The Library Program
Akshara Foundation's Learnings

www.akshara.org.in
The Library Program
Akshara Foundation's Learnings

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Akshara Foundation
EVERY CHILD IN SCHOOL AND LEARNING WELL
Preface

Studies on literacy confirm that when children have more contact with books, the better readers become better. The NCF 2005 mandates libraries in schools and RTE recognizes the need for a Library in every school. The learning crisis in primary education and indeed in middle and higher education is a worrying fact that is well documented now. Among the many factors that come into play in children's inability to read at grade level expectation is the lack of access to rich and profuse reading material in their own mother tongue. Against this context Akshara Foundation designed, the School Library program and later the Classroom Library program for government schools of Karnataka. This report narrates our journey so far and our understanding and learnings from the program. The report expects to throw light on the key ingredients for the program and some learnings for like-minded organisations working with libraries for children. The report covers the program design, outcomes of reading ability assessments, show cases some case studies and teacher feedbacks as well as recommendations for policy makers and program implementers.

The report concludes that access to books in the classroom has positive impact on the reading habits of the primary school children. This is particularly true of communities and homes that do not have access to books or exposure to reading practices. In such situations, as otherwise too, the class-room library is a learning corner in the classroom and provides easy and equitable access to books for children. Irrespective of the direct linkages with learning outcomes, the school/classroom library should be conceptualised as a space where children can expect to find the means to deepen their knowledge, satisfy their curiosity and imagination, and build their reading skills.
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Section 1

Akshara Foundation's Library Programme

“Even the most misfitting child who’s chanced upon the library's worth, sits with the genius of the Earth and turns the key to the whole world.” Hughes, T. (1997), Hear it again

Context

In the early years, a child learns to read. At that point, books play a large role in providing access to a variety of print, giving the child confidence to read, encouraging openness to new ideas, thoughts and worlds. A child learns to read by instruction, direct or indirect. Her learning levels are however dependent upon the efficiency and amount of reading that she does. Soon, though, the child graduates from learning to read towards reading to learn. Almost all information becomes text based, scholastically as well as otherwise. Children need reading skills to gain knowledge, to understand the world around them, and to express and understand abstract thoughts and ideas.

Most research studies have shown that children who have access to books in their day-to-day life are more successful in their academic performance and have better vocabulary. The habit of reading in children and adults can lead to a better knowledge base, more expressive writing skills, stronger analytical reasoning and intellectual stimulation, better understanding of the world around them, and better focus and concentration. (Neuman, 2012; Fountas and Pinell, 2013; Baker and Wright, 2016)

Access to books is, of course, linked to voluntary reading activity and the habit of reading for pleasure. But when you live in a “book desert,” as do too many children from low-income families, one should not
expect that these children will engage in much voluntary reading. Increasing children’s access to books has been shown to have dramatically positive effects on reading growth and achievement. (Lindsay, 2013, Neuman, 2012)

Yet, even with this body of research establishing that children from low socio-economic status families have restricted or almost nil access to books and that altering the situation so that ease of access to books is improved, we largely ignore the data and attribute the limited proficiencies in reading among these children to other factors and then focus on those other factors when designing our programmes.

At the policy level also, successively, government policies have recognized the importance of school libraries and their role in classroom teaching-learning interactions.

Unfortunately, not all children have access to reading materials at home. Thus, a good library at school can provide the missing link for children. A large number of books across all genres and age-appropriate reading materials can be an accessible and equitable resource for teachers as well as children. While a school library serves as basic infrastructure in the school a better option that can be recommended is the presence of a good quality classroom library that allows teachers and children to access supplementary resources in the classroom for meaningful classroom processes.

**National Curriculum Framework 2005**

*The school library should be embedded in the school at all levels that acts as an intellectual space where teachers, children and members of the community find the means to deepen their knowledge and imagination.” National Curriculum Framework (NCF) 2005.*

Extract from the National Curriculum Framework 2005

- It is important that future planning treats the library as an essential component of a school at all levels.
- India must move towards equipping every school, irrespective of its level, with a library.
- Facilities are to be provided to allow children to borrow books.
- Training of teachers in library management and use is required to meet the demands of this situation.
- One period a week to be devoted to library reading.
• It is important to let the child choose rather than having the teacher distribute the books.
• Library books can be brought into the language class. For class projects, children can be asked to look up a reference in the library.
• Children can be asked to share a story they have read with other children in class.
• The school library should be kept open during vacations.

The Classroom Library

For children, classroom libraries can mean access to information at the level that they are comfortable reading and absorbing it, not mediated by the assumptions and inferences of the adults in the environment. For teachers, a classroom library can be a valuable teaching aid as well as a tool for classroom management. Thus, a classroom library becomes a win-win situation for both students and teachers.

However, one library does not take the place of the other, nor are they independent of each other; they complement each other when the school librarian helps to build a positive pathway between the school library and the classroom library. Research shows that schools that achieve more have more books in classroom library collections; students read more frequently in classrooms with a larger collection of books; and classrooms with a larger collection of books usually have students reading books they can read successfully. Classroom libraries provide teachers with an opportunity for extending learning opportunities for all students, even those students who may be struggling or unmotivated.

A good classroom library has certain parameters around which it should be planned. The inclusion of all genres of books is one very important feature. A classroom library should include a significant non-fiction collection that encourages the reader to gather knowledge and perceive the world through it. Inclusion of all levels of reading in the library is a great way to encourage individual as well as collective reading of books. An adequate number of books will ensure circulation and equitable distribution to the entire class. The books should be definitely age-appropriate, but a small percentage of books that challenge the reader are also very necessary. The books and the setting in which they are placed should be accessible and attractive to children. Last, but not the least, children should be given enough time and leisure to engage with books, if they are to gain maximum benefit from them.
**Akshara Foundation's Perspective on Libraries**

Akshara's **School Library Programme** was initiated in April 2007 with a belief that books and reading will help government school children gain access to a range of print material and help them become better readers. The programme was implemented by instituting physical libraries in a hub-and-spoke model to provide library services to government schools in Bangalore Urban District. A library period was worked into the timetable as a once-a-week session for all children in schools. Books in six languages, Kannada, Urdu, English, Tamil, Telugu and Hindi, were circulated in Akshara's libraries. There were also a good number of bilingual books, mainly in English and Kannada. They were graded according to a heuristic method into six reading levels, based on the amount of text and pictures per page. The objective of the programme was to ensure that every child in every government primary school in Bangalore has access to library facilities.

The School Library Programme was conceived as an augmentation of the reading programme that Akshara implemented a few years earlier. A tie-up with Hippocampus Reading Foundation and their GROWBY system of levelling books provided the technical support for the programme in the initial stages. The libraries in the schools were designed to firm a foundation in reading already laid and steer new areas of development for children. The programme grew and aggregated. At its zenith, it covered all 1420 government primary schools in Bangalore, had 1,50,000 children as members and 4.25 lakh books in the system.

The library functioned out of a dedicated room in school. There were 450 such hub libraries or hub schools, as they were called, each serving a cluster of spoke schools. An Akshara-appointed librarian facilitated the process of children borrowing books.
**Framework of the Programme**

Putting together the evidence that has been highlighted by research worldwide and our understanding of how children learn and develop, it is clear that libraries, and classroom libraries in particular, are a great asset for teachers as well as children. They function in a simple, forthright model of direct benefit.
Akshara's Library Programme – The Journey

Learnings from the School Library Programme

Akshara ran the programme for three years and handed it over to the schools. But an ownership dilemma hung over the libraries. Realising the unsustainability of the project, Akshara decided to provide direct access for children to a library with good, grade-appropriate content within the classroom, giving children the autonomy to choose their books and read at a time of their convenience. But in a language skills test administered in 2013, 16 months into the programme, a third-party evaluation found no impact on student scores.
Emergence of The Classroom Library

In 2014, Akshara replaced its hub-and-spoke model with classroom libraries. It has since established such libraries in 2669 classrooms in 661 schools in three geographies in Karnataka.

