It is interesting to see how various authors make an effort to make books appealing and interesting to children. For instance books published by Tara, Pratham, Navayana, Katha and Tulika implement different tactics to make the book visually appealing.

At times the story is also narrated in the form of rhymes. The layout of the story is different in each book. Some books tell their tale only through pictures and some through the interesting patterns of words and pictures. The fonts used are bold, colourful and pictures take a large chunk of the page. The books also have interesting titles like *Out of the Way! Out of the Way!, How to Weigh an Elephant, Rooster Raga, The Famous Smile and Cat in the Ghat.*

Name: *Out of the Way! Out of the way!* (2010)

Author: Uma Krishnaswami

Illustrator: Uma Krishnaswamy

Publisher: Tulika Books

Price: Rs. 135

Languages: English, Hindi, Tamil, Malayalam, Telugu, Gujarati, Bengali, Kannada, Marathi
Name: How to Weigh an Elephant (1991)
Author: Geeta Dharmarajan
Illustrator: Wen Hsu
Publisher: Katha
Price: Rs. 275

Name: The Cat in the Ghat!
Author: Ambika Rao
Illustrator: Ruchi Shah
Publisher: Pratham Books
Price: Rs. 40

Name: My First Railway Journey
Author: Mrinal Mitra
Publisher: National Book Trust
Price: Rs. 12

Name: Little Toys
Author: Arvind Gupta
Publisher: National Book Trust
Price: Rs. 20

Name: Dinosaur long as 127 kids
Author: Geeta Dharmajan
Publisher: Katha
These are some types of books which are published under Katha, Pratham, Tulika, Tara and National Book Trust publishers.

Geeta Dharmrajan is a writer, editor, educator and the Executive Director of Katha, a nonprofit organisation that she founded in 1988. Her work focuses on education, especially of children from poor families. Katha is a registered non-profit and non-governmental organisation based in Delhi. Katha works in teacher training, children’s education and literature. Katha works in underprivileged areas across India. A teaching/learning tool that she devised, “story pedagogy”, has been in use in Katha’s learning centres since 2001. Katha Books are a showcase of contemporary Indian fiction for adults and children. Katha introduced an array of writings from India’s many oral and written traditions to children, ages 7 – 17. Classy productions, child friendly layouts and illustrations go in tandem with excellent writing. It is also interesting to note how all the books have attractive covers which is a tactic to grab the attention of a child at the first go.

Tulika Publishers is a South Indian Multi- Lingual children’s publishing house. It often uses the imprint Tulika Books, but is separate from the New Delhi-based publisher Tulika Books. Tulika was founded in 1996 as an independent publishing house by Radhika Menon. Menon and Indu Chandrasekhar ran a pre-press service called Tulika to “earn enough money” to publish their own books. Subsequently, Chandrasekhar founded Tulika Books in New Delhi in 1995, and Menon founded Tulika Publishers in Chennai. In the book ‘Out of the Way, Out of the Way’ we see that the author has made sure that there is a right mix of pictures and words. The drawings are very creatively placed in the page which adds to the attractiveness of the book. Taking the example of the book ‘Little i’ the book has a brilliant illustration. The book showcases a display of various font sizes and engages the children by
Pratham Books was set up as a not-for-profit children’s book publisher in 2004 with the mission to see ‘a book in every child’s hand. The key objective was to publish good quality, affordable story books in multiple Indian languages to support reading acquisition among children. In the last decade, Pratham Books has published over 300 original titles in 18 Indian languages, which total up to about 2000 books. The books cover a range of genres including early readers, fiction, non-fiction, and storybooks on science, history, mathematics and nature. They have had the distinction of working with many of the country’s renowned authors and illustrators and their books have won several awards as well. It is an initiative from Pratham Books, which helps further the endeavour to find newer ways to ensure that every child is able to discover the joy of reading. All the stories are available under Creative Commons licenses which means that the stories are free to use and can be translated into new languages, new stories can be created, and artworks can be freely accessed, by anyone.

StoryWeaver is an initiative by Pratham where children, librarians and educators, are informed that the stories are not controlled by restrictive copyrights. With StoryWeaver, Pratham throw open the doors of the library to every child. The book ‘the cat in the ghat’ displays a unique illustration which manages the catch the attention of young kids. Most of the Pratham books are very cheap which makes it easier for increase in readership.

