



LITERACY HOUSE
साक्षरता निकेतन

GOVERNED BY THE INDIA LITERACY BOARD

Tele : 22180, 28271
Gram : LITERACY

P.O. Alam Bagh
Lucknow-5, U.P.
India

DR. WELTHY H. FISHER,
FOUNDER AND CHAIRMAN,
INDIA LITERACY BOARD

GIRIJAPATI MUKHARJI,
CHAIRMAN, EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

E. C. SHAW,
ACTING DIRECTOR

April 7, 1971.

To
The Librarian of the
Troy City - Public Library
Young People Divison
500 West Big Beaver Road
Troy, Michigan 48084, USA.

Greetings,

A letter from Mrs. Marguerite A. Hart the young people's librarian tells me the good news that you are building a public library for the first time in your noble city and making a special place for the young people of your city. We often in India, who are struggling to write books to send them out into the rural areas of this vast land feel a tremendous exaltation when we hear that you are establishing a section especially for young people.

You citizens of advanced city of Michigan may think it strange that we have had to write books to send into these rural areas. It is because there are almost 380 million people of this great republic of India who have not learned to read their own language.

You will all be interested to know that the great Ford Foundation that stems from our beloved Michigan was the source who provided the money for the establishment of the School of Writing for new literates. I would like to quote from our great American woman poet Emily Dickenson who says,

"He ate and drank the precious words,
His spirit grew robust;
He knew no more that he was poor,
Nor that his frame was dust.
He danced along the dingy days
And this bequest of wings
Was but a book. What liberty
A loosened spirit brings. "



It was only last year that we had our greatest year of the distribution of books to the young people of many areas. In fact through jeeps and through steady devotion of those who bought their own bicycles and in a tin trunk on the back of their bicycles took thousands and thousands of books into the villages for those who had learned to read.

Altogether, last year our School of Writing through the jeep and bicycles gave out 88,000 books and can you believe that we lost less than 1500 books. I am sure, you feel that is a good record. We could not give these young people children books but had to write books that were especially written for their needs. The Government of India, through its Department of Education bought 55,000 of the first book which we wrote "WE THE GOVERNMENT". It began like this. "on that memorable day August 15, 1947, you and I became ..the Government".

This was the first time that India had sensed that she had become a true republic on that great day in 1947. And ten years later we began building the School of Writing and writing books for these developing people.

In this era of changing society more books may have to be written for the young people who are feeling this change more than you and I grown ups are feeling.

When we first went to the villages to ask them what they would like to read when they could read easily. They gave us three simple answers. The first was, "we want to learn how to grow more food on our difficult wornout land. They were all farmers. The second answer was, "we would like to read our holy scriptures. They had heard these holy scriptures in poetry and prose from priests that went about from village to village reading lovely scriptures to them. The third answer was something you might not guess. They said, "we should like to read about the cinema". They were just beginning to edge into the new world of motion pictures and they wanted to know how it could happen and was what was the mechanism by which it could happen.

I should like to tell you one of the great stories that has lived in India for thousands of years. They are collected in a book called, "Panchtantra". One of them I shall never forget, because to children and young people it is so meaningful, for the deep meaning of this great story is that, "there is no one too small to do a great deed". And the story is this. There was a great eagle masterful and high in a tree besides a swift flowing river. He looked out upon the world like a master and down below him he saw a struggling line of black ants trying to save their lives in the vast overflowing river. Just then the great eagle looked down and saw their difficulty and he began picking up little bits, twigs of the tree and threw them down in front of the ants so that they could climb on to these twigs and then save their lives. He threw down twigs after twigs until he saw all of these ants on the twigs and were being wafted

to the shore - safe and sound.

The ants were happy. They were saved. But as they looked up day after day and wanted "how could we thank this great eagle who saved our lives". The next day showed them how they could help him. They saw the two legged one with a gun in his hand poised and ready to shoot down their great master eagle that had saved their lives. The leader of the ant said, come along each one, rush up near this two legged one - come quickly. And just then as the two legged one was about to shoot - all the ants were at his leg biting him, his gun fell down. Eagle was saved and the little ants had saved their great benefactor - master eagle.

I write this story hoping that it may bring you closer to the people of India who have read this story for thousand years and believe with us that there is no one too young or too small to do a noble deed.

My best wishes and congratulations go to you who have built the library and to those in future generation who will read the great books on these shelves.

Sincerely yours,

Welthy H. Fisher
(Welthy H. Fisher)