



Daksha, the Medicine Girl

By

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*For my dear friend,  
Devika Varadarajan  
With love.*

## **Table of Contents**

Chapter 1

Chapter 2

Chapter 3

Chapter 4

Chapter 5

Chapter 6

Chapter 7

Chapter 8

Chapter 9

My Books

## **Chapter 1**

It was a clear day, without any mist, and a pale sun shone in the sky. The ice-covered mountains glowed with a quiet light. Daksha stood watching Panditji, the *vaidya*, go slowly down the mountain on his mule. She watched until he was a speck in the white landscape.

(*vaidya*: an *ayurvedic* doctor; *ayurveda*: traditional medicine, native to India).

Daksha's hamlet was high up in the Himalayas. It was surrounded by mountains that remained ice-clad all through the year. The nearest village was a good two-day mule ride away. During the winter months, the route was frequently impassable. Three or four days of heavy snowfall were enough to block the narrow path and cut the hamlet from the rest of the world.

Daksha breathed in the mountain air. There was a whiff of fresh chill in the air and the sky was changing color to the north. It would snow within the next two days.

"What will you make of it?" she asked the week- old lamb cradled in her arms. "You will have to stay indoors. Will you miss the valley?"

The lamb rubbed his head against Daksha. "You will be just fine. We're moving into Panditji's house. It's warmer than ours," she told him.

## **Chapter 2**

Panditji's house was the biggest in the hamlet. It was made of wood, stone, mud bricks, and plastered with clay. It was the only house having two floors. Daksha would be living here during the harsh winter months. She had moved in her three goats, two lambs, and two sheep. They were in the large room which opened to the back of the house, along with Panditji's animals. The next room had enough fodder for the winter. A third room had a covered well with a pump.

A wooden staircase led to the upper rooms. Panditji's store of herbs, the pestles, the thick-bottomed vessels for preparing the curing mixtures, etc., were in one of these rooms.

During the coming months, Daksha would pound the herbs and complete such other tasks he wanted her to do. He had left a store of winter vegetables and roasted grain, safe from the coming frost. There was also enough flour and salt and marinated pickles. She had coarse wool to knit socks and caps which would fetch some money and also keep her busy.

Every winter, more than half the inhabitants left the hamlet. Life was difficult with the houses getting snowed in. There was no work to be had. They could not cultivate their small fields and they were too remote to be on the tourist map. Some men left to work as porters, and some as shop helpers. Old people, women and children who had relatives in the plains or less remote areas and were willing to take them in, also left.

Daksha stood in the centre of the room, listening to the silence. A week ago, the hamlet had been a hive of activity. Everybody had been busy working and helping one another.

Those who were leaving made sure that their houses would withstand the snowfall. They reinforced the supports and closed the cracks. As they carried most of the grain and their clothing with them, nothing much was left in their houses. Sometimes they took the sheep and goats along; otherwise, a member of the family stayed back for the animals.

People like Daksha who could not leave were busy preparing for the coming long winter. Vegetables like carrots and cabbages were harvested from the scanty fields. Millets were roasted on a huge earthen stove, common to the village, and stored in earthen jars.

Until last year, Panditji had stayed in the village during winters. Daksha had spent the days in his house, helping with the pounding and sieving of dry herbs, boiling leaves and roots and making '*karhas*', decoctions that soothed fever and cough and many other ailments. She liked it when she worked there.

Panditji was old and as the years went by, he found the winters increasingly harsh. This year he had gone to the plains to spend the winter with his nephew. Instead of moving his medicine chests and the various instruments to Daksha's house, they decided it was better for Daksha and her animals to move into Panditji's house.

### **Chapter 3**

Five years ago, landslides followed by flash floods swept away half the village. Daksha lost her parents and brothers. She was then seven but like all mountain people, no stranger to danger and calamity. The surviving villagers helped one another to rebuild, and life went on.

During the summer months, like the other children in the hamlet, Daksha took the goats and sheep to graze on the mountainside. She also gathered herbs for Panditji.

The hamlet was a cluster of houses set close to one another, sometimes sharing a common wall. This was true of the people also. They were bound by close ties. They worked together and helped one another. Daksha missed her family but she was not an orphan.

