

More than Words

An Illustration Masterclass on
Creating Wordless Stories

October 7 to 11, 2026 | Bengaluru, India



Edition III

CALL FOR APPLICATIONS



More Than Words

“It’s a radical decision not to use words. When the artist removes the text, they invite readers to decode the pictures for themselves, so every child reads the book in their own way. A wordless picture book asks children to collaborate in this storytelling process— a very empowering request.” -David Wiesner, Caldecott Medal Recipient

Wordless picture books have been defined by what they do not contain: words (Serafini, 2014). These books express meanings through graphical illustration rather than text, and in the absence of a text to guide the story, the reader interprets the pictures to read the story that is being told. It is for their highly interpretive, engaging, and collaborative reading technique that Shaun Tan (2014) calls wordless books “the real open work” — books that evoke the imagination and voice of the reader. Wordless stories have come a long way over the last few decades in India and the South Asian region. However, they remain an underexplored category.

More Than Words - Edition III

Since reading pictures/illustrations is as important as reading text, the objective of this masterclass is to create a platform for discussing and developing wordless stories. Including wordless stories in magazines, regional language reading spaces, and on other platforms, may go a long way to making them more accessible. Edition III encourages participants to create wordless stories for both magazines and books. The key element of storying through pictures is what the masterclass intends to focus on and nurture.

The objectives of the masterclass are to:

- Build and strengthen a community of illustrators in the Indian children’s literature world that can contribute to the availability of contemporary wordless stories for children.
- Introduce participants to wordless stories (various genres and themes), their history, and contemporary development.
- Extend hands-on experience to participants during the masterclass to illustrate wordless stories.
- Through an extended mentorship period, develop good-quality wordless stories.

Wordless Picture Books under IBBY India

The International Board on Books for Young People (IBBY) promotes wordless picture books through The Silent Books Collection and travelling exhibitions comprising of wordless books based on selection from member countries in the network. This effort broadens the scope of reading, moving beyond the language of the text, and including diverse readers. Parag has been the convenor of the India Chapter of IBBY since January 2024. With nurturing wordless genre being a common focus area, Parag-IBBY India is keen to include voices from the IBBY network for the masterclass, and create a space for shared learning and the exchange of diverse stories and the process behind their making.

Past Editions of More than Words

Edition I was held in October 2024 in Bhopal, Madhya Pradesh. Wordless stories were created for magazines, and 11 stories were published across 3 magazines. Edition II was held in November 2025 in Bengaluru, Karnataka. The publishers have selected 9 stories for books and 28 for featuring in magazines. They are being published through this year. The vibrant engagement between participants, faculty and Parag around wordless books took the cohort through the many possible ways of engaging with this genre, ranging from perspective building, reading the layers of a story, and reading together to creating a story.



Details of the Workshop

- Duration** 4-day residential masterclass and 2 months for independent work on illustrations with expert mentorship
- Expected Participants** Illustrators
- Area of Focus** Creating wordless stories
- Language** English (translation support available for Hindi-speaking participants)
- Participants will be expected to**
- Actively participate in the 4-day in-person masterclass by engaging in sessions with faculty and with their fellow participants. Attending all sessions is compulsory.
 - Work on a wordless story guided by an expert mentor (alongside their regular work).
 - Submit a final storyboard within the timelines.
- Eligibility**
- Must be 18 years and above
 - Must have speaking, reading, and writing fluency in English or Hindi
 - Must be an illustrator
 - Must have been creating illustrations for children, whether published or unpublished
 - Must mandatorily attend the 4-day residential masterclass from October 7 to 11, in Bengaluru.
 - Must be available to engage in a 2-month mentorship process from mid-October to mid-December 2026, along with inputs from their mentor.