Established in the year 1994 by Gita Wolf, Tara Books has definitely made a mark for itself. Over the years, Gita has been joined by other writers and creative professionals who were drawn by her vision of bringing a variety of marginalised voices and perspectives to the reader while continuously playing with different form of the books. Today, the publishing house creates its own books as well as collaborates with a range of unusual talents from signboard painters to tribal and textile artists. While the core group is based in Chennai, other members reside in London, New York and various locations across India and the world. Imagination runs riot in Tara but they are down to earth in sourcing their ideas from tribal and folk artists, street art and oral narrative traditions. Tara began as a children’s publisher, but the list has expanded to include a strong but select collection of visual arts titles and adult fiction. Working with local communities and exploring social and political issues form a critical point of view, Tara’s non-fiction list comprises craft books for children as well as titles for all ages on the themes of peace and justice. They segregate their books into ‘For all age’ graphic novels, picture books/visual arts; ‘For adults’ picture books/visual arts, photography, art & design/pop culture, fiction/non-fiction; and ‘For children’ picture books, fiction/non-fiction, arts & crafts and stationery in creative format. Tara’s expertise is the production of books made entirely by hand, right from the paper to the printing and binding. Tara printing unit is a bustling workshop employing 16 skilled printers and binders who are drawn largely from the locality. So far, they have created a total of 1,80,000 handmade books. The book ‘Tiger on a Tree’ is a display of Tara’s unique mix of folk art and an interesting story.

It is time, we bring the forum of children’s literature to the forefront of the attention of our society. Children’s literature is a vast and field and this is a small effort to gather the rich culture of India through books.
A certain freedom comes in stride with illustrating a book meant for a child’s eyes. Some of the most fantastic and breath-taking artwork found within the pages of modern Indian children’s literature has been executed by artists inspired by traditional Indian or folk styles of art, like Ram Singh Urveti, Uma Krishnaswamy, Anushka Ravishankar, or Shanti Devi. The resounding vitality of such ancient art practices even today goes to show the power of tradition and global appreciation for India’s stunning creative force.

The mysterious illustrations of Ram Singh Urveti, Bhajju Shyam and Durga Bai entice readers young and old to wander into The Night Life of Trees. Upon flipping through this Bolognaraagazzi Award-winning book, readers will find themselves delighted by pages of hand-made art and a profound storyline which has been said (by the Fine Books and Collections) to “add to our understanding of the world”.

The silk-screens feature artwork inspired by Gondan folklore, a tribe from central India, mainly Madhya Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra, Chhattisgarh and Odisha. Gond paintings are traditionally made on festive occasions of Nag Panchmi or Ashtami but are also used as means of storytelling. Such stories are often encapsulating scenes to describe man’s relationship with nature, in which he is often seen worshipping or doing rituals for trees, plants and animals. The Gond worldview considers man and nature to be essentially inseparable, which is reflected in both their intertwined rich oral and artistic histories. Paintings were created to ward off evil spirits or bring good luck, which is why many Gond families painted symbols and motifs in this style on the floors or walls of the home. To create paint, natural colours were created by grinding or crushing charcoals, soils, plant sap, cow dung or leaves. The use of lines and dots characterize this art style, as has been well articulated in The Night Life of Trees. Nowadays, the art is employed on wooden boxes or tables and is popular across the globe.

Durga Bai’s Gond art style is also featured in a tale of “extraordinary caring and companionship” called mai and her friends. Each page reveals a fantastically colourful variety of creatures and scenes, each painstakingly detailed with the line and dot method.

In illustrating The Old Animals’ Forest Band, written by Sirish Rao, Bai paints a story of a dog, a cow, a rooster and a donkey who adventure into the woods to create music together. Each creature has an intricate variety of patterns for fur and feather, which changes in each scene, constantly re-invigorating the reader’s interest and attention.
Bai, who bases her work in Burbaspur, a village in the Mandla district, often takes all three of her children along with her to her art exhibitions. They have taken up painting as well, and Bai is working to pass along the Gond art tradition to them.

Wielding a Fine Arts degree from the Delhi College of Art, Vandana Bist’s illustrative style has brought her much attention in the world of children’s literature. In the Children’s Picture Book Competition, she was awarded the encouragement prize by the Noma Concours Foundation of Japan, and won the Chitrakatha Award of 1998 for outstanding illustrations. She uses a fine ink pen of black as a foundation of her pieces and goes on to incorporate a variety of colours and patterns. In The Princess with the Longest Hair, readers can admire the attention to the fine detail she uses in certain aspects of a drawing, (like long tresses of hair) while in others, sweeping or block colours are more prominent. She uses this eye catching technique to depict complex moments of Indian music and dance, with accurate renditions of traditional costume and local wildlife.

