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REVIEW ARTICLE

**AN ANALYSIS ON PROGRESS AND
ADVANCEMENT OF PUBLIC LIBRARY
FRAMEWORK IN INDIA**

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An Analysis on Progress and Advancement of Public Library Framework in India

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INTRODUCTION

Public libraries arose worldwide along with growth in education, literacy, and publications. Every country has its own public library history with influential leaders. Monarchs, wealthy people, and philanthropists have all made a contribution to society in the form of public library development.

India is no exception. Libraries were established in ancient India mainly by the patronage extended by emperors, major capitalists, and scholars. Indian emperors and kings were supported scholars and scholarship. There is evidence of well-developed libraries even in the sixth century A.D. The famous Nalanda University in Bihar had its own magnificent library with a massive collection of manuscripts covering the universe of knowledge. Admission to library was restricted to scholars. Other ancient universities, such as Taxila and Vikramashila, also had valuable libraries. Muslim influence in India during the 13th century A.D. marked the dawn of another era of learning and scholarship. The Mughal period gave a further stimulus to the growth of libraries. Mughal rulers attached considerable importance to libraries and appointed scholars as librarians. The Mughal emperors were patrons of art and literature. In the period of Emperor Babur, Humayun, and Akbar many new libraries were established and existing ones further developed. Mughal libraries featured magnificent buildings, rare manuscripts, and scholar librarians. The names of Maharaja Sawai Man Singh of Jaipur and Maharaja Ranjit Singh of Punjab will be remembered with appreciation in the history of library services in India. The Maharaja of

Tanjar started the famous Saraswati Mahal Library in 17th century A.D. It remains a unique institution in its nature of collection and services (Sathikumar 1993, p. 18) Libraries established by the kings and capitalists functioned like private institutions and the admission was limited. Service to the general public had to wait for the British (Sathikumar, 1993, p. 18-19). Unfortunately, the arrival of the British and resulting political disorder also brought chaos to the Indian way of life. This was a severe blow to the cultural heritage of India, which had arisen from the Indus valley civilization. When libraries began developing in India

during the early nineteenth century, they were a western product.

In 1808, the Government of Bombay proposed to register libraries, which were to be given copies of books published from the "funds for the encouragement of literature" (Dutta, 1970, p. 100). According to the "Sinha Committee", this was the beginning of the first phase of public library development in India. During the first half of the 19th century, the three presidency towns of Bombay, Calcutta, and Madras had public libraries (Jagdish, 1979, p. 19). These libraries were mostly financed by Europeans residing in these towns. Of these, the establishment of the public library at Calcutta in 1835 was the most significant.

This was the library which later developed into the National Library of India. Almost simultaneous, subscription libraries were started in many Indian cities. These were, of course, not public libraries in the true sense of the term, and did not provide free books for all. Founded in imitation of their western counterparts, the use of these libraries was confined to small, affluent portion of society.

PUBLIC LIBRARIES IN INDIA

Public libraries in India have a countrywide spread, consist of state central libraries in every state, district libraries, urban public libraries at the cities and rural public libraries at the villages. Public libraries are mainly supported by state governments and local authorities, and some times by the central government, developmental agencies, non-government organizations and private trusts. The Delhi Public Library (DPL), established in 1951 by government of India in collaboration with UNESCO, caters library and information services to the National Capital Territory of Delhi. Raja Rammohan Roy Library Foundation (RRRLF) is the nodal agency of the Government of India to support public library services and system and promote public library movement in the country. The RRRLF undertakes different functions in each state and union territory through a State Library Planning Committee (SLPC) or State Library Committee (SLC). Its headquarters' is located at Kolkata and it has four zonal offices in

Kolkata, Delhi, Mumbai and Chennai. RRRLF provides financial and technical assistance to public libraries and organizations engaged in the promotion of public library development through different schemes. Schemes of RRRLF broadly categorized as Matching Schemes and Non-Matching Schemes. Assistance under matching schemes is given from the resources shared on 50:50 matching basis with the state governments. Assistance under non-matching schemes does not have share of the state governments.

Table 1 shows the number of different public libraries in India. Table data also indicates that there is lack of existence of public libraries in most of the villages even after 59 years of independence. The real catch of India's development lies in villages where focused spread of rural libraries can catalyze the diffusion of knowledge among rural masses. This effort needs to be the core of our social and rural development programmes as this has been untouched so far. Probably, this is one of the reasons of mass ineffectivity of literacy programmes and other development programmes envisaged for rural mass.

