

Samuhik सामूहिक पहल Pahal

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Well-being During
the COVID-19 Pandemic

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Community Well-being Groups

You can access community well-being groups that run as online sessions as well. For some of Apni Shala's communities of well-being sessions you can find more information below.

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| <p>1. Sessions for Adults (ages 18+)
Thursdays 6:00 - 7:30 PM IST or
Saturdays 4:00 PM - 5:30 PM IST
For English or Hindi:
Meeting ID: 837 9141 6210
Passcode: well-being
For Marathi sessions:
Meeting ID: 916 2673 7064
Passcode: well-being</p> | <p>2. Sessions for Teens / Youth (ages 13-17)
Every Wednesday, 4:00-5:30pm IST
Session Links
For English or Hindi:
Meeting ID: 837 9141 6210
Passcode: well-being</p> <p>3. Sessions for Children (ages 4-12)
Every Friday 6:45 pm to 7:45 pm IST
For English or Hindi (bilingual sessions):
Meeting ID: 841 6349 2781</p> |
|--|--|

and looking after the family's needs all at once. Engaging in this intentional collection of data from the team helps to recognize that for some, a small yet timely financial support may relieve the psychosocial distress they experience. For others, just having the flexibility to complete work at a certain hour may alleviate the worry they are dealing with.

Some of the things we tried at Apni Shala that resulted in team members feeling supported were:

- a. Need based financial assistance;
- b. Ration support to team members who may express the need;
- c. Flexibility in work hours depending on access to devices, internet, workspaces etc. at home;
- d. Creating a protocol for working from office for those who may not be able to work from home;
- e. Planning for a short break of at least a week for the team (on a rotational basis to allow for all to receive some time off);

- f. Connecting team members with therapy and mental health services where necessary;
- g. Providing need specific training (for example, on how to use online platforms or tools).

Creating Spaces to Experience a Sense of Community

In the absence of spaces for socializing and building community like having chai or lunch together, walking back to the railway station or bus stop, many may experience a loss of connection with one another. This may sometimes result in a lack of motivation, purpose or inability to process difficult feelings. A restorative or healing space can be built into our work in multiple ways that can offer a window of just being, processing emotions and experiencing connection. Some ways in which we tried doing this include:

1. Having monthly team building activities (online games that are easy to play- Ludo etc.) based on what different team members suggested;

Resources for Well-being

Currently there are some open helplines for mental health support for anyone experiencing distress that can be accessed. Please find some of these listed below:

1. Samvaad (Project Mumbai): 1800-102-4040, Monday to Sunday, 8 am to 8 pm;
2. iCall (TISS): 022-25521111, Monday-Saturday, 8am to 10pm;
3. Arpan: +91 9819086444, Monday to Friday, 9 am to 5 pm.

2. Creating a space for restorative supervision in our supervisory relationships to identify current needs for the team;
3. Opening up some spaces for open conversations without a set goal for the team to chat with each other and exchange stories;
4. Facilitated spaces for specific emotions that may be experienced - for example, a session on processing grief.

Renegotiate Goals, Set Realistic Expectations and Communicate Regularly

We are working in a context in which we are seeing distress all around us as development sector organizations. Thus, the need to do more and more may be what is playing on our minds.

But it helps to relook at what our teams can realistically do and thus what the organization can achieve. This might be an imperative given the reduced mental bandwidth that many people in our teams may be operating from.

Based on the evaluation of the team's bandwidth, reassessing goals may not be enough, until these are communicated honestly, transparently and regularly. Some practices in this regard that have helped Apni Shala are:

1. Town Hall meetings where quarterly goals are communicated with opportunities

for the team to ask questions and seek clarity;

2. Regular check-ins with supervisors on progress on goals or support required.

While these are ways that Apni Shala has used to address well-being for our team, we understand that based on our respective contexts there may be other ways for responding to these concerns. While these may not completely heal our collective trauma, these may help us create spaces to express, share, listen and support one another through these trying times. To find out more about any of the resources mentioned above or to organize a well-being session for your own teams please write to us at the email address listed below.

Amrita Nair is a founding member of Apni Shala. She holds a Bachelors' degree in Psychology from Mumbai University, and a Masters' degree in Social Entrepreneurship from TISS, Mumbai. She has also been trained in personal counseling and Rational Emotive Behaviour Therapy. Since 2013, she is an active facilitator of 'Theatre of the Oppressed'.

Website: <https://www.apnishala.org/>

Email: contact@apnishala.org

Connect On:   

Supporting the Well-being of Children with Special Needs in the Context of the COVID-19 Pandemic

Shamin Mehrotra

The last year has been an unprecedented time for everyone. The uncertainty and unpredictability that the pandemic has brought on has been hard for most people to respond to, and even more so for children with special needs.

India has over 50 million children with disabilities under the age of 15 (extrapolating from WHO estimates of 15% prevalence rates), with a therapist to child ratio of 1:427. It is no wonder then that children with developmental disabilities and their families are a marginalized group that often fall through the cracks. The pandemic has only exacerbated this situation.

For a lot of children with special needs and their caregivers, this has been an incredibly tough time. It has robbed them of the safety of their routines, in terms of school, play, therapy, social interactions, and so much more.

It has led many children and their caregivers to experience mental health concerns. For those with already existing experiences of other medical, physical and/or emotional concerns, this has been nothing short of a double whammy. It has made the experience of it harder, and the access to care and support that much more difficult.

What the Challenges Look Like

The world suddenly witnessed an abrupt change with the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic which has impacted children across the world. While research has already shown that children with disabilities are at a higher risk of experiencing mental health

issues, the pandemic has only heightened this concern not just for these children but also for their caregivers.

Many caregivers have reported increased household responsibilities and stress levels. These have taken a toll not only on their mental well-being, but the well-being of the entire family as well.

This, combined with additional stressors such as the loss of jobs/income and housing, along with increased debts (due to the loss of work), inadequate nutrition and limited access to medical care and other support systems such as therapy has only increased mental health concerns among most families as a whole.

Online schooling does have its own merits and has supported the learning needs for many children. But for several others, especially for those who experience disability, online learning has been a huge challenge.

The impact of COVID-19 has also been evident with schools and colleges shifting classes online. Work from home has become a way of life throughout the globe. The ideas of social distancing and social isolation, have led to a lack of daily routine and structure, which often induces a sense of discipline as well as safety in children.

With school being online now, parents are struggling to manage children's education, while balancing childcare and work demands. This can be particularly challenging for parents of children with disabilities. Learning and school participation of these children are often supported by a team of professionals such as special educators, remedial teachers and counsellors. Some of these supports have been discontinued, while others have been moved online.

The mental health of children with disabilities may be improved if information is made accessible to promote understanding and coping.

Online schooling does have its own merits and has supported the learning needs for many children. But for several others, especially for those who experience disability, online learning has been a huge challenge. For some, there may be a lack of adequate accommodations while for others, online learning is simply not an option. Families of children with disabilities are also more likely to experience socio-economic disadvantages, including less access to the internet and technology.

The unpredictability of the pandemic, as well as the fact that information related to it has been new and often inconsistent, has also led to children experiencing significant levels of stress, discomfort and anxiety. Anxieties related to not knowing, to getting infected, to infecting others, to what might happen after one gets infected, to hospital care and accessibility, to death and related statistics, to precautions that need to be taken, are among the several thoughts that have been all-consuming for many children.

Overall, the uncertainty of the pandemic, the challenges of online learning coupled

with a lack of recreational activities, limited peer interactions, social isolation, increased responsibilities on caregivers, and a lack of routine and structure have disrupted lives across the globe. These processes are more likely to disproportionately affect and further marginalize children and families with pre-existing vulnerabilities.

How Can We Provide Support?

Over the last year, parents and caregivers have been faced with the task of helping their children and families adjust to a new normal. This includes trying to keep children occupied, feeling safe, attempting to keep up with schoolwork as best as possible and supporting their overall mental well-being. Given below are some ideas that can help caregivers support children during these difficult times.

Be a role model: Children often look to adults for guidance on how to respond to stressful situations. This can be a great opportunity for adults to talk to children about the importance of mental well-being and model for children problem-solving, empathy and compassion.

Acknowledge one's own feelings of worry: As adults, being aware of, and acknowledging, feelings of worry, fear, concern and uncertainty is important. This process can support children and families to take the necessary actions required to reduce the negative impacts of illness related to Covid-19. It also supports children by making them aware that they are not alone in some of the feelings and fears they may be experiencing.