The Classroom Libraries, or TCLs, when compared with the school library, are an Akshara Foundation innovation which aims to provide children with a library in their own classroom. It is our belief that easy access to good content can help children and bring the joy of reading to them.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Geography</th>
<th>Year of initiation</th>
<th>No. of schools</th>
<th>No. of libraries</th>
<th>No. of children</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bangalore Urban District</td>
<td>2013</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>500 TCLs</td>
<td>11768</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mundargi Block, Gadag District</td>
<td>2014</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>500 TCLs</td>
<td>11455</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hoskote Block, Bangalore Rural Dist.</td>
<td>2014</td>
<td>257</td>
<td>820 TCLs</td>
<td>12990</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kustagi Block, Koppal District</td>
<td>2015</td>
<td>220</td>
<td>1100 TCLs</td>
<td>30425</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Students consider the library to be a resource centre and become habituated to reading for enjoyment and reference. Teachers integrate the library with daily classroom teaching. Over a period of time TCLs went on to incorporate a wide variety of functions such as access to age-appropriate books; levelling of books; increased access to higher grades of reading; setting up a simple infrastructure with a cloth rack and a Reading Histogram; mapping the books to the science and Environmental Science curriculums of grades 4-7; book based activities for children; resource books for science teachers; and capacity building of teachers in the use of the books as teaching aids.

In the last three years, Akshara's TCLs have reached out to primary school children studying in government schools in urban as well as rural Karnataka.
Programme Components

The core components of The Classroom Library programme include:

(a) **Providing books** directly to children in an accessible manner. Selecting appropriate story books and resource materials in multiple Indian languages and English;

(b) **Setting up libraries** inside classrooms in government schools;

(c) **Training** teachers in the use and management of the libraries;

(d) **Evaluation** of the reading habits and outcomes of children using biannual assessments and Reading Histograms; and

(e) **Collaborating** with government to work on change from within the system.

The Innovation Package

The library in class is a compact cloth rack pegged to the wall, its pockets holding close to 50 books in Kannada and Urdu, mainly, depending on the school's demographic composition, and some in English. The library display is a part of the learning motif in many classrooms, unmissable, just as one enters. The dictum is that the racks be positioned at a height accessible to all children. The books in the net-fronted sheaths are sourced from reputed publishers of children's literature. Production values are excellent, the fonts large, and the pictures a treat, an art form in themselves.

The content is graded such that children find their own levels and proceed from simple to more complex reading appropriate to their interest and competency. The libraries have content that is compatible with the classes they support. The genres and diversity are it's remarkable features. Any theme that can propel children towards books finds a spot in the racks. Anything can be a storyline or subject as long as it is material fit for children and accomplishes a broad resonance with the curriculum.

The libraries in grades 4, 5, 6 and 7 have books that, in storytelling fashion, interpret for children the concepts in their science curriculum. If teachers achieve a pragmatic merging of textbook and library, it has the potential to develop a relationship with science
for children. Glossy charts that Akshara has designed depict the syllabus concepts of a particular class on one side and the books that can explain them on the other. If pursued with a reasonable measure of dedication, it can increase the scope of children's scientific understanding.

It goes without saying, though, that story books, plentiful in number, are the most popular reading material among children of all classes and that the science offerings, however engaging the rendering, may perhaps not exert the same irresistibility.

**Akshara's Criteria for Book Selection**

- **Books must present text in larger fonts for easy reading, especially for children who have newly learnt the decoding of words.**
- **Books containing humour that children can understand and appreciate are a preference.**
- **Bilingual books are a good choice as they help children learn another language as well.**
- **Books must be those that relate to children.**
- **Books that cover a range of subjects and themes are chosen – fiction, environment, nature, fun and enjoyment, simple Mathematics, geography, science, biographies and autobiographies.**
- **Books must not contain depictions, in text, pictures, or allusion, that encourage biases in terms of religion, gender, race, caste, colour or language.**
The Book-Coding Spectrum

The programme undertakes the levelling or grading of books according to reading capability and class-specific relevance. There are many book levelling systems prevalent internationally. Akshara has organically evolved a coding spectrum over time from field experiences and empirical evidences, besides which it has borrowed from other established systems as well.

Since the programme had adopted the technical know-how of Hippocampus's GROWBY method of marking the reading hierarchy, its colour-coding format was also retained.

The books are arranged in a simple Level I - VI reading scale, a grading scheme whose colours, green, red, orange, white, blue and yellow, mark the gradations. Their first letters make up the GROWBY acronym.

Level I has books with more illustrations and less of text. This is a baseline category that does not overwhelm the reader. It is all-inclusive, in the sense that class 5 readers are repeat readers of the books, unable to resist the gravitational pull. With each level, the number of words increases and the pictures decrease. Books are assigned one of the six levels based on the text on each page and colour-coded with a corresponding sticker on the spine or cover. The books are stacked in different sections of the cloth rack to conform with their levels.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Label or Colour Code</th>
<th>Sentences per page</th>
<th>Illustrations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>Green</td>
<td>0-2</td>
<td>70-100% of the page</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II</td>
<td>Red</td>
<td>3-5</td>
<td>70-100% of the page</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III</td>
<td>Orange</td>
<td>6-10</td>
<td>70-100% of the page</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>11-20</td>
<td>50-70% of the page</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V</td>
<td>Blue</td>
<td>&gt;20</td>
<td>30-50% of the page</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VI</td>
<td>Yellow</td>
<td>&gt;20</td>
<td>0-20% of the page</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Library Operations**

Almost every school in the programme mandates a library period once a week for all primary classes. The class teacher is also the class librarian, entrusted with the TCL.

- Akshara recommends the following guidelines for teachers.

**Library Period**

- Children should be allowed to choose books on a rotational basis. They must be grouped according to reading levels. Give children the freedom to choose the books they wish to read.

**Book Lending**

- Cultivate the reading habit by encouraging children to read beyond school hours, whenever possible. Maintain a register where book borrowing details are entered every week.

**Supporting the Curriculum**

The tranche of science-related books Akshara supplied to libraries in classes 4, 5, 6 and 7 in 2016-17 has an underlying stimulation. Mapped as they are to concepts in the science syllabi, they are supplements to classroom teaching and learning. Children can rely on them for greater clarity on their science lessons and for reference and project work.

Akshara encourages teachers to:

- Use the books interactively.
- Show children the books, flip the pages and ask them what they see.
- Read aloud and check with the children what they have understood.
- Summarise the science-embedded story with insights on the textbook lesson.

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5. More details of the programme are available in the Programme Manual 2017, www.akshara.org.in
Section 2

**Measuring the Impact - Strategy, Process and Results**

**Introduction**

The Classroom Library programme has a component wherein it measures the reading abilities of the children who have access to it. The programme provided inputs in terms of: a set of graded, attractive books spanning multiple languages for grades 3-7; a Teacher's Manual for conducting activities around the books provided; and orientation at the school level on the usage of books in the classroom libraries.

As outcome measurement, the programme was designed to capture the accessibility of library books through Reading Histograms, and a proxy reading assessment measured the reading skills of the students. The reading ability measurement indicators included reading an extract of a story from the books provided, questions to test comprehension, followed by paragraph reading, reading of words and recognition of letters. The objective was to understand the reading levels of the students. The target group for the assessment was the children studying in grades 4 and 5.

