

INTEREST IN BOOKS SHOULD BE INCULCATED AMONG CHILDREN THROUGH ADEQUATE READING RESOURCES.  
PROYASHI BARUA REPORTS ON A RANGE OF INITIATIVES ACROSS THE COUNTRY

# 'R' FOR READING

Andrea McTammany



BOOKMARK: John Wood enjoys a reading session with a student in Nepal

There are approximately 773 million illiterate people in this world and 40% of them reside in South Asia. Alluding to this piece of statistics, John Wood, founder and executive chairman, Room to Read, non-governmental organisation, says, "Literacy is perhaps the most widely debated issue of our times. However, literacy depends on many allied factors that are often overlooked or simply not accorded the attention that they merit."

Explaining this in the context of India, Wood says, "Although schooling is free and compulsory for children aged between six and 14, the facilities for education are either inadequate or totally missing, especially in remote areas of rural India. The lack of suitable infrastructure and resources

translates to learning impediments and attributes to a high rate of school drop outs." He adds that library resources is one such indispensable facility that is woefully lacking in most government aided schools of India.

According to Wood, in India — as well as in many other countries of south Asia, south east Asia and Africa — the dearth of library resources can be examined both at the quantitative as well as the qualitative level. "The problem is not restricted to the fact that very few government schools have adequately stocked libraries. The problem also encompasses the fact that much of the existing reading material is not appropriate for the target readers," he informs.

Elaborating, he says, it is important to understand that libraries are meant to facilitate the sheer joy of reading. It has been observed that children like to read books that they can easily comprehend and relate to. Accruing to this fact, most children in rural areas can acquire the reading habit far more easily if the books are written in the local language instead of in English. Secondly, they can relate to subjects and themes that reckon with their social milieu.

Understanding this need, Room to Read has strived to promote and train local writers in all the countries that they operate in. "We conduct workshops that are essentially platforms for writers to hone their imaginative and creative skills. Writers are also provided training on the technical and stylistic aspects of writing books. They are also familiarised with concepts of illustrations,

graphic detailing and print selection," informs Wood. However, the selection of drafts that go for final publication is decided through a democratic process. "In every country, we have a team comprising people from the education ministries, child psychologists, education experts and book publishers that decide which drafts merit publication," informs Wood.

To increase the footprint of libraries in India, Room to Read has adopted an innovative model called the Nodal Library. "We introduced this type of library in 2008 as a way to address sustainability issues and reach more students in remote government schools with relevant and engaging children's books," stated Vibha, programme director, Room to Read, India.

"The purpose of this library is to develop book banks at existing government Cluster Resource Centres (CRC), which provide resources and support to schools in the areas surrounding these centres," she adds. Some other initiatives that Room to Read has undertaken to strengthen the school library system include book classification systems and transparent check-out systems.

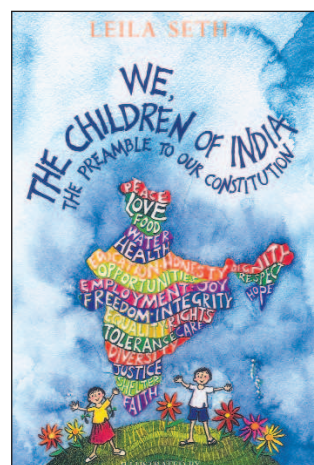
"Check-out systems ensure that books do not get misplaced or damaged. Also, it ensures that one book does not remain with one reader for too long," says Wood. "Given the academic pressures, children do not have much time for reading. Our check-out system has been so designed that students can afford to avail of library facilities more during relatively lean academic periods and during vacations," he adds.

# A preamble for growth

THE ideals enshrined in the preamble are meant to be internalised and understood in contextual settings. "This was essentially the belief that inspired me to write the book-We, The Children of India," says Leila Seth, former chief justice of Himachal Pradesh. Seth states that children need to imbibe the values of the preamble as they grow up. "Merely understanding what concepts like justice, equality, liberty and fraternity mean at an intellectual plane is just not enough," adds Seth.

Explaining the essence of the book, Seth says, "The book employs vivid imagery in relation to each concept." According to her, the decision of employing a substantial amount of pictorial illustrations goes beyond the understanding that children assimilate concepts better when they are visually explained. "Almost every concept enshrined in our preamble has multiple connotations. The pictures elucidate these inter-related yet distinct connotations," she adds.

