

BAGHA THE LITTLE TIGER



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In memory of my father Surajit Sinha,
who gave me the courage and inspiration
to explore untrodden paths.

Foreword

Children love animals. They are fascinated by the common animals they see around them- squirrels chasing each other, cats preening themselves, even crawling ants and stray dogs hold a child spellbound. They are also awed by the less common animals that they see only in books or zoos, ferocious tigers, huge elephants and majestic lions which inhabit lush mysterious tropical jungles.

In the fertile imaginary world of a child, garden foliage can grow into a thick jungle and a common garden cat can become a tiger.

In this story a young girl sees a cat and then dreams it is a tigress in the wild. When the tigress baghini roars the animals run helter-skelter, rushing into the first hiding places that they find. Animals know very well the idea of camouflage - blend in with the surroundings, lie low and say nothing till the danger passes.

But none of the jungle folk consider Baghini's cub Bagha to be dangerous, much to Bagha's frustration and disappointment. Just as children like to imitate adults, Bagha tries without success to be taken seriously. Neither Maur, the peacock nor Hanuman, the monkey nor Mriga, the deer give Bagha a second glance when he tries to frighten them with his roar. Poor Bagha! Finally, after succeeding in scaring a tiny squirrel Kullu, Bagha rushes off to tell his mother.

Children will learn from this story how similar we are to animals. The young are vulnerable and need protection. Mothers protect their young. The young try to imitate the adults and grow up. This imitative behaviour is an important stage in the struggle for the young ones to grow up and take their rightful place in the world. When Bagha grows up the jungle will echo with his roars and the jungle folk will shiver with fear. When Roshni grows upwell, let's wait and see!

This book can be read at various levels. Younger children can simply leaf through the book and look at the pictures. The story can be read out by an adult (dramatic exaggeration helps to hold the child's attention) or left to the child to make up. An older child can appreciate both the pictures and the writing.

I thank Arvind Gupta, Pulak Biswas and Vishakha Chanchani for encouragement and appreciation of my work.

I am deeply indebted to my husband Joseph Samuel for his constant support and encouragement.

