

NGO steers kids toward books with 'bus' library



Pics: S Lenin

Open to all, it houses material from puzzles to autobiographies

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Set up inside a stationary school bus, this unusual library, launched by Sakthi-Vidiyal, gives children a chance to read and learn while having a feeling of 'travelling' in a bus with friends.

"The idea for the library came to me from a Japanese children's story 'Totto-Chan: The Little Girl at the Window', authored by Tetsuko Kuroyanagi," says C Jim Jesudoss, executive director of the NGO. "This particular story speaks of unconventional schooling that children during the second world war underwent. Since it was difficult to run schools during war, classrooms had been set up in old railway coaches. It was fascinating." The 'bus' library with bus seats as chairs, houses about 300 books. It is set up on the Sakthi-Vidiyal campus at Muthupatti in Madurai, a centre for children from underprivileged backgrounds.

"We had a school bus which was worn down and unfit for use. It took a while and some refurbishing but finally we were able to establish and open the 'bus' library. Children from underprivileged backgrounds often don't have the luxury of buying books to read in leisure so such a library is a boon to them. It is also a good way to grab their attention away from smart phones and encourage reading habits," he says.

The 'bus' library has a variety of books for children from Class I to Class X, including story books, autobiographies, books with puzzles/riddles, or even picture books for some of the much younger kids. M Atheesri, a Class VII



GRAB A SEAT: The 'bus' library can accommodate around 25 children at a time

student of a govt school was excited to use the 'bus' library. "Sitting in the driver's seat with the steering wheel in my hand gave me the feeling that I was driving a bus while reading a book," he says.

A Theja, a Class VI student of a corporation school says the 'bus' library, with fans and tables inside makes it more comfortable for readers. "It really feels like I'm travelling in a bus when I'm inside there reading. Also though at school I can go to the library to read, here there is more freedom and I can also pick any book I like," she says.

The 'bus' library can accommodate about 25 children at a time. "The library is open to all kids in the neighbourhood. Our children will be using it regularly but perhaps slowly it may be developed further and more kids may join," says Jesudoss.

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