

MORE THAN MONKEYS, MAHARAJAHS AND MANGOES

An Overview of South Asian
Literature for Kids

By Pooja Makhijani

Introduction

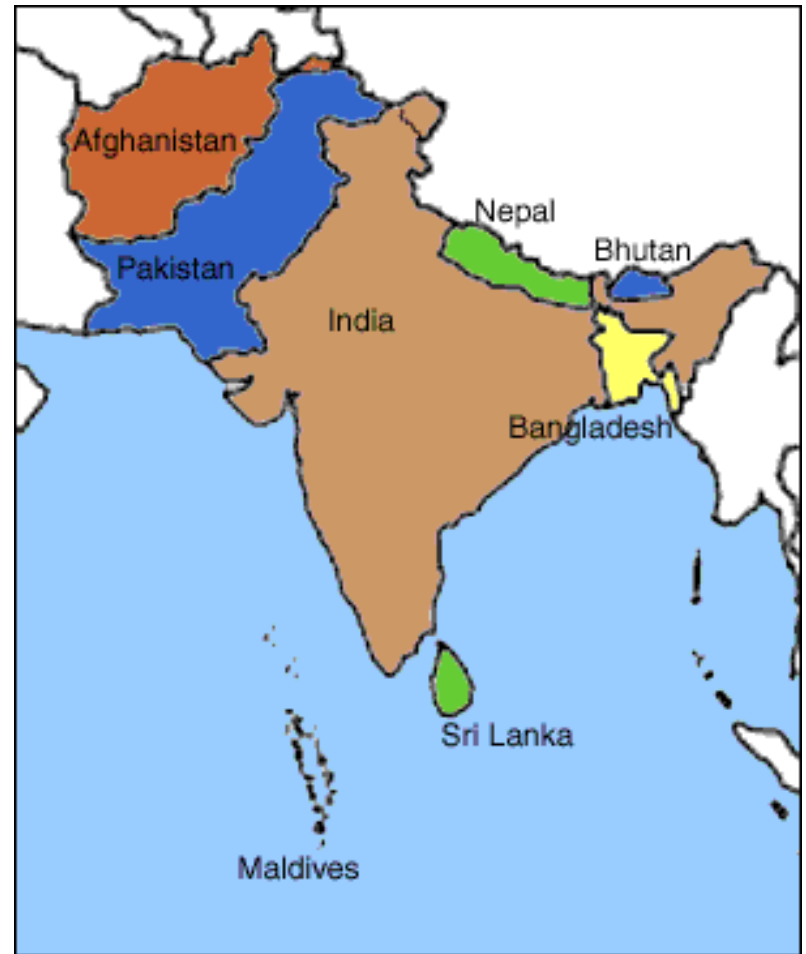


Books can make a difference in dispelling prejudice and building community: not with role models and literal recipes, not with noble messages about the human family, but with enthralling stories that make us imagine the lives of others. A good story lets you know people as individuals in all their particularity and conflict; and once you see someone as a person—flawed, complex, striving—then you've reached beyond stereotype. Stories, writing them, telling them, sharing them, transforming them, enrich us and connect us and help us know each other.

—Hazel Rochman, [Against Borders](#)

South Asia

South Asia is a sub-region of Asia, usually taken as comprising the modern countries of Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka. The concept of "South Asia" is useful when referring to the countries of the region as a group. The descriptor can be useful when discussing issues that affect the common history, culture, etc. of the countries.



