



Green Budget Should Go Beyond Energy and Electric Vehicles

By Benedict Paramanand

For a long time, Indian governments had soft-peddled sustainability. For the first time, India has signaled its sincere commitment to its sustainable future. Most of its policy pronouncements do reflect intent. What's evident is how it sees the inevitability of mainstreaming and integrating its economic goals with sustainability goals.

Unmissable in the Finance Minister Nirmala Sitaraman's speech is commitment towards energy transition and steps towards building a low carbon economy in the 2022 Budget. For the first time, she sees climate

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change as an economic and business opportunity. That she sees polluted Indian cities as 'centres of sustainable living'. Green energy and green mobility have received both policy and budget support.

India is the third largest polluter and how it executes its commitment to UN Sustainability Development Goals, of course with the help of the world institutions, will determine the future of the planet.

To **Masood Mallick**, joint managing director – Ramky Enviro, the announcement of green bonds to raise capital focused towards climate resilience and other environmentally focused projects, is a long awaited one. " This will certainly aid local governments to work together with industry towards accelerating India's transition to a lower carbon economy."

It's easy to pick contradictions in India's approach to mitigate climate crisis from the Budget speech.

Here's a list that shows off how 'green' the Budget is:

- ❑ Allocation of Rs 19,500 crore for production-linked incentives (PLI) for manufacturing of high-efficiency solar modules
- ❑ Support to use of biomass pellets in thermal power plants that could reduce CO2 by 38 million tons annually
- ❑ Energy efficiency and savings promoted for large commercial buildings through the energy service company model
- ❑ Four pilot projects for coal gasification and conversion of coal into chemicals
- ❑ A focus on agroforestry and private forestry and support to poor farmers for taking up agroforestry
- ❑ Sovereign green bonds to be issued in public sector projects to reduce carbon intensity of the economy
- ❑ Blended finance approach to promote climate action, agriculture and other clean technology. This is to be managed by private fund managers
- ❑ Inclusion of energy storage in the harmonized list of infrastructure
- ❑ Promoting transit-oriented development for cities
- ❑ A battery swapping policy
- ❑ A new bill called The Energy Conservation (Amendment) Bill, is to be introduced soon to provide regulatory framework for
 - Carbon Trading in India
 - Encouraging penetration of renewable in energy mix
 - Effective implementation and enforcement of the Energy Conservation Act, 2001

Address Present Crisis

Any major policy direction needs to take a long term view while addressing pressing present issues as well. It appears this Budget displays strong long term vision but is not doing enough to mitigate current crisis.

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For example, critics see weak support to controlling air pollution in cities. India has a majority of the most polluted cities in India. This falls in the area of common good and getting private funding is difficult. What India needs is a war on air pollution.

The government is keen to speed up environmental clearance for mega projects by clubbing all approvals into one. This may be prudent but it has to clearly improve transparency and governance standards so that in the name of efficiency fragile ecosystem is not compromised. India

needs to strengthen its institutions on environmental protection like the National Green Tribunal. We need tribunals in every state capital as well.

India has an awfully weak healthcare and primary education infrastructure. Support to healthcare in the budget is matter-of-fact without a grand vision. Ramping up health infrastructure including scaling and skilling para health support needs to be accorded priority.

India has the highest number of children suffering malnutrition even when Food Corporation of India godowns are brimming with grains. According to economist **Ashok Gulati**, a mammoth Rs. 2 lakh crore capital is stuck because 89 million tons of excess food stock is lying in the FCI godowns. Malnutrition crisis needs to be addressed on a mission mode.

This budget can be dubbed 'green' budget, but the definition of green extends beyond renewable energy and electric vehicles. Massive support is needed for waste management across all sectors especially treating municipal and water waste at scale. All Indian cities still have garbage dumps outside them. Municipal More roads and trains are good. But more hospitals, schools and waste treatment plants are more important.



Food grains rotting outside an FCI godown



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Swaraj Green Power Uses Praj Industries' Tech to Set Up Massive Ethanol Plant



Swaraj Green Power & Fuel Limited (Swaraj) announced plans to set up Asia's largest ethanol plant (1100 KLPD) in Maharashtra. The first stage capacity of 500 kilo litres per day (KLPD) and in second stage capacity shall be enhanced to 1100 KLPD based on sugarcane juice & BIOSYRUP®.

