

Britannia-Bookaroo 2008, the first literature festival for children in India

Britannia - Zindagi Mein Life presented "Bookaroo 2008", the first-ever children's literature festival in India, which took place in New Delhi at Sanskriti Anand Gram on the Mehrauli-Gurgaon Road from November 22-23, 2008. There was magic in the air. Britannia-Bookaroo 2008 was also held in many schools across Delhi.

At Anand Gram, there was story-telling under the Banyan Tree, drama at the amphitheatre, a walk into the world of insects around the park, exhibitions, fun workshops that allowed participants to let their imagination soar, travelling back into history, a continuous automata workshop (you could make gadgets out of everyday material), poetry and learning about trees. Whew! Wasn't that fun? One of the big draws of the show was Jeff Smith, the author of the comic series Bone. He drew a full house as everyone rushed to him to get their books signed.

Amidst all this was the Britannia 'tiger', who got into the spirit of things, hugging everyone who came his way and enjoying himself hugely.

Scenes of story-telling were unfolding across eight primary schools in Delhi on November 19-20th around mid-day meal time.

The most interesting character at Sanskriti Anand Gram is an old, giant banyan tree, under which Anupa Lal, master storyteller, sat, surrounded by a circle of wide-eyed young faces, weaving her kahani magic.

Then there was riveting drama at the amphitheatre when everyone was transported to Dickensian London, as members of Out of a Hat assumed their characters.

Artist Bhajju Shyam's book The London Jungle Book was used for inspiration by about 80 children as they learnt how to make 'automata' (mechanical moving machines) using nothing more than scraps of paper, bits of wood, piece of string, old chopsticks, glue, pens, and a bit of help from the Bookaroo volunteers, and lots and lots of imagination.