

Gita Ralleigh

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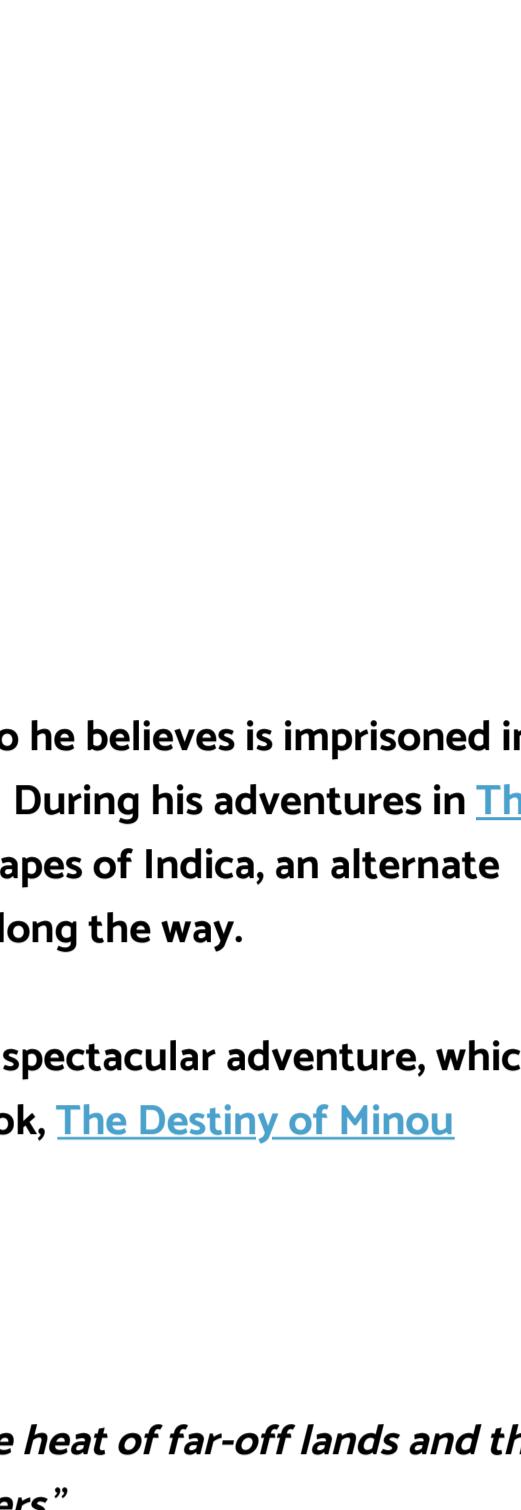
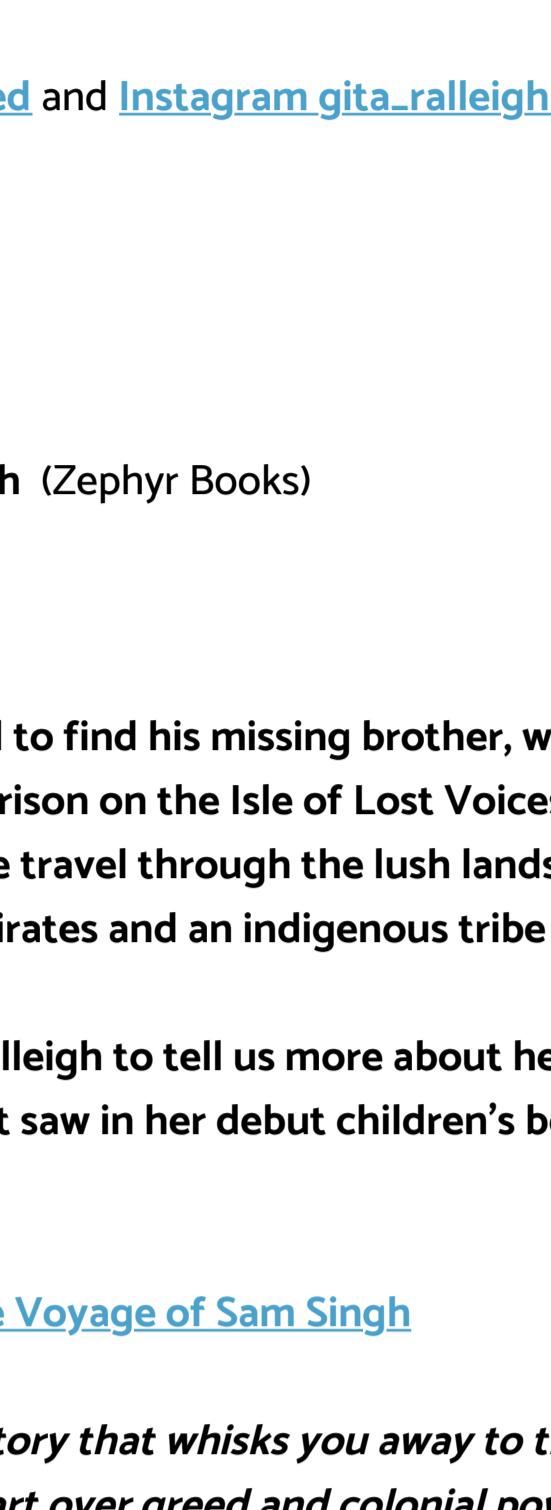


