

## **21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY PUBLIC LIBRARY: A VENTURE TO GET AT ELITE TO TOM, DICK AND HARRY OF INDIA**

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### **ABSTRACT**

This article attempts to show the positive evolution of the Public Libraries of India. It also tries to explain how the libraries become user friendly gradually. It emphasizes on some laws, manifestos/manifest and acts conducive to the progression of 21<sup>st</sup> century public libraries of India. It also focuses on modern technologies closely related to the developing public libraries of India. The article also proposes some plans for the betterment of the libraries for the common mass of India.

**KEYWORDS:** Library Movement, Model Library Bill, Extension Service, National Knowledge Commission, Category of Libraries, Library Legislations, Information Literacy Schedules

### **INTRODUCTION**

From the very beginning, the public library has been believed as social institution based on the democratic theory "of the people, by the people and for the people". The IFLA/UNESCO Public Library Manifesto 1994 details the implication of public libraries as "the local gateway to knowledge, provides a basic condition for lifelong learning, independent decision making and cultural development of the individual and social groups", and again uttered the effect of public libraries for learning and civilization as "a living force for education, culture and information, and as an essential agent for fostering of peace and spiritual welfare through the minds of men and women". (IFLA/UNESCO; 1994). On defining a public library it may be recognized that, "an organization established, supported and funded by the community, either through local, regional or national government or through some other form of community organization. It provides access to knowledge, information and works of the imagination through a range of resources and services and is equally available to all members of the community, regardless of race, nationality, age, gender, religion, language, disability, economic and employment status and educational attainment". (IFLA/UNESCO; 2001; 2, 3). It is according to Dr. S.R Ranganathan, the vicar of Library movement in India, public library is, "one which is open to any member of the public and annually free of any charge paid as so much service". (Ranganathan; 1960; 21).

Indian scenario tells us that Maharaja Sayaji Rao Gaekward has conducted complimentary compulsory basic education sponsored by libraries in 1883 in the district of Baroda and thereafter for the first time in India free public library services were set up as a system in 1907 and widened to the whole state.

### **PRE-INDEPENDENT (BRITISH RULE) GROWTH OF PUBLIC LIBRARY: A BRIEF SUMMARY**

The Bengal Royal Asiatic Society set up library in 1784, Bombay Royal Asiatic Society in 1804 and Calcutta Public Library in 1835. (Sharma; 1987; 99). Establishment of these libraries enlightened and illuminated the common mass

and may be treated as the basis of the notion of public libraries to the Indian people. Some of the vital libraries established in 19th. Century in India is Andrews Library, Surat in 1850, Gaya Public Library, Gaya in 1855, Long Library, Rajkot in 1856, Connemara Public Library, Madras in 1860, Government, Library, Janagarh in 1867, Adyar Library, Adyar in 1886 and DahiLaxmi Library, Nadiad in 1892. (Sharma; 1987; 99). Apart from these, other libraries, like the Gujarat Vernacular Society alongside with a library in Ahmedabad 1848 and Barton Library, Bhavnagar in 1882 were also established. Some of the Indian states also instituted public libraries. Such as Baroda established Baroda State Library in Baroda in 1877, Cochin launched Public Library and Reading Room in Trichur in 1873, Dhar established Victoria General Library in Dhar in 1856, Indore established General Library in Indore in 1852, Jaipur established Maharajah's Public Library in Jaipur in 1899. Others states also established such kind of libraries, viz. Jammu and Kashmir in 1879, Kahtiwari, in 1886, Kolhapur in 1850, Nizam's Dominion in 1891 and Travancore in 1829. (Patel; 2004; 9). The first noteworthy date in the improvement of public libraries in India is 1808 when the Bombay Government commenced a scheme to record libraries, which were to be given copies of books published from the 'Funds for the Encouragement of Literature'. (Bhattacharjee; 2002; 82).

Educationists, intellectuals and people in library loving mind originated Calcutta Public Library in 1835 and the same was inaugurated on 21 March 1836 for the public. In 1944, Calcutta Public Library was moved to a new and large building, erected in honor of Lord Metcalf, the Governor General of India.

