CHAPTER VI

RURAL PUBLIC LIBRARIES IN ANANTAPUR DISTRICT

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

Library is generally considered as a collection of books and other information materials (Atkinson, 1974). A Library, however, is supposed to serve its purpose only when the collections of Library are effectively used by the people (Sahai, 1973). In the modern context, Library is viewed as an instrument of change and development as it serves the purpose of the community by collection of information and its dissemination.

Depending upon the nature of the services, Libraries are classified into various types such as National Libraries, Regional Libraries, State Libraries, District Libraries, Local Libraries, Research Libraries, University Libraries, College Libraries, School Libraries etc. Among various types of Libraries Public Library occupies a place of prominence because of its easy accessibility to all kinds of people.
PUBLIC LIBRARY

Public Library has been described as 'a University of people' (Sahai, 1973) as it extends free information service to the people (Guruswamy, 1984). Usually the Public Libraries are established by the mandate of law with public fund for public use (Khanna, 1987).

In a broader sense, the Public Libraries are used as instruments of universal education, life-long education and means for promoting freedom and democracy (UNESCO, 1972).

Public Libraries assume greater importance in dissemination of information in the Indian context. As India's population is distributed over a wide geographical area and its population is semi-literate and ignorant of sophisticated information technology, Public Libraries are considered the chief means for meeting the information needs of the people (Viswanathan, 1961).

RURAL PUBLIC LIBRARIES

Rural Public Libraries in India have additional responsibilities besides collection, dissemination and diffusion of information. They have a complex task of providing information to mostly illiterate and semi-literate
population and to induce a change in them from tradition to modernity, from poverty to development. It is in this context that Rural Public Library is expected to promote literacy and education, social awareness vocational advancement and economic extension by organising specialised services. In doing so, it must gear up to meet the needs of the students, youth, women, farmers, artisans etc., in Indian villages.

Eventhough India has a significant history behind its Libraries, studies on the Library vis-a-vis the community are almost absent in India. The observation made by Srinath Sahai in 1973 that field studies on Libraries are absent in India holds good even today. Andhra Pradesh is not an exception in this regard. Among 194 works carried out between 1915 and 1981 in Andhra Pradesh on Libraries, not even a single study was made on the utilitarian aspects of the Library.

The two major field studies on Libraries in India were conducted by Sahai (1973) and Sarada (1986). Sahai's study, based upon the sample of 300 Library users, concluded that majority of the users were casual visitors of the Library, the visitors came to the Library in order to improve their knowledge; majority of them
preferred to read non-fiction books. Studying a Rural Public Library, Sarada concluded that fiction books constituted a major share of collection; the available books did not match the occupational needs of the community; and the Library was used only by 10 per cent of the village population.

CONTEXT OF THE STUDY

The present study has been undertaken, in view of the vast number of Rural Public Libraries in the country to create the awareness of the importance assigned to them in the development of the villages, and to bridge the existing research-gap at least to some extent. This study relates in particular to the Rural Public Libraries in Anantapur district, as the District has contributed significantly to the Library Movement in Andhra Pradesh as well as in India.

History of Libraries in India, in a way, can be traced to back to the past 4000 years. Memory was the basic instrument for preserving the Vedas and the Upanishads; the scholars of the past used to be the living and ambulatory Libraries (Sahai, 1973). With the invention of script, the Monostic Libraries in 600 B.C. started preserving various scripts in the famous Libraries like Nalanda and Taxila. During the medieaval periods,
Libraries were mostly attached to the temples, mosques and madarasas. The Moghul emperors maintained large collections in their Libraries.

The advent of Britishers ushered in the concepts of education and modern Libraries to India. The first Public Library was established in India in 1808 at Bombay. By the end of 19th century, Public Libraries were established in all the provincial capitals and district-towns.

Rural Public Libraries, in India, were established in Baroda by Maharaja Sayaji Rao Gaikwad under the guidance of W.A. Borden, a Librarian from Connecticut. In 1914, the First Library Association in the country was started in Andhra Region. The first All India Conference took place in Madaras in 1919. By 1942, more than 13,000 Rural Public Libraries were established in the country.

In the post-Independent India the enactment of Madaras Library Act, 1948, set a new trend in the Library Movement. A three-tier structure of the Libraries at the State, district, village level was introduced during the First Five Year Plan. The Second Five Year Plan emphasized upon the introduction of integrated Library
services. The Third and the Fourth Plans tried to strengthen the Library Movement in the country.