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A week after Panditji left, the hamlet had its first big snowfall. Those left in the village cleared the snow from the paths that led to each other's houses. Within a few weeks, the snow was over six feet deep. Walking on the paths was like moving in corridors of ice. The tiny village was blanketed in snow and silence. The people spent most of their time indoors.

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One afternoon, the villagers heard cries for help. Two army men, almost frozen to death, had staggered into the village. One man had a broken arm in a makeshift sling and the other man, himself unsteady on his feet, was trying to support him.

One of the villagers, by name Mahadeo, helped the men to his house. They were freezing. Some other men rushed in with quilts and '*kangaris*', small baskets with burning embers, to be placed inside the quilts for greater warmth. A fire was lit in the room.

The man with the broken arm slipped into unconsciousness. The other man looked exhausted. He was also shivering. He spoke in a faint voice, "Get a doctor or a *vaidya* for Arjun."

The villagers looked at one another helplessly. They knew the men needed medical help; he had a blue look about his mouth. But Panditji had left the village.



Without a word, Daksha went to Arjun. She placed her palm against his forehead, checked his pulse, and observed his breathing. She told Mahadeo's wife to boil water, she would get medicines from Panditji's house.

She added some herbs to the boiling water and placed the steaming bowl beside Arjun. She told Mahadeo to rub the medicated oil on Arjun's temples, palms, and chest. She got the other villagers to help. They supported the unconscious man and she carefully put drops of medicine into his mouth.

## Chapter 4

Arjun's companion was in another room. Mahadeo gave him the '*karha*' Daksha had prepared, to ward off the chill. An hour later, he was able to speak. He said, "I'm Subedar Hamid. We were taking supplies to our troops when our truck skidded and rolled down several feet. I jumped out but Arjun was at the wheel. He tried to control the truck. When it overturned, he fell, hit a rock and broke his arm. He also hurt his head. He wanted me to leave him and go.

"The truck came to rest about twenty kilometers above your village. It was damaged and the radio smashed. We couldn't contact our base. Arjun kept insisting that I should leave him and go for help. He did not want to slow me down. I decided we would climb down until we came to a cave or some shelter. I would leave him there and get help. But the thick layer of snow hid everything from view. Moreover, it continued to snow."

"How did you find our village?"

"By luck. The snow and Arjun's injury made it difficult to climb down. We barely avoided plunging down the mountain. We did not spot your village until we were in it because of the huge piles of snow around it. What village is this?"

"Parbat Devi."

"Is there a  *vaidya*  or a doctor hereabouts? Arjun's arm has to be set."

"We have a  *vaidya* , Panditji, but he has gone down to the plains for the winter."

"Who gave this medicine? I'm feeling better already."

Mahadeo brought Daksha forward. "Daksha helps Panditji and she has learnt a lot from him."

Subedar Hamid looked worried, "What about Arjun's arm? Can we take him down to some other village?"

"No, the village is snowed in. The only way out of the village is by the way you came in, that is, to go up the mountain. There is no village higher than this except for an army  *chowki* . You can't climb to it in this weather because the mountain is very steep. You'll be buried under the snow in no time."

(army  *chowki*  : army check post )

"What's to be done? His arm is very bad. It's swollen. Perhaps there are broken bones. He also hit his head," said Subedar Hamid looking very troubled.

"Nothing can be done for two months, until the thaw sets in," Mahadeo said and the others nodded.

Arjun regained consciousness but seemed dazed. Subedar Hamid was immediately at his side. Mahadeo helped him drink the '*karha*'.

Sarsati remembered something. "Daksha, you set your goat's leg when it fell off the cliff, didn't you?"

Daksha nodded.

Mahadeo asked, "Can you set Arjun's arm?"

"What? This girl will set his arm? No!" Subedar Hamid said, shocked. "There should be some other solution."

The villagers again shook their head. Mahadeo explained, "We're a small hamlet of thirty families. Some of us leave in winter because the village gets snowed in. If Daksha can do something for Arjun, he's lucky."

Everyone looked at Daksha, waiting for her to speak. She said in her soft voice, "A herbal bandage will bring down the swelling and reduce the pain by tomorrow. I'll examine the arm and decide whether I can set it. For now I'll bandage it loosely with some support, to prevent more damage. We'll cushion his arm so that he doesn't move it in his sleep."

