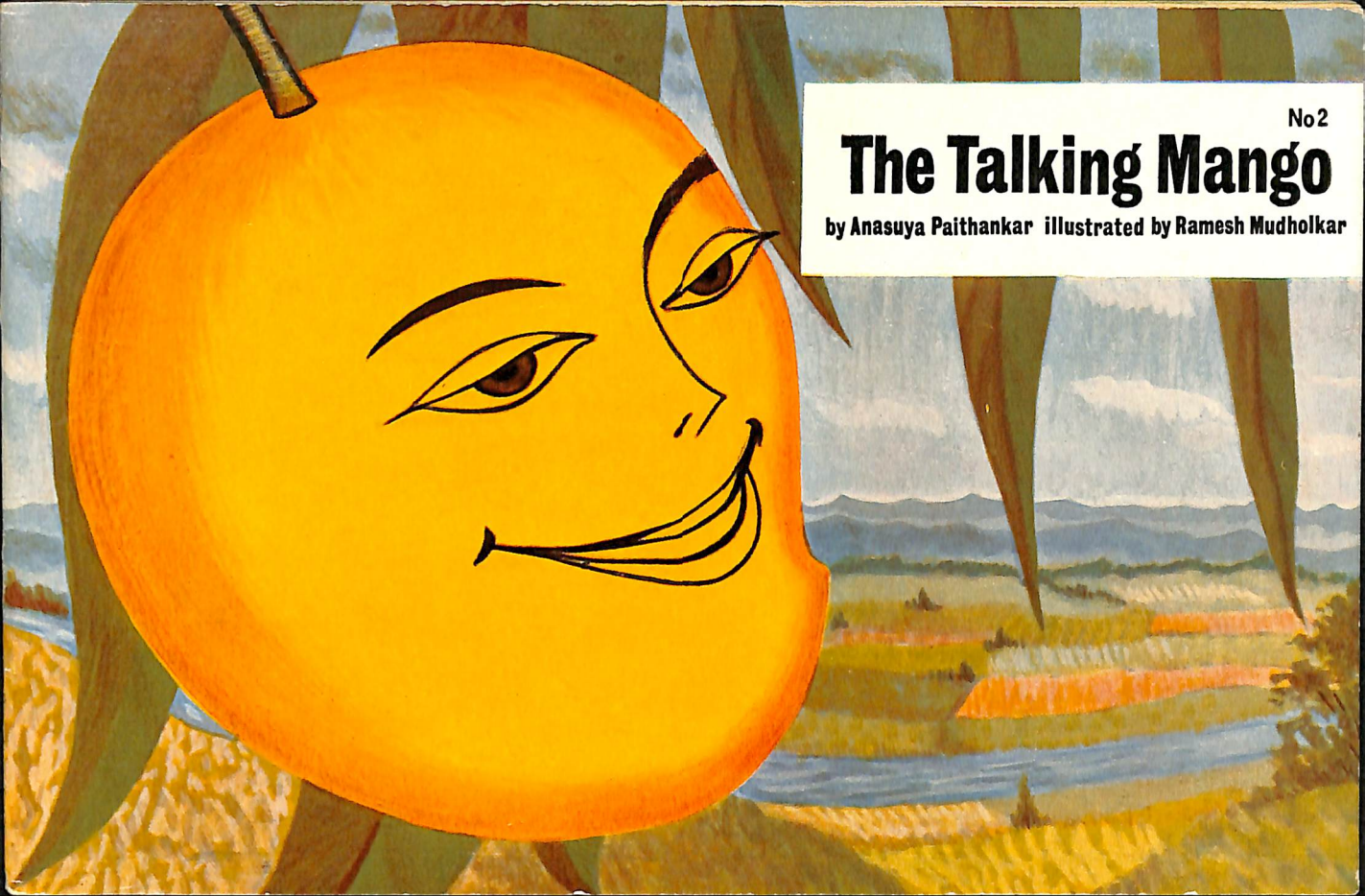


No2

The Talking Mango

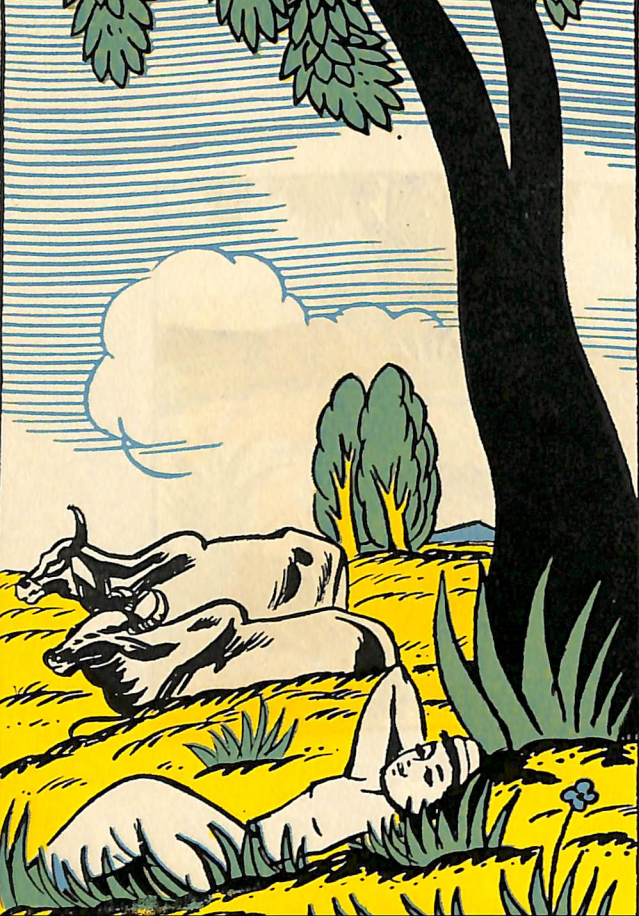
by Anasuya Paithankar illustrated by Ramesh Mudholkar



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Near a village flowed a stream, and on its banks were many mango trees.





One mango tree was huge and gave a lot of shade. In the afternoon farmers, tired after their work, used to sit under it and eat their picnic lunches. Travellers, exhausted by walking, would sit in its shade and rest. Every day cows and buffaloes would come and stand under it.

Spring came. The mango tree blossomed. Its scent spread everywhere. The koyal bird was overjoyed, and sat on a branch of the tree and sang sweet songs. The flowers turned to fruit—at first the mangoes were only as big as peas.

