

## DEAFNESS & TRAUMA

While possibility of the same might seem bleak, children who are deaf do undergo various facets of invisible trauma, which if not dealt with, can have long-lasting implications on their life.

Unlike children who are visually challenged, deaf children are exposed and susceptible to ridicule rather than sympathy or empathy. Parents of these children too, view them to have as a shameful condition. This hostility from their primary support system can lead them to feel neglected and rejected.

Owing to their medical condition, they are unable to participate in conventional communication patterns. This in turn can lead to feelings of isolation and abandonment. To add on, this difficulty can translate to be a hindrance, when it comes to commuting or attending a social gathering.

This disadvantageous position of the impaired child can be witnessed across all the spheres of their life such as their academic life, work life, family life as well as spill over their interpersonal relationships.

Research also shows that, Deaf children are more vulnerable to neglect, emotional, physical, and sexual abuse than children in the general population. (Sullivan, Vernon, & Scanlan, 1987). Somewhere, due to their hearing loss, deficiency in team building skills and socialization can be noted.

Hearing impairment also leads to absence of incidental learning as well as decreased opportunities to foster automated learning and curiosity. This renders itself to an inability to develop open, trusting relationships.

Nonverbal communication also takes a hit, as hearing plays a pivotal role in understanding and reciprocating one's emotional language.

In cases of legal conflicts as well, there is a disparity faced in reporting the incidents that occurred as well as difficulty is faced in gradually overcoming the trauma of the same.

Hence, implementing interventions to aid these children, is the need of the hour. Let's look at how Bookwallah helps them.



## WHERE THERE IS A WILL, THERE IS A WAY

Bookwallah fills the gaps with a unique, holistic solution. To bind the wounds of trauma, Bookwallah establishes vibrant, imaginative storybook libraries and reading spaces in orphanages across India. By providing this focused, concentrated programming, Bookwallah helps orphaned, abandoned and special children overcome the obstacles, preventing them from social integration and find true, lasting healing.

This means much more, however, than full bookshelves. Passionate about bringing libraries to life and forming safe, meaningful connections between children and storytellers, Bookwallah also launches storytelling programs and trains local volunteers in trauma-informed methods and proven storytelling techniques. So while orphanages appreciate the ability to encourage education through Bookwallah's libraries, the benefits extend far beyond literacy. Bookwallah's innovative methodology addresses social-emotional learning needs, improves mental health and instills hope through the imaginative power of storybooks.

Unlike some narrow forms of bibliotherapy, Bookwallah's approach is more comprehensive, facilitating healing through secure environments, strong social-emotional messages and inspirational figures. By selecting books with characters who endure and overcome painful realities— including *The Secret Garden*, *Beauty and the Beast*, *Cinderella* and *The Invention of Hugo Cabret*— Bookwallah helps children of trauma reflect on their own stories, hardships and emotions in a safe, more removed way.

As they follow the journeys of heroes they can identify with, the children begin to believe that they, too, can become heroes. Filled with wonder and joy, their eyes are opened to new possibilities, allowing them to reimagine their own futures. And along the way, these children are empowered by Bookwallah's compassionate storytelling volunteers. As volunteers build rapport in the orphanages, they serve as inspirational role models and reinforce the message that the children's stories aren't over—they're still being written.

*To cater to our populace of special children, our volunteers are extensively and rigorously trained in sign language, to facilitate communication and eradicate all barriers.*

## BOOKWALLAH'S TRANSFORMATION PROCESS



**Heal.** Bookwallah partners with orphanages to develop renovated reading spaces that are stocked with storybooks. These spaces often become children's safe havens - reducing stress and fear and increasing trust and hope. This warm, inspiring environment becomes a context for inner healing.



**Empower.** Dedicated volunteer storytellers empower children by sharing hope-filled messages in fun experiential ways and by building positive relationships that break down social barriers and help children learn to trust again.



**Transform.** Through regular interaction with volunteers and identification with heroes in storybooks who have endured hardship, children begin to transform. Bookwallah's psychologists report that within eight months, these children experience an increase in hope, persistence and prosocial behavior and a decrease in hyperactivity.

