

# Vanya

LIFELINE OF KUHU



# Healthy wetlands: Nature's own wonderlands sustaining earth and life on it

## About the publication

The publication 'Vanya: The Lifeline of Kuhu' is an attempt to sensitize youth on diverse values of wetlands and foster their participation in conservation and wise-use of these ecosystems.

## Published by

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## About Wetlands International South Asia

Wetlands International South Asia is a non government organisation working for sustaining and restoring wetlands, their resources and biodiversity in the South Asia region. Its office in New Delhi was established in 1996 as part of the Wetlands International network.

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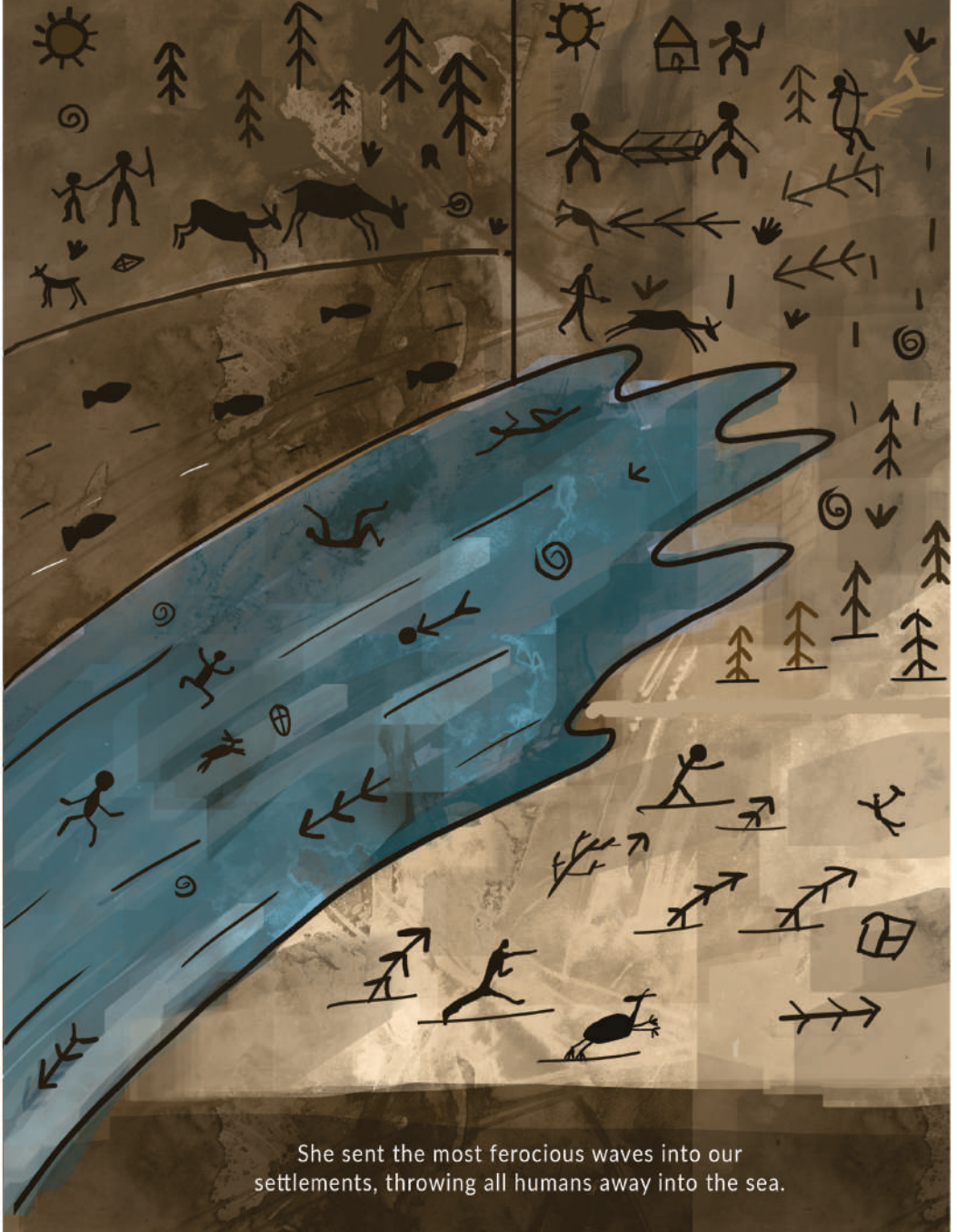
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The publication can be accessed from Wetlands International South Asia office in New Delhi.

Years and years ago, we were Mother Nature's closest associates. Bushes thrived, water was clean, trees grew tall, animals fed, and humans were at peace.

But, as ages passed, humans became more and more selfish, infuriating Mother Nature so much.



She sent the most ferocious waves into our settlements, throwing all humans away into the sea.



But there was one child, who was saved by a giant Hollong tree that grows right into the sky. The child, they say, climbed up this giant 3000 year old tree and saw his entire community destroyed with his own eyes.

What he saw was a never-before-seen wild wave as high as the sky engulfing the entire forest, along with whatever he knew the world to be, at one go.



Each time the wave came closer, he climbed higher. Each time he looked,

His eyes welled up with tears as it destroyed his aunt's house, his friend's house and then his own house.



And now it was coming for him. He climbed even further up the Hollong tree. And Every time he looked; the wave seemed higher than where he was.

Until he reached the top and what he saw was this ferocious gigantic wave growling at him.





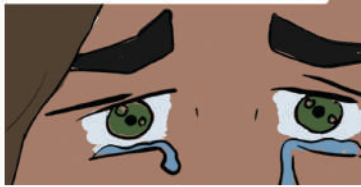
She rushes to the shower.



In the shower, the same visuals appeared again.



She had to reach the airport for her trip to Vanya Wetlands.



She has been having these recurring dreams for a while.



She gets off the cab at the airport.

Sorry sir



Sorry, My bad



I can't believe I forgot my wallet



Isn't that the same guy who bumped into me?

Thanks a lot.



As soon as he hides the boy's purse, Myna catches him red handed. And hands him to the authorities.

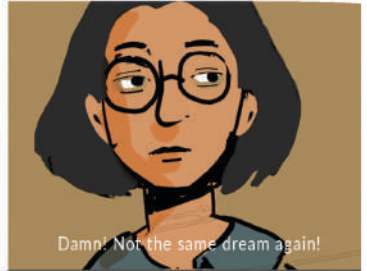
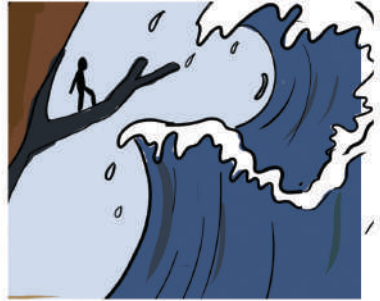


Hey there!

