

Written in verse form, the book uses short sentences and simple words, which attract young readers. Unique names like Mukurthi, Paniyale Saanp, and Bhangraj provide readers special experiences. However, at places, some proofreading feels necessary.

The illustrations highlight the tribal backdrop. The use of colours is so impactful that readers can not only understand but also feel the day-and-night scenes, the forest landscapes and its atmosphere. The vividness of the illustrations makes the narrative even more powerful.

From an educational perspective, the book opens up discussions about the Irula tribe, Dr. N. Kalyani, and the lives of all tribal communities living in forests. The poem conveys compassion for animals and nature. It sparks curiosity and sensitivity among children—especially those from rural or marginalized backgrounds. It presents the life of a tribal woman with dignity and also instills the realization that with courage and determination, every obstacle can be overcome. Moreover, it introduces young readers to the world of science and veterinary medicine, inspiring them to explore it further.

Generally, in stories, the big animals of the forest are shown preying on the weak. But imagining a situation where these very animals become the hunted and cry out for help adds a new dimension to this story. The way ants and crawling caterpillars stand up bravely against predators symbolizes that every creature, whether small or large, carries a special strength within.

The activity given at the end of the book will prove to be very useful for teachers and facilitators working with children, as it enables them to create opportunities for children to reflect on the book, expand their imagination, and connect with it more closely. At the same time, the brief note on the Irula tribe will enrich discussions conducted with children.

Van-Vani, Kalyani is not just a life story, but a book that conveys the spirit of education, equality, and responsibility toward nature. It is valuable for anyone who wishes to connect children with inspiring and meaningful literature.



Aniket Chouhan

BARAH SAU KI BAATI AUR ANYA KISSE

By Shivnarayan Gour. Illustrated by Nilesh Gehlot
Eklavya Foundation, 2025, pp. 35, ₹ 80.00

Shivnarayan Gour's book, *Barah Sau ki Baati aur Anya Kisse*, has fascinating anecdotes based on real-life incidents, memories, and experiences. The anecdotes are deeply connected to the people around us, their habits

and everyday life. They are like character-oriented short stories and have storytelling power. When you read them, it feels as if someone is telling these tales to you.

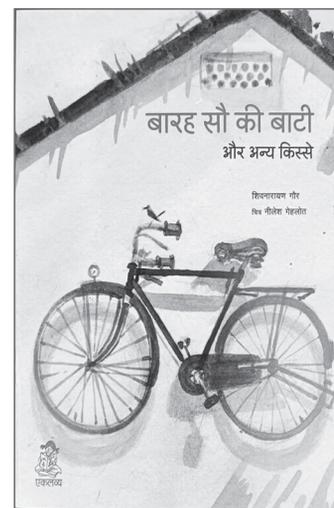
Gour has put these memorable characters and their habits into words with great sensitivity and ease. It mostly has anecdotes of people who have lived or are living their lives in a completely original way, and they don't care much about how people view their quirks. The evocative water-coloured illustrations by Nilesh Gehlot give the book a charming look. They help set the spatial context for the anecdotes.

There are fourteen such anecdotes in this book; each unique in itself. The originality of each character is central to the anecdote and leaves a deep impression on the reader's mind. For example, 'Cycle wala Chacha' is great not only because of its humour, but also because of its paradox. Chacha has property and wealth, yet his greatest passion is stealing bicycles. The irony is that here the theft is not motivated by need, but by habit, even a kind of ecstatic pleasure. What makes the story really interesting is how his hobby reshapes his entire social life. His frequent imprisonments become opportunities to meet people, collect stories and gain extensive knowledge about villages and individuals across the region. In other words, this bad habit of his becomes the source of his storytelling ability.

'Mahesh ka Saanp-Prem' is an interesting anecdote about Mahesh's love of, and living with snakes since his childhood, carrying them to school and taking them for a ride on his motorcycle. Mahesh doesn't just keep snakes as a hobby; he builds an entire world around them. His separate house, his carefully designed pots with air holes, his daily routine of taking each snake for a walk—all these details turn his fascination into a way of life. This anecdote isn't just 'interesting' because it is shocking; it is also interesting because it challenges our notions of fear, danger, and human relationship with snakes. Mahesh embodies a deep affinity with creatures that most people instinctively avoid. In doing so, he highlights how relative fear can be; what is normal for one person can be life-threatening for another. That tension is what makes this anecdote unforgettable.

'Barah Baras Baad' is one of the most emotional and memorable anecdotes of the collection. The return to home of Kaka, the protagonist of the anecdote, after a long time, takes the reader to a world of surprise, nostalgia and emotions.