## *The Real Life Prodigy of Bookwallah:*

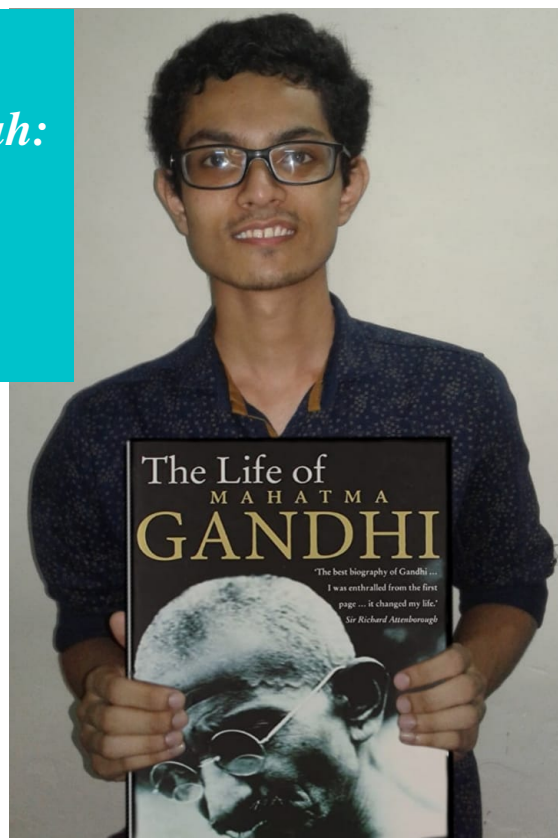
### VASAF WAGHOO

While catering to children at our special library in Mumbai, we came across this gem of a child, with a trillion aspirations, concealed in his naive eyes. We were overwhelmed and washed with gratitude, to have personally known a warm soul as him. And he was definitely a pearl, leaving us an ocean to find out.

For a young boy, who couldn't communicate conventionally with us, Vasaf for sure has a promising persona. Hearing him fluently communicate via sign language, we were drawn in a trance, captivated by his enduring charisma. While we couldn't hear him talk, his eyes expressed, what his words couldn't. His gestures covered volumes, of what he wanted to share with us. Share with us, that is....a piece of his life.

Hailing from a family, where both his parents have hearing impairment, Vasaf always showed a zeal in achieving his dreams. He was introduced to Bookwallah, when a library was set up in his school. He was in fourth grade then, aged 14.

Reminiscing about his time in the library, he fondly recollects, "This beautiful library was created in 2013, I believe a library is a place where we find many exciting books like fairy tales, novels, poems, magazines and much more...The books in the library encouraged me to learn, to help me develop... to be more curious."



Some of his favorite books included: If I Ran the Zoo, A Fish out of Water and The Cat in the Hat by Dr. Seuss. He also happened to read the biography of Mahatma Gandhi, where the simplest 5 principles advocated in the book, transformed his life completely.

*"I believe a library is a place where we find many exciting books like fairy tales, novels, poems, magazines and much more...The books in the library encouraged me to learn, to help me develop... to be more curious."*



Narrating his experiences he verbalises how his premorbid personality was inclined towards being selfish and rude. Then he goes on to express how Books touched him and transformed his life. For a young boy, who initially couldn't make sense of words, Vasaf has come a long way, in understanding stories his way. He quoted,

*"Earlier I was zero...nothing. I couldn't understand anything. I was selfish, cruel and rude. Through the stories I was transformed. Bookwallah sessions opened my eyes. Made me realise my wrong doings.*

*Earlier, I didn't respect my parents, teachers and friends...but gradually this library changed me.*



Vasaf has successfully completed his tenth grade exam with 87.80%. He is excited to be going to junior college soon and will be pursuing higher education. He aspires to get into accounting and remain focused in life, moving forward.

***He ardently thanks Bookwallah for touching his life and leading to his heartfelt transformation, as he sets out to write his story with not words, but signs.***

# LARGER IMPACT



45,000+ orphans and children of trauma have been impacted through Bookwallah's libraries, programs and initiatives.



Bookwallah has built libraries in India and Indonesia and has sent storybooks to Bangladesh, Ghana, Ecuador, Jamaica, Sri Lanka, Colombia and the United States.



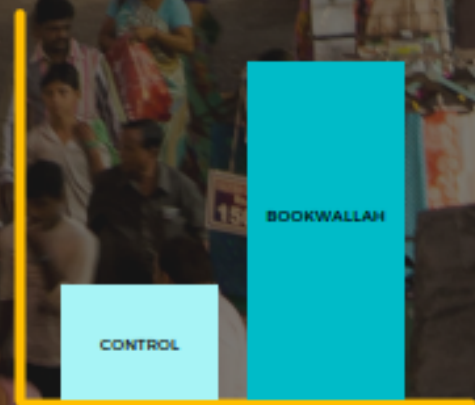
Bookwallah's work has resulted in \$70,000+ societal cost savings per child of trauma (in developing countries).



Bookwallah is 93% volunteer-operated, with more than 80% volunteer retention annually.



Bookwallah has distributed more than 20,000 storybooks around the globe.



Bookwallah's IRB-approved study found that within 8 months, caregivers found an increase in children's pro-social behavior.