



Biglittle
Book
award

Nabaneeta Dev Sen

Author (Bengali)

Winner 2017



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How did you become a children's author?

When my daughters were children, I used to tell them stories and later, compiled them into a book. I used to write for adults then. Writing for children came to me very spontaneously. My first children's publication was *Ichhamati*, in 1979, and since then I have written for them.

Do you feel that there has been a shift in Bengali children's literature over the last few decades?

Indeed. There has been a decline of fairytale. Detective stories, comics and graphic novels are being read more. Everyone looks for excitement and thus have turned to thrillers and

detectives. The sweetness of fairytale is lost altogether. Fairytale is very important for children to be encouraged about reading and they help in imagination, learn about beauty, about love and goodness. Fairytale is magical and they are now becoming almost extinct.

What has been your most treasured experience in your writing journey?

There are many, but I will share one from my recent experience. I had gone to a mall to watch my daughter's film. When I went to the toilet there, the lady who was cleaning the toilet told me that her son was a fan of my works and regularly reads Shuktara and Sandesh. I was very touched to find that my work has spread to children across a cross-section of society.

Who are your favourite authors and why?

Lila Mazumdar, Ashapura Devi, Satyajit Ray, ghost stories by Shirshendu Mukhopadhyay, Bhabani Prasad Mazumdar, Kartik Ghosh, Premendra Mitra and Narayan Gangyopadhyay. I find a child's heart in their writings. And the sentiment that their books hold are in favour of children instead of corroding them.

According to you, what role does an award play in promoting children's literature?

An award motivates the author to write more.

Have your books been translated into other Indian languages? If not, what are the challenges and would you like your books to be translated?

My books which are published by NBT have been translated and published by NBT in Hindi; like, Chhotto Bubul ar Parira, Tinni ar Mashi'r Goppogachha and others.

How can we encourage young authors to write for children?

The desire to write comes from within. Seldom can this take place through an external process. If one loves to write, they will write none-the-less.

The language that you have used in your works have very little distinction between for adults, for youth and for children. What were your thoughts about this when you were writing?

I used to write for my daughters and I felt that they should read language that is clear and the kind that they hear around them; or else, how would they learn the Bengali language. In

my experience I have seen that if the story is good, children understand and adapt to the language style. I do not write for very young children who need a different kind of storytelling. I like my writings to be sound like spoken language.

Women have played central characters in your works. In the time period that you began writing, what made you make this selection?

I always thought to myself, 'Why not women?' I thought this especially for detective stories. When I began to write, we were a family of 4 – my mother, my 2 daughters and I. I have cherished the thought that you can have a complete family and a happy family even without a man. My whole existence was with and around women. And this deserved to be reflected in my writing. So I have always loved femal central characters, where Princesses can win wars not on horse backs or with weapons but with their insight and wisdom.

In your work, you have used different voices like 'shakchunni' and 'tuntuni'. How did you hold this vividness and subtlety together?

I did this very consciously. I always thought that without different voices it is difficult to bring about a stark distinctive component. This distinction forms the crux of characterization.

If you had one message for children's authors, what would it be?

One must understand the child's heart before writing; to write with a child's heart for a child.

