

Sowmya Rajendran

MRIDU IN MADRAS: A CHARMING PORTRAYAL OF 'IN THOSE DAYS' CHILDHOOD

By Vasantha Surya

Eklavya, Bhopal, 2016, pp. 193, ₹160.00

Vasantha Surya's *Mridu in Madras* is an illustrated chapter book that is delightfully entrenched in Tamil culture and society. However, the book is not set in contemporary times and harks back to an era where large joint families were the norm, cycle rickshaws were common, and the price of commodities was way lower than what it is now. Madras was still Madras then and not the sprawling city of Chennai with its giant IT parks and overhead trains.

The story revolves around a young girl, Mridu, whose parents are away in Muscat. She grows up in a busy household, among cousins and elderly relatives. What we get is a fairly authentic picture of life in those times and nostalgia for a childhood that was very different from what children of today in urban areas experience.

There is an element of fantasy too—Mridu has a friend called Goruchaka, a boy wizard (inspired by the lizard on the wall), who speaks to her when she's lonely or confused and also saves her from a spot of trouble. However, the fantasy remains firmly in the sidelines and the author doesn't attempt to transport the reader to another world. The book is very much rooted in reality and the plot line with Goruchaka doesn't progress beyond what he is to Mridu in her imagination.

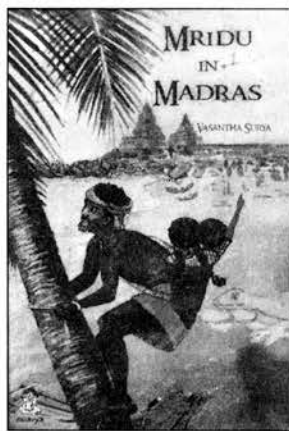
The characters who people *Mridu in Madras* are affectionate portraits. This isn't a dysfunctional family and though there is opportunity for so much drama to explode in a setup like this, the story plods along gently with trips to Mahabalipuram and adventures that revolve around frying *murukku*. Imagine, even an inter-religious marriage in a Brahmin household takes place with everyone agreeing pleasantly with each other.

For an adult reader, the book holds a certain charm. It is comforting to look back at your own childhood, the rough edges smoothed out by time. But one is not sure how appealing it will be for young readers of today. As the young children in the book lament, adults are fond of recollecting their 'in those days' stories—will such a book that is completely disconnected from the everyday realities of a child of this generation hold appeal? I wouldn't hasten to say yes or no. When a child can read adventures set in distant countries and enjoy them, why not stories set in the past?

The unpretentious tone of the book is a big plus. However, although the story is written with the children as the central protagonist, one still gets the feeling that it is an adult writing in their voice.

Perhaps it's because the book does not delve into the children's psyche much. The humour comes with an adult recognition of what constitutes the absurd and the dramatic.

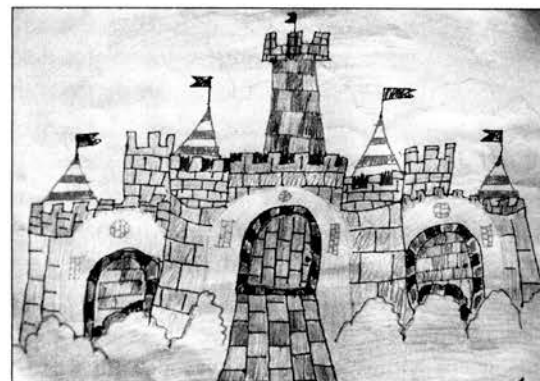
There are some inconsistencies in language too, which could have been ironed out with better editing. For instance, some lines



sound like a literal translation from the Tamil (which is fine) but the same characters use phrases like 'harum-scarum' that seem out of place.

Mridu in Madras is a pleasant trip down memory lane for an indulgent adult reader. If your 8 year old prefers 'in those days' stories to tales about vampires and flying bikes, it may score with them, too.