Established in the year 2010 Swaraj is recognized as one of the most progressive sugar mills and ethanol producer in India. Swaraj already has 60KLPD capacity plant for production of ethanol based on molasses as feedstock.

Praj is responsible for design, engineering, supply and commissioning of the plant. Its Innovative solution to process sugarcane juice into a new sustainable feedstock BIOSYRUP® will help Swaraj secure round the year ethanol production.

While signing the contract, **Ranjeetsinh Naik-Nimbhalkar, Founder & Promoter, Swaraj** said, "We are pleased to align with GOI's ethanol blending program (E20) aimed at achieving energy self-reliance while helping conserve environment and helps in saving huge foreign currency. We believe this project will help uplift farming community in Satara and Solapur districts by creating job and entrepreneurship opportunities.

Dr. Pramod Chaudhari, Founder Chairman of Praj said this landmark project in Maharashtra is a significant step forward towards meeting Government of India's E20 blending mandates while helping decarbonize the transportation sector. It is also seen as an effective solution to address challenges of fluctuating sugar economy.



Ambuja Cement Gets GRIHA's Green Product Listing

Ambuja Cements, a member of Holcim, has obtained listing in GRIHA's green product catalogue for its blended cement. Green Rating for Integrated Habitat Assessment (GRIHA) is a National Green rating system of India conceived by The Energy & Resources Institute (TERI) and developed jointly with the Ministry of New and Renewable Energy, Government of India.

Mr. Neeraj Akhoury, CEO India Holcim and MD & CEO of Ambuja Cements Ltd. said, "At Ambuja Cement Ltd., sustainability is the core of our business and we will continue to innovate and develop products & solutions along with sustainable construction practices in the future. This recognition bestowed upon us by GRIHA will further strengthen our commitment to build sustainable solutions for communities and contribute towards circular economies of the future."

Ambuja's blended cements portfolio consists of Ambuja Plus, Ambuja Kawach, Ambuja Compocem and Ambuja Cement (PPC). These products are aligned with Ambuja Cement's sustainability goals and objective of inspiring and exploring innovative ways in promoting sustainable construction. Ambuja Cements inclusion in GRIHA's catalogue, a company note said, has accelerated its commitment towards achieving Net Zero by 2030.

GRIHA Council has developed the GRIHA Product Catalogue. This online catalogue provides all necessary information on Green Building Products available in the country to the Green Building Designers, Architects, Engineers and clients which can be used to make GRIHA compliant green buildings.

Ambuja Cements Ltd., a part of the global conglomerate Holcim, is among the leading cement companies in India. Ambuja Cement has a cement capacity of 31 million tons with six integrated cement manufacturing plants and eight cement grinding units across the country.

For more details, visit <https://ambujacement.com/>



Ramky to Set Up Waste Management Facility in UAE

Ramky Enviro Engineers Middle East, a 100% subsidiary of **Ramky Enviro Engineers Limited**, and Waste Management Agency of the Emirate of Ras Al Khaimah, announced their strategic partnership to set up an exclusive industrial hazardous waste management facility in RAK, UAE.

This facility is meant to make Ras Al Khaimah more sustainable and competitive. This is the first hazardous waste facility with an R&D centre in the Northern Emirates and will provide solutions for industries for recycling, treatment of toxic hazardous and medical waste, in a scientific manner. RAK is actively investing in circular economy.

Masood Mallick, JMD, REEL, said, RAK is a priority destination for responsible investments and that REEL is happy to be a sustainable development partner for the region.

Ramky Enviro Engineers Ltd (REEL), a KKR-backed company, is one of Asia's leading providers of comprehensive environment management services.





Water Conversations

Trichy's Citizens Daunted by Challenges No One Wants to Solve

It's a motley group of people of Trichy who have been doing little things on their own, to make people see what they need to do, to overcome the challenge of water conservation and supply. You stand on the banks of the river Cauvery or of the Kollidam [the colonial Coleroon], and you wonder if there is at all a challenge of water in this ancient town of temples and of some of the finest schools and colleges.

