional languages, the books scored high on content, style, layout, illustrations and production. It would not be incorrect to point out, though, that their preoccupation with stories leads to information being ignored.

A remarkable attempt of the Publica-

tions Division at making available good literature at highly affordable price was the *Quotable Quotes* series introduced this year, priced at Re 1 each. A wide variety of books well produced and finely illustrated adorned the stands of the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) stall. And no one could complain about their pricing either.

The only publishers with exclusive sports publications, Sports Publishers, had titles like *Rules of Games and Sports*, *India in One Day International Cricket*, and *Playing Field and Equipment Manual*. The books were expensive with the diagrammatic representations being shoddy.

In contrast with other publishers, Sura Books Pvt. Ltd. from Madras published no story looks at all. Their latest collection ranged from books on general awareness, mysterious events, grammar and vocabulary at very reasonable prices. The format employed intelligent use of simple puzzles requiring application of mind and common sense.

Cheap literature was available too in the shape of vulgar comics from Vishv Vijay Pvt. Ltd. and Fort Comics. The latter's *Fort Love Series* were nothing but a desi version of Star Comics produced in bad taste.

What do parents look for while buying books for their children? They absolutely forbid comics for sure. A parent revealed that she prefers her children to do mathematical exercises for sharpening their mental skills. The present trend in children's books confirms this preference. More and more informative and aptitude books are being produced at highly affordable prices. The production standard, though, is not up to the mark.

Overall the visitors to the fair got everything they were looking for. But did the fair get what it was looking for? Sadly it did not. The children for whom the fair was meant were just not there. At least not in an appreciable number.

Most of the stall owners complained of the bad timing of the fair. Unlike last year, when the fair was held in January during vacations, this time the children, caught up in their exams, were unable to turn up.

The decor at the fair was quite business-like. It does not require much imagination to think what a Mela-like festive mood can do to the fair. The kids will love it!

The fair also lacked the much-needed publicity. The organisers must remember that 'doing business without ad. is like winking at a girl in the dark!' The fair was a success with regard to what it had to offer. But that is a lame success. For such an event to be an unqualified success it is imperative to generate the right kind of excitement for it. The excitement that compels one to go for it!

Neeti Malhotra has a Master's degree in Mass Communications and was Editor for Barbie Comics.

Wanna Have Fun?

Swapna Dutta

FUN-COOKING FOR CHILDREN; By Rohini Singh. Illustrations by Kamla Singh and Taarini. Cover design by UBS Art Studio
U.B.S.P.D. New Delhi, 1993, pp. 200+8, Rs. 75.00

PARTY GAMES; By Rohini Singh, Cover design by Shampa Lal
Rupa & Co., New Delhi, 1993, pp. 105, Rs. 30.00

Rohini Singh, an author who needs no introduction, has to her credit a number of highly successful cookery books, both here and abroad. What makes them outstanding is her clear, concise directions and the fact that she deals with ingredients which are readily available and affordable by all. The children are lucky to have a book by her, specially written for them!

"You are now the proud owner of a ticket to fun," says the author in her introductory letter from Rohini aunty. "I am so glad you're deciding to experiment in the kitchen and I assure you, you're going to enjoy yourself thoroughly. What is more, I hope this will be your introduction to a life-time hobby that is not only fun but is also creative and satisfying." She takes into account the fact that many of her readers may not have any experience at all. Is cooking a dangerous hobby for children? "Well, . . . it's about as dangerous as learning to ride a bicycle" says Rohini; "just as you may have a fall from your cycle or you may knock into something and hurt yourself. So with cooking. You may cut yourself because you have to use a knife for cutting and chopping or you may touch something that's too hot and burn yourself. But then, as in cycling, there are some things you must learn so you can keep yourself safe and still have fun. Once you can "balance" yourself in the kitchen as you learn to do on your cycle, there is absolutely nothing to be afraid of: just take your time and start with the easier recipes."

She starts off by giving a set of rules to keep in mind when cooking and sums it up in "The good cook's poem":

"Wash your hands. Go on, scrub, you wouldn't want germs in your grub!
Give your recipe a nice, long read
Get together all the things you need.
Put on your apron. Now you're ready
You know what works best? Slow and steady!
And when your cooking for the day is done,
Remember what I said about the price of fun?

Yes, leave the place all neat and clean
Wash and wipe, you know what I mean.

Well done! Great! I'm proud of you
And I know some others will be too!"

After this the author introduces the readers to the various gadgets used in cooking and tells them how to use each of them. She also explains the various terms

used in cooking plus common measurements and oven temperatures. A whole section is devoted to simple operations such as breaking an egg, separating an egg, sifting flour, chopping onions without tears and so on.

The simple recipes include a variety of sandwiches and drinks such as nimbu pani, milk-shakes, lassi and fruit drinks. Snacks come next and they include all-time-favourites like alu-chaat, papri-chaat, alu tikkis and the like. Then she describes a variety of mouth-watering desserts such as striped jelly, ice-cream jelly, bread pudding, apple crumble, banana cream and so on. The next set includes mini-meals such as Burger Bonanza, saucy noodles, chippy chicken and pea-pullao. Salads and raitas are the last on the list.

Every recipe is so clearly explained that it should be perfectly simple for an intelligent child to follow it. 'Curds with sprouts', for instance, which happens to be the author's favourite raita because it is full of protein and energy. This is how it goes: (You will need for four people): 3/4 cup sprouts (she explains how this should be done)

2 1/2 cup curds
1/2 tsp salt
1 tsp sugar
1/2 tsp chaat masala

a green chilli, finely chopped;
and also, a bowl, an egg-beater, a knife, a chopping board, a bowl and napkin to make the sprouts.

To make it:

1. Put the curds in the bowl. Add the salt, sugar, chaat masala and chilli.
2. Add the sprouts and mix together well with the curds.
3. Taste a little bit with a clean spoon and see if you need to add anything more. Put into the fridge to chill.

The author takes special care to include recipes particularly popular with children. Of course not many are likely to have all the gadgets mentioned by her. But even without them the child can try out a number of recipes in the book and have a wonderful time into the bargain!

"Party times are fun-times or at least that's what they should be" says the author of the book and adds:

"Throwing a successful party is much like taking a good photograph. When you're looking forward to or planning a party, remember to focus on the most important person, the one for whom the

party is being thrown. Keep him or her centre-stage, let others be the blurred outlines in the background." In other words, if the party is for a five year old child, one should concentrate on the child and his/her friends with regard to the food, the activities as well as the games. Everything should be primarily appealing to this particular age group. Which also means that the hostess should NOT make this an occasion to return hospitality to her own friends and relatives and must keep that for another occasion.

