CHAPTER II

KERALA GRANDHASALA SANGHAM/
PUBLIC LIBRARY MOVEMENT OF
KERALA

1. Introduction
2. Different Stages of Development
3. Objectives of Sangham
4. Emblem
5. Mouth piece
6. Unique features of Public Library System of Kerala
1. Introduction
The development of the library movement in Kerala is unique and is inextricably connected with the economic, social, political and educational development of the State. Kerala has the largest number, per head of rural libraries in India. Kerala has 900 villages and 170 townships and cities. If the number of libraries goes up to 6000 then on an average there are 6 libraries per village. This compares very favorably with other states of India.

It is not in the number alone that the Kerala libraries excel. It is in their quality of service and functioning that the public libraries claim their uniqueness. The Kerala library system owes less to Government sponsorship and aid and more to the voluntary effort of the people. Most of the libraries are established at the sole initiative of the local people.

2. Different stages of development
The history of the library movement of Kerala can be divided into four stages
1. 1829 to 1945 can be called the introduction stage / beginning stage
2. 1945 to 1977 can be called the developing stage
3. 1977 to 1994 can be called the problem facing stage
4. Post 1994 can be called the present scenario.

2.1 First stage (1829-1945)
According to the State Editor, Kerala District Gazetteer the Trivandrum Public Library, established in 1829, was the first Public Library in Kerala and the oldest of its kind in India. The ruler of Travancore State at that time was Maharaja Swathithirunal (1829-
1847), a versatile genius and a man of high accomplishment who laid the foundation for the modern system of education in the state. The then British Resident of Travancore was Col. Edward Cadogan, the grandson of Sir Hansloans, the founder of the British Museum and he could very easily make the Maharaja and high officials aware of the need and importance of libraries in a modern educational system. Joining together they established in 1929 the Trivandrum public library. The king took active interest in the affairs of that public library throughout his regime. The library was first managed by an association called the Trivandrum Public Library Committee, of which the British Resident was the President. In 1889 the Trivandrum Public Library Committee entered into an agreement with the Government, according to which the entire assets were handed over to the Government. The condition was that the Government would erect a suitable building for a new library for the benefit of the public and to that end provide a well stocked and furnished reference library and should undertake the maintenance of the same in a suitable manner under such regulations as maybe best calculated to carry out the end in view. Accordingly the Government took over the management of the Trivandrum Public Library and it was treated as one of the minor departments of the state. The British Resident continued to serve as the President of the Committee.

In the erstwhile Travancore State the first attempt to collect books in Malayalam and organize public libraries was made during the regime of Vishakam Thirunal Maharaja. The first of such libraries was the Sugunaposhini in 1894 at Vanchiyoor in Trivandrum. It could function for only less than two years. At Neyyattinkara in the southern part of Travancore, a library with the name Janana Pradayini was formed in the year 1909. Later, in the central part of the state, at Chengannur, the Sankaravilasom Library came into being. In the next one decade a few more libraries appeared. The names of the most prominent among them are given below.

The YMCA Library at Keezhkara (1911);
Chapter II

The Sri Chithirathirunal Library at Trivandrum (1914);
The RajaVarma Library at Ochira (1913);
The Lalitha Vilasini Library and Reading Room at Padmanabhapuram (1916);
The Jnanapradayini Library at Mavelikara (1916);
The Marthanda Vilasom Library at Eraniel (1917);
The Sri Mulam Silver Jubilee Library at Thodupuzha (1917) and
The Bharathee Vilasom Library Kottayam. (1919)
in 1881 the Kottayam Public Library was established. It is the oldest next to the
Trivandrum Public Library, in the state.⁷

The Government of Travancore framed rules to give grant in aid to libraries. 37 well
organised reading rooms and libraries were given grant in aid during 1917-18.⁸ The
first proceedings regarding the libraries of Travancore were issued on 23rd
September 1917.