According to Kapil Sibal, human resource development minister, the need for a book of this kind has been long felt. "India is a country of confusing contrasts and similarities and it will not be wrong to say that different communities of India practically live within different ecosystems. These



ecosystems are governed by their own peculiar customs and social laws and consequently what may be just and appropriate in one society maybe most inappropriate in another. Our preamble, at one level, intrinsically embraces and transcends these differences and establishes a code of mutual respect and harmony," opines Sibal.

"But it has been experienced that often even well-educated grown up people confuse and misappropriate these concepts. This is because somehow while there has been an academic emphasis on these concepts we as a nation have not done much to integrate them within the moral fabric of our country. This book addresses this vital need," he adds.

## Educationtimes

### Brain Strain

1. A dibasic acid  $C_2H_4O_4$  weighing 3.15 g and dissolved in 250 ml is 0.2N. The value of x:
  - a) 1
  - b) 3
  - c) 2
  - d) 4
2. The expansion work done when 72 g of water is electrolysed under constant pressure at 27°C:
  - a) 15 kJ
  - b) 10 kJ
  - c) 5 kJ
  - d) 0
3. The pH of a solution obtained by mixing 500 ml of 0.2 M acetic acid and 500 ml of 0.1 M sodium acetate is ( $p^a = 4.75$ ):
  - a) 4.56
  - b) 4.45
  - c) 4.68
  - d)
4. How many unit cells are along each edge of an ideal crystal of NaCl weighing 3.12 g?
  - a)  $2 \times 10^7$
  - b)  $3.17 \times 10^7$
  - c)  $6.67 \times 10^{23}$
  - d)  $4 \times 10^{23}$
5. A one molal solution of HCl freezes at  $-6.7^\circ C$ . Its degree of dissociation is ( $K_f = 1.86 K \text{ kg/mol}$ ):
  - a) 0.7
  - b) 0.80
  - c) 0.6
  - d) 0.5
6. An organic compound (A)  $C_2H_5NO$  on hydrolysis gives (B) which forms a silver mirror with Tollen reagent and (C) which fails to dissolve in alkali after reacting with Hinsberg reagent. (A) is:
  - a) N,N-Dimethyl formamide
  - b) N-Ethyl formamide
  - c) C-H.CONH.
  - d) N-methyl acetamide
7. On hydrolysis which of the following sugars give only glucose:
  - a) Sucrose
  - b) Lactose
  - c) Maltose
  - d) Xylose
8. Among the following alkanes which one is expected to give only one monochloro derivative
  - a) 3-ethyl-2-methyl pentane
  - b) 3,4-dimethyl hexane
  - c) 2,3,4-trimethyl pentane
  - d) 2,2,3,3-tetramethyl butane
9. The carbide which is a methanide among the following is
  - a)  $CaC_2$
  - b)  $Al_4C_3$
  - c)  $BaC_2$
  - d)  $Mg_2C$
10. Which of the following is having hybridization different from others?
  - a)  $HCIO_2$
  - b)  $HCIO$
  - c)  $HCIO_3$
  - d)  $HCIO$

ANSWER KEY TO LAST WEEK'S QUIZ:  
1. (b), 2. (d), 3. (c), 4. (a), 5. (d), 6. (a), 7. (b), 8. (b), 9. (c)

Three correct entries will win 'Pen Drives'. Send in your entries only through e-mail with your Name, Address, Email, Tel no. and Profession to [sanjay.saxena@timesgroup.com](mailto:sanjay.saxena@timesgroup.com)

## St Mark's Sr Sec School, Meera Bagh completes two decades

St Mark's Sr Sec School, Meera Bagh completed two decades on April 20. The school flag was hoisted by the chairman TP Aggarwal.

Also present on the occasion were school principal Anjali Aggarwal, vice principal Veena Wahi and Dr Balbir Singh, member of the managing committee. The students presented a song and a choreography number depicting student's journey at SMS. Meritorious students were awarded for their excellent performance. The school also organised investiture ceremony wherein the student leaders Arsh Marwaha (head boy), Aparajita Pandey (head girl), Garv Malik (captain boy), Marshneil Kaul (captain girl), Akanksha (Gandhi house), Mehak Juneja (Shastri house), Karshni Kharbanda (Nehru house) and Deeksha Ahuja (Patel house) were given their responsibilities.