Where are you heading?

Hey

Well, we are heading to the Vanya Wetlands.





### **Myna**

Back in school, Myna heads the anthropology club and has a wide variety of ancient artifacts that she collected from her travels, kept in the club. She is curious about ancient cultures and lands. She loves traveling solo to faraway lands. Being highly empathetic, she easily made friends.

### **Jimmy**

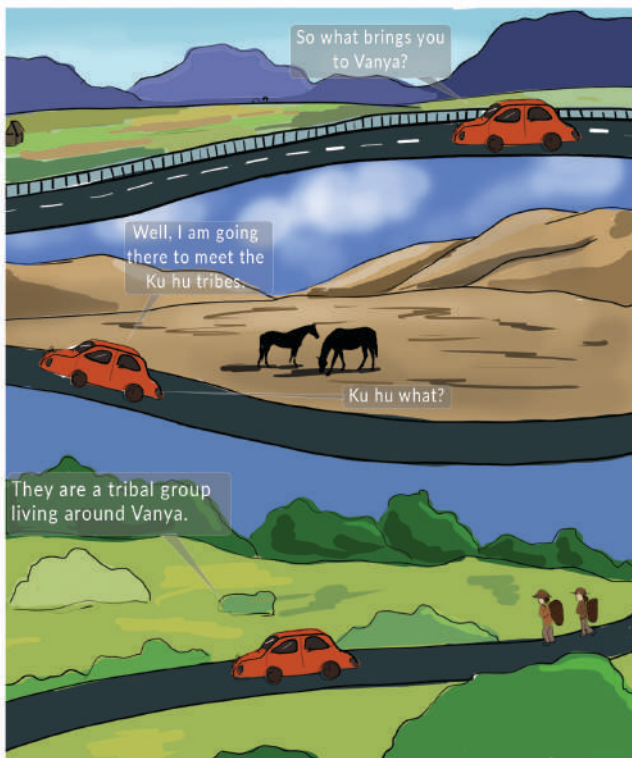
Although hailing from a small town in Manipur, Jimmy spent most of his childhood in the city, on his own. He studied in a boarding school which he hated because they were too strict and he couldn't follow rules. He loved to wander aimlessly with his friend Manas. Loves Math.



### **Manas**

Manas is Jimmy's best friend. He was new to school when Jimmy took him under his wings. Often an obedient kid in his classroom, but always falls in trouble because of Jimmy. A complete foodie who never misses a chance to fill his stomach.





So what brings you to Vanya?

Well, I am going there to meet the Ku hu tribes.

Ku hu what?

They are a tribal group living around Vanya.



Sounds interesting. Can we come along?

No you can't. It's dangerous.

We will have to follow you then.

Haha...



But why do you want to meet the Ku hu tribes?

Well, it's a long story.



It sure is going to be a long ride too.

My legs are dying but my ears are okay.



I am here to fulfill my grandfather's dream.



He once came to Vanya wetlands long before, but never returned



My grandfather was a nature conservationist who worked in Vanya long back. He was born here in Vanya and spent his childhood here.



He loved nature more than anything. He taught me how everything we need to know can be learnt from nature.



He passionately fought against corporations who wanted a piece of Vanya, a piece of his childhood so to say.



He mobilized the tribal community around Vanya against encroachment of their land.

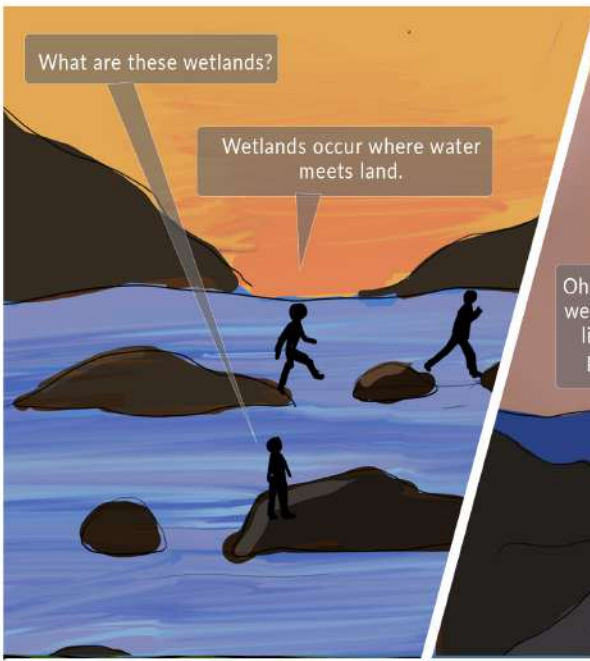


I am here to do my bit to conserve the Vanya wetlands..



...the place where my grandfather was born.



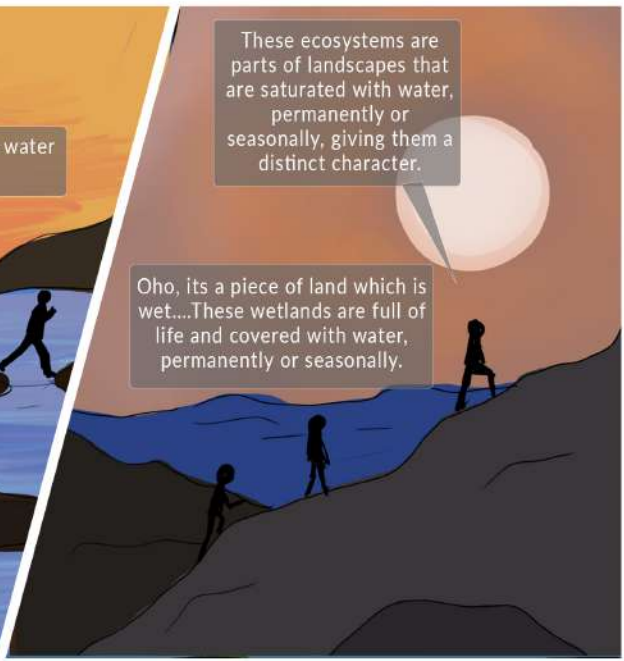


What are these wetlands?

Wetlands occur where water meets land.