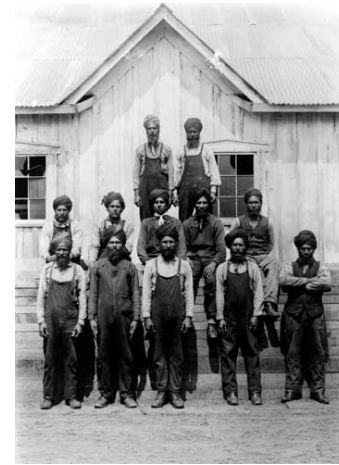
Diaspora



- The term diaspora is used (without capitalization) to refer to any people or ethnic population forced or induced to leave their traditional ethnic homelands, being dispersed throughout other parts of the world, and the ensuing developments in their dispersal and culture.
- The South Asian diaspora refers to communities of South Asians who emigrated from the Subcontinent. There are large diasporic communities in Fiji, Guyana, Trinidad & Tobago, Malaysia, Singapore, South Africa, the United Arab Emirates and the United Kingdom.
- There are more than 2 million South Asians in the United States.

South Asian American Immigration

- Immigration of South Asian Americans has taken place in many waves since the first Indian-American came to the United States in the 1700s. A major wave of immigration took place in the first decade of the 20th century.



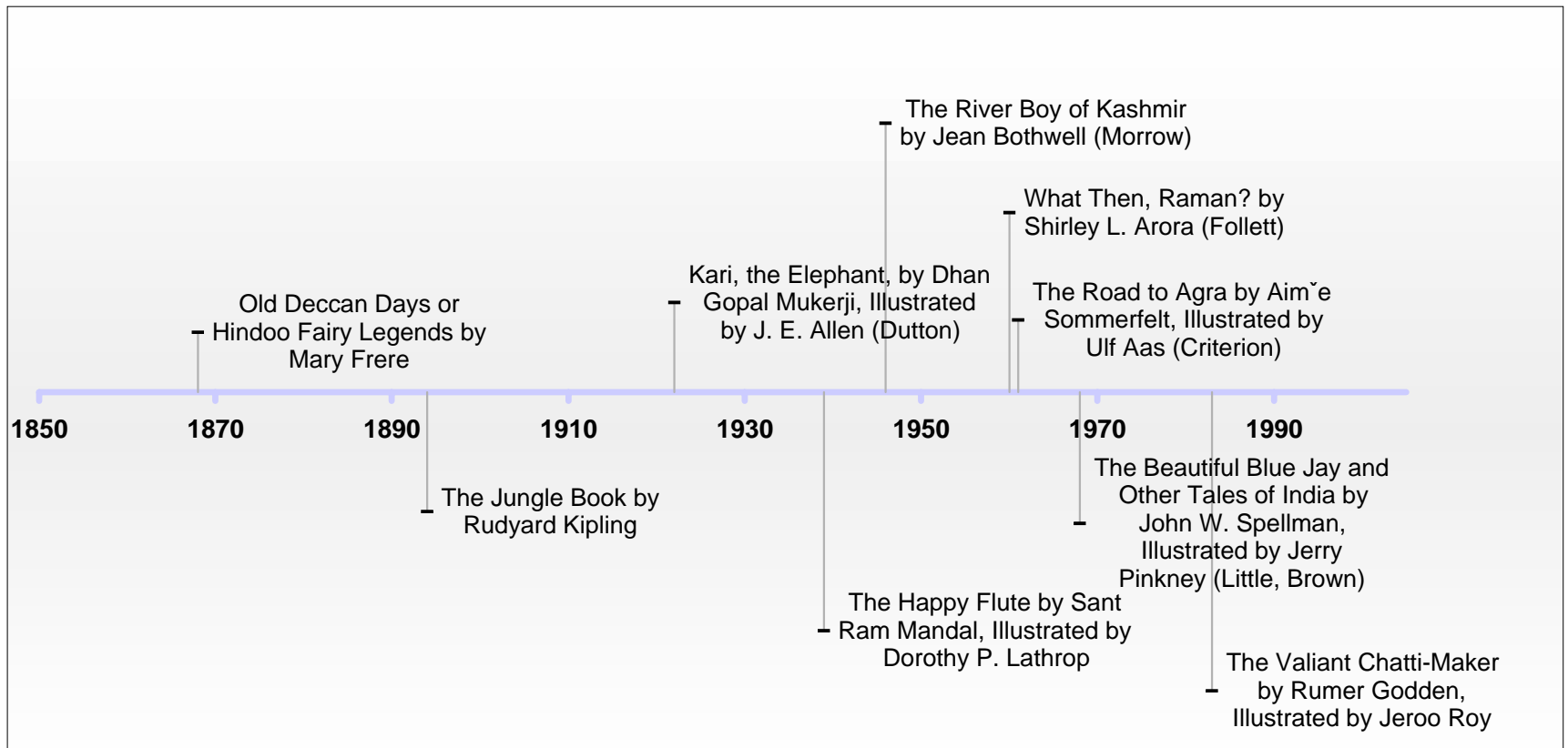
South Asian American Immigration