When the citizens for Uyyakondan banded together in 2015, not many were interested. Most people shrugged, "Where is any challenge of water? What is the issue that you want to take up when there is none at all?!" Dr Narasimha Rao, an orthopaedic, in his usual silent ways, chose not to react. He persisted. The forum grew into a sizeable number of people. They first put signboards on the history of the canal, the benefits accruing from the UK canal. Hope was that people would read them, know the significance, and do their little bit to reduce abuse of the canal. The polluting of the canal and of the lake of Uyyakondan is massive. How do we get people to stop polluting what was originally a freshwater body?

Continued on next page

Bridge Foundation that **Dr Narasimha Rao** had founded, continued its bit to nudge the story along, and bring subtle but tangible behavioural change wherever possible. When they hit upon WOW Action Forum and the work that the national and global group of water and sustainability experts were doing, Trichy saw promise. They chose to make their city a WOW Partner City, and galvanised a few citizen leaders from the town to join in. Says Narasimha, the Mission Director, "We must first bring some demonstrated change with higher education institutions, or industry, or even apartments and such communities which use water in large quantities. Then we can prove how the solutions bring measurable and dramatic savings." Says WOW's national forum founder, Dr Hariharan, "Every school or college campus of one acre, with 1000 children, with the city receiving one metre or 1000 mm of rainfall, can generate one crore litres of water in one year.... With very simple water solutions that are installed for both harvesting water, and for saving water with efficient fixtures and systems."

Ar. Vijay Sengottavan, a practising professional, and a pleasant, thinking citizen who has gained the respect and the ears of the City's administration over years of dedicated contribution he has made for the town, says, "The Big Institutions in Trichy have a vital role. Large institutions and the government, in my opinion, must be targets. I believe that reusing water is more vital than rainwater gathering. The government promises 100 litres of water to each person and somehow manages to provide it. So, when it comes to larger institutions with a higher number of individuals, this is most often the case."

Water Reuse Potential

Water reuse is one solution to the problem. As a result, I believe that after the larger institutions have brought such savings in their freshwater demand, the government will be in a better position to provide for the less fortunate members of society. It is the responsibility of major institutions to take the initiative; let us begin with them in Trichy. Let us work to overcome mindsets and preconceptions at the bottom level that it will take time, money, and effort. We had Kaveri's waters meeting our needs up until now, and we weren't in too bad a shape. The future is not very reassuring."

Adds Narasimha, "In contrast to Bangalore, I am yet to encounter a crisis scenario in which we must pay for the amount of water used by a person, apartment, house, or institution. A fixed water cess must be paid for a slab of water use. Yes, there are areas in Trichy where people buy water from tanks, but it's not terribly expensive. It's not like Trichy is experiencing a severe water shortage. Due to initiatives to create a water channel in Trichy, there is a growing level of awareness. The issue we have is that we need to understand how to treat our wastewater, which is the primary source of contamination in Trichy's largest freshwater lake, the Uyyakondan. Individual homes as well as bulk water-users discharge waste water into this channel. Question is : how do we handle sewage on a small scale as well as large scale? Individuals who are interested should be offered solutions on a scale that they can adapt to, while institutions ready to do their part on a larger scale, such as Holy Cross College, should be offered solutions on a larger scale. They are ready and willing—if the solution directions are guided. This is where WOW professionals can step in and guide the city's challenge."

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NGT keeping a watch on efforts taken to stop Uyyakondan canal pollution – The New Indian Express

Save Uyyakondan Lake

Reflects Ar Vijay, "The 1000-year old Uyyakondan Canal which once was a life-support for Trichy's water needs, has suffered the last 3 decades, massive abuse from water-users. Sewage enters the canal at several points with really no check or monitor. Officers in the administration say that installing water treatment systems before the waste water enters the Canal is not viable. "We cannot maintain and operate it in numerous locations," is the refrain. "There's also a general debate over whether the solution should be central or localised to the point of water-discharge or source at which the waste water is generated. At the organisational or corporate level, they must install such water treatment systems, and assign individuals to manage maintenance.

"We seek decentralisation, while bureaucrats want it to be more centralised. There are some inspiring examples. Railways, for example, do an excellent job of recycling water. They are major landowners in Trichy. Their example needs to be recognised by others and emulated by more bulk water-users in Trichy." Echoes Narasimha, "Sure, we need decentralised treatment of waste water in homes and offices, hospitals and hotels... This will ensure discharge into the Uyyakondan canal – of about half the water so treated and reused by the buildings."

