CHAPTER - 1

INTRODUCTION

Quality of living of the citizens of a society is measured by the quality of education they attain. Libraries have been considered to be as indispensable as the other formal educational institutions like schools and colleges in a modern society the world over, irrespective of the system of government it adopts. Still, public libraries are not always given appropriate recognition, especially in the developing countries. India being a land credited with the honour of one of the oldest civilizations of the world has also the rare distinction of being the land of walking dictionaries and encyclopaedias. But the existence of library in India, though not exactly in the modern sense of the term, is not as new as it is thought of. Even in those old days of the Brahmanas and Upanisads libraries seem to have come into existence long before we have positive evidence of this habit.

The concept of public libraries, however, is a modern development concurrent with the evolution of the socio-economic and administrative setup of the world view. At earlier times libraries were the reservations of the scholars and the aristocrats. But with the emergence of the democratic and socialistic forms of government it came to be “a commonplace that the success of a democracy depends on the level of intelligence of the people who compose it. ‘...in a country like ours they are indispensable. Local bodies

1 Campbell, H. C. Developing public library systems and services. Paris: UNESCO, 1983
should be encouraged to start libraries not only in towns but in major villages.”³

The development of public libraries in India, in the modern sense of the term, has been burgeoning with the advent of the Europeans, especially the British. Though in the beginning, it was solely on religious interest that the Europeans endeavoured to spread education amongst the natives, but later on as necessary follow up of history flame of enlightenment began to beam. With the passing of time it came to such a pass that during the pre-independence period the minds of the nationalist leaders of that time was shaped by the libraries and on the other hand the trend of library movement of the country was also shaped by them. Library organizations and associations, to name a few, Indian Library Association (ILA), Indian Public Library Association (IPLA), Rajib Gandhi Foundation (RGF), Bengal Library Association (BLA) has made great contribution to develop library awareness among the general public on the one hand, and ignite the governmental machinery to adopt proper measures for public library development. The great writers, social activists and thinkers also made remarkable contribution to this effect. It was only after independence that the development and growth of libraries in the country became part of our national development programmes and the establishment of public libraries proliferated ion a rapid pace all over the country.

A number of plans and programmes had been formulated by the Government of India at different times for development and promotion of public library services in the country. Measures have also been taken to examine and assess the state for affairs of public library services with a view to draw out suitable development plans. The Sinha Committee, chaired by K. P. Sinha appointed in 1957, NAPLIS⁴ (1986) (National Policy on Libraries and

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³ Radhakrishnan, Sarvepalli. – ibid., p.158
⁴ India. HRD Ministry, Department of Culture. Committee on National Policy on Library and Information System – a presentation. New Delhi: Govt. of India, 1986
Information System) under the Chairmanship of Prof. D. P. Chattopadhyay appointed by the Ministry of HRD, Govt. of India, the Empowered Committee (1988) to consider the recommendations of NAPLIS, Advisory Committee for Libraries (1959), Planning Commission Working Group on Libraries and Informatics (1885-90), National Commission on Libraries and Information Service etc. were the agencies commissioned by the Government of India are the evidences of the efforts on the part of the government for the promotion and development of public library services, although one cannot always be happy as to the true commitment of the government considering the way it either ignored or did little justice to the recommendations of all the commissions and committees set up for the purpose.

In this course of activities Raja Rammohun Roy Library Foundation was set up by the Government of India in 1972 with 29 objectives as is stated in its Memorandum of Association, the principal ones being to develop and promote public library services through the length and breadth of the country, especially in the remote rural areas where the general public is mostly deprived of the availability of books and information. It has also plans to develop a strong network of public libraries. Besides being a funding agency it has plans to act as an advisory body relating to the services of public libraries.

With a modest start, RRRLF has by now established itself a sound organisation exploiting relentless service for the cause of public library development in the country. Its Headquarter being housed at Kolkata, it has been rendering its services through its four zone offices functioning from New Delhi, Mumbai, Chennai, and Bangalore.