These ecosystems are parts of landscapes that are saturated with water, permanently or seasonally, giving them a distinct character.

Oho, its a piece of land which is wet....These wetlands are full of life and covered with water, permanently or seasonally.



Now I remember! There is one near my grandmother's house in Meenapur. It is called the Laktek Lake. Many consider it as the lifeline of Meenapur.

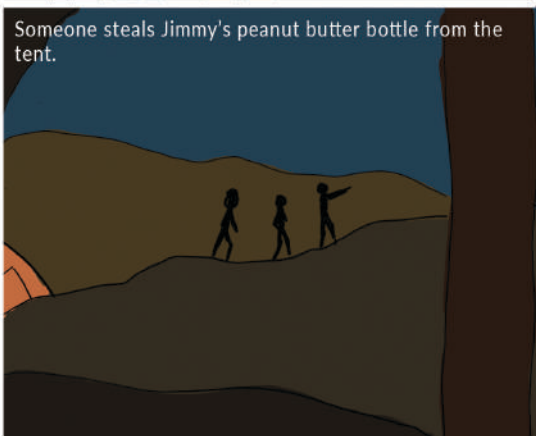
Yes, in fact many languages are full of words that suggest a negative image of wetlands. For example, we are mired in controversy,swamped with work and bogged down in details. But with a little awareness, you will know there is a lot more to wetlands.



Yes they range from mountain lakes and riverine marshes to salt pans, mangroves and coral reefs in the coastal areas.

I always thought of wetlands as that of foul-smelling, malarial swamps that were of no productive use to society and viewed them as 'wastelands'.







That is my last peanut butter bottle Manas. I really do not feel good about this plan.

If this plan works, you get one extra peanut butter bottle Jimmy. Stay optimistic my friend.



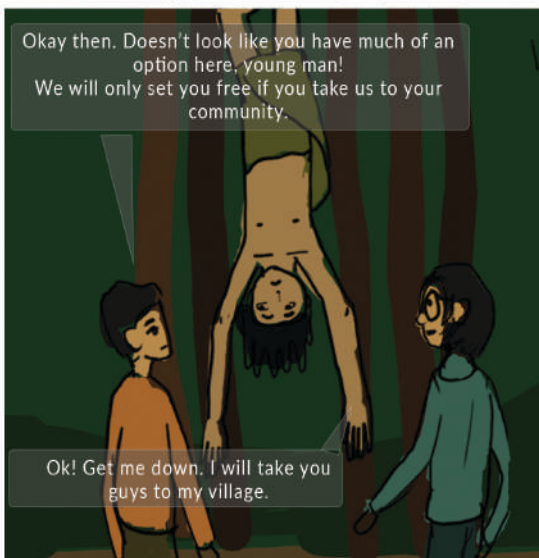
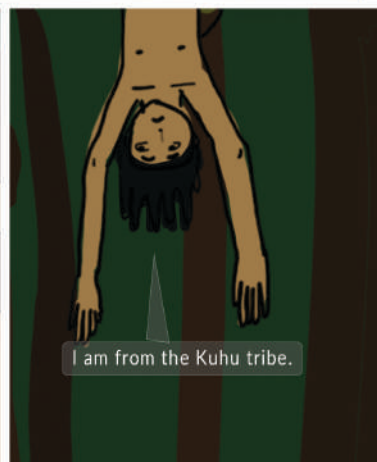
I think he is coming.

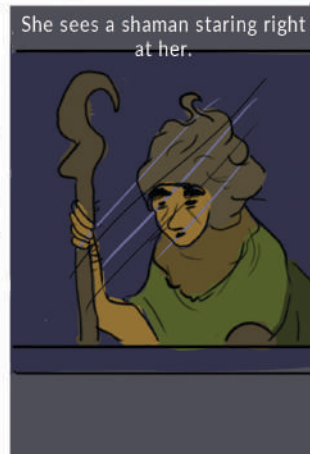
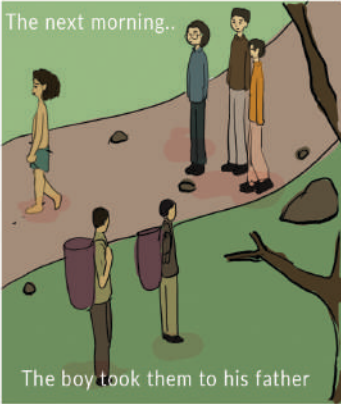


Hello young man! You thought you would get away with our peanut butter, just like that.

Jimmy, he is all yours, my friend.

Why is he crying?





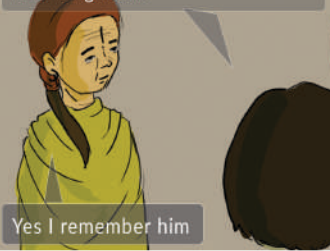
Next morning at the house of the elder..



A young girl has come to meet you

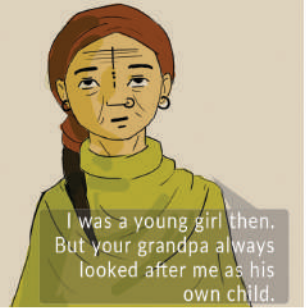


Hi, I am the granddaughter of Shivkumar. My grandfather came here long back.



Yes I remember him

I was a young girl then. But your grandpa always looked after me as his own child.



You have similar eyes!



What brings you here?



I am here to protect Vanya for your community.



Aha I see, To fulfill your grandfather's dream.




I think you might be a bit too late for that.

Come back tomorrow









I am going to take you to one of my favourite places. It has a beautiful wetland surrounded by forest with birds coming year round, trees surrounding the place, and insects buzzing around.

Yes it's like a place you have never seen before. The Cranes visit here every year flying above the cold and harsh Himalayas. The formation of troops in ancient wars was inspired by the flying formation of Cranes. Then, you also have the fiddler crabs who impress females with their claw waving.

