

Vacation library activists spread cheer in Wakro villages

ITANAGAR, Jun 27: Vacation months of April and May are not all fun and joy for the Arunachali rural students. For most of them, esp., girls, it means back-breaking farming activities, tending to domestic animals and lending a helping hand to their over-worked mothers. Hence all thoughts of schooling and reading find no place in the villages till June. But for the last 2 years, the young reader-activists of APNE Library, Wakro have been treading a different path, albeit silently. They have done, what no Govt or organization can do so fast: carried home a little library and made a 'vacation mini-library' freely available to the children of the neighbourhood. And called it a "Reading Brigade. Absolutely at no cost!

That this is the 2nd year of the vacation library has made the villagers take note of this band of youngsters. They feel the young group leaders have attached great importance to their work. The activists gather daily by 3 or 4 pm, sharing books and teaching the village children, apart from reading vital skills: like how to turn the pages (without licking!)

Mosamlu Manyu, heading the Manyuliang Reading Brigade, says, "Parents have been very supportive now. They are happily sending their children to our mini-library." Jeenamsi, her class-mate and vacation -I/c of APNE Library, Wakro agrees. She says, "We have to tell the parents not to send their children to the library in heavy rains!" Little Banika's mother at Namgo village tells Alikami, their library I/c. "If you all do like this, one day there would be many great people in our village."

All the 7 vacation mini-libraries in Wakro circle – at Kanjang, Mawai, Wakro, Hooking, Lamliang, Manyuliang and Namgo (the last 4 around Medo) - have been conducting a series of activities all through the vacation from mid April till June 2nd week. And heading these "Reading Brigades" are students of Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya, Wakro.

As in the last year, the vacation mini-libraries organized special functions. On Apr 23, the Reading Brigades Pukhuri and Kanjang celebrated Shakespeare's birthday, the World Book Day separately, while Medo and Wakro libraries joined hands to do it at the Gyan Sarovar Academy premises at Medo. The village children from Manyuliang, Hooking and Lamliang hamlets along with Wakro reader-activists put up a confident show of rhymes, story-telling and book-reading, in front of a large gathering of students, teachers and parents of Medo area.

The programme was conducted by Ms. Bomanlu Ngadong, a cl. IX girl and i/c of the Lamliang Reading brigade.

Congratulating the reader-activists for training village students to put up spirited performances in English and Hindi, Dr. S. Nayil, Patron, APNE Library, Wakro said this was an excellent use of ones vacation. It is a right way of honouring a great writer, and should motivate many more young people to become excellent writers in English.

Lauding the reader-activists for their keen efforts to help the rural children speak and read better, the Chairman Gyan Sarovar Academy Sanjay Ngadong appealed to all parents to encourage good reading habits in their children. Bihem Lap, Advisor, Medo Youth Library assured all help in continuing the reading campaign in Medo area.

The vacation library programme this year in Wakro had a memorable conclusion on June 8th at the Manyuliang Library, thanks to the brilliant organizing skills of its in-charge, Ms. Mosamlu Manyu. Held in the open-air just outside the library, the meeting had so many grown-ups – shopkeepers, parents and local women attending the programme, along with the children.

The young readers of the library recited lively poems and enacted two hilarious skits from library books, all groomed by Mosamlu and her team of activists: Ashalu, Disemsi and Piya. Wakro activists Jeenamsi, Bialu and Kesilu joined in with their delightful poem recitations and story – telling, making it a memorable eve for the folk of Manyuliang.

The concluding function had the added grace of 3 experts on wildlife: Er. Sanjay Sondhi, from Dehradun, an expert on moths, Dr. Abhijit Das, Guwahati, (on snakes) and Rohan Pandit, Pune (on frogs). The audience, young and old alike thronged forward, as Dr. Abhijit, pulled out a water-bottle, from which a thin long snake quietly crept out onto his stretched hands! He then explained to the children the dos and don'ts when they saw a snake. "Leave them their way, the snakes shall never harm you", he advised the audience.

Er. Sondhi, a well-known writer, then proceeded to show on his laptop, several pictures of moths and butterflies and explained their importance to the environment. Sri Rohan Pandit, who has been a regular visitor to Wakro, complemented the reader-activists for their enthusiasm and advised them to learn to observe life in their surrounding vegetation.

The Coordinator, Lohit Youth Libraries thanked the people of Manyuliang for actively supporting the reader-activists and expressed the gratitude of the entire audience to the guest-scientists for making the valedictory function a memorable one.

The vacation mini-library programme by the library-activists have visibly added to the enthusiasm of the village children in improving their speaking and reading skills, esp in English language. This is a silent contribution to reinforcing the rural school learning environment and even saving many of the young neo-literates from sure lapse into illiteracy.