Lord Curzon, the then Viceroy and Governor-General of India tripped Calcutta in 1899 and found a wretched state of the Calcutta Public Library. He purchased the rights of the Library from the owners and later combined it with the Official imperial Library comprised of government departmental libraries of the East India Company. He then declared inauguration of a latest Imperial Library of India on 30 January 1903 in the Metcalf Hall. In 1948, just after the independence of India, Imperial Library was converted into the National library of India and was housed in the Viceroy's Palace in Calcutta, to be precise, the Belvedere Palace.

Public libraries in India made a marvelous growth after the independence of India in 1947. The central and the state governments resorted a number of steps onward for the improvement of the nation from the viewpoint of education and believed library as crucial part of it. The programs accomplished by provincial and central governments since 1910 for the adult and social education of the public showed the way for the endorsement of library rules and laws for grants-in-aid in the country. That's why the public library became part of the education budget. (Jambhekar; 1995; 1). To augment the level of literacy of 16% in 1941, the government commenced some programs such as expansion/extension services, lifelong education, societal education, informal education and adult education. The government further began some activities for the progress of society and arranged some assignments in this regard. Libraries were considered to be a basic part of the Community Development Project that was initiated during the first plan period. (Naidu; 1990). In order to speed up the velocity of socioeconomic maturity, the government thought about public libraries to be an indispensable part of development projects. (Jambhekar; 1995)

The Connemara Public Library in Madras turned out to be the State Central Library in 1950 under the stipulation of Madras Public Libraries Act 1948, and became one of the three depository libraries in 1955. Delhi Public Library was set up in 1951 as the first UNESCO Public Library Pilot Project under the joint patronages of UNESCO and Government of India to take up "Modern Techniques to Indian Conditions" and to serve as a model public library in Asia. (Kumbar). In 1954, the Delivery of Books Act was passed to take in the newspaper. The act necessitated every publisher in India to put

down one copy each of its publications to the National Library in Calcutta, the Asiatic Society Library in Bombay, Connemara Public Library in Madras, and Delhi Public Library in New Delhi.

The Advisory Committee for Libraries was comprised in 1957 by the Government of India, with the Chairman named K.P Sinha. The Committee presented its report in 1959 with a well-sketched Model Library Bill. The Planning Commission created a Working Group on Public Libraries in 1964 and the Commission put forward its report in 1965 along with a Model Public Libraries Act. The model bill was reached to all the states/UTs, which do not possess Public Libraries Act. In 1972, the Government of India, Planning Commission formed Working Group on advancement of Public Libraries to render suggestions for library development. Raja Rammohun Roy Library Foundation (RRRLF), a self-governing body under the Department of Culture, Ministry of Education, was founded in 1972. The main goal of the Foundation was to support state library services for their development. Over the past thirty-two years, the Foundation has covered up about much more thirty-one thousand libraries at diverse levels of assistance.

- **Category of Libraries/Kendras, Etc. No of Libraries Covered**
- **State Central Libraries 28**
- **Divisional and District Libraries 451**
- **Sub-division/Taluka/Tehsil Libraries 501**
- **Towns and Rural Libraries 30134**
- **Nehru Yuvak Kendras 272**
- **Jawahar Bal Bhavans 49**
- **Others 128**
- **Total 31563 (Census of India; 1991), (Ghosh, 2005;180-191)**

In 1979, a well-organized library section was instituted by the Department of Culture under the Ministry of Education, which was under the control of an Under Secretary. The intention was to uphold the improvement of public libraries in India. (Jambekar;1995). A Working Group on up-gradation of Library Services and Informatics was employed by the Planning Commission in 1983 and proposed its report in 1984 with the creation of National Policy on Library Services and Informatics. Delhi Public Library got the status of a copyright library in 1982. National Literacy Mission was taken on in 1986, which highlighted education for women and also the importance of rural libraries. Library networks and systems were prepared at the national level institutions in the enhancement of literature in neo literates. Fourteen states, namely, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Maharashtra, West Bengal, Manipur, Kerala, Haryana, Mizoram, Goa, Orissa, Gujarat, Uttaranchal and Rajasthan have passed Public Libraries Bills throughout 1948to 2006.

