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“DEEPA AGRAWAL: A GREAT WRITER OF INDIA”

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ABSTRACT

Author, poet and translator, Deepa Agarwal writes for both children and adults and has fifty published books to her credit. She has received several awards for her work. Her picture book, Ashok's New Friends, was awarded the National Award for Children's Literature by the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT), while the historical fiction Caravan to Tibet featured on the International Board on Books for Young People Honour List of 2008. Her work has appeared in Japanese, Chinese and Korean as well as sixteen Indian languages.



KEYWORDS: Deepa Agarwal , Author, poet and translator.

INTRODUCTION

Fourteen-year-old Debu lives with his mother and his younger brother Hayat in Milam, a small village in the Himalayan hills of Kumaon, India. During the trip to Tibet, that his folks took the previous year, his father goes missing, and the tribesmen were close to believing that he must be dead in the snowstorm. But Debu has reasons to believe that his father is alive – he has seen his father's amulet on the chain of Sonam Darka, a Tibetan. With the goal of finding his father, and averting the danger of Trilok, his father's cousin, remarrying his mother, he pleads with his people to let him accompany them on their trading trip this year.

Kalyan Singh, the leader of the caravan, though reluctant at first, eventually concedes, and thus starts Debu's preparation. When he cannot find anything to trade there, and he is uncertain if his father's partnership with Dawa Nangal would be honoured without his father's piece of the stone of partnership, he sets out to find if it is hidden. Accidentally, he discovers some silver tankas, which he takes with him to trade. He has his pony Bijli for company.

The adventure begins with the slip to near death of Trilok, and a daring save by Debu that endears him to his caravaners. At Tibet, when they go to the Lama to pay their respects, Debu offers the top that Hayat gave him, to the Lama, who is younger to him. Pleased with it, the Lama wants Debu to stay back to be his friend, so the rest of the caravan proceeds without him.

When Debu tries to escape, but gets caught, he confesses his true intentions to the Lama. The understanding Lama, sends him on his journey, with some gifts and escorts. But, that night, robbers attack them, and the escorts flee with Bijli. Debu is taken into custody by the robbers.

The robbers want to kill him, but he makes them believe that the lucky charm that the Lama gave him would do them good as well. Eventually, they let him work for them, and plan to initiate him into robbery. During a grand raid plan at the Thok Jalong goldfields, Debu is taken along. During the gun

fight with the miners, Debu gets seriously injured and faints. He wakes up to the goodwill and care of the childless couple Dolma and Tsering. When he feels strong enough to venture out, he starts his enquiries about his father. Can he find his missing father? Can he at least get back to his caravan? How will Debu get back to his mother and Hayat? What happened to Bijli? An unputdownable adventure with twists and turns that ends in a breathtaking horse race, and an equally brilliant masterstroke of an exchange that Debu offers the whimsical Garphan, keep the story alive till the end. Go ahead and enjoy it!

DISCUSSION:

Best Stories from Around the World: Best Stories from Around the World is a collection of timeless pieces from the world's greatest storytellers—Oscar Wilde, O' Henry, Saki, H.G. Wells, Conan Doyle, Washington Irving and many more. Hailing from different countries such as America, Ireland, the United Kingdom and India, this book is an entertaining consolidation of diverse stories which cover a broad range of topics and themes. While 'The Gift of the Magi' resonates with the sense of love and loss, 'The Selfish Giant' and 'Rip Van Winkle' relives our childhood. Some stories warm your heart, some make you think and some delight you with their magical language while at the same time they explore universal themes and arouse a gamut of responses. A must-have, this book offers a plethora of classics to read and enjoy for any lover of a good story.

Caravan to Tibet: In the last years of the nineteenth century, a caravan of traders sets off from the high hills of Kumaon, India, for Tibet. They traverse dangerous passes and brave blinding snowstorms, in order to carry on their traditional trade in the Tibetan markets. Among them is fourteen-year-old Debu's father. Many days later, when the caravan returns, Debu is heartbroken to learn that his father was lost in one of the treacherous passes. Somehow he cannot believe it, and when a Tibetan trader turns up in the local market wearing an amulet remarkably similar to his father's, he is convinced that his father is alive, somewhere in Tibet. Debu joins the next caravan to Tibet to look for his father, little knowing he is setting out on the most perilous, yet most exciting journey of his life. The adventures follow thick and fast—a forced stay in a monastery with a young lama who takes a fancy to him; his capture by a band of bandits led by the cruel, mysterious Nangbo gifted with magical powers; a stay in the goldfields of Thok Jalong; and finally ending with a heart-pounding, breathtaking horse race.