The reading ability test in Kushtagi block followed one metric, which was an oral test in January 2017 for the children of grades 4 and 5. The test was designed to aid a comparison with ASER 2016. ASER is the Annual Status of Education Report.

The tests in Mundargi block and Bangalore, however, followed two measurements in a year to assess impact, one at the beginning of the academic year in June-July 2016 and the other at the end of it in February 2017.

This section unfolds the details of the test objective, the sample test tools, the blueprint of the tests, methodology of administering them, and the results generated from the survey.
Objective of the Test

Since Akshara's Classroom Library Programme focused on access to books and activities around them with the end objective of a print-dominated medium inculcating a reading culture, it became essential to test children's skills as it exits. Assuming that children benefitted from ease of access, the proxy reading ability measure, based on library content and ASER's reading tool, assessed that inference. The use of the ASER tool facilitated a comparison with reading outcomes across rural India and Karnataka. To sum up, therefore, the overall objective of the assessment was to assess the reading skills of the children in grades 4 and 5 to identify the effect of the programme on the goals it aimed to achieve. The evidences from this data can be thought of as representative.

Methodology of the Reading Ability Test in the First Language

- **STORY - 3**
  - Simple, library-linked story extract
  - If child reads, label child as “can read Level IV story book”

- **STORY - 2**
  - Simple, linked story extract from Level 4 Book.
  - If child reads, label child as “can read Level III story book”

- **STORY - 1**
  - Extract from ‘ASER’ Tool.
  - If child reads, label child as “can read Grade II text”

- **Word**
  - If the child can't read then move to

- **Sentence**
  - If the child can't read then move to

- **Paragraph**
  - If the child can't read then move to

- **Letter**
  - If the child can't read then move to

  BEGINNER
Methodology of the Reading Ability Test in the Second Language

**STORY**
Extract from level II story book
If child reads, label child as
“can read Level II story book”

**Words**
Common, familiar 3 letter words. After reading, the child is asked for the meaning of the words in her local language

**Words**
Common, familiar 3 letter words. After reading, the child is asked for the meaning of the words in her local language

**Capital letters**
Set of commonly used capital letters

**Small letters**
Set of commonly used small letters

BEGINNER
The Classroom Library Assessment, Kushtagi, 2016-17 (Kannada)

শ್ರೆಂಜಿ ಕುಸತಗಿ ಎಂದು ಮಾತ್ರ 2016-17 ವರ್ಷದ ಸಕ್ಕರದ ಪ್ರಕಟಣೆ

### ಶ್ರೆಂಜಿ 1: ಡಾಹ್ಯು

- ಅವರು ಗಿರುವ ವಾತಾವರಣದಲ್ಲೇ ಹಿಂದುಕೆ ಹಾಗೂ ಹೃದಯ ತುಲ್ಯ
- ಶ್ರೆಂಜಿಗೆ ಒಂದು ಸುಮಾರು ಭಂಡಾರವಾದ ಮತ್ತು ಹೃದಯದ ಮೇಲೆಯುದಾವಣೆಯರು ಕೂಡಾಗಿ
- ಅವರು ಹೃದಯದ ಮೇಲೆಯುದಾವಣೆಯರು ಒಂದು ಸುಮಾರು ಭಂಡಾರ
- ಶ್ರೆಂಜಿಗೆ ಒಂದು ಸುಮಾರು ಭಂಡಾರವಾದ ಮತ್ತು ಹೃದಯದ ಮೇಲೆಯುದಾವಣೆ ವಿಜ್ಞಪ್ಪುಗಳು

### ಶ್ರೆಂಜಿ 2: ಲುಂಬು

- ಅವರು ಕೇವಲ ಒಂದು ವಾತಾವರಣದಲ್ಲೇ ಹಿಂದುಕೆ ಹಾಗೂ ಹೃದಯ ತುಲ್ಯ
- ಶ್ರೆಂಜಿಗೆ ಒಂದು ಸುಮಾರು ಭಂಡಾರವಾದ ಮತ್ತು ಹೃದಯದ ಮೇಲೆಯುದಾವಣೆಯರು ಕೂಡಾಗಿ
- ಅವರು ಹೃದಯದ ಮೇಲೆಯುದಾವಣೆಯರು ಒಂದು ಸುಮಾರು ಭಂಡಾರ
- ಶ್ರೆಂಜಿಗೆ ಒಂದು ಸುಮಾರು ಭಂಡಾರವಾದ ಮತ್ತು ಹೃದಯದ ಮೇಲೆಯುದಾವಣೆ ವಿಜ್ಞಪ್ಪುಗಳು

### ಶ್ರೆಂಜಿ 3: ಸ್ವಾಭಾವಿ

- ಅವರು ಕೇವಲ ಒಂದು ವಾತಾವರಣದಲ್ಲೇ ಹಿಂದುಕೆ ಹಾಗೂ ಹೃದಯ ತುಲ್ಯ
- ಶ್ರೆಂಜಿಗೆ ಒಂದು ಸುಮಾರು ಭಂಡಾರವಾದ ಮತ್ತು ಹೃದಯದ ಮೇಲೆಯುದಾವಣೆಯರು ಕೂಡಾಗಿ
- ಅವರು ಹೃದಯದ ಮೇಲೆಯುದಾವಣೆಯರು ಒಂದು ಸುಮಾರು ಭಂಡಾರ
- ಶ್ರೆಂಜಿಗೆ ಒಂದು ಸುಮಾರು ಭಂಡಾರವಾದ ಮತ್ತು ಹೃದಯದ ಮೇಲೆಯುದಾವಣೆ ವಿಜ್ಞಪ್ಪುಗಳು
The Classroom Library Assessment, Kushtagi, 2016-17 (Urdu)

Story - 1

امیک خانے سے مرتدار ہو کر ڈاکیاں چھپیں کی ہم ۔

Story - 2

بیلے پھیلا ہو ہے کہ ہم ڈاکیاں جنا آئیں ۔

Story - 3

بیلے پھیلا ہو ہے کہ ہم ڈاکیاں جنا آئیں ۔

Section 1 Language Urdu

meri aayi neeche baazar le ganein..i am aik

meri aayi neeche baazar le ganein..i am aik

meri aayi neeche baazar le ganein..i am aik
There was an old man named Soma. He used to eat fruits from the trees in the forest. One day while he was wandering about, he came to a stream. Old man Soma cleared some trees on both sides of the stream. He tilled the land and sowed some paddy. When the paddy were ripe, a squirrel came along to eat them.