Sowmya Rajendran has published several books for children of all ages. She was awarded the Sahitya Akademi's Bal Sahitya Puraskar for her novel *Mayil Will Not Be Quiet* in 2015. She currently works with *The News*



Kamala Menon

BULA COMES TO MONTREAL

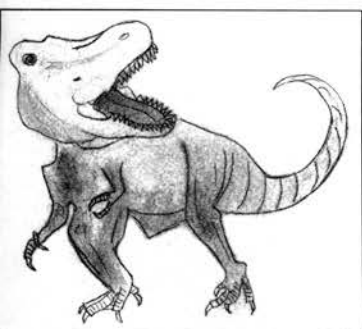
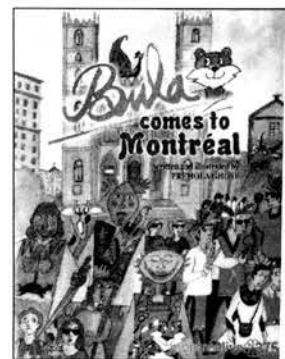
Written and illustrated by Premola Ghose

Acacia Livre, 2017, printed at FACET DESIGN, New Delhi, pp. 52, price not stated.

Bula Comes to Montreal was created as it celebrates the 375th anniversary of the city of Montreal founded on 17 May 1762. Kala Bharati, a nongovernmental organization is a centre for Indian culture, dance and music in Montreal. This child friendly Bharata Natyam repertoire has a book on learning dance called *Shishu Sadhana*, the cover of which was designed by Premola Ghose. *Bula Comes to Montreal* is a story of Bula, a dancing bear and his friends, dedicated for this celebration and authored and illustrated by Premola Ghose. It is designed by Michèle Laverdière. This 52 page book is a delight both visually and a treat to read for both children and adults.

Premola Ghose loves to draw and illustrate her books which tie historical facts with mirth and colour keeping the detail and facts in place. The animals who tell the tale came from the forests of Ranthambore and began to live city lives, absorbing the city life they saw and relating it to their own innate qualities of compassion, kindness and humour.

375 years of a city's founding is celebrated with a grand display of music, art, dance and pageants. The city of Montreal in the state of Quebec Canada has a long history, which brought people from all over the world to the New World. Discovered by Cartier in 1535 and called Canada after the Iroquois word Kanata or village the story of the Iroquois chief Donnacona is legend. Then in 1536 the French Jesuits, following negotiations, wars with the Iroquois and times of peace with Mohawk and Algonquin people, built their home here. Fur was traded and the French built a church on Mount Royal. The sketches at the end of the book, which is where the reader mu



begin, shows it all. This design is new and could be missed by all who read from the first chapter.

The 9 chapters tell the story of Bula who learnt Bharata Natyam and danced the Ras Lila, Zero who understood what Jazz was, and Lahorimal who introduced 'poutine', a special dish of Montreal and all the characters, Lucky, Mayurdas, Tota and of course Tunnu who saw the grand parade on St Jean Baptiste day on the 24th of June, the summer solstice in the Northern Hemisphere. This book is also a clever and amusing narrative of the history of Montreal and the link with India with a what if 'the Napoleon factor in India' had been here in India too.

What is riveting for readers, all the time, are the illustrations which accompany the text, reflecting the words in pictures. The Quebecians, Chocolate Mousse, Racellete, discuss the Tree of Life, Mayurdas the Bodhi tree and conclude that 'there is not much difference between your culture and ours! The Tree means the same to all of us!'

The most entertaining is the chapter on how Bula learns to dance Bharata Natyam and again has a performance at the ISKCON temple located in a Victorian church-style building where the friends choreograph a Ras Lila dance recital with a, 'mix of Gita Govinda (Odisha Version)' bhajans (Virndavan version) and a jazz finale as a tribute to the city of Montreal.' What was also included was Lucky the rabbit who performed just 'the hoppin jig'.