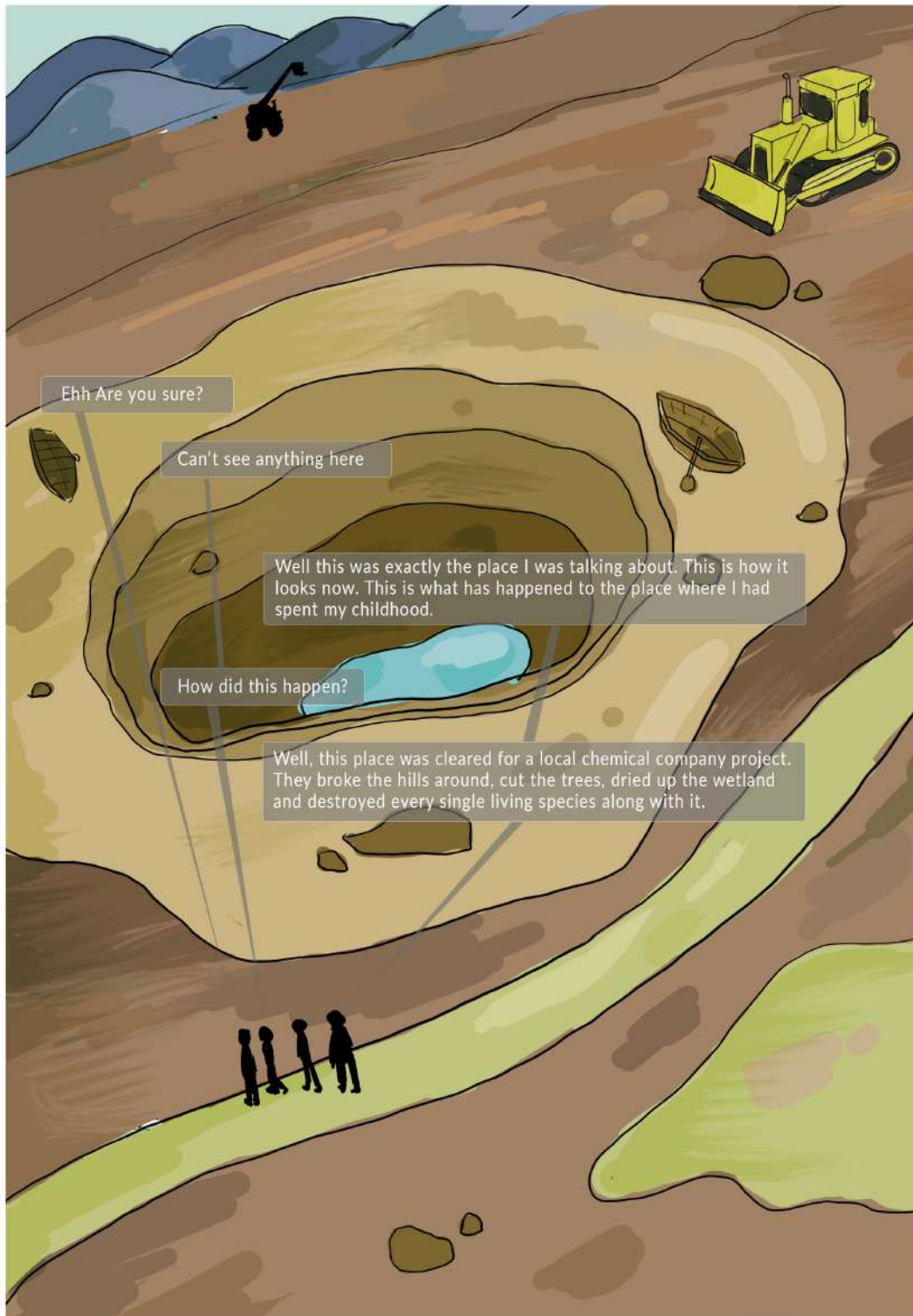
How do you know about this place?

Well I know this place since I was probably your age.

Sounds like a beautiful place

Yes You must see it to believe it.

The place is beyond this hill.



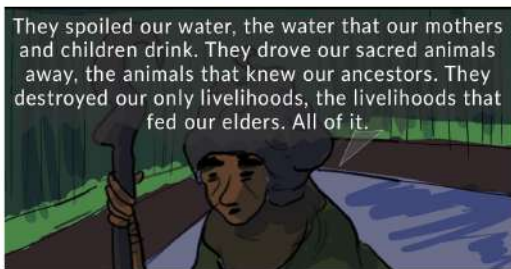
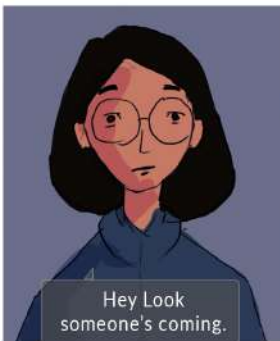
Ehh Are you sure?

Can't see anything here

Well this was exactly the place I was talking about. This is how it looks now. This is what has happened to the place where I had spent my childhood.

How did this happen?

Well, this place was cleared for a local chemical company project. They broke the hills around, cut the trees, dried up the wetland and destroyed every single living species along with it.





Look into the sky,  
oh children. Look into the sky



### **Madame Tahu**

A centenarian who spent her entire life in Vanya. She is the community's knowledge keeper and is keen to ensure that her tribe's cultural heritage thrives. She has living connections to the past and also serves as a healer and counselor. She loves her grandchildren and often play marbles with them.

### **Shaman**

He is a mystic who has access to the other worldly spirits and enters a trance state during rituals. He recognises nature as the essential life giver and sustainer.

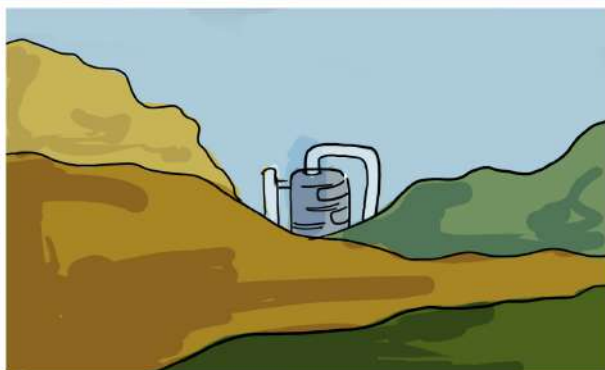
Shaman is also healer.



Next morning, the boys saw a pond and jumped right in..



Hey! look there



Wow, that's huge!



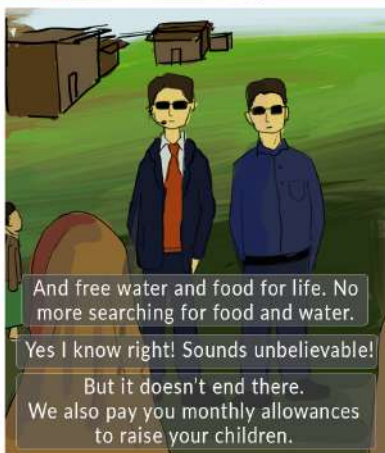
--- Meanwhile in the village

Yes sir! Yes sir! Yesss Sir!

