

Shallu Jindal Riding The Alphabet

BOOK LINK brings our readers an interview with **Shallu Jindal**, best-seller author of *India: An Alphabet Ride* and social worker, a mother of two, who is also chairman of the National Bal Bhavan. Shallu grew up in Ludhiana. Her early years were spent in a small town where entertainment activities were few and far between. Dancing has been her passion since childhood, and she has won many laurels at school, college and at the national level in classical dance. Reading was, however, her favourite pastime. 'I remember that when my mother used to gift me a book, I used to huddle myself in a corner and come out, only once I had finished it. In fact, I was such an avid reader that I used to spend all my pocket money on buying books', Jindal tells us.

Question: Generally, writers for children start early. You started a few years ago. What made you zero in on children?

Answer: I only started to focus on children just by chance. I came face-to-face with children and issues relating to them through the 'Openspace Jindal Foundation for Development'. The Foundation has worked on many projects related to children, thus opening their universe to me. It is a divine coincidence that many children's initiatives came to my notice and this is what made me think of I thought of writing my book – *India: An Alphabet Ride*. Moreover, as a parent, I am always looking for simple and interesting ways to make the learning about this diverse and complex country enjoyable.

Q: Tell us about the work you did to the run up to this book?

A: It took me almost two years to research and put together this book. India is not an easy country to explain, illustrate and put between the covers of a single book. I

must confess that I relearned a lot about India as I researched the book. I hope that this book makes young Indians take pride in our history, heritage and culture and they grow up to build a strong nation based on sound value systems.

Design and colour are central to the theme and uniqueness of the book, and I have Priya Kuriyan to thank for it. She has brought our ideas alive and woven her visual magic on each page. The most depressing moment was when the book got delayed by six months as my illustrator was busy with some other project and we had to wait for her to complete it.

I had previously done two books with Natraj Publishers and had a comfort level with them which is what made me go with them for my children's book. My publisher Divya Arora is an intelligent and efficient publisher.

The other inspiring thing about this book is that during the two year research, I too re-learned so many aspects about my country that I never knew of. It was an eye-opener for me.

I hope that this book will be a legacy to the children of our wonderful country. Our

children need to assimilate the wonder that is India when they are young, so that they imbibe the principles of our founding fathers and continue to build this great nation. This was my inspiration to work on the book.

Q: What has been the response of your family and friends to the book?

A: Everybody who has read the book has loved it and the response has been overwhelming. One of my cousins' son even takes the book to school everyday. Another child I know practises the hand mudras illustrated on the D for Dance page in the book. The book is a sellout and it is really gratifying to see that. My daughter, too, is very proud of me.

Q: When are you planning the second part of the book?

A: There are no plans to bring out Part II of the book as of now.

Q: Who is your favourite author?

A: When I was a child it was Enid Blyton. Best Reading: *The 40 rules of love* by Elif Shafaq. Favourite Indian Author: Chitra Devakaruni. I particularly like her book, *The Palace of Illusions*.

Q: What has been the most satisfying moment now that the publishing of your first book is over?

A: The most satisfying moment has been that the book is a sellout today. When my publisher even gets calls from book shops for more books. It really gives me a high and I'm so thrilled that *India: An Alphabet Ride* has got 5 stars on Flipkart and Amazon.