The Jazz festival has delightful drawings of skyscrapers with Diana Krall, a popular singer, walking on the neck of Zero who played the trombone, all in his dream. If readers do want to know what is 'poutine' then there is a lot about it that Lahorimal found out from Simba the Yellow toothed Lion.

Each character brings with him/her the quality of wonder and



interest in knowing about Montreal and building a bridge of friendship through dance, music and food. Readers would read with interest the history of a city and know how it has changed with new and interesting cultures from India which have now become a part of that city's culture.

Bula Comes to Montreal is priceless, (pun intended) and is a wonderful book for children, who would relate instantly with the characters, and adults who would want to understand the Canadian ethos. Everyone would immediately relate to Montreal, see its simple, yet fascinating buildings and celebrations through the eyes of Indian animals with humane ideals. What more would one want, perhaps how Bharata Natyam became the link to take India to Montreal, and what did Bula tell his friends in India about Montreal. Perhaps soon another sequel to this visit could be Racellete, Simba and Chocolate Mousse coming to Puducheri or Mahe.

Kamala Menon, reviewer and teacher, is an ex-Principal of Mirambika Free Progress School.

The skewed representation and near absence of children from different socially marginalized sections in children's books is a problem area world over—both in quantitative and qualitative terms. And among the many marginalized groups, differently abled children seem to be the least visible of the lot. A study done in 2009 by the Brigham Young University in the USA¹ found that award-winning (Newbery Medal and Honour) children's books from 1975 to 2009 featured a 'disproportionately smaller percentage of children with disabilities and ethnic diversity than actual classroom numbers.'

Turning back to India, we know that newspaper and television reports of Special Olympics and the feats of differently abled persons has increased. Some attempts in the area of children's book publishing have also been made with books like *Chuskit Goes to School* (Pratham), *Rikki and Panchhi Pyara* (A&A Books), *Why are you Afraid to Hold My Hand?* *Ten* (Tulika), *Friend*; *The Girl, The Boy and the Kite* (Eklavya), *The Sackcloth Man* (Anveshi and DC Books). All of this does help diffuse the prevalent understanding of words such as 'normal' and 'perfect'. But the fact remains that compared to the number of children as readers and the number of children's books being published every year, what has been done so far is grossly inadequate. We need much more of positive depictions in the public sphere of people and animals who have special needs. We need many more of these books and we need books that don't merely give space to someone in a tokenistic manner, but those that allow you to 'walk a few miles in someone else's shoes'.

Introducing children—even very young children—to stories whose characters have physical or mental challenges, especially when the framing is healthy and positive, helps expand their concept of 'normal' and exposes them to a wider array of experiences, building empathy and acceptance. I recall reading *Rikki* with my then 5-6-year-old daughter and she asking so many questions about what the 'rabbit with one ear that would not stand up' would be doing now—while she ate, while she went to school, when she was going off to sleep and so on. And then, while visiting friends one day, she came up to me and said, 'Come with me and I want to show you something.' She led me to the aquarium standing in one corner of the room and showed me a fish that had one eye. She was curious what the world looked like for that fish; how much of the world was invisible to her as she swam this way and that. When I told our friends what my daughter was asking about, they were so surprised. The fishes had been with them for over a year and no one in that family of six people had ever noticed that one fish had only one eye!

I narrate this anecdote to point out how having none or very few appearances in the media and books and other means that influence us almost blinds us to the special qualities or special needs of other fellow beings around us. I share this experience to reiterate that whatever I enumerated above is not enough. We need much *more*. We need characters in books who are in wheelchairs or who use a cane or are missing a limb or have some kind of condition or something. But care also has to be taken that we don't end up creating 'problem' books. It doesn't have to be all about how hard it is being in a wheelchair. It better be something *normal*—with the definition of 'normal' being as wide and deep as possible. Something *fun* to read that has someone in a wheelchair or with some hearing or sight difficulty as one of the main characters.

So, in this context, when these two books from the Children First series fell in my kitty for review—I was truly happy. Let's get into the books then...