Andhra Pradesh has a special place in the history of the Library Movement of the country. By starting the First Library Association and by introducing the First Library Journal and passing the First Library Act, Andhra Pradesh has won for itself the pioneering status. The Andhra Pradesh Public Library Act of 1960 made a provision to start a new institution at a district level, Zilla Granthalaya Samstha, for strengthening the Public Libraries in the district.

Anantapur district did play a crucial role in spreading the Libraries in the region. The history of Library Movement in Anantapur dates back to 600 B.C. A reading room, in modern sense, was started in the district in 1883 at Anantapur. By 1920, nearly 40 Public Libraries were functioning in this region. And the number swelled to about 60 by 1930. Most of these Public Libraries of this period were started by educationists and were sustained by the contributions of the people.

With the introduction of Local Library Authority in 1952 and Zilla Grandhalaya Samstha in 1956, the Public Libraries in the district started receiving
public assistance. During 1992 there were 88 Public Libraries in Anantapur district inclusive of 72 Rural Public Libraries.

METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

This study is an attempt to analyse Rural Public Library with specific reference to Library materials, services and users. In doing so, a comprehensive analysis of all the 72 Rural Public Libraries in the district is also attempted by using questionnaire as the tool. The information obtained from the questionnaire was supplemented through a workshop involving the Librarians of all the Rural Public Libraries in the district.

In order to obtain an in-depth picture of the Rural Public Library with reference to the availability of Library materials vis-a-vis the information needs of the community, case studies on the three representative Rural Public Libraries have been conducted.

The study is also based upon the responses of 324 users of Rural Public Libraries obtained by administering schedules. The Primary data is supplemented with information from secondary sources and
especially from the offices of the Zilla Grandhalaya Samstha and selected Rural Public Libraries.

PUBLIC LIBRARIES IN ANANTAPUR DISTRICT

Anantapur district consists of 88 Public Libraries. The Public Libraries in the district are organised, administered and financed by the Zilla Grandhalaya Samstha established in 1956. 16 Urban Public Libraries are covering a total population of 5.4 lakhs distributed in 11 towns. On the other hand, 20.88 lakhs of rural population, distributed in 964 villages, is served by only 72 Rural Public Libraries.

There are wide disparities between the Urban Public Libraries and Rural Public Libraries in terms of length of services, availability of Library materials, physical facilities, staffing-pattern and expenditure.

Majority of the Urban Public Libraries were established more than 25 years ago, while most of the Rural Public Libraries have come into existence in the last decade only.

The Public Libraries in the district together have a collection of 4.12 lakhs of books, on an average of 4,800 books per Library. The average books per Rural
Library is around 3,250 in comparison with 12,000 books per Urban Library.

The Public Libraries in the district are procuring 1,150 periodicals on an average of 13 per Library. The Urban Public Libraries have 23 periodicals on average compared to only 11 in the case of Rural Public Libraries.

The Public Libraries in general are poorly furnished and have only two tables and 12 chairs for the readers and three book-racks per Library on average. In comparison with the facilities in Urban Public Libraries the condition of Rural Libraries are much worse.

Coming to the personnel, the Urban Public Libraries are served by the required number of Librarians and para-Library staff. The Rural Public Libraries have many personnel inadequacies. Only 50 per cent of the Rural Public Libraries are headed by qualified Librarians. Some of the Rural Libraries are managed by persons like Record Assistants, Attenders and even Sweepers. About 15 per cent of the Rural Public Libraries do not have any staff and they are managed only by local volunteers.

The Public Libraries in Anantapur district are grossly underutilised. On average, each Public
Library has around 400 registered borrowers. While the Public Library in urban areas consists of 1,460 borrowers per Library, the Rural Public Library are catering only to 150 borrowers on average.

Students and unemployed youths account for one-third of the total borrowers in the district followed by a significant number of businessmen and persons in employment. Farmers, agricultural labourers, artisans and housewives are the minorities among the borrowers. The Public Libraries are used annually, on average, by 4,100 users. The average number of users per annum is around 10,000 per Urban Library and only 3,000 per Rural Public Library.

The user practices reflect that 50 per cent of the users are consulting only fiction books and 10 per cent are making use of reference and functional books.

Extension services are almost neglected by the Public Libraries in the district. While some efforts are being made by the Urban Libraries towards extension through film shows and lectures, the Rural Public Libraries are not making any efforts in this direction.

