
International Companion Encyclopedia of Children's Literature

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88 The Indian sub-continent

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The Indian sub-continent comprises seven countries: India, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka. Of these, India, Bangladesh, Pakistan and Sri Lanka were part of the British Empire until the 1940s. Bhutan and Maldives were under British protection. Nepal has remained an independent country. These countries have over one-sixth of the world's population. English is a common link between these countries and, except for Bhutan and Maldives, the other five countries share at least one major language with India. These countries belong to the old world and share affinity in culture, religion, heritage and tradition. These countries are also linked under SAARC, the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation, founded in 1985.

The sub-continent is extraordinarily rich in tales and folklore and this vast reservoir of traditional literature has been an important source of stories for children. The oral tradition of children's literature goes back more than 5,000 years, and the world's oldest collection of stories for children written originally in Sanskrit; India's *Panchatantra* (meaning 'five books') derives from this.

In these countries, the child has remained an integral part of the family, the nucleus of community life, and art and literature have developed for the enjoyment of the entire family. Only in recent times has the child gained a separate identity and this is reflected in modern literature for children. The concept of children's literature as a separate discipline has come from the West; contact with European countries, and particularly with England and the English language, has led to the growth of modern literature for children. The English language still enjoys a privileged status in these countries.

The development of children's literature in the sub-continent has passed through three distinct phases. Initially, the stories from the oral tradition, mythology, religion, folk tales, legends and classics were adapted and rewritten. Then there were translations and adaptations of material already published in England and other European countries and also in different native languages. Original creative writing has developed largely in the last five decades.

With improving literacy levels and the setting up of new schools, demand for textbooks has increased over the years, and supplementary reading material has also developed. The reasons for the slow growth of modern literature for children were the preoccupation of the publishers with the production of school textbooks and supplementary readers, the multiplicity of languages, lack of demand, poor purchasing power and high production costs. Moreover, these books continue to be treated, by and large, as an appendage to the textbook programme. Libraries for children are few, and institutional and individual purchases are small. Besides, the promotion of reading is not a very high priority for many parents.

The books have to have low prices, and most of the books are therefore available in soft cover. There are also problems with the availability of appropriate skills in writing, and facilities for illustration, book design, printing and production. In spite of these limitations, there is growing consciousness of the importance of children's books for reading pleasure.

The increased interest in the development of indigenous literature for children has led to the organisation of seminars, conferences, book fairs, exhibitions and training programmes in the sub-continent. Institutions and organisations to promote literature for children have been established, and delegates from these countries have also participated in seminars, conferences and book fairs in other countries, availing themselves of opportunities for interaction. India and Sri Lanka are members of the International Board on Books for Young People (IBBY) and participate in the Bologna International Children's Book Fair. India's Association of Writers and Illustrators for Children has provided an active forum for all those concerned with the development of better books for children. In January 2001, an Indo-Austrian seminar on children's literature was organised, together with an exhibition of picture books from Austria and all the seven SAARC countries.

New Delhi was declared the World Book Capital for 2003-4 by UNESCO and the International Publishers' Association and other book-related agencies. The SAARC Book Fair in New Delhi in August 2003 had as its theme 'Publishing for Children'. On this occasion the SAARC Book Development Council gave its first Excellence in Book Production Awards for children's books. Over 500 entries from SAARC countries, in various languages, by over 100 publishers were received for this Award. The first prize was won by Sri Lanka for a book in the Sinhalese language, the second prize going to two books from India, and the third prize given to a book from Maldives together with an Indian entry.

The Asian Cultural Centre for UNESCO (ACCU) in Japan has made a valuable contribution to the growth of children's literature in these countries since 1983 by organising training programmes, recruiting experts from the developing countries themselves, who have a better understanding of local problems, and encouraging production of better books for children. The ACCU's Noma Concours for Picture Book Illustration, given to picture-book illustrators from developing countries since 1978, has promoted children's book illustrations and picture books.

India

India has a rich heritage of ancient oral tradition, of which the *Panchatantra* is part. These stories were compiled by Vishnu Sharma to teach *Niti*, which could be roughly translated as 'the wise conduct of life', to three sons of a king. In all, there are eighty-four stories and many more interpolated anecdotes - which was a typical Indian way of story-telling to keep the interest alive. Before the *Panchatantra* came to be written, the stories had already been disseminated from India with travellers to west Asia and also to European countries. Today, these tales have been translated and adapted in over 200 languages around the world: 'The Monkey and the Crocodile', 'The Blue Jackal', 'The Lion and the Rabbit' and 'The Flight of Pigeons' are widely known.

India is a large country with an area of 3.28 million square kilometres, and over a billion people. The country is divided into twenty-eight states, with eighteen main languages and 1,652 dialects. The literacy rate is 58 per cent. There are about 1,100 publishers bringing out over 15,000 titles every year, both for adults and for children.

There is an abundance of tales, folklore, myths, legends and also tales connected with festivals, cities, rivers and mountains. India is the birthplace of four major religions – Hindu, Buddhist, Jain and Sikh – and home to many other religious groups: religiously orientated stories are therefore plentiful. Besides, *Kathasarit Sagar*, *Jatak*, *Puran*, epics of *Mahabharat* and *Ramayan* and other classics have also been a perennial source of stories.

Books for children as a separate genre made a beginning after the establishment of the School Book Society by the Christian missionaries in Calcutta (now renamed Kolkata) in 1817. Several well-known books published in English were translated into Indian languages and traditional Indian tales were rewritten and adapted for children.

Soon the writers in Indian languages began to publish stories for children and the publication of magazines in different Indian languages promoted new writing. Early in the twentieth century it was recognised that children needed special reading material. By 1930 illustrated storybooks for children started appearing in the Indian languages, and today an increasing number of books are being published, although the publication of original and creative writing is still in a low key. A large number of books continue to draw upon traditional and already published material. Some good plays, nursery rhymes, biographies and information books are also being published. In the *Creators of Children's Literature in India*, published in 2003 by the Association of Writers and Illustrators for Children, the editors have identified 1,450 authors in sixteen Indian languages, of which 459 write in Hindi language. This publication also identifies 101 illustrators, 82 researchers, 307 children's magazines, 153 children's book publishers (excluding those who publish textbooks only) and 54 institutions.

English

The quality of writing, illustration, book design and overall production in English-language books has reached an excellent level. Despite the support from central and state governments, the regional language publications have not been able to match the quality of books in English; even if the manuscripts are rich in content, the production quality is far from satisfactory. This is happening despite the fact that the sale of books in some Indian languages is higher than of books in English, and the market is growing every year.