The author also points out the importance of forethought and planning—"... if you want your party to be a memorable one, sit down, take time to make a list of jobs to be done and start completing them as much in advance as possible. Particularly when its children's parties you are organising, there are so many things that need thought—return-gifts, decorations, games, the food! It's a good idea to get started early. Try and look ahead... foresee your guests' needs, provide for them and you're unlikely to be caught unawares."

The author then proceeds to describe a number of delightful games for various age groups. Treats for toddlers include the pea-pushing game, the shape-sorter and the Qutub Minar. Three-year olds have "Follow The Dots", "Match it", the "Vanishing Trick" and the like—games which require more action. An interesting game in this section is the "Big Catch", where four children, holding hands, form a fishing net. They run along, holding hands to catch fish, i.e. the other children. As soon as they manage to surround one fully, the latter becomes a part of the net. The game goes on until only four children are left out who become the new net and the game starts all over again. There are no winners or losers but it is sure to provide a lot of fun—specially if it is played outdoors.

Most of the games are sure to prove enjoyable. They include "Chinese Whispers", "Copy Cat", "Pin it" for the four-year-olds; "Musical Jumps" "How's That" and "How Dare You" for the 5-year olds; "Popcorn-threading" "Let's go Bowling" and "Home made Hoopla" for the 6-year-olds; "Marble Hunt", "Speedy Shoppers", "Kissa Kursi Ka" and "Non-Committal" for children who are a little older. There are also a number of games meant for teen-agers such as "jumbled wisdom", "Every Liar Has His Day", "Four-letter words", "Taking Aim" and so on.

The detailed directions should make it possible for the most jittery of parents to enjoy their own party as much as the children and their special guests! A must-book for all party lovers.

Swapna Dutta has been writing and translating books for children for two decades, and has around 24 titles to her credit. Her latest works are the Juneli and the Teddy series, both published by Harper Collins (India).

Madhuban Books From Vikas

By Nilima Sinha

KNOW AND GROW: ENVIRONMENTAL SOCIAL STUDIES: BOOKS, 142; Edited by Sunita Kapoor and Moolayashree Hashmi. Illustrated by Girija Singh
Second re-print, 1993, New Delhi, pp. 56, 68, & 112, Rs. 22.00, Rs. 24.00 & Rs. 28.00

HEADWAY SCIENCE: JUNIOR SERIES, BOOKS 1 & 2; By Saroja Srinivasan & Gayatri Moorthy. Illustrated by Girija Singh
Second reprint, 1993, pp. 76 & 92, Rs. 22.00 & Rs. 26.00

ENERGY; WATER; By Amita Guha, Christopher Mitra. Edited by Gayatri Moorthy. Illustrated by Nina Bahl
Second revised edition, 1993, pp. 32 & 36, Rs. 18.00 each
Published by Vikas Publishing House, New Delhi

A child learns twice as fast when he takes an active interest in the subject being taught. A good teacher will prefer to create that interest rather than force facts down the unwilling student's throat. The attempt should be to make the child understand fully and appreciate the logic behind the idea before storing it in his mind.

What better way to create interest than to make a child, who is by nature curious, discover facts for himself? He is led to explore, investigate, and work out answers through simple activities, which definitely makes for a more thorough understanding of the world around him. This is where work and activity books score over ordinary text-books. They can turn learning into a pleasant experience, provided of course, there is someone patient enough to guide the child through the activities. It is a moot point, however, whether a teacher really has the time to make full use of such books, loaded as she is with the heavy schedules to be met by the class. If she does manage to, there is little doubt that educational books such as these attractive ones by Madhuban would provide plenty of fun to the student as he masters the subject.

The *Know and Grow* series (Book 0-2) is meant for the primary school. The books help create an awareness and understanding of the child's familiar surroundings and develop in him a scientific attitude towards objects he comes in contact with. The series is graded to match the NCERT syllabus but can be used to teach social studies under other systems too. A variety of subjects is covered, beginning with the child himself, his home, family, school, the road he travels on, and extending to cover the community, its festivals, and the environment. Health, hygiene, nutrition, good habits, personal safety rules are all told, not through dull texts, but with the help of lively fun activities which include colouring, pasting, joining dots, and experiments that keep little hands busy. At the same time there is an attempt to foster feelings of love, helpfulness, charity and brotherhood in the child. A good idea is the introduction of songs and rhymes to enliven each topic and to set little feet tapping. To make it easier for the teacher there are guidelines on how to develop the concepts further through

other suggested activities.

Facts reflect the changing social life in the country. The scarcity of natural resources and the need to conserve them, the need for communal harmony and the changing role of women have been taken note of. It was good to see pictures of a girl pilot and a lady engineer!

A useful and attractive set, both for the dedicated class teacher and for the parent anxious to ensure that his child is one-up on the bright kid next-door. The four colour illustrations are pleasant and lively enough to attract a small child. It is a pity that the name of the illustrator of the first two books is not mentioned. On the whole good fun books to delight the reader, at the same time teach the basics of leading a healthy life in a healthy environment.

The two books in the *Headway Science* series are intended to take the headache out of science and convert it into a fun and play subject. The Chinese saying "I hear and I forget, I see and I remember, I do and I understand," has been kept in mind while planning activities designed to train the mind to think scientifically. Concepts have been explained through simple experiments which confirm and reinforce theories. By pointing out scientific facts about the ordinary, everyday things seen around home, the authors make science a subject more applicable to the child's life. Sound, air, volume, weights, and movements are some of the complex concepts that are treated with a light hand. With the activities built around them, the child finds it easier to comprehend the concepts. Practical exercises for "air", for example, consist of simple play with a balloon and a stick, while "sound" has the child experimenting with rubber bands, tins and spoons. Similarly, weights and volumes are taught with the help of everyday items like rice and sugar, milk bottles, jugs and pails.

The concept covered in each chapter is explained beforehand to the teacher. Follow-up activities are also suggested to make it easier for the teacher. The extra activities can be carried out easily within the school's surroundings and do not require such elaborate preparations that the busy teacher is put off.

The language of the books is simple enough for the child to understand. The illustrations, however, could have been

more attractive. The price too may well keep the buyer away, which will be unfortunate, for the wealth of material given makes it otherwise a good buy.

Energy and Water, labelled *A Project Outline* are part of the series meant for science education in the middle school. The subjects, very topical, are covered comprehensively and meaningfully, and include much needed ideas on the conservation of the various forms of energy. Complex theories about energy are sought to be explained simply.

To catch the older student's interest there are plenty of teasers, quizzes, puzzles and practical experiments. There is even a crossword puzzle on energy such as the intriguing "a plane that has no engine"—which is a glider, of course! The book will be a welcome addition to the junior's own home library, where it will provide ready reference material to satisfy a questing mind. The other book, on *Water*, is also a welcome gift for the modern youngster hungry for information and itching for something to do. Interesting facts such as the amount of water needed to produce paper for one Sunday newspaper, the amount of water consumed by a person in his lifetime, etc., add sparkle to the mix of fun and education. Experiments provided are also fun to carry out. Consider activities where dried peas play a rhythm, a steam turbine moves, an automatic fountain sprays water, and water boils in a paper dish! Which juvenile would not jump at the idea of such exciting things to do?

