

## Re-creating a Reading Culture in Sri Lanka in 2020

## Newsletter December 2020

In this issue...

"If one is to believe  
in peaceful coexistence,  
the first messengers of that  
peace will be in  
children's books."



Jella Lepman

Founder of



50<sup>th</sup> Death Anniversary  
4 October 2020

Remembered by  
young people everywhere for  
building bridges of  
children's books.

The year 2020 has been undoubtedly a year of challenges for everyone, all over the world. However, for IBBY Sri Lanka it has also been a year of several triumphs, both nationally and internationally.

**Chief among them is obtaining another grant from the Yamada Foundation in September, for a new project to be implemented in 2021. Named *Let's Make Books and Reading Fun!*, the project is a series of workshops on four key aspects of books and reading. That is: illustrating, storytelling techniques using books and puppets in preschools, schools and public libraries, bibliotherapy, and mentoring.**

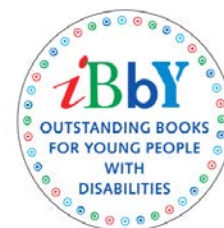
The project's aim is to teach techniques to make books and storytelling a rewarding experience. IBBY Sri Lanka believes that, to develop a reading culture again here in Sri Lanka, children and youth need more enjoyable experiences connected to books and reading. Connecting storybooks with animated story-telling activities such as puppetry and dramatisation, creates a fun element. They can also be a source of healing, when combined with bibliotherapy. This aspect will become more relevant in 2021, as state economies and families face unprecedented challenges due to the pandemic's fallout.

The workshops will be held in 2 stages: the first will train 5 local stakeholders by foreign experts; the second will be the training of 80 preschool teachers, by the resource persons trained by the foreign experts. The preschool teachers will be those involved in our current Story Nest project, also funded by a grant from the Yamada Fund.

**IBBY Sri Lanka has also entered into an agreement with IBBY India, to translate into Sinhala a book containing 24 stories for teenagers, published by IBBY India. Created as a book therapy project, *Lighthouse In The Storm* contains issues faced by youngsters in our part of the world. A Tamil version will also be published after the Sinhala edition.**

Await the latest on these projects and more in April 2021...

### Sri Lankan book wins recognition



*Whiz Kids of the Beautiful Village*, a Sri Lankan children's storybook comprising the character of a physically differently-abled child, has been chosen as outstanding for the 2021 IBBY Selection of Outstanding Books for Young People with Disabilities...

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### Writing workshops move online



Stage II of the workshop series on *Writing for Older Children and Teenagers* commenced its sessions via Zoom...

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### Children's Day fun in Colombo



For the first time, IBBY Sri Lanka partnered with the Colombo Public Library to organise this annual event...

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Season's greetings  
and  
best wishes for a truly  
memorable 2021!

### ... Sri Lankan book wins recognition

The book, written by Mahesh Pathirathna and illustrated by Nuwan Chaturanga was published in Sinhala by Graphicare in 2019. The book is one of 40 from 27 countries in 21 languages to be selected, out of a total of 194 submissions from 31 countries in 24 languages.

The IBBY Collection of Books for Young People with Disabilities organised by the International Board on Books for Young People (IBBY), is located at the Toronto Public Library in Canada. It features a large, international selection of books in over 40 languages, for and about young people with disabilities. The Collection offers research opportunities in the development and evolution of children's and young adult's literature, in this specialised field. Furthermore, it offers inspiring examples of book design and construction in unique formats, and ideas and book lists for teachers, parents, caregivers and librarians.

Every two years, the IBBY National Sections nominate books for young people with disabilities to be added to the Collection. A selection of Outstanding Books (approximately 50) is then made, and this selection is summarised in a catalogue.

According to IBBY, "The 2021 submissions provide a snapshot of publishing during 2016–2020, for and about children and teens who are deaf or have a disability. It is an excellent opportunity for the books to become better known, and there is already a waiting list for this new selection."

Two copies of *Whiz Kids of the Beautiful Village* will be included in the two travelling exhibitions that will travel around the world. The 2021 Outstanding List will be presented at the IBBY press conference at the Bologna Children's Book Fair on June 14, 2021. The list of titles will also be shared on the Toronto Public Library website at:

<https://www.torontopubliclibrary.ca/ibby>

and through the IBBY website at:

<https://www.ibby.org>.