Good morning my fellow tribes. I am here to help you all. That is all we do. Help people.



How would you feel if you had a house of your own. No more worry of storms or floods.



And free water and food for life. No more searching for food and water.

Yes I know right! Sounds unbelievable!

But it doesn't end there. We also pay you monthly allowances to raise your children.



And ofcourse We will make sure nothing happens to your Vanya wetlands.



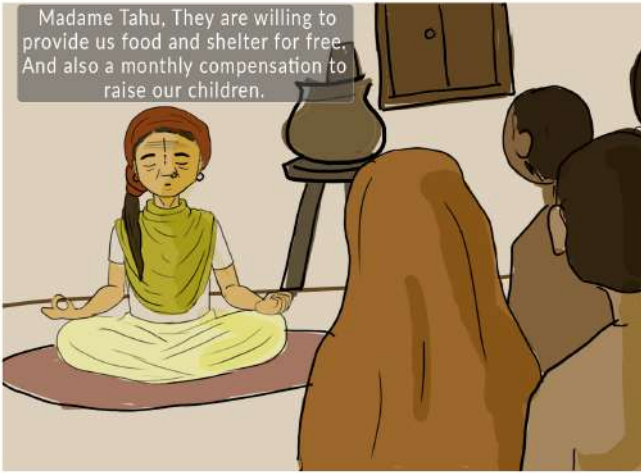
Okay, I am going to leave you now to pack your bags. Goodbye my fellow citizens.



Yes sirr! Yes sirr! Yesss sirrrr!



Madame Tahu. They are willing to provide us food and shelter for free. And also a monthly compensation to raise our children.

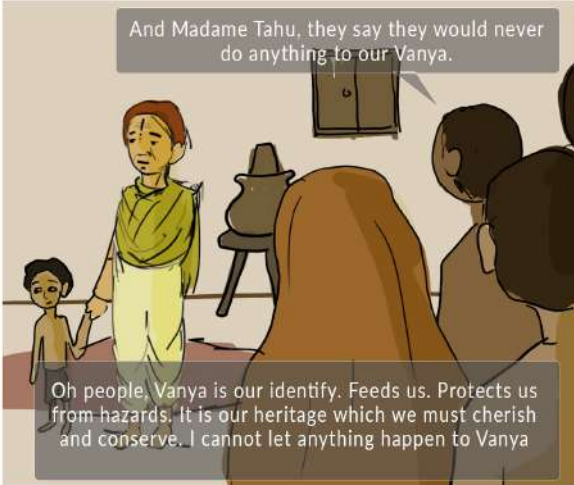


Wasn't Vanya providing you with food and shelter for free?

The Vanya is a part of my soul. I am a part of it. When I see how we have destroyed every other wetland or sacred forest grove we had, I feel devastated. I feel isolated.



And Madame Tahu, they say they would never do anything to our Vanya.



Oh people, Vanya is our identify. Feeds us. Protects us from hazards. It is our heritage which we must cherish and conserve. I cannot let anything happen to Vanya

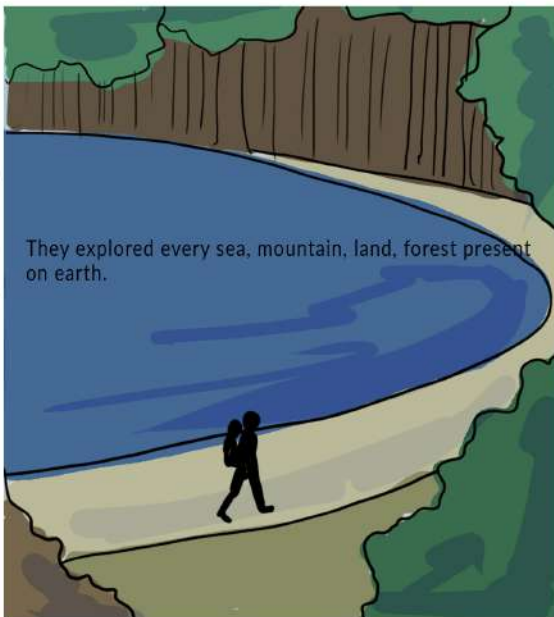


Let us not forget the Tsunami of 88.





Vanya was the daughter of a traveller named Guanghai. She saw the entire world from her father's shoulder.



They explored every sea, mountain, land, forest present on earth.

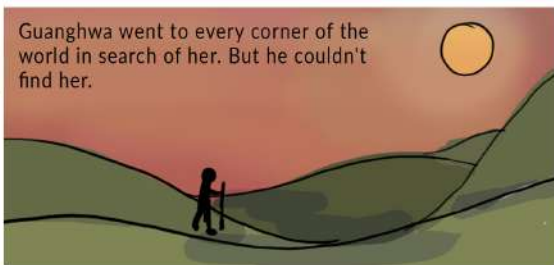
Until one day, she disappeared. Some say she died, some say she is still alive.



They say baby vanya knew the entire earth by heart.



Guanghai went to every corner of the world in search of her. But he couldn't find her.



One day, during his travels, he was so thirsty, he was looking for water to drink.



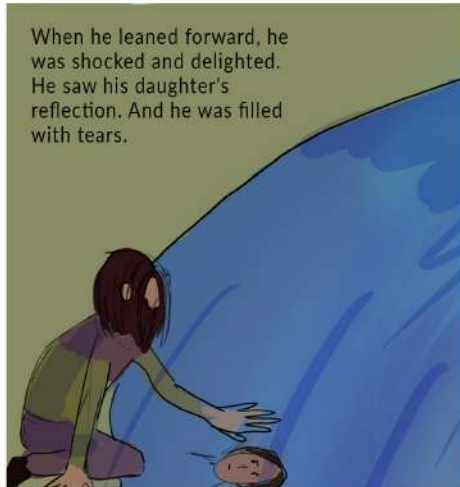
Until he came here.