Libraries in Cochin and Malabar - In addition to the above, Government supported
libraries were established in Cochin State and Malabar. The public library at
Eranakulam, the capital of Cochin State, was established in 1869, the Trichur library
in 1873, the Telicherry library in 1901, the Calicut library in 1924 and the Cannanore
library in 1927.⁹ Simultaneously in villages also small libraries and reading rooms
appeared. The main characteristics of all of them were that every one of them was
supported by public contribution and donations.¹⁰

By the emergence of libraries in different parts of the state, the difficulties experienced
in running them, the breakdown and collapse of several of them, forced the public
attention to the need for a library movement. But such a movement did not take
shape until the peak days of the freedom struggle of the people. The national
movement, the social reform movements, the formation of communal organizations,
the rapid growth of political consciousness, the struggle for responsible government,
the emergence of political parties etc. during the twenties and the thirties of the twentieth century accelerated the growth of libraries and hastened the birth of the library movement.\textsuperscript{11}

Library conference and formation of Kerala Grandhasala Sangham

Though the KGS as an organised body began only in 1945, the library movement was there for many decades before this crucial date.

Before the formation of Kerala State the geographical area comprised of the erstwhile Travancore, Cochin and Malabar States. Independent libraries existed in all these regions. Efforts were made by various personalities to bring these libraries together under one organization. In 1925, for the first time the activists of the people’s library movement and some important persons from various spheres of activity in Kerala assembled together to exchange ideas and discuss problems and possibilities for sustaining the village libraries. Under the auspices of the Jnanapradayini Library of Neyyatinkara near Trivandrum an all Travancore library conference was held in that year. An eminent academician, Prof. C.V. Chandrasekharan of Maharaja's College, Trivandrum presided. That conference was the first of its kind in Kerala. The second conference was held in 1933 in Trivandrum under the auspices of the Sre Chitira Thirunal Library.\textsuperscript{12} In 1937 the third all Travancore library conference was held at Neyyoor under the auspices of the Diwan Nanoo Pillai Memory Library.\textsuperscript{13} Academicians and eminent literary and legal luminaries of Travancore of that period like C.V. Chandrasekharan, P.K. Narayana Pillai and Mallor Govinda Pillai participated in those conferences.\textsuperscript{14} These conferences succeeded in making the public feel the need for a library movement. It also brought the attention of the Government to its responsibility of aiding and assisting libraries.\textsuperscript{15}

in the northern parts of Cochin and Malabar regions the library movement was in
existence from the beginning of the 20th Century. In the fourth library conference in Madras, held in December 1927 representatives of Kerala also took part. That enabled them to get new light and new knowledge about the library movement. In the Administration Committee of libraries in Madras in 1928 there were certain eminent Malayans as members. They were Dr. K.C Chacko, Am bat Sivaraman (later Chief Minister of Cochin) and Cheakulathu Gopala Menon. These gentlemen in fact inspired and encouraged the growth of the library movement in Cochin and Malabar.

The Cochin Government, as part of their adult education programme, established rural libraries in different parts of the state as an experimental measures from 1926. In the next twenty years the libraries increased in their number, strength and resources. There were three types of libraries in Cochin by 1946; public libraries, extensive rural libraries and village libraries.

Political organisations also decided to organise libraries. On 4 May 1916 the Malabar District Congress meeting held at Palghat under the chairmanship of Annie Besant passed a resolution to establish an autonomous panchayat, which would have full freedom in establishing schools and libraries in every village. The annual meeting of the KPCC held at Ernakulam on 24 July 1924 decided to spread the ideas of the Congress through libraries, which would be set up by each village committee of the Congress party. In 1927, together with the annual meeting of the Congress, a library meeting was also organised.

It was in 1931 that the library movement took a firm footing in the Malabar area. The Malabar District Board had invited the then Cochin Chief Minister Ambat Sivarama Menon to advise on the organization of libraries.

In March 1931 an All Kerala Library Committee was formed with Thrissur as the headquarters. Subsequently an All Kerala Library meet was held at Thrissur and the
Samasta Kerala Pusthakalaya Samithi was formed. The meeting decided to carry out the following activities for developing the library movement.

1. The council would put pressure on 6000 villages of Kerala for establishing libraries in each village.

2. It would convince the government, local bodies, and the rich sections of the society, the importance of the library movement.

