



The Ghost of the Mountains

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It is always exciting to see books from or set in remote regions of India. And it's always interesting to see titles that come from indie publishers and organizations trying to create awareness about their work. Kalpavriksh is one such environment action group based in Pune with the snow leopard conservancy as a focus area (there are only 5000 of them in the world – that's how endangered they are!)

Ghost of the Mountains comes after Sujatha Padmanabhan spent some time in Ladakh, as part of her conservation work. It's inspired by a true story that took place here. In this beautifully illustrated book, Rigzin a young lad lives in the Ladakhi village of Ang. One morning as he gets ready to help put up the prayer flags at the monastery, his friend Jigmet calls him. There's a shan or a snow leopard in the house of one of the villagers. The villagers are angrily shouting outside as the snow leopard has killed the livestock, leaving only a baby calf. As they wait for the headman to come, Rigzin climbs the roof of the lhas where the snow leopard is locked in. He sees in amazement, as the ghost of the mountains looks right back at him. "A real, live snow leopard"! b

The villagers are angry and Rigzin decides to act. He saves the trembling calf even as the disbelieving villagers distract the snow leopard. With that out of the way, they want nothing more than making the snow leopard “pay” by killing it. Rigzin tries to reason with them by talking about how few there are left in the world. And they say, “*The fewer snow leopards we have around, the safer are our livestock.*” Rigzin eventually saves the animal, and makes the villagers understand how they can protect their livestock and the snow leopard too.

One does see books from the west on conservation and the environment and it’s good to see more of them from India as well. Ghost of the Mountains has its facts woven into the story and drives home an important message. Madhuvanti Anantharajan’s illustrations and design are beautiful.

I recommend you buy this book – the proceeds from its sale go towards snow leopard conservation.

Available via the Kalpavriksh website (kalpavriksh.org)

Reviewed by [Aravinda Anantharaman](#)

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The book is a true story that took place in a small ladakh village in the Himalaya Mountains, villagers woke up one morning to find a snow leopard among themselves, the leopard had killed livestock of the villagers except a calf, villagers wanted to kill the leopard but a young boy called Rigzin convinced villagers not to kill the leopard as he has a idea to save calf as well as leopard.

I like this book because it teaches humanity, love for the nature, environment and wild life.

I like the character Rigzin because he cares for the leopard and also because he is able to convince the villagers to spare the snow leopard with his courage and determination.

Basieem Siddique

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