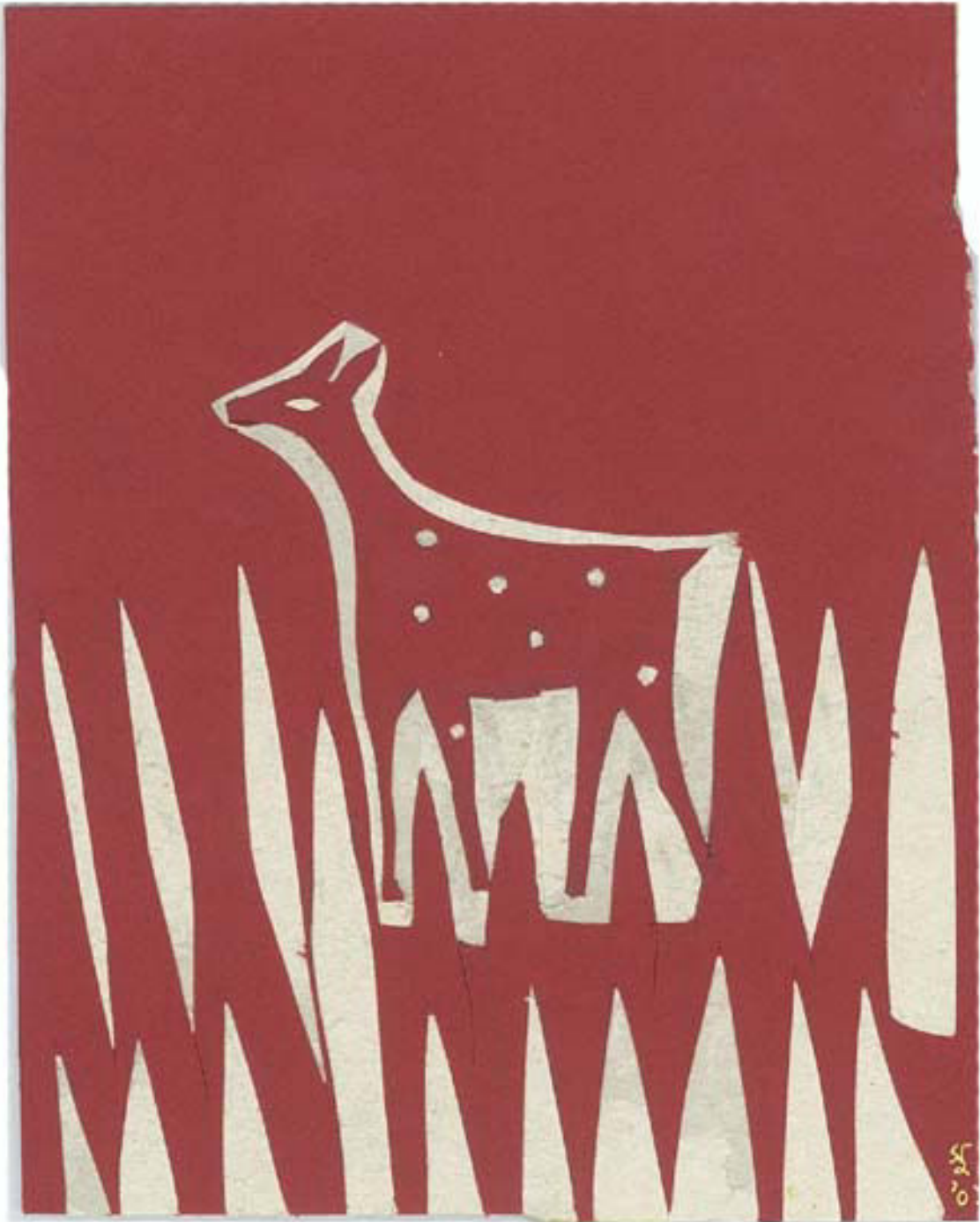


One day, Appa, Ma and Roshni were looking at the garden through the bedroom window.

Appa spotted a cat creeping into their garden. Appa and Ma left and Roshni sat alone watching the cat. It was a beautiful cat with lush fur and stripes just like a tiger.



The glare from the hot midday sun was making her feel drowsy. She saw a huge golden tigress with dark stripes, in a dense green jungle. Baghini, the tigress roared. All the animals in the jungle shivered out of fear.



Mriga, the deer, hid in the golden brown dry grass.



Maur, the peacock hid in the lush green grass by the river.



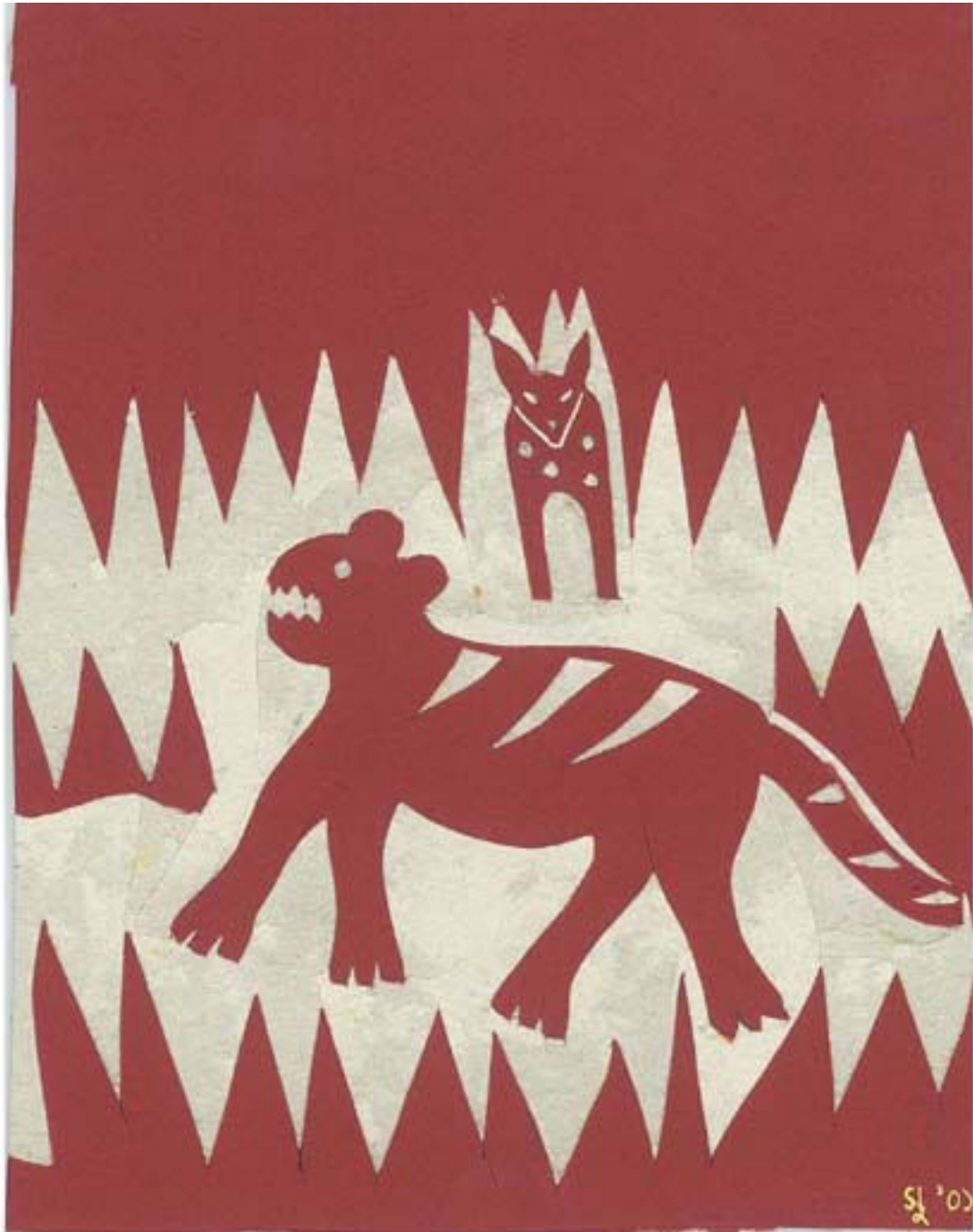
Hanuman, the monkey and his friends stopped their games and hid in the sandy bank, tightly clutching their little ones.