- 1917: The Barred Zone Act barred Asians, including people from India, from immigrating to the U.S.
- 1923: The US Supreme Court ruled in *United States v. Bhagat Singh Thind* that those from India are not “free white persons,” and thus, ineligible for citizenship.
- 1943: Congress introduces a bill to open naturalization to Indian immigrants to the US. President Franklin Roosevelt also endorses the bill, calling for an end to the “statutory discrimination against the Indians.”

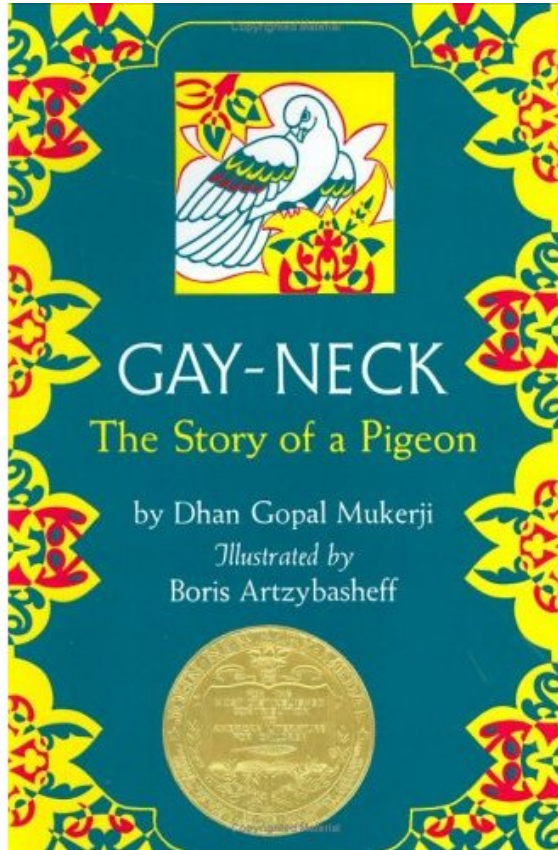
South Asian American Immigration

- 1946: President Harry Truman signs into law the Luce-Celler Act of 1946, returning the right to Indian Americans to immigrate and naturalize.
- 1956: Dalip Singh Saund elected to the House of Representatives from California.
- 1965: The Immigration and Naturalization Act eliminated per-country immigration quotas and introducing immigration on the basis of professional experience and education.

South Asia and Children's Books (A Very Brief History)