The Government of India, Department of Culture, selected a Committee on National Policy on Library and Information System in 1985. The National Policy on Education, 1986 uttered that a countrywide progress for the advancement of visible libraries and the establishment of fresh ones will be taken up, provision will be made in all educational institutions for library facilities and advantages, and the position of librarianship enhanced. (Jhambekar; 1995). The National Book, Policy, 1986 also had an impact on libraries, as:

- Proviso of reading material for children by all the agencies involved;
- That 10 percent of the yearly education funds of the governments be utilized to buy books for libraries.

These objectives are to be obtained by using official, non-official, and open channels of education. (Jhambekar; 1995). Rural libraries should become the central position for lifelong educational programs. Publishers, charitable organizations, and school library programs presumed as part of the “Operation Blackboard Scheme” of the National Education Policy on Education, 1986 were given auspices.

### **National Knowledge Commission**

The National Knowledge Commission was established by the Prime Minister of India, Manmohan Singh to get ready a design to hit into the colossal pool of our knowledge base so that our populace can boldly confront challenges and threats of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. The Commission has a selected time edge of three years -----from 2nd. October 2005 to 2nd. October 2008. The Commissions’ Terms of References are:

- Raise fineness in the educational system to meet the knowledge threats of the 21st. Century and boost up India’s competitive benefit in sectors of knowledge.
  - Encourage creation of knowledge in Science & Technology laboratories.
  - Develop the management of institutions connected with Intellectual Property Rights.
  - Approve knowledge applications in Agriculture and Industry.
  - Promote the use of knowledge potentialities in making government an effectual, crystal clear and liable service provider to the civilian and promote all-embracing distribution of knowledge to take full advantage of public benefit.
- (NKC; 2007).
- The Commission was led by Mr. Sam Pitroda as its Chairman with other 5 (five) members, the prominent persons in different pastures of knowledge. It is a highly advanced advisory body to the Prime Minister of India, with a command to guide rule and generate improvements. The Commission is the world’s first body of its type.
- The major focal point of the Commission is on five pillars of the knowledge pattern, such as-

### **Access**

- Literacy
- Translation
- Language
- Libraries
- Portals
- Networks

**Concepts**

- School Education
- Higher Education
- Vocational Education
- Medical Education
- Legal Education
- Engineering Education
- Management Education
- Open and Distance Education

**Creation**

- Intellectual Property Rights (IPRs)
- Science and Technology
- Novelty - Free enterprise

**Application**

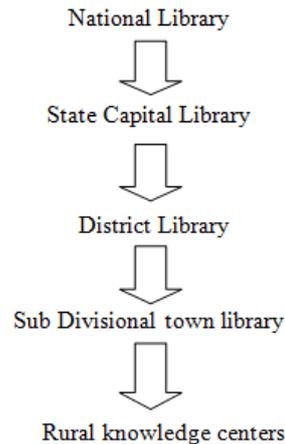
- Agriculture
- Traditional knowledge

**Services**

- E-governance

**The Layers of, Public Library System in India**

- State Central Library= joint publishing, e-governances, an assemblage of bibliographies in provincial language i.e. –Learning.
- District library- communication growth, harmonization of rural knowledge centers.
- Sub divisional -Town library- Interlibrary loan, web based service such as e-education, community information arrangement programs for each and every age group of people.
- Rural knowledge center – Community Information Centre Panchayat level information centers and programs that will help to uphold pleasant relation among rural community.
- Panchayat level information centers and programs that will help to keep satisfactory relation among rural community



**Figure 1**

### **Library Legislation in India**

Advancement of public library system in the state is the accountability of the relative state governments. Ten states in India have endorsed Public Libraries Act in their respective states. The library legislation guarantees the easy and smooth functioning of the public libraries in the state. Public Libraries Act also guarantees each village or city at least have one government-aided public library. This act also creates specifications of funding, human sources and other resources for the progression and activities of public libraries. Several state governments afford allowances for the public libraries; some other state governments gather Library Chess from the taxpayers.