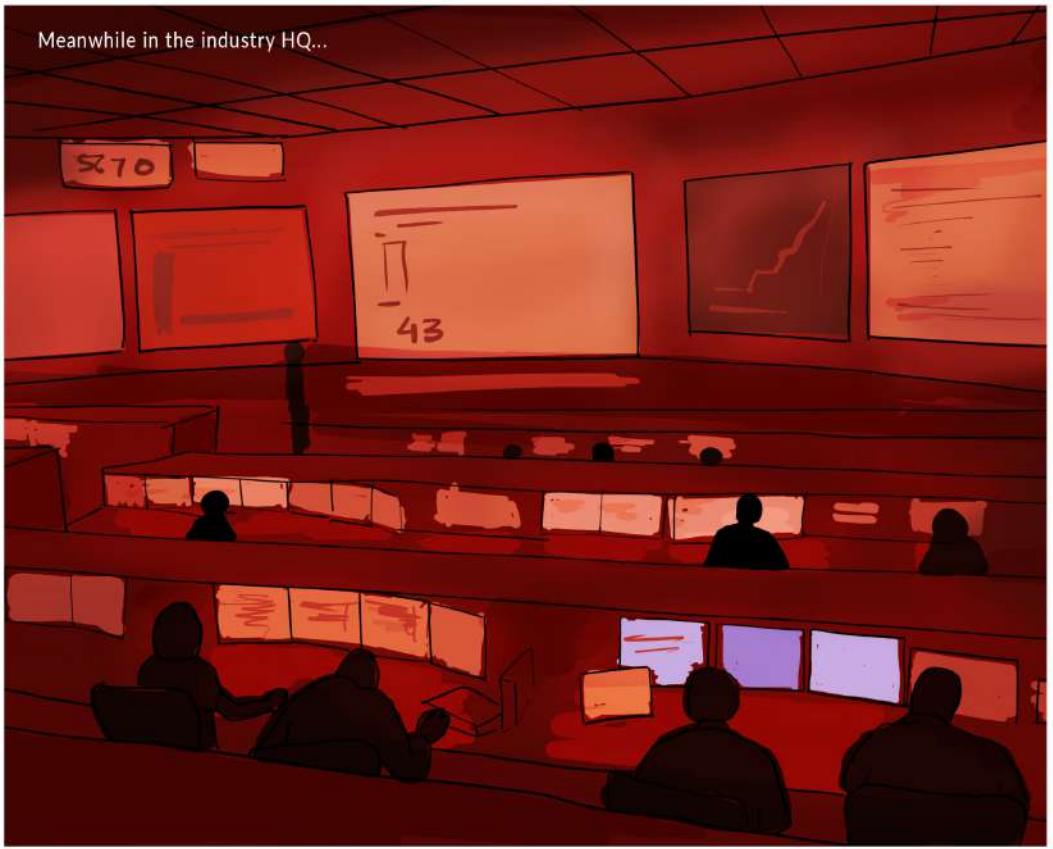
They say when he reached here, a complete wetland formed in front of him.



When he leaned forward, he was shocked and delighted. He saw his daughter's reflection. And he was filled with tears.



Meanwhile in the industry HQ...



What do we do with all this poisonous waste?



We can't possibly throw that in Vanya



Follow the procedure as we usually do with our effluents.

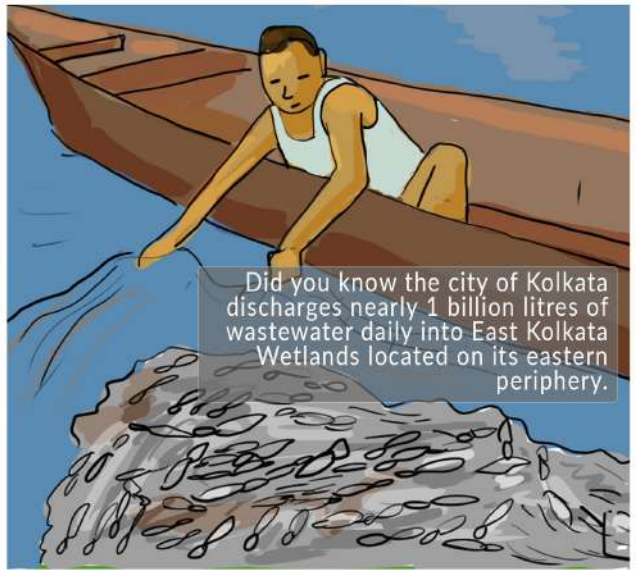
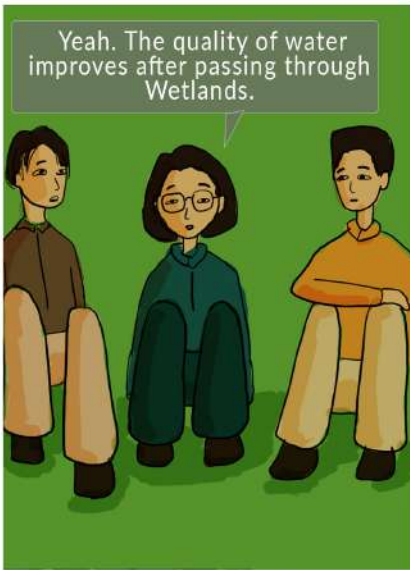


Next morning...

The wetlands look cleaner today



Yeah. The quality of water improves after passing through Wetlands.



Did you know the city of Kolkata discharges nearly 1 billion litres of wastewater daily into East Kolkata Wetlands located on its eastern periphery.

Are you saying, any amount of waste put into a wetland will be absorbed by it?



No. Of course, it would be wrong to consider that wetlands can deal with any type and any quantity of waste.

Well In this entire process, would wetlands prevent release of dangerous Greenhouse Gases from these pollutants into the atmosphere?.



Yeah! it does help in mitigation of climate change. Mangroves are known to store upto 50 times more carbon than the tropical forests.

Did you hear they are going to destroy the Vanya Wetlands? They will be landfilling the entire area for the industrial expansion.






Migratory birds use wetlands as stopover sites for feeding, resting and breeding.

Look Jimmy, Just as a global traveller needs hotels and restaurants to survive long distances, so do the birds use their natural equivalents - wetlands.



Restaurant!! That makes me hungry.

Haha. Let's go and find something to eat



Don't you think we should save Vanya?



Look I understand Wetlands are important. They store carbon for us, feed us and the fellow birds and..



They are also our principal supply of freshwater.



Hmm. But What do we do?



