



Winner of Sahitya Akademi
Bal Sahitya Puraskar (Kannada) 2025

K Shivalingappa Handihal

NOTEBOOK

& OTHER STORIES



Translated by
Anand G

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Foreword

Ramendra Kumar



BLUE PENCIL

Notebook and Other Stories

K. Shivalingappa Handihal

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foreword

In the anthology *Notebook and Other Stories*, you will not find ghosts and goblins, witches and wizards, demons and deities. What you will get are ordinary children using their armour of grit, gumption and chutzpah to face tough odds.

Shivalingappa, a master craftsman, weaves tales steeped in the ethos of rural life, with all its rustic charm and challenges about heroes (and heroines) without capes who take on the vicissitudes of life not with wands and spells, but with earthy wisdom and pragmatism rooted in reality.

A teacher by profession, the writer understands the sensibilities of his young protagonists. Their predicaments and responses resonate with the reader, who cannot help but empathise.

For instance, when Thimmaraju's dream of joining school is realised, one exults with him in pure joy and abandon.

Then again, there is the story of Badyega, who has to leave school due to compelling circumstances. However, his ingenuity enables him to secure a sponsorship to a prestigious private school. The twist in the tale, when he chooses to remain in his government school, loyal to the place where his dreams took flight, touches a deep chord.

Yet another narrative that stands out is that of Khushi, whose dream is to buy a new dress for Gowri Pournami. She works hard in the chilli fields and earns enough to fulfil her aspiration. However, upon finding that her baby brother is suffering from a fever and her mother cannot afford medical

help, Khushi uses her precious savings for his treatment. Though she misses out on a new dress, the satisfaction she gains from seeing her brother healthy is far more fulfilling.

The other tales also bring to light everyday incidents with rare sensitivity. There are no twists and turns, ebbs and tides, but rather a gentle flow and lyrical narrative that soothes you. Mundane scenes and objects like a rainbow, a school uniform, a scoop of ice-cream, a lamppost, et al, become powerful motifs to create experiences, which are riveting and evocative.

The anthology is reminiscent of RK Narayan's *Swami and Friends*, in which slice-of-life incidents, tender humour, and sentiments leave an indelible mark.

The *pièce de résistance* of this collection is the subtle sprinkling of values, which fall like a zephyr, not to overwhelm with a didactic tone, but to inspire with a light caress.

I am sure you will enjoy Shivappa's stories written straight from the heart with empathy and compassion.

Happy Reading!

Ramendra Kumar

Award-Winning Author, Performance Storyteller
and Inspirational Speaker



The Rainbow

At our school, we have lots of teachers. But our favourite is Mr Shivanna. I really enjoy his classes and the way he teaches us. They are so much fun. Sometimes, it feels like we are playing instead of learning. His classes are the best. We do not even notice how quickly time passes. When exams draw near, most students feel worried and scared, but not us. We are always ready, thanks to Mr Shivanna. He teaches us Science and makes sure we understand everything. Because of him, we often score top marks. Honestly, he is even better than the 'Boost' drink Mum gives me, and the fancy watch Dad gifted me.

One day, after lunch, we were in class with Mr Shivanna. It was scorching hot outside, but



luckily, we were inside where it was cooler. I felt grateful, especially when I thought of Jafer, who worked at the puncture shop under the blazing sun.

We were quietly listening to the lesson when I glanced out of the window. Suddenly, dark clouds covered the sky, and the bright day turned gloomy in an instant. And then it began to rain. The rain poured down heavily. But soon, the sun peeked out again.

I could not hold back my excitement. I shouted, "It's raining in the sunshine! It's raining in the sunshine!" I realised then how much I loved the rain. I cheered and shouted with joy, and, to my surprise, the whole class joined in. We all rushed to the window, laughing and shouting together.

We completely forgot about everything else. Even the cool science equipment, the test tubes and thermometers, did not seem half as interesting as the magical rain outside. We always thought Mr Shivanna's science classes were the best, but that day, the rain stole the show. It was amazing.

But you will not believe what happened next. We were still shouting, "It's raining in the sunshine!" when we suddenly noticed... where

was Mr Shivanna? We turned to look at the blackboard. He was not there. We searched around the classroom but could not find him.

Then someone spotted him outside, near a tree in the school garden. He was standing in the pouring rain, smiling, soaked, and loving every moment of it.