Adds Vijay, "Such post STP treated water can be used to irrigate agricultural lands on the outskirts of the city if the drainage of the canal gains good treated water. We are not suggesting that such treated wastewater should be potable. It should be good enough for agricultural purposes."

Based on excerpts from a conversation at the Prem Jain Memorial Trust Mahotsav Series. Healing of Trichy lake – <https://youtu.be/t7R8mWUJxjw>

Pallavi Singh & Lahari Babu Team WOW Action Forum.



Has Children's Literature in India Warmed up to Climate Change?

By Archana Natraj

With melting glaciers, forest fires, typhoons, epic floods and vanishing species all around us, the climate emergency is right here. Inspired by Greta Thunberg, the teenager climate activist from Sweden, young people around the world are raising their voices on a broad spectrum of issues related to the crisis. India is no exception. Over the past few years, young people like Ridhima Pandey and Licypriya Kangujam have captured public imagination in India and around the world with their strident activism. But, has children's literature in India warmed up to climate change? Thankfully, the answer, while not a resounding yes, is a very hopeful yes.

At first glance, climate change may be deemed to be essentially non-fiction, populated by books filled with facts to raise awareness. However, it is heartening to note that over the years, this genre has diversified to include a plethora of titles that attempt to capture the various facets of the issue for young readers, instead of limiting themselves to the science behind it.

Inspired non-fiction

My Big Book of Global Warming from Katha's 'Thinkbook' series is peppered with stories and poems that effectively blend fiction and non-fiction. From tree felling in Ladakh and the shifting agricultural techniques of the Baigas of Jharkhand to the global, youth-led social innovation enterprise Green Hope – the book is enriched by snippets that nudge readers to actively think of ways in which they can contribute to change.

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The emphasis on people-driven narratives is an effective means to inspire readers and spark action. *The Grass Seeker* by Uddalak Gupta uses mesmerizing photographs to tell the tale of a Gaddi shepherd whose future generations will be permanently forced to change their way of life as they reel under the effects of global warming. In *10 Indian Champions Who Are Fighting to Save The Planet* Bijal Vachharajani and Radha Rangarajan augment existing literature, with an anthology that brings together tales of various people working in the field, such as Minal Pathak, Aparajita Datta and Rohan Arthur. Reading stories of environmental heroes is essential to empower young people with role models who are bringing change on the ground, beyond activism.

Knowing our past struggles and victories provides an important insight to usher change. Meghaa Gupta's *Unearthed: An Environmental History of Independent India* is a unique compendium that meticulously chronicles the country's historical movements and significant green missions since 1947.

The rise of 'Cli-fi'

Stories have a unique power to teleport the reader right into a character's shoes, grapple with the problem from the inside, and feel the emotions. Hence, fictionalizing climate change is vital to situate it in our everyday lives.

Accelerated by the 'Greta Thunberg Effect', 'Cli-fi' (Climate fiction) is evolving into a popular genre in the West. In 2020, British YA author Lauren James established *The Climate Fiction Writers League* to raise awareness on climate change. The group has over 100 authors from around the world, including Bijal, whose much-loved book *A Cloud Called Bhura* highlights multiple facets of the climate change movement with a group of children becoming changemakers in the face of an ominous brown cloud threatening the health of their city. More recently, Bijal, who is one of India's best-known cli-fi authors, has written *Savi and the Memory Keeper*, a funny, thoughtful and deeply moving story of finding resilience in the face of personal loss, grief and an ever-warming world.

Published just before Greta Thunberg came into the collective consciousness, Roopal Kewalya's *The Little Rainmaker*, almost clairvoyantly, creates her fictional counterpart in the protagonist, Anoushqa. Situated in a rainless world, the book sees Anoushqa go on a determined trail to bring back the rain that her old and frail grandfather yearns to see. In her review of the book, Archana Atri writes, "both Anoushqa and Greta speak the same language when insisting that, "we hear the scientists," as also when they're guided by feelings and emotions. In an impassioned appeal to world leaders, Greta said, 'We children are doing this because we want our hopes and dreams back.' Within the pages of this novel, Anoushqa says, 'Those who don't feel are abnormal. And it would be awesome to have the power to shake things up when you really feel something.' Interestingly enough, both use social media platforms to garner support for their cause – Anoushqa's page is Grampa's Dream and Greta's global youth movement, *Fridays for Future*."