The states that enact Public Libraries Act are presented underneath along with the year:

- Tamil Nadu (then labeled as a Madras Public Libraries Act, 1948);
- Andhra Pradesh (Hyderabad Public Libraries Act, 1955; later as Andhra Pradesh Public Libraries Act, 1960);
- Maharashtra (earlier as a Kolhapur Public Libraries Act, 1945; later Maharashtra Public Libraries Act, 1967);
- Karnataka (Mysore Public Libraries Act, 1965; afterward Karnataka Public Libraries Act)
- West Bengal (West Bengal Public Libraries Act, 1979);
- Manipur (Manipur Public Libraries Act, 1988);
- Kerala (Kerala Public Libraries Act, 1989);
- Haryana (Haryana Public Libraries Act, 1989);
- Mizoram (Mizoram Public Libraries Act, 1993);
- Goa (Goa Public Libraries Act, 1994)
- Uttaranchal (Uttaranchal Public Libraries Act, 2005)

### **Information Literacy Programs for Public Librarians and Public Library Users/Clients**

Information literacy (IL) proficiency enhancement programs for public librarians would be a sort of training

course for the trainers. The public librarians would pass on training to the end users/customers of public libraries. Some of the dexterity needed for the information literacy is already obtained by the public librarians throughout their formal degree or diploma courses; initiation, orientation (direction), and on-the job training programs. Some librarians began their profession before the practices of information communication technologies (ICT) in library services and information management. These ICT skills, power to contact and teaching skills need to be achieved anew through the refresher courses. The goals of the information literacy ability enhancement programs for public librarians can be:

- The capacity to relate the rules of erudite communication to troubles of information handling;
  - The ability to place, choose and use suitable information retrieval tools in order to attain fruitful information in association with studies or work of the end users/, customers and when needed;
  - Self-assurance in using, and contentment in carrying out information searching;
  - Self-reliance in connecting, directing and informing the users.
- Some of the purposes for Information Literacy, capability enhancement for public librarians are:
  - Public librarians would be capable to extend a systematic technique of searching for information linked to areas of studies of the end users/customers;
  - They would be alerted of a broad range of resources (counting open access sources) obtainable for finding information and opt for the sources which will best meet users requires;
  - They would be conscious of apt indexing and abstracting services and databases and recognize the principles and norms of their exercise;
  - They would build up database searching systems for accessing both web-based and CD-ROM databases;
  - They would be able to utilize recent alertness methods to be advanced with the published literature;
  - They would be able to use worldwide scholastic networks for receiving information;
  - They would be competent to utilize and build list servers, conversation forums, Internet chat services and bloggers for acquiring and distributing information;
  - They would be capable to utilize a local library network for distributing in-house possessions and gaining materials through inter-library loan and document delivery services;
  - They would be able to contrast and seriously assess information attained from different sources;
  - They would be proficient to refer to bibliographic references in the articles, papers theses or reports;
  - They would be able enough to create an organizational bibliographic system;
  - They would be able to encourage library end-users/customers in entering library resources and receiving user services;
  - They would be able to correspond, direct and teach library users;

- They would be competent to set up learning and evaluation modules both in hard copy as well as web-enabled form for the learners;
- They would be able to craft plans for persuading stakeholders; and organize plans of action.

Public library authorities in India, such as Raja Rammohun Roy Library Foundation, Delhi Public Library, state central libraries and library associations have also introduced Information Literacy competency development programs for public librarians with aforementioned purposes and goals. The transforming library setting, current and forthcoming public library systems in India expects consideration while scheming such courses and programs.

### Libraries in West Bengal

There must not be any misapprehension that the emergence of libraries in every alternating village in West Bengal is the upshot of the 1979 Library Act. Rather, it is somewhat opposite. Near about 90 percent public libraries were constructed earlier than the Act, arose. In Kolkata only, out of 88 sponsored libraries only 19 spurt after 1979 and out of 10 town libraries simply one was established after the 1979 Act.

In the districts scarcely a library could be seen that succeeded 1979 Library Act. The subsequent table will demonstrate the figure of sponsored public libraries in almost all the districts.

