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Toads and Diamonds

Tessa McMillan

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Reviewer: Tessa McMillan
Reading Level: Young adult
Rating: Outstanding
Genre: Fiction; Fairy tales;
Subject: Stepsisters--Juvenile fiction; Blessing and cursing--Juvenile fiction; India--History--Juvenile fiction; Books--Reviews;

While Diribani is fetching water from the sacred well, the goddess Naghali "blesses" her with the gift of speaking gems and flowers. Diribani returns home to her stepsister, Tana, and her stepmother, Ma Hiral, showing her new gift. Tana decides to go to the well also to meet the goddess. When she returns, she is given the blessing of speaking sacred toads and snakes. Once their gifts are exposed to the public, Diribani is taken to the capital of their kingdom to be protected by Prince Zahid and Tana is sent to live at a temple. Tana decides to leave the temple on a pilgrimage. While visiting a local village, Governor Alwar's soldiers capture the whole village because they supposedly helped Tana. Tana follows the captors to an estate. Through her hard work, she discovers the captured villagers and her love Kalyan. She helps Kalyan to escape so he can reveal Alwar's evil to the emperor. Diribani is kidnapped from the capital by Alwar because he wants to use her gift to gain riches for himself. While traveling, the two sisters meet up and work together to kill Alwar. After his death, goddess Naghali comes to claim Alwar's body and to take the gifts way from the two girls.

Tomlinson's book is a beautifully written story based on the fairytale "Les Fées" or "The Fairies" by Charles Perrault and Morna Livingston's book on stepwells in India. But the beauty of the book is created between the two stories told from Tana's and Diribani's perspective.