

# I is for India

An alphabet book aims to teach kids about their country, discovers **Madhavi Pothukuchi**.

Shallu Jindal's *India – An Alphabet Ride* doesn't just teach A to Z to children, but at the same time offers a glimpse of the complexities of this vast country. Each page is dedicated to a letter which spells out a particular aspect of India – its culture, food, dance and the Constitution. For instance, there is A for anthem which has a translated version of the national anthem, and there is F for Flag which elaborates the meaning behind the tricolour and its history. For Jindal, a Kuchipudi danseuse, the book started as a way to introduce her children to the kaleidoscope of India.

While the idea is not so unusual, the book springs to life with illustrations by Priya Kuriyan. According to Jindal, Kuriyan's simplistic style of illustrations struck a chord with her and she knew that Kuriyan would be the perfect fit for her book. Her illustrations are typically hand drawn and rendered using poster paints and acrylics. For *An Alphabet Ride*, she used the diverse customs and traditions of India as her inspiration; "When it comes to India, all one has to do is look around for inspiration," said Kuriyan over email from Delhi. "What we were really sure about was that we wanted India's diversity to reflect in the book as strongly as possible. So, for pages like the food page we made sure we covered at least one particularly famous dish from each state including the north east states, which sometimes people tend to just see as one whole mass or just tend to think 'momos' when it comes to it," said the illustrator.

A graduate of the National Institute of Design in Ahmedabad, Kuriyan has been illustrating books for children since she was a student in 2002. Over the past 12 years, Kuriyan's characteristic colourful style of illustrations have been part of books such as the *Taranauts* series by Roopa Pai, a book about the adventures of

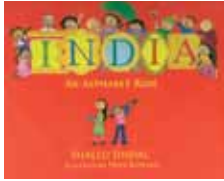
four teenage super heroes living on another planet, *Rooster Raga* by Natasha Sharma, a book for toddlers about a rooster who thinks he can sing, but can't and *Grandma's Bag of Stories* by Sudha Murthy, a collection of Indian folk tales. In 2002, Kuriyan started her career with Chennai's Tulika Books, an independent children's books publisher. She has recently worked on another book with Natraj Publishers, a 40-year-old publishing house, called *The*

*Talking Tree* by Sagari Chhabra.

It took Kuriyan almost a year to finish *The Alphabet Ride* because she painstakingly painted each page separately. The colours

and the little known facts about India, like the right way to fold the Indian flag or trivia such as India has 1,576 languages and dialects, are what make this book an interesting read. "I wanted the book to look as Indian as possible. I think as a country we are not afraid to flaunt really bright colours, be it in our clothes or our signage. I am always really inspired by Indian textiles, folk art like Madhubani and Gond art, and I think that naturally found its way into this book. Especially when it came to the borders and the clothes that all the people in the book were wearing," said Kuriyan.

It is this diversity that Jindal intends to demonstrate in the book, as she tries to introduce children to the wonders of their country. She paints quite a rosy picture of India, with its utopian premise of equality and fundamental rights for all. "I believe that our children need to assimilate the wonder that is India when they are young, so that they can grow up to build a strong nation based on sound value systems. I agree that there is a lot of work to be done; a lot of change is needed. And, while we as adults can sow the seeds, it is for the young to nurture those ideas so that they can one day bloom," said Jindal. However, you ask yourself whether this would be a conflicting lesson to teach our children who will grow up to witness the contrary in their daily lives. It is a good book with good intentions and worth a read. Ages 3+. *India – An Alphabet Ride*, Natraj Publishers, ₹699.



## Listings

### How to use this section

Listings are divided by type:

Around Town (Events, including lectures, treks and workshops), Kids (Activities and events), Fitness and Gay & Lesbian. Admission for readings and other events is free unless otherwise stated.

k denotes events we recommend.

