

LIFESTYLE (/LIFESTYLE), FOOD AND RECIPES (/LIFESTYLE/FOOD)

Letting silence do the talking

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Being only a month old, Talking Hands has been successful in creating a buzz in both the silent and hearing worlds.



People at the restaurant

Who knew that silence could be both deafening and so hard-hitting at the same time — this is what one experiences as one enters the premises of Talking Hands in Begumpet. The city recently got its first restaurant run and managed by hearing-impaired people. TKM Sandeep, CEO, Deaf Enabled Foundation (DEF) and the Telangana government, are behind this initiative.

“Being a hearing-impaired individual myself, I know the challenges one goes through to get an equal footing in the society, let alone get a job in a company based on one’s talent. A few years ago, I started the Deaf Enabled Foundation with the purview to educate and train hearing-impaired people to get jobs. And for that I was regularly in touch with the state government for support. But this time it was the other way round — seeing our hard work to educate people, B. Venkatesham, who is the Telangana Tourism Secretary, approached us to shoulder the creation of Talking Hands. The premises was given to us free of charge for a year. Now it is our time to let the world know about it,” says Sandeep, explaining how the restaurant came to be.

From the entrance to the table mats and the restaurant’s walls, everything has been designed and created in a way to guide the visitors and teach them the importance of sign language. “We want guests to look into our world of ‘talking hands’, so we encourage them to order by using sign language. We also try to create minimal noise as we think people should let the silence do the necessary talking.”

explains Sandeep.



TKM Sandeep, CEO, Deaf Enabled Foundation

Interestingly, all the staff members at the restaurant have been hired from DEF; they are being trained to deal with the customers and manage the restaurant all by themselves. "Across India, there are few restaurants that recruit hearing-impaired people but they are not run by them. Here we are breaking all stereotypes in every possible quarter," says Ramya, Sandeep's partner at DEF.

Being only a month old, Talking Hands has been successful in creating a buzz in both the silent and hearing worlds. Guests have been coming to this extraordinary restaurant in steady numbers, appreciating both the concept and the food. "We have to provide great service and food as it's a restaurant above anything else. The stewards are learning how to deal with different sets of guests without getting overwhelmed. On the other hand, for many guests it's their first tryst with the silent world," Ramya explains.

Describing an emotional incident, one of the guests, Meera, says, "Once you get inside, you know you have entered a different world. In other places, you will hear a cacophony of noises but here it's you and the food talking to each other in your own language. Even the process of ordering the food is so engaging."

In the following months, the team hopes that Talking Hands and its food will do the talking and they eventually want to spread out to cities in Telangana as well as other states in India.

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