Daksha took some ground herbs and wrapped them in a thin cloth and warmed them over the embers of the '*kangari*'. She carefully bandaged the arm with two wooden splints for support, cleaned the cut on his forehead and applied a paste. She asked him whether his head hurt and if he felt strange or nauseous.

Subedar watched the tall slim girl, barely into her teens, go about the job calmly. He noted the clear grey eyes and the steady hands and felt hopeful that she would be able to help Arjun.

Everybody left for their homes except for Daksha. She stayed back in Mahadeo's house. It had begun to snow again. Sarsati sat up with her beside the sleeping men. Subedar Hamid slept comfortably but Arjun was restless. Every now and then he woke up. Twice during the night, Daksha gave him some milk with a herbal medicine. It was a mild sedative. By the early hours of the morning, Arjun slept deeply.

## **Chapter 5**

The next day, Arjun had a mild headache. His fever had come down. The arm was still painful but the swelling had reduced. Daksha examined the arm and shoulder. She took a long time and asked Arjun many questions. She made a child take off his shirt and sit in front of her. She slowly moved the child's arm and looked at the interplay of the bones and the muscles. The village was assembled around them but nobody spoke a word. They watched silently.

Finally she said, "The bone in the arm has been broken and is out of line. The shoulder bone is dislocated because of the break. If the arm is set properly, the dislocated bone should slip back. Otherwise, later, after the arm heals, massage and exercise will set it right."

Daksha carefully aligned the bones and set the arm with splints, packed it in herbal paste, and bandaged it. She also made a sling for the arm.

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Subedar Hamid and Arjun ended up staying in the village for the next two months. The snowfall was exceptionally heavy that year. Hamid and Arjun (with his one arm) joined the villagers in shoveling out huge quantities of snow. They became a part of the village, helping in chores and chatting around the common fire.

Subedar Hamid took over the care of Panditji's and Daksha's animals. Daksha slowly got over her shyness and listened while he told her about his daughters, Shabana and Farzana. Shabana was a year older to her and Farzana, a year younger.

She answered his questions and told him the uses of the decoctions and powders she prepared. Parts of the same plant had different uses. Or only some parts were used, like the bark, or the inside of a root. The preparation also varied. There were cold decoctions where the herb was crushed and left in water, and decoctions that required boiling.

"How do you remember all this?" Subedar Hamid asked. It surprised him that an illiterate mountain girl, who had never left her village, could be so knowledgeable about medicine. Daksha only smiled and said, "It's easy. I've been helping Panditji."

He couldn't get much out of her. She was not very talkative. Perhaps, living among the lonely mountains and growing up without brothers and sisters had made her silent.

Arjun's arm was healing. The swelling had come down and there was no pain. It was only a matter of time for the broken bones to fuse together. He and Hamid were grateful to Daksha and also very curious about her.

Sarsati told them about Daksha. She was not like the other children; she never had much to say. During summer, the children went into the valley to put the animals to graze. They played games and had fun. But Daksha was apt to drift away to some secluded part by herself. Or she would watch the animals frolicking around. She was especially fond of studying the lambs. Very often she'd hold a lamb in her lap and hand feed it. While it nibbled at the grass, she'd trace its bones with her hand. She was always curious to know the bone structure of animals. The way the lambs moved, the play of muscle and bone fascinated her. She moved her own slim hands and arms and tried to imagine the way the bones meshed.

Her other passion was gathering herbs for Panditji. Since some years, Panditji could no longer go down on his knees among the many bushes that grew in the valley, to gather leaves and roots. He would slowly go a little way down into the valley, locate whatever he wanted and call out to some passerby to help him. Mostly it was the children. The other children did not have the patience to look for what he wanted. One boy even liked to tease him and gave him the wrong leaves again and again.

But Daksha loved to locate the plants and pick them. She willingly went into the thickest of bushes and endured scratches to get the herbs. Slowly, she became his assistant and began to help in grinding, mixing, and boiling the herbs and roots.

Panditji, whose wife was no more and children were away in Dehradun, liked having her around. He fell into the habit of telling her the uses of the medicines and their dosage. Within two years, she didn't need him to tell her what was required from the valley. She went alone and got all the medicinal plants he wanted. She had a keen eye and sense of smell. If she came across some new plant, she went back and described it to Panditji. He told her what it was and whether it had any uses.