I have a plan

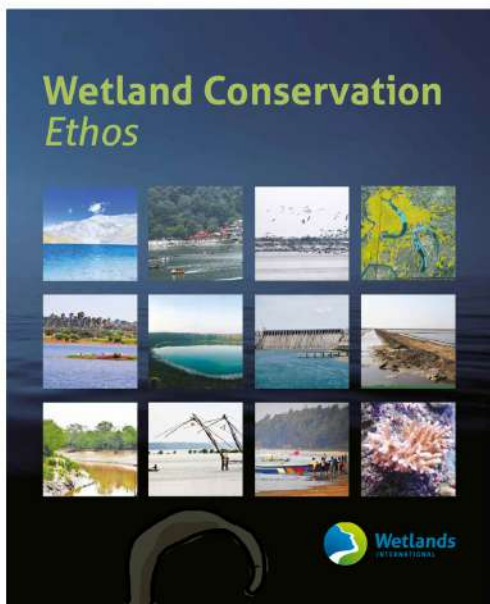
**TO LEARN  
MORE ABOUT**

# WETLANDS



An introductory book on the diversity of Indian wetlands, their ecosystem services and biodiversity values, threats and management needs and ways in which conservation and wise use of these ecosystems can be ensured through stakeholder participation.

**READ NOW**







The same night, they break into the industry premises and stick posters there.



Meanwhile, somewhere in the space...



TRG, you there?



All okay. What's happening?



Yes All okay. I am looking at one of the most beautiful sights of my life. What is happening there?

Somebody broke into a local chemical factory. Last night and stuck posters demanding conservation of the forests and the wetlands out here.



The next morning, all the employees read the posters and felt concerned.





Next morning, a heavy storm passed by the village..



What's happening guys?

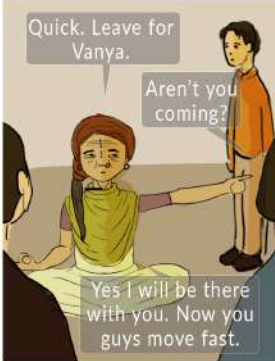
It has been raining all night

It's got quite windy also. Doesn't look good.



A big Storm is coming, friends. Everybody move.

Come, Lets go to the elder. We need to get everyone out.



Quick. Leave for Vanya.

Aren't you coming?

Yes I will be there with you. Now you guys move fast.

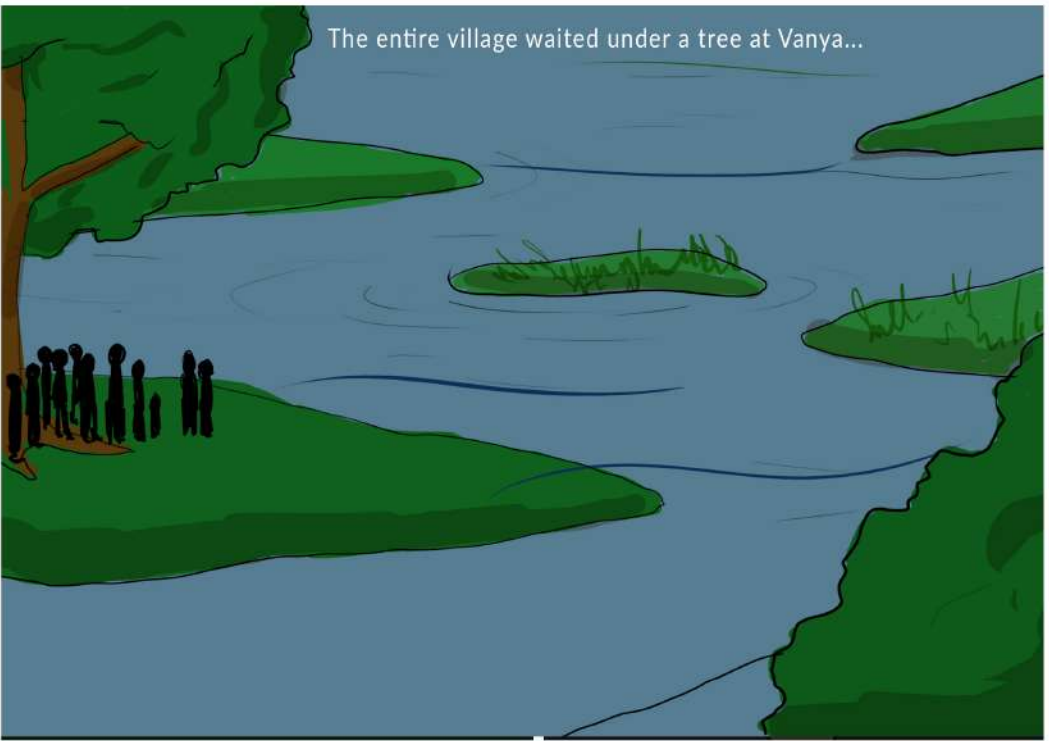


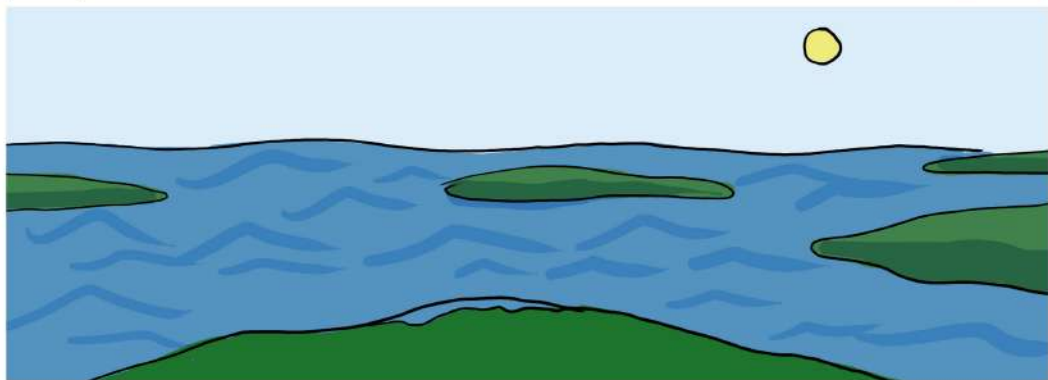
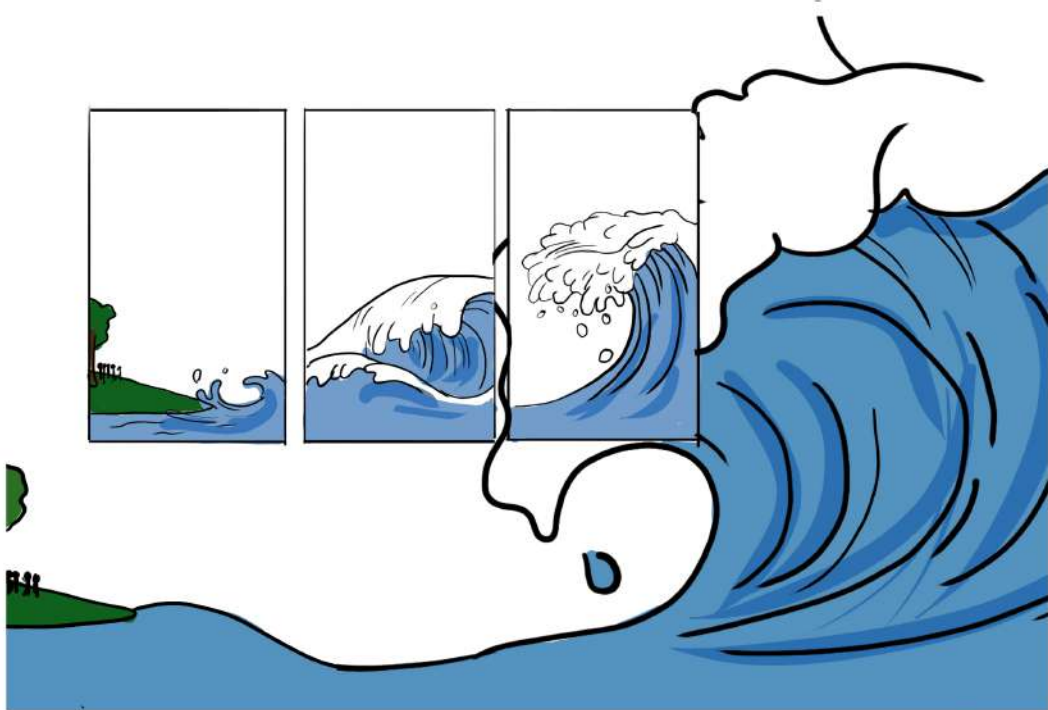
I don't know what to do. All our scientists are in the unit with secret documents and plans.



