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Celebrating Abundance in Collabaction:

Guest Curator: Bookosmia

This bi-weekly Bachpan Manao Badhte Jao newsletter is presented by Bookosmia!

Editor's Note:

Bookosmia (meaning smell of books) is India's No.1 Publisher 'for kids, by kids' from 150+ locations, strongly believing that every young voice matters. Started by ex-banker and IIM Alumni, Nidhi Mishra, who after having her first daughter realized that Indian kids (and their parents) deserve relatable content that is safe and fun. She was joined by content veteran and award-winning author at the Commonwealth level, Archana Mohan and together the duo realized that nothing will be more relatable and organic for kids than reading other children's stories and ideas.

Believing that every young voice matters and that when children feel heard and celebrated in their early years, they grow up confident, engaged and committed to build a better world with their fresh minds. Bookosmia is now India's largest home-grown publisher, publishing thousands of children and young adults (6-17 years) from 150+ locations as digital stories, ebooks, books, podcasts and ted ed videos which are being read by lakhs of people.

Empowering children from a young age

95% of a child's brain develops before the age 6. Can a heavily funded Ed Tech industry think beyond competitive exams and obsessing over grades, fill the void of opportunities to engage and celebrate early age? Are their opportunities for parents to celebrate their children outside the limits of report cards and confines of classrooms? Can we pause to listen to the output of kids (how they feel, how they think) in a period of their life which is largely characterized with input, from parents, teachers e tal. Would Indian parents, stereotyped to be obsessed with dreams of making their children engineers, doctors and IAS from the time they are born, even care about encouraging their child's stories and artwork? Both co-founders, Nidhi and Archana were rooting for the answers to the above questions being a YES and were delighted to see Indian parents and kids send in their stories/poems/artworks/ blog for publishing, celebrating their child's creativity, from Bhilwara(Rajasthan) to Goalpara(Assam), Jammu to Neyveli(TN).

Bringing forth the voices of parents and children

The need to bring out children's voices through our first ever publishing company in India, was an attempt to have a dedicated imprint for neurodiversity, our young readers realize that their semi or non-speaking friends

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neurodiversity are much beyond one single label.

Not That Different:

Every child's voice deserves to be heard, even those who are non-speaking

The flagship program **Not That Different**, a child-led movement for inclusion is focused on the majority understanding neurodiversity (and all differences) better at an early age using a 4-pronged approach:

- Publishing books by self and parent advocates to enable children to hear their narrative
- Spotlighting their strengths in the Inclusion Fest to enable children to actually see and not just read about neurodiversity
- Stereotype busting and tips by parent- advocates
- Mainstreaming the narrative of neurodiversity with celebrities talking about the movement.

How did 'Not That Different' start?

Over the years, we realized that while we are publishing childrens from across India's vast geography and income segment, we are still not publishing *every* young voice. A large segment of neuro-diverse children (who have a different wiring of the brain with conditions like Autism, Down Syndrome, Dyslexia, Dyspraxia) were not part of the Bookosmia family yet. Together with the vibrant Mugdha Kalra, broadcasting veteran and autism activist mom, Nidhi and Archana co-founded a flagship program under Bookosmia- **Not That Different**.

While fantastic work has and is being done in this space for the neurodiverse community, there was a gap in focusing on spreading awareness amongst the larger majority about invisible disabilities, helping them them not as boring, depressing or 'none of my business' and building a basic understanding and empathy. Also while most interventions happen as Neurodiversity in Business, training employees across the corporate sector to hire neuro diverse individuals, Bookosmia focuses on tapping in the curiosity, lack of bias and conditioning and freshness of ideas that children bring to naturally grow up accepting differences in their friends over the years, than turn on a switch in their 30s to become inclusive.

Myth Busters with Shivani Aunty

[Click here](#) to view more videos on the 'Not That Different' youtube channel



How has it evolved?