Both books are good for creating interest in the environment and ensuring that the child of today feels adequate concern for the problems of tomorrow. Conservation of scarce resources like water and energy have to be taken seriously not by us, but also by the coming generation. Therefore, the two books need to be read by all.

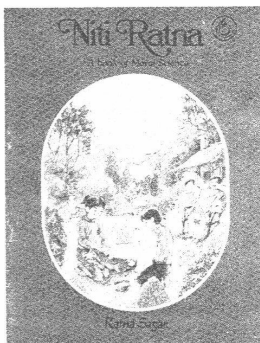
Nilima Sinha has taught primary classes at Bluebells School, Delhi and Notre Dame Academy, Patna. She has written more than a dozen fiction books for children which include several prize-winners such as the Chandipur Jewels, Adventure Before Midnight and Vanishing Trick at Chandipur. She writes in Hindi and English.

Ratna Sagar Series for the Young Readers

Shailaja Choudhury

NUMBER MAGIC: PRIMARY MATHEMATICS 0, 1 AND 2;
THE PANCHATANTRA SELECTIONS 1, 2, 3, 4, 5; NITI RATNA: A BOOK OF MORAL SCIENCE 1, 6, 7, 8;
GEM'S SOCIAL STUDIES, 2; LIVING SCIENCE, 1, 5

All published by Ratna Sagar, New Delhi

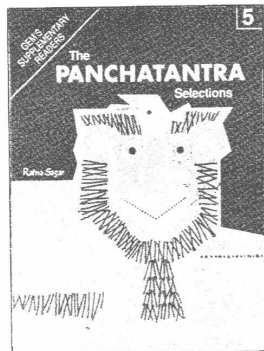


Number Magic 1 and 2: The level 1 which is for Prep Class, 4 plus age group is bright and colourful but this could have been more marked if the number of exercises were less and the spacing better. The objects drawn should be bigger and clearer. The children of this age group mostly count by using their fingers, and this should be kept in mind when doing the illustrations. In the matching exercise too, the lines made by the children would over-lap or would be too close to each other especially for children who do not have very good hand control.

The contents, minus, multiplication and division, should be well balanced. It is too premature to even include these topics in a book for the plus 4 age group.

Level 2 for Class 2 (age 6 plus). As in 0 level the number of sums on each page are too many. If the idea is to give maximum practice, it should be done by a supplementary work-book. It should restrict itself to explaining the concept by giving examples and a few questions. The practice in any case has to be given in the exercise books or with the help of assignments prepared by the teachers.

The instructions in the book at times are ambiguous, e.g., What numbers can you make from 0, 2, 4, 5 and 8 (p. 8)? The child could make a 1, 2, 3, 4, or 5 digit number also; although the expected an-



swer is a 2 digit numeral. On the same page the explanation of the value of zero is also not clear. One '0' added to 1 makes it 10. One more 0 makes it 100. The zeroes are not added to 1.

Some of the exercises in the form of games are quite stimulating e.g. on pp. 14, 15, 25, but can be attempted only when the children are fluent with their tables. The exercises on time also are too complicated for a 6-year-old (e.g. pp. 18 and 38).

Measurement of length, weight and capacity if taken together would lead to confusion for the young learner. (The units of conversion vary from 10,000 and 1,000). It is not essential that all topics should be covered; it is more important that a sound grounding be given so that the foundation is strong and the learning lasting.

Gem's Social Studies (Book 2): The topics are all relevant except the first chapter where the pivotal point is a joint family. The book which mainly caters to public schools and its readers from urban background are from nuclear families. They have little exposure to joint families.

In the other chapters also, too much information has been crammed in. e.g. in Chapter 7, *Our School*. Chapter 8 "Services in the Neighbourhood", Chapter 9 of Places Worship and the chapter related to Festivals also need stricter editing.

The presentation and illustrations are well done and very attractive. More objective exercises would be handy for recapitulation and testing.

The *Living Science Books Number 1 and 5* are well presented. The contents and the presentation are ample proof that the writer has kept the interest and the ability of the reader in mind. The number of reprints especially of Book 1 reflects the success of the book. The bold print and colourful illustrations add to the contents and enhance its appeal for the young reader. The activities are enjoyable and easy.

In *Book 5* the structure and the quality of print and illustrations have been maintained. The objective exercises and activities are interesting and motivate the students to do and learn from these. Inclusion of the pronunciation and meanings of new words in each chapter, and explanation of scientific terms is a good idea.

The Panchatantra Selection: It is always a

pleasure to read stories from *Panchatantra*. To be able to enjoy these, it is of utmost importance that the language be simple, which the reader can understand on his own. In *Book 1* the illustrations are good but the language is above the level of a Class 1 child. The difficult words have been explained, still there are many others like eagerly, panting, dripping, etc. which would not be understood by all.

The book meant to be a supplementary reader should not have tricky exercises. Maybe some short questions to test comprehension. Most stories have a moral behind them but the readers are too young to draw out the teaching level. The level 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 are graded but *Book 1* and 3 would interest its readers more if illustrations were in colour, but maybe higher cost was the restraining factor. The affordable cost of these books goes greatly

in favour of Ratna Sagar Books and series.

Niti Ratna (Books 1, 6, 7 and 8): In the *Moral Science* books the stories are simple and make interesting reading. Most of these have an Indian setting (which would enhance their appeal) though there is a sprinkling of stories by foreign authors or adaptations of foreign folk tales, which proves that moral values and ethics have no geographical or religious boundaries.

In *Book 1* the illustrations are colourful, the exercises interesting but the reader would need guidance to be able to understand it. It is slightly above the level of a Class 1 child. There is no visible sermonising, the stories well narrated and readers are left to draw their own conclusion (Books 7, 8) which stimulates the reader.

Shailaja Choudhury teaches at the Delhi Public School, New Delhi.

Age 2-5

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Teaching Hindi To Primary School Children

Devaja Khattar

HINDI PADO AUR SIKHO: PRAVESHKA 1 AND 1A; Madhuban Educational Books, Vikas Publishing House, revised edition, 1993, pp. 48, 72, Rs. 18.00 and Rs. 20.00

HARE BHARE YEH PED PITAMAH
By Shiela Sharma,
Illustrated by Nitin Adige

BATUNI GORAIYA; By Shiela Sharma,
Illustrated by Nina Behl

CHUHIYA LAYI MATAR KA DANA; By Shanta Mohan, Illustrated by Nina Behl

Madhuban Children's Books, Vikas Publishing House, New Delhi, Rs. 10.00 each

When a baby is born he is unable to speak; but slowly and gradually he learns to express himself by different sounds and gestures which he has in turn heard or observed around him.