Make information accessible: The pandemic information has not consistently been shared in accessible formats such as closed captioning and sign language interpretation. This has ended up further marginalizing people with disabilities and increasing their health risks. The mental health of children with disabilities may be improved if

Additional Resources

UNICEF (2020). Psychosocial Support for Children during COVID 19. A Manual for Parents and Caregivers

The Lego Foundation- <https://www.fhi360.org/sites/default/files/media/documents/resource-lego-case-study-nurturing-care-report.pdf>

information is made accessible to promote understanding and coping - for example, closed captioned videos explaining concepts such as social distancing.

Create a routine: Keeping a regular schedule provides a sense of control, predictability, calm, and well-being. It also helps children and other family members respect others' need for quiet or uninterrupted time supporting an overall sense of safety and security.

Talk, talk, talk: Being available to answer questions children may have and what they are feeling supports their sense of well-being. Talking about ones' own experiences of worry, what it looks like, how one would like to respond to it can support children in thinking of how they might want to address the worry they experience.

Have a 'worry window': Creating a specific window of time during the day to think about, talk about, and address concerns related to the pandemic can ensure that it is not something that is consuming ones' thoughts all day. This window of time can be a time set aside for the family as a whole or time set aside by each individual member for themselves.

Build awareness and stay up to date: Children often imagine situations worse than reality. Therefore, offering developmentally appropriate facts to them can reduce their fears. While it is crucial to be honest and accurate, it is also important to keep information age-appropriate. Providing accurate information can also prevent stigma and discrimination related to Covid-19.

Advocate: Leverage available information to advocate for children with disabilities and their families.

What Role Can NGOs Play?

During this challenging time, many NGOs have come together to cater to the needs of children with special needs and their families. NGOs can play a very instrumental role in supporting the well-being of children with special needs and a few ways are listed here.

Resource support: NGOs can provide support in terms of mobilising resources. These resources can be of a material form such as essential commodities and access to phone/internet/DTH services etc. These can also take the form of access to educational materials, information etc to address immediate needs of some of the families that require them. This can reduce the stress that the lack of such resources are causing, and, thereby address the immediate well-being of the children with special needs and their families. Another essential resource support that NGOs can provide is working towards building resources that spread awareness of self-care and hygiene during this pandemic for children with special needs in accessible formats that can alleviate the anxiety and keep them safe. NGOs can provide resource support in the form of providing information on how to ensure the general well-being of all children with special needs and their caregivers. This can be done by providing access to resources such as counselling support, information on accessing medical resources, information on coping strategies, psychiatric, psychological and social care etc.

Curation of safe spaces: The pandemic has brought words like quarantine, social distance, isolation into everyday vocabulary. While maintaining social distance is extremely essential during these times, it has also taken an enormous toll on the well-being of children with special needs. In these contexts, NGOs working with children with special needs can curate safe spaces where they can meet with friends, and have safe spaces for learning, well-being and socialising.

Advocacy for accessibility: A lot of materials available online and offline in terms of information, education etc is largely available in non-accessible formats. NGOs can work towards converting materials into accessible formats, and also ensure that all their own materials are available in accessible formats. NGOs can advocate for, and share information on, how to turn materials into accessible formats. This can go a long way in reducing anxieties and promoting the well-being of children with special need by removing barriers.

Coming together to support the well-being of children with special needs: Civil society, NGOs and public officials needs to come together and work in a united way to ensure that children with special needs are supported. This can create a support network where various entities can collaborate and invest in the well-being of such children.

Shamin Mehrotra has been working with Ummeed Child Development Center for over 17 years. She supports schools to promote and facilitate the inclusion of children with diverse learning needs within mainstream settings. She is passionate about working with children with disabilities (and their families) and providing them with ongoing mental health and counseling support to enable their overall journey in a positive direction.

Website: <https://ummeed.org>

Email: info@ummeed.org

Connect On:   



Nurturing Well-being During This Pandemic

Kapil Dawda

‘Take Care.’ We casually end emails and chats with these two words. But these challenging times have attached so much more meaning to them. While many of us are doing a lot to support the well-being of others, prioritizing our own well-being may have become a challenge. This article talks about a few common questions we have when it comes to taking care of our own and others’ well-being needs.

How Can I Prioritize My Own Well-being in These Times?

“When others are struggling, it feels wrong to take care of myself. There is so much that needs to be done before I rest. Well-being is a matter of privilege that many others don’t have.” These are a few of the many reasons we give ourselves in these times to not focus on our own well-being practices and rituals.

In such times, I am reminded of a quote from J. D. Salinger’s classic novel, ‘Catcher in the Rye’: “The mark of the immature man is that he wants to die nobly for a cause, while the mark of the mature man is that he wants to live humbly for one.”

We need to balance the aspiration for a better world with the acceptance of how insignificant we are in the face of the magnitude and complexity of its problems. We can only do our best, but we cannot control every outcome.

We are human. Even if we do our best, we will make mistakes and we will not achieve some outcomes. There are limits to our power. We cannot do everything for everyone, but we can do something for someone.

The scale of the current calamity requires a marathon effort from us. We have to find a way to sustain our best efforts for prolonged periods of time. Realigning our expectations in a more realistic way can help us become more self-compassionate and as a result, last for the whole stretch of the marathon.

With this perspective, caring for ourselves becomes an action in service of others. Remember, we cannot keep pouring from an empty cup!

Therefore, we need to be mindful of what our choices today mean for our well-being tomorrow. We have to include ourselves in the ripples of kindness we send out to the world. We have to learn to care, but not carry the responsibilities in a way that wears us down.

What Can I Do to Take Care of My Mental Health?

There are many things we can do to take care of our mental health in these times. We will share a few practices that are relevant and easy to implement.

Practice Grounding and Resourcing: Whenever we face adversity, our mind is biologically programmed to react in a flight, fight and freeze manner. Grounding and resourcing are two tools that use the body and mind respectively to help us move away from such a reaction.

Both allow the instantaneous emotion that causes reaction to pass through us and allow us to return to calm and balanced states of being, thereby enabling a better response. Try [this short meditation](#) or follow [some of these tips](#) to ground and resource yourself!

Be Grateful: Gratitude is about recognizing, feeling, and expressing thanks for all the gifts we have received. Taking out some time every day to acknowledge the [blessings, learnings, mercies and protection](#) we have received everyday can have a deep impact on our happiness and well-being. It is not about toxic positivity, where we ignore or deny everything that is going wrong. On the contrary, gratitude helps us to maintain a balanced perspective in difficult situations by not letting the mind fixate on just the bad or the wrong. It helps [expand our resilience](#). Here is a [simple way to be grateful everyday](#) !

Embrace Flow: Giving our complete and undivided attention to an engaging, challenging but doable activity is called [flow](#). This could be different for different people - trying to cook something different, designing a support space for your stakeholders, or deeply listening to a close friend. It is the perfect antidote to [the 'blah' or 'meh' feeling you are feeling in these times](#). Flow can enhance your creativity, happiness and productivity, all of which we need in plenty in these times!

Connect With Your Emotions: Often, we let ourselves be immersed in a tsunami of emotions without observing them, naming them or getting in touch with their sources. This requires our mind to be calm and fully present to our own thoughts and feelings. [We can do this through many ways](#): journaling, meditation, art-based exercises or walking in nature. These practices become the first step to understand our inner world which influences how we see and experience the outer world.

Cultivate Belonging: Authentically connecting with others is as important as connecting with ourselves. [Feeling that you belong is important in seeing value in life, and in coping with intensely painful emotions](#). It may involve being a part of a community of peers, a support circle or spending authentic time with your loved ones. It involves going beyond

transactional exchanges, holding space for each other, listening deeply, and validating one another's experiences.

While these practices can be extremely beneficial, they do not substitute seeking support from a professional in case one is feeling deeply distressed. Check out [this guide](#) that helps us decide if we need one! Here are a few [reliable mental health helplines](#) based in India should one wish to connect with a professional.

I Know All of This, But How Do I Create Time to Apply These Practices?

It is not about the amount of time we spend on these exercises, but the frequency with which we engage with them. Even doing all of these things once every 2-3 days is a good start. Grounding, resourcing and connecting with our emotions are practices we can try in as little as 2-3 minute intervals when we take breaks from work. With flow, we could choose to do an activity every day with our complete attention. We could start or end our day by expressing gratitude or conversing with a loved one or a friend.

Is There a Community Where I Can Find Space for My Own Well-being?

There are [many diverse circles](#) that are being organized to offer support, connection and safe spaces to those in need by different individuals/organizations. If you are stretched for time, there is a [Personal Well-being WhatsApp community](#) where participants share relevant resources, perspectives and opportunities.

How Can I Be Supportive of Others' Mental Health?