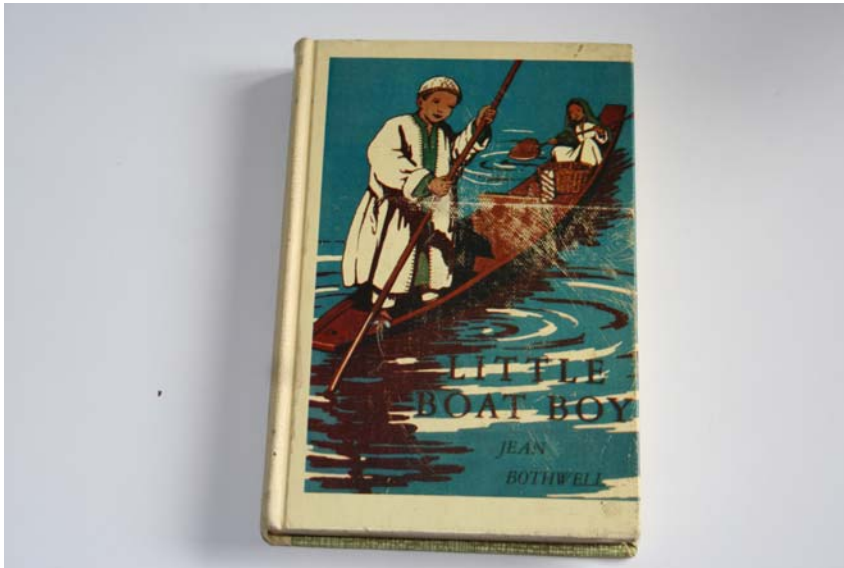


Dhan Gopal Mukerji (1890-1936)



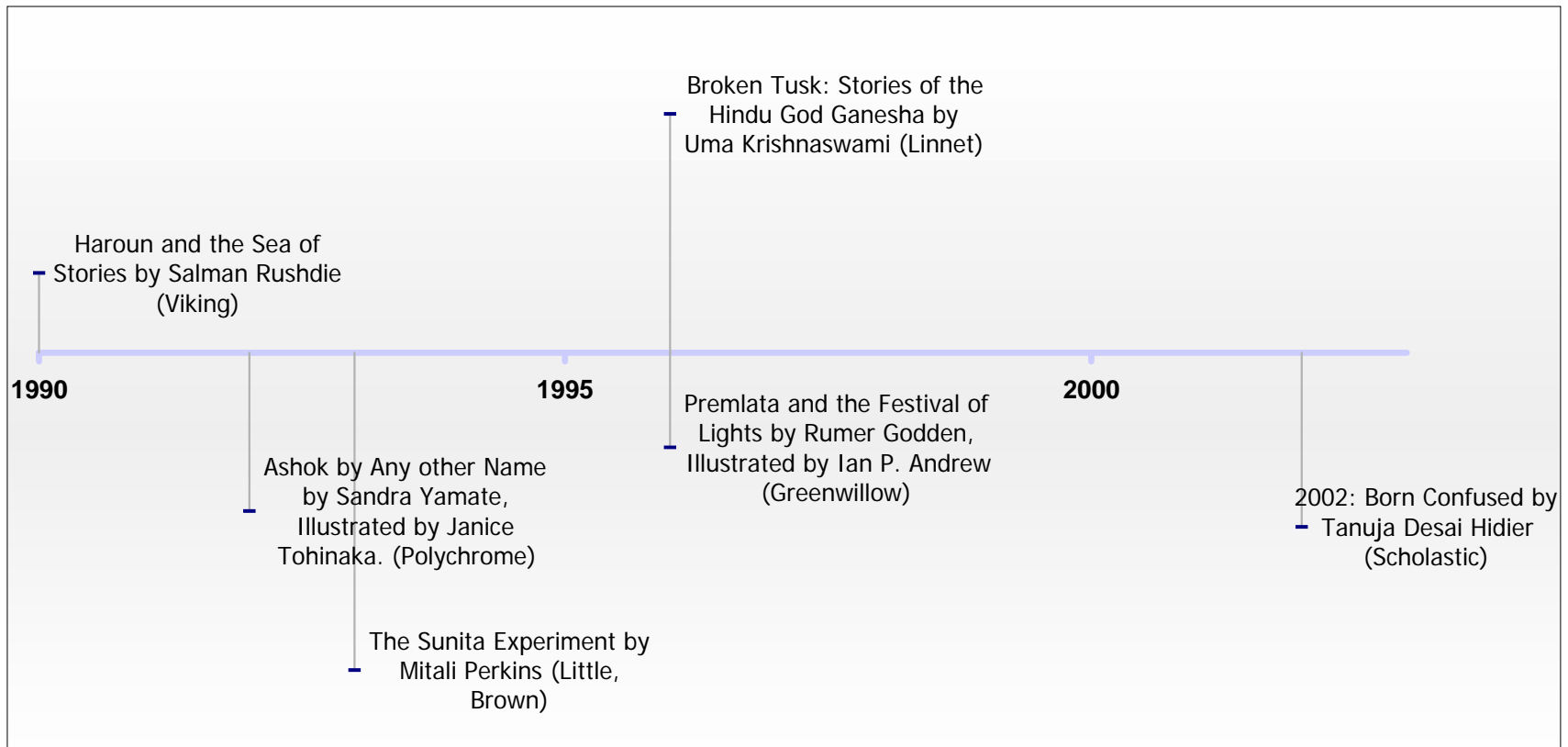
- *Kari the Elephant* (1922)
- *Jungle Beasts and Men* (1923)
- *Hari the Jungle Lad* (1924)
- *Gay-Neck: The Story of a Pigeon* (1927); **1928 Newbery Medal**
- *Ghond the Hunter* (1928)
- *The Chief of the Herd* (1929)
- *Hindu Fables, for Little Children* (1929)
- *Bunny, Hound and Clown* (1931)
- *The Master Monkey* (1932)
- *Fierce-Face: The Story of a Tiger* (1936)