Demography of India	Number	Public Libraries ^{##}	Number	Percentage covered
States and Union Territories	35	State Central Libraries	28	80%
Districts	592	District Libraries	451	76%
Talukas [#]	3,987	Taluka Libraries	501	12.5%
Villages [#]	587,226	Rural Libraries	28,820	4.9%

Table 1: Penetration of Public Libraries in India

Public library is largely regarded as the People's University. It has tremendous developments in India from the early period to till date at various stages. Most of the Indian states now have free public library services to develop the people of India at different levels, which can be stated as below briefly;

Ancient Period (before 1200 AD) - "The history of the development of the public library may be said to be as old as that of education in India". (Ekbote;1987;2). During Vedic times, the pupils stayed in the *guru-gruha* for several years for education. Since ancient times, India is being very much pertinent in search of knowledge and wisdom. Oral communication was the best means amongst the people of India and writing was not available. "The earliest written and recorded materials found in India are the inscriptions on stone pillars of King Asoka (300 BC); these inscriptions could be called the first outside open libraries".

(Patel;2004;3). Later, *Ashrams* came into existence in India and students study under the supervision of well-known teachers. They kept many manuscripts for use of the teachers and students as well as for the visitors.

Many students joined ashrams and such big ashrams were known as *vidyapeeth*, where numbers of teachers are engaged to teach the students. These educational institutions collected many different manuscripts and other materials which can help in

their teaching and daily routine. They kept and preserved carefully. "The reading materials, of course, related to many subjects formed the source material for transmitting knowledge in different streams of education and culture.

"In India, since the ancient times libraries have been functioning as light houses for those who wanted to read and to extend the boundaries of various disciplines. References are available to prove that Nalanda University (in Bihar) had its own multistoried library in 600 AD with massive collection of manuscripts. The collection of the library was housed in three buildings, each having nine floors and three hundred rooms. This library was opened by the then Emperor of India, King Davapal. The library was open for any body that was known scholar and took interest in reading, interpreting and even copying the documents kept in the library. Chinese traveler Whuen Sang is known to have consulted this library in the seventh century and to have taken from here hundreds of treatises to China and Japan. This library was completely destroyed by Bakhtiar Khilaji, who invaded India in 1205 AD. And burnt the library. The library kept on burning for about six months". (Sharma;1987;97).

Medieval Period (1200-1757 AD) - Muslims mostly rule the Medieval Period of India. Historically, it is also known as Mughal Period. There were great changes not only in social and political, but also on education and library system during this period. The Muslim rulers made great contributions to Indian culture and libraries played a significant role in the sociocultural development of the nation. "The period of Mughal is considered as the golden period of Indian history for its educational, literary, and library activities".

The British Period (1757-1947) - The Britishers came to India primarily to establish trade and commerce. Some of them were very interested for the upliftment of rich cultural heritage of India. "A number of Academic institutions were established during the British period by the East India Company (the representatives of the British Empire) and by the Christian missionaries". (Patel;2004;8). The University of Calcutta was established in 1857 and its library was opened in 1873. Other Universities, University of Bombay and University of Madras were established in 1879 and 1907 respectively. There were only nineteen Universities in India before 1947. Universities were equipped with libraries in accordance with the Indian University Act of 1904. 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 the community and may be regarded as the foundation of the concept of public libraries to the Indian people. Some of the important libraries set up in 19th.

Century in India are 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 Dahi Laxmi Library, Nadiad in 1892. (Sharma;1987;99). Apart from these, other libraries, like Gujarat Vernacular Society along with a library, in Ahmedabad 1848 and Barton Library, Bhavnagar in 1882 were also established. Some of the Indian states also established public libraries. Such as Baroda established Baroda State Library in Baroda in 1877, Cochin established 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, Kahtiawar, in 1886, Kolhapur in 1850, Nizam's Dominion in 1891 and Travancore in 1829. (Patel;2004;9). The first significant date in the development of public libraries in India is 1808 when the Bombay Government initiated a proposal to register libraries, which were to be given copies of books published from the 'Funds for the Encouragement of Literature'. (Bhattacharjee;2002;82).

Post-Independence Period (1947 onwards) - Public libraries in India made a tremendous growth after the independence of India in 1947. The central and the state governments took a number of steps forward for the development of the nation from the point of education and considered library as essential part of it. The programs executed by provincial and central governments since 1910 for the social and adult education of the populace paved the way for the enactment of library laws and rules for grants-in-aid in the country. Hence public library became part of the education budget. (Jambhekar;1995;1). To enhance the level of literacy of 16% in 1941, the government undertook some programmes such as extension services, continuing education, social education, non-formal education and adult education. The government further initiated steps for the development of community and organized some projects in this regard. Libraries were considered to be an essential part of the Community Development Project that was launched during the first plan period. (Naidu;1990). In order to accelerate the pace of socioeconomic development, the government considered public libraries to be an integral part of development projects. (Jambhekar;1995).