In these times, the best thing we can do for people is to just be with them, to listen to them, and only with their permission, to guide them to the right support. We should not do or say anything that we ourselves would not wish to experience if we are seeking support. This means we try to keep aside our opinions,

our judgment, our analysis and many a time, even our solutions.

One-on-One: We should stay on the lookout if we observe shifts in behaviour of others. If we notice any signs, we should check-in with them by sharing our observations and our willingness to help. [This article captures things to keep in mind to have this conversation.](#) Based on the conversation, we can find a way to intervene with the right support, which could also include connecting them to a professional. [This interactive tool](#) explores how we can have such a conversation. You can find [reliable mental health helplines](#) based in India, should the person wish to connect with a professional.

Group: If there is a space where we bring our team or stakeholders together, it is essential to create time to allow members to surface how they are feeling and why. The sheer act of being listened to can be very beneficial. [Here](#)

[are a few tips](#) to keep in mind while holding such a space for groups you work with. In these spaces, we can also stay on the lookout for any warning signs evident in a particular individual's behaviour that may require us to have a one-on-one check-in thereafter.

Kapil Dawda brings alive many personal well-being practices in his own life and wants to enable others to experience their benefits. He works on designing and implementing structures to reinforce learning and on creating collaborative learning ecosystems that deepen well-being practice. He is a team member at Viridus Social Impact Solutions and a co-initiator of the Well-being Movement.

Website: wellbeing.viridus.in

Email: info@viridus.in

Connect On: 



Children and Well-being in the Pandemic

A Conversation Between Two Teachers

Samuhik Pahal Team

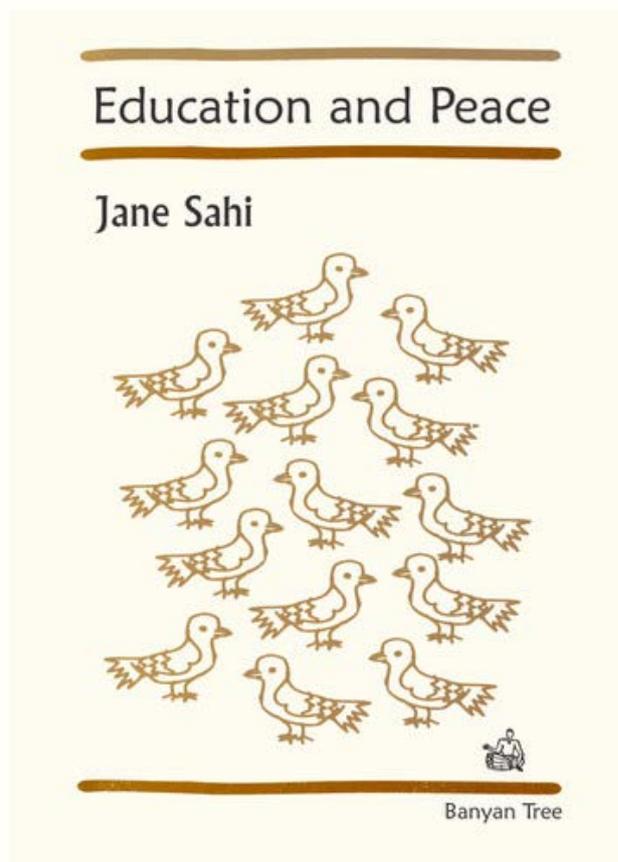
The account below is an edited, excerpted conversation between Jane Sahi (JS), who founded Sita School in Silvepura, Bangalore, and Thejaswi Shivanand (TS), who taught for many years at Centre for Learning school in Varadenahalli in the same city.

TS: I miss being in the presence of children, Jane. It has been over a year and while I have had some online contact, it wasn't the same. How have you felt about this period of enforced isolation?

JS: I really miss the direct contact with children. The uncertainty of the situation and not seeing them for a long time has been difficult.

TS: My sense of speaking with children and with teachers as well is that they miss each other.

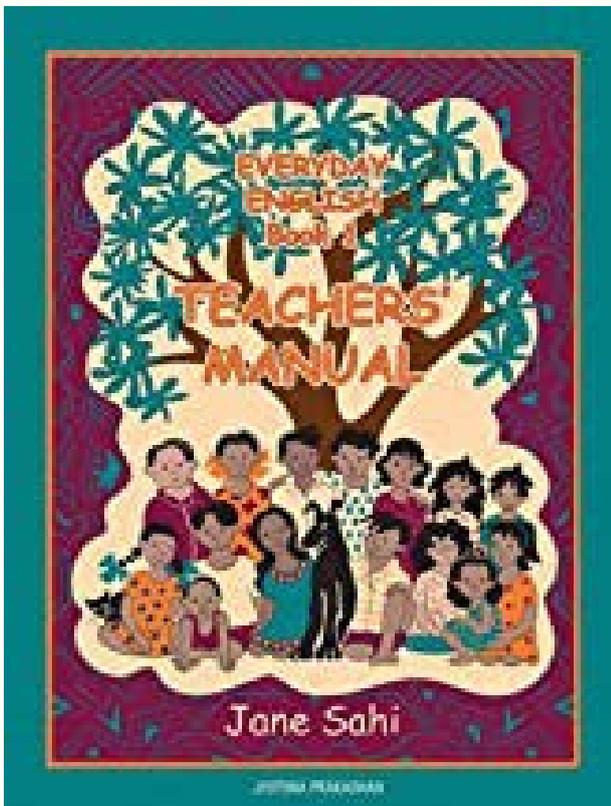
JS: Yes, indeed. Younger children miss the additional adult contact in their lives, which is now mostly parents, since their movements are restricted. This has been especially heightened in the second wave of the pandemic. But even this experience could differ depending on where the child lives. For instance, in a neighbouring community of migrant workers, children have been restricted to their homes with their parents away the entire day at work. I'm sure this must have an emotional impact on them. In other communities as well, where children are in contact with parents throughout the day, they are restricted to their homes for fear of the virus. In both cases, limited movement has restricted children from meeting their friends or to freely move in the community.



TS: I have also wondered about the role of the community in the well-being of children. If you consider today's children in urban spaces, the isolation is greater in some ways as fear within a city is already all pervasive, the fear of strangers, traffic, so much unknown. I also wonder if it is fair to compare their situation with children in rural communities, given children everywhere don't have a choice in where they are born or live.

JS: That's true, one can't put it on the children! Since we work with children in rural communities, we have been thinking of them and their situation, and discussing possible ways of reaching them, now that

there is real fear in communities everywhere. But it is important to recognize the role of communities in children's learning and well-being.



TS: I know that you are in touch with your colleagues...

JS: Yes, I have been working closely with colleagues Sarojini, Gousia and Rebecca who are in direct contact with children. We are also working with the NCF (Nature Conservation Foundation) Nature Classrooms team to look at ways of creating learning opportunities for children who attend government schools in the neighbourhood of Silvepura.

TS: Can you share some of your learning experiments and the thinking behind them?

JS: Well, we first had to think of the safety of everyone; the children of course, and the teachers as well. We tried remote work, but it didn't really work. Not many children have access to phones. Where there is a phone in the family, it is usually with the father and they are out at work. So that was difficult.

TS: Was this during this round of the lockdown?

JS: No. This was before this lockdown; essentially over the last few months. Early on, when the first wave ended, we had children meet each other. And the government teachers also conducted outdoor classes under the Vidyagama program; but that stopped soon as well. Textbooks arrived very late in one school in the neighbourhood and haven't yet arrived in another. I must make one observation here. The pandemic interrupted this tyrannous cycle of assessment that has taken hold of our schools.

TS: Are you referring to the large-scale assessment frameworks used to measure learning outcomes that are currently popular in the country?

JS: Well, more an extension of the impact these frameworks have had on the focus of the learning process. Teachers are focussed on getting children ready to pass tests, but are the children learning? What are they learning? The lack of textbooks this year exposed a vacuum where the teachers in the neighbourhood schools did not have anything to offer the children in class. In addition to the limitations of working in a pandemic situation, this was an additional concern.

