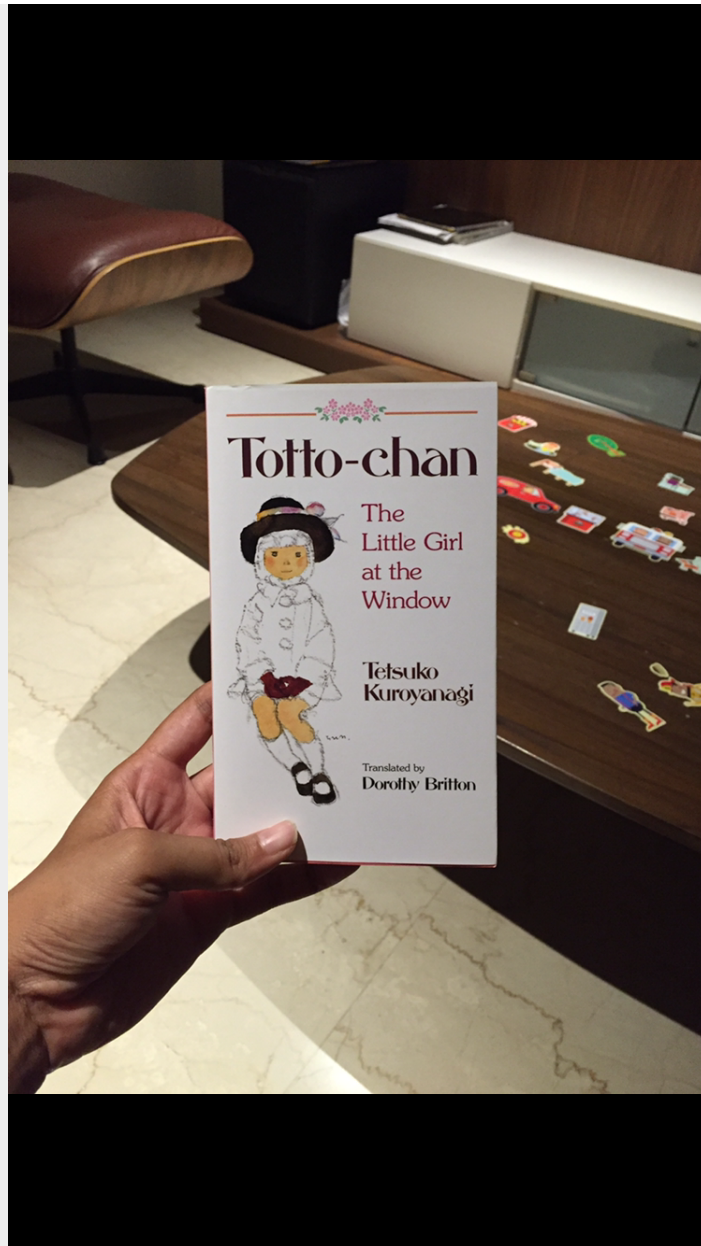


BOOK REVIEW- TOTTOCHAN

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A reader kindly commented on [this blog post](#) that I must read Tottochan. So ofcourse I did!

The book is about a young girl in Japan around the time the 2nd world war starts and how she is put in a school, which is very progressive with a true visionary at the helm, and very different from the education system prevalent in Japan at that time. The school was very small with just one class of 10 kids per year and at the beginning of the day the teacher would just put up a list of topics meant to be accomplished that day, and the children choose to do what they pleased in any order. So (for example) there was a boy who was always doing physics experiments and who grew up to be a successful physicist in the US.

This is a true story and the author – Tetsuko Kuroyanagi – is a famous TV personality in Japan. She attributes her success to her schooling.

Personally the character I really identified with and loved was the mother. It's so easy for mothers to get ruffled and upset when your kids do anything unusual. The girl Tottochan was expelled from her previous school within a week of school starting, for being disruptive and not listening, for standing at the window and not sitting down and repeatedly being punished. Yet the mother never mentioned this to her until she was a grown woman in her 20's.

The mother just understood her, let her be, allowed her to find herself and stepped back. She put her in an environment (a school) where she would be set up for success over failure. She was wise, in spite of most probably not being extremely well read or well educated. She believed in her and didn't overthink. She was the best mother this little girl could have.

It's so easy as parents to get swept away with society's expectations of what children should be like and how other children are different from yours. It's so easy to have a picture of the perfect child and get disappointed when your own doesn't shape up. And it's so fruitless.

The importance of letting a child's natural curiosity and personality shine should not be underestimated. Things could have been oh so different for this little girl if this mother panicked and kept her in a 'normal' school. If she put her down, played up her negatives, asked her to be 'conventional'.

While of course the headmaster is special, unique, and the inspiration behind this beautifully written biography and is not to be trivialised at all, a person like that may be hard to find.

The mother on the other hand, all of us can be.

All in all a fantastic light read with takeaways for anyone who wants to have anything to do with children!

Thanks for reading. Have you read it yet? Do you plan to?