Meanwhile, in *Grandfather Goes On a Strike* K.S. Nagarajan takes the fight beyond children, with Sathya's feisty grandfather, who refuses to allow a neem tree to be 'murdered' by resolutely perching on it! Not surprisingly, the power of protest is an important theme in fiction covering facets of climate change.

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However, sometimes fiction is just that – a richly imagined text that invokes the issue without pushing a point. In *Gravepyres School for the Recently Deceased* Anita Roy fictionalizes many real-world references, such as wildlife conservation, dams and plastic, to create a powerful narrative that effortlessly paints both life and death within a broader canvas of nature. Little Jose is dead and the only way he can return to his parents is through the River of Time. But dammed by 'Plasticorp', the river is nearly dead and the path to it is laden with adventure...

Playing with formats

In telling these stories of climate change, publishers, authors and illustrators have often employed interesting formats. Rohan Chakravarty's *Green Humour for a Greying Planet* is collection of his trailblazing comics that expose current conflicts, ill-conceived environmental policies and wildlife issues while packing in a chuckle-inducing punch.

Similarly, P.S. *What's up with the climate?* uses postcards written by animals under threat to alert children to what is happening to landscapes and animals around them, in a changing planet.

Need for more 'local' stories

The climate story is bleak. Agricultural distress, coastal destruction, loss of livelihood, forced migration, loss of biodiversity, health repercussions... it has far-reaching consequences. Yet, there are gaping holes, when it comes to telling stories that unravel the often-insidious ways in which the crisis finds itself in our lives. Effective storytelling and the use of fiction can bring these stories to children in gentle ways. In the words of the environmental scientist James Jones, *"In a world where politicians and others frequently peddle fictions, the fiction author can tell truths that people otherwise wouldn't hear."*

At its heart, the climate change narrative will change when we stop looking at nature as 'The Giving Tree' and realize that it is about saving a place we share and call home. To quote the Native American Chief Seattle,

"All things are connected like the blood that unites us all. Man did not weave the web of life, he is merely a strand in it. Whatever he does to the web, he does to himself."

Recommended Reads

My Big Book of Global Warming edited by Geeta Dharmarajan

10 Indian Champions Who Are Fighting to Save the Planet by Bijal Vachharajani and Radha Rangarajan

Unearthed: The Environmental History of Independent India by Meghaa Gupta

A Cloud Called Bhura: Climate Champions to the Rescue by Bijal Vachharajani

The Little Rainmaker by Roopal Kewalya

Green Humour for a Greying Planet by Rohan Chakravarty

P.S. What's up with the climate? by Bijal Vachharajani and Archana Sreenivasan

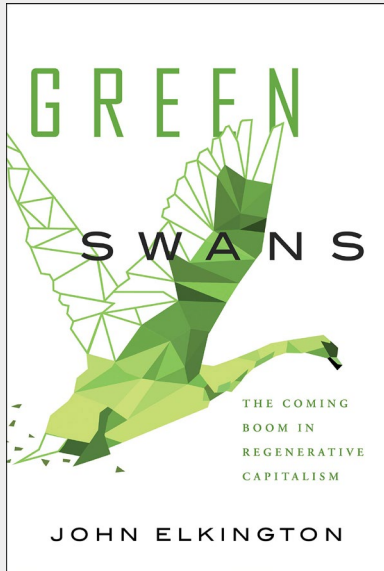
The Grass Seeker by Uddalak Gupta

Grandfather Goes on Strike by K.S. Nagarajan

Gravepyres School for the Recently Deceased by Anita Roy



BOOKREVIEW



Ride the Green Swan to a New Future

By Santhosh Jayaram

Few birds stir our imagination like swans do. They're part of many motifs, legends, and in India, even religions. Swans are a grace in motion. They appear as if they don't need to evolve any further.