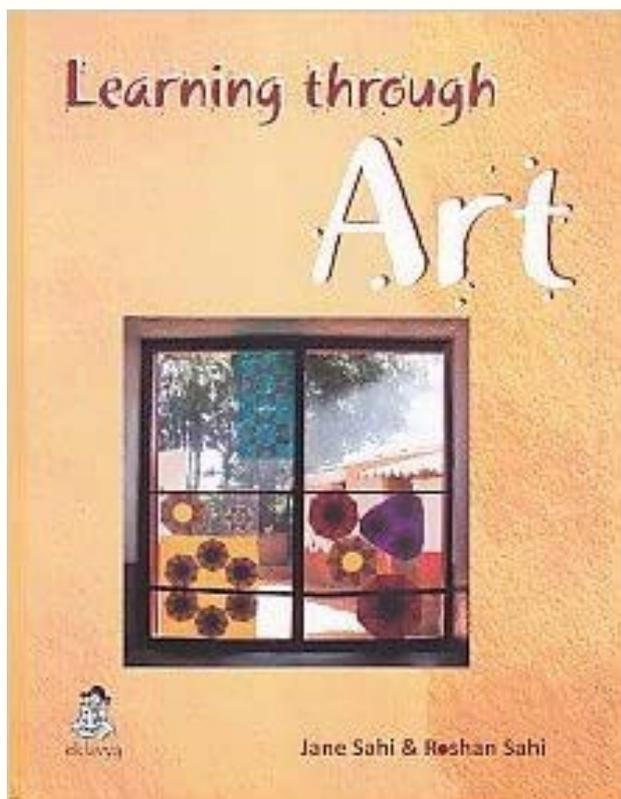
Sarojini, Gousia and Rebecca worked outdoors. In such a situation, it wasn't easy to find open, public spaces and we were very conscious of requesting access to private homes given the pandemic. We ended up meeting at the temple premises, the verandah of the panchayat library, the government school grounds, and under trees in the community.

TS: You mentioned earlier that communities are important in children's learning? Did this play a role in planning your program?

JS: In fact, we worked closely with the NCF Nature Classrooms team to develop a learning program where children observe

the natural world in their homes and communities. For example, one of the themes we took was patterns. The overall objective of looking at patterns was to help children begin looking more carefully at nature and observing both the diversity and the relationships between natural forms. The basic idea was to notice and record directly from nature, and to become familiar with some terms to describe patterns.

But thinking about exploring patterns in nature with young children proved quite challenging when we asked to look around them and note or draw anything around them. While such observation comes naturally to them when they are very young, we wondered if the dependence on classrooms and textbooks for scaffolding has limited their direct observation skills.



So, our work with children began with NCF's activity worksheet on patterns. It has so much potential as a topic for children to notice, record and think about and all within children's reach. Patterns can be about numbers, shapes and the sequences of those. It has been described as anything that

is not random. Sarojini and Gousia supported children in working with these worksheets.

One interesting observation that I can share is that children recognized a difference between making designs with natural objects and patterns in nature and we used these as part of our sessions. However, it was helpful for children to understand the nature of patterns by looking at fabrics and textiles.

TS: Can you share an instance of this collaborative work with NCF on nature patterns in more detail?

JS: Awareness about how things can be differentiated/described through shape, size and colour seemed a helpful place to start. Sarojini and Gousia began by asking children to collect leaves in the vicinity of the school. The children were then asked to sort them in different ways. Children responded initially by looking mainly at the colour and the size. They then began to observe some of the basic shapes of leaves, describing them as sharp and round butterfly shapes. One child, Arati, asked why the bauhinia leaf is heart shaped.

They also noticed some leaves that had been eaten by caterpillars or other pests and so had holes. Kiran, 9 years old, drew a damaged leaf showing how parts had been eaten. They also began to notice some details like how different leaves have different edges or margins and also a variety of tips, noticing that some were long, and pointed... Looking more closely at the veins with a magnifying glass they noticed that the veins were arranged differently – some alternately and others starting at the same place - a symmetrical way. Tagnya noticed that in the *nelikayi* (amla) leaves the veins started one below and one above... Although the children did not have the vocabulary to define these, they could recognize the different characteristics.

The children were reminded how to do leaf rubbings, and were asked to try out leaf rubbings at home before the next session. A number of the children experimented with

leaf rubbings and also used their differences to make designs. We used the book *Pishi and Me* by Timira Gupta to guide the children in the process of looking closely.

TS: Oh yes, the book is wonderfully illustrated by Rajiv Eipe, with images of the child navigating the world on its own and the world is shown from a child's height and perspective. How clever of you all to use this in this context!

JS: It reminded the children that they observe their world on their own in any case, in their daily lives at home and everywhere they go! They just need to actively do it for this learning activity as well.

TS: This is interesting Jane. I have spent many years thinking and working with children on being introduced to nature, but I guess at my school it was an intrinsic part of the daily routine. But you are right, you don't really need a green campus to look at nature. Nature is everywhere and not all of it is affected by the coronavirus.

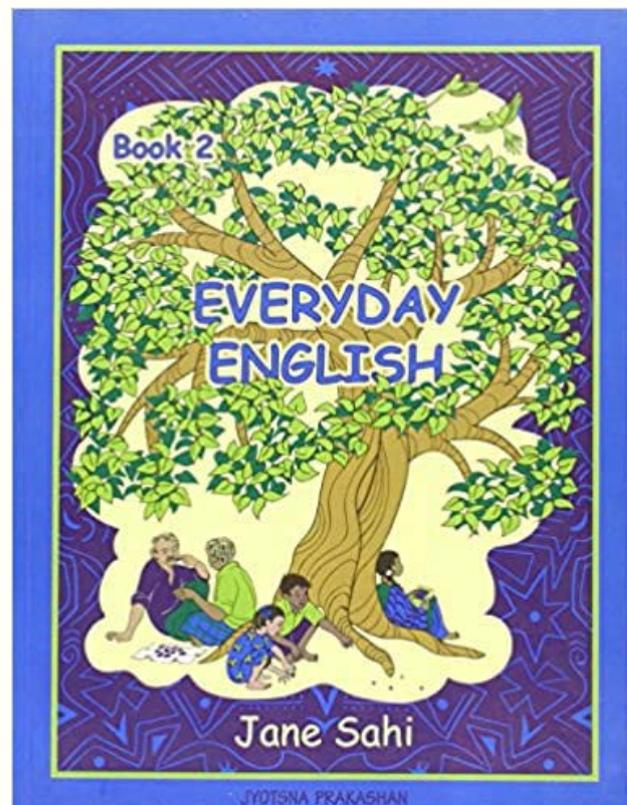
JS: Yes, so we can look around our homes, and even indoors. How many of us look at cockroaches, mice, spiders, frogs, geckos, snakes, crickets, moths, ants - all of whom share our homes with us? They are also a part of the natural world. There are also many patterns in the natural world.

TS: The natural world can draw you in even in these times, when it is so difficult everywhere. It can be a refuge, a shelter to stay away from difficult emotions. It can protect you from the reality of the world.

JS: But children live in the real world. Everything is part of it. The current pandemic has brought with it some restrictions. But the fundamental reality of the world hasn't really changed, has it?

TS: You mean, pain, death, decay and reincarnation?

JS: Your comment reminds me that there is an interesting way in which folk tales and



fairy stories often deal with death. There are instances where someone dies in the story and becomes part of the environment, is reborn as a tree for example, that makes death a part of the cycle of life. It is another way to imagine death and allow for a child to imagine it as well. The water lily dies and sinks, but then something happens to it underwater, at the bottom of the pond. What happens when a butterfly dies, a child might ask. Nature has much to offer here as well, in teaching us about death.

TS: I agree, children are not in such close contact with nature these days. They are not so aware of the cycle of life, death, decay and regeneration. This view of death as cyclical is one way of looking at it in the larger context. In some real ways, relationships in children's lives can be irretrievably changed after a death. That may need more ways of looking at death as well? Don't you feel there are other stories or books that can be used in this context?

JS: Yes, death has been sensitively portrayed in several books that can be used with children.

TS: Stories such as the folk tales or fairy stories you mentioned earlier, where a character becomes a part of the living environment after death, sound like it naturally blends into belief systems in a rural community. Does this clash with the rational frameworks that we use to investigate the world and in school curricula and classes?

JS: In a child's world, they don't clash. They are all parallel realities they learn to navigate in their lives. Children are very resilient, live in communities, and encounter death. They will at some point understand the finality in death in the biological sense. But they can process it and understand it emotionally in many ways. Here the community plays a central role.

Children also very much live in the present. Where do we recognize this in supporting them process death? The situation today is complex and ambivalent. The present moment offers no quick fixes. We can't do anything but live fully in the present. This reminds me of the doctor in the Warsaw Ghetto, Janusz Korczak.

TS: I know who you mean. Didn't he run a school for them in the ghetto?

