

Published: October 7, 2014 18:43 IST | Updated: October 7, 2014 18:43 IST

Stories for all

SRAVASTI DATTA



At a session of Cutting Tea Tales

Special arrangement

Cutting Tea Tales is an initiative to give lesser privileged children access to storybooks in different languages

They rolled out a mat and sat huddled together to hear stories in English, Tamil, Urdu and Kannada. This wasn't a storytelling session conducted in a posh space.

It was held in a little tea and provision store in Satyam Nagar in Byapanhalli. Such sessions are conducted every Sunday morning, for an hour or so, for lesser privileged children, by Akshara Foundation. Titled *Cutting Tea Tales*, the initiative, launched on September 8, International Literacy Day, is an attempt to give access to storybooks to every child.

The members from Akshara Foundation narrated stories in different languages. The children read the books, grasped the essence of the story, and relayed the stories. The best part was how fluently the children read the books in languages from Kannada and Tamil to Hindi and English. The atmosphere was charged with fun, imagination and learning. There were bags with pouches filled with books, arranged in the Growby method, in which the books with the green stickers were for entry level reading and books with yellow stickers were for older readers and are more text heavy.

The books included stories such as *Kaka and Munki* in Kannada, *Tsomo and the Momo* in Tamil, *Where did it go* in Tamil, *Red Umbrella* in Telugu, *Bubbles is Honest* in English, among others. After the session, the books are left in the provision stores, so that children can read them any time.

The kids were especially attracted to books with big, beautiful illustrations. Colourful chart papers pasted to the shop walls added to the joie-de-vivre of the session.

Chai (tea) stalls and provision stores in localities serve as spaces to conduct storytelling sessions. Ashok Kamath, chairman of Akshara Foundation, says:

"This is a way to bring the community together. It is around tea stalls that people gather. So we chose to engage with these spaces. We want these children to have access to storybooks. They may not necessarily have opportunities to read at home."

Akshara plans to take *Cutting Tea Tales* to other parts of the city, with a view to engage both children and adults.

Keywords: [Story telling](#), [English](#), [Tamil](#), [Urdu](#), [Kannada](#)

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