What is the time?
This is a large house.
I like to read.
She has many books.
The Classroom Library Assessment, Mundargi & Bangalore, IV & V Grade, 2016-17 (Kannada)

विद्यार्थीकर्त्वेचिन्तन

रण 1: नवीन

रण 2: संगणक

रण 3: नवीन

रण 4: संगणक

रण 5: नवीन

रण 6: संगणक

रण 7: नवीन

रण 8: संगणक

रण 9: नवीन

रण 10: संगणक

रण 11: नवीन

रण 12: संगणक

रण 13: नवीन

रण 14: संगणक

रण 15: नवीन

रण 16: संगणक

रण 17: नवीन

रण 18: संगणक

रण 19: नवीन

रण 20: संगणक

रण 21: नवीन

रण 22: संगणक

रण 23: नवीन

रण 24: संगणक

रण 25: नवीन

रण 26: संगणक

रण 27: नवीन

रण 28: संगणक

रण 29: नवीन

रण 30: संगणक

रण 31: नवीन

रण 32: संगणक

रण 33: नवीन

रण 34: संगणक

रण 35: नवीन

रण 36: संगणक

रण 37: नवीन

रण 38: संगणक

रण 39: नवीन

रण 40: संगणक

रण 41: नवीन

रण 42: संगणक

रण 43: नवीन

रण 44: संगणक

रण 45: नवीन

रण 46: संगणक

रण 47: नवीन

रण 48: संगणक

रण 49: नवीन

रण 50: संगणक

रण 51: नवीन

रण 52: संगणक

रण 53: नवीन

रण 54: संगणक

रण 55: नवीन

रण 56: संगणक

रण 57: नवीन

रण 58: संगणक

रण 59: नवीन

रण 60: संगणक

रण 61: नवीन

रण 62: संगणक

रण 63: नवीन

रण 64: संगणक

रण 65: नवीन

रण 66: संगणक

रण 67: नवीन

रण 68: संगणक

रण 69: नवीन

रण 70: संगणक

रण 71: नवीन

रण 72: संगणक

रण 73: नवीन

रण 74: संगणक

रण 75: नवीन

रण 76: संगणक

रण 77: नवीन

रण 78: संगणक

रण 79: नवीन

रण 80: संगणक

रण 81: नवीन

रण 82: संगणक

रण 83: नवीन

रण 84: संगणक

रण 85: नवीन

रण 86: संगणक

रण 87: नवीन

रण 88: संगणक

रण 89: नवीन

रण 90: संगणक

रण 91: नवीन

रण 92: संगणक

रण 93: नवीन

रण 94: संगणक

रण 95: नवीन

रण 96: संगणक

रण 97: नवीन

रण 98: संगणक

रण 99: नवीन

रण 100: संगणक
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assessment Tools</th>
<th>Story</th>
<th>Simple Words</th>
<th>Section 1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>ائف دنم یون پناب ایف</td>
<td>Language Urdu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>ائف دنم یون پناب ایف</td>
<td>Compound characters with same alphabets</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>بینسلل سولو سینا نيا دا کسما کام کنو، یا کنوا کام کنو، پر بد</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>بینسلل سولو سینا نيا دا کسما کام کنو، یا کنوا کام کنو، پر بد</td>
<td>Compound characters with different alphabets</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>کلا ائف، ائف کسما، ائف کام کنو، پر بد</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>بیشما کام مان اتنا لون</td>
<td>Compound characters with same alphabets</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>مبتد کرکد، پر پرور، چھلا نششل</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>شبر اتر بس، تو خریبے سے دیکھی کہ کام کنو پر بد</td>
<td>Compound characters with different alphabets</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Sonu wore a blue shirt after his bath. Monu and Rina wore blue socks. Oh, we are all dressed in the same colour today! Come let us see some other colours. Here are Dadi's red chillies. Don't touch them.

Maya has a very beautiful house. The walls of the house are coloured yellow, because yellow is Maya's favourite colour. The house has a red roof and the windows are blue. There is a mango tree outside the house. Maya has a dog and his name is Shimba.
The Procedure

The criteria-based tests papers were designed as oral tests and were aligned to the books in the classroom libraries. All the tests were guided by the colour-coded levels of the books in grades 4 and 5 as well as the basic competencies prescribed for testing by ASER 2016.

The tests were administered in a school environment outside the classroom. Testing was carried out by Akshara's field staff in Bangalore and Mundargi. In Kushtagi, test administrators appointed by an outsourced agency administered the test. All test administrators were trained for standardised test administration with synchronised training modules to enable identical procedures to minimise differences in the test scores.

The Results

Kushtagi Block

The Classroom Library project in Kushtagi block began in 2015. Around 1100 classroom libraries were set up in all 220 government primary schools in the block. Over 1230 teachers from Kannada and Urdu medium schools participated in the programme. While over 30,000 children in grades 3-7 benefited from the programme, the assessments were administered to 8,785 children of the 10,676 reportedly enrolled in grades 4 and 5.

![Fig-1](image.png)

Fig 1 shows that 8,785 children participated in the reading ability test. The attrition rate on the day of the test was around 17%. The test was administered to all children present on the day of the visit.
First language reading ability

Akshara's reading survey in the first language, Kannada or Urdu, included two levels of story reading aligned to stories selected from Level III and Level IV story books. This was followed by a test modeled on the lines of ASER 2016, where the tasks comprised reading a paragraph, words, and letters in Kannada or Urdu. The assessment began by measuring story reading skills in descending order. Story 3 – reading and comprehension; Story 2 – reading and comprehension, and downwards, till children who could not read were given paragraphs, words and letters. Those who could read Story 3 were classified as the Highest Level readers.
The Classroom Library programme provided story books that are aligned to different levels. In the context of grades 4 and 5, the books included Levels III, IV and V to cater to children with different reading ability ranges in a single grade. It is clear from the above graph that 8% of children in grade 4 and 5% of grade 5 students acquired reading proficiency at Level III and IV story books provided in the program.

**Comprehension in first language**

The objective of the test was to record the reading ability and comprehension of the story that the child had read. The comprehension questions included why, how, what and where. This measure was also expected to be a proxy measure to understand children’s familiarity with the books provided and the impact of access to non-scholastic print resources on language acquisition. The data shows that only a few children could clear the test of reading and comprehension of a story extract from a book at Level IV, indicating a cause for concern.

**Comparison with ASER 2016**

It is interesting to note that the performance of children as compared to ASER 2016, both at the national and rural Karnataka level, is higher. The performance in reading fluency is close to 10% points in all parameters for both the grades as compared to data reported in ASER 2016 (see Table1).

**Table-1 Reading ability in first language**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Grade 4</th>
<th>Grade 5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Beginner</td>
<td>15.12</td>
<td>8.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Letter</td>
<td>8.31</td>
<td>17.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Words</td>
<td>16.45</td>
<td>17.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Para(Grade1 text)</td>
<td>11.20</td>
<td>19.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Story (Grade 2 text)</td>
<td>48.91</td>
<td>37.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: *ASER results are valid at the divisional level and applicable for children from all types of school managements

**The Akshara Survey’s reading ability testing includes all children who have cleared three levels of story (Story-3, Story-2 and Story-1)**
Reading ability with comprehension in English as a Second language

Kushtagi's classroom libraries have around 10,000 English story books. The tests developed to test children in English included 7 questions. Children were asked to read a story, an extract from a story book which is at Level III, and if they read it fluently they were asked simple questions on the same text to understand their comprehension status. This was followed by a set of 5 simple sentences, each having not more than 4-5 words, followed by identification of a set of commonly used upper and lower case letters.

Fig-4
Reading Ability - Secondary Language
Grade 4(%) N=4462

Fig-5
Reading Ability - Secondary Language
Grade 5(%) N=4323

4% of children from grade 4 and 8% from grade 5 could read a simplified story extract from a Level I and II library book. More than one fourth of the students from both the grades are at word level. As far as comprehension is concerned, only 4 children of grade 4 and 5 of grade 5 could clear the test.
Comparison with ASER 2016

We find from the Akshara Survey that up to 30% of the children are at simple word level. ASER 2016 results show a higher percentage of children at the Easy Sentence level. This could be because the children who participated in ASER were from English medium schools.

*Table-2 Reading ability in Second language*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Grade 4</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>Grade 5</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Beginner/Not even capital letters</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Letter-upper case</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Letter-lower case</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Simple Words</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Easy Sentence</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note:* *ASER results are valid at the divisional level and applicable for children from all types of school managements.

*Children Speak*

The reading ability survey included some questions for children who were administered the test on whether they like to read story books. Do they follow the library management process of logging in and registering transaction information? Do they take books home?