KITTU'S VERY MAD DAY

By Harshikaa Udasi. Illustrated by Lavanya Naidu
Duckbill Books, 2017, pp. 96, ₹199.00

Kittu is a fun-loving boy—but 'strong-minded'—as the author tells us. So much so that bringing him up and taking care of their large family tires his mother out. As per Kittu—his is the 'World's Most Chaotic Family'. A diamond trader family of Mumbai that has three brothers, their wives, a very vocal sister, a variety of children with different moods and mood-swings, a full-time housemaid and her daughter. YES—that's the family! And what a happening family it is!!

This handful of family travels to Panna in Madhya Pradesh on a business-cum-pleasure trip and forgets Kittu at a roadside Dhaba on their way back! Kittu—with his face downcast but mind hoping for some adventure—is perched up on a wall—with his crutches hidden behind the wall.

And from here, with the help of the ice-creamwala and his daughter—Madheshwari—a girl of his own age—Kittu lands up in Janwa Castle—the little known skate-boarding haven in interior rural Madhya Pradesh.

In her deft crafting of the story, Harshika Udasi begins to break stereotypes from the first page itself—in the way the world (in the character of an ice-creamwala) looks at a lone child, in what could be a child's reaction to being lost in the middle of nowhere, in what today's portrayal of a family is, in what a boy on one leg and two crutches can or cannot do, and so on. The characterization of each and every person in the book, not just the lead ones but also those who just offer a helping hand to the story, is very fleshy and real—you can almost see and hear them while you read on. The author's attention to detail—in the plot, in building the characters, the setting, the times and moods—is amazing.

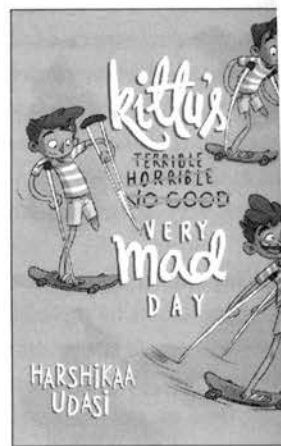
Lavanya Naidu's illustrations add to the overall ambience of the story. They often take off weaving our imagination where the text stops. Some more care in proofing would have made the reading experience smoother. Still, on the surface of it, the book is an enjoyable read to the core. On delving deeper, it leaves you with fun-filled understanding about someone who is unlike you and yet so much like you.

MANYA LEARNS TO ROAR

By Shruthi Rao. Illustrations by Priya Kurian
Duckbill Books, 2017, pp. 78, ₹199.00

Shruthi Rao's *Manya* is a chirpy and playful 10-year old girl. She has friends and foes in school—as any child her age would naturally have. And she has her dreams too. So when a teacher Ms Sridhar-Ali, comes to announce that the school was going to put up a play in the inter-school competition, and the play was no other than *Jungle Book*—*Manya* just had to be Shere Khan. She applies for the role and faces the audition—overcoming her stammering—and gets selected.

Jungle Book is one of *Manya's* favourite films. She has seen it many times and knows all the dialogues. While giving the information, the author has cleverly introduced Kipling's book too—although, she has also admitted that *Manya* did not manage to go beyond reading a few pages of the book. This



called 'honest portrayal'!

Manya is also an observant girl. She can read the lines on the face of the English teacher—Ms Menon—whom Ms Sridhar-Ali is working with for the preparations of the play. She can make out the doubts being exchanged between Ms Menon and the Principal in their exchange of looks and hushed conversations. And that bothers her. To add to her troubles, her classmate Rajat is constantly teasing her about her stammer. All of this teasing and doubting makes her nervous. And, as her anxiety increases, so does her stammering.