Journey to the Forbidden City: Nineteenth-century Tibet was an unknown entity, a complete geographical mystery to the West. Where did its capital city Lhasa lie? Which rivers, lakes and mountains stretched across this land?

Where were its fabled monasteries and legendary goldfields? And did the magical flying lamas actually exist? It was next to impossible for a white man to enter this rigorously guarded territory. And so was chosen an intrepid Indian explorer from the mountains of Kumaon-Nain Singh Rawat. Trekking across this country, he risked life and limb and donned innumerable clever disguises as he surveyed the vast expanses and identified countless villages, cities and people. From putting Lhasa accurately on the world map to earning the title of Pundit, his eventful and often arduous travels led to his name being permanently engraved in the annals of Indian exploration. Based on his actual diaries, this gripping narrative is also a tribute to the indomitable spirit of this fascinating man, who rose from being an impoverished village schoolteacher to a legendary hero. When I was a young girl, growing up in a town where there were only two streets, I never thought I'd become a writer. But I was an avid reader who kept winning prizes for writing. And the time came when I found that I had lots to write about. That my own life was as full of stories as those other people shared with me. Also, that writing was a kind of therapy that gave meaning to my existence.

Words To Live By: The Best of Indian Non-fiction for Children : A.P.J. Abdul Kalam on how to reach for the stars B.R. Ambedkar on questions of caste Bhagat Singh on intentions behind actions Dilip Salwi on a shining light of science Jawaharlal Nehru on kings and patriarchs Jayant Narlikar on an astronomer-king Jim Corbett on tigers and an unusual poacher Leila Seth on a tragic turn in life Mahatma Gandhi on truth Nandan Nilekani on our schools Rabindranath Tagore on learning without textbooks Ruskin Bond on the power of nature and words Sarojini Naidu on India after Mahatma

Gandhi Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan on character Subhas Chandra Bose on woman power Sheila Dhar on an extraordinary musician Subroto Bagchi on pioneers and path-reators Sudha Murty on questioning inequality Vivekananda on tolerance and harmony Valmik Thapar on where 'Indian' lions came from Vikram Seth on his adventures in Tibet Zai Whitaker on fascinating reptiles **Anita and the Game of Shadows** : An evil Shadow-King and Peacock People...A clock that talks and a robot that sings...A bottomless chasm and a bag of magic tricks...This game is Dangerous! In the middle of it all, Anita must recover the Magic Stone to rescue her parents from the Endless Maze.

Do Not Weep, Lonely Mirror: Deepa Agarwal writes consistently good poetry, which stands up against women's marginalisation and articulates with rare artistry the desire, pain, frustration and indignation of the womenfolk in a patriarchal society with its oppressive values. This volume fully reflects the range and quality of her growing poetic talent and sensibility.

If the Earth Should Move and Other Stories: Can the gulf between dream and reality ever be bridged? This question haunts many of the characters in this collection of stories by Deepa Agarwal. Compelling, disturbing, thought provoking, these stories span a wide range of human experience Deepa Agarwal writes consistently good poetry, which stands up against women's marginalisation and articulates with rare artistry the desire, pain, frustration and indignation of the womenfolk in a patriarchal society with its oppressive values. This volume fully reflects the range and quality of her growing poetic talent and sensibility.

Kashmir! Kashmir: While the uncertainties of a lockdown weigh heavy on Humra and her friends, Zainab must run as fast as she can to protect the life of her neighbour. Buried deep in a mound of snow, Rehman is saved by an unexpected rescuer, and Atharva is finally able to understand his mother when he is forced to visit his ancestral home in Kashmir.

This collection of short stories explores the lives of young people in a land that is blessed with a beautiful landscape, exquisite handicrafts and warm hearted people but is at times, cold and torn with conflict. A land where joy and hope bloom in the midst of strife, like the crocus sprouting up from the dark earth.

The Wish-fulfilling Cow and Other Classic Indian Tales: Do you know how Ganesh got such a large belly? Or why a sage and a king were fighting over the wish-fulfilling cow Kamadhenu? Discover wise men, brave women and animals and birds with superhuman powers in this collection of fascinating stories from the Ramayana and Mahabharata, the Puranas, the Panchatantra and the Kathasaritasagar. Along with everlasting values, these ancient tales unfold a world full of fantasy, humour and adventure.

Scholastic Book of Hindu Gods and Goddesses: What happened when Ganesha ended up eating too many modaks, his favourite sweet? Why did baby Hanuman try to gobble up the sun? How did little Krishna take on might Indra, the king of the gods and save the people of his village by lifting Govardhan Hill on his finger? This book contains well-loved stories about the Hindu gods and goddesses. The easy to read and understand text is perfect for independent readers and reading aloud.