The Public Libraries in Anantapur district have meagre independent financial sources and are
depending mostly on grants and Cess. About 80 per cent of the expenditure on Public Libraries in the district is incurred on establishment charges alone. On an average, 34,000 rupees are spent annually on each Urban Public Library compared to only Rs.18,000 on Rural Public Library.

In comparison with Urban Public Library, the Rural Public Library presents a gloomy scenario. They have very few collections, meagre facilities, insignificant number of borrowers and users, poor extension records insufficient personnel and inadequate finances.

RURAL PUBLIC LIBRARIES

The Rural Public Libraries at Bukkarayamudram, Bathalapalli and Kothacheruvu have been subjected to a detailed study. The conclusion reached after analysis is that the Rural Public Libraries are not able to reach any significant extent of population. To be more precise, the Libraries are able to reach eight per cent of the population at Kothacheruvu, six per cent in Bukkarayamudram and only one per cent in Bathalapalli. While coverage of male population is slightly better, only one per cent of the female population is able to utilise the services offered by the Rural
Public Libraries. The percentage of children and youths covered by the Rural Public Libraries is less compared to percentage of the coverage among adults and older generation. Caste-wise the Scheduled Castes remain mostly uncovered by the Libraries. Among different occupational groups, businessmen and persons in employment are able to utilise the Library to a better extent, while the farmers, agricultural labour, artisans are among the neglected sections, the coverage is to a limited extent only among the poor people, whereas the richer section are utilising the Libraries to a larger extent relatively.

INFORMATION SERVICES EXTENDED BY RURAL PUBLIC LIBRARIES

The information services extended by the Rural Public Libraries are not in tune with the socio-economic needs of the rural population. To begin with, the three Rural Public Libraries are not equipped with enough number of books. The Bukkarayasamudram Library has a book collection limited to 22 books per registered member and only two books per person when the entire village population is considered. The Library books at Kothacheruvu stands at 13 per member and two per person. At Bathalapalli, the Library consists of only
10 books per member and less than a book per head in the village.

Even the existing books in Rural Public Libraries in all the three villages do not cater to the functional requirements of the population. The villagers are witnessing a series of programmes for spreading literacy among the illiterates. Despite the growing number of neo-literates, books for neo-literates are almost absent. Similarly, eventhough agriculture is the major sector of economy and employment in the villages under study, the Libraries do not posses the required number of the functional books on agriculture. Functional books related to animal husbandry and cottage industry representing the secondary sector of rural economy are almost nil. Despite the presence of a large number of businessmen among the registered members, the Rural Public Libraries fail to provide them with any suitable books.

The only section of population in position to derive some benefit from the Rural Public Libraries is the student-population. A significant number of books in the three Rural Public Libraries match the requirement of the student members.
Periodicals and newspapers are the other forms of materials available in the Rural Public Libraries in addition to books. Without exception, the existing magazines in the Rural Public Libraries do not have any functional value, and cater to the leisure time requirement of its members.

Only one Rural Public Library under study is able to undertake some extension activities related to adult education and village development. None of these Libraries have any materials, equipment and information to promote extension for village development.

The three Rural Public Libraries present a peculiar pattern of expenditure in which nearly 80 per cent of the amount is spent on salaries; only 20 per cent is spent on procuring books, magazines and newspapers. As such none of these Libraries have any provision for expenditure on extension activities.

**USERS OF RURAL PUBLIC LIBRARIES**

The analysis, basing upon the study of 324 users from the three Public Libraries under study, shows that the females are among the minorities. Only 8.64 per cent of the users are from the fair sex. Nearly half of the users are adults in productive age group and
about one-third of the users are adolescents. Forward Castes account for 58 per cent of the users followed by 36 per cent on the Backward Castes. The Scheduled Tribes and Scheduled Castes thus constitute only six per cent of the users. The users are mostly from the highly educated sections of the village. Nearly 52 per cent of the users have collegiate education and 28 per cent high school education.

Students constitute the largest section of the users and accounts for 34.3 per cent followed by farmers (28.7 per cent), employees (20.7 per cent), and businessmen (6.5 per cent). The users are predominantly from higher income group.

USER PRACTICES

The number of visits undertaken by the users varies from less than 7 days to more than 22 days per month. About 43.0 per cent of the users are found to be regular visitors to the Libraries and attend the Library for more than 22 days per month. Near one-third of the users are casual visitors and attend the Library for less than a week per month.