There has been an old and rich tradition of telling and



listening to anecdotes and stories in Indian society. We gain insight into our surroundings through the anecdotes of Akbar-Birbal, Tenali Rama, Vikram-Betal, and the stories told by elders in the family to their children about the times of their time. The same tradition seems to come alive in this book.

The book is written in a chatty style, almost conversational. There is a familiarity in Gour's style of narration, which connects with the reader deeply. With every rereading, a new layer opens up and new emotions come to the fore. This is the reason the anecdotes of the book touch the heart and are remembered for a long time. Books of this genre are rarely seen. These anecdotes not only describe character-oriented stories; they also illustrate how the unique quirks of different human characters can become anecdotes or narratives.

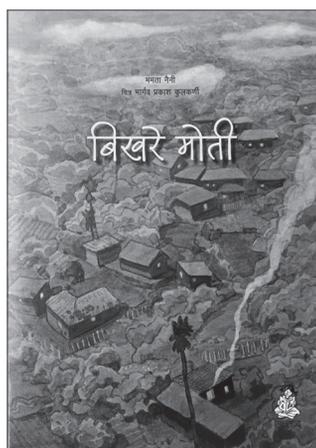
The quirky temperament of the book's characters lends a unique colour to these anecdotes. Sometimes their innocence, sometimes their craziness, sometimes their frankness—all these bring a smile to the face while reading, and sometimes make one think deeply. The biggest strength of these anecdotes is that they present a live picture of our society and time, without any pretense.

Barah Sau ki Baati aur Anya Kisse introduces children and young readers to social diversity, originality and the complexities of human behaviour, breaking away from traditional children's literature. This book strikes a balance between humour and sensitivity, which not only engages readers but also makes them empathetic. In today's times, when literature is distancing from everyday life, this book bridges that gap. It is a priceless experience for those readers who want humour, sensitivity and the depth of human relationships simultaneously.

BIKHRE MOTI

By Mamta Nainy. Illustrated by Bhargav Prasad Kulkarni
Eklavya Foundation, 2024, pp. 20, ₹ 60.00

Bikhre Moti (Scattered Pearls) is a story about a young boy, his sister Ratna, and their mother, Amma, who set out to the forest with bamboo baskets under their arms to collect mahua flowers. The collection of mahua flowers is a seasonal traditional practice that has deep cultural and emotional significance for tribal communities and rural village people. The summer season is mahua season for



villagers; they wait for this season to arrive because with the mahua season, the entire village atmosphere changes.

Nainy gently unfolds the magic of these moments, thread by thread—the silence of the morning, cricket chirps, waking up early, carrying bamboo baskets, the fragrance of mahua wafting through the forest, crunching dry leaves beneath footsteps, people camping overnight to gather mahua, and finally, the sight of mahua flowers scattered like tiny pearls on the floor of the forest. The mahua flower is beautifully set as the center of this story.

This story could unfold in any tribal village or rural area of central and northern India. The village is situated close to the forest where people from almost all households go to collect mahua. Their collection and sale are a major source of livelihood for the village people. Collecting them is the first step: it requires several days to dry them for sale. Villagers sell them at local markets to be able to purchase necessary items.

The flowers hold significant social, economic, and cultural value for the tribal community. They have been central to festivities and celebrations as a symbol of abundance as resilience. The flower is also recognized as the key component in the liquor that shares its name, crafted by tribals. In tribal villages, mahua flowers can be seen spread like a sheet in every house, in its courtyard and on the roof. These sweet and juicy flowers bring joy to both kids and adults, as well as cattle and other animals!

Nainy's work succeeds in weaving cultural beliefs, traditional practices and ecological relationships into a seamless narrative; it helps readers understand why mahua flowers are truly pearls for the tribes of central India. The work also captures the harmonious coexistence of people, nature and livelihood, underlining the mahua flowers' role as living heritage of the region.

This book is designed extraordinarily well. What the reviewer liked the most are the illustrations, especially because colour combinations are skillfully employed to add to the charm of this book. When reading this story, one can imagine through the pictures and colours; the illustrator has added a lot of movement to his pieces on every page. These illustrations make the story more accessible and help readers understand it more thoroughly. They help put ideas from the story into context.

In all, in this fictional account of an average villager's routine in the mahua-gathering season, Nainy has used simple words and short paragraphs while relying on fantasy and imagination to allow it to remain understandable to children. Her writing draws readers into the world of rural foraging and helps them feel the excitement.