West Bengal, a constituent state of India bears a great tradition in education and culture. It is also a leading state in the field of library movement in the country. Great personalities in the field of education,
culture, as well as leading organizations and associations has played important roles for the development and promotion of library services in the state that stood as a role model in the country. It is one of the leading states that had been striving for the promulgation of public library act in the country, though, eventually it come to be the fifth state in the country to be succeeded to promulgate it in 1972. RRRLF, the funding and monitoring agency for the development and promotion of public library services in the country is named after a great son of Bengal who is recognized to be the inaugurator of modern age in India. Finally the Headquarters of the Foundation is housed in the state that justifies special concern as to the activities and accomplishments rendered by the Foundation in the state. It in this backdrop that present study is undertaken to assess and examine the overall perspective of RRRLF with special reference to West Bengal.

1.1 Objectives of the Study

The following are the aims and objectives of the present study as is laid down in the synopsis approved by the Board of Research of the University:

i) To examine and assess the organization and functions of Raja Rammohun Roy Library Foundation.

ii) To examine and assess the aims and objectives of the Foundation as is laid down in its Memorandum of Association and to suggest necessary modifications and changes thereto.

iii) To examine and assess how far the aims and objectives of the Foundation has been attained so far by the services rendered by the Foundation, with special reference to the state of West Bengal.
iv) To examine and assess the existing library system, nature of services and also to evaluate the state of services rendered by the system.

v) To examine and assess the existing user need, future user need, existing and future user pattern etc.

1.2 Scope of the Study

The scope of the study is West Bengal. The study is designed to examine and evaluate how and to what extent RRRLF has accomplished the task of development and progress of public library services in the state. To examine and evaluate the accomplishments of the Foundation a random sampling of the public libraries government, government sponsored and private libraries is made for the purpose of field survey and spot verification.

1.3 Relevance of the Study

The Raja Rammohun Roy Library Foundation was established in the year 1972 with the sole aim of promotion and development of public libraries not only in the district and sub-divisional level towns but also in the remotes villages throughout the country, to do justice the dictum that promotion reading habit is one of the fundamental instruments for both economic development and promotion of democratic rights. More than thirty-six years has passed since its inception. Therefore it is imperative on the part citizens of the country to know how far the Raja Rammohun Roy Library Foundation is successful in its endeavours to appropriate the aims and objectives it is
destined to. It is only when we come to know state of services and the attainments only then we can be able to justify the existence of the organization. The present study is aimed to make an in-depth examination of the matters just told of, and here lies the relevance of the study.

1.4  Uniqueness of the Study

On literature search, it is revealed that except some dispersed articles no such study has yet been made to the tune as is the present study endeavoured with,. On this count the present study may be considered to be unique. The study is not confine to mere descriptive presentation of the organisation and administration of the Foundation but it also attempted to make a critical analysis of the activities and accomplishments made by the Foundation. Uniqueness of the study lies in its objectives, scope, findings and especially in the field study that will be helpful to the future planners working in the field of public library services.

1.5  Hypothesis

1. The objectives of RRRLF as is stated in its Memorandum of Association though unique in print has not been updated to meet the demands of the day in view of the changed socio-economic scenario.
2. The organizational structure of the Foundation is not designed judicially as the majority of the representatives are constituted from non-library personnel.

3. The extent of assistances made by the Foundation towards its various schemes is not sufficient to bring about expected impact and the criteria of eligibility for receiving assistances from the Foundation is not always conducive ground realities and therefore stands as a hindrance to achieve the objectives it aims at.

4. The activities of the Foundation focused mainly on money and matter but the humanitarian concern is lying out of sight. The development of material infrastructure is nevertheless important, but the user needs, the existing as well as prospective user pattern and such other intrinsic matters are not properly addressed.