Amity International School, Noida organised parent orientation session for classes IX and X. The programme commenced with a *shloka gayan* and lighting of the lamp. School principal Renu Singh welcomed the parents and apprised them of new CCE system. She also stressed on the need for parents to be supportive towards their children. The coordinator Jyoti Arora also spoke on CCE. School vice principal Sunanda Grover proposed the vote of thanks.

Hansraj Model School, Punjabi Bagh hosted the felicitation function organised by DAV CMC to honour its President Padma Bhushan Gian Prakash Chopra. He was conferred this national honour on April 7 by President Pratibha Patil. He has also been honoured with the Qimpro Award which celebrates excellence in quality. To felicitate the patriarch of the family, the DAV fraternity got together and celebrated this moment. 1500 principals, office bearers, regional directors and members of DAVCMC attended the function held in the school premises on April 11. The occasion began with a floral welcome to Mr Chopra, followed by presentation of shawl by general secretary R S Sharma and Justice R N Mittal. A citation in silver enumerating was also gifted to him. An *Abhinandan Geet* written and composed by the cultural faculty of the

school was also presented. A group of teachers sung the same in his praise. School principal Rita Rajen Kumar said, "It is a matter of great pride and honour to be hosting the fraternity for such a celebration and special occasion."

Amity International School, Mayur Vihar organised orientation programme for the parents of class I to V. The programme commenced with the lighting of the lamp followed by chanting of '*shlokas*' and '*Ganesh Vandana*'. School principal Sarita Aggarwal, welcomed the parents. School vice-principal Rashmi Sharma made the parents conversant with the curriculum and the evaluation system. The parents also had an interactive session with the school counselor. Chairperson, Amity International School, Dr Amita Chauhan blessed everyone.

Blue Bells Public School, Sec-10, Gurgaon, organised a grand celebration on the occasion of the founder chairperson's birthday on April 21. The programme was graced by the presence of Suman Gulati, director; Soumya Gulati, academic coordinator and Anshuka Aneja, IT coordinator; Bluebells Group of Schools, Richa Kaw, headmistress, Bluebells Preparatory School, also attended the programme. Students presented a colourful dance performance. Director Madam released the school magazine '*Creatica*'. A self composed poem by Dr Vibha Matharu was presented on behalf of the school in honour of the founder chairperson. Arindam Chattopadhyay, editor-in-chief, '*Creatica*', proposed the vote of thanks.

Goodley Public School, Shalimar Bagh celebrated its 31st prize distribution ceremony on April 17. Dr GD Singh, MD and school manager welcomed Dr Narendra Nath, chairman of Yamuna Development Board, Govt of NCT Delhi was the chief guest. Chief patron of the school, B R Bhagat graced the occasion and presided over the function. Indra Ranga, EO, zone-IX, distt North-West (A), Directorate of Education, Govt of NCT Delhi was the guest of honour. School director S Singh assured the chief guest and parents that Dr Singh's dream of taking the school to Numero Uno position shall come true. The students presented a colourful ballet 'Water The Essence of Life'. Students of class X and XII who had achieved outstanding result in the CBSE exams were awarded mementoes by the chief guest. Merito-



GHPS, Vasant Vihar

rious students from class I to XI were also awarded memento and gift cheques. Students excelling in sports were also honoured. School principal R Paliwal mentioned that eco-club students were already working in collaboration with TERI and NDPL and had been felicitated by NDPL for working on a project in their neighbourhood that had resulted in reducing the electricity bills. The vote of thanks was given by President SN Malhotra.

S S Minhas, Principal, Guru Harkrishan Public School, Vasant Vihar was awarded with Avantika Silver Jubilee Award. The award was presented by 'Avantika — A group of Contemporary Artists and Intellectuals Body' on April 14 at Hindi Bhawan. Dharampal Singh, regional CBSE secretary, Dr Anand Aggarwal and others did the honours. It included a certificate, trophy, shawl and other gift items. Dr G R Kanwal, Director, Sumermal Jain Public School, Janakpuri received a cash prize of Rs 7,100 and a memento for his latest anthology of poems entitled *Neend Kayon Nahin Aati* (Why does Sleep Dodge Me). The prize was awarded to him by Urdu Academy, Delhi in a special ceremony held to honour Urdu poets and writers.

