

#BOOKWORM

Tiny Tales, Big Impact

Best Books to Help Indian Kids Fall in Love with Reading from an Early Age!

In an age dominated by screens, cultivating a reading habit in children may feel like swimming against the current. But books remain powerful tools, shaping young minds, nurturing empathy, boosting imagination, and building strong language skills. For Indian parents and educators looking to sow the seeds of lifelong learning, introducing the right books at the right age can make all the difference. Here's a curated list of some of the best books



- For Ages 2-5: Board Books and First Stories
1. **Gajapati Kulapati by Ashok Rajagopalan**  
This adorable elephant with a sneezing problem is a hit among preschoolers. With simple repetitive text and onomatopoeic sounds like 'Aaaaachoo!', it's perfect for read-aloud fun. Bonus? It's set in a charming Indian village, making it instantly relatable.

2. **My First Book of Hindi Words by Rina Singh**  
An excellent bilingual primer, this book introduces common Hindi words through colourful illustrations and simple rhymes. Great for toddlers growing up in multilingual homes.

3. **The Very Hungry Caterpillar by Eric Carle**  
Though not Indian, it's a timeless global favourite. The vibrant visuals and rhythmic flow help children grasp basic concepts of numbers, days, and food, and it's now available in several Indian languages.



- For Ages 5-8: Picture Books and Early Readers
4. **The Why-Why Girl by Mahasweta Devi**  
A powerful story based on the real-life journey of a tribal girl who dares to ask 'why'. This tale introduces themes of curiosity, social equity, and resilience, all wrapped in accessible storytelling.

5. **The Blue Jackal by Karadi Tales**  
A lively retelling of the Panchatantra fable, this book from the Karadi Tales series blends wit and wisdom. The vibrant artwork and audio-book option enhance engagement, especially for first-time readers.

6. **Timmi in Tangles by Shals Mahajan**  
This early chapter book features Timmi, a quirky little girl with a wild imagination. It's funny, real, and refreshingly free of preachy morals, perfect for encouraging kids to enjoy reading for fun.

- For Ages 8-12: Chapter Books and Indian Adventures
7. **Swami and Friends by R.K. Narayan**  
This timeless classic is a window into Indian life in the 1930s through the eyes of a mischievous boy in Malgudi. Narayan's gentle humour and vivid storytelling still resonate with young readers today.

8. **The Mystery of the Silk Umbrella by Asha Nehemiah**  
If your child is into mysteries and puzzles, this book is a great pick. With its Indian setting and relatable characters, it keeps readers engaged while encouraging problem-solving.

9. **The Wildlings by Nilanjana Roy**  
Set in Delhi's Nizamuddin, this beautifully written fantasy novel follows a secret society of cats. It's poetic, imaginative, and offers a more literary experience for advanced young readers.

- Tips to Nurture a Reading Habit in Kids
1. **Make Reading Routine**  
Incorporate reading into bedtime rituals or dedicate 15-20 minutes a day. Consistency is key to habit formation.

2. **Let Them Choose**  
Take your child to bookstores or libraries and let them pick what excites them. Ownership of the reading experience increases motivation.

3. **Create a Reading Corner**  
A cozy, well-lit nook with a few cushions and a book basket can do wonders. Make reading feel like a reward, not a chore.

4. **Lead by Example**  
When children see adults enjoying books, they naturally mirror that behavior. Read together, talk about books, and model curiosity.

5. **Celebrate Indian Authors**  
Support homegrown stories. Indian children, seeing their culture, festivals, food, and names in books, creates deeper connections and pride in their roots.

Why Early Reading Matters

Research shows that children who develop reading habits early not only do better academically but are also more empathetic and imaginative. In a multicultural, multilingual country like India, books also play a vital role in helping children understand diversity, inclusion, and their place in the world. As we guide children through the noise of the digital

age, books remain quiet companions, ready to entertain, educate, and empower. So, whether it's a cheeky jackal, a sneezy elephant, or a girl who asks too many questions, there's a perfect book waiting to open up a child's world. Let's turn the page on screen-time guilt and start a new chapter, one where Indian kids fall in love with the written word, one book at a time.

