



The Letterpress Project

Q1. What are your earliest memories of books and reading? For example, did you have a favourite or inspirational book?

As a child, I don't remember being attached to any one particular book, but growing up in India, I was surrounded by an abundance of mythological stories like the Ramayana and Mahabharata. These epic tales were a huge part of my everyday life — whether through television series, bedtime stories narrated by my mother and grandmother, or beautifully illustrated comics like Amar Chitra Katha. I was always drawn to these stories, especially the vivid imagery and the sense of wonder they created. Even then, I found myself more fascinated by the illustrations that brought those worlds to life, and that love for storytelling through visuals has stayed with me ever since.

Q2. What inspired you to become an author / illustrator?

While I had a fulfilling career working for over a decade as an accessory designer, everything shifted during COVID. I went back to my hometown to stay with my parents, and while going through my old childhood drawings, something sparked inside me — a deep urge to draw again. I realized that my true passion had always been visual storytelling.

Growing up, I was one of those children who was always drawing — on paper, on walls, anywhere I could. My mother recognized that spark early on and nurtured it, enrolling me in every drawing competition she could find. Those small acts of encouragement planted the seeds for my creative journey. After rediscovering that passion, I started taking small online classes to learn how to write and illustrate storybooks, slowly finding my way back to the creative dreams I had as a child.

Later, drawing and illustration felt like a natural bridge between my love for design and my desire to tell heartfelt stories. Moving to New York to pursue my MFA in Illustration also gave me the courage to fully embrace this path — to explore writing and illustrating my own narratives, especially for children.

Q3. For you, what makes a successful book or illustration?

For me, a successful book or illustration is one that creates a lasting emotional connection. It's less about perfection and more about honesty — the ability to evoke wonder, empathy, or even just a moment of quiet joy in the reader. Recently, when I read *Grandad's Island* and *The Storm Whale* by Benji Davies, and *Hot Dog* by Doug Salati, I was reminded of how powerful simple, heartfelt storytelling can be. Their illustrations and narratives feel so genuine and moving, they linger with you long after the last page. That authenticity in both storytelling and visuals is what truly resonates with me and is something I strive for in my own work.

Q4. Do you have a specific audience in mind when you write your books / plan your illustrations?

Yes, I usually have children between the ages of 4 to 8 in mind. But more than an age group, I think about the sense of curiosity and imagination I want to spark — in both kids

and the adults reading to them. I also often consider young readers who may be navigating new environments, much like my own experience moving to a new country.

Q5. What future do you think the physical book has? For example, do you think the electronic book will replace the physical book?

I believe physical books will always have a special place, especially for young readers. There's something tactile and intimate about holding a book, flipping through its pages, and discovering illustrations that screens simply can't replicate. I still remember being curled up next to my mother as a child, listening to her read ancient Indian epic stories from beautifully illustrated books. I would trace the pictures with my fingers, completely absorbed in the magic of the stories and the feel of the paper. While digital books are convenient, physical books offer an experience — and that experience is timeless.

Q6. Are you a book collector? Is there a special book you'd love to own?

While I wouldn't call myself a serious collector, I do have a deep love for illustrated books that connect to my roots. As a child, I grew up watching and reading a lot of Indian ancient epic stories about gods and goddesses — especially tales like the *Ramayana*, which I watched on television and heard from my mother and grandmothers. Recently, I came across *Illustrated Ramayana for Children* by Shubha Vilas and *01 Tales: The Great Panchatantra Collection*, and I would love to have both of them in my collection. These books beautifully capture the stories that shaped my childhood imagination.