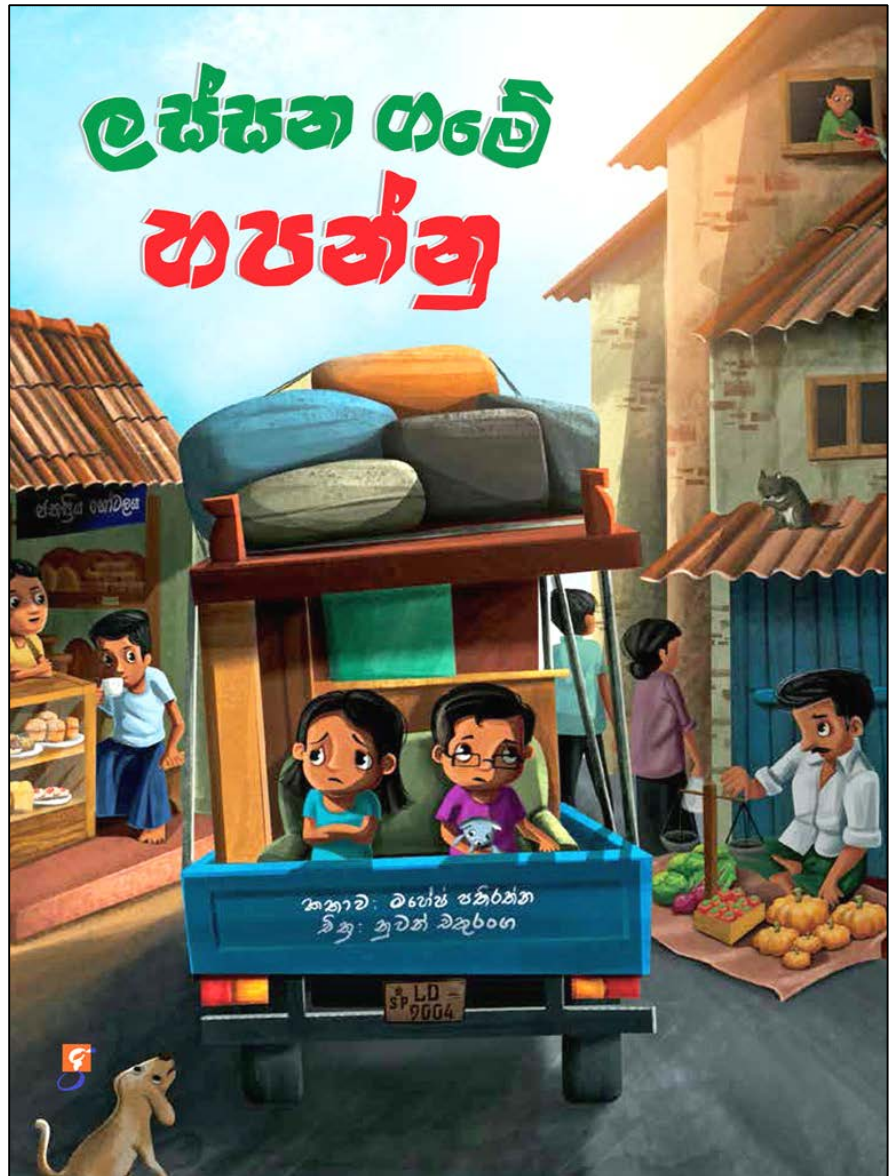
The other book nominated by IBBY Sri Lanka, namely *The Child Artist Who Went To The Sky Village*, will remain in the reference collection for research and study at the Toronto Public Library. The book written by award-winning author Thanuja N. Ayagama, and illustrated by Anura Srinath was also published by Graphicare, member of IBBY Sri Lanka.