Nassim Nicholas Taleb, trader-cum-academic, used the black swan metaphor as the title of his book '*The Black Swan – The Impact of the Highly Improbable*.' When he showed the extreme impact of rare and unpredictable events, business leaders could relate to it easily.

A decade later, the swan is back. This time its color is green.

John Elkington, renowned sustainability guru, published *Green Swans – The Coming Boom in Regenerative Capitalism*.

I've read many of John's 20 books. In terms of their contribution to profound transformative thought process, Green Swans is only next to The Cannibals with Forks. Both were published at critical moments in business history and provide an excellent framework for moving ahead.

In The Cannibals with Forks John questioned businesses' single-minded focus on bottom-line. In Green Swans, he shows how, capitalism in the current form, is broken and how the world needs to transform to a new economic system that is regenerative.

John's style of writing is a mix of in-your-face approach and calls out challenges the way he sees them. He sees these challenges with measured optimism. He sees the ugly ducklings of today transforming into green swans of tomorrow.

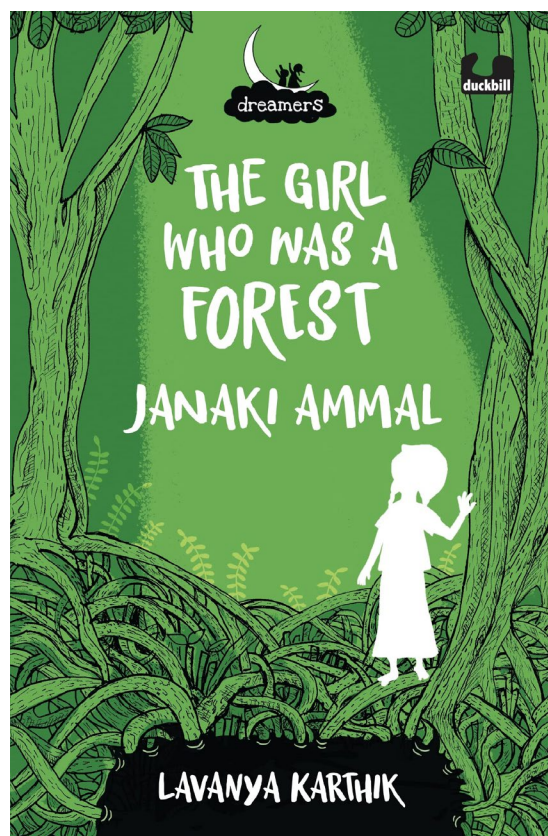
John explains how we are headed towards a systemic breakdown with numerous examples, yet, he believes in the extraordinary creativity of humankind that has the potential to create a radically different future. Many things that used to be fiction, fantasy, or the magic of the past, are a reality today. He weaves old stories and counters them with the new and explains how transformation is taking shape.

The book switches between the wicked problems and the green swan evolutions that are happening concurrently. It contains several well-researched case studies. Through many examples, John tries to convince the reader that the change towards green swan capitalism will indeed be a paradigm shift. If organizations and leaders are convinced of this shift, it's the beginning of them becoming future fit. It's not enough if a single or a few organizations become future-fit, the whole market and the eco-system needs to become future-fit. This book is a must-read for business leaders. It will help them overcome their cognitive biases so that they can steer themselves and their organizations to a greener future.



Finding the Forest Within

By Rati Girish



This book has been a part of our conversation for a while because my son has fallen in love with the line – ‘Every seed is the promise of a forest... like you are.’

The third book in the Dreamer series – delightfully illustrated short biographies for beginner readers published by Duckbill – *The Girl Who Was A Forest* is about E.K. Janaki Ammal, one of India’s most well-known women scientists in the field of botany.

This is a story about her childhood, when she was desperately trying to break free from rules and pressures imposed on her as a girl, especially one belonging to a lower caste. Little Janaki dreams of flying and soaring free in the sky. But her father tells her that she is a seed. What good is a seed, and how is being a seed better than being a bird, she wonders. Her father then explains to her how a small seed has infinite potential and could one day create an entire forest, one that grows and thrives despite the rules that society imposes on it.