By the age of two and half the child has enough vocabulary to talk about his surroundings and the environment that he is in. All this is done in his mother tongue.

Before teaching children a new language one must know and understand a child's psychology so that children can be motivated further by using colourful pictures and illustrations. Keeping this in mind teaching for the very young children should be by the play method.

To take up the subject of textbooks for primary children in the age group of 5 to 7 years we have these Madhuban Educational Books Series *Hindi Pado Aur Sikho*. Written by a teacher, these books are in four parts, graded according to age and class. The object is to make it easy to understand and learn Hindi and they certainly suit the level of six-seven year old students. The books begin with consonants, then go on to forming words by joining together two consonants—each consonant is placed in a different colour thus attracting the attention of the young child. Teaching a language usually starts with use of vowels but the present books begin with consonants. These books teach a child to be observant and recognize consonants and begin to read two letter words. The list of words given at the end are helpful as well. However one thing which is not made adequately clear is that the *matras* must be dealt with more fully and extensively—this causes a lot of problem to the child and unless the *matra* and its sound are absolutely clear the child faces the life long bogey of spelling mistakes.

Interesting and well-written story

books are also essential for young children. These can be read aloud in class as supplementary texts and will help increase the vocabulary and general awareness of the child. All children enjoy story books and the ones being reviewed here are extremely well written and colourful—the story of the talkative bird and the mouse who brought a pea seed proved interesting to all the little children in my own class. *Harey Bhare ye Ped Pitamah* teaches the child about different plants and trees, their parts and their uses. These books fill in the need for knowledge about environment, animals, birds etc.—introducing these concept to a young child is very important. Ratna Sagar, the publishers of these books are doing a signal service to the cause of education by their well-presented books in Hindi, Science and Mathematics.

Devaja Khattar teaches Hindi to primary school children at Gyan Bharati School, New Delhi.

A-Z OF CHILDHOOD ILLNESS

By Ross Meek

Orient Longman, 1993, pp.126, Rs. 30.00

This is another of the little books from Orient Longman full of useful information. This sensible, straightforward book helps you to recognize, understand and deal effectively with day-to-day health problems, common ailments as well as emergency situations. It puts to rest parental anxiety regarding childhood illness, showing you how to deal with tummy aches and ear-aches, and swallowed objects, bruises and stings, sudden hiccups and fever. It tells you when to call your doctor and to recognize dangerous symptoms.

As the author says it is not meant to take the place of a doctor but to be a ready/handy reference guide for parents especially first-time parents, who tend to panic on seeing their child unwell.

The first chapter looks at the general care of an ill child and an essential first aid kit to keep at hand. Immunisation is discussed in a separate chapter. Common illnesses are divided into sections according to the origin of the illness e.g. constipation under Digestive System and so on.

The 20th century has seen improvements and breakthrough in health care and medicine and yet we do fall ill—AIDS, heart disease etc. are all growing concerns for people and we can help by making the community aware of the importance of good diet, basic hygiene and health care. This informative book will go a long way in helping parents cope with ill children. The information given point-wise is precise and tells you exactly what to do.

Preeti Gill

RHYME 'N COLOUR

Manju Misra

NEW NURSERY RHYMES BOOK 1 AND 2;
DRAW COLOUR AND LEARN 1 AND 2

Madhuban Educational Books, Vikas Publishing House, 1993, pp. 32, 65, Rs. 18 each

"Children are smiles
So sunny and bright
They can chase away tears
And make any heart light"

What we write for children or rather what they hear and recite makes a great impact on their little but highly receptive minds. They begin to familiarize what they hear, and imbibe the attitudes and values they are exposed to.

New Nursery Rhymes Book 1 and 2 brought out by the Madhuban Educational Books is an interesting series of new rhymes different from the old time favourites.

The author has composed little rhymes which I'm sure will be loved, both, by the teachers and the taught. Most of the rhymes are full of life, simple, educative, informative, pleasant and easy to retain. I strongly suggest though that at such a tender age, one could avoid exposing the 'youngsters' to concepts of fear, cruelty, slyness etc. which have been incorporated in some rhymes.

E.g.:

Fear—When I first went to school, When the lights go off.

Cruelty—Naughty Boy.

Anger—A thin Black Cat.

Slyness—So many smells.

Evil—When I grow up.

Critium—My School Bus.

Indiscipline—Bus stand, only a Child.

The attitude should be positive and encouraging. A pleasant experience at school or a nice description of the school bus would encourage the child to go to school.

The illustrations are very good. Leaving some illustrations for the child to colour is an excellent idea. The general lay out of the books is very good, and the device of bright colours on the cover are eye catching. On the whole the work of Anita Nahal Asya and Poonam Bevi Sahi is a worthwhile effort.

Draw Colour and Learn Series brought out by the Madhuban Educational Books is a very interesting set of books for children. The wide range of interests of children been very well tackled by the authors. Book 1 and 2 have innovative methods of gripping the child's interest which would mould him into a more creative child.

Bright colours on the cover are eye catching and the idea of having the child paste his photograph on the inner cover is a good one. Illustrations in the books are very good.

Scope for colouring the illustrations would help to bring out the artistic talent in a child. Visuals would help the child to identify things, as illustrations of *ustads* playing the tabla and veena would help to promote Indian classical music among children.

The exercises are very interesting. They would:

—Motivate the child to think carefully,
—help to build up the ability to concentrate,
—increase the vocabulary and general knowledge.

These books thus would help the children to use their imagination and enjoy themselves. The books are reasonably priced.

Manju Misra teaches in Carmel Convent, New Delhi.

Quiz Answers

1. Karl Marx.
2. Have you ever heard of a well being on top of a hill?
3. Because his father was from Aguascalientes (hot water) and his mother from Rio Frio (cold water).
4. Pele (Pe-stupid, le - feet - Turkish).
5. Fear of peanut butter sticking to the roof of one's mouth.
6. The Communist Manifesto.
7. A Bull fighter.
8. Hair dressing.
9. The Sleeping Beauty.
10. William Shakespeare's tomb.
11. The Satanic Verses.
12. Woody Allen.
13. Jonathan Swift himself.
14. An English poem (6th century).
15. Adolf Hitler.
16. No, it is not Jack Nicklaus but Winston Churchill.
17. Karl Marx.
18. Because they are so quick they are rarely bitten.
19. Eric Ambler himself.
20. A cauliflower.

What I like to Read

"Books are our best friends"!
How true isn't it?
You can read when you are:
happy or sad,
sick or very well
and even when you are lonely and
down in the dumps.
Recall for yourself and to your surprise
you can read any time and anywhere at all.
Hey! be sure there is enough light though!"