The present-day book scene owes much to the setting up of the Children's Book Trust (CBT) in 1957. Founded by K. Shankar Pillai, a political cartoonist, CBT is an exclusive children's book publisher and has long been a trendsetter. CBT brought out its first set of two illustrated books in 1961: *Kings Choice* (English) written by K. Shiv Kumar and illustrated by Rebori Bhushan, and *Varsha Ki Boond* [The Rain Drop] (Hindi) by Kusmawati Deshpande and illustrated by K. K. Hebbar. India's first picture book, *Home* (English) written by Kamla Nair and illustrated by K. S. Kulkarni, was published by CBT in 1965. The same year CBT also published *Life with Grandfather* and *Sujata and the Wild Elephant*, both written and illustrated by Shankar. The first picture book for pre-school children, *Three Fish*, written by Dolat Doongaji and A. K. Lavangia and illustrated by Pulak Biswas, was published by CBT in 1966.

CBT set up its own printing facilities and also engaged artists on its staff. The quality of writing, artwork, book design, printing and binding was better than that of books published by any other Indian publisher. Most of the titles published by CBT were in English and translations were brought out later in some major Indian languages, using the same illustrations and the same format. Almost all the picture books were of 18cm x 24cm size, a size chosen to avoid waste of paper. CBT was the first publisher to bring out

colourful picture books in soft cover, and these were low-priced in order to reach a wider audience. This is an excellent example of publishing in a multilingual environment. CBT's publications took note of the requirements for different age groups of children and brought out books with suitable text, typography and illustrations.

CBT looked for new talent in writing and illustration, endeavoured to upgrade skills, and remained open to new ideas. To encourage new writing, it organised an annual competition for writers in English (from 1978) and published selected manuscripts. The first adventure story in an Indian setting in English for teenagers was *Kaziranga Trail* by Arup Kumar Dutta, published by CBT in 1979. To develop skills in writing, CBT established a workshop for writers in 1976 and later published *Writing for Children* by Manorama Jafa. In 1979, it organised the First International Children's Book Fair in New Delhi, which provided a welcome exposure to children's books from different countries.

Among other publishers in the English language is the National Book Trust (NBT), a government-owned institution, publishing common reading material in Indian languages including English and Hindi since 1969 under the Nehru Bal Pustakalaya Scheme. The National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT), another government organisation, established in 1961, has also been bringing out supplementary reading material along with textbooks for schools. The Publications Division of the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting has also published several titles for children.

The Year of the Child, 1979, saw a sudden spurt in children's publishing. India Book House and Thompson Press published excellent books in the early 1980s but have since ceased to publish children's books. The main publishers in English apart from the above are Anada, Delhi Press, Dreamland Publishers, Frank Brothers, Hemkunt, Penguin, Pitambar, Ratnabharati, Ratna Sagar, Rupa and Co. and Vikas. In recent years, Scholastic India has set up a publishing house. Evergreen, Jyotsna Prakashan, Tiny Tots, Tulika, Tara Publishing and several others have gained in importance. The Association of Writers and Illustrators for Children has published several books of stories for children. The Khaas Kitaab Foundation, set up in 1997, has brought out books for children with special needs and several of these have received international acclaim. An interesting feature of English book publishing is that it is largely based in the capital city of Delhi.

There are several magazines for children in English and the prominent ones are *Children's World*, *Champak*, *Junior Quest*, *Tamasha*, *Tinkle* and *Target*. *Cub* is a well-produced specialist magazine on wildlife. *Science Reporter* is also a specialist magazine. Another milestone in the development of children's literature was the establishment of the Association of Writers and Illustrators for Children (AWIC) in 1981 in New Delhi. Founded by K. Shankar Pillai, AWIC has contributed immensely to the development of better books for children. It has provided a vibrant forum for debate and discussion. It organises workshops for writers, evaluates their work, provides guidance and also assists in the publication of their work. AWIC has published a quarterly journal, *Writer and Illustrator*, since 1981. It has also published a catalogue, *Indian Illustrators 1960-1992*. AWIC has organised a chain of children's libraries and was awarded the IBBY-Asahi Reading Promotion Award in 1991. It organised the first national exhibition of picture books in 1993, and in 1998 organised the 26th Congress of the International Board on Books for Young People (IBBY). AWIC has set up lifetime achievement awards for authors, illustrators, researchers and publishers. Under its literacy project, attractive alphabet books in English and seven other languages have been published. *Creators of Children's Literature*

in India, a title comprising information on Indian authors, illustrators, publishers, researchers, institutions and magazines in sixteen Indian languages was published in September 2003.

Among the well-known writers in English are Ruskin Bond, Mulk Raj Anand, Shankar, Manorama Jafa, Arup Kumar Dutta, Nilima Sinha, Kavery Bhatt, Pratibha Nath, Vernon Thomas, Dilip Salwi, Ira Saxena, Deepa Agarwal and Manoj Das. Some of the well-known illustrators of children's books are Reboti Bhushan, Jagdish Joshi, Mrinal Mitra, Mickey Patel, Pulak Biswas, Ramesh Bagchi, Niren Sengupta, Atanu Roy, Phalguni Das Gupta, Subir Roy and B. G. Verma.

Hindi

Hindi is the national language of India and is spoken by about 45 per cent of its people. The history of children's literature in Hindi can be traced back to the riddles in verse written by Amir Khusro in the fourteenth century. In 1851 Pandit Badri Lal compiled stories from *Hitopadesh* and also translated *Robinson Crusoe*. Later in the nineteenth century, Raja Shivprasad wrote many books: the better-known ones are *Bachchon Ki Kahani* [Stories for Children] (1867), *Raja Bhoj Ka Sapna* [Dreams of King Bhoj] (1876) and *Larkon Ki Kahani* [Stories for Boys] (1876). The Hindi writers took full advantage of the source material like the *Panchatantra*, *Ramayan*, *Mahabharat* and the legends. Bharatendu Harishchandra wrote a humorous book, *Audhernagari* [The Dark Town] and also brought out a magazine entitled *Bal Bodhini*. Mahabir Prasad Dwivedi, a well-known writer for adults, inspired publishers to bring out books based on Indian epics like *Bal Bhagwat*, *Bal Ramayan* and *Bal Mahabharat*. Translations of many other English books for children were also published.

In the early twentieth century, a number of well-known writers began to write for children. Premchand wrote *Kutte Ki Kahaniyan* [Stories of Dogs] and *Jungle Ki Kahaniyan* [Stories of the Jungle]; Sohan Lal Dwivedi's collection of poems, *Balbharti*, and *Bigul* and other patriotic poems earned instant popularity. During this period, several magazines also came out: the foremost of these were *Vidyarthi* (1914), *Shishu* (1915) and *Balsakha* (1917). The first full-length fiction for children was *Khar Khar Mahadev* by Narain Dixit, which was serialised in *Balsakha* in 1957.