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The season changed and the snow begun to thaw. Arjun's arm had healed. It was still a little stiff but he had complete faith in the medicated oil and herbal powder Daksha had given him to use for another month.

Subedar Hamid and Arjun left the village, to return to their army post. Panditji and the other villagers came back to the village. The snow melted and the valley filled with fresh leaves and flowers.

## **Chapter 6**

Panditji was astonished to learn that Daksha had treated the army men. He did not know she had learnt so much while working with him. When he told Mahadeo and the others, "I couldn't have done better," Daksha glowed with pride.

Three months later, the village gathered at Panditji's house to witness something unusual. The postman had come up to their village. He had never done that before. He usually gave the letters to Mangru from the village, who had a shop on the lower slopes.

This letter was different, he said. It was a registered letter from the government. It had to be delivered against acknowledgement.

The letter was in English and it was for Daksha. The postman took a long time to read it, not because it was lengthy but because he could not understand what it said. It took him longer to make the villagers understand what it was about.

He said, "They want to take Daksha."

"Who wants to take Daksha?"

"Army."

"Why? What has she done?"

"They say they'll put her in the army school."

"To make her a soldier?"

Daksha began to tremble. She didn't want to become a soldier. It was all very confusing. None of them could read the letter except the postman and he insisted that the letter said the army would take Daksha and put her in the army school. There was hardly any work done in the village that day. Everyone took the letter, turned it this way and that way and tried to make some sense out of it.

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The mystery was solved two days later when Subedar Hamid came to the village. He said, "The army has a welfare association, run by the army wives. They want to help Daksha by giving her an education. They will look after all her expenses. Our entire unit is very impressed with Daksha's skill. We feel she

should have the best opportunities. Daksha can stay in the hostel or with my family. My daughters are about her age. They are eager to meet her."

Daksha did not want to go. She was a shy girl and did not mingle easily with people. She was closer to the mountains and the *deodar* trees and spent hours sitting among them. The thought of leaving her familiar surroundings and going to live among strangers frightened her.

Panditji and Subedar Hamid gently convinced her. When she told Panditji she wanted to stay back and help him, he said, "You have done so much work during the winter that I do not need to prepare anymore medicines for some time. I will wait for you to come home during the holidays and help me."

She finally agreed when Subedar Hamid said, "Daksha, any time you want to come back, tell me. I'll bring you back myself. Don't think that you will be among strangers. Everyone in the army unit knows about you and is looking forward to having you there. You will be part of a big loving family."



## **Chapter 7**

Daksha found it difficult to leave her animals, especially the lambs. Sarsati promised to look after them like her own children, yet when Daksha left the animals in Mahadeo's enclosure, she was tearful.

There were many more farewells to be taken. There was the old tree, with its trunk wide and broad branches. The tree had withstood the flash floods in which Daksha's parents had been carried away. Mahadeo had climbed the tree and pulled up his daughter and Daksha. Her parents had been away from home.

To Daksha the tree was almost human. She could speak to him about her brother, Raja. Raja had climbed the tree but had got down to bring Daksha her small rag doll. He didn't get far. The waters suddenly rushed into the village, carrying away people, animals, cots, trees, in fact anything that was weaker than their force. The tree had been stronger. It had saved twenty lives.

Another favorite haunt was a *kund*. It was a small pool, at the centre of which water gently bubbled out of an underground spring. The water was clear, sweet and, even during mid- summer, ice- cold. Apples and strawberries grew beside it. Daksha would tie the fruit in her scarf and lower it into the *kund*. Within minutes, the fruit would be deliciously chilled.

There was also the temple to visit. It was in a small natural cave. Daksha and the other children, and women from the village, visited it on Mondays and on festivals, and placed fresh flowers at the feet of the idol. When they rang the big brass bell, its peals echoed in the mountains.

Daksha loved the spot for another reason. She liked to come here and think.

Everyone told Daksha that she was very lucky and would have a great future but Daksha left her home with a heavy heart.

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Two days later, Daksha and Subedar Hamid reached the army base at ten o'clock in the night. A bewildering number of people were waiting to welcome Daksha. Daksha smiled only when Arjun came to her and told her his arm was fine.

The next day, a group of women, who were her sponsors, visited her. They spoke kindly and praised her. They told her she would be going to school and

staying in the hostel. At her look of panic, Hamid's wife, Niloufer, intervened. "Daksha will be living with us."