Like most children I too like reading and when the reading is mysterious or adventurous its fantastic. I've found my style in Enid Blyton. Every mystery is a super mystery, be it *The Disappearing Cat*, *The Missing Man*, *The Spiteful Letters* or *The Banshee Towers*. I love the way Enid Blyton captures your imagination totally and you get involved in solving the mystery. One just does not want to leave the story mid-way whether there is a test to prepare for or an assignment to do (until mummy catches you!).

The *Secret Seven Adventures* are amusing, thrilling and exciting. As you read on you really want to be one of them—Barbara or Janet, Pam or Peter. Scamper, the dog is also so sweet. The success in their adventure is nothing but cooperation and team work. I strongly feel if these children can work in such harmony, then, why is there so much of hatred in the world today!

My friends and I enjoy reading and exchanging our books and I do wish more children would read the books of Enid Blyton, my favourite author!

Aradhana Misra
11 Years

As I sit down to read, my mother starts to scream, "Stop reading and start studying. You have been reading for more than an hour." I had only started reading about five minutes back. She sits down and reads for hours on end forgetting about everything else. I am like her. Give me an interesting book and I can read it continuously till the end but there are so many disturbances; my little sister and her friends yelling around the house, the phones ringing, my grandfather listening to the news on full volume etc. But still nothing stops me from reading for hours on end. From mystery to romance, from books like *Malory Towers* to books like my especial favourite *The Little Princess*. While I am reading I feel like a part of everything written in the pages of the book. I join in the midnight feasts at St. Clare's with all the other characters—Pat, Isobel, their cousin Alison and all their other wonderful friends. While reading books like *Famous Five*, I join in all the adventures. When they get caught I wonder "How will I get out. Will this be the end of us?" While snooping around with the *Secret Seven* my heart beats fast and I cannot wait to solve the mystery. When they find Susie poking her nose, I feel like screaming and giving her a tight slap.

It is hard to decide which is my favourite book as there is such a wide variety and I read nearly all sorts of books. But at the moment I think, I like Francine Pascal's *Sweet Valley Twins and Friends*. The best. It is all about friendship and being sisters or a family helping each other out when needed. In

Who'll Buy My Poems?

Who'll buy my poems?
No thanks, they said, we don't want poems.

Who'll buy my songs?
They shook their heads.
We'll buy a singer, but not your songs.

Who'll buy my thoughts?
Your thoughts? they laughed. We've plenty of our own.
You can keep your thoughts to yourself.

Who'll buy my desk, my books, my bed,
Who'll buy my rags and bones?

We will! they cried. We'll buy your tomes,
We'll buy your clothes, your bags and bones,
But take away your songs and poems!

Ruskin Bond

Raindrop

This leaf so complete in itself,
is only part of a tree.
And this tree so complete in itself
is only part of the mountain.
And the mountain runs down to the sea.
And the sea, so complete in itself,
rests like a raindrop
in the hand of God.

Ruskin Bond

Kites

Are you listening to me, boy?
I am only your old kitemaker,
My poems are flimsy things
Torn by the wind, caught in mango trees,
Gay sport for boys and dreamers.
My silent songs. But once I fashioned
A kite like a violin,
She sang most mournfully, like the wind
In tall deodars.

Are you listening? Remember
The Dragon Kite I made one summer?
No, you were too young. A great
Kite, with small mirrors to catch the sun
And eyes and a tongue, and gold
Trappings and a trailing silver tail.
A kite for the gods to ride!
And it rose most sweetly, but the wind
Came up from nowhere,
A wind in waiting for us.
My twine snapped and the wind took the kite,
Took it over the flat roofs
And the waving trees and the river
And the blue hills for ever.
No one knew where it fell. Boy, are you
Listening? All my kites
Are torn, but for you I'll make a bright
New poem to fly.

Ruskin Bond

Kites was published in the *Christian Science Monitor*,
Boston.



these series of books the main characters are played by a pair of identical twins. These twins (Jessica and Elizabeth Wakefield) might look identical but are totally different from each other. Elizabeth is the more serious of the two. She likes reading and writing for the school newspaper *The Sweet Valley Sixers*. She likes talking on the phone and spending time with a few close friends. Jessica likes spending time and hanging around with her friends from an exclusive all girls Snobby Club called the 'Unicorns.' She likes talking about boys and fashion and loves shopping. Jessica by the way hates studying. They have an elder brother called Steven and he is fourteen. His favourite hobbies are eating, playing basket ball and teasing Jessica.

I like reading these series because I feel more close to these twins than any other character in any other story. Their life is not a fairy tale but the life of any kid in the sixth grade. In these stories you have mystery, morals, as well as a bit of romance.

Karishma Sahi
11 years

There is a joke in English in which a novelist brags to his friend that he has used up 20 litres of ink in all the novels he has written. Unnerved, his friend, who is also a novelist replies, "Oh, but I save that amount of ink by not dotting the i's!" That must be the case of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, the author of *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes* which consists of approximately 60 mysteries! Futhermore you won't imagine even in your wildest dreams that all of them are full of suspense, thrill and are immensely enjoyable.

Doyle was a doctor, rather an unsuccessful one, before he took up writing mysteries. You can't really call it a profession because he wrote while waiting for patients, not that many patients came. Thank god for that because he might not have had the time to write otherwise. Sherlock's address, 21 Baker Street is as popular as the address of all the prime ministers in the world. When his hero Sherlock Holmes and his assistant Dr. Watson (probably he was thinking of himself when he gave him the title of Dr.) solve practically unsolvable cases you tend to wonder where Sherlock got his brains from. His disguising capability is truly amazing. He can even fool Watson. So don't be surprised if you were Watson to see an old man hobbling in because it will be Sherlock in disguise. Don't be surprised again if in the middle of the night you hear a loud explosion from the adjoining room which wakes you up from sleep and puts you in a state of shock, because it will only be the sound of Sherlock doing a scientific experiment. As Watson commented, "As the world of detectives gained a valuable detective the world of actors lost a valuable actor and the world of scientists lost a valuable scientist."

One fine day Sir Conan decided to kill Sherlock. No, No. Not with a dagger or pistol or even an AK 47, he decided to have him killed in his stories. His popularity had soared so high that there was an uproar and at the end of it the author cleverly devised a means to bring him back to life. After that Sir Conan did not ever try to kill him again. That is enough proof that it is the best book in the world.

Dwaipayan Banerjee
10 years

Charlie and the Chocolate Factory, Charlie and the Peach, The BFG, Charlie and the Glass Elevator are books which a lot of children must have read and enjoyed. Roald Dahl is presently my favourite author and I have read all these books, as well as *Boy* and *Going Solo* which are autobiographical.