The demographic, social and economic features of the users had profound influence on the frequency of
their visits. While the majority of the males are regular visitors, the majority among the females are only casual visitors. By age, the youth and the aged among the users attend the Library regularly while the children and adults are casual visitors. The frequency of the visits are maintained at higher level by the Forward Castes whereas, the Backward Castes are irregular in visiting the Libraries. Similarly, the less educated visitors visit the Libraries for about seven days per month compared to more than 21 days by the majority of the visitors with secondary and collegiate education. Farmers, artisans, and agricultural labour are mostly casual visitors, only the students represent mostly the regular visitors. Higher income groups are visiting the Library regularly while lower income group has a low record of the Library visits.

Coming to the timings, nearly 27 per cent of the users visit the Library in the early morning session between 8. to 9.30 A.M. and 23 per cent go to the Libraries in the late morning session, between 9.30 to 11.00 A.M. The evening session is preferred by only 18 per cent of the users, about 32 per cent of the users have no specified timings of visits.
Male users are mostly visiting the Libraries in the morning sessions, while the female prefer to visit in the early session. Evening sessions are preferred by the children and the adults while the morning sessions are preferred by the youth and the adults. Caste and education are not influencing the timings of the visits of the users. On the other hand, occupation of the users has a definite influence. Majority of the employed persons visit the Library in the early morning sessions. A significant number of farmers visit the Library during the late morning session. Housewives prefer the early evening session while the agricultural labour have no specific timings. Income-wise the users from high-income groups and the middle-income groups are visiting the Libraries in the morning sessions while the majority of the users in lower-income group are habituated for afternoon visits.

The time spent by the users of the Rural Public Libraries during their visit is not encouraging. About 52 per cent of the users are spending less than one hour at the Library per visit. Nearly 34 per cent usually take one hour; 11.4 per cent spend two hours and only 1.5 per cent spend three hours per day at the Library.
Female users are spending less time at the Library compared to male users. Children below 13 years of age as well as the aged persons above 60 years are mostly habituated for visits of less than one hour duration. Youth and adults are relatively spending more time during their Library visits. Users from Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, users with only primary education, users engaged as artisans, agricultural labour and housewives and users of lower-income group are mostly used for visits of less than one hour duration. On the other hand, a significant section of the users from the Forward Castes, from the college educated, from among the employed and businessmen and from the higher-income groups spend more time during their Library visits.

READING PRACTIES OF THE USERS

The reading practices of the users of the Rural Public Libraries include newspaper coverage, novel and short story reading, coverage of general information articles, current affairs and economic affairs. More than 92 per cent of the users read newspapers at Rural Public Libraries. About 59 per cent of the users are habituated to cover general information articles; nearly 46 per cent read the regional and national current affairs. Only 33
per cent and 39 per cent of the readers are resorting to the short-story and novel reading at Library.

Reading practices of the users are varying as per their socio-economic and demographic variations. The male users are habituated mostly for reading general information, articles and current affairs. Females on the other hand are used mostly for novel reading. Children and youth are inclined in favour of general information and current affairs, while the adults are in favour of reading information related to profession and economy. In addition to general information and current affairs, the aged persons are habituated to read general information as well as novel and short-stories.

Other things being more or less equal. Professional and economic information is mostly sought by the users from the Forward Castes. Users with primary school education showed more concerns in reading articles on general information and current affairs. While users with collegiate education are found to be the readers of novels and short-stories in addition to the current affairs and general information articles, Information related to professions and economy is being read mostly by employees and businessmen. Farmers are habituated to read general articles while the majority
among the agricultural labour, artisans and housewives are inclined in favour of novels and short stories. The middle-income users are more concerned with obtaining information on profession and economy, the upper-income groups are found to use their time in reading general information articles and current affairs. General articles, short-stories and novels are read by most of the lower-income group users.

The reading habits of the users of Rural Public Libraries show that, despite the presence of overwhelming number of fiction books, only 33 per cent prefer to read short stories and 29 per cent novel reading. On the other hand, nearly 59 per cent of the users prefer to read general information articles and 46 per cent are inclined to cover the current affairs. Only newspapers at present are catering to the interests of such users.

OPINION OF THE USERS ON VARIOUS LIBRARY SERVICES

Majority of the users expressed that they were satisfied over the availability of newspapers, general periodicals and fiction books. There was wide
spread dissatisfaction among the users about the non-availability of informative periodicals and non-fiction books.