Manya's bosom pal, Ankita, is always around to help her learn to ignore the irritants, to focus on what she needs to do. And Ms Sridhar-Ali is there too. She goes out of her way to talk to the child and help her sort out her doubts and misgivings and look at what she can do to make her performance better. The relationship between a teacher and taught has been brought out here very beautifully. At this point in the book, the almost philosophical dialogue between a mentor and mentee has been rendered so effortlessly and naturally that the book earns the special place of becoming a 'forever friend'. It brings in that quality which makes it an enjoyable read for readers of all ages.

The illustrations by Priya Kurian are very evocative. The idea of using Manya and Ankita's secret code for chapter titles is brilliant. It adds to the creative aspect and teases the reader to decipher the code, just as the suspense builds in the book.

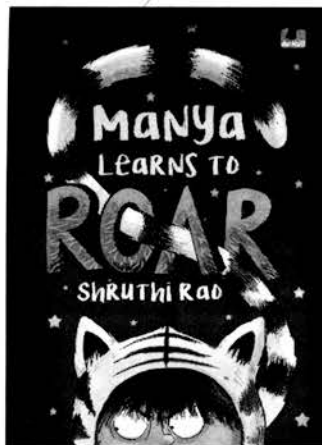
These books are part of a collaborative project between Parag Initiative, (Tata Trusts), Vidya Sagar School (Chennai) and Duckbill Books. It shares its mission as: '... is important that children read books ... which feature children who are differently abled, but present them as children first, not focussing only on their disability and problems, but helping the reader see that they can be mischievous, stubborn, playful, happy, needy... just like any other children.'

For me, the Children First project seems to serve two purposes. On the one hand it enables differently-abled readers to relate to characters in the books. If there's a huge lack of a certain kind of person in books, then there's going to be a huge number of people who are unable to truly relate. So these books help narrow that gap and make differently abled children feel that they too belong to the world of children's books.

However, it is not just about relating with someone like you. It is also about learning how to relate with those who aren't like you. It's about learning what it is like to be a boy or gay or a speech-impaired person when you are a straight, wheel-chair bound girl. It is all about 'walking a mile in someone else's shoes'. And if all kinds of people aren't represented in books, we're not going to be able to understand them the same way—or even see them the same.

And that is where I find the reason to celebrate these two very special books. Yet, the bottom line remains the same—WE NEED MUCH MORE.

Tultul Biswas is with Eklavya, Bhopal.



Chandra Chari

The Eklavya Bonanza

Every year when we write to publishers of children's books send in their recent titles for review, Eklavya of Bhopal's response is a bonanza. And invariably I reserve the bulk of Hindi titles for me to review! It is no different this year too, there others who have reviewed the Eklavya titles for this issue, English and Hindi titles. But here are some which I grabbed.

JUNGLEE SARSON KE UPHAAR (HOW DO THEY EVOLVE?)

By Karen Haydock. Translated from the original English *How Do They Evolve?*

Originally published in English by the National Book Trust, 2015, Eklavya Bhopal, 2017, pp. 52, ₹95.00

What is science? It is not a bundle of facts. It is a process, a manner of inquiry, a process of observing, imagining, measuring and recording of results, all of which when analysed and debated leads to a theory. Karen Haydock's book is a wonderful way of teaching children how scientific inquiry works. In easy to understand language she manages to take a child back to the times of cavemen and how they learnt slowly to grow food and vegetables by observing the world of nature. She presents facts, questions and answers, and weaves the whole into a story which adults and children alike will enjoy.

The translation reads very well and conveys the author's teaching ably in simple Hindi.

KAHANIYON KA PED

By Rinchin. Translated from the English original by Sushil Joshi

Illustrations by Kanak Shashi

Eklavya, Bhopal, 2017, pp. 68, ₹50.00

The protagonists in the four stories in the book—Sabari who loves to draw and cannot tolerate injustice, Shankar who scoffs at everything and has learnt to suffer in silence, Magan who observes and tries to understand what the world about him is all about and the villagers who are struggling to keep their land intact—are characters who pull at your heartstrings. Living far away from the plenty of globalization, in a village where poverty and lack of the basic necessities of life are stark realities. And yet, as the children and the villagers alike try to come to terms with what seem like insurmountable odds, their basic innocence and creativity shine through. The stories swing from the imagined to the real world and leave the reader more than a little churned up. This is a book which is more appropriate for the Young Adult than the younger readers. The subtle nuances behind what is actually written would be grasped by the older reader. Much of what the real world faces in the rural areas are thrown up in relief through almost no sense-seeming stories.