1.6 Methodology

The methodology and technique to locate, collect, examine and interpret data and other necessary information adopted as follows:

i) To study and examine the primary documents of the RRRLF like Annual Reports and circulars and notices of the Foundation, articles of the RRRLF Newsletters, articles published in the RRRLF journal ‘Granthana; Indian Journal of Library Studies’ etc. as far as practicable.

ii) Sample Survey: Sample survey relating to existing user profile, user needs, future user requirements, user satisfaction levels, effectiveness of present library service, staffing, job satisfaction of
staff, staff efficiency and such other matters relating to direct or indirect link with library services.

ii) Case Study, statistical investigations, examination of reports of governmental agencies, Annual Reports, minutes etc. was conducted.

iii) Interview of library personnel, library users, and even general public were interviewed and opinion-survey was conducted.

iv) Questionnaire by personal contact and through mail.

v) Tele and web services were also availed to collect necessary data and information.

1.7 Literature Review

The study of the British Museum Library System under the chairmanship of Fred Dainton is one of the most important and high-powered study on public library under state sponsorship. Edward Edwards, the legendary librarian, has made a colossal study of the public libraries not only of Great Britain and Scotland but also those of USA, continental Europe, France Germany, Italy, the Scandinavian countries and many other parts of the globe. The legendary librarian Lionel R. McColvin’s study on the state of affair of library personnel in UK is still a model study to be followed even today. The study covers library system in Great Britain, standard and types of libraries, stock supply and cooperation among the libraries, staff conditions, financial

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8 McColvin, Lionel R. The public library system in Great Britain: a report on its present condition with proposals for post-war reorganization. London: Library Association, 1942
aspects and all other admissible areas of public library services. Aliaga’s study on public attitude towards library in the Latin American countries may be applicable in the Indian situation which shows that between 8-10 per cent of overall indigenous Latin American population are library goers. Slater’s study on secondary school level library users relating to career guidance is illustrative and bears sufficient merit in its applicability in the public library field. Greiner’s is an excellent work on the research issues in public librarianship.

Ranganathan has made numerous contributions throughout his life towards development and promotion of public library services in the country through numerous books and articles on the subject. He prepared a draft for model public library act for the states to be followed for enactment. He even prepared a model act for the state of West Bengal in particular on initiation of Kumar Munindra Deb Ray Mahasaya. Ranganathan made an attempt to focus on the world standard of the public library services followed by the developed western countries with a view to set a target standard to be followed in our country. The Report of the Advisory Committee of Libraries is perhaps the first important government document on public library finances in India. It also suggested for development of library system in the states, service units of the libraries, finance and accounts, salaries of the library staff etc. N. C. Chakravarty’s article on public library finance, perhaps the first in the field of public library finance in India, tries to show that what is spent on public libraries is negligible and suggested for a comprehensive plan.

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9 Aliaga, Cesar Casto. Library services for Latin American indigenous population. IFLA, 2004
   - Post-war librarianship of libraries in India: a scheme. Lahore: Punjab Library Association, 1944
13 India. Ministry of Education and Youth Affairs.
14 Chakravarty, N C. Public library finance. IASLIC Bulletin, 10, 16-28
The NAPLIS report\textsuperscript{15} prepared by the National Policy on Library and Information System is one of the in depth study on public library situation in India. It encompasses all aspects of library services – administration, staff, financial resource mobilisation, infrastructure, collection strength development etc. One of its important suggestions is to make provision of 6-10 per cent of education budget of the union and state governments. The Research Committee of RRRLF prepared Guidelines for Public Library and Systems Services\textsuperscript{16} is another important work for public library development suggesting collective responsibility of all administrative units – from the central government to state and even local bodies. It even laid importance on the role of the voluntary organizations associated with library services which is justifiably reflected in its programme of assistance extended to the voluntary organisations.