There was no shortage of water, as the stream was so near. The tree would suck

water through its roots, and supply it to all the mangoes. Soon they began to grow very fast. In no time they were as big as betel nuts, then as big as limes. They used to spend their time playing with the wind, chatting with the stream down below, and talking to their mother, the tree.



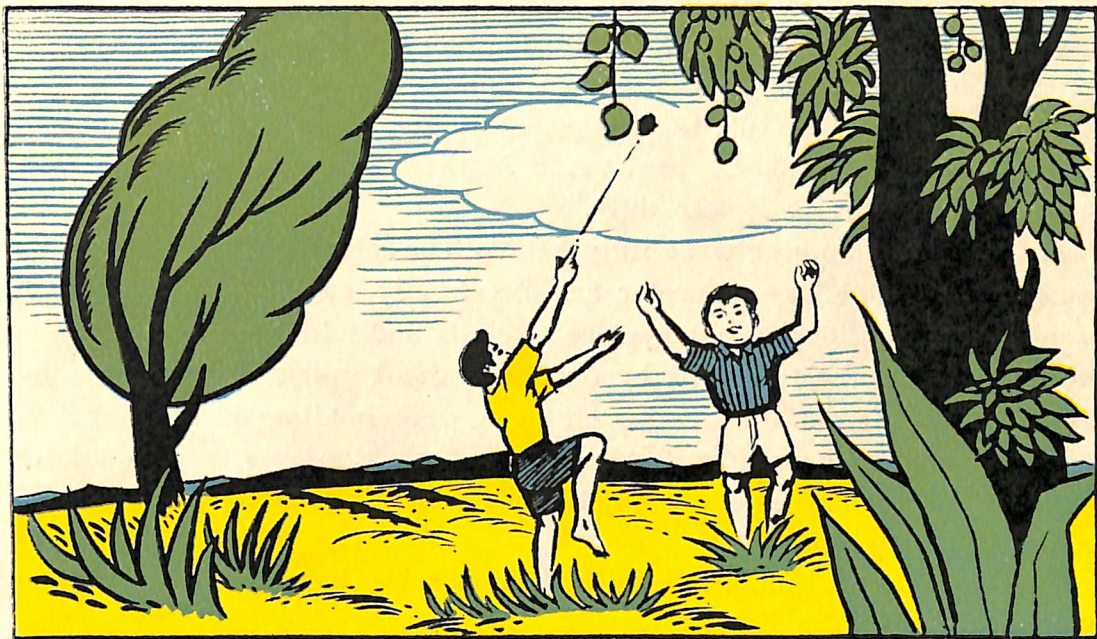
One day, when the mangoes were all holding tight to their mother and swinging in the wind, they suddenly heard a cry, "Oh, Mother!" They looked down. Some of the village boys were trying to get the mangoes by throwing stones at them.