LIBRARY LEGISLATION

Several attempts are being made by individuals and library associations to provide public libraries under law. Apart from Dr. S.R. Ranganathan, a number of individuals spent their time and energy to put on the statute book public library laws. Notable among them are Kumar Munindra Deb Rai Mahasai of Bengal, K.V. Krishna Swamy Iyer, T.R. Venkataraman Sastry,

Basheer Ahmed Sayeed of Madras, M.V. Donde of Bombay, K.M. Ujalambkar of Hyderabad and P.N. Kaula of Delhi. It is only after India's independence that, Dr. Ranganathan's dream of public Library Act enactment was fulfilled. Through the good offices of the then Minister for Education, Avinaslingam Chettiar, a modified Bill was introduced in the state legislature which was passed as the Madras Public Libraries Act in 1948. Since then the following ten States have enacted library acts for their respective states:

1. Tamil Nadu (1948)
2. Andhra Pradesh (1960)
3. Karnataka (1965)
4. Maharashtra (1967)
5. West Bengal (1979)
6. Manipur (1988)
7. Kerala (1989)
8. Haryana (1989)
9. Goa (1993)
10. Mizoram (1993)

It is heartening to note that the major states in terms of population and other natural resources like UP, MP, Bihar, Rajasthan and Panjab have no library legislation. No professional force is able to motivate the state governments in this direction.

For getting into the profession, public librarians should have formal training, at least a Certificate in Library Science (CLS) or Diploma in Library Science (DLS) for the rural libraries and Bachelor's in Library and Information Science (BLIS) for the district libraries. There is also provision of training of public librarians in the Public Libraries Act in some states, in the forms of orientation training, refresher training. The public librarians should be aware of recent development in information sources and information systems, especially in the digital

environment, as many public libraries worldwide are providing web-based library and information services to their users. Digital divide in the India can be bridged significantly if they make use of computers and Internet technologies in the public libraries at the grass-root level. The users of public libraries then will have access to digital information available through Internet to keep abreast of recent development in their areas of interest. Information literacy competency development programmes for public

librarians and users need to be a part of provisions in the Public Libraries Act of the states.

FUNCTIONS OF PUBLIC LIBRARY

Here are given the functions as described and discussed by various learned bodies: (a) UNESCO manifests for public libraries to perform the following functions:

“The public library must offer to adults and children the opportunity to keep in touch with their times, to educate themselves continuously and keep at least of progress in the sciences and arts. Its contents should be a living demonstration of the evolution of knowledge and culture, constantly reviewed kept up-to-date and attractively presented. In this way it will help people from their own opinion, and develop their creative and critical capacities and powers of appreciation. The public library is concerned with the communication of information and ideas, whatever the form in which these may be expressed.

(b) The committee to frame of the public library service in England and Wales (1957) has mentioned that the public library should perform the following functions:

“It is the function of a public library not to satisfy but to promote the desire a books. Consequently the provisions of a children’s library with adequate stocks and expert guidance in the choice of books should be regarded as an integral part of the library services.....”.

(c) American library association (in public library services: a guide to evaluation, with minimum standards) has prescribed the following functions of a public library:-

(i) “To enrich and further develop the subjects on which individuals are undertaking formal education.

(ii) To facilitate informal education of all people in the community.

(iii) To meet the information need of all.

(iv) To support the educational, civic and cultural activities of groups and organization.

(v) To encourage whole some recreation and constructive use of leisure time.”

From the above mentioned functions of the public libraries, we can conclude that the functions are as under:-

(a) Educational:- In order to fulfill its objectives with regard to education it is the primary function of the public library to offer reading materials for education to the public. It is also to offer such services that will support and facilitate the programmes of educational institutions. The education here does not mean

education in any narrow sense. It covers formal education, and adult education etc. The services include supporting or auxiliary services as well as those that the public library may initiate of its own. Moreover, the public library has a major role to play in the fields of continuing, adult distance education.

(b) Civic functions:- The public library has a fundamental function to play in offering to the citizens of democracy the mean by which they may become informed and intelligent citizens. This will help them to know defend and enjoy their rights and realize and discharge their duties in a free society.

(c) Utilitarian Functions:- Public library is a People’s university. It has to offer to the people of its locality materials and services that will help them to prosper in their respective profession and got along in the world. To student they will offer a wide range of services that will help them better grades. Similarly many services are offered to other classes of society so that they may keep up with latest developments in their professions and vocations, which is essential for occupational proficiency and prosperity. This is more important in the present day world when inventions and discoveries are flooding the world day in and day out impelling a man to have continuing education for professional maturity.

(d) Cultural Functions:- A public library is a cultural center in more than one way. It plays a vital role in collecting and preserving the cultural heritage of the locality and making it readily available to the people of the locality to enrich its cultural awareness. It also organizes various cultural activities to disseminate the cultural heritage of the locality. It also attempts to reduce the cultural lag the time taken for the innovation to become integrated into society.