The users, by and large, are not happy with the extension services undertaken by the Rural Public Libraries. About 80 per cent of the users are dissatisfied with the services meant for neo-literates and about 83 per cent opined that the Library was not serving as an instrument for promoting literacy. There was total dissatisfaction among the users regarding the role of Public Libraries in promoting the social and functional awareness through cultural programmes, exhibitions, demonstrations etc.

About 30 per cent of the users feel that existing working hours are inconvenient while majority are satisfied with existing working days and holidays of the Library. 64 per cent of the users have expressed that the present seating and reading facilities are inadequate and 56 per cent felt that the Libraries do not have proper lighting facilities.

The opinion of the users on the display, stacking and index system of the Rural Public Libraries show that there is a need for reviving the system. About 42 per cent of the users have expressed that the display
and stacking system is inconvenient. Nearly 72 per cent of Library users have felt that current system of indexing is complicated and inconvenient.

By and large, majority of the users are satisfied with the procedures of issues, returns and fine for delays in return. Concerning the existing admission procedure, an overwhelming majority is not satisfied and feel that the admission fee is very high. Since the users do not have any say in procurement of books, periodicals and newspapers, all the users did express their displeasure with the prevailing procurement policy.

The summary of the study made so far lead to certain conclusions on Rural Public Libraries in Anantapur district.

CONCLUSIONS AND MAJOR FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

Anantapur district played a significant role in contributing to the Library Movement in Andhra Pradesh as well as in India. The history of Library Movement in Anantapur district, in the modern context, was started in the year 1883 with the establishment the first reading room at Anantapur; over the years many Libraries were started at important places in the district such as
Anantapur, Dharmavaram, Hindupur etc. By 1920 more than 35 number of Libraries were functioning in the district. The decade between 1920 and 1930 was the golden era in the history of Library Movement in Anantapur district. This decade witnessed the establishment of more than 25 Libraries at different places in the district.

There was a setback in the Library Movement in this region from 1930 to the year of Independence i.e. 1947. This was due to the intense involvement of the regional elites and educationalists in the freedom struggle.

The Libraries in Anantapur district came to be governed by Madras Public Libraries Act of 1948 after Independence. A new institution called Local Library Authority was created in Anantapur district basing upon the Madras Library Act. The Local Library Authority made significant efforts to start new Libraries and strengthen the existing Libraries.

The Anantapur district became part of the newly started Andhra Pradesh State in 1956; the Libraries in the district came to be regulated through the Andhra Pradesh Public Libraries Act 1960. Accordingly, the Local Library Authority was replaced by Zilla Grandhalaya.
Samstha. Ever since, the Zilla Grandhalaya Samstha did start, all the Public Libraries in the district were brought under control of the Samstha. Though the Zilla Grandhalaya Samstha is theoretically proposed to encourage local initiative in development of Libraries, the Zilla Grandhalaya Samstha itself has become dependent on Government for its own existence. In the process, the Public Libraries in the district started depending upon the Zilla Grandhalaya Samstha which, in turn, was dependent upon the State Government. As a result efforts to start and maintain the Libraries were taken up by the Zilla Grandhalaya Samstha. As a result Public Libraries lost their local initiative and reached the point of stagnation.

The major findings of the study are listed hereunder:

1. Anantapur district consists of 88 Public Libraries of which 16 are in urban areas and 72 are in villages.

2. The main drawback of the Public Library system in Anantapur district is that 90 per cent of its finances are coming from the Government in the form of grant and cess. With only 10 per cent of independent resources, the Zilla Grandhayala
Samstha and the Public Libraries in the district lost their autonomy and independence.

3. The second major constraint of the Public Library system in the district lies in its expenditure pattern. 80 per cent of the expenditure on Public Libraries in the district is incurred on salaries and establishment. As a result, only 20 per cent of the annual budget is earmarked for strengthening of the existing Libraries.

4. Due to financial limitations as is the present budget, money is insufficient to cater the requirement of the existing Libraries. Zilla Grandhalaya Samstha is not in a position to start new Public Libraries.

5. Within the Public Libraries in the district there are disparities between urban and rural areas. In fact, the 11 urban communities together account for 16 Public Libraries, while there are only 72 Rural Public Libraries covering 964 villages in the district.