*Fig-6: Children's Engagement with Classroom Library (in %)*

- Having library books in class: 89%
- Like to read story books: 90%
- Book will be registered when borrowed: 63%
- Books are taken home to read: 24%
The above graph shows that 90% of students from both the grades like to read story books, and about the same number of children were found to be aware of the The Classroom Library. 63% of the children responded that they follow the process of entering transaction details and 24% responded that they take books home.

**Findings from Kushtagi block**

- Around 8% of grade 4 and 5% of grade 5 students have acquired reading ability in the Level 1V books in the programme. This number is lower in the case of comprehension.
- Comparing the scores of ASER 2016, around 49% of grade 4 and 55% of grade 5 children have acquired reading ability in the first language of a story from a grade 2 level text. This is far higher than the ASER 2016 findings in the national and rural Karnataka measurements, with the same grade 2 text. It is almost 10% points higher.
- However, when we look at comprehension, only 38% of grade 4 and 47% of grade 5 children have acquired it in I language.
- The English test reveals that only 4% of grade 4 and 8% of grade 5 children could read a story from a Level II library book, indicating that a substantial majority of children are struggling with basic second language proficiency. The data on comprehension of the story was negligible and only 4 of grade 4 and 5 of grade 5 children could attempt to answer the questions.
- It is encouraging to see that 90% of the children like to read story books, that 24% borrow books and take them home and that 63% follow library procedures, making a strong case for a functional library facility in school.

**Bangalore North 2 Block**

The Classroom Library project in North 2 block, Bangalore Urban district, began in 2013 in 87 government schools; however, in 2016 this number came down to 12 schools. This section presents data from the Akshara Survey of grades 4 and 5 children in the 12 schools in Hebbal and Sanjay Nagar clusters. Sixty three teachers from Kannada and Urdu medium schools participated in the programme. While 2030 children in grades 3-7 benefited from the classroom libraries, assessments were administered to 485 of the 583 children enrolled in grades 4 and 5. It indicates an attrition rate of 17%. The reading ability test was organised as a pre-test and a post-test and administered to all children present on the day of the visit.
**First language reading ability**

Akshara's reading survey in the first language, Kannada or Urdu, included two levels of story reading aligned to stories selected from Level II and Level III story books. This was followed by a comprehension test of the story children had read and words across three difficulty levels in Kannada or Urdu. Word – level 1; word – level 2; and word – level 3. The assessments began by measuring story reading skills in descending order, reading and comprehension of a story, and downwards till children who could not read were given words to read at different ranges of difficulty. Those who could read the story were classified as the Highest Level readers.

The above graphs show that there is positive increase in scores from the pre-test to the post-test in both the grades. 53% of children in grade 4 and 62% of children in grade 5 could read a story compatible with that of the ASER 2016 tool.

**Comprehension in first language**

The objective of the test was to record the reading ability as well as comprehension status of the story the children had read. The comprehension questions included why, how, what and where. The data shows that 52% and 57% of children in grades 4 and 5 respectively could clear the test at the story level and were able to comprehend by the end of the post-test.
Reading ability with comprehension in English

Bangalore's 12 schools had 575 English story books in their classroom libraries. The Akshara reading ability test in English included story reading aligned to stories selected from Level 11 library books, followed by comprehension of the story and words spread across three difficulty ranges in English. The test followed a descending order pattern, beginning with the story reading test until word recognition. The children who could read the story were classified as the Highest Level readers.

Fig 9 - Reading ability - Second language, grade 4 (%)

Fig 10 - Reading ability - Second language, grade 5 (%)

Fig 9 shows that 44% of grade 4 children were at word level 1 in the post-test, 12% at word level 2, and 37% at word level 3. Fig 10 shows that 50% of grade 5 children were at word level 1 in post-test, 10% were at word level 2 and 21% at word level 3. About 19% of the children could read an English sentence fluently.

But only 6% of grade 4 and 17% children of grade 5 could read easy sentences fluently and comprehend.
The above graph shows that almost all the children from both the grades like to read story books. The same number of children were also found to be aware of the classroom library, the cloth rack with the books. 98.4% of them responded that they follow the process of entering transaction details. Around 36% responded that they take books home.

**Findings from Bangalore North 2 block**

- 53% and 62% of children from grades 4 and 5 respectively have acquired reading ability in the medium of instruction in accordance with the ASER 2016 assessment tool. And 52% and 57% of children from grades 4 and 5 could clear the test at the story level and comprehend by the end of the post-test.

- The English reading ability test points out that only 7% of the children of grade 4 and 19% of those in grade 5 could read an easy sentence, indicating that a substantial majority are struggling with basic second language proficiency. Only 6% of grade 4 children and 17% of grade 5 children could read an easy sentence fluently and comprehend as well.

- It is encouraging to see that almost all the children like to read story books, and that 35.7% borrow books and take them home.
Mundargi Block

The Classroom Library project in Mundargi block began in all 97 government schools in 2014. 500 teachers from Kannada and Urdu medium schools participated in the programme. While 11,455 children from grades 3-7 benefitted from the programme, the assessments were administered to 40% of randomly selected children in grades 4 and 5. The tests in reading ability in the first and second languages were similar to that of Bangalore North block.

The above graph points to the positive increase in grade 4 and 5 scores from the pre-test to the post-test. 90% and 92% of children respectively acquired reading abilities in the first language in a test based on the ASER 2016 story level assessment tool.

Comprehension in first language

The objective of the test was to record the reading ability as well as comprehension of the story children had read. The comprehension questions included why, how, what and where. Data shows that 87% of children from both the grades could clear the test at the story level and comprehend what they were reading by the end of the post-test.
**Reading ability with comprehension in English**

Mundargi's classroom libraries have 4350 English story books. The Akshara reading ability test in English included reading aligned to stories selected from Level II library books, followed by comprehension of the story, and words in English spread across three difficulty ranges. The test followed a descending order pattern, beginning with the story reading test and ending at word recognition. The children who could read the story were classified as the Highest Level readers.

![Fig-14: Reading ability - Second Language, Grade 4 (%)](image1)

![Fig-15: Reading ability - Second Language, Grade 5 (%)](image2)

Fig 14 shows the English reading levels of grade 4. A majority of the students were at word level. Only 12% of the children could read an easy sentence fluently in the post-test. 31% were at word level 2.

Fig 15 shows the English reading levels of grade 5. 26% of the children were at word level 2. 21% of them could read English sentences fluently. A large number of children from both the grades have moved from word level 1 to the higher word levels and sentence level in the post-test.

Only 10% of grade 4 and 17% of grade 5 children could read easy sentences fluently and comprehend them as well.
Findings from Mundargi block

- The Akshara Survey found that 90% and 92% of children in grades 4 and 5 have acquired reading ability in the medium of instruction in accordance with the ASER 2016 assessment tool. And 87% of children from grades 4 and 5 could clear the test at the story level and comprehend by the end of the post-test.

- Akshara's survey of the reading ability results in English skills finds that 31% of children in grade 4 and 26% in grade 5 are at word level 2. And 42% in grade 4 and 55% in grade 5 are at word level 1.

- The English reading ability test says that only 12% of grade 4 children and 21% of grade 5 children could read an easy sentence, indicating that a substantial majority are struggling with basic second language proficiency. Only 10% of grade 4 and 17% of grade 5 children could read an easy sentence fluently and comprehend it as well.
Section 3

Stories and Snapshots from the Field

No programme would be complete without all the small but important nuances that the small events, personal interactions and personal feedback bring to us from the field. In this section we present a very small sample from many such fruitful interactions we have had and the feedback we have received from all our regions.