At present, well-known children's magazines are *Nandan*, *Champak*, *Balbharti*, *Balhans* and *Chakmak*. Two of the most popular magazines, *Parag* and *Balmela*, after publishing for more than a decade, stopped publication a few years ago. The Children's Book Trust started a competition for writers in Hindi in 1987 and also the Writers' Award. The winning manuscripts are published by CBT.

Some of the best-known Hindi writers are Shyam Narayan Pande, Rim Nareesh Tripathi, Subhadra Kumari Chauhan, Nirankar Dev Sewak, Vishnu Prabhakar, Vyathir Hridaya, Harikrishna Devsare, Swarna Sahodar, Manohar Verma, Sri Prasad, Shakuntala Sirothia, Jai Prakash Bharti, Nilima Sinha, Ira Saxena, Kamla Chamola, Dronvir Kohli, Manohar Chauhan, Mastram Kapur and Manorama Jafa. Many new young writers are also entering the field.

Today, the foremost publishers in Hindi are Arya Book Depot, Shakun Prakashan, Atmaram, Children's Book Trust, Delhi Press, Eklavya, Kitab Ghar, Parag Prakashan, Pirambar Publishing Company, Prakashan Vibhag, Mishra Bandhu Karyalaya, Mishra Brothers, the National Book Trust, the National Council of Educational Research and Training, Neeta

Prakashan, Sahmat, Sasta Sahitya Mandal, Umesh Prakashan, Vidya Prakashan and Vikas Publishing Company. Most of the Hindi book publishing is now centred in Delhi.

Bengali

The Bengali language is spoken in the state of West Bengal and is rich in children's literature. The first magazine for children in India, *Digdarshan*, was published in Bengali, under the editorship of John Clerk Marshman, by Serampore Press in 1818. An important tradition in Bengali is that a large number of those writing for adults have also written for children, unlike writers in any other Indian language. Nineteenth-century children's literature was based largely on traditional and oral literature. In 1847, Ishwarchandra Vidyasagar, a teacher by profession, translated *Betal Pancabinsati* [Hindi: *Betal Pachchisi*]. He wrote several books for children. In 1851, the Vernacular Literature Society was formed and translations of Hans Andersen's stories and Western masterpieces began to appear. 'The Little Mermaid' was translated by Madhusudan Mukhopadhyaya as *Matsaya Narir Upakhyay* (1857). In 1878, the magazine *Balak Bandhu* and in 1885, *Sakha* and *Balak* opened further avenues for both creative writers and illustrators. Dakshinaranjan Mitra Majumdar wrote the well-known fairy-tale collection *Thakurmar Jhuli* [Grandmother's Bag] in 1907 and *Thakurdadar Jhuli* [Grandfather's Bag] in 1908. Rabindra Nath Tagore, a Nobel Prize-winner in literature, wrote his famous poem for children *Bisti Pade Tapur Tupur, Nadey Eloban*, which was published in *Balak. Birpurus*, an action-packed long poem by Rabindra Nath Tagore, was published in a booklet form. It was colourfully illustrated by Nandlal Bose, a celebrated graphic painter. Tagore also wrote stories, poems and plays for children. In 1919, Abanindranath wrote *Barngharbratn*, and Sukumar Ray wrote and illustrated a collection of nonsense rhymes, *Abol Tabol* (1915). His father had launched a children's magazine *Sandesb*, which was discontinued after Sukumar Ray's death. His son Satyajit Ray, the well-known film-maker, restarted and edited *Sandesb*, and encouraged almost all the modern writers for children. It is one of the most reputed magazines in Bengali. He edited *Sandesb* together with Lila Majumdar and Nalini Das. Satyajit Ray wrote and illustrated a number of books and liked to illustrate his own stories. His notable books are *Gupi Gayen Bagha Bayen*, *Sonar Kalla* and *Prof Sanku*.

Bengal also produced many artists for children's books who have also illustrated books in other languages. During the last decade there has been a rapid growth of children's literature in Bengali. *Hasir Galpa*, written by Ashapura Debi is very popular with children. Among the well-known writers are Mahasweta Debi, Provash Ranjan Dey, Sunil Gangopadhyay, Utpal Hom Roy, Buddha Deb Guha, and Lila Majumdar. In 1961, Shishu Sahitya Parishad was established, followed later by other organisations for the development of children's literature. Among well-known publishers in Bengali are Shishu Sahitya Samsad, Anand Publishers, Signet Press, M. C. Sarkar and Sons and Calcutta Publishers.

Gujarati

Gujarati is spoken in the state of Gujarat and has an abundance of literature for children based on folklore. There are also plenty of translated books from other languages. In 1828, *Aesop's Fables* was translated by Bapu Shastri Pandya. In 1840, the Bombay Education Society brought out *Shishu Subodh Mala*. In 1860, *Batris Putlini Virta* was

written by Baji Bhai Amichand. During the third decade of the twentieth century, Giju Bhai Badheka started two periodicals, *Sikshan Patrika* and *Dakshinamurthi*. Through these periodicals Badheka promoted new authors. He himself published 150 books for children, of which eighty books were published in the series *Bal Sahitya Mala* [Garland of Children's Literature]. Badheka's stories are very popular even today. He is truly the pioneer of modern Gujarati children's literature.

In Gujarati, writers have developed humorous characters. Gijubhai has written anecdotes of Advo. Hariprasad Vyas wrote *Bakore Patel* (1938). Jivram Joshi created humorous stories around new characters and published *Miyam Fuski* and *Chhako Ane Mako*. Among other well-known writers are Uma Shankar Joshi, Panna Lal Patel, Labhuben Mehta, Nagardas Patel, Mulshankar Bhatt, Harish Nayak, Ramanlal Shah, Amritlal Parikh, Dhirubhai Patel, Hundraj Balwani and Hansaben Mehta. Abid Surti has authored and illustrated a number of books. Many other writers also contributed to children's literature through children's magazines. Among the children's magazines are *Bal Srishti* and *Gyan Gammat*. Some of the important publishers are Ratnabharti, Anada Book Depot, S. S. V. Karyalaya, Lok Milap Trust, R. R. Seth and Company, Sanskruti Prakashan, Harihar and Sahitya Publishers.

Marathi

Marathi is spoken in the state of Maharashtra. *Balbodh Muktavali*, containing a translation of *Aesop's Fables*, is considered the first story book for children in Marathi. In 1815, Vajjanath Shastri translated the *Panchatantra* from Bengali into Marathi. Later, a number of translations and adaptations of children's books from other languages and English were published. Children's literature in Marathi was influenced mainly by works in English; H. K. Damle translated several books from English. V. K. Oke wrote many original books, for example *Hindusthan*, *Katharaja* and *Mahamanimala*.