There are qualitative and quantitative differences between the Rural and Urban Public Libraries.
and invariably the scales are tilted heavily towards the Urban Libraries, as listed below:

a) As against 12,000 books per Urban Library, the Rural Libraries consists of only 4,800 books;
b) Against 23 periodicals per Urban Libraries Rural Libraries have only 11 periodicals;
c) The Urban Libraries have sufficient physical facilities and suitable staff, while the Rural Public Libraries are neglected with regard to both these aspects;

6. Coming to the Rural Libraries in specific they are found to be lacking in Library materials, furniture, equipment, personnel as well as services. The three Rural Public Libraries subjected to an in-depth study present invariably common features such as:

a) They are able to cover around 2 per cent of the total population of the community;
b) The Library material in possession of these Libraries are both quantitatively and qualitatively not in tune with informational requirements of the people;
c) The position of the books shows that these Rural Public Libraries have only 23 books per member and less than 2 books per head when the entire population is taken into account;
d) Even these limited number of books are mostly fiction-based and less than 4 per cent of the existing books have any functional or utilitarian value;

e) Without exception all the existing periodicals are fiction-based and have very little functional value;

f) The neo-literates do not have any suitable reading material in the Library;

g) Farmers, artisans businessmen etc., do not find books related to their profession, vocation or economic life;

h) Only the interests of the students are served to some extent by these Rural Public Libraries.

7. The facilities offered by the Rural Public Library to the users are inadequate. All the three Libraries are managed by Librarians without any support-staff.

8. Due to financial limitations, less than 200 books are procured by these Libraries annually.

9. In the absence of financial allocation, equipment and material, these Rural Public Libraries are not able to undertake any extension service either for illiterate or neo-literates. Their
contribution to the socio-economic development of the village is almost nil. They are at the most serving as Centres for spending for leisure time that too for a limited number of people.

10. As far as the users of the Public Libraries are concerned, they are found to be mostly males. Very few females i.e. less than one per cent of the female population of the villages under study are visiting the Libraries. The educated, forward castes, businessmen and employees and richer sections constitute the major sections among the users of the Libraries. It shows that only the population exposed already to development process is exposed to the Library services while the under-developed people keeping away from the Rural Public Libraries.

11. Majority of the users are visiting the Library less frequently and often less than 7 days per month. The visitors are mostly spending less than one hour at the time of their visits to the Library. Thus it can be concluded that even those visiting the Library are unable to spare sufficient time for utilising the services offered by the Library.
12. Newspapers are the main sources of the attraction to the users, as more than 90 per cent of the users invariably cover the newspapers during their Library visits.

13. Despite the presence of many fiction, hardly one-fourth of the users are utilising them. Majority of the users are interested in reading general information articles and current affairs and significant number of users are concerned with vocational, professional and economic information. But, unfortunately, the Rural Public Libraries under study are not able to meet these requirements.

14. The opinion of the users on different aspects of Rural Public Libraries reflect the state of the Public Library system in rural communities. The opinions show that:
   a) The users are totally unhappy with the extension services offered by these Libraries;
   b) Majority of the users expressed their displeasure about the non-availability of informative books and periodicals;
   c) A significant number of users felt that the physical facilities were inadequate; and
Some of the users expressed that the current admission procedure, the index system and the system of display and stacking was not to their satisfaction.

The above conclusions point out certain deficiencies in the system of Rural Public Libraries in Anantapur district.

**DEFICIENCIES IN THE RURAL PUBLIC LIBRARIES**

It is pertinent to note here the major deficiencies of the Rural Public Library, basing upon the observations and conclusions of our study are:

1. The Rural Public Libraries are depending totally upon the Zilla Grandhalaya Samstha for their maintenance and their development. They lack independent sources of income. Even the meagre allocation meant for Rural Public Libraries is mostly going for meeting the establishment charges and hardly 20 per cent of the budget is used for procuring books, periodicals, and the newspapers.

2. The existing books and periodicals in Rural Public Libraries are, to put it bluntly, quite inadequate. Among the existing books and
periodicals, very few are catering to the developmental needs of the rural population and are not able to match and sustain the interests of the users. This is due to the present policy where the books are procured by Zilla Grandhalaya Samstha and supplied to the Rural Public Libraries. Neither the Librarian nor the members nor the users of the Rural Libraries is consulted in the process of procurement of the Library materials.