Jean Bothwell (1897-1977)



- *The Thirteenth Stone: A Story of Rajputana* (1946)
- *The River Boy of Kashmir* (1946)
- *The Little Flute Player* (1949)
- *The Emerald Clue* (1961)
- *Omen for a Princess: The Story of Jahanara* (1983)
- *The Dancing Princess* (1965)
- *Ride, Zarina, Ride* (1966)
- *Defiant Bride* (1969)

South Asia and Children's Books (A Very Brief History)





2006

Picture Book

- *Bringing Asha Home* by Uma Krishnaswami, Illustrated by Jamel Akib (Lee & Low Books)
- *The Closet Ghosts* by Uma Krishnaswami, Illustrated by Shiraaz Bhabha (Children's Book Press)
- *My Mother's Sari* by Sandhya N. Rao, Illustrated by Nine Sabnani (North South Books)

Middle Grade

- *Young Uncle Comes to Town* by Vandana Singh, Illustrated by B.M. Kamath (Viking)



2006

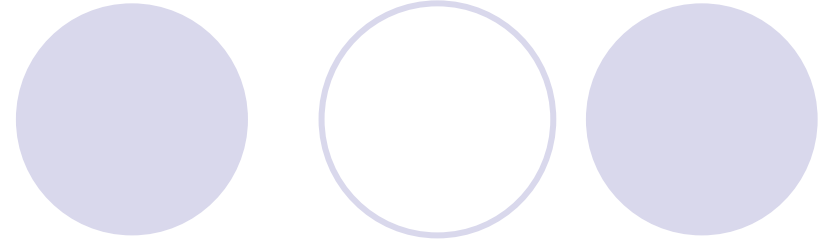
Young Adult

- *Ask Me No Questions* by Marina Budhos (Atheneum)
- *Bhangra Babes* by Narinder Dhami (Delacorte)
- *Koyal Dark, Mango Sweet* by Kashmira Sheth (Hyperion)
- *Looking for Bapu* by Anjali Banerjee (Random House)
- *The Shalamar Code* by Mary Louise L. Clifford (Flux)
- *Sold* by Patricia McCormick (Hyperion)

Crossover

- *Londonstani* by Gautam Malkani (Penguin)
- *How Opal Mehta Got Kissed, Got Wild, and Got A Life* by Kaavya Viswanathan (Little, Brown) *