Children are naturally curious and full of questions. Answering them with right information and patience builds lifelong understanding. That is just what our parent advocates and award-winning storytellers like Shivani

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Pro-tips by Special-Needs Parents

[Click here to watch all the videos](#)



Publishing our neurodiverse authors is not just for namesake. Many of the books are in their third print run and through our distribution partners, we try to ensure reach online (on Amazon) and across bookstores. Shipping the books to the Indian Army Library and seeing Archana's story on social and emotional inclusion being selected by Children's Book Trust as part of school curriculum have spelt the impact of these books. Mentored by parent advocates, Extra (An adventure book with a child with Down Syndrome) and Not That Different Comic Book (on Autism) have not only been at Bangalore Lit Fest and Serendipity Art Fest, Goa but also in school events from Bangalore to Vadodara to Chennai to Chandigarh.

The most memorable moment that you remember in this journey?

Working on our book Extra to introduce children to the extra chromosome that causes Down Syndrome in a fun, adventure story, has been most fun for the team. With mentor and parent advocate Shivani opening up her heart and home for the team to understand not just her daughter with Down Syndrome 12-year-old Shreya better, but also the dynamics of Shreya's two siblings Aviraj (16) and Noor (8), what fun they have together, how they quarrel like all siblings do, how they clarify to their friends on misconceptions about Down Syndrome and how they watch out for each other. Both Shreya and Noor are featured as characters in the book! Shivani has also recorded the Myth Busting series for us. Meeting this lively lot who will change how you perceive #neurodiversity or any #disability.

What has the response of parents and children been on seeing their publications?



Watch what Aditi has to say at the launch of her publication by Bookosmia

"Thank you so much for the beautiful illustrations... so glad to inform you that you're first illustrated book is Idhant's first book too.. just loved all the illustrations... . thanks to Bookosmia- India's No.1 publisher 'for kids, by kids' too for fulfilling Idhant's wish of publishing of his book.."

- Mother of Idhant, 12, Bhopal who is a neurodiverse author published Rise and Shine with Not That Different.

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को फिर जगाया है और मेरी उम्मीदों को नयी उड़ान दी है !”
 - Mother of Sarvagya,9, Bhopal who is an author on the autism spectrum, published Sarvagya ki Hanuman Chalisa with Not That Different.

Bookosmia Recommends

The need to bring out children’s voices through our first ever publishing company in India, was an attempt to have a dedicated imprint for neurodiversity, our young readers realize that their semi or non-speaking friends can also be prolific writers, with talents and interests similar to theirs. They have stories to tell and often these young authors choose to write about everyday stories. This is a great cue to young readers that people with neurodiversity are much beyond one single label.

With April having been World Autism Month, here are a few books that we recommend from our repository:



To understand Autism better:
Not That Different Comic Book-

10-year-old Sara has a new classmate and he seems different, but why? Come join Sara as she meets Madhav and understands his way of doing things. Not That Different is the first ever children’s comic book to help them understand their neurodiverse friends better. Authored by award-winning writer Archana Mohan, illustrated by prolific designer

To appreciate that non-speaking on the autism spectrum does not mean non thinking:

Small Stories, Big Thoughts-
 A fabulous collection of stories that are an ode to the ‘never-say-die’ human spirit, by 17-year-old Aditi, a prolific writer on the autism spectrum who uses text-to-speech to communicate, this book is the best reminder of how it takes people of different kinds to make the world interesting.

To understand other neurodiversity like Down Syndrome better:

EXTRA! Extra Chromosome, Extra Ordinary Love-
 10-year old Sara is off for summer vacation to her aunt’s house in Anjor. But the vacation isn’t just a laze in the sand as she predicted when she and her cousins, Shreya and Noor discover an object that has been missing for millions of years – The Moon’s third eye. Can

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Kalra

Shreya's Down Syndrome slow them down or will it boost their chances of solving the mystery?

The Bachpan Manao Network at Play



How Do I Feel
Author: Dhyani Katharani
Illustrator: Neha Bhatt
Level 2

Simple Education Foundation have published a contextual storybook series : 'We, the children of Garhwal' with **Storyweaver** to enable learning through relatable and fun experiences for children. Read these wonderful stories [here](#).



Aavishkaar hosted the Bachpan Manao Badhte Jao Masterclass on developing mathematical mindsets which saw 85+ participants and a very lively engagement! Missed it? Catch the recording [here](#).



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Our mailing address is:
bachpanmanao@gmail.com

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