JS: Yes, and you know, the remarkable story is that he and the children put up a performance of Tagore's *The Post Office* in the ghetto. Tagore's story is about a young boy living with an incurable disease who imagines that he would receive a letter from

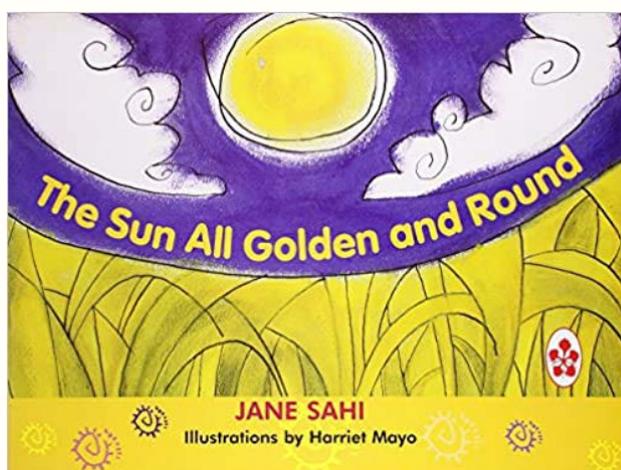
the King and lives in this world of fantasy in his last days. Janusz's thinking was to help the children understand the reality of imminent death faced by all of them in the ghetto. Death camps, racial identity, Jews vs Germans, the holocaust, these were very distant to the children. The reality was, their parents, relatives, others in the ghetto were disappearing. Where did they go? What happened to them? What is death? Janusz didn't want to fool them into a false reality. He wanted them to accept it as a fact of life and the way it was around them. Children live in the present moment. We have to be with them in the present during our interaction as well. How do we do it?

TS: That example leaves me with many thoughts and questions, Jane. There are so many dimensions to well-being, children and learning. Maybe we can pick it up again another time? Thank you for this conversation. I enjoyed thinking together with you today, as always. Any last thoughts?

JS: Nothing more than the last question! How do we bring a sense of curiosity and exploration in any learning interaction we have with children even in difficult circumstances? How does this link to well-being? That is the question that remains with me now. Thank you, I enjoyed our freewheeling, but still focused, discussion very much as well.

Jane Sahi has been working in education for the last 45 years. She was born in England and moved to India in 1968 in search of a deeper understanding of Gandhiji's life and values. In 1975, she started Sita School, an alternative school that helps each child reach its potential through holistic, child-centric education. In 2000 she wrote a book titled 'Education and Peace'. Jane has conducted a number of workshops on language teaching. She has been actively involved in the Alternative School Network, an informal group of individuals working in education.

Email: janehelensahi@gmail.com

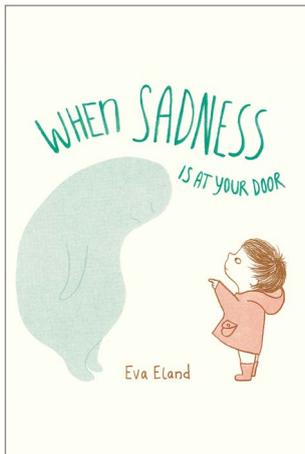


A Booklist for Now...

Bookworm

“We don’t heal in isolation, but in community’ - S. Kelley Harrell, *Gift of the Dreamtime - Reader’s Companion*

In a time that has been both sorrowful and numbing, anxious and unpredictable, drawing together through stories has been an anchor and support for us. The selections listed here are recommendations by the Bookworm team, based on books that we have felt connected to during this period of time.



When Sadness is At Your Door

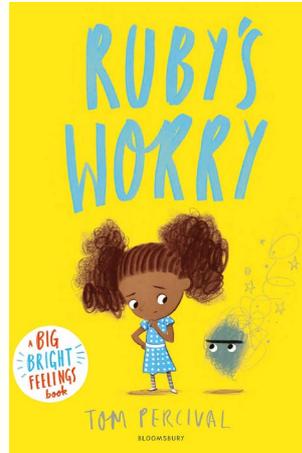
Author: Eva Eland
Illustrator: Eva Eland
Publisher: Random House Books for Young Readers
Language: English
Recommended Age Group: 3+ years

A simple narrative about a visitor named Sadness and how a young child interacts with this visitor. The story makes one of the more feared and judged feelings, something that is accessible and acceptable.

The personification of Sadness enables an exploration of the young child’s changing relationship with this feeling, in a way that is comforting and relatable.

When Sadness is at your Door makes us feel less alienated even as we dwell within a bubble of sadness.

“Sometimes Sadness arrives unexpectedly”

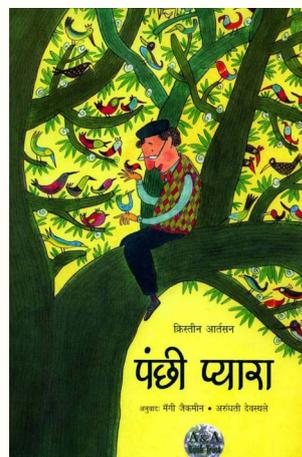


Ruby’s Worry

Author and Illustrator: Tom Percival
Publisher: Bloomsbury
Language: English
Recommended Age Group: 7 - 10 years
Ruby’s worry is the story of not just one

girl named Ruby but it is the story of many children and many adults. It is themed on ‘worry’ which is often not discussed. The story helps us understand that worries are normal, and that it is important to accept and talk about them. The worry itself is represented in a way that is understandable and relatable, and the story gently takes us on Ruby’s journey as she faces this worry. The story empathizes with every individual facing a worry, and reassures that we are not alone in this.

“Ruby realized that she wasn’t the only person with a Worry after all. Other people had them too!”



Panchi Pyara

Author: Kristien Aertssen
Translation: Arundhati Deosthale with Maggy Jacquim
Publisher: A&A Book Trust
Language: Hindi and Flemish
Age Group - 7- 10 years

Panchi Pyaara is a poignant story of a family depicting their love for birds and for each other. Bulbul loved to feed the birds with her grandparents. Her grandfather would call her grandmother 'panchi pyaara' and would tell Bulbul everything about birds.

The story talks about the heartbreak of losing a loved one and how the family copes with it. It interestingly shows how birds help the grandfather relieve his sadness.

“दुखी न हो, जब इन पंखियों को देखोगे तो मुझे वहीं कहीं पाओगे।”



The Red Tree

Author: Shaun Tan

Illustrator: Shaun Tan

Publisher: Hodder Children's Books

Language: English

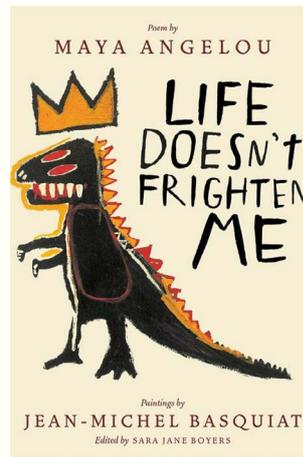
Recommended Age Group: 7 + years

The story begins with a young child waking up in her room, with the words 'sometimes the day begins with nothing to look forward to'. A few leaves floating around turn into a flood that she struggles to get through, as she tries to move out of her room.

Shaun Tan's incredible illustrations are both magically realistic, and also honest and precise in the emotions that they convey through the story.

The Red Tree is a story about loneliness that can envelope anyone, and that hope lies within and around us, and we only need to recognize and seek it.

“Suddenly there it is right in front of you, bright and vivid, quietly waiting.”



Life Doesn't Frighten Me

Author: Maya Angelou

Illustrator: Jean-Michel Basquiat

Editor: Sara Jane Boyers

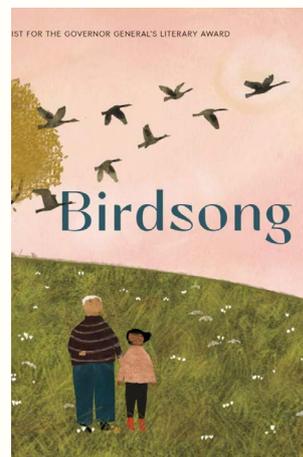
Publisher: Harry N. Abrams

Language: English

Recommended Age Group: 8+ years

Maya Angelou's powerful words are paired with Basquiat's striking bold artwork in a way that draws us into the power of this narrative. It has both an awareness of the dangers and worries lurking around every corner of this world, and a determination to not give in to these fears but to face them with strength and commitment. The book compels us to reach within, and find our own resistance to these times that we face together.

“I can walk the ocean floor and never have to breathe. Life doesn't frighten me at all”



Birdsong

Author: Julie Flett

Illustrator: Julie Flett

Publisher: Greystone Kids

Language: English

Recommended Age Group: 8+ years

Not all changes are welcomed and so begins and ends a story of change and hope written with a special lyrical quality and illustrated in gentle pastel shades to remind us of what can bring comfort when we are the most distressed.

The writer Julie Flett, a Cree-Metis, honors her culture beautifully in this book as it opens a window to us, to the cycles of the seasons and the warmth of friendships across generations. It is a tender story with precise language and vivid details.

