Em-barr-ass-ment means something you do or say that makes you wish you were someone else.

Nina Soni is a problem solver—and her latest problem is her little sister Kavita, who is a real embarrassment. Not only does Kavita sing too much, she often gets the lyrics wrong, or, even worse, makes up ridiculous songs. What Nina needs is a project—a plan to fix her sister.

But one project isn’t really enough, especially during a long rainy school break. Nina is restless. A pile of dirt in the neighbor’s yard is a temptation she can’t resist—a project for Nina, a distraction for Kavita, and something to do to pass the time. Soon, Nina has more to worry about than Kavita’s singing. Can she fix Kavita and her own mistake before it’s too late?

“I adore Nina and know readers will, too.”
—Debbi Michiko Florence, author of the Jasmine Toguchi series
Mom stood by the door and waved goodbye to my sister and me. “Have a good day. Bahut Seekhna.”

Every single day Mom reminds us to learn a lot at school!

Kavita blew kisses to Mom and stepped on my shoes. I grabbed her hand. “Stop walking backward.”

“Nina, don’t forget to bring Kavita home with you,” Mom said to me.

I waved at her without looking back. I had only forgotten my younger sister at school once. Now every single day Mom also reminds me to bring her home!
On this frosty spring morning our breaths cartwheeled before disappearing. I held Kavita’s mittened hand in mine.

As we walked down our street, Kavita burst out singing. “I have been working on the railroad.”
Kavita likes to sing—nursery rhymes, songs, jingles from TV commercials. And her favorite, songs she makes up. Sometimes whatever she sings on the way to school earworms in my head.

There are many reasons Kavita likes to sing.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>In-my-head list of why Kavita likes to sing</th>
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<tr>
<td>* Singing is like her, flowing and unstoppable.</td>
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<tr>
<td>* Kavita means poetry in Hindi, so singing is all mixed-up with her name.</td>
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<tr>
<td>* Singing gives her a chance to interrupt anyone, anytime, anyplace.</td>
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So Kavita, poetry, was singing and skipping. She was making her lungs work as hard as her legs.

Unlike Kavita, I like to make lists because lists help me keep organized.

Or-ga-nized means you keep things all straight, not zigzaggy in your head.
Most of the time I write down lists in my notebook called Sakhi.

*Sakhi* means friend in Hindi.

I’ve named my notebook because...why not? People name their pets, their stuffed animals, and their imaginary friends, so it’s okay to name my notebook. And when I write in Sakhi, it’s like sharing a secret with a friend.

Kavita was still singing. “Someone’s in the kitchen with Dinah. Someone’s in the kitchen I know-oh-oh-oh. Someone’s in the kitchen with Dinah, stomping on the old man Joe.”

“It’s not ‘stomping on the old man Joe.’ It’s ‘strumming on the old banjo,’” I said.

“These are not nice people.” Kavita stomped her foot and her backpack slid down. “That’s why they don’t strum an old banjo. They like to stomp on the old man Joe.”
I adjusted her backpack. “That would be silly. It makes no sense.”

“I told you, they are mean.” She shook her head. “Anyway, songs aren’t supposed to make sense. Does ‘four and twenty blackbirds baked in a pie...when the pie was opened the birds began to sing’ make sense?”

“Well, no. But this song is different.”

“Why is this different?”

“I don’t know why. It just is.”

“Let’s ask someone else.” She looked around. Jay came out of his house at that moment.

“Jay, Jay,” Kavita called.

He didn’t hear her. Or ignored her. I couldn’t tell which. Jay not only lived on our street, he was in my fourth-grade class. And he was my best friend.

“Jay Davenport! You better answer or else I’ll tell your mom!” Kavita was so loud that I bet her teacher, Mrs. Jabs, heard her from school. Three blocks away.