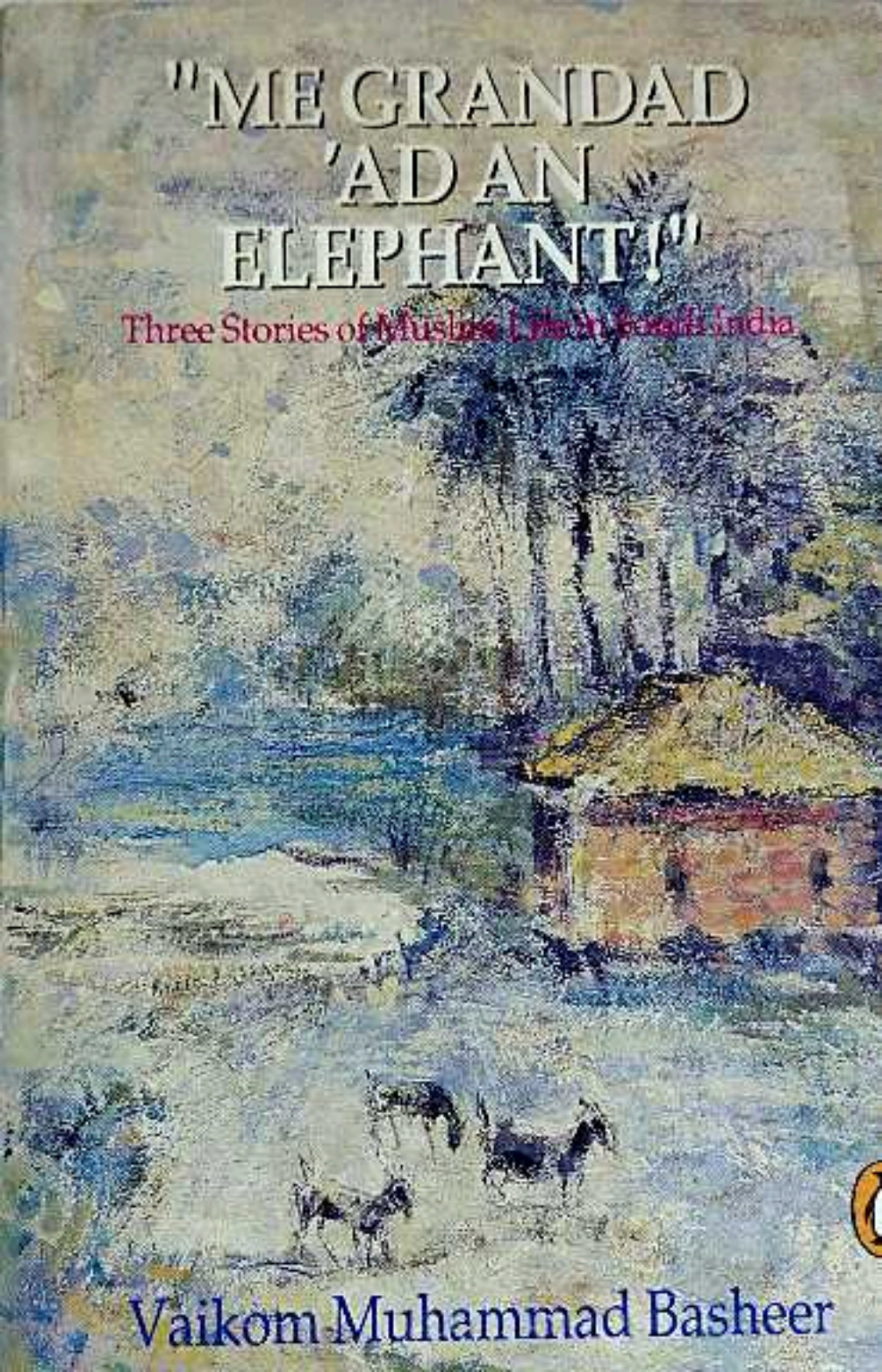


"ME GRANDAD 'AD AN ELEPHANT!"

Three Stories of Muslims in the South of India



Vaikom Muhammad Basheer

K Ayyam Perunnal.

August 1994

**"ME GRANDAD
'AD AN ELEPHANT!"**

THREE STORIES OF MUSLIM LIFE IN SOUTH INDIA

BY VAIKOM MUHAMMAD

BASHEER

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TRANSLATED FROM THE MALAYALAM

BY R-E-ASHER AND

ACHAMMA

COILPARAMPIL

CHANDERSEKARAN

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1)

Although Suhra and Majid have been friends from their childhood, there is something unusual about this affectionate relationship, in that before they became acquainted they were bitter enemies. What was the reason for this enmity? They were neighbours; the two families were on good terms. But Suhra and Majid were implacable foes. Suhra was seven and Majid nine. They were in the habit of making faces and trying to frighten each other.

And then came the mango season. Ripe mangoes started falling from the young tree near Suhra's house. She did not get a single one. When she ran up on hearing a mango fall, it would be to see that Majid had already picked it up and was taking a bite. He would not give it to her. Even if he pretended to be willing to give her one, it would be one he had already bitten into. Even then, when she stretched out her hand, he would say, 'Bite my elbow!' and poke his elbow in front of her face. In addition to that, when he saw her, he would try to frighten her by glaring at her and sticking out his tongue.

Suhra is not in the least frightened by this. She does the same to him. But as far as mangoes are concerned, she always comes off worse. Why isn't she getting any mangoes? Whether the wind is blowing or not, Suhra will stand under the tree, but nothing falls, not even a leaf. She knows there are plenty of ripe mangoes on the tree. If none falls, the only thing to do is to climb up. But there are lots of red

Vaikom Muhammad Basheer's prose work defies easy classification, but the three stories that comprise this volume are among the finest works of fiction that have been written in any Indian language. Of the three, *Patamma's Goat* is (the author assures us) entirely autobiographical and *Childhood Friend* is based on an episode in Basheer's own life. "*Me Grandod 'Ad An Elephant!*" the longest and most complex of the stories in the book, and the work that established Basheer as one of India's greatest living writers, is also the author's most successful novel and has sold over 100,000 copies in Malayalam.

These stories portray the Muslim community in Kerala. Written in a style that is free of frills and unnecessary ornamentation but is witty, wise and firmly rooted in the local ethos, they paint an evocative portrait of a little known, endlessly fascinating slice of India.

*Translated from the Malayalam by R. E. Asher and Achamma
Coilparampil Chandarsekaran.*

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