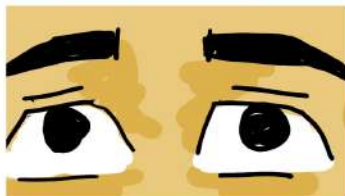
One such refuge is Vanya, which you are going to destroy..

The entire village waited under a tree at Vanya...





Oh God! save us



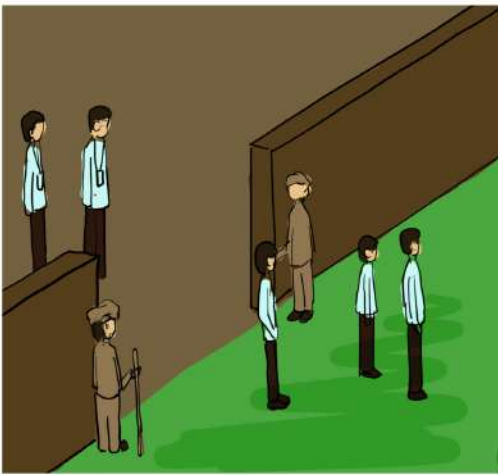
What just happened?

O boy! Are we not dead yet?



It's Vanya.

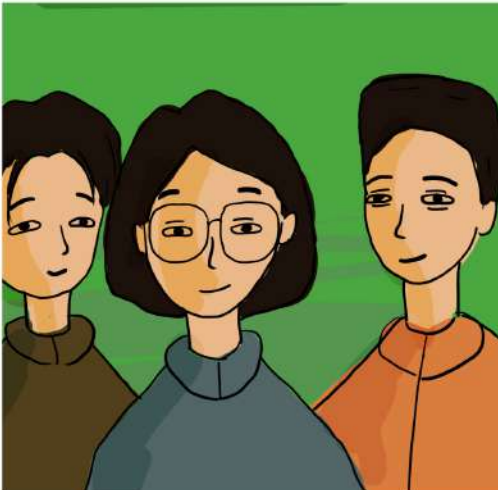
I forgot to tell you. Wetlands act as buffer for storms. It can absorb floods.



It is Vanya who has saved us. We wouldn't be alive without it. I am forever grateful for it. We would have suffered huge losses without it.



There is no way we can do without Vanya. I will immediately tell the authorities to stop the expansion. Thank you madame. Thank you for conserving Vanya.



..and Myna looked into Vanya and saw her grandfather's reflection.

In the evening, the entire village celebrated the victory of Vanya...



Madame, did you call me?



I hear you are leaving tomorrow morning.

Yes Madame. Classes resume this week.

I did not have time to thank you.



Wow this is beautiful.



Thank you for helping me save Vanya. You have made your grandfather proud today.



You guys better keep your wallets safe. And see you soon.

Until next time!



Yes, until next time.



..And Myna went home and dozed off.



The dream reappears for the last time..



And Myna realizes..



The child was none other than..



..Madame Tahu.

..and this adventure was her calling.



# Learn more about wetland ecosystems and its ecology



## Home of the Blue Lily

An introductory primer for students to understand various dimensions of wetlands ecosystem and their services, and to inculcate a sense of scientific curiosity and appreciation for wetland ecosystems. It has section-wise activities, exercises & tasks that involve investigation and decision making to encourage inquiry based learning

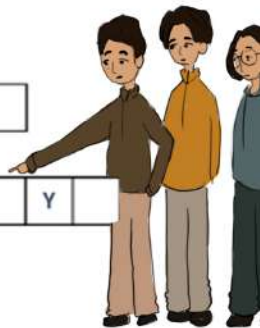


**READ NOW**





# Crossword Puzzle



## ACROSS

- 2 What does wetland store?
- 7 Which animal attract opposite sex by raising hands?
- 8 The safe refuge from storm is
- 9 Wetland buffers \_\_\_\_
- 10 The boy belonged to \_\_\_\_ tribe?
- 11 \_\_\_\_ is a type of wetland

## DOWN

- 1 \_\_\_\_ is a coastal wetland type
- 3 Who was the sole survivor of Tsunami of 88
- 4 Wetlands can absorb
- 5 Which bird has battle flight formation?
- 6 Which tree did the child climb upon?

## Get to know the artist

### Swikriti Soni



I am a tireless diligent communication designer who loves illustration, animation and filmmaking and music.  
Find me on instagram @wokekriti.

I am a new media content creator who creates content via comics, animations, games, podcasts and films. Loves to sleep when nobody is watching. Find me on instagram @yvek.s



Vivek Shankar


- Crossword answers
1. Mangrove
  2. Carbon
  3. Madame Tahu
  4. Pollutants
  5. Crane
  6. Hollong
  7. Fiddler crab
  8. Vanya
  9. Drought
  10. Kuhu
  11. Swamp







## STAY IN TOUCH

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