The translation is excellent except for one jarring use of the colloquial word Massaab (for Master sahib). The illustrations however



¹<https://news.byu.edu/news/top-children%E2%80%99s-books-still-don%E2%80%99t-accurately-portray-children-disabilities-byu-researchers-find>

leave much to be desired. Black and white as they are, the drawings are heavy and dark and add to the pathos of the already extremely heartrending nature of the stories.

AKAM SE PURAM TAK: LOK KATHAON KA GHAR AUR BAHAR

By Teji Grover
Eklavya, Bhopal, 2017, pp. 52, ₹40.00

Poet, writer, illustrator and translator Teji Grover has used the genre of folk-tales to bring an unusual book to her readers. The stories recounted and analysed are told to children. But this thoughtful narrative is really a valuable resource for teachers and parents alike to give a new take on how they relate stories to the children. Teji Grover has allowed her creative mind to roam effortlessly over the entire genre of folk-tales from different cultures and various languages, Indian and foreign, to highlight what she believes: that what we call children's literature is in fact an unending source of joy to the adult, and this should not be lost sight of when selecting books for the child reader.

Grover has taken up for analysis world class folk literature, ranging from A.K. Ramanujam's collection to the epics, tales told by grandmothers down the ages and much more. This book has to be read to savour every word. Yet, what it also does is to leave the reader with many new and interesting ways of reading these tales which relate to human culture.



KAKKU KE KARNAME

By Vasant. Illustrated by Prashant Soni
Eklavya, Bhopal, 2016, pp. 44, ₹35.00

This is one real fun book which brings up a bubble of laughter throughout. There is no end to Kakku's pranks or mischief. Eleven years old and a student of Class Six, Kakku does not like going to school at all. His father's postings as a government servant keep shuttling schools between the city and the village and Kakku's way of dealing with frequent disruptions is to think of more and more ways to rope in his friends to get up to mischief. Read on.



CHALO CHALEIN PAKSHI DEKHNE: EK PARAMPARIK KAHANI

Illustrations by Shraddha Kirkire
Eklavya, Bhopal, 2017, pp. 16, ₹42.00

Busy in our daily routines we often fail to pay attention to the variety of feathered creatures that abound in our surroundings. We also fail to distinguish their different calls. This little book with evocative illustrations help to make us familiar with them.



CHAKKAR/LOOP

By Ishita Biswas
Eklavya, Bhopal, 2016, pp. 20, ₹25.00

A book without words! There are simple elements on earth that nurture the most complex loops of life. This book is a reminder of the most obvious story of our times: 'Are we taking ourselves a little too seriously?'

KHELO GANIT

By Manoj Sahu 'Nidar'
Eklavya, Bhopal, 2016, pp. 24, ₹25.00

A handy little resource book which will make addition/subtraction, multiplication/division simply child's play. Both teachers and students will find this book interesting and useful.

AKAL AUR USKE BAAD

By Nagarjun. Illustrations and Design by Karen Haydock
Eklavya, Bhopal, 2017, pp. 20, ₹20.00

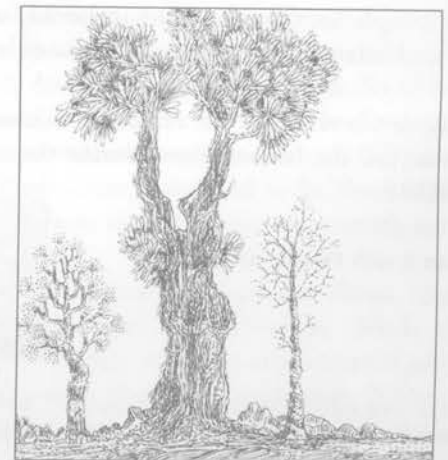
This is a famous poem by Nagarjun, a Leftist poet and writer born in Madhubani, Bihar. Karen Haydock's illustrations are brilliant and make the poem come alive to the reader. An English translation is appended.