# When We Used To Fight Wars Which Looked Like Wars



The Mukti freedom fighters played a major role in the defeat of the Pakistan Army. They broke their morale and created an environment of fear. Due credit must be given to them for their role. We had no maps; the ones we had were fifty year old and had no relation to what was on ground. I requested freedom



We have been at a war of sorts. Though not even officially over yet, as I am proceeding to share this account with readers of Arbit. Wars are not going to be what we have been used to, anymore. Advanced

technology, and the products of the whole world, who produce and sell weapons, watch abated as their claims are put to test and they win or lose, not to say, a whole lot of world economy looks up or down as the result of one skirmish, let alone a war. Major Chandrakant had been part of a war more like the one we would understand, the Bangladesh one. Just to remind ourselves, all the weapons in the world, all the technology, can't replace human intelligence and will to win. So, here is what Chandrakantji says!

I have had the privilege to have known Gen Jacob and would even say that he was a friend, even though he was closer to my father's age than mine. I first met him in 1967 when he was posted as Commander 12 Infantry Division at Jodhpur. My battalion 4 Guards was under him and we were located at Udaipur. The start of our friendship was a common interest in Western Classical music. Jacob was a brilliant man, the ideal



Gen Jacob with Chandrakant.

choice as Chief of Staff, Easter Command in 1971. He did a fantastic job both in the logistics build-up and during the operations. But he did himself no credit when in his two biographical books and several TV interviews, he takes sole credit for the victory in Bangladesh. This is Gen Jacobs account in his own words.

"The Bangla elections took place at the end of 1970. The West Pakistanis, on no account, wanted a Bangladesh Prime Minister and did everything to oppose it. It was after the slaughter at Dacca University that Operation Searchlight took place. I saw the refugees come and it was terrible. The works through the monsoon and logistics were the key factors in winning this war. I want to quote (Then Chief of Air Staff) PC Lal, a very competent officer: "Dacca was never an objective, as it was considered not possible to capture. The war had to be short, as UN would intervene. With these restrictions, the objectives were limited to get territory for Bangla government in exile." Once limited objectives were agreed to, each service did what it thought was best. The Pakistan strategy was to defend territory, towns and main roads. Therefore, we based our plans to bypass these and go for the centre of gravity, Dacca. We received Army Headquarters operation instruction on 15th of August. The war officially started on 3rd December, when Pakistan bombed our airfields. As far as we were concerned, however, the war for us had started earlier, on 22nd November. As the Pakistanis were shelling us, we asked for permission to silence these guns and were given permission to go up to ten miles.

The offensive went according to plan, we bypassed the cities. Meanwhile, the American fleet was moving into the Straits of Malacca. On December 13th, there was an American resolution at the United Nations, which was vetoed by the Soviet Union. The Soviets said no more vetoes. Sam Manekshaw reacted and sent us an order to capture 'all the towns in Bangladesh except Dacca.' All the towns we had bypassed were listed, but though we were outside Dacca, no mention was made for its capture. As these orders had also been sent to HQ 3 Corps, we rang up the corps and told them to ignore these orders. The Army Commander, Lieutenant General Jagjit Singh Aurora came agitated into my room, showed me the signal from Army HQ and said that it was entirely my fault as he wanted to capture the towns, but I did not support his view. That night, I got hold of General Niazi on the wireless and told him that our

These were printed in Survey of India and issued in November. We used Pakistani maps throughout the war. The only intelligence we got from R&AW was two and a half pages. It was Signals Intelligence that gave us all the intelligence we got. By the end of April, I made a draft plan and sent it to Delhi. It was done during monsoons. We doubled the capacity at the railway line and got Border Roads Organisation (BRO) to build roads. We built up the infrastructure and logistics. When the war started, everything was in place.