The women asked Daksha, "Are you sure? You will have a room to yourself in the hostel. You may have to share here."

Shabana and Farzana were in the room. Shabana said, "We want Daksha to live with us. She can have our room." They had heard a lot about Daksha from their father and Arjun and were eager to befriend her.

"No. I'll share," Daksha said softly. Hamid had told her so many incidents about his daughters that she felt she knew them already.

The next days were busy ones. Mrs. Andrews and Mrs. Sen, of the Army Wives Association, took Daksha to the tailor for her school uniform and other clothes. They got her shoes, and books. She was admitted into school. She met many new people. Everyone knew about her and wanted to speak to her.

## **Chapter 8**

Two months later.

Subedar Hamid was upset. Daksha had told him she wanted to return home.

“Why?” he asked Niloufer. “She seems happy when she is with Shabana and Farzana. They have become good friends. She is not shy with Arjun either.”

Niloufer also was not happy with Daksha’s decision but she understood. She knew Daksha was finding it difficult to adjust. The change was drastic. The stream of well-meaning visitors still alarmed her. When they praised her, she lowered her eyes and grew tongue-tied. She was not used to such attention. Actually, it would be too much for most children.

“She told Farzana that school scares her. She does not like the big stone building and the noise during recess,” Niloufer said.

“She isn’t used to crowds and noise. Her small village is surrounded by towering mountains. There is space and silence. I promised I’ll take her back but I wish I could convince her to stay. She will not get another opportunity for studying.”

“Why don’t you take her to see Dr. Hemalatha?”

Major Dr. Hemalatha was one of the doctors at the army hospital. Niloufer thought very highly of her.

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Daksha knew she was making everyone unhappy. Shabana would speak of nothing else except to ask her to stay and Farzana had stopped talking to her. Hamid, Niloufer, and Arjun were also upset.

She wished, for all their sakes, she could stay.

Niloufer thought she did not want to stay because she did not like meeting so many people. Actually, she had got used to them. She did not know what to say to them but when they stopped her and asked her questions about her village, or told her about themselves, she knew they were only being kind and friendly.

Farzana thought she was leaving because she did not like the clothes. She had confided to Farzana, in the beginning, that her new clothes and shoes were not very comfortable. Especially the shoes. Her old hand-stitched shoes were good

for walking and climbing mountains but her new shoes pinched. That was then. She had got used to them now.

It wasn't even the mountains or her hamlet that made her want to return. She missed the mountain air and her home but she missed something else more.

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Like everyone else on the army base, Dr. Hemalatha knew Daksha. She was sorry to hear Daksha wanted to go back. Hamid explained, "'She's homesick. She misses her village and the mountains. Nothing seems to interest her here. She likes my daughters but doesn't join them in their games. She doesn't speak much to the other children.'

"She's a shy child. She wants to be left alone. Tell me, how did she set Arjun's arm? Did she just bandage it?"

"She applied something for the swelling to come down. She examined his shoulder and arm. She also studied a child's arm, to understand how the bones were placed. She took quite some time. She was almost like a doctor, very professional. She is an exceptional child. She gave me the names and applications of more than a hundred medicines in Panditji's house. She should not miss out on this opportunity! Education will change her life!" Subedar Hamid said, getting agitated.

"We cannot convince her to stay by telling her that education will change her life. She does not know how education will change her life. Moreover, she does not want it to change. She likes her old life. She was happy helping the village doctor and learning about herbs. Hm..." Dr. Hemalatha paused, thinking hard. "I have a plan. Bring Daksha to the hospital tomorrow and take her to the bird house in the garden."

## **Chapter 9**

Daksha was enchanted with the birds. Some of the birds were the same as the ones in the valley near her village.

She did not hear Dr. Hemalatha come in. Dr. Hemalatha opened one of the cages and took out a pigeon. Its foot was bandaged and one of its wings hung awkwardly; it was taped.

Subedar Hamid asked, "What's wrong with the bird?"

"The gardener brought it in yesterday. He found it under a tree. I think it got entangled in a sharp wire somewhere."

"What are you doing?"

"Checking it. The keeper told me the bird had an uneasy night. I hope it does not have a relapse. Of late, many birds are falling ill and dying. I want to give this one some preventive medicine."