The American mission published a magazine, *Balabodhmewa*, in 1872, catering for Christian children, which contained mainly biblical stories. Several other magazines were also published in the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century. Wasudeo Govind Apte started a magazine titled *Anand* in 1906. *Baljivan* was started by Ramanlal Shah in 1918 and later *Kishore* came out. These magazines promoted original and creative literature. N. D. Tamhankar's *Gotya* (1940), a novelette, was published in the magazine *Khelgadi*. Tarabai Modak wrote original nursery rhymes and stories; Sane Guruji's *Shamachi Aai* is considered an outstanding book.

Since 1952, original writings have developed at a faster pace. There is the unique annual event, Pustak Yatra, when the writers of children's books in Maharashtra travel to different cities and towns and interact with children to publicise children's books. A noteworthy aspect of Marathi children's literature is that comics have not been encouraged. Bal Kumar Sahitya Parishad, founded in 1975, promotes books in unique ways.

B. R. Bhagwat's best-known titles are *Chandravara Swari*, and *Jaichinaval Kabani*. D. S. Desai wrote *Saha Sahase* and Jayant Narlikar wrote several books of science fiction. *Antaril Visphot* is Narlikar's most recent book. Notable playwrights include R. K. Atre (*Guru Dakshina*) Ratnakar Matkari, Sai Paranjpe and Sudha Karmarkar. Among popular writers are Sane Guruji, Tara Bai Modak, Jayant Narlikar, N. D. Tamhankar, V. G. Apte, W. G. Mayadeo, Sudhakar Prabhu, Niranjan Ghate, Surekha Panandikar, B. R. Bhagwat and his wife Durga Bhagwat. The most well-known publishers in Marathi are

Ghanshyam Prakashan, Adarsha Prakashan, Anada Book Depot, Rajhans, Sahitya Saurabh, Popular Prakashan, Dhamal Prakashan, Ratna Bharati and Shree Harihar Pustkalaya.

Kannada

Kannada is spoken in the state of Karnataka. In Kannada, children's literature began with the translation of *Panchatantra* stories from the Sanskrit by Durga Simha in 1035. Translations and adaptations from Sanskrit and European literature are an integral part of Kannada children's literature. About seventy years ago, an encyclopedia for children, *Balaprapanch* by S. Karanth, was published.

From 1945 onwards, children's literature has taken great strides and creative literature has also developed. *Petemathenaji* by M. S. Puttana is a good example from this period. Hoysala has made valuable contribution to Kannada children's literature. Panje Mangesha Rao and M. N. Kamath have contributed stories and poems in plenty. They also formed a group called Bala Sahitya Mandali to promote children's literature. Well-known authors are Tonse Mangesha Rao, Katpadi H. Shetty, K. S. Karanth, M. S. Potanna, A. R. Krishna Shastri, K. Niranjana, Sisu Sangmesh and H. S. Srinivas Murthy. In 1940, *Makkala Pustaka*, a monthly illustrated magazine for children, was brought out. *Bal Bharati*, another monthly magazine, publishes the work of new authors. Children's Book Council of Mysore publishes a monthly magazine, *Kanda*. An organisation called the Rashthrothana Parishat has published over 250 titles for children. Other publishing houses are Satya Shodhana Pustak Bhandar, Shanti Seva Sadana, Samaja Pustakalaya, Bhargava Prakashana and Manohar Bal Sahitya.

Malayalam

Malayalam is spoken in the southern state of Kerala where literacy has always been higher than in other states: the state has now achieved nearly total literacy. The earliest Malayalam book for children, *Cherupaitbangalkku Upakaratham Kathakal*, is believed to have been published in 1824. This contains stories translated from English but the name of the author is not known and copies are not available (one copy is said to be in the British Library). In 1876, a collection of Bible stories, *Balabodhini*, was published. Starting with re-told tales, translated and adapted books from traditional literature, children's books have been published in plenty. *Bilathivisesham* by K. P. Kesava Menon is one of the earliest travelogues in this century, and Mathew M. Kuzhiveli has written about a hundred books for children, including translations, adaptations and abridgements from Indian and foreign languages. Venu Variath, T. Sukumaran, S. Sivadas, K. G. Sethunath, P. I. Sankaranarayanan, Abdul Khadar Pattankad and G. Kamalamma are some of the well-known authors.

Balan (1948), a children's monthly, published works of new writers. Although there are good writers, such as V. Madhavan Nair and Sumang, many other writers prefer to translate and adapt children's books from other languages, and so the development of indigenous modern literature is still in a low key. Almost all picture books in Malayalam are translations from English. The State Institute of Children's Literature and D. C. Books have brought out original titles for teenagers in Malayalam. Some of the important publishers are D. C. Books, Kerala Sahitya Academy, Southern Languages Book Trust and the State Institute of Children's Literature.

Oriya

Oriya is spoken in the state of Orissa. The first effort in writing for children was made by Balkrishna Kar during the early 1930s when he prepared an encyclopedia for children, *Shishu Sarkhali*. Nandkishore Bal wrote Oriya lullaby songs, *Nanabaya Gita*, in two parts, in 1934. Children's literature in Oriya has largely developed in the last two decades. The most well-known writers of children's books are Ramakrishna Nanda, Jagannath Mohanty, Balkrishna Kar and Manorama Mahapatra. Shishu Sahitya Parishad, a research institute for children's literature, published an annotated bibliography of Oriya children's literature in 1966. The Research Institute of Oriya Children's Literature and the Children's Literature Academy have been promoting children's literature in Oriya. In 1995-7, two volumes of *Who's Who in Oriya Children's Literature* were prepared by Basant Kumar Sahu. Jagannath Mohanty published a book entitled *Development of Oriya Children's Literature* in 2002. *Bal Bichitra*, *Banar Sena*, *Rupathaliya*, *Suna Chadei* and *Sunapila* are some of the magazines published in Oriya. Among the publishers are J. Mohapatra, Cuttack Student Store and Manik Biswanath Memorial Charitable Trust.

Tamil

Tamil is spoken in the state of Tamil Nadu. In the twelfth century, Avvayar wrote *Aththichoori*, a book of didactic rhymes. In Tamil, *Aivickapurana Kurukathai* by Veeramamuniver is the earliest humorous story for children and was written in the eighteenth century. The development of children's literature was facilitated by the early arrival of printing presses. In 1940, the Christian Society of Nagercoil published a quarterly magazine for children, *Bala Deepihai*, to which Tamil writers from Sri Lanka and Malaysia also contributed. Later, many popular magazines for adults in Tamil included a separate section for children. The development of children's literature received great encouragement when an illustrated monthly magazine, *Ambulimama*, was started by A. V. Subba Rao at Madras in 1947. At present this magazine is published in eleven Indian languages simultaneously. This is an example of a successful magazine publishing in a multilingual society. *Gokulam*, *Junior Vikatan*, *Kalkandu* and *Kutty* are other magazines in Tamil. Regular story-telling sessions for children are organised by Kuzandai Ezhuthalar Sangam (KES), the association of writers for children in Tamil Nadu.