Voices from the field

A School with an 'A' on all Counts – Government Kannada Lower Primary School, Malkapur, Kustagi Block

This school proves that limitations of location and student strength do not have to be drawbacks. It is in a small village at the end of a narrow road, some distance from Kustagi town, and it has 65 students in classes 1-5 and three teachers. The Headmaster, who has served the school for 20 years, is widely respected and a popular figure in the community. Basavaraja Rodda, a teacher, reached the finals of the Most Innovative Mathematics Teacher contest Akshara held in Kustagi block two years ago. And Meenakshi is the Nali-Kali teacher as well as English subject teacher. During the library team's reading assessment last year, this was one of the few schools in the selected cohorts where the children of class 5 could read English sentences. In most other schools, children struggled with words.

The parents in this little, obscure village deserve credit too, say the
teachers. Most of the parents are agricultural labourers. Though uneducated and unable to provide much support at home, they have respect for education. They push for reading achievement. “That makes a difference. In our school, 80% of the children can read well,” says the Nali-Kali teacher.

**Systematic Implementation**

“That the classroom libraries are very effective,” says Basavaraja Rodda. “Earlier, the school had a library which was not used very much. Now every classroom has a library. The books are good. They promote reading, give an awareness of the world. They give a boost to imagination and help children explore their creativity. They don't need us to tell them to read. They talk to their friends about what they've read, do role plays.”

But then, Akshara is no longer in a position to continue the library programme. To which Basavaraja Rodda says, “See, now you're not implementing Akshara Ganitha, your Maths programme. As long as we teachers keep using the kit, it has life. Same with the library books.” At the recent library programme training, Basavaraja Rodda’s attention was focused on the science activities with great enthusiasm and appreciation.

**Much in Demand Libraries**

The 4th and 5th grade classrooms are large, no desks and benches. Learning resources are up on the walls. The Akshara library is a conspicuous player in the mix. Most of the books in both the classes bear the marks of handling and usage. This applies particularly to the science books supplied in 2016-17. *Science Experiments* is a clear favourite in the 4th and 5th grades. *No, David*, an English book, is also much in demand.
Meenakshi says, “The classroom libraries help a lot. We practise the 'buddy system' in our classes, where one student teaches the other, especially in the 4th and 5th grades. Some of our students also self-study, which includes their class lessons too.”

Some Model Teachers in a Model School - Govt Higher Primary School, Nidaseshi, Kustagi block

Some entries from the library register maintained by the HM. Vol. 11: Entry dated 4-1-2017, Sadashiva, class 5, has written from memory the story of Fisherman Khalif, including the author's name.

Another entry dated 30-1-2017: class 6 student, Ningaraj, has paraphrased The Vijayanagar Kingdom, Author – K. Narasimha.

Shivanand Pampanavar is the Headmaster of the Government Higher Primary School in Nidaseshi, Kustagi block. He is the chief architect of the school's vision and progress and has given a distinctive character to it. The school was selected to be part of the Padhe Bharat, Badhe Bharat campaign undertaken by the Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India. He has introduced innovative practices starting with the morning assembly when students of classes 4 and 5 take turns to read a book from their classroom libraries, beginning with the title and the name of the author and illustrator. They then proceed to narrate the story.

“Our task of teaching students has become more efficient because of the classroom libraries,” says the HM. “Akshara Foundation's books are compatible with our class subjects, especially science. Children are fascinated by stories with morals. Their simplicity appeals to children. No difficult words. My students are the first generation to attend school. There is not much academic support at home. Whatever has to be done has to be done here. They are bright and alert,” he says proudly.

“I have a library period every day, not once a week,” says Shashikala Patil. “The children select the books themselves, read and return them. Nobody allots it to them. The story books are favourites. The science books are useful. Maza Ganitha (Happy Maths) is used a lot. The library books are easier than the textbooks. They are topics of discussion among children, they encourage interaction. Television watching has reduced. They tell their parents and siblings about the books they are reading.”

Shashikala Patil acknowledges that after Akshara Foundation's training she knows how to connect the books to innovative activities. Now she wants to create science activities with simple waste materials.

This class teacher of class 5 has 34 students. “Earlier library books used to be in the office
room. Children were afraid to go there and take books. Now Akshara has brought Classroom Libraries to our school,” says Baseteppa. “Sometimes my students tell me facts from the library books that I didn't know about. For instance, they told me about the number of insects there are. They even told me of the various kinds of insects. I didn't know all that!” he confesses.

Baseteppa uses books like Amazing Activities and Fun Science that give children knowledge and shows them simple experiments that they can easily do. He feels that there is curiosity when children see a book they can read and the confidence to read it. Earlier, the only books they saw were textbooks and they didn't see anything interesting in them. “Reading is becoming a hobby,” he says.

Baseteppa has a plan to take the library movement forward using the school's library fund to purchase books for children once in two or three years. “Only quality books. The classroom libraries Akshara Foundation has set up for us will be our guiding principle,” he insists.

**A Library Period- The Government Kannada Higher Primary School Dambal, Mundargi Block**

The Government Kannada Higher Primary School (GKHPS), Dambal, Mundargi Block, [Gadag distt] has one hundred and eighteen students in classes 1-8. Within the four walls, untouched by the realities that daunt, the school hums with the energy of children, though the space is constricted and narrow, hope circulates in the air.

The school has been adopted by the centrally sponsored District Primary Education Programme (DPEP), which is resulting in refocussing and re-energising.

**“Huge Benefits”**

Akshara's TCLs, or The Classroom Libraries, have found their way into the hearts of children at the GKHPS. All classes, from 1-7, where the programme operates, have their own library. The Akshara cloth rack hangs on the wall, gathering into its folds around 50 books in Kannada, and some in English, a bright, colourful, curated collection that draws children to reading, and a symbol of achievement in class.

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1 DPEP is a Government of India scheme launched in 1994 to revitalise the public primary education system and to achieve the objective of universalisation of primary school education. DPEP adopts a holistic approach to universalise access and retention, improve learning achievements, and reduce disparities among social groups. The central government meets 85% of the programme cost. The remaining 15% is shared by state governments.
“The library in my class has huge benefits” says Akka Mahadevi, the class teacher Class 4. “It helps children read, write, improve. The books are really good. Children get familiar with the idea of books. They get introduced to it, to books for reading, books that are not their textbooks. Reading happens early in the morning mostly as children come in and there’s some free time. They take a library book, read it, take it home if they wish to, come back the next day and narrate the story. I notice that the children in my class like to read about national leaders and Kannada poets.”

“Akshara Foundation has given us books that align with our syllabus. The science-related books are useful. But it would be nice if I could have practice books and materials for practice. I would particularly welcome science kits, like your Mathematics kits. But you have already given us so much material and we see so much improvement.”

"Even if you're not continuing the programme next year, please keep these books here. Children will miss not having a library. If they have to read, they have to first form the habit of reading. Books do that. No point saying that children don't read. We have to give them the resources. The more you give, the more they will read. I will continue the programme.”

Shafiq says, “The books are very interesting. It feels really good to be reading. I prefer the Kannada books. We speak Urdu and Kannada at home.” Her special preferences are Panchatantra Jadu Yantra, Badshah's Garden, and Cleanliness Keeps Disease Away, all in Kannada, that last a VI level book in Akshara's reading scale. VI is the peak of reading proficiency - tougher text, fewer pictures. It has words there that can be challenging. Shafiq picks out 'sweet potato,' 'toilets,' 'implement,' 'waste,' 'discipline,' 'Father of the Nation.'