3. A committee would be formed to select books and periodicals from the publishers.

4. The council would organise book fairs.

5. The council would give assistance for starting public libraries.

In April of the same year the first issue of a quarterly magazine “Grandha Viharam” was published by the Committee.

The library movement gained full support only in 1937 when the first Malabar library Conference was held at Calicut. K.Kelappan, the veteran Congress leader, was the Chairman. That conference gave birth to an organization called “Malabar Vayanasala Sangham”. Political bearers were the office bearers. E.Raman Menon was the President and K.Damodaran was the secretary. The office leaders being active political leaders they could not devote adequate attention to library work and the library movement therefore suffered. In order to revitalize the library movement and to have a central organization, a meeting was held in Thalasseri in 1943. The meeting resolved to have an all Kerala organization of libraries. Consequently, under the leadership of Madhuvanam Krishna Kurup, an eminent Congress leader in Malabar, the Kerala Grandhalaya Sangham was founded and registered in December 1943. Under the auspices of this organisation S.R. Ranganathan, the epochal figure in Indian Library Science, visited the libraries of Malabar area in 1945.
and delivered lectures. But, unfortunately, it could not lead and direct the library movement properly.\textsuperscript{24}

2.2 Stage II 1945-1977
The crucial problem faced by the library workers was how to impress and convince both the Government and the public that the libraries are vital to the mainstream of life and that they require more attention. There must be adequate regular income for the libraries, the service of full-time workers, buildings of their own etc. The library workers are convinced of the need for a central organization with dedicated workers and steady income to take up the task of keeping the libraries alive. \textsuperscript{25}

Formation of All Travancore Grandhasala Sangham
September 1945 was a milestone in the history of the library movement in Kerala. On that day the authorities of 47 libraries functioning in different parts of Travancore area assembled at Ambalapuzha, in North Travancore, at the P.K. Memorial Library under the leadership of P.N. Paniker and the Diwan of Travancore, Sir C.P. Ramaswamy Iyer formally inaugurated the All Travancore Grandhasala Sangham (Akhila Thiruvithancore Grandhasala Sangam) which was later registered as a voluntary organization with 47 member libraries. \textsuperscript{26}

The name of the libraries that participated in the first conference of the All Travancore Grandhasala Sangham in Ambalappuzha in North Travancore were:

1. Desasewini Grandhasala, Karakonam, Neyyattinkara
2. Kshethra Pravesana Smaraka Grandhasala, Amaravila
3. Swadeshabhimani Grandhasala, Neyyattinkara
4. Vivekananda Grandhasala, Balaramapuram
5. Sreerkrishna vilasam Gradhasala, Malayinkeezh
6. V.M.Thampi Memmorial Grandhasala, Palkulangara
7. P.K.N.P. Grandhasala, Chalai, Thiruvananthapuram
8. Sree Avitam Thirunal Grandhasala, Kuriyathi, Thiruvananthapruam
9. Malloor Vijayam Grandhasala, Punnapuram, Thiruvananthapuram
10. SreechitthiraTirunal Grandasala, Vanjiyoor, Thiruvananthapuram
11. Kseihra Pravesala Grandhasala, Kawdiar, Thiruvananthapuram
12. Sreenarayana Vilasam Grandhasala, Murukumpuzha
13. K.P.S.M. Grandhasala, Vithura
14. Bhagavathivilasam Grandhasala, Sarkara, Chirayinkeezhu
15. Godavarma Vilasam Grandhasala, Kilimanoor
16. T.R.P.M. Grandhasala, Paravoor, Kollam
17. K. Ramakrishna Pillai Memmorial Grandhasala, Chavara
18. Sree Subrahmaniam Grandhasala, Ayiroor, Kozhancheri
19. Changanasseri Smaraka Grandhasala, Ivarkala Kadambanad
20. Lalaji Smaraka Grandhasala, Karunagappally
21. Desabandhu Grandhasala, Evoor, Cheppad
22. P.K. Memmorial Grandhasala, ambalappuzha
23. Gramasewa Sangham Grandhasala, Thayankari, Champakulam
24. Progressive Library, Vakathanam
25. Sankaravilasam Grandhasala, Mundankavi, Chengannur
26. Jnanapradayini Grandhasala, Kandiyoor, Mavelikkara
27. Sree Vidya Grandhasala, Mannadi, Kulakkada
28. Y.M.C.A. Grandhasala, Keezhkara, Kozhenchery
29. Harijanodharana Sahakarana Sangham Vayanasala, liannur
30. Sahithya Poshini Grandhasala, Chathurthyakari, Mankomp
31. Vinjanavilasini Grandhasala, Idampalloor
32. Sree Chithra Thirunal kireedadharini Grandhasala, Adoor
33. Veluthampi Dalawa Grandhasala, Mannadi
34. KeralaVarma Memmorial Grandhasala, Pandalam
35. Sahakarana Sangham Vayanasala, Thakazhi, Kuttanad
36. Vinjanodayam Grandhasala, Idackidam, Kundara
37. K.G. Parameswaravilasam Grandhasala, Vallikunnam
38. Sree Balakrishnavilasam Grandhasala, Ezhumattoor
39. C.P. KochuKunjuPillai Memmorial Grandhasala, Kottarakkara
40. Sahridaya Grandhasala, Kanjirappalli
41. Bharathee Vilasam Grandhasala, Varaappuzha, Kottayam
42. Sethu Parvathy Bhai Grandhasala, Kudamaloor
43. Good Shepherd Grandhasala, Thottackad
44. Sreechithra Library, Vadakan Paravoor
45. Sreekarthika Thirunal Vanitha Grandhasala, Karappuzha, Kottayam
46. Sahithya Deepika Grandhasala, Vadakan Paravoor