Children's literature in Tamil is very rich in poetry and short stories based on traditional material. Novels, plays and biographies have also been written. In recent years two Tamil writers, Al Valliappa and Kalvi Gopalakrishnan, have made valuable contributions. Al Valliappa started the Association of Tamil Writers for Children, which promotes children's literature and also awards prizes to Tamil writers. Among other well-known authors are K. G. Vaidyanathan, V. Thenappan, Thambi Srinivasan, Thangamani, V. D. Poovannan, K. V. Namasivayam and R. Parthasarthy. Among the publishers are New Century Book House Pvt. Ltd, Vasantha Publishers and the Christian Literature Society. Tara Publishing House and Tulika have brought out books for different age groups, and picture books are particularly good quality.

Urdu

In Urdu, Amir Khusro (1253-1325) wrote many riddles for children, and his book *Pahelian* could be regarded as the first book for children in Urdu. In 1835 *Panchtantra*

was translated and published as *Tutinama. Rani Ketaki Ki Kahani* [The Story of Queen Ketaki] by Insha Alla Khan was published in 1893. Nazir Akbarabadi wrote a number of books for children on many subjects. It is also interesting to note that Urdu books for children were inspired by Middle-Eastern Persian literature. Stories from the *Arabian Nights*, anecdotes of wisdom by Sheikh Sadi and bravery tales by Firdausi are popular. Well-known writers of adult books have contributed to children's literature in Urdu. *Abbukhan Ki Bakri* [The Goat of Abbukhan] by Zakir Hussain has been translated into many Indian languages. Urdu has very rich humorous literature for children: *Chacha Chakkan* [Uncle Chakkan], stories by Syed Imtiaz Ali, are delightful reading, and *Lambi Dabri* [Long Beard] by G. P. Srivastava and Azim Beg Chughtai's story *Cricket Match* are classic examples. *Payam-E-Taleem*, a monthly magazine for children, started publishing in 1926. *Umang*, a monthly magazine, started in 1987. In the 1980s the Bachchon Ka Adbi Trust was set up; it has published a number of picture books and enriched Urdu children's literature.

Among the important writers in Urdu are Syed Imtiaz Ali, Qudsia Zaidi, H. G. Haider, Abdul Wahid Sindhi, M. S. Nayyar, Mushtaq Ahmed, Khwaja Ahmad Abbas, Saliha Abid Hussain, Kushal Zaidi, Riyaz Ahmed Khan and Chughtai. Maktaba Jamia is one of the oldest publishers, and others include the Bureau for the Promotion of Urdu, the Urdu Academy and the Bachchon Ka Adbi Trust.

Telegu

Telegu is spoken in the state of Andhra Pradesh. The *Panchatantra* stories were translated into Telegu by Ravipati Gurusurthy Sastri in 1819. Christian missionaries published an illustrated book, *Pedda Balasiksha*, in 1864, and since then, translations and adaptations from English and other Indian languages have been published. Kandukuri Veeresalingam translated and adapted Aesop's tales with illustrations, *Necti Kadha Manjari* (1898). A volume of moral verses, *Necti Deepika. Balageetavali* (1912) by V. P. Kavulu, is the earliest collection of folk songs for children. V. Venkatappaiah has collected 500 rhymes in *Pilla Patalu* (1982). Writing of novels for children started only after 1947 and among the popular ones are *Chandram* by Sabha, *Veedhi Gayakudu* by Narla Chiranjeevi and *Ratanala Loya* by R. Bharadwaja.

Gurajada Apparao is regarded as the pioneer of modern children's literature in Telegu. Among well-known authors are Manga Devi, Prabhakar Rao, S. Apparao, Kalvi Gopal Krishnan, Bhaskar Rao, Kavi Rao, Mahidhara Nalini Mohan Rao, G. Radhakrishna Murthy, and N. Subba Rao. Among the publishers are Mallikarjuna Publications, Anandbala Prachuranalu and Gnagadhara Publications. The first magazine for children, *Bala Kesari*, was started by a schoolteacher in 1941, and was followed by *Bala* in 1945, *Bala Mitra* in 1949, and later *Bala Chandrika* and *Bal Jyoti*. In 1976, the Balala Academy was set up to promote children's literature and also to channel the creative energies of children. In 1979, the Academy produced a series of books including picture books.

Punjabi

Children's literature in Punjabi has developed since 1949 when Punjabi was accorded the status of an official language of the state of Punjab. Behari Lal Puri (1830-85) was the earliest to write books for children, notably *Buddhi di Vadiayee* [The Greatness of

Intelligence], *Vidya Da Adar* [Regard for Learning] and *Chup Rahme De Gun* [The Importance of Keeping Quiet]. These books were all didactic in nature.

Punjabi translations of *Tarzan* and *Betal* stories have been published and some rewritten tales are also available. Some of the better-known books are *Chirhi De Chonchle* [Stories of Birds] by Dhanwant Singh, *Pappu Te Pari* by Rajendra Singh Atish, and *Tukk Khoh Laya Kanvan* by Gurdial Singh. Well-known authors in Punjabi are Sital Dhanwant Singh, Shamsher Singh, Gurdial Singh Phul, Rani Phulan, Davinder Pal Singh and Manmohan Singh Bawa.

At present, the Punjab Text Book Board and Punjabi Academy are the leading publishers of children's books. A cultural and literary society, Sarang, has created a separate wing for publishing children's books. Rama Rattan's Bal Preet Milnee (Kafla) is a unique organisation designed to introduce books to children by sending teams to different cities and towns every year.

Pankhrian is a well-produced children's magazine which promotes new writing in Punjabi; *Balak* and *Primary Sikhia* are also popular magazines for children.

Bangladesh

Bangladesh became an independent country in 1971. Earlier, it was part of British India's Bengal province and in 1947, it became the eastern wing of Pakistan. Bangladesh has an area of 143,999 square kilometres and a population of 133.4 million. Bangla is the state language and is spoken by 95 per cent of the population; the literacy rate is 56 per cent.

Children's literature in Bangladesh has its roots in the oral literature of the sub-continent, and folk tales and *Panchatantra* stories were an integral part of early childhood literature. Before the division of British India, children's literature in the Bangla language was shared with the Indian state of West Bengal. At the time of partition, many writers migrated from India, while several publishers shifted to India.

Between 1955 and 1970, only a few books for children were published in the Bangla language. These too were mostly based on the oral tradition. *Madhumati*, edited by Al Kamal Abdulla Chaba, an assorted collection of stories, poems and jokes for children, was published in 1964. Several information books based on science were published between 1948 and 1968. *Bijananer Rajya* and *Abak Prithibi* by Abdullah Aalmuti are well known. In the past twenty years about 120 volumes of fairy tales have been published: *Sanjibher Belar Rupkatha* by Aatur Rahman and *Bijan Baner Rajyakanya* by Habibur Rahman deserve special mention. *Bangla Shishu Sahitya Granthapanji* [Compendium of Bangla Children's Literature] (1946-71), a bibliography of children's books, was compiled by Shamshul Huque and was published in 1974.