A pilot survey of library services was conducted under the sponsorship of Raja Rammohun Roy Library Foundation in Andhra Pradesh through the Library science department of Andhra University during 1980\textsuperscript{17}. The main objectives of the study was to study the structure and administrative pattern of the public libraries, including finance, of the state, to study the reading interest of the community including its effect upon the people, to study the problems relating to administration and library personnel, nature of services rendered by the library system of the state etc. S. R. Ranganthan’s Model Act\textsuperscript{18} for the Union and the States which dealt with all aspects like organization, administration and other matters conducive to the development of public library system delineates how the financial aspects can be met best. In fact, Dr. Ranganthan’s contribution towards development and promotion of public library systems and services in India is

\textsuperscript{15} India. Ministry of Human Resource Development. Committee on National Policy of Library and Information System – a presentation. New Delhi: Govt. of India, 1986

\textsuperscript{16} Kalia, D. R. \textit{et a.} Guidelines for Public Library Systems and Services, Granthana; Indian Journal of Library Studies, 2 (1), 1991

\textsuperscript{17} RRRLF Newsletter, 1: 1, (July 1981), p.5

monumental. The Draft Manual prepared by PIG and UNISIST attempted to assess concomitance between library resource and library performance level\textsuperscript{19}.

The joint 34\textsuperscript{th} All India Library Conference and the 13\textsuperscript{th} National Seminar deliberated on the state of public libraries in various states\textsuperscript{20}. L S Ramaih\textsuperscript{21} estimated the number of public libraries in India as 42,531 and advocated adequate financial raising the performance of library services in the country. A. A. A. N. Raju\textsuperscript{22} made an extensive study of the public library situation of the Telengana district of Andhra Pradesh in which he attempted to ground realities of the area. Panda's\textsuperscript{23} work throws light opens a comprehensive picture of the public library systems and services of the state of Orissa. It includes organisation and administration of the rural libraries of the state, collection development, technical processing of reading materials, building and furnishing of the rural libraries, finance and budgeting, service and operation reporting and return of the rural libraries of the state. This study may be considered to be a model for local area study on the subject. Dr. D. R. Kalia\textsuperscript{24} made a novel approach in the study of library services in India and suggested that empowerment of Panchayati Raj would be the determining force in public library development in the country. K. Ravindran\textsuperscript{25} made a brief historical sketch of public library development in India from the pre-independence period till the post-independence. He also made an exposition of state of library acts in the country coined the position of prospect library services with the state of book production in the country.

\textsuperscript{20} ILA. 34\textsuperscript{th} National Seminar Souvenir. Calcutta: Bengal Library Association, 1988
\textsuperscript{22} Raju, A. A. A. N. Constraints in the public library services in Andhra Pradesh. CLIS Observer, 7, 3-4, p.69-72, 1970
\textsuperscript{23} Panda, B. D. Twenty years of rural library services in Orissa. Cuttack: Educational Publishers, 1994
\textsuperscript{24} Kalia, D R. Public Libraries and Panchayati Raj. CLIS Observer, 10, 3s
\textsuperscript{25} Ravindran, K. Public libraries in India in Public Library System in India, ed. C. A. Augustine et al. New Delhi: Ess Ess, 1990, p.1-7
Despande and Hungund 26 critically examines the accomplishments of RRRLF and suggested for critical evaluation of the works of the beneficiary libraries out of RRRLF fund at regular intervals. It also recommends the Foundation a study of IFLA standards in the light of recent developments for adoption in public libraries. R. S. P. Singh made an analysis on the position of public libraries in Bihar from the State to the village level27. S. M. Safi and Reyaz Rufai briefly traced the historical development of public libraries in Jammu & Kashmir28. Sewa Singh made a brief account of the historical development of public libraries in Punjab29. Prof. Manoranjan Mahapatra30 made an overview of the public library movement in Orissa. Sitakant Mahapatra31 traced the limitations of RRRLF activities and made some important suggestions to bring books to the doorsteps of rural India. Girija Kumar32 attempted to visualize the past and future of public library situation in the country. S. P. Agarwal33 has made a comparative study of development of library services of the states and union territories of India. Gopal Rao Ekbote34 has made a study on the prevalent public library system in the country. A. F. M. F. Kabir35 and Ajay Kumar Sharma36 critically traces the development of