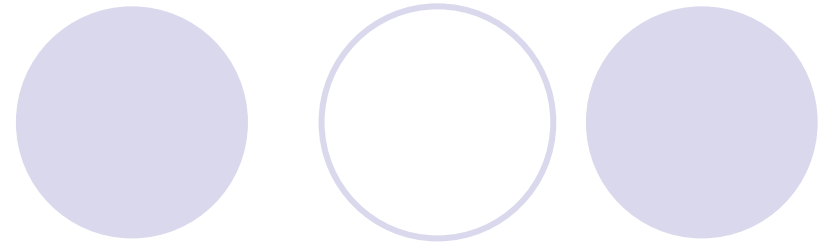
Recently Released



Rickshaw Girl by Mitali Perkins,
Illustrated by Jamie Hogan
(Charlesbridge)

QuickTime™ and a
TIFF (Uncompressed) decompressor
are needed to see this picture.

Recently Released



Mama's Saris by Pooja Makhijani,
Illustrated by Elena Gomez
(Little, Brown)

QuickTime™ and a
TIFF (Uncompressed) decompressor
are needed to see this picture.

Kahani




- 2006 Distinguished Achievement Award, Association of Educational Publishers (AEP)
- 2006 Multicultural Children's Publication Award, National Association for Multicultural Education (NAME)



Importance and Impact

From reading stories about other cultures, children

- learn about an individual or a group of people whose stories take place in a specific historical and physical setting;
- appreciate the idiosyncrasies of other ethnic groups;
- eliminate cultural ethnocentrism;
- develop multiple perspectives.



Importance and Impact

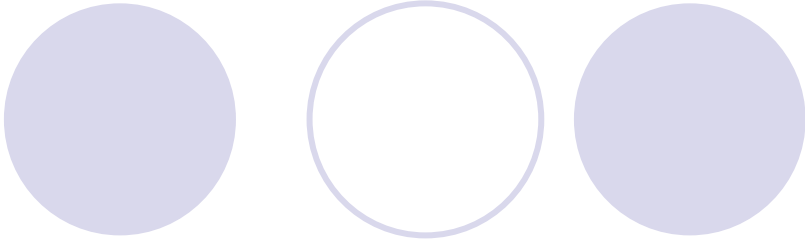
From reading stories about their own cultures, children

- have opportunities to see how others go through experiences similar to theirs;
- develop strategies to cope with issues in their life;
- identify themselves with their inherited culture and, at times, spark a sense of cultural pride and validation.



Guidelines

- General accuracy
- Authentic and realistic behaviors
- Authentic illustrations
- Well-developed characterization

- 
- Historical accuracy
 - Reflections of cultural values
 - Cultural specificity
 - Language

Problematic (But Popular) Titles

- *Homeless Bird* by Gloria Whelan (HarperCollins); 2000 National Book Award
- *Shabanu: Daughter of the Wind* by Suzanne Fisher Staples (Harper Collins)
- *The Story of Little Babaji* by Helen Bannerman, Illustrated by Fred Marcellino (Joanna Cotler)
- *Sold* by Patricia McCormick (Hyperion)
- *Elephant Dance: A Journey to India* by Theresa Heine, Illustrated by Sheila Moxley (Barefoot Books)



Author “Qualifications”

- Should writers and illustrators belong to the cultures they describe?
- It is enough if writers and illustrators empathize with members of a culture even though writing or illustrating from an outsider's point of view?

My Soapbox

The title 'My Soapbox' is positioned on the left side of the slide. It is partially overlaid by a solid light purple circle and a light purple circle with a thin outline. To the right of the title, there is a horizontal row of three circles: a solid light purple circle, a light purple circle with a thin outline, and another solid light purple circle.

- Schools and libraries sometimes make buying decisions based not on the qualities of books or where they fit in any kind of analytical assessment, but instead on how the demographics are shifting in their communities.
- All kinds of children ought to be reading all kinds of books.