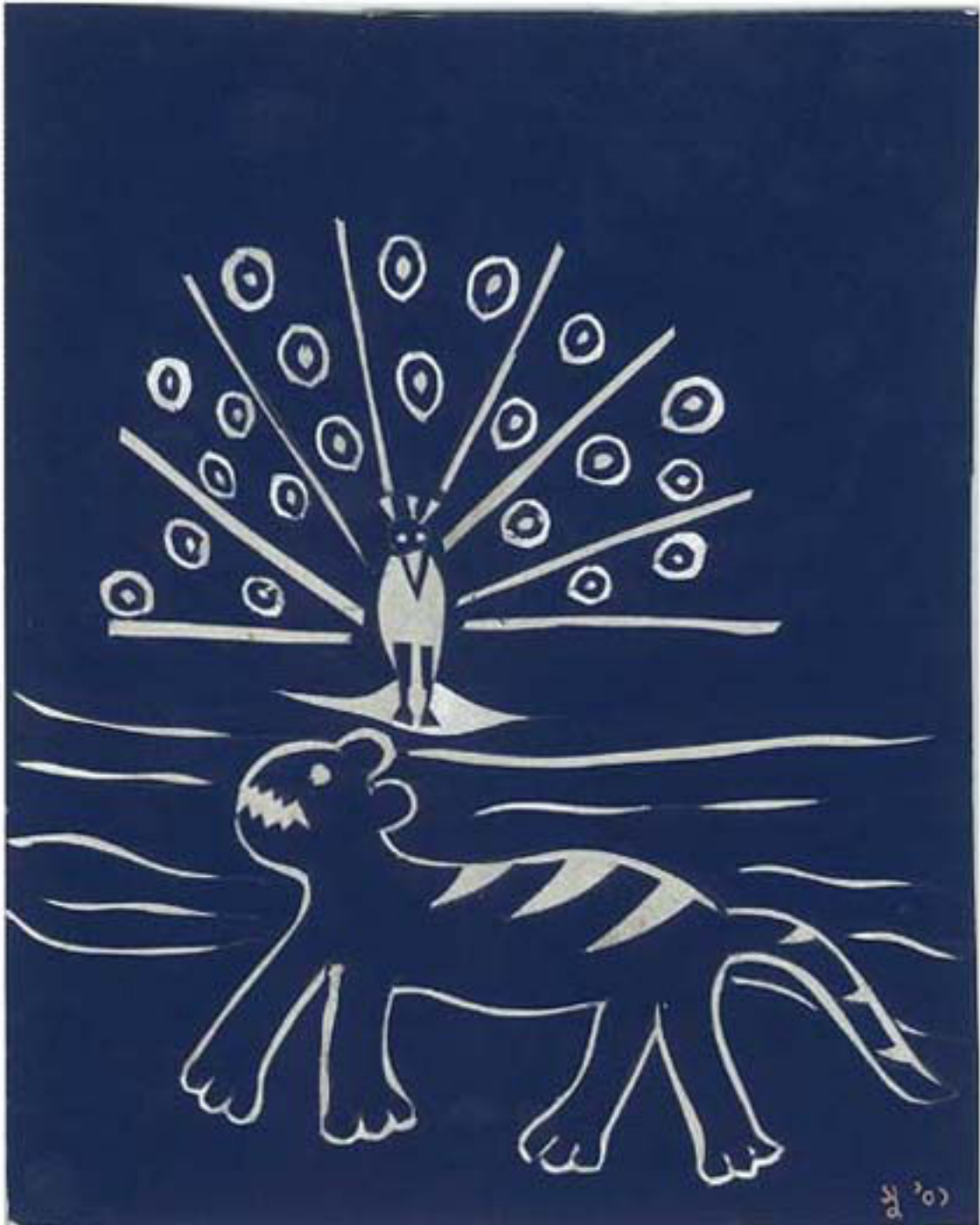
Baghini stretched out under a tree to take her midday nap. Her baby bagha was very proud of his mother. He knew that one roar from his mother would send all the jungle folk scampering for cover. He wanted to try this too. But Baghini would not let him.