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31 Mahapatra, Sitakant. School-cum-Village library: taking books to rural India. Granthana; Indian Journal of Library Studies. 1(2) 2005, p.56-60
32 Kumar, Girija. Library development in India; retrospect and prospect. New Delhi, 1987
public library development in Bengal. Prof. (Dr.) Amit Kumar Banerjee has made a very important task of a users’ survey of the public libraries in West Bengal in which he laboriously and critically explored almost all the situations that a public library has to go through in its regular activities. In another study, Prof. Bandyopadhyay explored the information need of the rural library users and in a similar study he explored the users’ need in the modern changing information perspective. Thomas made an incisive analysis of public library development in India with respect to financial support from the union and state governments with special emphasis on the role of RRRLF. A. K. Ohdedar made an incisive study on the growth of library in India since 1498, the year the country came in contact with the western civilization with Vasco-de-Gama anchored off Calicut, till 1836, the year Calcutta Public Library formally opened to the public.

The last and might be one of the best exposition of library studies relating to West Bengal is of P. S. G. Kumar which is a monumental work in the field under review covering various states of India. Krishnapada Majumdar is also one of the finest elucidation of the historical perspective of the development and progress of public libraries in West Bengal. The role of Bengal Library Association in accelerating the developmental process of public libraries in Bengal with summary accounts of the each and every Annual General

38 Bandyopadhyay, Amit Kumar. Users of rural information and role of public libraries and information centres in West Bengal. Seminar papers of IASLIC, 2004, 21-30
Meetings of BLA and examination of their impacts is an invaluable contribution in the field. He traced the history of library development at all levels including public libraries in the state dating back from the 5th century AD to modern period.

1.8 Discussions and Interviews

To get first-hand knowledge as well as to examine the authenticity of the information presented in the documentary reports made by the concerned library authorities, officials and professionals, interview and discussions with the personalities relating to the concerned libraries, organizations and associations are conducted.

1.9 Libraries and Documentation Centres consulted:

For the purpose of the study a random sampling has been made of the public libraries of all categories and types - government, government-sponsored and private; from the State Central Library down to the rural level. All these libraries have been consulted and used as sources of sample data collection and reference work. Extensive use in reference study was made in the National Library, Kolkata, Metropolitan Library, Kolkata, the special public library of Raja Rammohun Roy Library Foundation, Salt Lake, Kolkata, Bangiya Sahitya Parisat, and the library of Bengal Library Association, Kolkata, State Central Library, Kolkata, State Central Library, Hyderabad, Central Library, the University of Burdwan, Central Library, University of Jadavpur, Central Library, Osmania University, Hyderabad and other libraries.
1.10 Survey and Analysis

In addition to the methods and approaches mentioned above a sample survey was conducted to collect relevant data to understand the ground realities relating to the state of affairs of the public libraries functioning in West Bengal. It is indeed a matter of great concern that the Government of West showed interest on library matters by sponsoring an evaluation study library services programme. Though it apparently appears not to be necessary as to the purview of the present study, still it has been made part if it both in the proposed synopsis and the final part of the thesis with the following aims and objectives in view:

a) The assessment and progress of any project is to be finally determined by the level of satisfaction by the end users of the particular project.

b) The findings of the survey will be useful to measure quality of service rendered as well as detect the drawbacks thereof the will be instrumental to measure the feasibility of plans and programmes of the field in future. It is especially true in the case of RRRLF as the findings of the survey will be helpful in determining the type and extent of assistances and grants in its future plans.

c) Cost efficiency is also taken to be an important factor - while going on the main study the simultaneous sample field-survey saves time, energy and cost to a major extent.

d) Sorting of survey data is made by using the UNESCO sponsored library software CDS/ISIS.

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