Roald Dahl was born in Wales and his parents were Norwegians. He died in November, 1990 at the age of 74. His books are read by children all over the world and some of them have been awarded prizes too.

Roald Dahl is a skilled writer and creates magical stories that keep me happy for hours—I tell my parents about them at the dining table and my friends in school and giggle over the crazy, fun-filled things by myself alone in my room. The thing I like about his books is that they are so full of the most fantastic happenings. He writes books to be enjoyed—he doesn't try and teach me to be good and obedient. He tells me some sensational secrets about modern witches like: witches don't ride around on broomsticks wearing black clothes and funny hats, they disguise themselves as ordinary ladies—my mother could be a witch or my teacher could be one! He writes:

"A real witch gets the same pleasure from squelching a child as you get from eating a plateful of strawberries and thick cream".

The Golden Ticket in *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* allows Charlie to fulfil his dearest wish (it would be mine too) to go around a chocolate factory and have all kinds of mouth-watering delights like Whipple-Scrumptious Fudgemallow Delight, Cavity-filling Caramels, Strawberry-Juice Water Pistols, Lickable wall papers, river of hot melted chocolate, hot-ice cream, eatable Marshmallow pillows or Mr. Wonkas, three-course Dinnerchewing gum. Gosh what fun!—it reminds me of the time we went on a school tour to a sweet factory and got all kinds of goodies to eat.

In the BFG (stands for Big Friendly Giant) Roald Dahl writes that the BFG is the only giant who doesn't eat beans (humans). The BFG's profession is catching dreams and storing them in small containers. While all his friends (the other giants) go out on their prow to hunt 'beans' he goes to the houses of children to give them good dreams. This is when Sophie, who is an orphan, sees him and he sees her. At once he pounces on her and takes her to Giantland where the adventure of her whole life-time is waiting for her!

The 'beans' in Wellington taste like boots and the beans in Turkey taste like turkey-birds but the giants like going to Hungary as the 'beans' there are always hungry and therefore eat a lot and are very fat and chubby writes Roald Dahl.

He has written picture stories for young children as well as books for older children and also adults. I have read most of his books and found each one wonderful. But my favourite ones are *Witches, Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* and *Matilda*.

I only wish that I got new books to read everyday and no one ever stopped me from reading. Maybe someday I too will be able to tell such stories and keep my readers glued to the books from the first page to the last word. Although I know that these things don't happen in real life, there is a teeny weeny part of my mind that wants to believe that this wonderful world of Roald Dahl really exists.

Gayatri Gill
12 years

I have always been fond of reading. I owe it to my grandfather who loved books and told me stories before I could even hold a book. After I would come back from my play-school, I used to sit on his knee and hear stories. He told me stories of *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*.

I am very interested in school stories and so while reading *St. Clares* and *Malory Towers* by Enid Blyton my grandmother presented me with a school series with an Indian background. They were *Juneli Choudhary* series by Swapna Dutta. I had great pleasure in reading these books because she (Swapna Dutta) made me feel that I'm part of them. I could picture a lonely, motherless girl who lives in an isolated place with no company of her age. She has a secret longing to go to a boarding school and make friends but never says so for fear of hurting her father. An aunt seeing her loneliness suggests to Juneli's father to send her to a good boarding school called St. Avila's. Then a wide wide world opens before Juneli. She makes many friends and does exciting things in her first term, and when she goes home she eagerly awaits the second term. In her second term she becomes a guide. Later she gets a surprise when the school is shifted for a term (her third) to Vijaygarh Castle. She has many adventures and lots of fun.

These are very interesting books, they were the first ones of their kind to have an Indian background. They make me want to go to a boarding school. I like these books very much and I'm looking forward to reading more books written by her.

I hope she continues to write not only for my age group but also for smaller children. Since you can see glimpses of Enid Blyton perhaps she can take another cue from her and write for all ages. She could go more into Indian culture and have more Indian situations. I'm sure many children of my age have liked Swapna Dutta and I'm sure my younger brother and others of his age will like her in years to come.

Surabhi Ranganathan
10 years

Cricket is one of the most beautiful games ever to be invented.

It provides excitement and pleasure for those who are watching as well as playing. There have been great players right from the start, e.g. from Alfred Mynn to Dennis Lillee to Jeff Thomson etc.

There are different types of cricket books. Reading them gives knowledge and pleasure. There are autobiographies, books on matches etc. The book *Cricketing Memories* says what different cricketers said about incidents in their lives. It is a very good book. It is written so that children can also read it. It includes Sunil Gavaskar, Dennis Lillee, Clive Lloyd, Vivian Richards etc. The book *The Fast Men* is all about fast bowlers. It gives information to whoever wants to be a fast bowler. It tells us about the careers of cricketers, i.e. fast bowlers, from the time of 'Foghorn' Jackson to Jeff Thomson. 'Foghorn' Jackson was named so because he used to blow his nose behind the stumps after every wicket he would take.

The book *One-Day Cricket* is all about one day international matches. There is a chapter on the World Cups. It tells us about the Prudential Cup and the Reliance Cup. It tells us about who won which World Cup. It is written very well. It was the first cricket book I read. It is a very exciting and tense book. The magazine called the *Sportstar* also gives information on cricket. Whenever a country has toured another country, (the recent South Africa tour of Sri Lanka) it tells us what happened in each match. Same thing with all sports.

Reading is my second hobby. I like it second only to playing some sports, e.g. tennis, swimming, cricket etc. I love reading books. Especially cricket books. I find almost all the cricket books I've read exciting. They give pleasure to the readers.

Madhav Raghavan
9 years

Children's Books: The Publisher's Viewpoint

Preeti Gill

"Fundamentally, I don't think children have changed through the years. Maybe they have acquired certain sophistication from watching television but it is only on the surface. Childhood is universal and I write about childhood feelings as I know them" writes a best selling author of children's books.

Memory has a strange way of bringing out details, colours, sounds and smells of a forgotten childhood and often when one least expects one is jolted into remembrance and with it joy. One of the greatest pleasures of childhood (and then later years too) is reading—to inculcate this habit in children is one of the greatest gifts parents can bestow.

Children of course have never had it so good—there is no dearth of reading material in the market today and things are looking brighter every year. The publishing industry has woken up to the fact that our children need books set in their own social and environmental milieu with characters they can easily identify with and scenes and situations familiar to them.

Today there are a number of publishers catering to children and among these the leading ones are Children's Book Trust, National Book Trust, Ratna Sagar, Harper Collins, Puffin Books, Vikas, etc. C.B.T is the pioneer in this field in India having set up operations in 1957. The Trust has to its credit over 600 titles and brings out as many as 25-30 new titles a year including their many language translations. Their efforts in this field have been laudable indeed, the objective being to promote the production of well written, well illustrated, well designed books

for the average child with limited money to spend on books. They stress that although their books are so reasonably priced they have never compromised on the quality of their production, story or illustration. Their list is fairly comprehensive with fiction, non-fiction, folklore and fantasy tales, historical and adventure

stories, science fiction, heritage and culture series and the recently introduced environment series—in fact a whole gamut of subjects to interest the young child. This is not to mention their beautiful picture books with interesting simple little stories to enchant the young reader.

