

Classics, popular fiction in Braille

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Kolkata: It's rare to find a Bengali household that does not have an omnibus of Sarat Chandra Chattopadhyay and Rabindranath Tagore's works. Ditto with the popular detective fictions featuring Byomkesh and Feluda. Yet, there are lakhs of visually impaired people who have no access to these titles that make Bengali literature so rich.

Recognising this long-standing need, Third Eye charitable trust unveiled several titles in Braille on Saturday. These included Tagore's 'Sanchaita', Bibhuti Bhushan Bandyopadhyay's 'Pather Panchali', Bolai Chand Mukhopadhyay's 'Bonoful', Sarat Chandra Chattopadhyay's 'Srikanto', Jibananda Das' 'Banalata Sen', Subir Sen's 'Jana Theke Ajana', 'Gangtoke Gondogol' and 'Badshahi Angti' by Satyajit Ray, Byomkesh's 'Adim Ripu' by Saradindu Bandyopadhyay, 'Arun Barun Kironmala' by Sailen Ghosh and Ashapura Devi's 'Kishore Bachai Golpo'.

Several English titles including RK Lakshman's 'Malgudi Days', APJ Abdul



Tagore's 'Sanchaita', Bibhuti Bhushan Bandyopadhyay's 'Pather Panchali', Bolai Chand Mukhopadhyay's 'Bonoful', Sarat Chandra Chattopadhyay's 'Srikanto' are some of the books that will be available in Braille

Kalam's 'Mission India', Gandhi's 'The Story of My Experiments with Truth', 'The Jewel of India' by Jawaharlal Nehru and 'Our Constitution' by Leila Seth were also released in Braille as were some books in Hindi.

"Each day, each moment there are so many shades of colors that reflect off our eyes and we don't even notice. How often we love curling up with a magazine or a thriller or a poem? How often

do we stop to think of the millions for whom this is a luxury? They who wait patiently, for others to get a little free from their busy schedule to just read them a few pages. It is a small effort on our part, telling these beautiful minds that their wait is over," said Third Eye trustee board member Mahua Seth.

Pointing to the need to bridge the gap between the large body of literature that is available to the masses and

a fraction that the visually impaired have access to, social activist Shampa Sengupta said the amendment to the Copyright Act last year would help publish more books in Braille.

PricewaterhouseCoopers manager (HR) Asif Iqbal who lost his vision to a genetic disorder when he was in his teens hailed the move. "It is a pity that the visually impaired have so little access to books despite it being the only form of recreation that is available to them apart from music. When I was growing up, the challenge was acute and I had to depend on friends to read out text books during my B Com and MBA. But there is a whole world beyond texts that I could not explore. I am glad that some books are now being converted to Braille. But we still have a long way to go," he said.

Five children's encyclopedia from Parragon like Our Universe, Incredible Earth and Human Body have been converted into DAISY format which can now be accessed and enjoyed by both visually impaired and dyslexic children. The books will be given away free to 17 schools in Bengal.

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