“It Feels Really Good to be Reading”

An hour on late Saturday mornings is when the GKHPS has, by timetable decree, instituted the library period. Class 6 is all bounce and vigour as the bell rings and time is granted. Afrin sticks the Reading Histogram on a felt-topped panel, making it more visible and important for the occasion. The Histogram is a reading chart that children mark informally and voluntarily after their sessions. It defines their reading progression. Afrin is happy, there is purpose in her light, quick stride, and suddenly, the freedom to do what she enjoys.

Every child has a book, though not everyone is reading. Some rifle through, pausing momentarily when a picture makes for arresting reflections. Vijaykumar reads well, but the scenes of reading around him are distracting. His mind wanders. Many children, though, are serious readers.

Afrin is reading a IV level Kannada book, Sameer's House. Nandini writes down in her notebook the words her teacher has put up on the blackboard. Children cluster, showing the
drawings they have made from the pictures. Their drawing books are full of it.

Netra takes Singing in the Rain from one of the library pouches, a Vth level book, which is a reading grade in the middle range. It is a celebratory book, an ode to the rains. “Come to me, O rolling clouds……” Netra reads calmly, without undue buoyancy. Her pronunciation could be faulted, but the effort and drive emerging from that thin frame are tangible. Did she understand what she had just read? “A little,” she says truthfully, nodding her head in rapid succession.

Kannada is Netra's forte, her asset. She chooses one of the most demanding books of the VIth level, Around the World with a Chilli. Big words, complex sentences. She is fluent and professional, dealing speedily with it, halting nowhere but at the designated punctuation stops. Not a single stumble.

**The Connections**

Akka Mahadevi says, “During a library period, I ask children what they found useful in the books they read. 'Did you come across anything related to your textbook?' I ask. 'To science? Environmental Studies (EVS)?’” She flashes a library book on water before her students, and turning the pages, asks, “Can you tell me something in this book that gave you knowledge?” Two distinct voices rise above the clamour of answers. “We need water for drinking.” “For growing food.”

She points to children the library books that connect to science and Environmental Studies. Science is Fun is an example, she says. Netra is the first to respond to the question, “What is the environment?” “Safe, protected landscapes and water bodies constitute the environment. That's what our EVS subject is about.”

Akka Mahadevi: “Does your textbook lesson on plants match with any of the library books?” Silence descends. “You should read the books and see for yourself what all you can find. If you use them as reference, you will understand your textbook easily.”

**Progress is Evident**

Akka Mahadevi does not intervene in her students' reading choices, nor does she maintain a register for book borrowing details. This is, nevertheless, a library class attempting to better itself, and aspiring for model transactions and knowledge transfer. The painstakingly produced Akshara charts that map science and EVS concepts to the library books to make navigation easier for children and teachers, have been mislaid somewhere. The children who have
autonomous control over their classroom library are at a loss, and Akka Mahadevi who has just returned from a few days at a government-organised camp is nonplussed.

The positive factor, though, is the children are relying on the library books for class projects. Akka Mahadevi displays on her mobile phone screen their collaborative presentation on the transmission of light and another that proves the earth is round. For both projects, they referred to the library a good deal, she says.

Progress is evident, even if not at the pace and the cloth rack with the 50 books is not a frozen emblem on the wall, but a moving, engaging, interactive entity that is spurring interest, curiosity and learning, while engulfing them in carefree enjoyment.

**Library Activities**

A large part of any successful library programme includes activities and events that are created and conducted around libraries and stories. They may be storytelling for children; storytelling by children; hands-on science or art and craft activities relating to the books in focus; or games and puzzles.

In Akshara too we conducted several activities for children and teachers, with the intention of drawing their attention to books and trying to make the event interesting for them.

**Drawing and Colouring Event**

Many children are expert readers and storytellers. If it is a Kannada book, comprehension is lucid and flowing, a confluence of story and aesthetics. An English book is an aspirational tingle to have in hand, though harder to read for many. But the pictures give them the overall idea. One of the potent stimulations of the books is that they are sumptuous productions, with engaging storylines, design and display. Akshara has yet to come across a child unmoved by the pictures. The first thing many children say when asked about a book’s appeal is, “I like the pictures.” Many of them can draw and colour faithful reproductions with almost professional artistry.

Conducted across two regions - Bangalore and Mundargi - where we are active, the drawing and colouring event was the simplest and most attractive method of encouraging children to explore the books in their classroom library. Children of the 4th and 5th grades were asked to select a book they liked from their classroom library and draw and colour a picture from it. This event was largely based in the classroom itself or in the school premises and was therefore easy to carry out smoothly.
Drawing Competition at the Geddalahalli School, Bangalore

At the Government Model Higher Primary School in Geddalahalli, Bangalore, 35 children filed out of class 4 to the second-storey terrace and sat down on the floor for the drawing competition. They had white sheets of paper before them.

Shivamma, the Headmistress, expressed scepticism. How would her students do? “They don’t have a drawing teacher, no art lessons. Children will find it difficult to memorise a picture from a book and draw it. All the children are not as good as all that in drawing. The concept might be too much for them. Without a drawing teacher to guide, who will tell them how to approach this competition? Only all of you at Akshara Foundation are there to give all the encouragement.”

The allotted time was 45 minutes. Everyone was intent over their drawing sheets. Pencils were the preferred medium as they began; crayons would come later. There was much use of erasers at this stage.

Ashwini’s concentration was complete. She had inscribed her name, class and the book’s title. Nechinaglaya (Best Friend) was her inspiration. She had a leopard in full stride across the page. Its trademark spots on the coat had a stark drama.

Yuvaraj looked small and vulnerable before his drawing. The book he had chosen was Maya Medikke (Magical Pot) “I don’t know the story,” he admitted. “I remember the pictures,” saying which his face lifted. Yuvaraj was drawing and colouring a blue spread of water, a pile of coins, a girl and a boy, and trees and stones.

Lakshmi had a huge tree on her page from the book Sundara Mara (Beautiful Tree), a profuse canopy and red fruits in the foliage.

“I enjoy drawing,” said Vanitha. Her book was Junior Kumbhkarnar. She had sketched her Kumbhkarnar, a demon from the epic Ramayana, as a towering, portly figure, standing on earth in ornamented glory. For decorative indulgence alone she deserved a prize.

When the winners were announced, Vanitha was in third place. Lakshmi came second for her beautiful tree and Ashwini received the first prize for her bold leopard. The children dispersed just as quietly as they had assembled, but not before they had proved to their Headmistress that they could do it.
An adaptation of the jumble game, this event was our next successful attempt at reaching out to children. In this event, a book was selected and all children were intimated two weeks prior to it that they could take part in a Word Search competition. The simple instructions were that they would be provided a grid of letters which contained 4-letter words from the book, *The Pike and the Sea Fish*.

**Number of children who participated in the event**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Kustagi</th>
<th>Mundargi</th>
<th>Bangalore</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>35 Schools</td>
<td>20 Schools</td>
<td>5 Schools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>522 Children</td>
<td>335 Children</td>
<td>127 Children</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Highest number of correct words in each region**

1. **32/40**, Government Lower Primary School, Madalagatti, Kustagi block, Koppal district

2. **27/40**, Government Urdu Higher Primary School, Dambal, Mundargi block, Gadag district

3. **24/40**, Government Urdu Lower Primary School, Bhuvaneshwarinagar, Bangalore

Within a 30-minute time span they had to identify all the words in the grid and the highest number of words would be given a prize. This was probably an ambitious move considering that the event was based on an English book, and our field experience of the English proficiency of the children and teachers had not been very encouraging. However, we were in for a surprise.
**Teacher training workshops**

As we were getting prepared to move out of the schools, it became imperative to hand over The Classroom Libraries to the teachers and managements of every school in the regions we worked in. This became even more important as, due to circumstances not within Akshara Foundation's control, we could not conduct a formal capacity building of the entire set of teachers regarding the importance of access to books for children. Therefore, a day-long capacity building event was organised in the regional hubs to ensure access to all government school teachers. The modules were meant, primarily, to: introduce teachers to the guidelines for libraries as laid out by NCF 2005, and convey the importance of classroom libraries; promote a variety of activities related to library books and instill an understanding of how they could enhance teaching and learning in the classroom, especially with regard to science; and build their skills in storytelling, story reading and dramatisation of stories.