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forces outside Dhaka were very strong, a Mukti Bahini uprising was imminent, ethnic minorities would be protected and that they would be treated with dignity if they surrendered. On December 14th, I got an intercept that there was a meeting at the Government House in Dhaka. There were two government houses in Dhaka, so we took an educated guess, and fortunately it was the correct one. The Indian Air Force bombed it within two hours. The governor of East Pakistan resigned. About 4 p.m. that afternoon, Niazi and Major General Farman Ali went to see Spivack, the American Consul General, with the following proposals: Ceasefire under the United Nations, withdrawal under UN, handover of the government to the UN and no war crimes trials and other stipulations. I got to know about it through one of the embassies. So, I informed Manekshaw, who spoke to the American Ambassador in India, who didn't know anything about it. That same day, the American embassy in Islamabad sent it to New York, and it was given on December 15 to Zulfikar Ali Bhutto. He refused to accept it. The Americans then gave it to us. On December 15, the ceasefire was ordered. On the morning of



Gen Jacob between Generals Cariappa and Nathu Singh at raising day celebrations of 4 Guards in Udaipur 1967.



This surrender is unique. It is the only public surrender in history where a ceasefire was converted into surrender and signed in four hours. Niazi had the capacity to fight on for two to three weeks, and the UN was in session. He was taken to task by the Hamidur Rehman report, which said not only had he agreed to surrender but he had shamefully agreed to a public surrender and guard of honour.

December 16, Manekshaw phoned me and said: "Go and get surrender." I asked, "On what terms?" "I have already sent you a draft surrender document. Do I negotiate on that?" "You know what to do, just go!" he replied. Then I made a mistake. I told him that when I was talking to Niazi, he had invited me for lunch, and I forgot about it. On the staircase, I met Mrs. Aurora, and she told that she was going to Dhaka with her husband. "My place is beside my husband," she said. I was changing helicopters at Jessore to get to Dhaka, when a man came running to me with a signal from Army HQ. I opened it, thinking well, now I have some orders. I was unarmed, and carrying the document which I had typed and sent to Delhi. Only a staff officer was with me. I opened the letter, and it said: "The government of India has approved of General Jacob having lunch with Niazi." Who wanted their permission? (promptness!)

Anyway, I landed at Dhaka still carrying this paper which I had sent to Delhi. On my arrival, I was met by the UN representatives who said, "We are coming with you to arrange the withdrawal of the Pakistani army and the takeover of the government." I said that thank you very much, but I don't need your help. Fighting was going all around Dhaka between the



## Celebrating World Facilities Management Day 2025

Observed on May 14, World Facilities Management Day recognizes the vital role facility managers play in ensuring safe, efficient, and sustainable environments across workplaces, hospitals, schools, and public spaces. The 2025 theme, "Inspire. Integrate. Innovate," highlights the industry's shift towards smart infrastructure, energy efficiency, and user-centric spaces. From maintaining air quality to implementing eco-friendly technologies, facilities managers are the unsung heroes of operational excellence. As businesses evolve post-pandemic, their contributions in maintaining hygiene, safety, and adaptability have become more crucial than ever. Today, we honour these professionals who keep our built environment functional and future-ready.



The famous Surrender Photograph. Jacob first from right.



Jacob with Niazi and Gavin Young. At the famous, Surrender Lunch, 16 Dec 1971, Dacca.

fighters to please get us maps. They got a complete set of maps which I gave to Survey of India in Park Street, Calcutta. These were printed in Survey of India and issued in November. We used Pakistani maps throughout the war. The only intelligence we got from R&AW was two and a half pages. It was Signals Intelligence

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Pakistani troops and the Mukti Bahini. A Pakistani brigadier met me at the airfield to guide me to Niazi. En route, we were stopped by a unit of the Mukti Bahini, who refused to let us proceed. "We are going to attack Niazi's headquarters," they said. "He is surrendering, please let me go," I said. A long argument took place with the Mukti Bahini, until I said, "Look, your new government is coming in tomorrow, and Niazi wants to surrender, for God's sake, let us go!" Finally, they let us go. I arrived at Niazi's headquarters, where I had the draft surrender document read out to him.