They face no problems getting good manuscripts and do this in a variety of ways—competitions annually for creative writing sometimes with international agencies like UNICEF and WWF. These are woven around a specific theme. Another exciting dimension to promoting the reading habit among children is a novel concept of the Association of Writers and Illustrators for children, an independent body housed in the CBT premises. They launched the children's Lending Library Scheme in 1983. These libraries are functioning in Delhi and other cities. The members of AWIC manage these libraries on a voluntary basis and these are functioning in their homes. AWIC provides books to these libraries free of charge.

It seems to be the common consensus among publishers that parents are squarely to blame for their children's non-interest in books. They are the deciding factor—children are seldom if ever allowed to choose what they want to read. Parents vet the books and then if the contents and price are right they buy the book. Of course there are no Indian households where books are on the monthly budget agenda—however that is a different issue altogether. In India knowledge is revered for itself and therefore we find that culture or value oriented books to build character are preferred by parents as against 'fun books' which are just wacky and funny but don't necessarily tell the child to imbibe the right values.

Dr Dhanesh Jain of Ratna Sagar is one of those who feels that parents must take the responsibility for the scarcity of good reading material. Society is responsible, they place books very low on their priority list, they would rather spend that money on ice cream or even toys but not on books. Money is not the problem. The constantly heard complaint, 'books are so expensive' really doesn't hold true—people do have the spending power. Vikram Seth's *A Suitable Boy* priced at Rs 500 is doing brisk sales as booksellers will testify. But then he has status value—that

Surveys conducted from time to time reveal that children don't like books that 'sermonize', that just preach morals even if they are in the guise of stories and it is unfortunate that we still expect books to impart only knowledge and not real entertainment to our children.

book is a must for all our elite drawing rooms!

Similarly this bogey of pricing. Most publishers feel that price is not a deciding factor. If the whole packet is good the book will be bought. After all compared to Indian books by Indian authors, foreign books are so much more expensive and yet they

are not only displayed in every bookshop worth its name but also lapped up by the book buying public (such as it is). The Enid Blytons, Nancy Drews, Hardy Boys are visible and available while our own publications are more often than not relegated to some small forgotten corner and dug out only when someone asks for a particular title or author by name.

Schools too have a role to play here. They must also encourage reading actively and give a helping hand to these publishers who are in this field not merely for profit but doing a service to the community. Book exhibitions and sales can be organized regularly at schools and reading fiction should be made a must for all children—reading lists can be given. Dr Jain mentioned that at the Children's Book Fair held in October in the Zoo grounds their stall had one best seller—*Mental Maths!* That sold more copies than fiction.

There are a number of established authors—Ruskin Bond, Sigrun Srivastava, Dilip Salwi, Subhadra Sengupta, Margaret Bhatti, to name only a few. But there is room for more writers who can write to entertain and amuse in a style that is suited to children. There are lots of new writers and illustrators coming in and publishers by and large feel that they do get a lot of manuscripts. They have to do a lot of groundwork however before the manuscripts see print and all this hikes up costs but then there should be no compromise on quality.

Surveys conducted from time to time reveal that children don't like books that 'sermonize', that just preach morals even if they are in the guise of stories and it is unfortunate that we still expect books to impart only knowledge and not real entertainment to our children. Harper Collins India which have hit the market with low priced children's books under the Peacock imprint have tried to fill in this gap and to provide alternatives to Enid Blyton and Nancy Drew. There is no dearth of talented writers, they feel, and flooded with manuscripts they are bringing out about four titles a month. They do not give any strict guidelines to their authors and have titles covering school and adventure stories to popular sci-fi and computales. Their books are selling well and getting good reviews as well. Their Abu series and Swapna Dutta's

Juleni series are doing extremely well. They also export to Asian countries—Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Nepal being target markets.

Puffin Books from Penguin do not have a major list and bring out about three titles a quarter. Their first list included Ruskin Bond, Sigrun Srivastava and Romila Thaper's *Tales from Indian History* which has been reprinted twice and also been taken for distribution to the U.K. where also it has fared exceedingly well. Their other titles by Madhur Jaffrey, Margaret Bhatti, Jacqueline Singh, Indi Rana are also doing well, most being sent to the U.K. and the U.S.A. Puffin Books tap the 9-13 age group and have no picture books but plan to go into this area in the future as well. Puffins are priced at Rs. 50.00 and Rs. 60.00 and Mr Zamir Ansari does not feel that price is a barrier to sales. Well produced books by good writers do sell. He too felt the absence of fun books in the Indian market. We have nothing like Roald Dahl, Spike Milligan or Judy Blume. Perhaps our children's writers could look towards this segment as well. Ruskin Bond is perhaps one such author who writes of nature, flora and fauna with gentle humour and is immensely entertaining. Another name one could men-

tion here is Vikram Seth—his *Beastly Tales* is superb reading for older children.

So what ultimately emerges is an essentially hopeful and positive picture but with some areas that do need careful handling. Parents should change their attitudes, allow kids to choose their own books with a stress on reading fiction, not so much pressure on scholarly texts. Schools should stress the importance of reading and encourage buying of books, take students to fairs and book exhibitions as a matter of course. Publishers should perhaps look towards fun books, entertaining books especially for older children (12-18 age group). There is a surfeit of picture books for little ones. Authors too should relate their themes to life and realistic situations as well as fantastic imaginative creations even if it is not exactly what the parent has prescribed—to rise above the ordinary and mundane to new levels of excitement and fun.

We have covered a substantial number of new books in our section on children's books and hope they provide hours of happy reading.

Preeti Gill is Assistant Editor, The Book Review.

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Rupa & Co., book & tape £3.49

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Moira Butterfield

This brightly coloured and well presented book shows children how to paint and print patterns and pictures in all kinds of different medium and ways. Explained in clear easy-to-follow text which takes the child step by step to an exciting hobby. Others in the series include *Making Presents, Fun with Fabric, Fun with Paper*.
Hamlyn, 1993, pp. 48, £ 4.50

Puppy Tales

Rachael MacBean
A delightful book about a little puppy white as snow with sparkling eyes as naughty as can be and with whom you can share many adventures.
Harper Collins India, 1993, pp. 162, Rs. 30.00

Fudge-a-Mania

Judy Blume
Meet Fudge on holiday with baby Tootsie, Turtle the dog and uncle feather the Mynah bird in another one of Judy Blume's exciting new books.
Distributed by Rupa & Co., 1993, pp. 128, £2.90.

