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This Bengaluru mother wanted her son to read. And so she started a library. 13 years on, this is what happened

ThinkBox is a children's library stocked with books and toys in Bengaluru's Malleshpalya main road. We find out more



Shreesha Ghosh
Edex Live





Thinkbox library in Bengaluru

When we think of moving to a new place or neighbourhood, we seldom ask if there's a library nearby but we do enquire about medical shops, doctors, tailors, restaurants, ATMs etc. For **Bhakti Shah** (51) from Bengaluru, it was quite different — she went ahead one step to set up a community library in her neighbourhood. And it was all for her three-year-old son to take up reading as a habit. Started in early 2008, **ThinkBox** is a children's library stocked with books and toys in Bengaluru's Malleshpalya Main Road. Functioning for over a decade now, the library has catered to hundreds of children in the locality.

Telling us why she started the library, Bhakti says, "I was always a voracious reader, I quit my corporate job to look after my son. Then I was looking for a library for him and couldn't find it nearby. We had been going to the British Council but the traffic in Bangalore increased, he had his studies and we weren't finding any in our neighbourhood. That's when the thought the starting our own library came to my mind. I didn't have business experience, wasn't sure how to set it up or if it will work. However, I wanted my son to be a reader and kept buying books. There are certain books children will read once and then we didn't know what to do with those. In the initial days, money, time and space was a challenge to start a new library. I had the idea since 2002 or so but

This Bengaluru mother wanted her son to read. And so she started a library 13 years on, this is what happened.
challenge to start a new library. I had the idea since 2004 or so, but only by the end of 2007, did I gain the courage to finally do it."



Bhakti says that her husband encouraged her to go ahead with the idea as books never go to waste and add to our knowledge bundle. "Some books have wonderful content and you buy it for your child with over Rs 1000, and then the child uses it only a maximum of five times maybe and then what happens to that? I wanted to store them for other children so they too could read it and use it," she adds. Thinkbox started with just 500 books and 200 toys and Bhakti decided to see how it goes, whether the community accepts it or not. She kept on adding books every month. "It was never a business for me but my passion for reading. Whatever subscription amount came in through it, it was again cycled back into the library to buy more books and toys. And eventually, the community response was overwhelming. I never thought I could run it more than a month and now we are in our 13th year," she laughs.

Bhakti chose to set up the library in a commercial market area in

Bengaluru's Malleshpalya, as it was a place frequented by parents, especially mothers. "We thought we would start it in someplace famous where people will be more open, but then I thought children are there everywhere and they should all have access to libraries. I searched for a place near our house in the neighbourhood and rented it out. With about 150 sq ft space, the library boasts of books and toys as I wanted the furniture and décor to be secondary. I had gathered the initial investment with whatever savings I had from my corporate job," she says.



The library houses books for children aged between 1-16 years. Bhakti visits the publishers, distributors herself to pick up the books. "I need to keep a check on the illustrations and content that make the books interesting. Going through a website or catalogue doesn't help with children's books. We have Indian authors, foreign authors and their storybooks and easy-to-read interactive books. A child remembers better when books have more colours, pictures, and things that interest them. Encouraging a child to read early is the main aim, the mind is most absorbing at this time and so it is

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the best time to inculcate the habit of reading," quips Bhakti.

Currently, Thinkbox also has a small collection for adults as the mothers who came in with the children, said it would be nice for them to have books they can read, Bhakti tells us. Until now the library was catering to the local crowd, however, after the pandemic hit, Bhakti began posting books across the country. "We started a website where people can see the catalogue and order the books. We already have a few members in Noida, Kerala, Andhra Pradesh and a few other states," she concludes.





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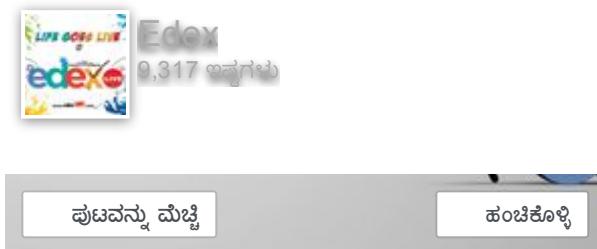


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