Since the establishment of the Bangladesh Shishu Academy in 1976, the children's book scene has been changing. Supported by the Bangladesh government, the Academy has started publishing quality children's books, with low prices to keep them within the reach of children, and they have been very popular throughout the country. *Golap Photo Khuker Hate* (1975) by Shamsur Rahman and illustrated by Rafikun Nabi, and *Khuki Kathberalee* (1977) are good examples of picture books published by the Academy. Since 1980, the National Book Centre and the Bangla Academy have also supported the development of children's literature. Book fairs and exhibitions have created a new awareness and have created new opportunities for the authors, illustrators and publishers.

In earlier years, attention was paid only to publishing textbooks. Even the school libraries stocked either textbooks or books of religious and classical nature and biographies

written mostly in didactic form. Children's literature mainly developed in the form of supplementary readers. The available literature abounds in biographies, nursery rhymes, poetry, short stories and plays. The Central Public Library of Dhaka has a special collection of children's books, but library services are otherwise poor and individual buying is limited.

An interesting phenomenon on the Bangladesh book scene is that the total number of books published by the authors themselves outnumber those published by the publishing houses. Among the writers of children's books are Shamsher Rahman, Kazi Abdul Quasem, Hossain Mir Musharraf, Mustassir Mamoon, Jobeda Khanam, Kazi Nazrul Islam, Abdul Hafiz, Tahera Huq, Abdul Al Muti, Mamatajuddin Ahmed, Syed Al Farooque and Naima Haque (also an illustrator). The best-known illustrators of children's books are Hashem Khan, Rafikum Nabi, Kazi Abdul Quasem, Sitara Abraham, Qayyum Chowdhury, Asem Ansari, Sisir Bhattacharya and Abdul Bark Alvi. In recent years several new publishers have come up. The active publishers are Bangladesh Shishu Academy, Muktadhara, Bohi Ghar and Adeylebros and Co. Picture books have also been published by the Primary Education Council, Shishumela Prakashan, Sahitya Prakash and Prathamic Siksha Adhidaptar.

UNICEF and ACCU, Tokyo, have been assisting in training and other book-development programmes for children's books. These have helped immensely in the advancement of better literature for children.

Nepal

Nepal is located on the southern slopes of the Himalayas and is the only country in the Indian sub-continent which has remained independent of foreign rule. Nepal has an area of 147,181 square kilometres, of which 77 per cent consists of high mountains. The population of 26.5 million lives largely in the rural areas and the literacy is 45.2 per cent. Nepal was virtually closed to the outside world until 1951; however, the cultural links between Nepal and India have been close since ancient times. The bulk of the population is Hindu and the Hindu tradition and culture is shared with India. Nepali is the main language and is spoken by 58 per cent of the population. The Devanagri script of Nepali is also shared with India's national language, Hindi. Besides Nepali, there are about fifty other languages and dialects spoken in Nepal.

Nepal has a rich tradition of oral literature in the form of tales, folk tales, lullabies, tongue twisters and children's songs. Since literacy came late, most of the children's literature was confined to the oral tradition for a long time. The earliest children's literature is based on stories from *Panchatantra* and *Jatak* tales. The first books for children, in 1901, were in the form of alphabet books, and textbooks were brought out by Prithvi Bahadur Singh. During the 1920s poet laureate Lekhanath Paudyal wrote many poems for children.

In the 1950s, several publishers became interested in publishing reading material for children. Books of poems of this period are particularly notable, and the most well-known of these are *Putali* and *Sunko Biham* by Laxmi Prasad Devkota, *Gham pani* by Madhav Ghimire and *Ramaila Nani* by Krishna Prasad Parajuli. Some books of fables, folk tales, biographies and information books were also published. Books of poems continue to have a prominent place: among other popular titles are *Tirmir Tara* by Sidhi Charan Shrestha (1988), and *Gaukhane Kavita* by D. R. Neupane. Picture books are usually published in soft cover and illustrated in one or two colours. Among recent picture books are *Ghar* by Vimal Krishna Shrestha, *Hiun Rani* by Helen Sherpa, *Manda Kuti* by Kapil Lamichane

and *Latokose Rolai Laddu* by Shashwa Parajuli. These picture books were displayed at the SAARC Book Fair at New Delhi in August 2003.

In 1951, Sajha Prakashan, a cooperative publishing house, under the supervision of L. K. Devkota, started publishing children's books and encouraged new writers. The same year another publishing house, Janak Shiksha Samagri Kendra, also started publishing textbooks and supplementary reading material. In 1965, the first children's magazine, *Kopala*, came out; in the same year Nepal Bal Sangathan brought out some books and a magazine, *Balak*. Another organisation, Bal Pustak, started publishing children's books in 1966. The movement for publishing children's books was further activated when the first seminar on children's books was organised in Kathmandu in 1966. Soon after, Ratna Pustak Bhandar brought out children's books under their scheme Bal Sahitya Prakashan.

The celebration of the International Book Year in 1972 included a seminar on Book Development and Reading Habits where the state of children's books was discussed. At the same time, a survey of reading habits of schoolchildren was conducted by the Sigma Mu society of Kathmandu. The survey results showed that one of the main causes of poor reading habits among students was the lack of suitable books.

Sajha Prakashan published several titles, including two volumes in 1977 under the co-publication programme of ACCU. In 1979, the Year of the Child, a few more publishers brought out new titles. *Ganesh Ko Laddu*, written by P. Sapkota and illustrated by R. Vajracharya was a popular picture book. A monthly magazine, *Bal Posh*, was started, and later another bi-monthly, *Bal Koshi*, was launched in 1981. In 1982, *Kalilo*, a news magazine for children was also published. Today, the most popular children's magazine is *Balak*, which has been running for over twenty-five years. By 1983, the importance of illustrations in children's books was well recognised.

Exposure to quality books from other countries, participation in training programmes organised by the ACCU and interaction with writers, illustrators, editors and publishers from other countries influenced the further development of children's literature. Illustrators from Nepal regularly take part in the Noma Concours of Picture Book Illustrations of ACCU.

Books on science have also appeared in recent years; for example, *Pani Ka Thoppa* by Kavita Ram introduces basic lessons in science and is one of the best-known titles. The Royal Academy of Nepal gave encouragement to publishing better books for children. They have published *Balvigyan*, a book on science by T. B. Shrestha and Bimal Man, and they have plans to publish information books for children.