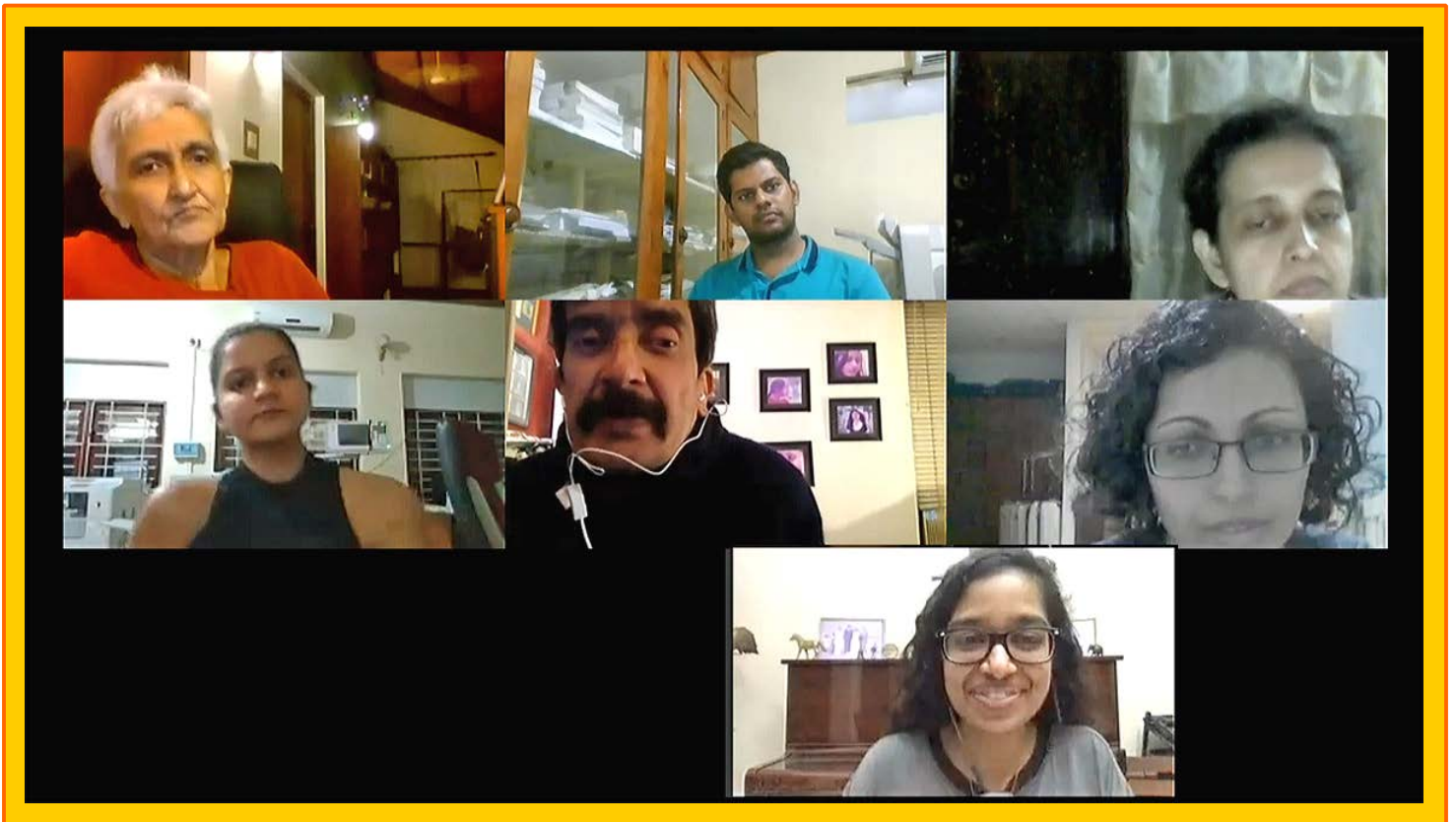
Mahesh Pathirathna  
—the author



Nuwan Chaturanga  
—the illustrator



## ***Writing for Older Children and Teens*** **— stage II of workshop series moves online**



The second stage of the workshop series organised by IBBY Sri Lanka with its academic partner, NILIS of the University of Colombo, commenced on the 17th of December. Whilst the first stage was conducted by Dr.Ken Spillman in Colombo in February, the ongoing pandemic required new arrangements. Subsequently, following the wholehearted support of the participants, the second stage was re-designed and re-scheduled as virtual sessions.

**The sessions are conducted by Ranjit Lal, an award-winning Indian author of over 40 books for older children and teenagers. His book, *Faces in the Water*, on female infanticide, and for which he was honoured by IBBY in 2012, won the Crossword Award for Children's Writing 2010 and the Ladli National Media Award for Gender Sensitivity 2012. *Our Nana Was a Nutcase*—on dementia and Alzheimer's—won the Crossword Raymond Award for Children's Writing in 2016.**

His other books on social themes include *Taklu and Shroom* (shortlisted for the Crossword Award for Children's Writing 2013), *Miracles, Smitten* (on child abuse in the family), *The Secret of Falcon Heights*, *The Dugong and the Barracudas*, and *The Battle for No.19*. The latter is a story set against the backdrop of the anti-Sikh riots following the assassination of Prime Minister Indira Gandhi.

Ranjit Lal's abiding interest in natural history, birds, animals and insects is reflected in many of his books. He was awarded the Zeiss Wildlife Lifetime Conservation Award for 2019 for writing 'with exceptional literary skills' on the conservation of wildlife, especially birds.

IBBY Sri Lanka is confident this workshop series will produce a collection of exceptional stories, through the guidance of its two eminent mentors. The workshops are scheduled to conclude in February 2021.

## At the International Children's Day Programme in Colombo...

The annual International Children's Day Programme organised by the Colombo Public Library was held successfully at its premises on the 3rd of October. Despite the pandemic, many kids and youth participated. IBBY Sri Lanka assisted in providing a memorable and educational experience for all.



A story-telling activity in progress at the Reading Camp



A workshop for preschool teachers on story-telling techniques



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[www.ibbysrilanka.org](http://www.ibbysrilanka.org) [www.facebook.com/ibbylanka](https://www.facebook.com/ibbylanka)