(e) Social Functions:- The public library has a great role to play in social education to prepare people for social adjustment. It also offers material and services to the public to understand social phenomena and thus like a success social life and avoid social evils. It provides opportunities to the people to understand social disease and how to control them.

ROLE OF STATE LEVEL LIBRARY ASSOCIATIONS

Library associations exist in most of the states and union territories of India. State level library associations are very active in public libraries development in their respective states. Some library associations also conduct certificate and diploma courses in library science that help the learners get into the profession. Some library associations also conduct refresher courses for the in-service public librarians, mostly in the areas of library automation, ICT applications in libraries, and other contemporary issues. Most library associations observe Library Day and Dr. S.R. Ranganathan’s birthday. On those occasions they organize one-day seminars or

lectures. These way public librarians get informed about the recent development in the librarianship and public libraries movement in India and the states. Some library associations bring out their newsletters and bulletins for their member librarians and disseminate various professional information.

Some library associations take up the issue of information literacy competency for the librarians and library users. Library associations in the states need to come forward and develop information literacy competency of the public librarians through organizing training programmes, workshops and seminars. In December 2005, Indian Library Association had organized 51th All India Conference with the focus on "libraries, information literacy and lifelong learning", where many librarians felt the importance of information literacy in lifelong learning and optimizing the usage of information in the libraries. In October 2005, an international information literacy workshop was held at the Punjabi University, Patiala, India to promote information literacy in South and South East Asia, with the support of UNESCO and other partners. In September 2003 at Prague, the *International Alliance for Information Literacy* was formed where India's *Networking Alliance for Voluntary Actions*, a network of NGOs, became a member. In India, a number of NGOs support public libraries and community information centres, where common people become users of these libraries. The state level library associations, NGOs and developmental agencies can collaborate amongst themselves to develop information literacy competencies of the librarians and library users.

ADVISORY COMMITTEE FOR LIBRARIES

The Government of India appointed a committee in 1957 to report on the status of public library development in the country. It is also called the Sinha Committee, after its chair, the late Dr. A.P. Sinha, who was at that time Director of Public Instruction in Bihar.

The Sinha Committee's charge included:

- Determining present reading needs, how they are met, and what part existing library systems play in meeting the needs;
- Determining reading tastes, what agencies provide suitable literature, and how reading taste can be improved;
- Recommending future library structure in India;
- Recommending areas of cooperation between libraries and education systems;
- Considering the training of librarians and the conditions of their service;

- Recommending the administrative and financial measures necessary to support public libraries in

India (Ministry of Education, India, 1961, p. 126). The committee submitted its report to Dr. K.L. Shrimali, who was Minister for Education, on the 12th of November, 1958. The Committee described the situation as dismal and called libraries in most cases, "a stagnant pool of books," because new books were not added regularly. The committee at the same time observed that wherever large collections did exist, they were not fully used because of rigid rules. Library users were not trusted and were required to deposit large sums of money as a kind of insurance, which lower income people could not afford. According to the report, as of March 1954 there were 32,000 libraries in India, with a little more than 7,100,000 books and a total circulation of about 37,700,000. The report observed that genuine public library service was rarity, and that public library service throughout the country was unsatisfactory. The committee recommended creating state library networks based on uniform library legislation.

CONCLUSION

India now has become one of the most developing countries in the world. It spreads in various fields of knowledge and disseminates its resources to the world.

It has also established public libraries and community information centers to give and help local community to acquire information from various agencies. Public library services have been expanded to serve the local people, but after 60 years of independence India, public libraries could not be administered and managed with the clear mandate of law in many states of India. As such, the development of the nation through library services is neglected in some states, and its services are beyond the reach of the rural poor.

It is an established fact that the contact libraries organized by British High Commission and United States Information Services in India. The British Libraries and American Centers have impressed the elite public in few state capitals and the national capital. It is hoped that in the 10th Five Year plan period RRRLF take the lead and muster all possible resources to develop a model public library which can make use of all modern technologies, at least one in each state, and Union Territory. Even the serious through it may be given to the Member of the Parliament Local Area Development Programme where in the funds can be diverted to the development of model public libraries in each district. In this direction strong coordinated efforts on war footing becomes inevitable.

Public libraries can also play a pivotal role for national development programmes and bringing mass affectivity of such programmes. Hence, horizontal diffusion of information literacy can reap the optimum value of envisaged programmes. Public libraries have always been the door to learning for a great majority of the populations that they serve. They are knowledge centres and contribute to lifelong learning. For India, there are bumps in the road that leads to the goal of having an institution to serve the masses, which is even more imperative in the present information society, in a nation where 40 percent of the population is living below the poverty line. A massive investment in public libraries is needed to make them true information resource centres for the layman

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