Where have the fairytales gone?

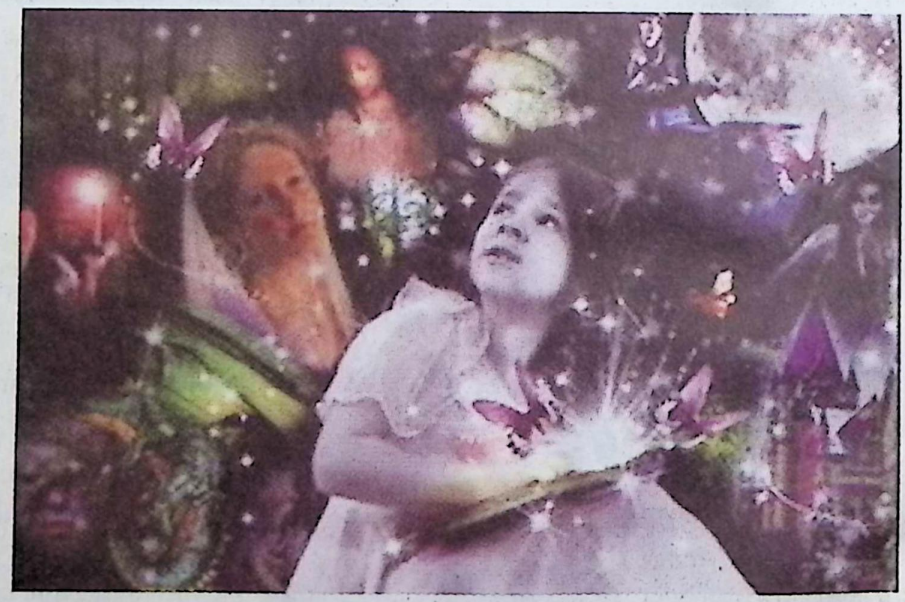


Ananya Rubayat

IF I start to list the dearest memories of my childhood, possibly right on top will be, a little girl of four sitting on a sunlit verandah, and her Grandmother trying to feed her breakfast by distracting her with stories. Never reading from a book, but with sparkles in her eyes that always made me think *'oh! She was there, she saw it!'* My grandmother had an endless stock of stories. She could keep a child spellbound with almost anything that came out of her mouth. But, as one can expect from a child, my favourite was always the fairytales. From my very own *'Thakurma'r Jhuli'*. The stories of Dalim Kumar, Shuyo Rani, Duyo Rani, of a monster who has his soul hidden inside a bird, who was always defeated in the end would keep me enthralled, and still does since the first day my Grandmother told me the stories.

Later on my parents brought the Dreamland publication books which had many of the internationally known fairytales along with colorful pictures. And my world of *dotti-danob* became familiar with Cinderella's wicked step mother, the long hair of Rapunzel, and the Frog Prince. When the Russian tales came, Evan and Vassilisa took me on rides on their winged horses. Then Aladdin rubbed a magic lamp and enchantments flew around my room. No matter which country these tales came from, and whoever wrote them, they all echoed the same message: good always triumphed over evil, and people always lived happily ever after. Even if I pick up one now, after life has taught me somewhat that not all endings are happy, they always bring a smile to my face. I thank the angels who brought me these fairytales when my mind was young, and gave me a world of my own where fairies flew and dragons breathed. Thanks to that, when the real life pressures become too much, I still have an enchanted forest to sit and dream in.

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I wonder what children nowadays read. By the time they are three, they are enrolled in pre schools. I see little children with bent backs from all the textbooks. Do they even have time to sit with their grand parents? Good question. How many children actually spend time with their grand parents these days? Do their parents read to them before bedtime, or do they just watch cartoons full of cyborgs? Hasn't computer games completely taken over a child's spare time? I think sometimes, when they grow up a little, will they know what to do with leisure, or are they saturated so much with reality, that they don't have anything left to imagine? Sometimes I think all the princes, princesses, nymphs, fairies, witches and monsters are huddled somewhere waiting to be summoned once more. But then the little magicians who forgotten what it is to believe in magic.

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