The year 1987 could be regarded as a landmark in the development of children's literature in Nepal. The Royal Nepal Academy, with the support of UNESCO, organised a workshop for writers and illustrators of children's books. At this workshop, twenty dummies of picture books with texts were prepared, and later on the Royal Academy undertook the responsibility of publishing these titles. On this occasion, 200 children's books in Nepali were displayed. To keep the momentum alive, in 1987 Dr C. M. Bandhu and other interested persons formed Nepal Bal Sahitya Samaj (Nebasas) (the Nepalese Society for Children's Literature (NESCHIL)), and they publish the NESCHIL newsletter on children's literature in both the Nepali and English languages. The most prominent writers of children's books are Ramesh Bikal, Churamani Bandhu, T. B. Shrestha, Dhruva Ghimire, M. L. Karmacharya, Dhruva Sapakota, Bhupa Hari Paudyal, Krishna Prasad Parajuli, Kalpana Bista and Parashu Pradhan. Some of the eminent illustrators are Tek Bir Mukhiya, Milan Shakya, Ratna D. Rajracharya, Mohan Khacka, Kul Man Singh Bhandari, Abha Mishra and Ram Kumar Pande.

Pakistan

In 1947, when the British left India, Pakistan appeared as a new country on the world map, its two wings separated by more than 1,000 miles of Indian territory. The western and eastern wings had little in common except the religion Islam, and in 1971 the eastern wing separated and became another independent country, Bangladesh. Pakistan has an area of 796,095 square kilometres and a population of 150.7 million. Urdu is the national language, although Sindhi and a few other languages and dialects are also spoken. English is widely spoken. The literacy rate is 45.7 per cent and is growing.

Pakistan has paid attention mainly to textbooks for schoolchildren, and books for reading pleasure have not developed adequately. The slow development of children's literature in Pakistan is largely due to children's books being considered as an extension of textbooks. In 1964, the National Book Council of Pakistan published a bibliography of children's books and listed 1,288 titles; another bibliography published in 1973 lists 3,400 titles. The supplementary readers form the bulk under the category of children's literature. Most of the children's books consist of biographies, stories from religious sources and some creative writing in Urdu.

The National Book Council of Pakistan, established in 1960, has promoted children's literature by organising workshops for writers and publishers. Recently some good titles have been published: *Batashay* (1979) by Abdul Ali Absar is a book of poems with colourful illustrations. *Beej Aur Boond* [The Seed and the Rain Drop] (1975) was published by the National Book Foundation and won the 1975 National Council Award for illustrations. *Hum Suraj, Chand, Sitare* [Our Sun, Moon and Stars], a collection of songs by Rais Farogh, and illustrated by S. Sajid Rizvi won the National Book Council Award for book production in 1978. Some of the more recent publications are *Muslim Tarze Zindagi* [The Muslim Way of Life] (Urdu), *The Princess and the Cobbler* (Urdu and English), *Tasveer Ghar* [The House of Pictures] (Urdu), *Umru Ayaar* (Urdu and English), *Jungle ka Safar* [A Journey through the Jungle] (Urdu), *Bachchon ke Punjabi Geet* [Punjabi Songs for Children] (Urdu), *Fakta aur Lomdi* [The Dove and the Fox] (Urdu), *Ek Bachcha aur Jugnu* [A Child and a Glow Worm] (Urdu).

Ek thi Jheel [Once There Was a Lake] (1973) by Meher Nigar Masroor, profusely illustrated in colour and won the National Book Award and the 1973 UBL Literary Award for book production in 1972-3. The National Book Foundation also published a humorous book for children, *Mulla Nasiruddin* (1975) by Mahmud Sham. The National Book Foundation in Pakistan has taken up the task of publishing low-cost illustrated children's books. They also have the books translated into regional and national languages, and up to 1988 had produced 215 titles. In addition, another project was under way to bring out ninety titles within the next three years. Some leading private publishers like Ferozsons have undertaken publishing joint ventures with foreign collaboration.

The prominent writers in Pakistan are Meher Nigar Masroor, Ibne Insha, Muhammad Iqbal, Qamar Ali Abbas, Sharif Kamal Usmani, Mahmud Sham, Lakhat Saeed and Nazar Qayyum. The prominent illustrators for children are Naheed Jafri, A. Mansoor, Zaki Meer, Syed Sultan Akbar, B. A. Najmi, Samina Shahabuddin, Talat, Sajid Rizvi, Manzoor Chan, Ali Shahzad and Zahimeer. The prominent publishers of children's books are Ferozsons, Saeed Kitab, Tahir Sons, Dost Publications, Nuqoosh, National Book Foundation and the government-supported National Book Council of Pakistan.

Sri Lanka

Sri Lanka is an island country, separated from the Indian sub-continent by the narrow Palk Strait. With an area of 61,610 square kilometres and 19.7 million population, it is a mixed society, of which 72 per cent of the population is Sinhala and 20 per cent Tamil, with other smaller communities making up the remaining 8 per cent. It is also a multi-religious society in which 67 per cent of the people are Buddhists, 17 per cent Hindus, 8 per cent Christians and 7 per cent Muslims.

Sri Lanka was part of the British Empire until it became an independent nation in 1948. The history and culture of Sri Lanka has close links with its neighbour, India. Sinhala and Tamil are the main languages and English is widely spoken. In addition, there are fifty other dialects. The most remarkable feature in Sri Lanka is its literacy rate of 92.3 per cent, which is the highest in the Indian sub-continent. In spite of such a high literacy rate, Sri Lanka suffers from a lack of indigenous children's literature.

The early literature for children comprised folk tales, rhymes and songs in the form of oral literature. When the British ruled the island, the medium of instruction in the better schools was English; the textbooks and supplementary readers were imported from England and the books in Tamil were imported from India. The Sinhala-speaking children, who comprised the bulk of schoolchildren, were too poor to buy other books, with the result that for a long time no publisher came forward to publish books for children in Sinhala. The first books for children in Sinhala were written by Munidasa Kumartunga, Martin Wickramasinghe and G. B. Senanayake.

The government made education free for all from kindergarten to university in 1943, which led to a rapid increase in the number of schoolchildren. The adoption of Sinhala as the language of instruction in schools created the demand for books in that language and supplementary readers for use in school were developed.

Children's books of this period often contained questions and exercises for use in classrooms, although the quality of writing remained indifferent and unrelated to the interests of children or the requirement for different age groups.

Illustration, book design and book production also did not match the quality of imported books. Measures taken by the government to raise the level of literacy had an unintended adverse effect on the development of books. Thus, in 1956, schools were instructed not to ask children to buy more than one basic reader, and in 1963, the government decided to issue all textbooks free. These factors have depressed the demand for children's books. Besides, the high cost of production made children's books a luxury item.