Quietly, while his mother was asleep, Bagha set off to find someone to frighten.



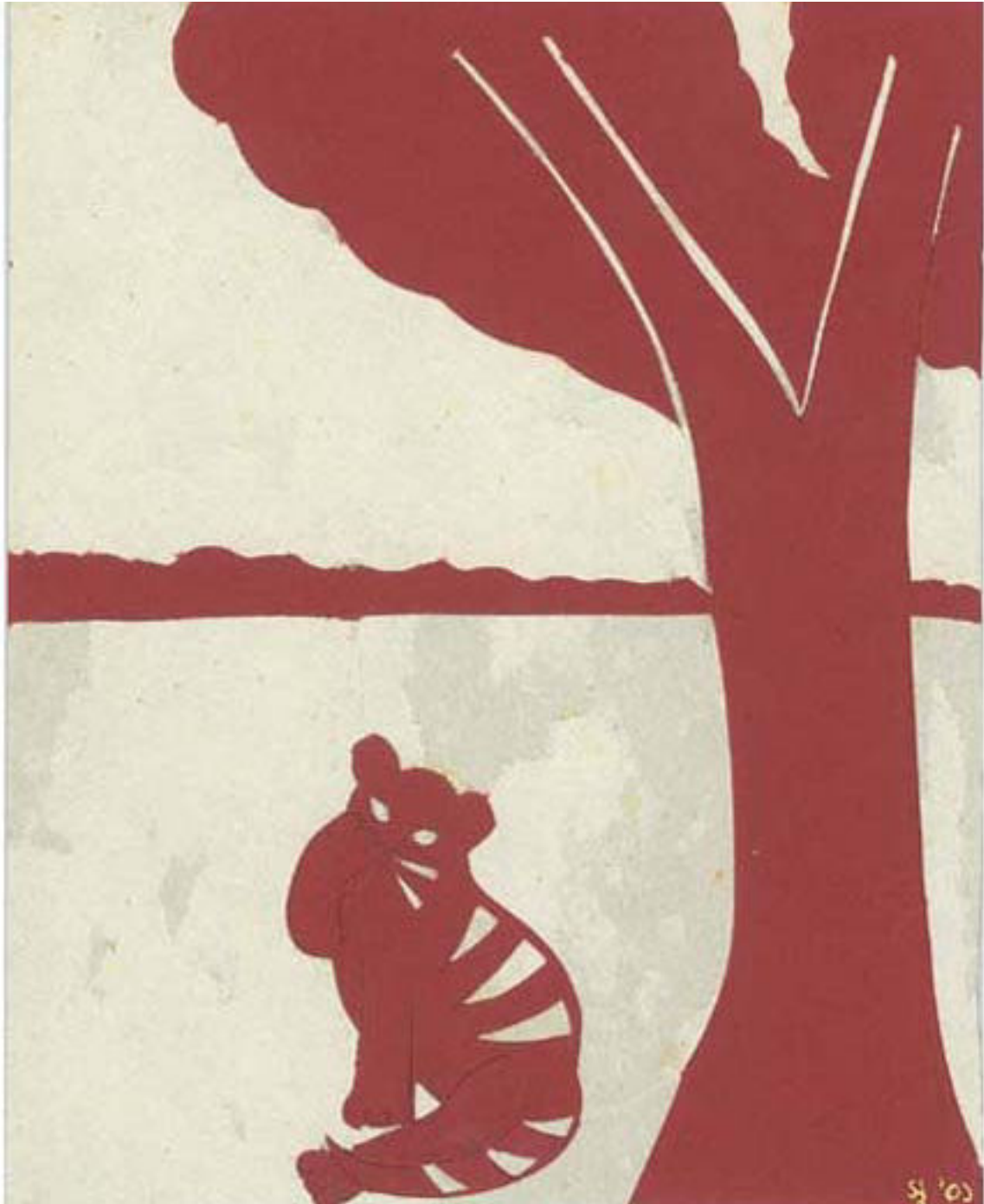
But as Bagha started walking through the jungle, Mriga came out of the tall dry grass.



Maur was dancing for joy at the riverside.



Hanuman and his friends left the sand and started playing and swinging in the trees. Nobody was scared.



Bagha felt so sad he sat under a tree and started crying.



A nut dropped from a nearby tree and close behind came Kullu, the squirrel. When he saw Bagha, Kullu forgot all about his nut.



He turned tail and ran to the safety of his tree.



Bagha was very pleased. He went running to tell Baghini how he had scared the squirrel.



Roshni rubbed her eyes to wake up and through the mist of her clouded sleepy eyes she saw a cat sitting in the shade of a huge plant in her garden.

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