



Out of the Way! Out of the Way!

Written by Uma Krishnaswami

Illustrated by Uma Krishnaswamy

Groundwood Books. 2010, np.

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“Out of the way! Out of the way!”

Those are the words yelled by a mango seller, bullock-cart man, and riders on bicycles, motorbikes, and scooters to others passing by a tree in India. The tree begins as sprout in the middle of a dusty path. A young boy spots it and protects it by piling rocks around it. Over time, as the tree grows, so do the path and the boy. The tree matures with a thickening trunk and numerous forking branches that become homes to birds, squirrels, and parakeets. The path gradually transforms into a curving lane around the tree, then a road that is eventually graded by machines and turned into a place that bustles with cars, buses, trucks, vans, and tractors. The area around the tree changes from being a small village where the boy and others live quiet lives to a city filled with traffic and homes with television antennas and satellite dishes. The boy grows and becomes a father who brings his own children to the tree and, later as an old man, he sits under the tree and listens. “Evening breezes rustled the leaves, bringing back stories the man had forgotten he knew – stories his father and mother and grandfather had told him of trees long ago before there was even a road.”

This is a beautiful story about changes that come with the passage of time but also a sense of home and place that remains stable and constant. The tree marks a special place for the boy and is a reminder to him and others of memories of times past, despite the technological advances and fast-paced changes of life.

The art adds to the richness of the story. Artist Uma Krishnaswamy combines pen and ink and lively colors to create art using traditional Indian folk-art styles. The numerous detailed images on each page imply other narratives and highlight the richness of Indian life and culture. From page to page, the art gradually grows until it eventually encircles the written text, emphasizing the completeness of life and the story.

Author Uma Krishnaswami was born in New Delhi, India, and moved to the United States when she married after receiving her master’s degree from the University of New Delhi. She was inspired to write this book based on a childhood experience of planting a mango seed and reading a news story about people planting trees in potholes. Artist Uma Krishnaswamy was born and lives in India and uses Indian arts and crafts as the inspiration for her work.

Out of the Way! Out of the Way! would work well with other books on sense of place. These might include *I Know Here* (Laura Croza, 2010) and *Amelia's Road* (Linda Jacobs Altman, 1995). With books related to changes over time, it could be paired with *Window* (Jeannie Baker, 1991) and *The House on Maple Street* (Bonnie Pryor, 1987).

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