At the first meeting K.N. Kesavan was elected President and P.N. Panicker was elected Secretary of the Sangham.²⁷

In 1947 the All Travancore Grandhasala Sangham was registered under the Travancore Company Act (1939). After the formation of the All Travancore Grandhasala Sangham an Executive Committee was elected with P.N. Panicker as Convenor and a memorandum was submitted to the Diwan for increasing the amount of grant to libraries. The Diwan agreed to increase the annual grant from Rs.200 to Rs. 240. A special aid of Rs. 250 to the Travancore Grandhasala Sangham was also allowed. Accordingly the following four organizers were appointed by the Sangham for the revival of libraries which had became inactive or defunct and for establishing new libraries wherever necessary.

1. M/s P.N. Panicker - Chief Organiser
2. M/s S.K. Swami - Southern Division
3. M/s P. Madhavan Pillai - Central Division
4. W.O. George - Northern Division
So within a short period the Sangham could establish a large number of libraries. The Government ordered to affiliate the library of Travancore University with the Grandhasala sangham.

The dedicated work of P.N. Panicker in organising a library network in the state deserves special mention. He was associated with the formation of the Sanathana Dharma Vayana Sala in Neelamperur, Alleppey. He succeeded in getting a grant of Rs. 10 from the government for this library. He realised that the Government and official agencies had to play an important role in promoting the library movement. He travelled all over Travancore, met the enthusiasts in the library movement, and secured all possible assistance from them in forming (and reviving) rural libraries. He devoted his life entirely to the cause of the library movement in Kerala. The encouragement that the Diwan, Sir C.P. Ramaswamy gave to the library movement was also remarkable. He was really interested in establishing the public library system in the state and the library movement. The first headquarters of the Sangham was in Ambalapuzha. After one year, the office was shifted to Trivandrum.

**Travancore Cochin Grandhasala Sangham**

Even from the time of its inception the Travancore Library Association (Grandhasala Sangham) tried to extend its activities to Cochin and Malabar areas. A committee visited the libraries in the Cochin area and tried to evolve a common formula for the working of the libraries in the Travancore and Cochin areas. A special meeting was organised in the Ernakulam Public Library which appointed a 21 member committee to report within a month as to how to regulate the working of the libraries and how to evolve a uniform pattern for them. At that time there were 240 rural libraries in the Cochin area.