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About Author

Gita Ralleigh introduces *The Voyage of Sam Singh*, the adventurous follow-up to her acclaimed debut, *The Destiny of Minou Moonshine*.



Gita is a medical doctor who studied for an MA in Creative Writing and has previously published short stories and two poetry books. She lives in London with her two children, and teaches creative writing to undergraduates at Imperial College.

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Interview

The Voyage of Sam Singh (Zephyr Books)

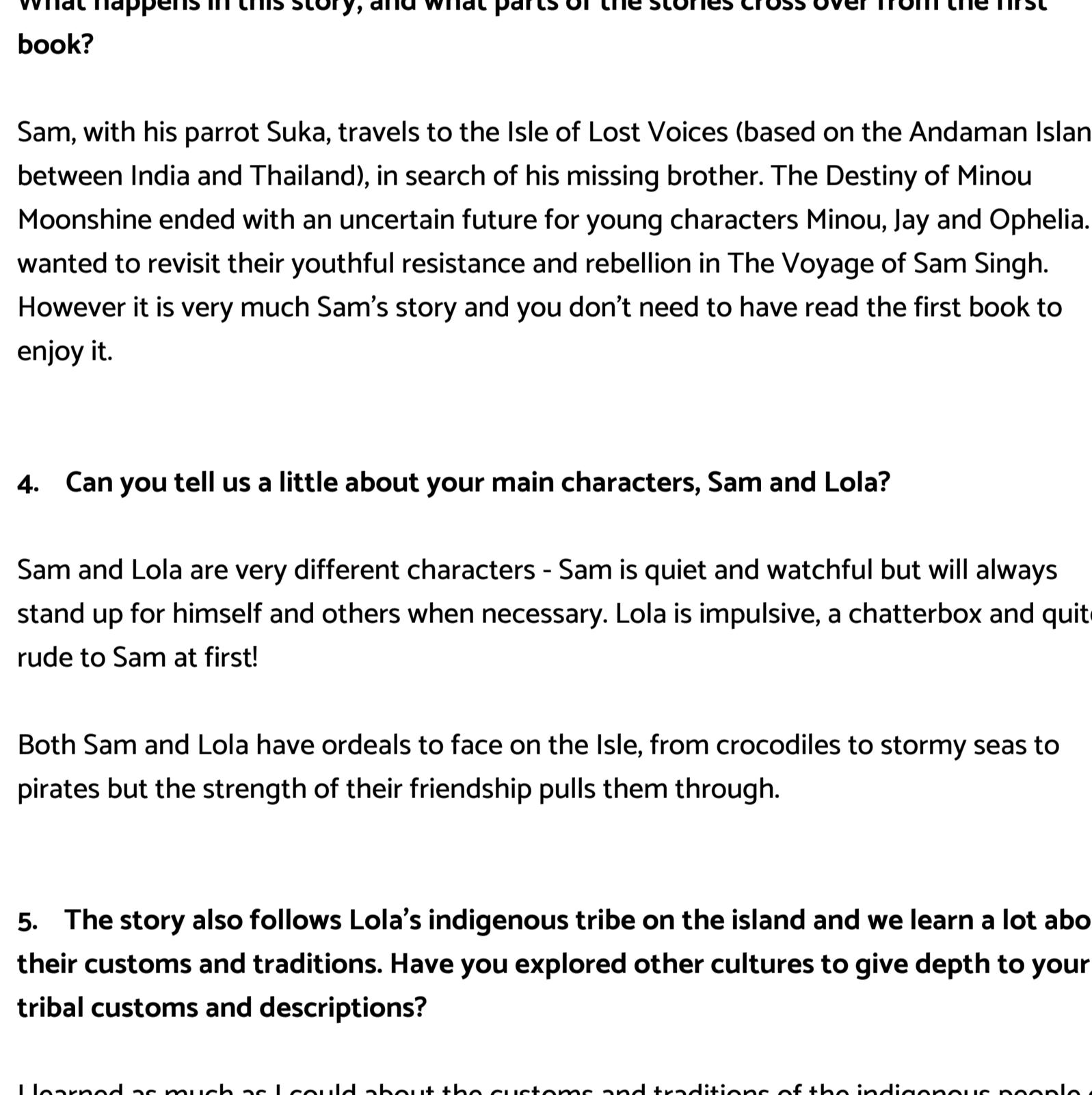
July 2024

Sam Singh is determined to find his missing brother, who he believes is imprisoned in the notorious Octopus prison on the Isle of Lost Voices. During his adventures in *The Voyage of Sam Singh*, we travel through the lush landscapes of Indica, an alternate India, and meet spirits, pirates and an indigenous tribe along the way.