We were thrilled. We ran out to the playground and started playing in the rain. Even Mr Shivanna, who was usually so strict in class, joined us. He danced with us, holding our hands. Even shy little Giddi Rani, who always hid behind others in class, came out and danced with him.

After a while, Mr Shivanna called out, "Children, do not get too wet, or you will catch a cold. Let us go back to class." But we could not stop playing.

Suddenly, Bharati came running and shouted, "Look! There is a rainbow!"

We all looked up. The rain had stopped, and behind the little hill, a rainbow shone brightly in the sky, glowing with seven beautiful colours. We jumped and shouted with excitement. Someone started singing a rhyme, and soon we all joined in:

*Rainbow came from clouds above,
Painting colours with its love.*

Bringing joy to land and sea,

Oh, what a sight for you and me!

Soon, everyone began sharing what they thought the rainbow looked like.

"Look! Lord Krishna is wearing a yellow dress!" Channabasava shouted.

"See that green? It is just like the lush fields of Gadeppa," said Gadilinga.

"Bharati, what do you see?" someone asked.

"Wow, Rohini, look! Seven princes riding seven horses!" Bharati exclaimed.

"For me, it looks like colourful jets at the Bengaluru Air Show," said Malla.

But I thought differently. Why compare a rainbow to fields, planes, or princes? A rainbow is simply a rainbow. That is a fact. I just gazed at its colours, feeling completely lost in them. It felt as if the rainbow's seven colours were flowing in my veins.

I felt as if I were floating on clouds. My friends kept calling me, "Roshni, come back!" But I could not tear my eyes away.

Then Bharati called my name again. I ignored her. The rainbow had captured my heart.

Suddenly, I felt a tap on my back. I turned around angrily, ready to snap, when a firm voice

asked, "Hey Roshni, where are you?"

It was a different voice. I turned, and there was Mr Shivanna, standing in front of the class, teaching with his science equipment. I blinked. Was this a dream? Had I imagined the whole thing? I remembered how Giddi always said she dreamt of the science teacher asking questions.

Before I could think further, I heard again, "Roshni, what is wrong? Why are you like this?"

I was startled. To check if I was dreaming, I pinched my own shoulder. At the same moment, I felt another tap — a strong one. It was Malla this time. And instead of pinching myself, I pinched his hand.

That woke me up completely. I was back in the classroom. All my friends were sitting quietly, listening to Mr Shivanna's lesson. Nobody seemed to notice me. I turned towards the window.

The sunlight was beginning to fade. I saw Iravva, who sold fruits outside the school, sitting quietly in the dark. And then a single raindrop fell to the ground. More drops followed.

Was my dream about to come true?





The Dream That Came True

That day, Shivanna Sir was giving out school uniforms to everyone. Gaadiga, Mukka, Soma and others had already received theirs and were excitedly chatting, whistling and laughing. While the teacher was taking down names, I quietly walked up to him.

"What is your name?" asked Chandrashekhar Sir.