This is an unconditional surrender, he said. "You have only come here to discuss the ceasefire and the withdrawal of the Pakistani army." "General," I replied, "this is not unconditional. I have worked on this for some time. I had put in it that we would protect ethnic minorities, that we would ensure the safety of them and their families, that they would be treated with dignity as officers and men according to the Geneva Convention. So, it is not unconditional. Where would you find all these conditions laid down?" But he said no. I listened to the arguments for some time. His aides like Farman Ali were advising him not to surrender. Finally, I told him, "Look General, you surrender, I will ensure your safety, the safety of your families, ethnic minorities, everyone. You will be treated with respect. If you don't, I am afraid I can take no responsibility for what happens to you or your families. What is more, we will have no other option but to order the immediate resumption of hostilities. I give you 30 minutes." I walked out.

Aurora was supposed to land soon to sign the instrument of surrender. I fervently hoped he was bringing what we had sent Manekshaw. I was alone in a very hostile environment. I was thinking, suppose he doesn't surrender, what do I do? He has 30,000 troops, we have 3,000 and he can fight for three weeks at least! The Hamidur Rehman report also says when they asked him why you surrendered, Niazi told them "General Jacob blackmailed me! He threatened to hand us over to the Bahini, and that they would bayonet us." All rubbish. I did pressurise him and I didn't say I would hand him over to the Mukti Bahini for them to massacre. I said I would not be responsible. I never said I would hand them over. That's a lie.

In fact, in the Hamidur Rehman report, one of the officers, who was present, said that Jacob never used

the word bayonet. Anyway, I was wondering what was going to happen as I walked back after half an hour. The paper I gave him was lying on the table. "General, do you accept this paper?" I asked. He kept quiet, he didn't answer. I asked him three times. So, I picked it up, and held it high, and said, "I take it that it is accepted." There were tears in his eyes. There were glares from the other Pakistani generals and admirals. I had no advice, no orders, other than to get a surrender. I didn't know what was going to be signed. What came to be signed had to be re-signed in Calcutta two weeks later. The signed document was wrong.

"I will surrender in my office," Niazi said. I said no, I have already given instructions that you will surrender at the racecourse, in front of the people of Dhaka. "I won't," he said. "You will," I said. "You will also provide a guard of honour." I made my own modalities for the surrender. This surrender is unique. It is the only public surrender in history where a ceasefire was converted into surrender and signed in four hours. Niazi had the capacity to fight on for two to three weeks, and the UN was in session. He was taken to task by the Hamidur Rehman report, which said not only had he agreed to surrender but he had shamefully agreed to a public surrender and guard of honour, when he could have fought on for some weeks, enabling the UN to intervene. Then, there was that lunch which Gavin Young described as the Surrender Lunch, with all the silverware laid out. After that, while we were going to

rajeshsharma1049@gmail.com



2 March 1972. Sheikh Mujib signing the visitors book of 4 Guards after the ceremonial farewell Parade. Gen Jacob 2nd from left. Gen Aurora behind Sheikh Mujib.

#HEALTH

Booze Snooze Blues



Why That Nightcap Might Be Robbing You of Rest and Waking You Up with the Dreaded 'Next-Day Blah'!

We've all been there, a couple of drinks to unwind, some good food, maybe a laugh or two. It all seems like a great idea until the next morning rolls around and you wake up groggy, foggy, and far from refreshed. That sluggish 'blah' feeling is more than just a hangover; it's your body reacting to alcohol's disruption of one of its most essential processes, sleep.

The Sleep Illusion

Many people assume that a nightcap helps them fall asleep faster. And in a way, that's true. Alcohol is a sedative that can make you feel drowsy and may help you doze off quickly. But here's the catch, while it may aid sleep initiation, it seriously disrupts sleep quality throughout the night. Research shows that alcohol interferes with the body's natural sleep architecture. It reduces rapid eye movement (REM) sleep, the deep, restorative stage where dreaming occurs and your brain processes emotions and memories. Without enough REM sleep, you wake up tired, irritable, and mentally sluggish, no matter how many hours you spent in bed.

The 3 AM Wake-Up Call

Alcohol also acts as a diuretic and suppresses the production of anti-diuretic hormone (ADH), leading to more frequent bathroom visits in the night. That's why many drinkers find themselves wide awake around 3 or 4 AM, hot, dehydrated, and anxious. This phenomenon is also linked to the rebound effect: once the sedative effect of alcohol wears off, your nervous system becomes hyperactive, jolting you awake and making it harder to fall back asleep.

