

Joe, who supervises Sechelt language teaching for her band on the Sunshine Coast north of Vancouver, tells her story in simple and appealing words, which have the ring of the skilled storyteller. The strangeness of the country of the salmon people, dry land though it lies beneath the sea, and of the people themselves who are at the same time both the fish and humans who live off the fish, is conveyed in a matter-of-fact way, though it may leave some questions in the minds of readers unfamiliar with the tradition. Joe doesn't shirk from mentioning the practice of slavery: the giant chum salmon makes the captured boy his slave for a year. The tone of the story is one of calm acceptance and respect for the mysteries of life, and our responsibilities to nature.

Charlie Craigan's illustrations pair the stylized figures of traditional West Coast native art with softer representational scenes from the story on the facing pages. The combination is effective, and readers may be fascinated to trace the many variations of form within the various stylized salmon figures leaping across the pages, as well as gaining a sense from the evocative small drawings of the atmosphere of traditional coastal life. The book is in black and white, and not lavishly produced, but is a useful contribution to the growing body of first nations stories presented by the people from whose culture and experience they come.

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Leave Storytelling to the Writers and Tellers

African Tales from Tendai's Grandmother. Lakshmi Mukundan. Tara, 1997. 64 pp. \$11.99 paper. ISBN 81 786211-23-3. *A Tree in My Village.* Paritosh Sen. Tulika, 1998. \$23.99 cloth. ISBN 81-86895-10-8. *And Land Was Born.* Sanhya Rao. Illus. Uma Krishnaswamy. Tulika, 1998. 28 pp. \$29.99 cloth. ISBN 81-86895-13-2. *Ekki Dokki.* Sandhya Rao. Illus. Ranjan De. Tulika, 1996. Unpag. \$11.99 paper. ISBN 81-85229-32-5. *Suresh and the Sea.* Raghavendra Rao. Illus. Sandhya Rao. Tulika, 1998. 48 pp. \$19.99 paper. ISBN 81-86895-19-1.

The Banyan Tree, "an Ontario-based corporation providing consulting services in technology re-engineering and direct marketing (Winter '98 catalogue)," has collected and produced a selection of stories which originate mainly in South Asia. My review centres on the "visual expression series" (i.e. picture books) that I like quite well. More difficult to review are the audio read-along books and tapes, priced between \$12.99 and \$19.99, with such titles as *The Musical Donkey*, *The Talking Cave*, *Fish Friends Three*, and *Magic Vessels*. This later series is an example of what literature becomes when it emanates from corporations with design teams of producers, sound engineers and scriptwriters. Gone are the unique and unifying vision of storytellers and writers. However sophisticated the technology, the stories are lost in a wash of sound effects and poor writing. However guised in fun, the tapes were

judged by my Faculty of Education students to be moralistic and heavy-handed. This makes them unsuitable for classroom use, and unsatisfactory as stories. *The Monkey and the Crocodile*, for instance, is a powerfully sexy tale when told by storytellers. Here it's silly.

Black-and-white photographs (rare in children's literature), in *Suresh and the Sea* reveal Suresh learning to fish, as his ancestors have done for generations, on a kattumaram off the Coromandal coast of India. A concern for the marine environment permeates the book. Rich factual details embedded within a compelling story encourage different levels of reading. Further scientific and cultural edification is available in the marginalia. *A Tree in My Village* also focuses on the interrelated, global-village quality of the environment, from the childhood point of view of the writer-illustrator. The text is factual, imaginative, and enhanced by loose, evocative illustrations.

Ekki Dokki is a tale in which a correct attitude ends in reward, while a bad attitude ends in downfall; a story similar to the Grimms' "Mother Hulda." The felt marker illustrations come to a near-exploding conclusion through a recurring triangle theme. The bomb-like characters are reinforced by a text that breaks into capital letters: "WHAT DO YOU THINK HAPPENED?" I'd like to know what this triangle fetish is about. More successful is *And Land Was Born*, illustrated by the same artist, Rao. In this book the geometry is the right, light, touch for the mythic import of this origin story. God as well as the four jugni matas are colour-coded cutout figures. A zany, years-long adventure story in which god admits that only the astrologer can find land. Delightful.

The parallel narratives in *African Tales from Tendai's Grandmother* conjoin present purposes with traditional teachings. An unremarkable treatment of moralistic animal stories, but attention to crocodile eggs (46) and other aspects of nature are noteworthy. There's lively interaction between the main characters, and the book is written in awareness of the imposition of western culture and technology: "He (Tendai) put the balls (of yarn) into a plastic bag for grandmother."

I encourage Banyon Tree to continue publishing and distributing these works by Indian authors, but advise the company to omit the saccharine read-along books and to use the author's original stories on the audiotapes.

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Family Dynamics and Secrets

That Silent Summer. Elaine Medline. Scholastic Canada, 1999. 169 pp. 5.99 paper. ISBN 0-590-51500-0. *Topher*. Anita Horrocks. Stoddart Kids, 2000. 211 pp. \$7.95 paper. ISBN 0-7737-6092.

In *That Silent Summer*, readers follow family dynamics through a young girl's sum-