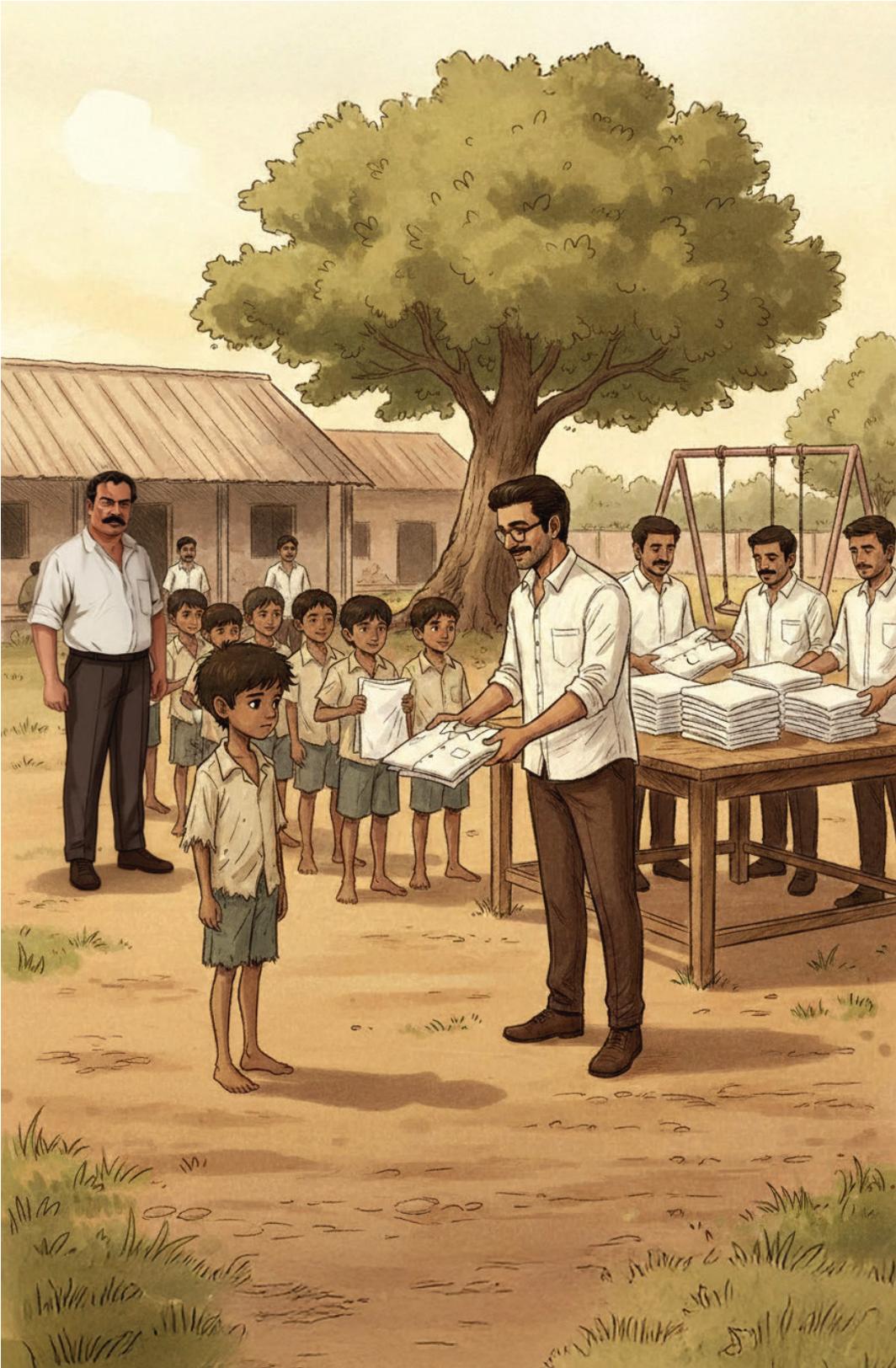
I stayed silent.

"Which class?" asked Shivanna Sir.

I still did not say anything.

Just then, Javalageri Venkateshi came running and shouted, "Sir, give me my uniform!"

"Hey, Venkateshi, why are you here? The annual



village fair is not here yet!" teased Shivanna Sir.

Chandrashekhar Sir picked up a stick and threatened him. Venkateshi kept his head down and did not look up. His only thought was, no matter how much you scold me, just give me the uniform. He stood there like a pillar in the middle of the playground.

After a while, the teachers got tired and gave him the uniform. One of them muttered, "If he does not come to school, it is his problem. We are tired of this." As soon as he got the uniform, Venkateshi, who had stood so still for so long, disappeared from sight.

Shivanna Sir then turned to me and asked, "What is your name? Which class are you in?"

Chandrashekhar Sir looked surprised. "Mr Shivanna, you remember every student and their parents' names so well. How come you do not know this boy?"

"It seems he is new here, so I do not know him yet," replied Shivanna Sir.

I stood there without answering. The teacher grew impatient and almost shouted, "Hey, tell me your name! I have a class to get to!"

Hesitantly, I replied, "Thimmaraju."

"New admission?"

"No."

"Are you a dropout?"

"No."

Annoyed by my short answers, Chandrashekhar Sir said to Shivanna Sir, "Fine, I am going to class. You can come after listening to his story." He walked away.

Shivanna Sir understood more from my appearance than from my words. He could see my situation clearly just by looking at me. My face was pale. My shirt had no buttons, the collar was torn from chewing, as I used to chew it to suppress my hunger, and there was a faded mark where a pocket had once been. My shorts were held together by an old thread tied around my waist. Everything about me showed the hardship I was living in.

He had no time to hear my slow, hesitant answers because the Headmaster called him away.

The next day, I went and stood at the classroom doors again. Mr Shivanna saw me but walked past to the next class. This happened for three or four days. No matter how much they shouted or scolded me, I did not stop going to school.

One day, Mr Shivanna asked, "Did you get

END OF SAMPLE

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