

The Song In Her Heart

A CHERAW DANCE STORY



STORY : SHAMIM PADAMSEE

Illustration : Students Of Akshar Centre For The
Hearing Impaired Children, Vadodara



As she walked home from school Ringluia imagined the steady beat of the long bamboo poles go Dhak...dhak...dhak.

And the dancers dancing gracefully in and out from between the poles.

From the time she was little, Ringluia yearned to dance the Cheraw, the national dance of the Kuki - Mizo - Chin tribes of India and Burma. But she was afraid.



When she reached home, she pulled out the note handed to the students by the teacher and read it again;

“Tomorrow is the audition for the Cheraw Dance Festival.

Interested students must come to school dressed in the traditional costume.”



"I wish..." she whispered, hot tears rolling down her cheeks.

"Hoo-hoo, child, what do you wish for?" Signed her grandmother.

"I want to dance the Cheraw, Grandma, but how can I, if I cannot hear the beat?" she said wiping her tears.



Grandma took Ringluid's hand and placed it on her chest. Dhup-dhup, dhup-dhup went her heartbeats.

"Do you feel them," she asked.

Ringluid nodded.

"Anyone can dance," signed her grandmother, "However, sometimes one has to dance to a different song. The song in your heart!"



Grandma held her hand and led her to a clearing in the lush jungle where orchids bloomed, and rhododendrons nodded their heads.



She lifted Ringluia's hand and tapped the rhythmic beat of the clacking bamboos on her palm.



Ringluia closed her eyes.

She could feel the beat in her heart and then in her belly. And then slowly, down-down-down, all the way to her feet. Her toes began to twitch. Her feet began to move between the imaginary sticks.

Step in – step out!

Slowly at first, and then faster and faster. Tap-tap, tappity-tap went her feet as the music in her heart played on.

She danced until the moon came out and smiled down at her.



The next day Grandma took out the traditional Cheraw dance costume from a box and gave it to Ringluia for the audition at school.

The audition began. Two boys sat opposite each other on the ground. They began to tap the long bamboo poles in a steady rhythm. One by one, the girls stepped in and danced.

And then it was Ringluia's turn. With her heart pounding the beat loud and clear, she jumped in. Her heartbeats sang with the clackity-clack of the bamboos.





She was a peacock in the jungle.
She twirled. She swirled. She whirled.



She was a bird soaring in the skies.
She flew. She flipped. She flapped.





“Ringluia, how did you learn to dance like that?” signed her surprised teacher. Ringluia smiled, pointed to her heart, and signed, “Everyone can dance, if they listen to the song in their hearts.”

Our Talented Illustrators



Amaan Salat
18 years



Chandan Kushwaha
18 years



Deepanshu Sharma
16 years



Nayan Hadgada
14 years



Shivam Kushwah
14 years



Devre Yashraj
14 years

Teacher Mr. Jaydev Biswal's note

I am a professional painter, sculptor and a photographer having a Bachelor's and Master's degree in Visual Arts from the renowned Faculty of Fine Arts, M.S university of Vadodara. I am practicing art and also working as a part-time teacher for Akshar Trust.



"Akshar Trust has been involved in the education of children with deafness since 1988 in Vadodara, India. It believes that children with deafness are children first. They have rights to a happy childhood, literacy and communication skills. Nearly all at Akshar belong to the economically weaker section of society. The experience of 35 years has shown us that given the appropriate pedagogy, technology and opportunity the child with deafness does achieve. This is the belief that drives our work."

**Nisha Grover: Hon. Founder Director &
Managing Trustee of Akshar Trust**