3. In all the three Rural Public Libraries, the existing facilities are just sufficient to accommodate around 10 visitors at a time. As majority of the users prefered to visit the Library in the early morning or late evening session, users are always put to inconvenience due to lack of sufficient facilities.

4. The Rural Public Libraries under study have materials that can cater to the needs of the literates and as such nearly 70 per cent of the rural population, being illiterate, are left uncovered by the Libraries. None of these Rural Public Libraries made any attempt to educate the illiterate population through lectures, discussions, exhibitions; demonstrations etc.
5. The Rural Public Libraries, that used to be established by the initiative of the local people and that used to be the centres of socio-economic and political awakening in early 20th century, underwent a radical change. They have been reduced to the level of mere centres of collection of books serving the educated and socio-economically developed population in the recent past.

The degradation of the Rural Library and stagnation faced by them has been noticed by the authorities of the Zilla Grandhalaya Samstha and the Librarians of the district on one hand and by the users on the other hand. Both these groups have come up with suggestions for improving the functioning of Rural Public Libraries.

SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT OF RURAL PUBLIC LIBRARIES

The responses of the Zilla Grandhalaya Samstha staff and the Librarians of Public Libraries in Anantapur district included suggestions for improving the Public Libraries in Anantapur district. The suggestions were discussed at length during the workshop. The following
were the major suggestions arrived at the workshop basing upon the responses of the personnel of Public Libraries.

1. The Zilla Grandhalaya Samstha is constantly facing financial shortcoming as it is not able to realise the cess from among the local self-governments. It is pointed out that an amount of Rs. 50.00 lakhs is due from the municipalities in the district to the Zilla Grandhalaya Samstha. As a result Zilla Grandhalaya Samstha is forced to cut expenditure related to the development of the Public Libraries. In this context, it is recommended for payment of cess as mandatory at the end of every financial year. Otherwise, the State Government itself might be authorised to make a special grant to the Public Libraries through the Zilla Grandhalaya Samstha in lieu of the cess from the local government.

2. In order to co-ordinate between the State Government and the various Zilla Grandhalaya Samsthas in the State, there is a provision for constituting an apex body in the State called Grandhalaya Parishat. However, due to negligence of State Government, the Grandhalaya Parishat is left often unconstituted. As such, the liaison work between the Zilla Grandhalaya Samstha and
the State Government is not being effected. Efforts should, therefore, be made for constituting the State Parishat regularly.

3. The Zilla Grandhalaya Samsthas in the State are administered through the State Directorate for Public Libraries. The Directorate oversees the proposals and budget of all the Zilla Grandhalaya Samstha's in the State and sanction suitable grants. However, there are always differences between the directorate and the Zilla Grandhalaya Samsthas. This is on account of lack of field-experience to the Director and the personnel. Instead of appointing a civil servant as a Director of Public Libraries, there can be a separate cadet for Librarians at State level so that the Directorate is represented by the experienced Librarians.

4. Coming to the composition of the Zilla Grandhalaya Samstha, its structure is highly biased in favour of elites from non-library fields. In fact, only one Librarian is given membership in the governing body of the Zilla Grandhalaya Samstha. While all other members are nominated on political considerations. While
idea of involving local leaders in Zilla Grandhalaya Samstha, has its merits, enough interest must be taken to see that representations to the Librarians on Zilla Grandhalaya Samstha as well. There can be a Governing Body consisting eight local leaders and at least seven Librarians. The Chairman could be from among the local leaders while the secretary should be from among the Librarians.

5. As far as Public Library is concerned, it is totally under the charge of a Librarian. The members, users, and local population are not involved in the management of the Public Library. As a result, local participation in the development of the Public Library is almost absent. For better management of Public Library, each Library should have a Governing Body or atleast an Advisory Committee consisting of seven members representing the local teachers and village administrative officers as ex-officio members and prominent local personalities representing women, farmers, artisans, agricultural labour, businessmen and students.
The Governing Body or Advisory Committee of the Public Library can be entrusted with the responsibilities of preparing and processing the budget, procuring books, magazines and newspapers, mobilising local resources to supplement the grants of the Zilla Grandhalaya Samstha, motivating the village population by promoting membership drive and planning and implementing extension services on behalf of Rural Public Libraries.

The users of Rural Public Libraries have responded to with the following suggestions for improving the functions of the Rural Public Libraries:

1. The Librarian must stay in the village where the Library is located so as to ensure that the Library is kept open regularly at specified hours. This would also help the Librarian to understand the socio-economic situation of the community and the information needs of the rural people so that the Library services can be re-oriented to suit the community and its people.