Just then a nurse came running in. "Doctor, please come. There's an emergency." Dr. Hemalatha placed the pigeon into Subedar Hamid's hand and hurried away. Daksha took the bird and soothed it. She cradled it for a while and examined it. She told Subedar Hamid, "This bird will get better. There's no fever. Its feathers are not dull and look at the eye, see how bright it is."

Subedar Hamid said, "Daksha, I have some work. You can stay here. I'll be back for you in an hour."

Daksha nodded. She continued examining the bird. She was very gentle with it. The bird tried to flutter its injured wing. "You'll be fine," Daksha murmured. She knew about the fevers the doctor spoke. They spread quickly and killed the creatures within hours. Where was the doctor?

Another ten minutes passed. Daksha waited no longer. Cradling the bird, she entered the hospital building. A nurse, stationed in the corridor by the doctor, came forward. "Do you want to see Dr. Hemalatha?" she asked.

Daksha followed the nurse through corridors, getting a glimpse of what was in the rooms. Daksha was so busy looking around she did not realize that the nurse had given her a tour of the hospital. She did not know that some of the doors had been left open only to interest her.

Dr. Hemalatha was at the bedside of a woman who had undergone surgery a week ago.

Daksha listened as Dr. Hemalatha asked the woman questions. She forgot the strangeness of her surroundings. It seemed familiar, like Panditji talking to a patient.

The nurse took the bird from Daksha (which did not need any medicine) and Daksha stayed by Dr. Hemalatha's side as she visited three more patients.

Dr. Hemalatha asked Daksha, "Do you want to come again?"

Daksha nodded happily. Dr. Hemalatha arranged for her to come to the hospital for a week. She assigned her to a senior nurse.

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Daksha came every morning and, the nurse reported, worked like a pro. At the end of the week, Dr. Hemalatha spoke to Daksha, and explained to her how she could train to become a doctor. She waited for Daksha's answer, hoping that she would agree to continue her studies.

She found Daksha was now *eager* to study.

Dr. Hemalatha smiled. She had guessed correctly. Daksha had missed assisting Panditji. She had wanted to return to learn more about the herbs and the roots. She would continue her studies for the same reason.

It was not easy for Daksha; everything was new. She had to learn English but she worked hard and everyone helped. As she got to know more and more people, she liked living on the base. Now and then, Hamid and his family took her to visit her village.

Not surprisingly, she grew up to become an orthopedic surgeon. Over the years, she earned fame for her skill on the operating table and for her research on Himalayan medicinal plants.

## Other Books by the Author

### The Chapter Book Series



My Chapter Book Series is an attempt to inculcate the love of reading in all children, transitioning beginning readers to more advanced readers, and reluctant readers into beginning readers. The books are also read-alouds for younger readers who are able to follow a story but have not learnt to read fluently.

Early readers will delight in being able to read the whole book by themselves, and will move on to bigger books. For reluctant readers, the length of the book will make it easier to get them to read, and introduce them to the magic of the written word. Younger readers may be encouraged to read a chapter or two, with the rest of the book being read aloud to them.

The books in this series have short chapters, and the average word count is 5000 words. The series also introduces children to different genres. Dearie is an animal story, The Real Magician is a fantasy, Krishta, Daughter of Martev is a science fiction book, The Forbidden Forest is an adventure tale, and so on.

Dearie: A Tale of Courage

Daksha, the Medicine Girl

The Forbidden Forest

Krishta, Daughter of Martev

The Magician's Turban

The Homeless Birds

Knife and Fork

Make a Wish



## Rangeela Tales



Navjyot rescues a parrot and nurses him back to health. The parrot, Rangeela, is a talking parrot, who has escaped from his cruel master. He learns to trust Navjyot and chooses to live with him.