They saw a stone hit the mango that had cried out, and it fell to the ground. When the boys had got several mangoes down they went away.

A bit later along came a man with a stick which had a knife tied to its top end. He cut off some branches of the tree and went away. He wanted to make chains of mango leaves to hang outside the doors of different houses. People thought they brought luck.

One mango was horrified to see all this. He said to his mother, "Mother, we give shade to so many people. We add to the beauty of this place, as the stream says. So why do all these people trouble us?"

Mother lovingly put a leaf on the mango and said, "Child, whatever happens, do not forget that service is our duty."



As the mangoes began to grow bigger and bigger their troubles increased. Some children would even climb up the tree to pluck the mangoes. Whenever things like this happened the mango would ask his mother, "Mother, why does this happen?" And Mother's answer was always the same, "Child, service is our duty."

By now the mangoes were fully grown. The soft stones inside them had become hard. One day a farmer and his family came to the tree. He brought some sacks and a big piece of cloth, and told his children to hold the cloth under the tree. One by one he began to pick the mangoes and drop them in the cloth which his children were holding down below.

When the mango realised that the farmer's plan was to pick all the mangoes, he held even more tightly to his mother and said, "Mother, look at that cruel man."

Mother said, "Child, don't be afraid. Service is our duty, and true happiness lies in that."

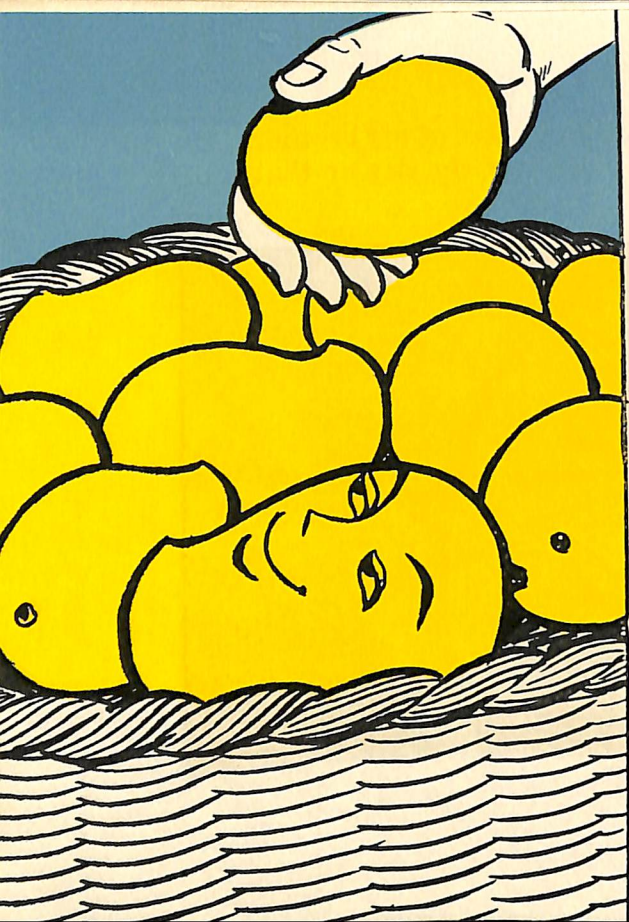


No sooner had she said this than the farmer picked the mango and dropped him down into the cloth. Soon he was in a sack with the other mangoes, and he knew he was being taken away somewhere.