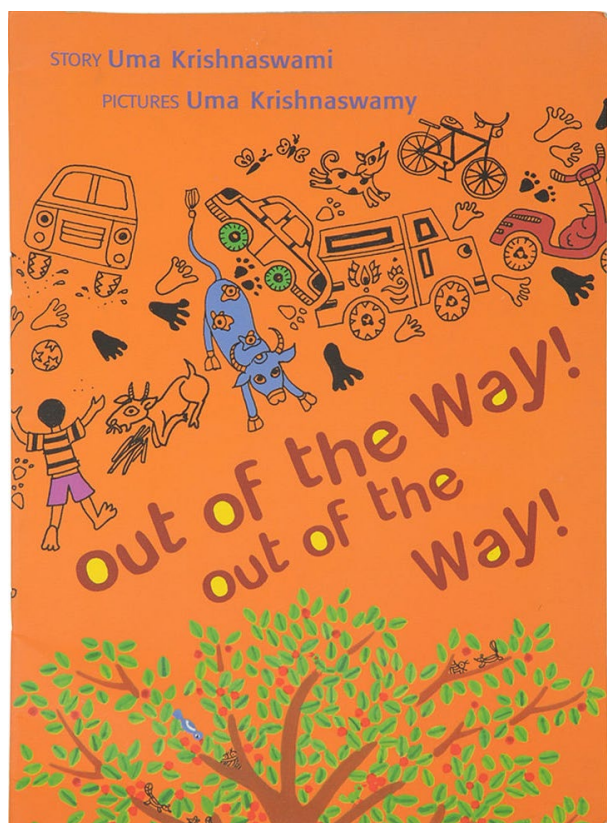
Author and illustrator Lavanya Karthik must be commended for her choice of personality – women scientists are underrepresented in popular imagination – and finding the perfect story from her protagonist’s life – one that will move not just children, but readers of all ages. The green, black and white illustrations, inspired by botanical and landscape art add to the charm of this story and will surely appeal to young readers who are just beginning their journey with longer text.

The book includes a short biography of Janaki Ammal – with information on her work both in India and in England. But a picture of the scientist, a description of what it means to be a botanist and an image of the flower named after her would have gone a long way towards creating a better context for the young reader. My son had questions about what caste meant, what mangroves were, and even her work in developing the sugar we eat today (as mentioned in the short bio at the end of the book). A glossary of terms would have helped both the young (and adult!) reader understand her work and its context in today’s world, better. That said, **the Dreamer series is meant to introduce children to the spark that ignited the minds of these dreamers. They will remember that these dreamers saw something extraordinary in their everyday and decided to pursue it to achieve greatness, often against tremendous odds.** And isn’t that what all of us are trying to teach our kids?



Leaving Room for Nature

By Aparna Kher



A boy notices a small sapling on a dusty path that runs through a busy village, and instinctively protects it with stones. People and goods passing by, on ever-faster wheels, shout “Out of the way, Out of the Way” as they make their way around it. They pound and flatten the path into a regular thoroughfare. Over time, the tree becomes taller and wider, serving as a nesting place for birds and a meeting place for the community. The boy keeps returning to the shade of the tree as he grows older from father to grandfather. The thoroughfare grows into a street and then a wider, busier road for bigger and faster vehicles, some of which stop a while in its shade.

Out of the Way, Out of the Way written by Uma Krishnaswami and published by **Tulika** is a timeless tale of how landscapes evolve, and how nature and development can go hand-in-hand and even complement each other. It speaks of changes visible

all around us that we rarely pause to notice.

Vibrant, folk tale-style illustrations by Uma Krishnaswamy contextualise the story within an Indian rural setting. They also add more depth to the narrative. We see scenes from a village like huts with grains drying outside, a lady talking to a girl, a balloon seller. As the sapling grows into a tree, the huts also grow in number and size. Some become larger houses and buildings. We see more fields, more carts, a small school, vegetable vendors and other scenes from a town that convey the growth and development of what was once a village.

Children will find it interesting to spot the different aspects of everyday life that dot this landscape and see how these evolve over time. This can then lead to conversations on how their own surroundings may have changed, encouraging them to pause and ponder.

