

# Seven-year-old wonder kid

## Autistic girl an inspiration to all after writing children's book

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**KUALA LUMPUR:** She could not hold a pencil and does not like writing much.

Yet, Madhu Barghavi Vijayakumar has written her first children's book at the age of seven.

Diagnosed with autism two years ago, the girl has become an inspiration for families with autistic children.

The launch of her 24-page book titled *The Golden Parrot and the Magic Teapot* attracted almost a full house at the auditorium of the National Museum yesterday.

A nervous Barghavi read out on stage one of her two short stories in the book, accompanied by her mother Jegadeswari Krishnan.

"It's amazing she has come this far, a girl who earlier didn't want to read and write or hold a pencil," said her personal tutor Mahaletchumi Tavamany, 37.

Just three years ago, Barghavi had poor motor skills and Mahaletchumi had to train her to work with clay, marbles and play dough to strengthen her grip.

"Even now, she still doesn't like writing that much.

"She prefers activities like listening to people read books," said the special education teacher.

Mahaletchumi has been spending an hour to tutor Barghavi weekly since 2014.

Jegadeswari said the idea of the first story about the golden parrot in the book came to Barghavi last year when her school teacher gave her an empty booklet to write a story.

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Mahaletchumi Tavamany

"The booklet only had illustrations as she hates writing but she repeated the story to me a few times so I encouraged her to write it," she said.

"It took her a few weeks and immediately after that, she came up with the second story on the magic teapot."

Jegadeswari, who wanted to nurture the author in her daughter, then found a family who offered to sponsor the publication cost.

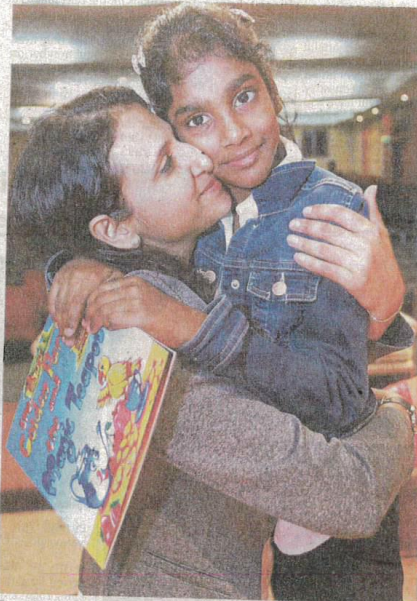
Priced at RM28.90 and published by Rakyat Media Industries, proceeds from the book sale will go to non-profit organisation Love Autism Society of Malaysia (Persama).

Persama patron Tan Sri Dr M. Kayveas, Persama founder Thila Laxshman, and director of a film on autism *Retha*, Tunku Mona Riza were also present yesterday.

"Don't mould your child. What I did was accepting her as she was and try to encourage and empower her in the face of adversity.

"I don't see raising her as a challenge but an experience.

"I didn't try to change anything in her and she has grown on her own," Jegadeswari said.



**A mother's pride:** Jegadeswari hugging Barghavi after her daughter's book launch at the National Museum.