

[Be a Child Like Lily](#)

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BOOK REVIEW

Be a Child Like Lily

The wonder of nature takes life in art to capture a child's curiosity about the world

Tara Menon

In a 34-page children's picture book just released by Gingham Dog Press, sacred fruits, flowers and trees of India are personified to describe snippets of Hindu culture to a little girl named Lily. Skillfully written by Jeremy Smith and beautifully illustrated by Rob Hefferan, *Lily's Garden of India* (us\$15.95) is a delightfully original presentation which proves as entertaining as it is educational. Although the text aims for an older readership than does the masterfully childlike art, the story itself is simple enough for tots to follow with minimal assistance from teachers at school or moms at home.

Lily's adventure all takes place on one magical day in her mother's garden when jasmine, marigold and lotus flowers, banyan, coconut and neem trees--even a mango fruit--all mesmerize her with their heavenly world of color and wonder. She becomes so absorbed in the stories they tell, she actually experiences them as if they were happening physically. When the marigolds tell her that on Diwali pilgrims toss their petals into the Ganges, she finds herself on the riverbank, stepping into a boat afloat on candle-lit waters during a sacred festival night. In another scene, a coconut tree educates her about its usefulness as she refreshes herself eating and drinking of its fruit. Only at sunset do the plants finally stop talking to this little flower child named Lily.

An illustrated glossary and supplement on Indian festivals at the end of the book provide explanations that are simplified, concise and irresistibly magnetic. This

book plays on a child's sense of enchantment as it showcases nature interrelated with Hindu culture. Never has learning been so fun.

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