Nature of Support

- A maximum of 24 participants will be selected after an application review and shortlisting process.
- **Mentorship:** Expert mentor support through a period of 2 months after the residential engagement. This will include a call and discussion every alternate week, and a periodic review of the illustration-to-storyboard process. Participants will receive feedback while they work on the final submission.
- **Resources:** Reference readings in English will be provided, as well as a set of children's magazines and books. A range of wordless picture books will be available for participants to read during the 4-day session.
- **Prospective Publishing:** Participants are encouraged to publish their final stories in magazines/books in their respective countries. Publication of content developed in the masterclass must include an attribution to the masterclass and to Parag.
- **Lodging and Travel:** Accommodation and meals for the 4-day residential workshop, from lunch on October 7 to lunch on October 11, will be covered. Participants are required to book and bear the costs of their travel to and from Bengaluru. Please note, accomodation will be shared with other participants.
- **Fee:** There is no fee for the masterclass.

Information for International Applicants

- International applicants will be responsible for visa, tickets, and other travel expenses and permissions from their home country.
- Parag can provide a letter of invitation for selected participants for visa applications and other travel requirements.



Application and Selection Process

- To apply, participants will need to fill an online application form, which includes the submission of a portfolio. A complete application must be submitted before the deadline.
- The portfolio should include five artworks, of which at least one must exhibit a narrative. This portfolio should be submitted as a single PDF file of not more than 100MB.
- All applications will go through a shortlisting process by the faculty members.
- Applicants will be informed of the status of their application via email by July 15, 2026.

Important Dates

May 25, 2026	Applications open
June 25, 2026	Applications close
July 15, 2026	Selected participants informed regarding selection
October 7 to 11, 2026	4-day residential workshop in Bengaluru (October 7 half-day; October 8-10 full days; October 11 half-day)
December 20, 2026	Submission of final storyboard/story

Apply Now!

[Click here to reach the application form.](#)

Note: Incomplete applications will not be accepted.
For other queries, write to parag.ibbyindia@kalike.org

Faculty



Prachi Kalra is a storyteller who also teaches at Delhi University. She grew up listening to naughty stories from her grandmother. Now she teaches courses on how to teach reading and children's literature. She believes that reading for pleasure is the best thing that you can do with your time. She loves telling the scariest ghost stories and dreams of opening a library one day.



Proiti Roy is one of the country's finest illustrators and the winner of the Big Little Book Award 2017 (now known as Parag Significant Contribution Award) for her significant contribution to children's literature in India. She graduated in fine arts in Shantiniketan, Bengal. Her nuanced sense of form and colour evokes many emotions. Among her acclaimed books are *In Bon Bibi's Forest*, *The Snow King's Daughter*, *Dosti*, and the wordless book *Jab Main Moti Ko Ghar Laai*. She lives in Shantiniketan with her many rescued dogs and cats.



Priya Kuriyan has been illustrating for children since 2003. She has illustrated numerous books for publishers like Tulika Books, Penguin Books, Hachette, and Karadi Tales. Her first wordless picture book, *Ammachi's Glasses*, was published by Tulika Books in 2017, and she has collaborated with writer Devapriya Roy on a graphic biography of Indira Gandhi for young adults. Priya is also the recipient of the Big Little Book Award 2019 (now known as Parag Significant Contribution Award).



Canato Jimo is a picture-book maker from Nagaland, currently working as an art director at Pratham Books. He moonlights as a musician, loves to guzzle tea and pop bubble wrap, and is a recovering stationery addict. His published works include **Afo and I**, **Asamo, Is That You** and the wordless book **Snip**.



Pankaj Saikia is an illustrator from Assam. He loves drawing scenes and stories from his own childhood. Some of our favourites of his work include **When We Are Home** and **The Theatre of Ghosts** (wordless). When he is not drawing, he can be found in a bamboo grove, hoping to sight a fox.

About the Organizer

Parag, an Initiative of Tata Trusts, works towards the development of and access to good-quality children's literature in Indian languages. Parag also works to nurture the children's literature sector through various projects such as strengthening school and community libraries, professional courses for educators, capacity building workshops for librarians and children's book creators, and recognitions for books and book creators. Since its inception, Parag has supported the development of 1500+ books in 9 Indian languages.

Since 2024, Parag has been convening the India chapter of IBBY by placing Indian children's literature on global platforms through participations, nominations, and creating opportunities for international shared learning.