Shanti Devi is a painter from the state of Bihar. Her work features mythical and religious symbols in the traditional Madhubani style, which she has used to create huge murals and teaches the style to children in various workshops. The photos below were gathered from Bioscope, a tale written by Mamta Nainy about the simple joys in life of Mithila. Devi’s illustrations incorporate the large eyes of and colourful page borders of Madhubani style.

Madhubani painting finds its’ home in the lush Mithila region, and is traditionally executed with the fingers, twigs, nib-pens or matchsticks. The paint was created by grinding rice into a paste, and colours were derived from natural sources like turmeric, sandalwood, indigo or charcoal, and today is applied onto paper, cloth and other mediums. The art is brilliantly coloured, and very little shading is present in most pieces, so works are said to be particularly uplifting and invigorating to the soul.

Originally paintings were done on the eve of important dates, and marked ceremonies, festivals, weddings, or pujas. The subject matter of this art is mainly natural or symbolic of some form of nature; celestial beings, trees,
animals, and people can be seen in fantastic geometric patterns or complex social scenarios. The most intricate patterns can be seen in the Kanchi or Bharini styles of painting, created solely by upper caste or class women. Now, men are learning the trade but within the Bihari culture, it is customary for women to pass down the age-old technique from mother, grandmother or aunt to the younger generation.

Uma Krishnaswamy was first introduced to the fantastic variety and diversity of Indian craft traditions and art history when illustrating for A. K. Ramanujan in his Folktales of India section of the Deccan Herald. She now dabbles in illustrative styles from across the globe, but finds much of her inspiration through pouring over books which feature the vibrant art traditions of India. She now lives in Chennai, where she teaches Visual Studies at the Madras Craft Foundation.

Her descriptions of her process of illustrating Out of the Way! Out of the Way! give readers some insight into her process of illustrating the book. The use of a simple and sophisticated black, white foundation was highlighted by a brilliant colour scheme which she says was supposed to be reflective of the wild and dazzling Indian wardrobe, chaos, confusion, and simultaneously, beauty that characterizes India.

In Shamin Padamsee’s Dancing on Walls, Uma incorporated unique renditions of the painting style of the Warli people of Maharashtra. Traditionally the main artists were tribal women, and was their means of expressing their
mind and emotions. In its original form, the medium for this art were ochre branches, earth and cow dung. Using a bamboo stick with a chewed end as a paintbrush, dots of white (from rice paste) and sometimes red and yellow were used to create detailed scenes of dance, the sacred marriage of god or Palghat, or geometric designs. Only a simple colour scheme and visual style is necessary to display absolutely profound scenes of celebration and ritual and those which invoke the Gods. The ways of life of the Warli people have, for time immemorial, been captured in such scenes.

India and Italy meet in a Sunday Times, UK Children’s Book of the Week, To market! To market! Anushka Ravishankar uses a lovely poetic writing style that is complimented by Emanuele Scanziani’s soft and textured renditions of the Indian bazaar through the eyes of a playful, adventurous and brave little girl.

In such scenes, he creates a uniquely surreal visual effect by combining differing definition of background and foreground, and playing subtly with depth and distance. Emanuele works out of Auroville, in Tamil Nadu, India.
Ayeshe Sadr is one of India's top-ten best known illustrators. Along with fellow artists, she has helped children explore artistic techniques which can bring out their own creative talents, like at the 2013, 13 day exhibition called Bookart, hosted by the Foundation for Indian Contemporary Art, Vadehra Art Gallery Book|Store and Bookaroo. Ayeshe studied Textile Designing in Srishti School of Art, Design and Technology in Bengaluru and now works out of New Delhi, at her Mehrauli studi.
She has illustrated a number of children’s books, including the brilliant Satya’s Boat, a tale written by Saraswati Nandini Majumdar about a girl and her father’s boat adventures in Benaras.

Scenes involve an array of detail, from the tiniest windows to the scales of each fish. Yet, there is still a simplistic beauty to be found in the 2D renditions of townships and oceans, classrooms and houses. Her creative edge is at a peak when depicting Satya’s dreamscape; deep blue water-colour backdrops overlain with the gentle white curves and lines of trees, water and wild beasts. Her portfolio can be found at http://twooneonestudio.com/. Pictures in this section were taken from this website; see citation 12 in the bibliography.