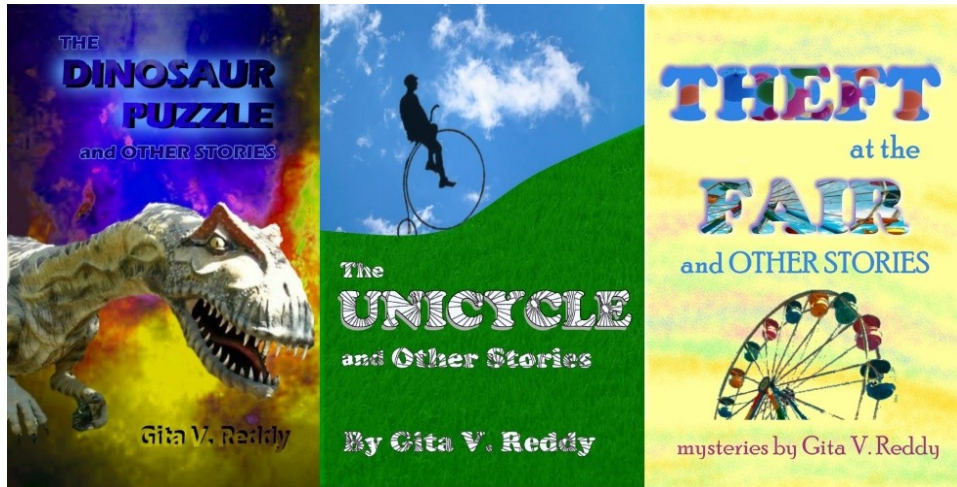
Rangeela Tales is a series of short stories about the duo, along with Navjyot's nosy cousin Nimi and her cat Robber, who is always looking for ways to make Rangeela his meal.

Rangeela Tales: Book 1

Rangeela Tales Book 2

Rangeela Tales: Book 3

## Short Story Collections



### The Dinosaur Puzzle and Other Stories

Meet a thief and a snake, a dinosaur and a great-grandmother, a boy and his lucky marble. Some more? How about a boy and an elephant, a terrorist and a school boy, and some ghosts?

### Theft at the Fair and Other Stories

A collection of four baffling mysteries children crack using math, problem solving, and observation skills.

### The Unicycle and Other Stories

A collection of six stories that are fun, and also make the young reader more aware about giving back to the community.

## Novels / Novellas



### Cheetaka, Queen of Giants

This is a fantasy in the Land of Giants. Nine-year old Tara, who finds herself in a strange land after a storm, and accidentally lands on the head of the queen of giants, is taken into the queen's care. The good queen promises to help her return home but there are evil giants who believe Tara is a magician and are out to capture her for her magic powers. What follows is danger, courage and a fascinating journey home. And yes, fun, because Tara and the boy-giant, Montek, become great friends.

### King Neptune's Delite

A bottle with a diamond ring and a coded message is washed ashore. Maya, who is usually sensible, and keeps her exuberant brother in line, is swept along the tide of adventure into a dangerous rescue mission.

Apart from being a fast paced page turner, the book gives a glimpse of Indian rural culture, and shows how a close-knit community takes care of its children.

### Hunt for the Horseman

Hunt for the Horseman is a gripping story set in an Indian palace.

Twelve year old Sandy, who has always lived in the U.S., is visiting Amrita Mahal, the family palace. She joins the other children of the erstwhile royal family in the Hunt for the Horseman, a game like none other because it involves the many secret compartments of the palace. But dangerous criminals are out to grab the palace. This could be the last chance the children may have to find the elusive horseman. Will they succeed? More important, will the palace be saved?

Hunt for the Horseman is also about Sandy learning more about her family and her roots, and building a better understanding with her parents, who are first generation immigrants.

### Cinderella's Escape

Cinderella's Escape is a retelling of the fairy tale with a gritty heroine who needs no Prince Charming or Fairy Godmother to rescue her!

Author A.E.Albert says, "I really enjoyed this parallel story of Cinderella. What impressed me is the heroine herself. Unlike the lead characters from most fairy tales, Anna Maria is a fighter and a survivalist. This 'Cinderella' is a role model for all young girls; believing in herself and never giving up."

## Picture Books



### Bala-Gala the Brave and Dangerous

Bala-Gala lives in the forest of Gamba-Bamba, and must save himself from the crocodile, Brammy-Gommy, who lives in the River Kanga.

But who is Bala-Gala? Is he a deer, a tiger, a dinosaur, or a dragon? The answer will delight kids, as will the story.

### The Ant Thief

Noira the Ant wears a diamond ring and tells everyone a king gifted it to her for bravery. She becomes famous as the Great Traveler Ant. But the truth is something different. Noira is a thief. Will the other ants learn the truth? What will Noira do if they find out?





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