PED NEELA THA AUR ANYA KAVITAYEN

By Rustom
Eklavya, Bhopal, 2016, pp. 30, ₹35.00

This collection of poems are pleasing in the simplicity of their telling, so much so that even language seems to absent itself from the words. Children will relate to the poems and will be able to relate to concepts of earth, light, colour and peace, or just recite them for the pleasure of hearing the words.

Chandra Chari is Editor of *The Book Review*.



Sandhya Raj

CINDERELLA RETOLD

By Rachna Jaiswal. Illustrated by Ghanshyam Bochgeri
Cover design by Sudipto De, 2016, pp. 42, ₹399.00

Ever so often a story (especially for children) is retold and translated into many languages. This is a given as long as the original story line is maintained.

Cinderella in its original form is a fairy tale which has charmed generations and will never be outdated. A book that every child would read with a glow on her face and a smile on her lips knowing that Cinderella had a 'happily ever after' ending.

A tale of virtues, honesty and goodness prevailing over evil, a rags to riches story which had every young girl aspiring to find her special Prince Charming!

Cinderella Retold by Rachna Jaiswal leaves me speechless. Here is a story embellished and distorted beyond imagination. The choice of words and the language is horrific and in many places the grammar atrocious. Who would in this day and age of every attempt by authors and publishers alike to be mindful, write a book for children using such language as 'You ghastly bitch'? Which parent or teacher or minder would in their right senses ever agree to allow a book to be read which contains such grossly inappropriate words?

The entire narration smacks of negativity. The author had every opportunity to put a positive spin on this tale despite the gross embellishments!! What kind of father would never stand up to his wife and allow his daughter to be ill treated? There is a feeble attempt at times to portray Cinderella as strong willed and slightly conniving too, yet all too soon she retreats and let's herself be berated by her step-mother and step-sisters.

Rachna Jaiswals attempt to re-tell one of the worlds most favourite fairy tales falls dismally short ... and leaves a bad aftertaste in the mouth.

The illustrator however has done a decent job.

The book starts with a quote from Albert Einstein:

'If you want your children to be intelligent, read them fairy tales, if you want them to more intelligent, read them more fairy tales'

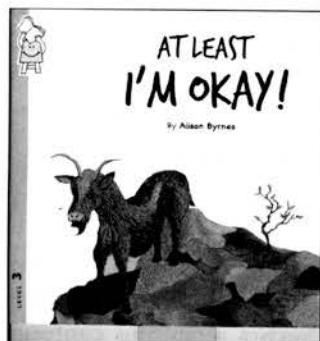
All I can say is no child should read this book and it does not deserve a space in any shop, library or home!!

AT LEAST I'M OK

By Alison Byrnes
Pratham Books, Level 3, 2017, pp. 24, ₹45.00

At Least I'm Ok is the story of Una, a mountain goat who thinks she is infallible and lives stubbornly all by herself on the top of a mountain, in beautiful Sakuland. This is a country that abounds in nature and has plenty for all animals to eat and live happily.

Slowly and steadily climate change starts affecting the life of its residents. Whilst Una is disdainful about the other animals who live alongside her, they start to quietly leave one



by one in search of greener pastures. Why does this happen?

This story is all about climate change and how it is slowly and steadily affecting the quality of life on this planet.

The illustrations are quirky and funny by turn and add to overall charm of this book.

The book and this topic are very relevant for the young child of today.

