

## \* How I write Bhakti Mathur, Hong Kong children's author



**Bhakti to basics** Mathur's books teach children and parents about colourful Indian festivals

I finally fulfilled my long-time desire to become a writer with a children's book series, *Amma Tell Me About*, the idea for which came as a way to introduce my sons, aged four and two, to Indian festivals and to the wonderful mythology associated with them. The goal was not only to keep the narrative informative yet engaging for children, but also interesting for parents.

I start out by making notes about my memories of the festival and then thoroughly researching it. The writing starts with an outline of the narrative. It can be tricky when trying to retell the Ramayana (a 24,000-verse epic) in 1,200 words while retaining the essence of the characters and the story!

Then comes the task of converting the outline into the

story and, since I decided to write this series in verse, it's the most challenging aspect. My four-year-old and husband end up being 'guinea pigs' as I read them countless drafts to gauge their reactions. When my son runs off or husband nods off, I know I have more work to do! The final aspect is putting together the illustrations. I am lucky to have found a wonderful illustrator who shares my vision.

Since I work full time as a banker, I do the bulk of writing at night after putting the boys to bed. However, I have figured out that a journal and pen are my best friends. I carry

them around all the time as many ideas come out of the blue – in the MTR, taxis and even in business meetings (I hope my boss isn't reading this!).

I find the whole process of creating a book from scratch to be extremely fulfilling, but I only realised its biggest reward when I saw a mother reading one of my books to her daughter. They were both totally engrossed in the story and it created a beautiful moment. The realisation that I had contributed to this moment was very rewarding!



**Amma, Tell Me About Ramayana!** is published by Anjana, priced \$98. Find out more at [www.ammatellme.com](http://www.ammatellme.com).