The Mansion in the Mist: An Antony Monday book

John Bellavis
Antony and his friends must travel to another world to save the people of Earth. Other titles in this series include *The House it a Clock in the Wall, The Figure in the Shadows, The Letter, the Witch and the Ring and The Secret of the Underground Room*.
Puffin Books, 1993, pp. 170, Rs 115.00

Be Kind to Flowers: Clever Mr Crow; The Snail Who Lost Her Shell

Divya Jhala
Illustrated by Jai Singh, these small simple tales will enchant little 5-6 years old children.
Rupa & Co., 1991, pp. 12, Rs. 15.00 each

Children's World

A monthly for children edited by Vajjayanti Thonpe this is brought out by Children's Book Trust. Full of interesting stories, features, simple recipes, humour, competitions, quiz and fact file, it is priced at Rs. 4.00.

Murder on the Menu

Is a mouth-watering collection of short stories from the masters of mystery where food and death meet with devastating effect. The collection includes stories by Agatha Christie, Ruth Rendall, Roald Dahl, Georges Simenon, P.D. James and others.
Chancellor Press, IBD, 1993, pp. 415, £4.00


The Road to the Bazaar
Ruskin Bond

A collection of sixteen tales by Ruskin Bond who succeeds in bringing to life a town in Northern India capturing the scenery, the people, the atmosphere, and showing that children are the same the world over.
Rupa & Co, 1993, pp. 119, Rs. 40.00

The Yellow Butterfly
Nilima Sinha

This won the first prize in the Picture Books category in the competition for writers of children's books held by C.B.T. with beautiful illustrations by R. Ashish Bagchi
Children's Book Trust, 1991, pp. 16, Rs. 8.00

Chitku

Surekha Panandiker 
The story of a little mouse who strayed from the safety of his hole in search of delicious goodies and came face to face with a cat!
Children's Book Trust, 1992, reprint, pp. 24, Rs. 10.00

Mr Sun Takes a Holiday; In Search of Water; Madame Air Wants a Change; Meet the Soil Fairy

Dilip M. Salwi
Illustrated by Atanu Roy
All life-forms are made up of the four elements, Air, Sun (fire), Water and Soil—a fact hard to comprehend for an eight-year-old. These quaint little tales will make children realise how vital these elements are for survival.
Ratna Sagar P. Ltd, 1993, Rs 12.90 each

The Stupid Tiger and Other Tales

Translated by William Radice
The adventures of the taunting tailor bird, the ugly jackal and the stupid tiger, the ill-fated crocodile and other assorted animals make up this group of 20 tales written by Upendra Kishore Raychoudhuri, the grandfather of Satyajit Ray. In the folk tale tradition these are translations of Bengali stories.
Andre Deutsch, Rupa & Co., 1991, pp. 86, Rs. 30.00

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SARMILA BOSE was educated in Calcutta and at Bryn Mawr College and Harvard University in the US. She has worked as Teaching Fellow and Instructor at Harvard. Currently, she is Senior Research Fellow, Warwick Manufacturing Group, Department of Engineering, University of Warwick.

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EDITED BY DANIEL WEISSBORT AND ARVIND KRISHNA MEHROTRA

Periplus means "the action of sailing round, a circumnavigation; a voyage (or journey) round a coastline, etc"; in *The Periplus of the Erythraean Sea*, a first-century account that describes coastal routes from Egypt to India and along East Africa, it is 'a narrative of such a voyage' (OED)

Periplus: Poetry in Translation attempts to do both. It sails round or along certain coastlines, some of which might be unfamiliar, and whenever possible it narrates what occurred or did not occur on the journey. A degree of randomness is inevitable in a volume not restricted to any one period or country, and the translation voyages undertaken here range widely.

DANIEL WEISSBORT is the Director of the Translation Workshop at the University of Iowa. With Ted Hughes, he founded the magazine *Modern Poetry in Translation* in 1965. He has published four volumes of his own poetry, most recently *Nietzsche's Attache Case* (1993), as well as many translations, including *The Poetry of Survival: Post-War Poets of Central and Eastern Europe* (1992).

ARVIND KRISHNA MEHROTRA is the author of *Middle Earth* (1984), translator of *The Absent Traveller: Prakrit Love Poetry from the Gathasaptasati* (1991), and editor of *The Oxford India Anthology of Twelve Modern Indian Poets* (1992).

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Professor Berreman's *Hindus of the Himalayas*, originally published by the University of California Press, is an ethnographic study of a hill village in India, which has come to be widely regarded as a classic.

In this edition the author adds two new sections—a prologue, 'Behind Many Masks: Ethnography and Impression Management'; and an epilogue, 'Sirkanda Ten years Later'. GERALD D. BERREMAN is a former Professor of Anthropology at the University of California, Berkeley.

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TIRTHANKAR ROY is Assistant Professor at the Indira Gandhi Institute of Development Research, Bombay.

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biography *Jinnah of Pakistan*, the volume traces the life of this remarkable figure from the colorful days of his feudal ancestors to his imprisonment and hanging at the hands of a military dictatorship.

STANLEY WOLPERT is Professor of South Asian History at the University of California, Los Angeles. He is the author of a number of books on South Asian history, including *A New History of India* (Oxford, Fourth Edition, 1993), *Nine Hours to Rama* (subsequently filmed, and banned, in India), and *Jinnah of Pakistan* (Oxford University Press, 1984).

Rs 280

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Trade underpinned these relationships but the Ocean was also a highway for the exchange of religious cultures and technologies, giving the Indian Ocean region an identity as a largely self-contained 'world'. The expansion of Hinduism, Buddhism and Islam helped define the boundaries of this 'world' which, by the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, was one of the most prosperous and culturally complex regions on earth.

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KENNETH MCPHERSON attended the University of Western Australia and the Australian National University. Following an Alexander von Humboldt post-doctoral fellowship at Heidelberg University he joined Curtin University. He is now Executive Director of the Indian Ocean Centre for Peace Studies at Curtin University and the University of Western Australia. Apart from articles on South Asian and Indian Ocean history, he is the author of *The Muslim Microcosm: Calcutta 1918 to 1935* (1974), and *Jinnah* (1980).

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MEENAKSHI MUKHERJEE is the author of *The Twice Born Fiction: Themes and Techniques of the Indian Novel in English* (1971). She has translated Bengali poetry and fiction into English, edited an anthology of critical essays entitled *Considerations: Twelve Studies of Indo-Anglian Writing* (1971), and taught English at the universities of Pune, Delhi, New York State and Texas. She is at present Professor of English, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi.

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EDITED BY TAPAS MAJUMDAR

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TAPAS MAJUMDAR is Professor at the Zakir Husain Centre for Educational Studies, School of Social Sciences, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi.



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