



Dear Friends of the Library,

November arrived with the quiet of winter and the warmth of togetherness. As the air turned chilly, more members found their way into the library, not just to read, but to sit, talk, and simply be. Wrapped in thick jackets, heads covered against the cold winds, members gathered closely on the benches, sharing thoughts, laughter, and unhurried conversations. The library became a cozy refuge from the cold, alive with soft voices and shared moments.

We began the month, as always, with our beloved classes. While these sessions take place offline, a larger question continues to guide our work: How do we ensure that more resources, guidance, and mentorship reach our village, despite its remoteness? Technology has become our bridge. Many of our volunteers live in cities and cannot travel to the village regularly, yet their commitment remains unwavering. Over time, this dedicated volunteer community has become a strong and steady foundation of our work. Through online classes and virtual sessions, they continue to teach, mentor, and support our learners, proving that with the right access, distance need not be a barrier to learning.



At our library, many of you are already familiar with a space we hold very close to our hearts: the **Book Hospital**. Often, visitors ask us why we do not charge our members, even a nominal fee. They wonder why we do not impose fines when a book is returned late or comes back worn, folded, or lovingly used. Our answer is simple. Books are meant to be read, to be touched, felt, carried around, and lived with. They are meant to be opened many times, to travel into homes, into conversations, and into the hands of curious readers. Even a one-rupee charge or a small fine can quietly turn access into hesitation, and hesitation into distance. We never want fear- of damage, of delay, of penalty- to stand between a reader and a book.

That said, we deeply believe in accountability. When a book returns in need of care, we invite the member to place it in the Book Hospital and join us every Sunday as we “operate” on it, mending torn pages, fixing bindings, and restoring it for its next reader. This process holds members responsible, while also teaching shared ownership. In this way, books remain free to be enjoyed fully, without fear, while responsibility becomes a collective act of learning and love.



November also marks a deeply special milestone for us- **five years since the first shelf of Bansa Community Library came into being**. On 5th November 2020, in the midst of the uncertainty of the COVID-19 pandemic, our very first bookshelf was installed with the support of the community. There were only a handful of us then, standing before a half-painted wall, carrying a simple but powerful dream: to create a space where every child and every person in our village could find a book to call their own. That modest shelf became the heart of something much larger. From that single beginning grew the first free community library in the Hardoi district, a living, breathing space that today reaches and serves thousands of people across 36 villages. While so much has changed over the years, the feeling remains unchanged: when books are placed within reach of people, they hold the power to transform lives.



One of the most beautiful gifts of this weather is the way it brings read-alouds alive at Bansa Community Library. In every corner, you can spot small, cozy circles, children and adults huddled together, reading softly, listening closely, sharing a story among themselves. Alongside these are larger groups, filling the space with laughter, questions, and thoughtful discussions. Their voices often draw in passersby, who pause, listen, and sometimes stay. While the weather is inviting, it is the space that truly welcomes people in. There is something gentle and magical in the air, perhaps it is the comfort of sitting together, wrapped in warmth, gathered around a story, and taking the time to think, feel, and reflect together.



November brings with it more than just pleasant weather, it also brings a celebration that fills us with immense joy: Children's Day. When we started the library, our vision was to democratise access to books, reading material, and learning opportunities in remote villages like ours. At the time, we did not set out to serve a specific age group. Instead, we dreamed of creating a space that would feel welcoming to everyone, and that remains at the heart of what we stand for. Over time,

however, we have seen how our youngest members have become the soul of the library. A large part of our membership is made up of children, and it is often they who lead the way, initiating projects, read-alouds, and events with their boundless energy and ideas. In their curiosity, their hunger to learn, and their fearless questions, we catch glimpses of future leaders in the making.

This month's Women Adda session also held a special place for us. We screened Homebound, a recent film that has sparked many conversations. Women Adda is a weekly space where women from Bansa and nearby villages come together to talk, learn, and unwind, to build a community rooted in shared experiences, and sometimes, in differences. Homebound beautifully held up a mirror to the lives of many migrant families in and around Bansa, capturing stories of longing, resilience, separation, and love. As the film ended, the room filled with stories. Women spoke about how deeply the film resonated with their own journeys, and even those who could not relate directly reflected on the impact it left on them. We are grateful to the makers of Homebound for creating a film that feels so close to home for our community. Truly, a must-watch.

November also opened doors to new possibilities. While we were in Bengaluru for work, we hosted a small gathering of supporters, people who have been cheering us on from afar, standing by our mission, or simply curious about our journey. What made this gathering especially meaningful was that we celebrated five years of Bansa Community Library with this very circle of people. What began as a small experiment in a remote village in Hardoi, Uttar Pradesh, has grown into the district's first free community library, now reaching over 40,000 people across 36 villages. Sharing this milestone with a community that believes in the work made the moment deeply special.



To offer you a glimpse into **Chalti Phirti Bansa Library**, an initiative by the [Kutumb Foundation](#), with us at Aruna Mithlesh Foundation as knowledge partner, this project is our attempt to take the joy of reading beyond walls and into people's everyday lives. In less than two months of on-ground operations, the Chalti Phirti Library has grown into a cherished mobile community space. Our Community Engagement Librarian often shares how the energy of each visit begins to build even before the vehicle comes to a halt. As soon as the Chalti Phirti Library jingle plays, children rush out of their homes, gathering around the vehicle before it is fully parked. Many immediately start flipping through books, choosing two or three at once, settling onto mats to read with friends, or excitedly pointing out books they loved during the library's previous visit.

November was a month full of warmth, even as winter set in, woven with nostalgia and a deep sense of community. We were delighted to **welcome 1,130 visitors to the library** and **issue 843 books** to our growing community of readers. Our shelves continued to expand, **with 18 new books** added this month. We were especially heartened to **welcome 166 new members, 117 children and young adults, and 49 adults, including 4 women and 45 men**.

As we look back on this fulfilling month, our hearts are filled with gratitude, for your belief in us, for standing beside us, and for helping us reimagine what a rural library can be.

Read and bloom where you are planted!

Here's to the Free Library Movement, and to the endless stories still waiting to be told.

Niharika & Jatin

15th December 2025

Address: Village Bansa, District Hardoi, Uttar Pradesh.

Order books for our members, [Amazon Wishlist](#)

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