2. The users have invariably expressed unhappiness about the existing Library materials especially
books. They strongly feel that they must be involved in the procurement process. This can be fulfilled by constituting an Advisory Committee or a Governing Body with the users of the Library.

3. In order to improve the quality of the Library materials, the users suggested that at least 50 per cent of the books and periodicals should be such that they serve the functional needs.

4. The users opined that the existing working hours are suitable to non-agriculture season only. During the agriculture season as the timings of the Library clash with the timing of agricultural operations. They wanted the Rural Public Library to function from 6 A.M. to 9 A.M. in the morning; from 4 P.M. to 7 P.M. in the evening.

5. The users preferred to have more elaborate index system in which the available material are listed in the form of chart and that there must be separate index chart for different categories of books.

6. The present system of admission in which a member is charged with Rs.20/- as admission fee is not liked by some of the members. In
the opinion of a section of the users, the admission fee must be reduced to Rs.10/- and to compensate the loss, efforts may be made to enrol as many members as possible. Some other users suggested that in addition to the admission fee, there was a need for levying annual subscription fee also. Such annual subscription is to be pooled for the purposes of procuring newspapers and periodicals; the admission fee is to be used for improving the physical facilities.

7. The users felt that large number of illiterates are left untouched by the Public Libraries and wanted that the information requirements of the illiterate rural population should also be met by installing T.V. and radio sets on the premises of the Library.

Basing upon the conclusions of this study, the following suggestions have been offered additionally by the researcher:

1. The present policy of appointing the Librarian for each and every Rural Library must be reviewed. While there is no dispute about the need of a Librarian for a Library, the need
must be judged keeping in view of the objectives of the Library.
As things stand now, 80 per cent of the budget of Rural Public Library is spent on the salaries of the Librarian. Besides, the Library with 500 books as in the case with Bathalapalli, serving nearly 56 members may not be in need of Librarian. It can as well be managed by a local volunteer with some orientation and guidance. A community consisting of at least 10,000 people of which at least 2,000 are enrolled members in Library, consisting of at least one book per person in the community only should be provided with a full-time Librarian. Libraries that fail to satisfy this criteria may be kept under the charge of a volunteer assisted by an Advisory Committee. In order to extend professional service, a mobile Librarian can be maintained for a group of 10 such Libraries. This would certainly lessen the establishment expenditure; the entire amount can be used for procurement of books so that, at a later stage, it can have the services of full time Librarian.
2. As per our study, the Rural Public Libraries are not undertaking information and extension services required by the respective communities. This is partly because of lack of extension aids, equipment and material at the Rural Public Libraries. It is in this context the following alternatives are suggested:

a) There can be a linkage between the Libraries and the public relation and information departments at grassroot level. Since the public relation and information department does not have the staff at village level, the Rural Public Library can act as the grassroot unit of this department and can preserve display and disseminate information to the rural population;

b) The Librarian of the Rural Public Library and the village development system can have linkage and development needs of the people can thus be effectively served by the Rural Public Libraries; and

c) Majority of the schools in rural areas have books without a proper Library or a Librarian. It would be advisable to keep the books of such schools under the custody of Rural Public Libraries.
3. Very few rural women are currently using the Public Libraries. This may be on account of the peculiar cultural limitations imposed on women, in general and rural women, in particular. Hence, it is suggested to have separate reading room for women where there is sufficient accommodation or else to earmark specific hours of Library time, specially in the afternoon, exclusively for women users.

4. The age old practice of enlisting people's participation in Library development through practices like Deepavali Bhiksha are to be revived and donations from the people in cash or in the form of books may be collected for strengthening the Libraries.

5. In order to encourage peoples' participation, the Library must reach all the sections of the village by making use of the traditional methods such as conducting cultural programmes, organising demonstrations and exhibitions, sponsoring lectures and discourses and coordinating debates and discussions.
Rural Public Library can become really peoples' university, as dreampt by Sahai (1973) and can fulfill the information needs of the mass of the people as envisaged by Nehru (1955), and can be a source of and means for development, as visualised by Tagore, (1930), if only when it acquires functional Library materials, creating congenial atmosphere for learning and exchange of information, reducing expenditure on establishment involving the people in processing the policies and adopting itself to the changing needs of the rural population and the rural community.

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