Anxiety Amplified

It's not just poor sleep that's the culprit. Alcohol's interference with sleep can worsen next-day anxiety, a condition often dubbed 'hangxiety.' Sleep deprivation, combined with alcohol's impact on neurotransmitters like serotonin and GABA, can heighten stress and make you feel emotionally vulnerable the next day. This emotional toll can be especially brutal for people already prone to anxiety or depression, turning a casual night out into a trigger for a full-blown mental health spiral.



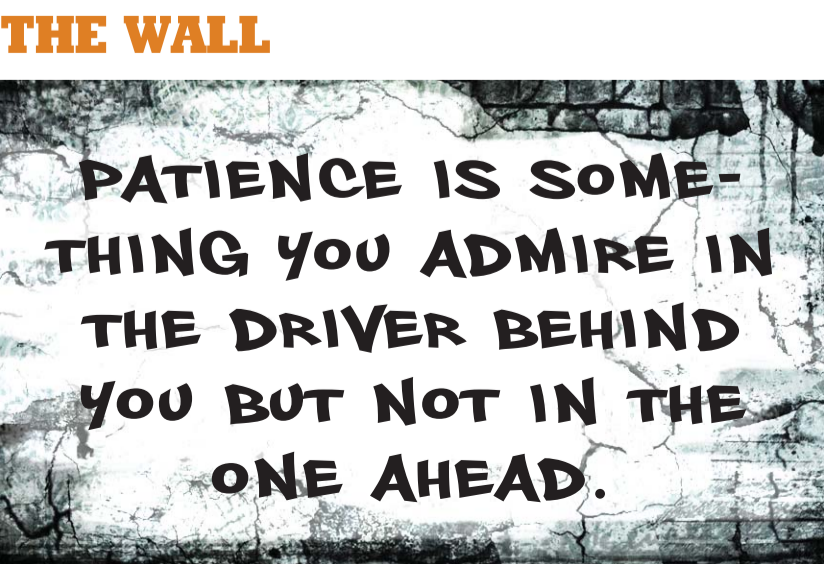
Long-Term Consequences

Regular alcohol use before bedtime doesn't just cause short-term grogginess, it can lead to chronic sleep issues like insomnia and obstructive sleep apnea. Studies also suggest a link between prolonged alcohol use and reduced melatonin production, the hormone responsible for regulating your sleep-wake cycle. In the long term, this disruption may contribute to cardiovascular issues, lowered immunity, and even cognitive decline. It's a domino effect, where one poor night's sleep due to alcohol can snowball into lasting health complications.

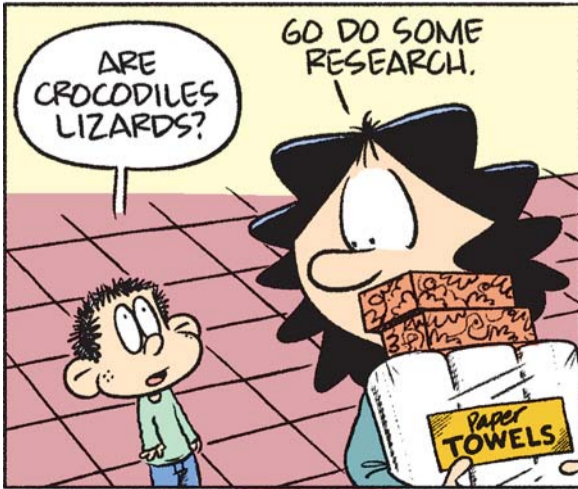
Breaking the Cycle

If you're serious about improving your sleep, the answer is simple yet often overlooked: cut back on alcohol, especially in the hours leading up to bedtime. Even a two-week alcohol break can drastically improve sleep quality, energy levels, and mental clarity. So, the next time you're tempted to wind down with a drink, ask yourself, is that short-lived buzz really worth the next-day blah? For your brain, body, and emotional wellbeing, the answer is likely no.

By Jerry Scott & Jim Borgman



## BABY BLUES



## ZITS