We asked author Gita Ralleigh to tell us more about her spectacular adventure, which revisits the world we first saw in her debut children's book, *The Destiny of Minou Moonshine*.

[Read a chapter from The Voyage of Sam Singh](#)

Review: "An evocative story that whisks you away to the heat of far-off lands and the triumph of hope and heart over greed and colonial powers."



Q&A with author Gita Ralleigh

Gita introduces *The Voyage of Sam Singh* and explores its themes of colonialism, indigenous voices and her alternate India in this story

1. Hello Gita, thank you for joining us on ReadingZone this month. Can you tell us a little about yourself and what brought you into writing for children?

I'm a poet, writer, doctor and mother of teenagers. I'd always loved reading, particularly fantasy and historical novels but it wasn't until I had my own children that I decided to try writing my own stories. At the time there were very few fantasy books with heroes who were children of colour. I think that spurred me on!

"Although I was born in England, we often visited India, where my grandparents lived. It seemed like a magical place to me as a child"

2. What inspired your debut, *The Destiny of Minou Moonshine*, and how would you describe the world of Indica that you created for this story?

Although I was born in England, we often visited India, where my grandparents lived. It seemed like a magical place to me as a child - we'd see monkeys scamper over temples, peacocks dance in the grounds of old palaces and even the odd elephant on the road alongside cars, bicycles and cows. I drew upon all of this for my fictionalised India, or Indica.

3. And what drew you back a second time to this world, for *The Voyage of Sam Singh*. What happens in this story, and what parts of the stories cross over from the first book?

Sam, with his parrot Suka, travels to the Isle of Lost Voices (based on the Andaman Islands between India and Thailand), in search of his missing brother. The Destiny of Minou Moonshine ended with an uncertain future for young characters Minou, Jay and Ophelia. I wanted to revisit their youthful resistance and rebellion in *The Voyage of Sam Singh*. However it is very much Sam's story and you don't need to have read the first book to enjoy it.

4. Can you tell us a little about your main characters, Sam and Lola?

Sam and Lola are very different characters - Sam is quiet and watchful but will always stand up for himself and others when necessary. Lola is impulsive, a chatterbox and quite rude to Sam at first!

Both Sam and Lola have ordeals to face on the Isle, from crocodiles to stormy seas to pirates but the strength of their friendship pulls them through.

5. The story also follows Lola's indigenous tribe on the island and we learn a lot about their customs and traditions. Have you explored other cultures to give depth to your tribal customs and descriptions?

I learned as much as I could about the customs and traditions of the indigenous people of the Andamans. Lola's tribespeople's culture, food and language are based on those sources.

With climate change and the crisis resulting from it, the perspectives of indigenous people have finally begun to be recognised. In *The Voyage of Sam Singh*, spirits warn Lola of the dangers that outsiders bring to traditional ways of life and fragile ecosystems - the Andaman and Nicobar Islands are currently at risk from tourism and development.

7. The Voyage of Sam Singh is a story of the wider themes you explore in the story, and why you wanted to write about them for children?

The links between colonisation and its effects on indigenous people and their land is one I wanted to explore. We are now beginning to understand how these forces reshaped and in some cases threatened the natural world. Young people today are rightly concerned with these threats, which is why I wanted to write about them.

Sam often has to make really hard choices about what the right course of action is on his journey. He manages this by trusting his own instincts.

He manages this by trusting his own instincts

8. Apart from a fabulous adventure, what would you like children to take from Sam Singh's journey?

Sam often has to make really hard choices about what the right course of action is on his journey. He manages this by trusting his own instincts, which is something I'd love young readers to take away with them.

9. Which part of Indica would you travel to, if you could, and how would you travel around?

Since I've spent so much time there in my imagination, I'd have to ride Minou's mechanical elephant Laxmi through her queendom of Moonlally.

I'm currently writing a supernatural detective story, although I would love to return to these characters in future.

10. What are you writing currently, and where do you go to find inspiration to bring new adventures into your own life?

My favourite place to write is in the library, facing a window - I feel very uninspired without inspiration! Although I live in London, whenever possible I love to visit the sea. As I take inspiration from history, our holidays are a mix of beach days and visits to historical sites. If I'm stuck, wandering around galleries and museums to look at art always helps.

Author's Titles

[The Voyage of Sam Singh](#)

[The Destiny of Minou Moonshine](#)

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