In 1949, at the instance of the unification of Cochin and Travancore State, the library department of Cochin State was abolished and the local libraries were affiliated to the Sangham and its name changed to the Travancore Cochin Grandhasala Sangham.
In the Malabar area, social and political workers considered it their responsibility to start reading rooms which were in turn transferred into libraries. In 1948, along with the introduction of the Madras Library Act, Local Library Authorities (LLA) were formed in the Malabar area. The LLA’s collected a cess from the people and gave grants to their libraries. The libraries under the LLA which were functioning as Government institutions didn’t offer good service to the public. The Grandhaasala Sangham tried to establish libraries in the model of the libraries of Travancore and get grant for them too.

**Kerala Grandhasala Sangham**

In 1956 Kerala State was formed by uniting the erstwhile Travancore, Cochin and Malabar States. Since 1958, the Travancore Cochin Grandhasala Sangham has been known as the Kerala Grandhasala Sangham by incorporating the libraries of Travancore, Cochin and Malabar. 32

With the emergence of the Kerala Grandhasala Sangham, with the dedicated service and voluntary spirit of many eminent personalities of different parts of Kerala, a new chapter began in the history of the library movement in Kerala. The library movement in Kerala was unique in character. It was democratically constituted and it functioned as the core of the cultural life of Kerala. It has got a deep rooted organizational structure and the rural libraries were the centers of socio-cultural activities. The libraries, numbering more than 5000, were instrumental in inculcating the reading habit among the public. These libraries have participated vigorously in the literacy and non-formal education programmes throughout the state.

Thus the association (KGS) became a strong force behind all the socio-cultural progress of the State. During the period of 1955-1975 the number of libraries under the KGS increased from 1747 to 4280. This rapid growth is an indication of the effort the Sangham made to bring the entire public library system in Kerala under its control.
In 1961 the post of organizer was abolished and the Taluk Union took over the responsibilities.

The KGS celebrated its Silver Jubilee in December 1970 with colourful functions and useful discussions, seminars, exhibitions etc. which was another landmark in the history of the Sangham. The cultural march organised along with the Jubilee celebration from the northern end to the southern end of Kerala was a historical event.

Initially the Sangham gave a thrust to the development of rural libraries and later, in addition to library service, Sangham began organising community interactive programmes such as discussions, debates, seminars, sports and games and other recreations, radio clubs, farmers’ forum, arts and sports clubs etc.\textsuperscript{34}

In 1970 on the occasion of the Silver Jubilee of the KGS, sample surveys were conducted in different parts of the State. Then the Sangham focused on eradicating illiteracy from the State. In connection with that a procession was organised by the Sangham from Kasargode, the northern end, to Parassala, the Southern end of Kerala, to make the people aware of the need for being literate. “Read and Grow”, “Think and Act” were the slogans of the march.\textsuperscript{35}

In 1971, with the sanction of the Government of India a pilot project was started by the KGS to accomplish the literacy programmes in two rural pockets of Kerala, one in Athiyannoor Block in the south and Malappruaum Block in the north. Functional literacy, social, political and cultural development of the people were also given emphasis. Thousands of illiterates were made literate through voluntary workers of local libraries.\textsuperscript{36}

The Sangham constituted an expert committee and prepared primers, hand books, guide books, work books, literacy charts etc. for use in the literacy centers. Orientation
courses and regular monthly seminars were organised by the Sangham for voluntary workers. Writers' workshops were organised to prepare scripts for publishing books for neo-literates. As a follow-up measure, a weekly newspaper for the neo-literate, *Sakshara Keralam* was published from October 1973 onwards.

The Sangham organised regular seminars, literary criticism, science exhibitions etc. at state, district and taluk levels as a part of its non-formal community education scheme. Awards were given to the best libraries in each taluk and district and the best library worker every year. A prize was instituted for the best student reader. Thus local libraries have developed into community centers in most of the areas.

Recipent of UNESCO Mention
For its contribution to adult education and literacy movement the KGS got the Krupskya mention from UNESCO in 1975. it is the only organisation to receive the prestigious award in India. This was actually a morale booster for the Sangham.