Over the years, publishing techniques have improved immensely but good-quality literature is still a rarity. Most children's books draw on the oral tradition and are didactic. The number of books for reading pleasure have been increasing. An example of the good-quality books now being produced is *Umbrella Thief*, written and illustrated by Sybil Wettasinghe, which was originally published in Sinhala in 1956. The English translation later won Japan's Maruzan Award in 1986. Sybil Wettasinghe has published several other books. Her book *The Runaway Beard* in Sinhala won the first prize at the SAARC Book Fair in New Delhi (2003). She is also the secretary of the Sri Lankan Section of IBBY and an active member of the Children's Book Foundation. *Mihibata Surapura* (1974), written by K. Jayatilaka, won the Literary Award as the best children's book of the year. *Laba Kiribath* (1975) written by K. G. Premaratna and illustrated by Sunil Jayaweera won the Academy of Letters Award in Sri Lanka. *Deeptha Lama Maga* [Children's Bible in

Sinhala] won an award for the illustrations in 1989. The Nirmana Institute, an organisation for the promotion of children's literature in Sri Lanka, has taken up the publication of children's books to raise funds to assist writers. Some of the recent publications are *The Playhouse* (Sinhala) by Pushpa Ilangantilaka, *The Buddhist Child* (English and Japanese) by Kotawila Sri Pemaloka, *Poppin the Porcupine* (Sinhala) by Cyndie de Silva, *Baby Duck* (Sinhala) and *Two Friends* (Sinhala) by A. B. L. Sudharma de Silva. Sandeepa Publishing House has brought out a collection of bedtime stories in Sinhala.

Several children's magazines have been published: *Miniral* published by Lake House, *Wijaya* (1980) by Wijaya, *Suratmala* (1984) for pre-school children by Wijaya, *Bindu* (1986) for under-twelves by Upali newspapers, and *Handamama* (1987) published by Little Rose are the prominent ones.

In 1983, ACCU supported a writers' workshop in Colombo. Later, the Nirmana Institute conducted two workshops on illustration for children's books, and the participants in these workshops joined together and formed the Colombo Book Association to promote children's books.

The best-known author-illustrators in Sinhala are Sybil Wettasinghe, Sunil Jayaweera, Cyndie de Silva and Mahagma Sekara. Some of the well-known authors are K. Jayatilaka, H. D. Sugathapala and W. A. Abeyasinghe. The well-known illustrators are Peliyagoda Dayananda and Sumana Dissanayake. Among the publishers Gunasena, Hansa and Pradeepa publishers have made good contributions to children's books.

Bhutan

Bhutan is located between India and China on the southern slopes of the eastern Himalayas. It is one of the world's smallest countries. Under British influence, a monarchy was set up in Bhutan in 1907 and after three years a treaty was signed whereby the British agreed not to interfere in Bhutanese internal affairs, with the British directing their foreign affairs. With India gaining independence in 1947, India replaced the British authority. In 1949 Bhutan became an independent country, though closely aligned to India through strong trade and monetary links.

Most of Bhutan is mountainous with fertile valleys and savannas, covering an area of 47,000 square kilometres. Bhutan has a population of just over 2 million, with 40 per cent being children under fourteen. A large majority of people follow Buddhism and speak Dzongkha, which is also the official language. English is also used for official work.

The oral tradition of narrating stories to children, as in other South Asian countries, has existed for a long time. Books prepared specially for children have appeared only in recent years. Bhutan launched a modern education system in 1961 and the government of Bhutan took special interest in the development of children's books. Curriculum officers of the Department of Education started writing books, mainly to fulfil the requirement of the school system. Children's books were also developed to provide material for formal education programmes. Writers emerged at this stage, and by the 1980s private publishers also began to publish children's books.

There are several reasons for the slow growth of children's literature in Bhutan. Being a small country with a 42 per cent literacy level, the total requirement is small and is partly met from the import of books. There have been few individuals and institutions with the capacity to produce and publish children's books. Only after the expansion of the school programme has the preparation of textbooks and supplementary reading material gained momentum.

All children's books are largely meant for schoolchildren. Picture books for pre-primary level with strict control on vocabulary have been used. Thirty six titles have been published for the benefit of schoolchildren in the primary class and Classes I and II. Most of these are simple animal stories. The themes of the stories for children in higher classes were taken from imported English-language books. The first illustrated books for children in English were developed in the late 1980s. *Kezang and Wangmo* by Frei Pont (1980) presents rural life in Bhutan as seen through the eyes of a young boy and his sister. In the 1990s several picture books in English have also been published: *The Carpenter and the Painter*, *Wild Life in Bhutan* (1999) and *Yaks*. The Dzongkha picture books have been written and illustrated by local people. Often the stories have personified vegetables and fruits as characters.

Some of the well-known authors are Pema Wangdi, Frances Klatzel, Kes Kirby, Frei Pont and Jigme Lodey. Among the illustrators are Dawa Heruka, Sonam Tshering, Chimmi Dorji, Sukbir Biswa, Ab Tamang, Bb Tamang and Kama Wangdi. The Royal Government of Bhutan is the major publisher.

Picture books from Bhutan were displayed at an exhibition of picture books from SAARC countries in January 2001 at New Delhi. Again, children's books from Bhutan were on display at the Delhi Book Fair in September 2003. These occasions have also opened opportunities for interaction with writers, illustrators and publishers from other countries.

Maldives

Maldives is a tiny country comprising 1,190 coral islands, grouped in twenty-six atolls. Of these, 200 islands are inhabited and another eighty are tourist resorts. These islands are located in the Indian Ocean, south-west of India. The total area of Maldives is 300 square kilometres and the population is 329,684, with 45 per cent being children under fourteen. People follow the Muslim religion, and the literacy level is high – 97.2 per cent of the population.

Maldives was a sultanate first under the Dutch, and later came under British protection. The islands gained independence in 1965 and became a republic in 1968. Male is the capital city. The official language is Dhivehi, which is a dialect of Sinhala, and the script is derived from Arabic. English is widely used in business and administration.

The need for schoolbooks has prompted local publishers to bring out textbooks and supplementary readers. In 1987, a training course on book publishing in collaboration with the Asian Cultural Centre for UNESCO was organised; a number of picture books were prepared and some of these were published in the local language. In 2000, the Ministry of Education, in collaboration with UNICEF, developed some picture books with Dhivehi and English texts. Two of the titles are: *Look How Terrific I Am* and *Everybody Loves Me (Hazko's Story)*.

The National Centre for Linguistic and Historical Research has also brought out picture books with photographs and some illustrations. Some of the titles are: *Meyyan* (1999), *Dhirehi Rajjey Gai Hedhey Bach Meyva* (2000), *Bas Foiy* (2000) and *Al Hujjadin*. *Ummeedhu* (2001). The most well-known writers are Aishath Naseema and Azra Husain. Yassin Hameed has illustrated several books.

Children's books from Maldives were displayed in New Delhi at the exhibition of picture books from SAARC countries in January 2001. At the Delhi Book Fair 2003, Aishath Naseema's book *Kiyamaa Kiyamaa* was awarded a prize for Book Production.

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