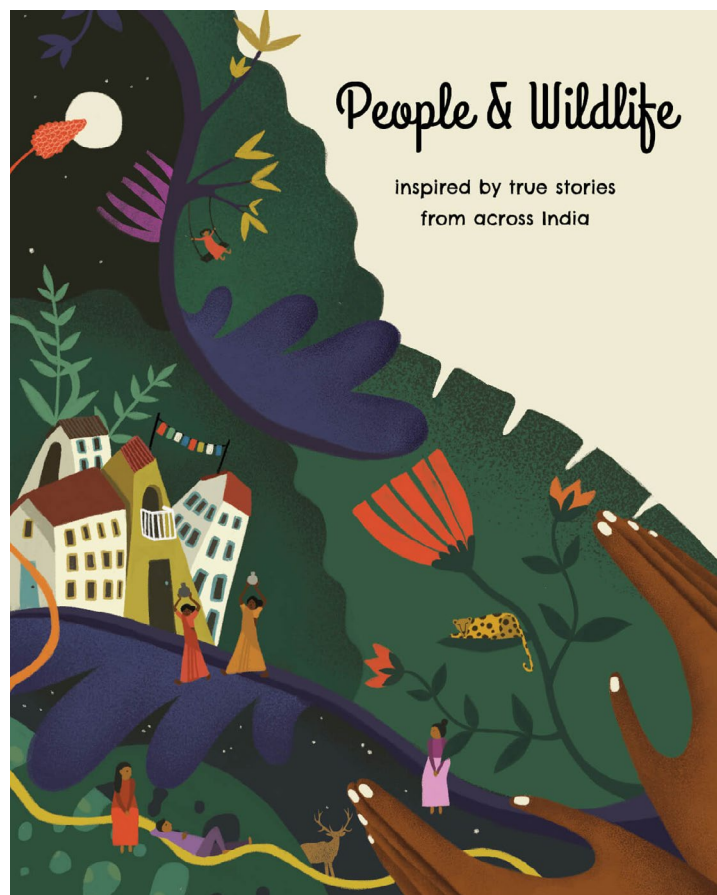
The spectre of uncontrolled urbanisation is a reality of modern India. While most children in pre-independence and newly-independent India were born in villages and small towns, most children of today and tomorrow will be born in cities. Yet ideas of urban development are rarely discussed in children’s literature. This is precisely what makes this picture book delightful and important at the same time – the beauty and simplicity with which it captures this complex, contemporary concept.

Also available in Hindi, Bengali, Marathi, Gujarati, Tamil, Telugu, Kannada and Malayalam



Of Human-animal Co-existence

By JoAnne Saldanha



“... do step outside the confines of your classrooms and houses. You never know what you might find right in your back yard,” Gundappa Sir advises children, in the story Kaadu Paapa by Sujatha Padmanabhan – one of the ten delightful tales featured in the anthology *People and Wildlife* published by Kalpavriksh. True to his words, this book inspires children to do exactly that by telling them fascinating stories of how people and wildlife co-exist across the country. Along the way, it also informs them of our country’s stunning natural heritage.

When I think of India, I think ‘diverse’. So, what struck me the most was the close attention given to diversity in this book. In addition to wildlife, it also highlights the diverse cultures, beliefs, traditions, landscapes and people across the country. In the lush northeast, a Naga grandfather tells his grandson about

the traditions of their tribe and how their people listened to messages from nature. In the west, villagers in Charotar, Gujarat, co-exist peacefully with mugger crocodiles. In Rajasthan, Ratanlal and his wife draw from the teachings of their religion to feed thousands of migratory Demoiselle Cranes from Mongolia. And in Kerala recollections of their carefree childhood days, lead a group of friends to clean up their river, bringing back the otter that once frolicked there.

In addition to rural narratives, the book also features stories from big metros. In Chennai, citizens help save the Olive Ridley Turtle from extinction, and, near bustling Mumbai, despite attacks, the leopard is worshipped as Waghoba, the guardian of the forest.

Nayantara Surendranath’s charming illustrations bring alive this wonderful potpourri of stories, helping readers picture the cultures and unique creatures they might not have seen otherwise. While a couple of the stories did drag, what I can say about all the stories is that they brought hope and inspiration to an otherwise dismal narrative on environmental degradation that one usually encounters. These are stories children must know – of real people, doing real work to preserve the natural world. A must have in any school classroom or home library.

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SN launched India's first Green Literature Festival (www.greenlitfest.com) in December 2021.

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