Most teachers expressed a very positive viewpoint about the sessions. Many felt that the sessions dealt with whatever skills they could directly apply in their classrooms. They found the sessions interesting and engaging, and expressed a willingness to try out the innovations in their classroom.

A teacher from Government Higher Primary School, Dambala, Mundargi, said: “…..A picture is worth a thousand words. Similarly, the effective usage of TCL, the methods of storytelling, ways to arouse children's curiosity and imagination, was addressed very effectively……I will encourage the use of all these techniques in my school.”

Another teacher from Government Higher Primary School, Harijanawadi, Hanumagasara, Kustagi, said: “…..In the workshop, through activities, we learnt about- how to make teaching aids from low cost materials which are easily accessible in small villages also; simple science experiments using household materials; and story telling skills. These activities are very important for the overall development of children. We should get regular inputs from the Department of Education through Samalochana Sabhas etc.”

**Number of teachers who participated in the workshops**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Block</th>
<th>No. of Schools</th>
<th>No. of Teachers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kustagi</td>
<td>219</td>
<td>192</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mundargi</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bangalore</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>328</strong></td>
<td><strong>285</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
തೆಗೆದು മാറുന്ന നിയമം കേള്ളൽ

കേൾപ്പിറ്റുക കുറുകെ നിലവിലെ ഭാഗത്തേക്ക് സ്വയം വിദ്യാഭ്യാസം ആരംഭിക്കുന്നു. ചെറുകാര്യങ്ങൾ മുഴുവൻ ആദ്യത്തെ കുട്ടികൾക്ക് സഹായിക്കാൻ സാധനങ്ങൾ പുരോഗമിക്കുന്നു. ചെറുകാര്യങ്ങൾ ഇപ്പോഴും സ്വയം വിദ്യാഭ്യാസവും നടക്കുന്നു. 

കേൾപ്പിറ്റുക കുറുകെ നിലവിലെ ഭാഗത്തേക്ക് സ്വയം വിദ്യാഭ്യാസം ആരംഭിക്കുന്നു. ചെറുകാര്യങ്ങൾ മുഴുവൻ ആദ്യത്തെ കുട്ടികൾക്ക് സഹായിക്കാൻ സാധനങ്ങൾ പുരോഗമിക്കുന്നു. 

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Map Reading

Map reading was a limited-edition activity for the older children of class 6 at the Government Kannada Higher Primary School, Nagashettyhalli, Bangalore. It coincided with the Environmental Science curriculum. Forty children took part in the event. The objective was to impress on children the necessity of reading maps, relevant today as never before. The activity was crafted to train children's minds, help them observe and take in their surroundings, and be mindful and intelligent, for instance, about their commute to school.

With components like Kick-Start, Show-and-Tell, World of Imagination is Boundless, Tapping the Christopher Columbus in You, and finally, Stitching can be so Much Fun, the map reading workshop evoked fascinated concentration. The children learnt to make their own route map from home to school, marking the important landmarks they see every day. Though it was not directly related to the library books, map reading served to fulfil one of the objectives of the programmes, which is to create a classroom environment immersed in print and promote keen observation.
Report on the Status of The Classroom Libraries in Schools

Presented below is a brief summary of the data collected from government schools in Bangalore from where TCLs exited in 2015-16.

The primary objectives of TCLs were:

1. Provide access to a library inside each classroom.
2. Create print-rich environments in class.
3. Motivate and train teachers in the TCL methodology to become librarians in their own classrooms.

During the follow-up survey we carried out to ascertain whether the library objectives had been fulfilled, we visited all 75 schools and collected data on 322 classrooms ranging from classes 1-7. The survey also covered 322 teachers and 570 children. The key information collected was:

- Status of the TCL cloth rack.
- Status of the TCL books.
- Teacher inputs on book usage by children.
- Children's inputs on book usage.

Summary of the Findings

- This was a basic survey to determine the status of the TCLs a year after Akshara exited the schools.

- About two-thirds of the 75 schools in the erstwhile programme still maintained the TCLs, with a good percentage of them able to retain the cloth racks and the books.

- About half of the teachers interviewed reported that children use the books at least on a weekly basis, and most of the teachers reported that children seem to prefer picture books to any other type.

- Most of the children reported that they were attracted to books and read more frequently than once a week.

- In many schools it was noted that the TCLs had been mixed with the school libraries and access limited to once a week. This day was typically Saturday, when the SUPW (Socially Useful Productive Work) period was used as the library hour, thereby defeating the purpose of a classroom library with easy and constant access to books.
Section 4

Suggestions and Recommendations

As a part of our experience of working with Library programme so far, we would like to place the following suggestions-

1. Access to books in the classroom has positive impact on the reading habits of the primary school children. This is particularly true of communities and homes that do not have access to books or exposure to reading practices. In such situations the class-room libraries are a learning corner in the classroom and provides easy and equitable access to books for children.

2. In a school day, the library can serve many different purposes. Restricting the use of the library to one period a week, as is customary with the School Library, does not allow children to cultivate the habit or culture of reading. Activities around book reading can make the process more interactive. Teacher should draw upon the classroom library’s resources and facilitate discussions.

3. Irrespective of the direct linkages with learning outcomes, the school/classroom library should be conceptualised as a space where children can expect to find the means to deepen their knowledge, satisfy their curiosity and imagination, and build their reading skills.

4. Towards this goal, it becomes important for DSERT to actively encourage the formation of a Classroom Library Cell. The specific mandate can be - to build teacher capacity in the usage and management of the classroom library; encourage understanding of book levelling and replenishment of books; encourage the use of library as a teaching aid and motivate children of Government Primary schools to read more for knowledge and pleasure.

5. A simple mechanism of lending and borrowing of books should be evolved so that children can become self-reliant library users. This will encourage all levels of readers, not just the proficient readers, to inculcate the enjoyment and habit of reading. This will also serve to spread the usage to books to the families and communities, if required.
About Akshara Foundation

Akshara Foundation was established in March 2000 at the request of the Government of Karnataka. It was conceived as a tripartite partnership between the government, corporate sector and the voluntary sector with the mission: “Every child in school and learning well”. The government took the lead in setting up the organization and allowing access to its schools; corporate leaders lent financial support and, community volunteers assisted in implementing the programs. In many ways, this is a unique model with a built-in capacity to address change at a mass scale.

Akshara firmly believes in working with the government to bring about large scale and rapid changes. The programs therefore aim to supplement and not supplant the governmental efforts in universalizing primary education. We design the teaching learning material, the training modules, the assessment metrics and provide support in terms of monitoring and technology. This makes the programs sustainable and builds capacity within the school system for improvement.

Since its inception in March 2000, Akshara has touched the lives of over one million children in the state of Karnataka, India, through several programs- Prepare, Not repair ( ECCE program); Oduve Nanu ( Kannada and Urdu literacy); Swalpa English Thumba Fun ( English); Akshara Ganitha & Ganitha Kalika Andolana ( Maths) and The Classroom Library.