**If you want to be listed**

Submit information by mail (TimeOut, 41, Essar House, Old Lakshmi Theatre Building, St John's Road, Bangalore – 560 042) email (listings@timeout-bengaluru.net) or fax (4269-8502) to Asawari Ghatage. Include details of event, dates, times, address of venue, nearest landmark, telephone number and any entry fee. Time Out is a fortnightly publication, appearing on the stands every other Thursday.

**Deadline for information is ten days before publication.** Listings are free, but inclusion cannot be guaranteed due to limited space.

## Around Town

### Events

#### Fri May 23

**FREE Design expo** The Pencil Box, a design and media fair, organised by ICAT Design and Media College, will showcase student work in the areas of graphic, editorial and advertising design, illustration, concept art and creative visual thinking. Alliance Française de Bangalore, 108, Thimmaiah Road, Vasanth Nagar (4123-1345).

**Health retreat** Wrapping up their current series of wellness retreats, SHARAN is organising a three-day residential programme for those looking to spend time focusing on health and well-being. Held at the Mektoub Wellness Beach Retreat in Varkala, Kerala, the weekend event will include yoga, morning walks by the beach, lectures on nutrition and recipes for a healthy diet. To register and for details about the prices, contact saravanan@sharan-india.org or call 94869-09586. Until Mon May 25.

**Nature expedition** Nirvana Nomads is organising a trip to the coastal town of Mahabalipuram in Tamil Nadu. This weekend getaway is a part of their "May! We Be Amphibious" series, which specialises in visits to scenic water bodies and coastal towns. Activities on this trip will also include surfing for novices.

To sign up, contact hitesh@nirvananomads.com or call 97390-96412. Until Sun May 24.

**Trek** Bhoomi Network is organising a two-day trek through the Sharavathi Valley, for children and adults. The walk is geared towards amateur and novice trekkers, according to the

press note. The trek will also be used as a programme to teach the participants about sustainability and the diverse terrain of the region.

To register and for details about the cost, contact bhoomiworkshops@gmail.com. Sat May 24–Sun May 25.

**FREE Workshop** Atta Galatta is hosting a workshop on goal setting and developing plans, both personally and professionally. The two-day sessions will be facilitated by Deepti Arora, a neuro linguistic program practitioner and certified life coach. The workshop aims to help participants "identify which areas of your life should you focus on in the coming years, create a blueprint of your action plan and become equipped with tools and frameworks for setting goals in all or any other area of your life", according to the press note.

To register, contact Deepti at 98864-03237 or write in to her at coachdeepti@gmail.com. ₹2,000. Fri May 23–Sat May 24. 10am–1pm.

#### Sat May 24

**Music lessons** Nathaniel School of Music, run by Bangalore based multi-instrumentalist Jason Zachariah, will conduct its latest batch of music lessons this fortnight. Called Music Method, the classes will encompass training in a variety of western instruments, including guitars, drums, keyboards and vocals. For details about the fees and registration, contact 99864-77804.

## Register now

**Course** New Acropolis is organising a course in Practical Philosophy at the beginner level as a part of its regular series of programmes on the subject. The course will outline the different schools of philosophy, present the works of the great minds in the field and explore ancient and modern traditions of philosophy from around the world. The course is set at the first level and will take place over 15 sessions starting Thur July 24. However, New Acropolis will also host an open house on Thur July 10 and Thur July 17 to get those interested more acquainted with the course structure and answer any queries.

21/14, Brunton Road (96638-04871). For more details, write to info@newacropolis.in.

**Health Retreat** SHARAN will hold a 21-day health retreat at the end of the summer this year, based on their holistic treatment of diseases programme. With a focus on disease reversal, the health retreat will provide participants with healthy and natural solutions to ailments, without "medicines, surgery, gimmicks or supplements," according to the press release. The day-to-day programme will include yoga classes, health checkups, meditation, healthy food cooking classes and art therapy.

To register, write to seminars@sharan-india.org or call 41326-22637. The retreat runs between Sun June 8 and Sun June 29. Prices start at ₹1,45,000.