Bibliography

In her book *Contemporary English-Language Indian Children’s Literature*, author Michelle Superle stated that up until the 1970s, most Indian children either read Western children’s literature, or a smattering of Indian mythology.

However, as the publishing industry in India slowly blossomed, so did the variety of Indian children’s literature. While publishing houses are dedicated to churning out innumerable original children’s texts, they are also revisiting some of the best children’s literature that India has to offer. The vaults have been unlocked and lo and behold! An entire world of innovative rethinking of the past is discovered.

If you liked the titles that we’ve put up here, feel free to [download our database](#), to browse through hundreds of Indian children’s books!

**MODERN MYTHOLOGY: TAKING ON THE STALWART OF INDIAN CHILDREN’S LITERATURE**

The most obvious, yet sometimes the most innovative adaptations, have been of history and mythology. Fresh perspectives from alternative characters are discussed in order to highlight the rich depth of the Indian story telling tradition.
Mango Books’ beautifully retold “Krishna” regales the hugely popular tales of the mischievous young Krishna. The book, part of the “Mango Classics series”, as an adaptation does not confine itself to mere retelling; it also provides a reserve of secondary sources and questions that the reader should be asking about the tales. Such adaptations stoke the curiosity of the young reader and compelling him to question the nature of simply everything that is encompassed in Indian mythology, be it themes, symbols, motifs or the characters themselves.

You can find out more about Mango Books and Mango Classics by clicking here.

Name: Kama vs Yama (2011)

Author: Devdutt Pattanaik
Illustrations: Vishal Tondon
Publisher: Puffin Books
Price: Rs. 99

In this book, Devdutt Pattanaik brings together two diametrically opposite Gods, Kama (the God of Love) and Yama (the God of Death), introducing young readers to the Hindu pantheon in an innovative manner. Pattanaik is renowned for his fresh takes on Indian mythological giants such as the Mahabharata, Ramayana and many others. The book is part of the “Fun in Devlok” series, in which Pattanaik manages to balance the depth of traditional mythology with the light heartedness of childish innocence, allowing for children to grasp the true messages that mythology conveys at their own pace.

You can find out more about Puffin Books and Fun in Devlok by clicking here.

Name: “Shivaji” (1971)

Comic Script: B.R. Bhagwat
Illustrations: Pratap Mulick
Publisher: Amar Chitra Katha
Price: Rs. 70
A stalwart in the Indian publishing industry, Amar Chitra Katha has been heralded for publishing high quality comics on traditional Indian folklore and mythology since its inception. However, as the years have passed, the publishing house has brought out starkly different titles. Be it comics on Shivaji, Kalpana Chawla or J.D. Tata, the publishing house has extended the timeline of folklore and mythology, covering the urban greats in its trademark style. These adaptations are of great import, as they pay homage to modern leaders, who would have had a very tangible impact on the lives of their readers.

You can find out more about Amar Chitra Katha and its innovative adaptations by clicking here.

**RELIVING THE GREATS: ADAPTATIONS OF INDIAN LITERARY SUPERSTARS**

The adaptations of children’s literature are vast, ranging from translations from vernacular languages or foreign languages, to fresh takes on stories by superstars of the Indian literary world.

Name: “The Clouds and Waves” (2011)
Author: Rabindranath Tagore
Illustrator: Sunaina Coelho
Publisher: Katha
Price: Rs. 120

Katha’s beautifully illustrated adaptations of Rabindranath Tagore’s “Clouds and Waves” and “The Champa Flower” are a testament to the brilliance of the new Indian literary adaptation. The magical universe that Tagore creates for the small child in the poems are complemented by vivid illustrations. The impact of such heavily illustrated adaptations is immense, as not only do they introduce young readers to the
wonders of one of India's greatest literary figures, but, they also highlight the impact that illustrations can have on a child when shaping their creative faculties.

You can find out more about Katha and their adaptations by clicking here.