### Names of Districts Numbers of Libraries

**Table 1**

1.	North 24-Parganas	225
2.	North Dinajpur	55
3.	Kolkata	101
4.	Coachbehar	110
5.	Jalpaiguri	110
6.	South 24-paraganas	157
7.	South Dinajpur	57
8.	Darjeeling	214
9.	Nadia	111
10.	Pachim Medinipur	158
11.	Burdwan	212
12.	Purulia	118
13.	Purba Medinipur	122
14.	Bankura	130
15.	Birbhum	124
16.	Malda	105
17.	Murshidabad	159
18.	Hoogly	18
19.	Howrah	159
<b>Total No. of Non Sponsored Govt. Libraries</b>		<b>2426</b>

### Break up of Libraries

- Government Library: 12
- District Libraries: 19
- Town Library/Sub-Division Library: 232
- Rural Library: 2209
- Janagranthagar and Information centre: 319
- Non-Government non-sponsored libraries: 2426 (Chatterjee, P;2012-2013;143-144)

### Fall of Readership: Some Reasons

The Library Act unquestionably offered enthusiasm to the library movement. In spite of that there is notable decadence in the movement. One cause may be peoples spare time has either eaten into different socio economic reasons, or their main concern of media choice has swung from conventional media to some latest media. Once book was the major medium of amusement. Habit of Book reading and the attraction for libraries have disappeared. Libraries used to be earlier is no more an epitome of cultural activities, a place for social dealings. A public library is just like any other public workplace where newspapers are unreservedly obtainable to read. A suitable place for job hunters to get information and important books on jobs. Some students get some reference books on a specific subject essential for his or her exam and find more opportunity to get pages photocopied from a public library. Gone are the days of grave readers. Even the readers of pure literatures like short stories, novels have started vanishing in some urban libraries. The major causes for the readership problems may jot down in the following way.

- There are a number of competitive media that are likely seemed to be more gorgeous and lucrative to the readers than books.
- The usual users of Public Libraries – women and children are more limited of late to different socio economic grounds to swing to ‘joy reading’.
- True book lovers have not been abolished though their number has decreased but they discover more comfortable buying books than going to library. Perhaps the library timing may not go with them or they hate time limit of returning the book on a specific day.
- Public libraries are not endowed with proper man power to defy present day information society nor they are ready to undertake library promotional jobs dynamically. The department gets small concern in budget allotment and is forced to keep many posts unfilled with or without conscious affecting the movement. All the libraries both sponsored and non-sponsored stay alive till date due to the service of some committed library professionals.

### Some Findings

- There should be appropriate harmonization of activities between the different levels of Libraries, specially in respect of those actions which will be of common interest, e.g. training, sharing of databases and contents, problem solving, transaction scrutiny, congregation of information towards setting up of unvarying standards and

modeling of inspection of need, access and distribution, and examination of progress of knowledge based works, and identifying limitations in the system, if there is any.

- The Head of the Library at each level may be assigned as State Librarian, District Librarian and Town Librarian. It is also proposed that the subsequent routine jobs may be outsourced: Stack management, stock verification, borrower's registration, retro conversion, bar coding, digitization, library security and physical infrastructure and preservation, computer network and maintenance. Work of administrative staff such as Night Watchman, Private Night Watchman, Cleaner, Driver, Mali, Book Binder and Sweeper may also be farmed out.
- An Information Officer is required to watch over and synchronize the activities of groups of District Libraries and their Knowledge Centres.
- A UGC type **Library Grant Commission (LGC)** needs to be set up as an apex body at the centre with full financial support from the centre.
- There should be library commission like Indian Press Commission to enquire into the status of public libraries.
- And **6.** The following staff pattern may be maintained.
  - Managerial (Group A)
  - Professional/ Technical Staff (Group B)
  - Para-professional/ Support Staff (Group Q).

## CONCLUSIONS

A new trend is trying furiously to be the trademark of the 21<sup>st</sup> century society, and it is a kind of dependence on e-reading. India must not yield to this custom severely. Indian rural folk cannot pay for 'e' education at private level and we must not anticipate that printed wisdom is totally lost. We must not converse all our national astuteness to the internet oriented reading habit. We must hold on to printed books, must speed up public library movement keeping velocity with latest technology but must make sure that books are studied, as books are obviously meant for reading. It is our (our means the professionals) supreme duty to maintain the delight of reading books, as the proverb says **laws die, books never.**

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