

## Charu Bahri, author of *Star Struck*, spoke to M<sup>e</sup> about her experience of writing a childrens' book

### What's your book about?

*Star Struck* is a story of Gita, a girl who loves the twinkling stars. Besides dealing with a new class, new friends, illness etc, she's caught up in a parallel quest — to know more about her "starry" friends, and one star in particular. It all comes together in the climax, when she is able to decode the meaning of the many messages sent to her by her friend, the star.

### What made you write this book?

As a child, I struggled to understand the meaning of death. I knew many children faced the same doubts and fears, and parents couldn't explain the concept well enough. In my teens, I learned meditation, which helped me experience myself as a 'soul' apart from my 'body', and helped me realise that death is merely a form of 'moving on'. I wanted to share this message with children, so that they would not have to spend years waiting for an answer.



### Any challenges you encountered while writing?

*Star Struck* is not the kind of story that a publisher would commission me to write. I wrote it because I had the courage of my conviction. Besides, children's books are priced so nominally in India that the author must be driven solely by passion to write them.

### And the rewards?

The satisfaction of a project well done, and having children and grown-ups tell me how much they like the book.

### The hardest part of writing for kids?

You don't write for children to showcase your language skills but to connect with them. So, the plot must intrigue them and keep them hooked. That's a huge challenge!



### Lessons learned?

Plenty. I discovered that my greatest strength is dialogue-writing, and I need to work harder on plot-development and characterisation. Also that writing fiction is exhausting work!

### Advice for new writers?

Choose innovative themes, keep your writing simple and work on the plot. Children need to be entertained. They have raised the bar for us writers. — RUSHINA MUNSHAW-GHILDIYAL

### Remember to ask yourself...

- Does my story get off to a good beginning?
- Any loopholes?
- Any ambiguity?
- Too many adjective and adverbs?
- Too self-indulgent?
- Over-use of any particular words?
- References rechecked?
- Title apt?