“When we’re done, Agnes says it’s like a poem for her heart. Then I sit with Agnes and talk about making things: mucky things and things with string and song and paper and words. And then we sit quietly together, on Agnes’s bed, until it’s time to say goodbye.”

Bookworm is a charitable trust based in Panaji, Goa that works intensely with library engagement and education. It began in September 2005 to create a rich accessible collection of children’s books. With a vision to inspire and develop a love for reading as a way of life, nurturing humane engagement in every girl, boy and others, Bookworm works with children, youth, adults and the larger community in diverse and varied contexts.

Website: <https://www.bookwormgoa.in>

Email: mail@bookwormgoa.in

Connect On:   



The Bookworm Library in Goa

COVID-19 Resources

Samuhik Pahal Team

The second wave of the COVID-19 pandemic is having an unprecedented impact on primary health care, maternal healthcare, and mental health of adults and children. Questions on the future of children from underserved communities who have lost their parents to COVID-19 remain unanswered. We have put together a few resources (on mental health and well-being and child-protection and rights) that might be useful to tackle the challenges posed by the impacts of COVID-19's second wave.

A. Well-being

Helplines:

- **iCALL:** A psychological helpline that aims to provide high quality telephone counselling and internet-based support services which will significantly improve mental health and the well-being of individuals as well as the community. Call: 022-25521111.
- **Parivarthan:** Helpline will be open from 1 pm to 10 pm, Monday to Friday for anyone who wishes to reach out and speak to a trained counsellor. Call: 7676602602.
- **Arpan - Mental Health Support Covid 19:** Arpan is extending its counselling services entirely free of cost beyond issues related to Child Sexual Abuse to provide counselling and parenting support for those affected by COVID-19. Helpline: +91 98190 86444.

Manuals, Webinars and other Resources:

- [Johns Hopkins Children's Center - COVID-19 Resources for kids and families.](#)

- [Mental Well-being Resources - WHO](#)
- [Worries, Fly Away: Helping Children Manage Covid-related Anxieties- SAMVAD](#)
- [Breaking Bad News: Disclosing Illness and Death to Children in the Covid Crisis - SAMVAD](#)
- [In my Heart Forever: Supporting Children through Loss & Grief Experiences in the COVID Crisis - SAMVAD](#)
- [Psychosocial Support for Children during COVID-19 - UNICEF](#)
- <https://www.apnishala.org/covidsupport.html>
- <https://www.wellbeingmovement.in/our-work>
- [Impact of COVID-19 on mental health](#)
- [A comprehensive list of COVID resources across India](#) by Prarthana Sannamani

B. Child-Protection/Child-Rights

Helplines:

CHILDLINE India Foundation is an NGO in India working for child labour, child trafficking, child abuse, child marriage, homeless children, conflict with the law and missing children. CHILDLINE 1098 is a 24-hour a day, 365 days a year, free, emergency phone service for children in need of aid and assistance. Call: 1098.

Manuals, Webinars and Other Resources:

- 1) [Saving Children from the Brink: Acting upon Child Protection Vulnerabilities in the Covid Crisis - SAMVAD](#)
- 2) [How to adopt a child legally - The Hindu](#)
- 3) [Child protection and COVID-19 - UNICEF](#)

Reminders and Retreats for Our Hearts in This Time of Loss

T Shivanand

Caught in the midst of the second wave of the Covid-19 pandemic, many of us have been confined indoors as the world goes by, in and out of hospitals and crematoria, in and out of phone calls and TV screens, in and out of condolence meets and work meets. The world moves on and yet does not move at all. We all find ourselves navigating a complex maze that is emotionally fraught, strangely disconnected, where isolation is prized and privileged, unless the inevitability of daily bread forces you to the streets and the crowds. Many of us work in such situations as well in supporting stricken communities where we live and work. There are many ways of understanding this world and coming to terms with it in all its complexity. Books can sometimes provide an avenue of exploration as well, and a wide-ranging one at that, given the long history of print that has allowed for the evolution of so many forms of writing to be available for an interested reader.

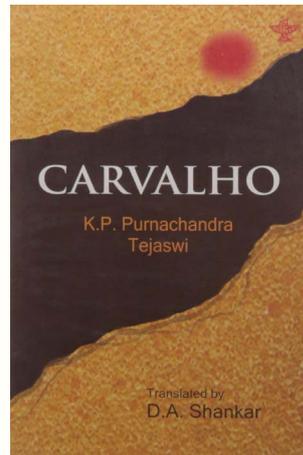
Books can emerge a refuge, where you take a break from the cares of the world, or can help you with perspective to understand the current situation in which we find ourselves hopelessly mired. A book can be opened and closed at your convenience, mood, interest and you can pick it where you left it earlier. You don't have to read a book to completion. You can skip pages if you like; you can read them fast or slow. You aren't compelled to like everything you read. Find your pace, space and read.

Reading doesn't necessarily have to be a solitary activity. You could instead listen to some one read out a book to you or as part of a group. Sometimes, reading can be tiring

after a long day in front of the screen or being outside in emotionally challenging situations. Taking turns while reading together and listening to each other, in person, on the phone or on zoom, can be a wonderfully comforting way to stay connected. Books can be inclusive for those who like to read, those who do not like to or are not comfortable with the act of reading, and for those who are constrained by conventional modes of print availability or access to books.

Here are eleven books you can explore that look at the world in crisis, both within the individual and in the outside world. These volumes will hopefully allow us to explore ways to find our own way through the crisis as well.

BOOKS FOR RETREAT

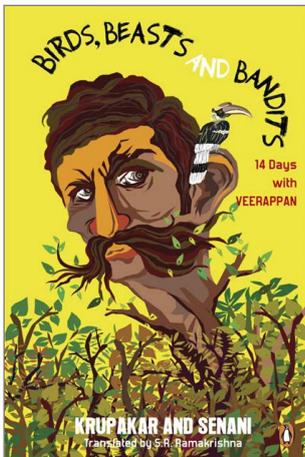


Carvalho by K. P. Purnachandra Tejaswi: *Carvalho* is a slim novel set in the lush forest communities of the Western Ghats in Karnataka. The unnamed narrator undertakes an adventure with an expert on reptiles who is in search of

a rare species of lizard that lives deep in the forest on tall trees. Also on the search are local community members Mandanna the lizard spotter, Biryani Kariappa the climber of tall trees, and Prabhakara the tag-along. The story is short, and the writing easy to read by yourself or together. Fun-filled and incident-

prone, the story can be enjoyed as such. But tough questions on our natural world, lived social realities and friendship appear easily in the narrative as well.

The English translation is published by Sahitya Akademi. The original in Kannada is also available from other publishers as are translations in Hindi, Marathi, Bangla and Malayalam. Tejaswi's novel Chidambara Rahasya is available through Sahitya Akademi in major Indian languages and English.



Combine reading *Carvalho* with *Birds, Beasts and Bandits: 14 Days with Veerappan* by the wildlife photographers Krupakar and Senani, a gripping true account of their kidnapping by Veerappan in the late 1990s in

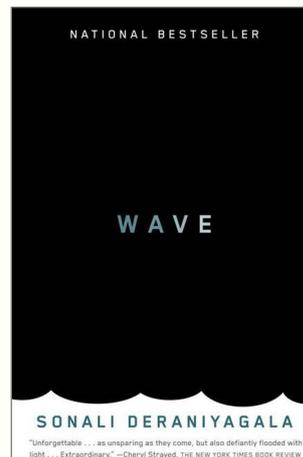
the Bandipur forests of south Karnataka. The book is available through Penguin in an English translation, with the original in Kannada, and it has been widely translated into many Indian languages including Hindi.

BOOKS FOR LOSS



H is for Hawk by Helen Macdonald: *H is for Hawk* is a path-breaking and award-winning memoir that was published in 2015 by Vintage. When the British writer Helen Macdonald faces the sudden loss of her father, she begins an unusual journey

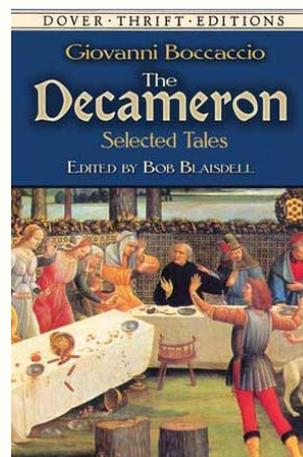
to tame a bird of prey, the Goshawk. Helen is determined but fragile and the bird is



independent, fierce and unaware, and sometimes to Helen, uncaring of her state of mind. The book is about her story of navigating the evolving relationship with the bird as much as it is letting go of her father.

