

Aksara: A Proposal for a Children's Reading Room in Puduchcheri, India



Every child is a lover of interesting narrative, a hero-worshipper and a patriot. Appeal to these qualities in him and through them let him master without knowing it the living and human parts of his nation's history. Every child is an inquirer, an investigator, analyzer, a merciless anatomist. Appeal to these qualities in him and let him acquire without knowing it the right temper and the necessary fundamental knowledge of the scientist. Every child has an insatiable intellectual curiosity and turn for metaphysical enquiry. Use it to draw him on slowly to an understanding of the world and himself. Every child has the gift of imitation and a touch of imaginative power. Use it to give him the ground-work of the faculty of the artist.

—Sri Aurobindo

The goals of the **Akshara Children's Reading Room** project are as follows:

1. Collection building (particularly targeting children ages 2-7):

- ◊ To make resources on Indian narrative traditions published abroad available to a readership in India, and to stimulate interest in Indian mythology and history, narrative and storytelling;
- ◊ To broaden these resources to include materials from all other parts of the world;
- ◊ To develop collections in at least three different languages: English, Tamil, and French;

2. Programs: To offer programs that encourage the development of scientific enquiry and art appreciation;

3. Resources for Parents and Schools: To provide resources to parents and local educators alike, and to develop programs in collaboration with local schools in Puduchcheri.

A note on the meaning of "Akshara": Aksharas are the letters of the Sanskrit alphabet, the bijas, or seeds of existence. Audible sound is categorized into fifty alphabets starting from "a" and ending with "ksha." Hence the alphabet and its constituent letters are "a-ksha-ra," which literally means "infallible" or "supreme." Akshara is thus also a synonym for the sound Om, the sum of all syllables and source of all vedic hymns.

Book donations (gently used or new) are welcome. Hardcover books are preferred & particularly ex-library books, as they come with mylar jacket covers.

Akshara's temporary home is with:
Deepa & Shrikanth Reddy, 2810 Linkwood Drive, Houston, TX 77025-3810