### 2.3 Stage III 1977-1994
Due to some problems roused in the organization by political interference, the Government had to take over the administration of the KGS. In 1977, as per an ordinance dated 16-3-77 and Act No. 19 of 1977, the Government appointed a Control Board and brought the KGS under this Control Board. The members of the first Control Board were

- Education Minister-Sri. Chakkeeri Ahmed Kutty - Chairman
- Sri. P.N. Paniker-full time Member Secretary
- Sri. N. V. Krishna Warrier
- Sri. P.T. Bhaskara Panicker
- Dr.A.N.P.Ummerkutty
- Sri. Chitran Namboothiripad (Jt. Director of Public Instruction)
- Sri. A. Balagopal and
- Finance Secretary (State Government)
Though the Control Board was appointed for a short period as a temporary set up the state continued till 1994.

In 21-5-77 the Government reconstituted the Control Board with a new set of members. It was re-constituted in 1978, 1980, 1981, 1982 and 1987\textsuperscript{41}

The loss of democratic set up and people’s participation in the organization affected the whole system. The voluntary activities of the KGS were more or less stagnant during this period. The activities of the apex body were adversely affected and the grass root level activities of rural libraries had became paralysed. \textsuperscript{42}

Attempt for Library Legislation

The Control Board appointed in 1987 and the Left Democratic Front took keen interest in enacting the Library Bill and to re-establish the democratic nature of the public library system. Thus the Kerala Public Library Bill was placed before the Assembly in February 1989 and, after much debate and with a large number of amendments, the Bill was passed. With this, the Public Libraries (Kerala Grandhasala Sangham) Act came into force in Kerala. \textsuperscript{43}

As per the Act the State Central Library was treated as a separate department. And for the organization and administration of the other public libraries there is a three tier administrative system, besides the Government of Kerala at the top. They are State Library Council, District Library Council and Taluk Library Union \textsuperscript{44} (later in 2000 in an amendment in rule the name of the Taluk Library Union was substituted by Taluk Library Council). \textsuperscript{45}

The State Library Council coordinates the working of the District Library Councils and the Taluk Library Council.
2.4 After 1994

Even though the Act came into existence in 1989, it took three more years to frame the rules and conduct elections.

Kerala State Library Council (KSLC)

The KSLC is a statutory organization constituted as per the provisions of the Kerala Public Library Act 1989. Soon after the implementation of the Act, the functions of the Grandhasala Sangham were transferred to the KSLC along with its assets and liabilities. The KSLC came into being in 1994. This more or less resembles the Department of Public Libraries in other states of the country.

Objectives of the Sangham

The objectives of the Kerala Grandhasla Sangham at the starting time were:

1. To function as the central organisation for all libraries in the state
2. To work for the betterment of existing libraries.
3. To render all possible help for the promotion of adult education.
4. To prevent neo-literates from relapsing into illiteracy and provide facilities to the educated to read and acquire knowledge.
5. To conduct night school.
6. To work for the establishment of a library department in the state.
7. To conduct training courses for library workers.
8. To work for the development of mother tongue.
9. To undertake publication activities useful to library workers.
10. To start a Central Library in each Taluk
11. To work for improvement of other associations companies etc. having similar aims, take their administrative controls and rights.  

\footnote{46}
Major events after assumption of charge

Enhancement of Grant

The grant amount provided by the Sangham for the upkeep of the affiliated libraries was very small. Steep escalation in the price of reading materials and the proliferation of literary output are squeezing the purchasing power of libraries, with the result that the readers cannot be provided with sufficient reading materials. Similarly the amount already granted to libraries as librarian’s allowance was too meager to meet even their pocket expense. It was therefore decided to enhance both the grants.

Model Bye-Saw

According to the rules and regulations, the Library Council has prepared and distributed a model bye-law to the member libraries by the Taluk Library Councils. The bye-law was accepted by the general body meeting of the libraries and sent to the State Library Council by Taluk Councils.

2.5 Emblem

The State Library Council has accepted the emblem a lighted lantern between two elephants and an open book on a book holder, below the book the English words, “Kerala State Library Council” and “Kerala Grandhasala Sangham” in Malayalam. (Appendix IX)

2.6 Unique features of Public Library System in Kerala

Some significant features of the public library system are:

1. State Government and public support to Public Libraries;
2. Non-bureaucratic monitoring system of Public Libraries;
3. Vigorous role of non-government organizations:
4. Prevalence of reading habit in all sections of the community: and
5. Public libraries are in the safe hands of literates.
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