Combine reading *H is for Hawk* with *Wave* by Sonali Deraniyagala, a 2013 memoir by a Sri Lankan author, published by Knopf, who movingly writes of her coming to terms with the sudden loss of her entire family – parents, husband and children – to the Indian Ocean Tsunami in 2004. Both the books deal with the bewildering range of emotions that a person facing loss has to confront, from grief to guilt to fear to loneliness, and they strike the right tone for these times when we all face losses of our own.

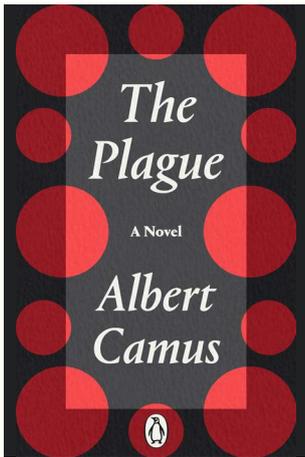
BOOKS FOR OUR TIME



The Decameron by Giovanni Boccaccio: The Black Death, or the Plague as it was called in fourteenth century Europe, comes to Italy. Seven young women and three young men escape medieval Florence and move to a rural retreat. In order to

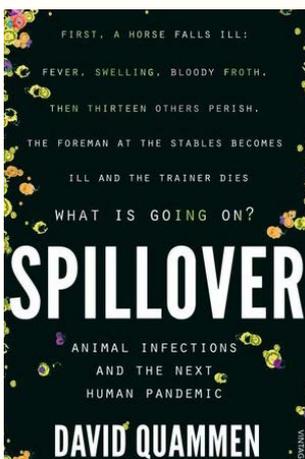
pass time, they take turns in telling stories to each other every day. *The Decameron* is a compilation of one hundred stories, each of them short and easy to read by themselves but together making a thick tome of over 900 pages. The stories hold together through the narrative of the daily living of the ten central characters.

The themes of the stories reveal themselves as the days pass, and the tensions and undercurrents of living together for extended periods of time emerge revealing many universal truths of humanity – jealousy, love, anger, altruism – even in the face of adversity. A 700 year-old classic of Italian literature, it is widely available in translation in English through many publishers and a copyright-free version is available for download on the Project Gutenberg website.



You can read the French classic, *The Plague* by the Nobel Laureate Albert Camus that is located in an unnamed city where a plague breaks out and society collapses in response. The novel is narrated by a doctor who

asks many difficult questions, that we are currently confronting ourselves in the second wave of the Covid-19 pandemic. Gripping and unforgettable, this book is available widely through many publishers and across many Indian languages including Hindi.



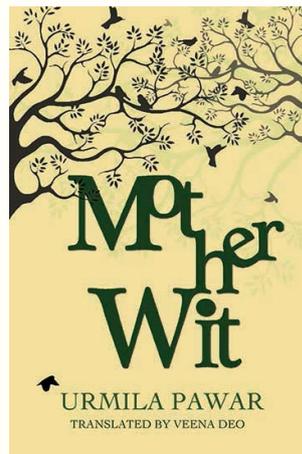
You can also read *Spillover: Animal Infections and the Next Human Pandemic* by David Quammen to gain perspective on the origins of diseases like Covid-19, termed as zoonoses, or diseases of animal origin. The book explores the

manner in which these diseases leave their animal hosts and become global diseases in human populations. Historical examples of different diseases are described in detail in a well-anchored narrative that shows the

trajectory of past pandemics and warns us of future ones. When David Quammen published the book in 2013 with Random House, little did he know that Covid-19 was only years away. Currently, the book is only available in English, and is yet to be translated into any Indian language.

BOOKS THAT ARE REMINDERS

The following three books serve as examples, not necessarily wholly representative or exhaustive, reminding us that while we are currently in the grip of a virus that does not biologically discriminate between individuals, we also live in a society where the disadvantaged sections of society are disproportionately affected by the very same virus. These three books ask questions of now, of the past, and the ins and outs of our society that are laid out bare in the open by the pandemic.



First, *Motherwit* by Urmila Pawar is a collection of fourteen short stories by a pioneering Dalit feminist writer who explores a wide range of themes intersecting caste, gender and modernity in rural and urban

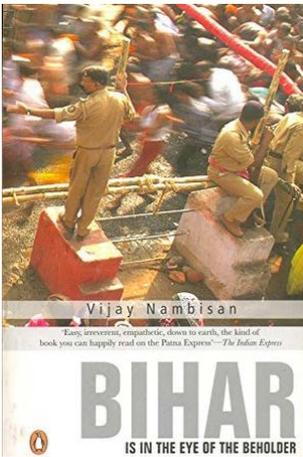
Maharashtra. Translated from Marathi and published by Zubaan Books, this particular collection is not available in translation in other Indian languages. However, other collections of Urmila Pawar's short stories are widely available in major Indian languages through Sahitya Akademi.

Aosenla's Story by Temsula Ao is the story of Aosenla looking back to her life on the journey that has been for her as a woman, as a mother, and as a Naga. The narrative is tinged with sadness as Aosenla looks at missed opportunities, lost identity and a



stifled voice that is the reality of millions of women in this country. This novel in English is published by Zubaan Books and is also available as an e-book. Temsula Ao's short story collections on life in the Naga Hills during the turbulent

1970s and 80s have been published by Sahitya Akademi and translated into many Indian languages including Hindi.

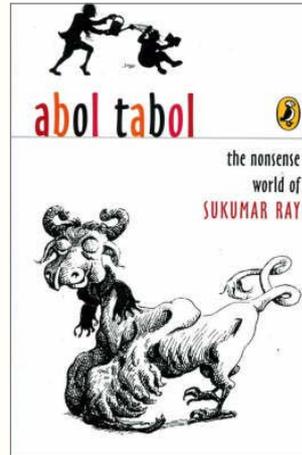


Bihar is in the Eye of the Beholder by Vijay Nambisan is an easy-to-read, nonfiction account of spending sixteen months in a small town in Bihar. Nambisan, the well-known English language poet and journalist, lands up there along with his

surgeon wife when she gets a job there in a hospital. In this book he paints a picture that is true not just of Bihar but of most of India

– caste tensions, corruption, crumbling and often non-existent services and structures of health care, education and transport – and resilient people. What more can one say as a reflection of the times of today? The book was published by Penguin in 2001 and continues to remain in print.

BOOKS FOR THE HEART



Finally, there has to be occasions, even in dark times such as these, where we can lighten up in laughter. *Abol Tabol* by Sukumar Ray is very much a book for such a time, filled with nonsense poetry that has regaled generations of Bengali children

and adults. While the book is brimming with fun-filled sketches of inimitable characters and happenings, it was a critique of society of the time during its first publication in the 19th century. Now, however, they are among the most accessible poetry we can find that appeals to both children and adults alike. They have been widely translated into many Indian languages and are available in multiple editions and translations in English.

Poems of Grief and Hope

'Peace My Heart' by Rabindranath Tagore

Peace, my heart, let the time for the parting be sweet.
Let it not be a death but completeness.
Let love melt into memory and pain into songs.
Let the flight through the sky end in the folding of the wings over the nest.
Let the last touch of your hands be gentle like the flower of the night.
Stand still, O Beautiful End, for a moment, and say your last words in silence.
I bow to you and hold up my lamp to light you on your way.

"Hope" Is The Thing With Feathers" by Emily Dickinson

"Hope" is the thing with feathers -
That perches in the soul -
And sings the tune without the words -
And never stops - at all -

And sweetest - in the Gale - is heard -
And sore must be the storm -
That could abash the little Bird
That kept so many warm -

I've heard it in the chillest land -
And on the strangest Sea -
Yet - never - in Extremity,
It asked a crumb - of me.



“A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning” by John Donne

As virtuous men pass mildly away,
And whisper to their souls to go,
Whilst some of their sad friends do say
The breath goes now, and some say, No:

So let us melt, and make no noise,
No tear-floods, nor sigh-tempests move;
‘Twere profanation of our joys
To tell the laity our love.

Moving of th’ earth brings harms and fears,
Men reckon what it did, and meant;
But trepidation of the spheres,
Though greater far, is innocent.

Dull sublunary lovers’ love
(Whose soul is sense) cannot admit
Absence, because it doth remove
Those things which elemented it.

But we by a love so much refined,
That ourselves know not what it is,
Inter-assured of the mind,
Care less, eyes, lips, and hands to miss.

Our two souls therefore, which are one,
Though I must go, endure not yet
A breach, but an expansion,
Like gold to airy thinness beat.