A HELPING HAND

By Payal Dhar
Pratham Books, 2017, pp. 20, ₹40.00

A Helping Hand is a moving story of friendship essayed beautifully through a series of letters. The first person narrative makes it easy to follow the storyline effortlessly.

A student is selected to be the mentor for a new girl in class. The initial resentment and curiosity towards the newcomer mirrors what happens typically in all schools. The girl in question has a prosthetic hand which adds to the mystery that surrounds her.

All too soon the initial hard feelings give way to awe, acceptance and eventually firm friendship.

A lovely tale from which the young reader will certainly take away core values of adapting to circumstances and forging strong bonds without bias.

AIMAN'S SCHOOL BAG

By Mazhar Ahmad. Illustrated by 211 Studio. Translated from the original Urdu by Rajesh Khar
Pratham Books, Level 2, 2017, pp. 12, ₹35.00

How relevant and cute is this tale of a bag that goes happily to school with its young owner Aiman.

Every child loves his or her school bag and there's always a favourite one!

Aiman's School Bag originally written in Urdu is a simple and enchanting story. Suddenly the little ones will no longer think just about themselves, but of the feelings of their bags too! Can it pant because its owner is running? Does it feel sad when put away in a corner for a long time? Do bags get together and chat and sing or love the whiff of delicious food tucked inside them?

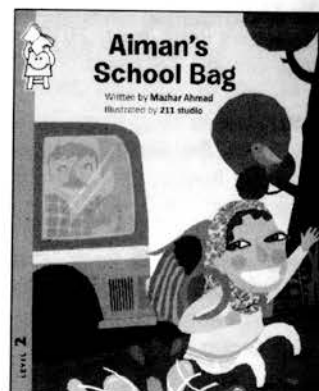
Yes indeed, all of the above. These feelings and adventures are nicely captured in the simple illustrations of this book.

An easy story every child can relate too.

AALAI GOES FLYING; AALAI KI UDAAN (HINDI)

By Bharati Jagannathan. Illustrated by Preeti Krishnamurthy
Eklavya, Bhopal, 2017, pp. 28 each, ₹70 & ₹55.00

Aalai (Maram) in Tamil is the Banyan tree. And *Aalai Goes flying* is a



beautifully illustrated story of the Aalai tree, its life, its inhabitants and its own desires and wishes. The language is simple and the tone nice and easy for the young reader.

Aalai transports the little ones on a magical journey along with the birds over rivers, mountains and cities. It also no doubt kindles in them the same yearning to explore beyond their boundaries like Aalai wished to do.

The illustrations are simple yet beautifully depict a day in the life of Aalai and its many residents, and what they do in their daily lives.

Do trees want to stand all day and all year in the same place? They too get bored. What happens when Aalai soars and flies, do read to find out more!

The bi-lingual publications complement each other very well.

THE KITE

Written and illustrated by Jeyanthi Manokaran
Pratham Books, level 1, 2017, pp. 8,
₹30.00

The highlight of this book is the author's use of beautiful illustrations, intricate in pattern with great attention to detail. It is these illustrations which effortlessly



narrate the story of how the Kite flew and was finally caught! The 'Warli art' form is unique. It depicts the various aspects of village life, creating 'food for thought' and lending itself to interesting discussion amongst parents and children alike.

A must buy book!

TALES OF HER PONY TAIL; CHUTKIYA KI CHUTIYA (HINDI)

By Sheetal Paul and Sonia Mondal
Illustrated by Taposhi Ghoshel
Eklavya, Bhopal, 2017, pp. 20 each,
₹70.00 & ₹45.00

A hilarious yet accurate account of what can happen to a young girl if she has long thick unmanageable hair and needs to be on time for school!

Guniya comes up with ingenious excuses to mollify her teachers on a daily basis. She is fed up of not having any time for exciting activities and feels her long hair is a burden much to the annoyance of her mother.

How does she put an end to the problem of her tresses? Well, then you find out by reading this book!

The text in both English and Hindi make an excellent read.

Sandhya Raj is an avid reader.