Name: “A Bagful of Mystery” (2009)
Author: Satyajit Ray
Illustrator: Tapas Guha
Comic Script: Subhadra Sen Gupta
Publisher: Puffin Books
Price: Rs. 99

Gone are the days when Indian comics were synonymous with Amar Chitra Katha's mythological masterpieces. The Indian publishing industry has diversified extensively, adapting its mediums over a wide range of genres, in order to cater to a young modern audience. Puffin Books' adaptation of Satyajit Ray's famous Feluda detective series reads like a breath of cool air. The entire series is presented as a comic, with the beautifully created panels matching the suspense of the mysteries with ease.

You can find out more about Puffin Books and their Feluda series by clicking here.

PERFECTING PEDAGOGY: REINVENTING THE FOLKTALE

Name: The Puffin Book of Folktales (2013)
Authors: Manjula Padmanabhan, Sudha Murthy, Paro Anand, Musharraf Ali Farooqi, Devdutt Pattanaik, Shashi Deshpande, Ruskin Bond, A.K. Ramanujan, Meera Uberoi, Kamala Das
Illustrator: Poonam Athalye
Publisher: Puffin Books
Price: Rs. 499

Folk tales in India are no longer confined to the pedagogy of the Panchatantra and Jataka tales. Publishers are making a very conscious effort to adapt modern folk tales in order to provide some accessibility in morality and diversity to young children. Such adaptations allow modern Indian authors to present the country's cultural heritage to its youth, in a relatable manner and style. Puffin's sumptuous tenth anniversary special, “The Puffin Book of Folktales”, is a perfect example by this. Accompanied by Poonam Athalye's soothing oil paint illustrations, the book compiles ten short stories from then of India's most acclaimed authors, ranging from Sudha Murthy to Ruskin Bond to Kamala Das.

You can find out more about Puffin Books and their other Folk Tales by clicking here.

AN ERA OF GLOBALISATION: ADAPTING THE FOREIGN
While the phrase “global village” has become a tad bit overused, it holds great relevance in the modern world. Children in India are now being exposed to a multitude of cultures through various media. In order to bring the (largely incomprehensible!) world to the Indian child in an accessible manner, publishing houses often team up with foreign cultural institutes. These institutes provide the funds for Indian publishers to adapt their country’s literature to suit the Indian market, resulting in wonderful adaptations, such as “Anokhi’s New Friend”. Financed by the Finnish Literature Exchange, this adaptation of a popular Finnish book is a perfect example of adaptations in the global era.

You can find out more about A&A Books and their publications by clicking [here](#).

You can find out more about the Finnish Literature Exchange by clicking [here](#).

**A Side Note**

The German Book Office (New Delhi), a joint initiative between the Frankfurt Book Fair and the German Foreign Office, also promotes the adaptations of German and Indian literature between the two regions. You can find out more about the New Delhi branch of the German Book Office by clicking [here](#).

**THE HARDEST OF THEM ALL: ADAPTING NON-FICTION**

Given the liberty of expression that fictional writing lends itself to (in any media), it is often hard for non-fiction books to grab attention with the same ease. However, some publishing houses take this difficulty in their stride, producing stellar works that effortlessly combine creativity and facts.

**Name:** Baaja (2014)

**Author:** Mamta Nainy

**Illustrator:** Aniruddha Mukherjee

**Publishers:** Mango Books

**Price:** Rs. 95

For all the connoisseur’s of music who double up as parents, this book is an absolute dream. The book combines the myriad musical traditions of India (and their intricacies) with delicately sketched black and white illustrations. The poetic narrative style ensures that the young reader remains engaged and at the same time, learns about India’s rich musical traditions.

You can find out more about Mango books and their other non-fiction titles by clicking [here](#).
Name: How it Works: Television

Author: Navkala Roy

Illustrator: Subir Roy

Publisher: Children's Book Trust

The Government run Children's Book Trust is a hallmark institution in the country, providing high quality books at extremely affordable prices. The book showcased here is just one of many; the publishing house is dedicated to providing informative, engaging non-fiction. Characterised by the usage of simple language and bold, colourful illustrations, all of the non-fiction titles from the Children's Book Trust are must have in the non-fiction shelf of a child's library.

You can find out more about the Children's Book Trust and their other non-fiction titles by clicking [here](#).

REFERENCES

BOOKS


IMAGES


Mythological Narratives

Illustrative Style

Everything You Need to Know About Children's Literature and Publishing

The Place of the Indian Child in Indian Children's Literature
- ABOUT THIS BLOG-

This blog was created by six Literary and Cultural Studies students from FLAME University (Pune) in order to archive the rich children’s literature tradition in India.

- IMAGE SOURCES -