Vishwa Bharati Group of Schools celebrated the 59th anniversary of its foundation day on April 20 in the Vishwa Bharati Public School, Noida. The *hawan*, an annual feature of the school, was performed to rededicate themselves to uphold the ideals of their founders. It was attended by school principal, members of school staff, management members of all Vishwa Bharati Schools, students and parents. The Vishwa Bharati Public Schools and Colleges are run by Vishwa Bharati Women's Welfare Institution. They also started a 'Maa Sharda Shiksha Kendra' where 70 students are receiving free education.



Hansraj Model School



Goodley Public School



Vishwa Bharati Public School

## PIRACY FIGHT

Unesco celebrated World Book and Copyright Day on April 23. Unesco has also recently established the World Anti-Piracy Observatory (WAPO), a free on-line platform that provides information on anti-piracy measures and policies implemented by member states. The observatory, which will be updated regularly, makes available comprehensive information on copyright legislation as well as news and announcement of events pertaining to the global fight against piracy.

# Books are your best friend

Piyal Bhattacharjee



Times Foundation and Unesco has launched a new initiative titled 'Donate a Book' to encourage reading habits among children. Leila Seth, former chief justice of Himachal Pradesh, was the chief guest and keynote speaker. There was also a panel discussion comprising representatives from publishing, schools, NGOs and the media on 'importance of books in schools and promotion of reading through community'. The audience also participated in the discussion. The key issues that emerged were that children should not be forced to read, but an interest in reading books should be inculcated by parents and schools. Also, not just reading but discussing a book should be encouraged to facilitate children's understanding of issues.

# Roots to branches

YALE UNIVERSITY, US, HOSTED ITS SECOND YALE HINDI DEBATE THAT SAW STUDENTS FROM ACROSS AMERICAN UNIVERSITIES PARTICIPATING IN THE EVENT. NIKHIL SUD, FOUNDING PRESIDENT, SHARES HOW IT ALL STARTED

Tirna Ray/TNN

The Yale Hindi Debate was conceptualised and created by its founding president, Nikhil Sud, an undergraduate student at Yale University (class of 2010). It began as an internal Yale event in 2008.

Initially, Sud was apprehensive about the kind of enthusiasm the event would inspire. "To solve the potential pitfalls, I, along with my team, designed the debate not as an examination of linguistic proficiency but as a platform for students with a view and a voice. The rules were crafted in a way to ensure that the debate became a friendly opportunity to express one's opinion, not a grammar-and-vocabulary test," he says.

So, with the support of Seema Khurana (senior lecturer in South Asia Studies at Yale), and his classmate Ronik Bhangoo, Sud managed to turn a wish into a reality.

This year, the theme was 'Religion is more divisive than unifying.' Speakers are judged on both content as well as form. The criteria include logic, creativity, structure, diction and rebuttal among others.

Olivia Dowling (class of 2011, Yale University), an American, won the 'Best Speaker' award in the non-native non-heritage category this year. Dowling first became interested in India during her senior year at high school. Coming from a small town in Texas, she did not have many Indian friends, but rather experienced India through the popular culture of Bollywood, food, and music.

She says, "The more I learned about India, the more I liked: its colourful and vibrant culture, its differences and similarities to America, and its importance to international affairs. I thought if I wanted to make India a lifetime interest, I had better learn Hindi." She took Hindi for a year at Yale, before spending a summer in Jaipur learning Hindi through the American Institute of Indian Studies.



LANGUAGE WISE: (left to right): Ronik Bhangoo, Nikhil Sud and Seema Khurana

The speakers are judged by eminent members of faculty from some of the nation's prestigious universities and occasionally, people who have worked in the media. "This year's debate was judged by Richard Delancy (perceptor in Urdu and Hindi in the department of Sanskrit, Faculty of Arts and Science, Harvard University), Susham Bedi (leading author of South Asian literature in the US and adjunct instructor in Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies, Faculty of Arts and Sciences), Rakesh Ranjan (senior lecturer in Middle East and Asian Languages and Cultures, Columbia University) and Ashwini Deo (assistant professor, linguistics, Yale University)."

After two years, Sud feels that the debate gives students like Dowling an opportunity to express their views, listen to, and debate other people's views on a subject that is relevant. "Isn't that what education is all about?" he asks.

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