

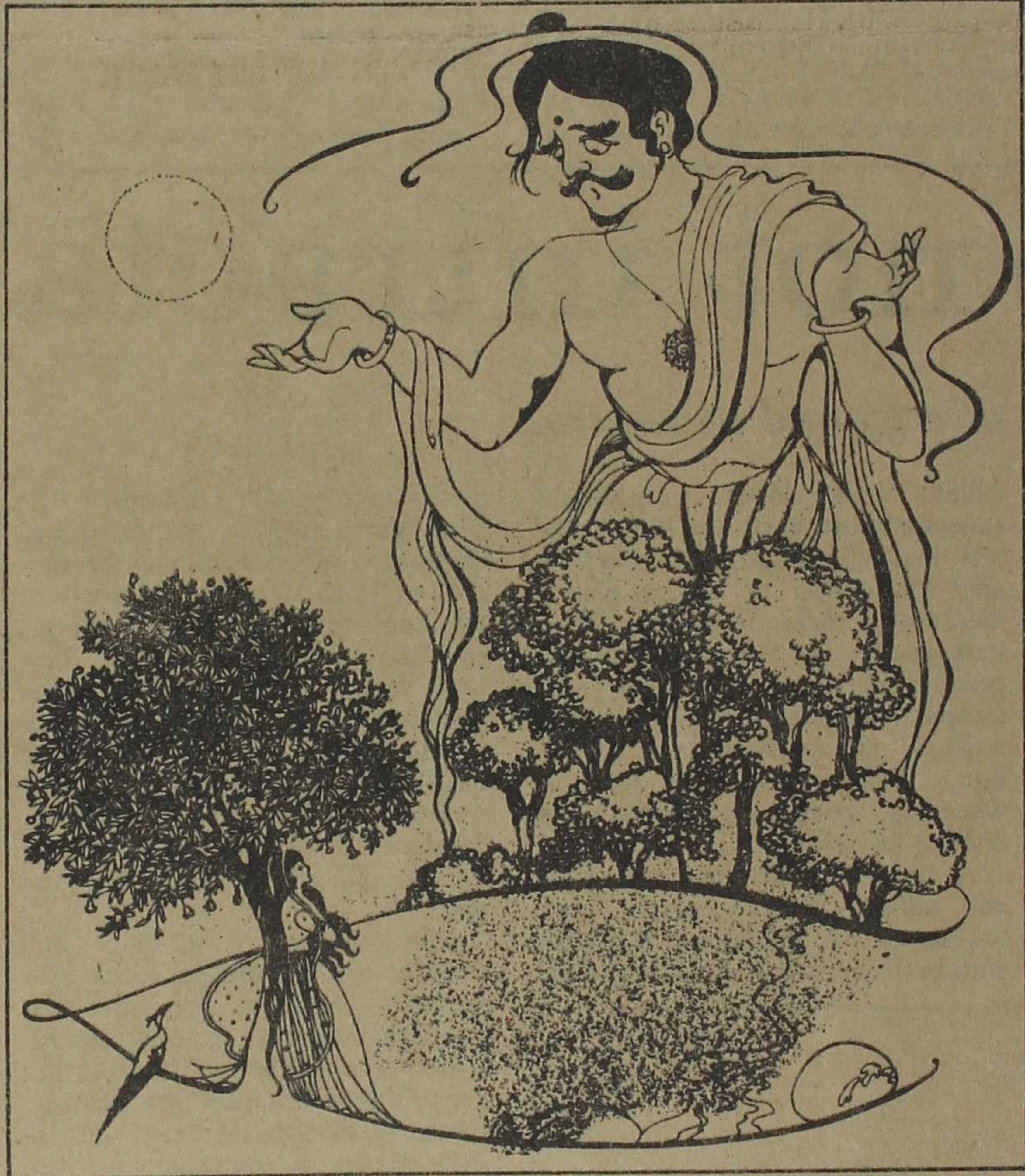
Learning fun

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LADYBIRD books cover a wide range of children's titles for all ages. The set of read-it-yourself stories is actually based on the Ladybird Key Words Reading Scheme and graded according to the needs of the child – the English school-going child that is. But parents here can make a quick estimate of the level of self-reading the child can handle. I would say that levels marked one to five could be managed by children aged five to seven. The stories chosen are those the children would already have heard from adults – *Sleeping Beauty*, *Rapunzel*, *Cinderella*, *Heidi*. Level one has two well-known – and despite the culture gap – well-loved rhymes – *Old Macdonald's Farm* and *Here we go round the mulberry bush*. Nice to read aloud, to sing in a chorus and to dance to. In short, for sheer bedlam! The print is large, the format fit for children's palms and fingers and the pictures delightful. Get the kids to be independent readers and you will feel a palpable sense of liberation.

For kids between seven and nine are two Ladybird horror classics – *Dracula* and *Frankenstein* – retold in simple English and vividly illustrated. Great for an after-dinner huddle with the lights turned low.

For still older children, are two collections of paperback stories based on Indian folk tales garnered from the *Kathasaritasagara*, the *Panchatantra* and other sources. The one edited by Catherin Lim is called *The man who rode a tiger* and the other edited by Manoj Das is called *A bride inside a casket*. Because of their strong basic plots, the stories have survived many retellings with deletions and additions. There is "The talking cave", "The blue monster", "Those who revived the tiger", "The story of Arjuna", "The ungrateful one" which have appeared in other compilations under slightly different titles and forms. Manoj Das includes an original story of his own titled "The bewildered giant" which is about a giant who diminishes when he weeps and changes into a bird when



he laughs, and of course turns into a young man when he listens to the song of a princess!

But for sheer inventiveness, wit, fun and knowledge, there is nothing to beat Daxon Publications' illustrated books in slim, soft-cover format published in Selangor, Indonesia. No credits for the text or picture are given and both are created by sheer genius.

The two Beginning Beginner Books – *The Tooth Book* and *The Foot Book* – can teach even young infants certain basic concepts with rhyme, good sense and humour, showing the connection between picture, word and meaning. The other titles include *A fly went by* which is about a merry chase started by a timid lamb whose hind feet are

caught in a bucket and who sets off a chain reaction of running in a man, a fox, a cow, a pig, a dog, a cat, a frog and a fly!

Oh, the things you can think! is for the young thinker who can "think left and think right and think low and think high". In keeping with the statement of Plato – Do not train children to learning by force and harshness, but lead them by what amuses them – which appears on the back cover of each of these books, these titles live up to their zany, dizzy ideal of spreading laughter and light.

Saahil

(All titles reviewed here are available from India Book House)