Blessed; "She darted to her brother, grabbed his stick of chalk and scrawled an intricate shape that her fingers traced, she didn't know how..." Selentra, the youngest of three siblings born to a weaver's family living in the dark-forested hills of Kote, suddenly discovers she has the extraordinary gift the Ancients spoke of. Little does Selentra's family know that her astonishing ability, when mastered, could free their gagged country from the wicked Ag-yanees.

All her secret might have earned Selentra was the sullen jealousy of her brother, Dumor - the oh-so-unworthy favourite. But her power could prove so huge. so vital and so potent that her ruthless enemies are already poised to strike her down. Who will protect Selentra from her foes - which include her own brother - as she crosses the chasm between her destiny and her will?

Is Selentra doomed? Or truly blessed? Sharp as an icy wind, gleaming like a charmed gem and twisty as a mountain path, this imaginative tale of courage and conflict will make you wish that it were true.

The Hilltop Mystery: Who are the three strangers and why does their presence disturb the peace of the quiet hill town? What are they looking for? Where and why has Pranav the young artist disappeared? Shilpi, Jayant and Meghna are determined to find out. Nani, their indomitable grandmother, with whom they are spending their vacations, watches them with an eagle eye. So, how will they succeed?

Debu and Hayat live in Milam, a small hilly village on the borders of India and Tibet. A year ago they lost their father in a snow blizzard when he was coming back to Milam from Tibet following a trade business. Father's absence makes their life all the tougher, since they are poor and means of livelihood are infrequent in the hills, and his uncle Trilok troubles them above all. However, Debu believes that his father is alive and he should proceed to find him. But the biggest obstacle is the journey that has to take through the snowy high-mountain passes that lead to Tibet. Moreover, he is just a fourteen-year-old boy and so far no boy of his age has been included in the expedition which is usually carried out by veteran traders and mountaineers.

One day Debu sees his father's amulet in a Tibetan customer's neck. When he enquires about that amulet the customer says he bought it from the market of Garkot – a famous place in Tibet where his father and other men of the village often went for business chores. This incident revives his hope about his father's survival and soon he manages to convince both: his sad mother and the men who are about to go on an expedition to Tibet.

Following a treacherous journey, they reach Gyanima – a place where the boy Lama lives in a palace. In the palace, the people of caravan one by one bow before the lama and offer him some or other offerings – as being his first time in the land of the lamas Debu follows the others trace. Ironically, an interesting thing happens when the boy lama draws a liking for Debu. Next morning Debu is taken to the palace and forced to stay with the boy lama and the rest of the caravan marches ahead for Garkot.

One night when Debu tries to escape, the soldiers arrest and present him before the lama. At this point, when Debu narrates his tale and the objective behind coming to the lama's land, the lama tells him about a person being saved by a meditating monk from a snowy blizzard but it remains unsure whether the person is still alive. To help Debu, the lama sets him off for that monastery which saved and then later nursed his father. Debu is escorted by some soldiers. On the way a gang of bandits attacks them – all the soldiers run away – Debu is taken as a prisoner. The leader of the gang is Nangbo – he has some wicked magical powers. Thus, he knows all the tricks which Debu can apply to run away from the gang.

The bandits make plans to loot the goldfields of Thok Jalong. The gang includes Debu as one of the shooters and when the time comes so close they tie his hands and set him on someone else's horse. Even Debu does not realize how it all happened – he finds himself in the hands of an old couple nursing his wounded leg. As luck favours his treacherous search so far; soon he discovers his father in the goldfields as one of the working miners. They both narrate each other's tale and move ahead for Gartok to find other people of the caravan in order to make a return trip to Milam. However, some other quirks of fate await him when they reach Gartok.

CONCLUSION:

Best Stories from Around the World is a collection of timeless pieces from the world's greatest storytellers—Oscar Wilde, O' Henry, Saki, H.G. Wells, Conan Doyle, Washington Irving and many more. Hailing from different countries such as America, Ireland, the United Kingdom and India, this book is an entertaining consolidation of diverse stories which cover a broad range of topics and themes. While 'The Gift of the Magi' resonates with the sense of love and loss, 'The Selfish Giant' and 'Rip Van Winkle' relives our childhood. Some stories warm your heart, some make you think and some delight you with their magical language while at the same time they explore universal themes and arouse a gamut of responses. A must-have, this book offers a plethora of classics to read and enjoy for any lover of a good story.

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