If they be two, they are two so
As stiff twin compasses are two;
Thy soul, the fixed foot, makes no show
To move, but doth, if the other do.

And though it in the center sit,
Yet when the other far doth roam,
It leans and hearkens after it,
And grows erect, as that comes home.

Such wilt thou be to me, who must,
Like th’ other foot, obliquely run;
Thy firmness makes my circle just,
And makes me end where I begun.

“If-” by Rudyard Kipling

If you can keep your head when all about you
Are losing theirs and blaming it on you,
If you can trust yourself when all men doubt you,
But make allowance for their doubting too;
If you can wait and not be tired by waiting,
Or being lied about, don't deal in lies,
Or being hated, don't give way to hating,
And yet don't look too good, nor talk too wise:

If you can dream—and not make dreams your master;
If you can think—and not make thoughts your aim;
If you can meet with Triumph and Disaster
And treat those two impostors just the same;
If you can bear to hear the truth you've spoken
Twisted by knaves to make a trap for fools,
Or watch the things you gave your life to, broken,
And stoop and build 'em up with worn-out tools:
If you can make one heap of all your winnings
And risk it on one turn of pitch-and-toss,
And lose, and start again at your beginnings
And never breathe a word about your loss;
If you can force your heart and nerve and sinew
To serve your turn long after they are gone,
And so hold on when there is nothing in you
Except the Will which says to them: “Hold on!”

If you can talk with crowds and keep your virtue,
Or walk with Kings—nor lose the common touch,
If neither foes nor loving friends can hurt you,
If all men count with you, but none too much;
If you can fill the unforgiving minute
With sixty seconds' worth of distance run,
Yours is the Earth and everything that's in it,
And—which is more—you'll be a Man, my son!



Integrated Response to the Second Wave

Samuhik Pahal Team

Azim Premji Foundation and Wipro's Response to COVID-19 Second Wave

Over the past few weeks, there has been a significant increase in COVID-19 cases across India, with around 300,000 cumulative deaths reported so far. The second wave outcomes are severe and call for stronger collaborations on public healthcare, bolstering emergency preparedness, and rapid vaccine delivery.

Working with more than 500 partner organizations across the country, we have significantly ramped up our efforts on the ground to address healthcare and humanitarian needs. On the healthcare front, our immediate focus is on reducing the mortality rate by enabling access to treatment and slowing down the rate of transmission through screening and awareness building.

On the humanitarian front, our focus is to mitigate the crisis by providing cooked meals, dry ration and hygiene kits as immediate support, and taking structured steps for livelihood regeneration over the next 2-12 months.

Last year in April, Wipro Ltd, Wipro Enterprises Ltd, and Azim Premji Foundation came together and committed Rs. 1125 crore towards tackling the COVID-19 crisis.

Delivering Critical Medical Support and Our Mobilization Efforts

Oxygen Treatment

We are working on large-scale deployment of oxygen concentrators, setting up oxygen plants, and delivering solutions like oxygen

cylinders and liquid oxygen storage. For instance, In Rajasthan, the commitment is to supply over 1700 Oxygen Concentrators in a staggered manner, across the 11 districts that we work in. The oxygen concentrators will be delivered to Primary Health Centres (PHC), Covid Care Centres (CCC), and facilities with capacity to treat more people.

Our partner organizations are facilitating timely access to medical oxygen in various States of India, such as Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Rajasthan, Telangana and Uttarakhand and in the Union Territory of Puducherry.



ICU Beds

The share of rural districts in new cases has increased from 37 per cent in March to 45.5 per cent in April and 48.5 per cent in May (first week). Rural areas and small towns now account for 89 per cent of new cases. There is an immediate need for better bed management practices in urban and rural regions to prioritize severe COVID-19 infected patients and provide them with timely treatment.

From April 2021 till now we have supported 5127 government hospitals and 422 non-government hospitals with oxygen beds as that emerged as the most critical need. Over the next few weeks, the goal is to deliver 800 ICU beds and support 10,000 beds with piped systems, large oxygen storage, etc., in regions that have been affected by the spike.

Testing, Isolation, and Basic Care

Our partners have reached out to hospitals in urban and rural India with medical equipment like infrared thermometers, pulse oximeters, and High Flow Nasal Cannulas (HFNC).

Testing equipment including RNA Extractors, RT PCR Machines, TrueNAT Machines, Biosafety Cabinets, and other equipment and instruments required in laboratories are also being procured and provided. To facilitate vaccination and testing, COVID call-centers and hospital helpdesks are being supported to assist patients with testing.

The second wave outcomes are severe and call for stronger collaborations on public healthcare, bolstering emergency preparedness, and rapid vaccine delivery.

Healthcare Staff Augmentation

There is a continued need to enhance COVID care capacity of hospitals in India. Our partners are supporting the augmentation of medical staff and frontline teams. For instance, in Delhi, our partners have mobilized doctors, nurses, and trained staff to operate a 120-oxygen bedded COVID Health Centre at Rouse Avenue School within 3 to 5 km radius of Lok Nayak Jai Prakash Narayan (LNJPN) Hospital for the next three months. In Hyderabad, the state government is being provided with support to augment critical care units by equipping TIMS - a

multi-specialty hospital currently operating as a 1000-bedded COVID Hospital - with 50 HFNC, 50 multi-para monitors, 100 syringe pumps, and 10 ECG machines. Modern Architects for Rural India (MARI) and Rainbow Foundation of India are being provided support for healthcare response at the community level. Our partners are supporting ambulances for a limited period in Jaipur, Bangalore, Bhopal and Yadgir to enable better access to treatment facilities.

Community Awareness, Help Desks, and Frontline Coordination

To slow down transmission, the focus is on strengthening frontline surveillance. This includes orienting, training, and adequately equipping frontline workers with pulse oximeters, thermal guns and other material for building mass awareness and doing better screening, especially in vulnerable communities. Better screening and early detection of conditions like low blood oxygen concentration (SpO₂) will aid quicker access to treatment and reduce mortality.

As an example, in Bengaluru Urban and Rural, our partners are focusing on intensive frontline work in 250 settlements with awareness building through cable TV, bus advertising, wall paintings, etc., potentially reaching over 7.5 lakh people.

In cities like Pune, Kolhapur, Aurangabad, Solapur, Amravati, and Osmanabad, helpdesks and helplines are being supported to enable frontline coordination and to address complaints.

Technology Support

Through the Global Coalition for COVID-19 Medical Care (GCCMC), we are bringing the medical fraternity and hospitals together on an online platform. Online knowledge sharing will help improve hospital throughput, and coalesce home and hospital care, resulting in better clinical outcomes. In partnership with Project StepOne, we are also supporting

patients with timely access to information on COVID-19, connecting them to doctors and hospitals over the telephone. Many Wiproites are e-volunteering for this initiative, and have helped more than 10,000 patients so far.

Humanitarian Aid

On the humanitarian front, the focus is to mitigate the crisis by providing cooked meals and dry ration/hygiene and taking structured steps for livelihood regeneration over the next 2-12 months. So far, our partner organizations have supported over 80,000 families in Chhattisgarh, Rajasthan, Karnataka, Uttarakhand, and in cities like Mumbai and Delhi.

In the rest of the country, our partner organizations have provided humanitarian support for dry rations in several districts. In collaboration with our partners, we have been working closely with the respective district administrations to provide healthcare and humanitarian support through the pandemic.

Since April 2021, We Have Initiated Procurement/Delivery/Set-up of:

- 50,000 oxygen concentrators
- 40 oxygen plants
- 800 ICU beds, and 10,000 ICU beds with piped oxygen
- 20,000 isolation beds
- 50,000 pulse oximeters
- Twelve testing equipment that can process 1000 tests per day

Our partners, who had worked on the frontline on creating awareness and on screening community members last year, are now undertaking awareness building and support during vaccination. Our partner

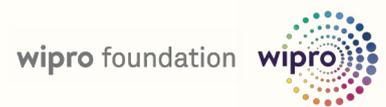
network is facilitating more equitable access to vaccines at urban locations and rural communities.

Our COVID-19 Response So Far

Key Highlights of Our Collective COVID-19 Response, as of April 2021:

- 9.1 million people have been provided with food, dry rations, and personal hygiene kits
- 330 million meals distributed
- 200000 PPE kits and N95 masks distributed
- 6 million people being helped for livelihood regeneration
- 500+ nonprofit partners involved in delivering humanitarian and healthcare aid
- Of the 718 Districts in India, our humanitarian and healthcare efforts have reached 505 Districts across 29 States and 1 Union Territory.
- Over the last 12 months, more than 1561 projects have been supported covering humanitarian aid, healthcare support, and livelihoods regeneration.





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