Later he found himself in a dark store with the rest of his brothers. He felt very sad when he remembered his loving mother, the stream that sang songs with the rocks, and the playful wind.

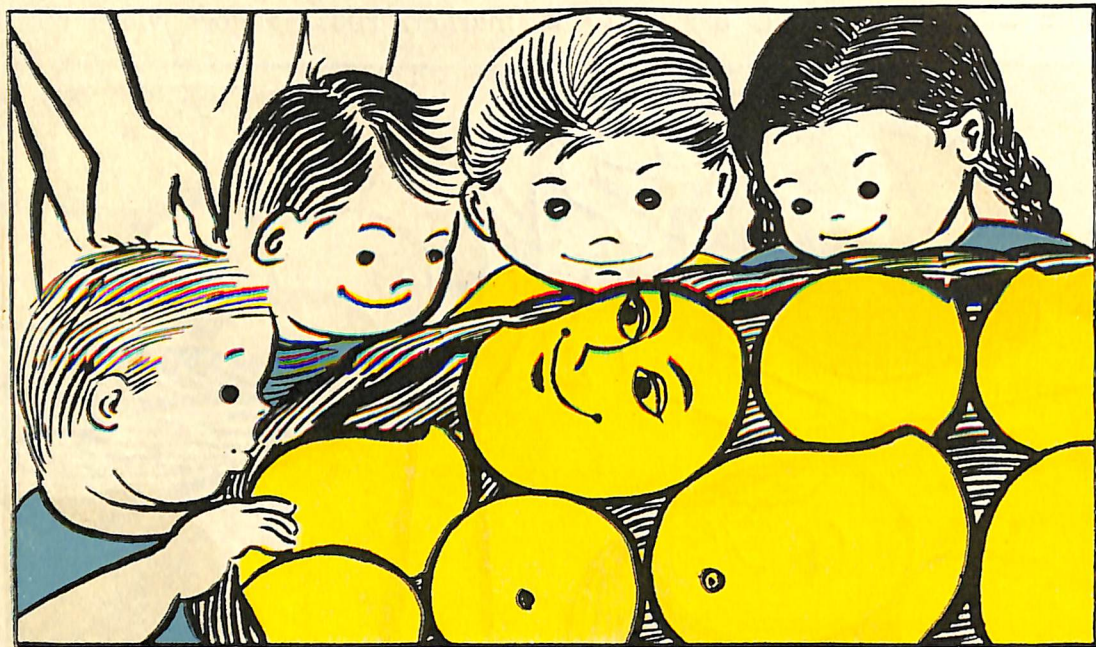




After a few days the farmer came back into the dark store. He put the mango with several others into his basket, arranged them nicely, and took the basket outside. The mango felt so refreshed to see the clean light outside. And when the wind touched him and ran away, he felt very happy. Then he looked at himself. What a surprise! His green colour had turned a beautiful yellow!

The farmer took the basket to a market. His mangoes were more





attractive than anyone else's. Four children came up to him, pulling their father along by his dhoti. At their insistence he bought a mango—and the one he chose was the talking mango. The children jumped with joy and could hardly wait to get home. The mango was pleased to know that he was the cause of the joy on the children's faces.

Reaching home, the children told their mother about the mango. She brought a shiny knife from the kitchen. All the children sat around her eagerly. Father gave the mango to mother.

The mango became scared and horrifying thoughts began to enter his mind. But there was no time to think. Mother cut the mango up, and they all ate it. They threw the skin and the stone outside among the other rubbish.



The mango was sad to see himself in this situation. But just as he was about to get really angry with this family, he remembered his mother. She always used to say, "Child, service is our duty."

Then he became happy that he had fulfilled his duty in spite of everything.



Some weeks passed. A little plant peeped out of the mango stone, and slowly it began to turn into a tree. After a while the tree was taller than any of the houses. He looked around. Far, far away he was able to see his mother, standing.

He waved his branches in the wind and called, "Mother!"

Mother looked at him. Her heart was filled with joy. She understood him, and said, "Well done, child."



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To be published shortly

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4 THE MAGIC BALLOONS by Linda Pierce

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