CHAPTER II

IMPACT OF LIBRARY ON THE CHANGING SOCIETY

2.1 Introduction

It is clear from the foregoing Chapter that a public library is one of the essential organizations in a society, which the national welfare activities, like education, social, economic and cultural and recreational spheres and to develop these spheres on sound principles and practices.

A society is made up of multi-complex organizations and each organization is rendering services to the society in its own way, for the betterment of the society.

To flourish in all directions, a society needs a number of resources from various angles, for example, educational, social, economical etc. The standard of living and the status of an individual is directly related to the excellence and the availability of such resources. To meet this goal and the basic ingredient is knowledge or information which is readily supplied by one organization and that is library, which is a part and parcel of any affluent community.
The relationship of the library with that of the society in which it is existing is inseparable and it is illustrated as follows:

"The relationship between library-community is inseparable. ... It involves the various services which a library provides throughout the geographic area it serves, ..., and the actual interaction between a library and its community which results in two kinds of major benefits: the community's awareness and use of all the library has to offer, and the library's assurance of community's continuing good will and support."  

It is aptly said that a public library is 'People's University'. It is an integral part of education. It plays a pivotal role in mass education. The programmes of mass education coupled with a well-organized and service oriented public library and by providing the necessary funds and man-power can contribute immensely towards the welfare and happiness of the society.

The organizations in a society are service oriented or the profit motive oriented. Of them, some have the profit motive while others are platonic in their objectives with free service to all as their motto. All these institutions are aiming towards one particular goal of developing and improving the social condition of the society. This fact is nicely explained by Robert E. Coughlin and others as, "It is hoped that the methodology and some conditions reached in this study will also be useful to those concerned with other systems of service facilities in which the demand resulting from the general growth of the metropolis is met by the addition of one or more relatively self-sufficient, physically isolated units. Examples of such services are health centres, hospitals, schools and playgrounds, fire stations and police stations."²

Some of the non-profit motive organisations are as under:

a) Educational Institutions;
b) Government Health Centres and Civil Hospitals;

c) Civic Bodies;
d) Urban Water Supply and Drainage Boards;
e) Family Welfare Departments; and
f) Public Libraries; etc.

The above mentioned institutions are rendering service to the society, for which they are not charging the community. Such institutions are essential for the progress of the community.

It is rightly expressed in the context of public library by W.J.Murison: "The significance of the public library will be established by the need for it in the light of present day conditions; it must be judged accordingly in competition with the other media and organizations which operate in the same fields, which have the same aims and attack the same problems. Today other means than books, can provide more effectively some messages, contained in books. For instance, the cinema and radio have certain characteristics which equipped them better for demonstrations than books and this must be recognised as an indication of a relative decrease in the importance of some aspects of public library service where that service is confined exclusively with books. It is still fair, however, to claim that next to
The present day public library is a universal provider, not just for the underprivileged but also for the serious readers. Every citizen is provided with an equal opportunity to have access to the information to whatever extent it is required. Thus, it has its contribution towards reconstruction of the welfare state, and in times fulfils its responsibility in an ideal democratic society.

2.2 **Public Library as a Democratic Institution**

The 1940s witnessed a thorough change in the political scene of the world. Autocracy which was prevailing upon the mankind from the past many centuries slowly vanished from the scene. The place was occupied by democracy. The societies in the world are now enjoying the democratic status, as they are established on the principle of society is by the people, for the people and of the people.

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It is the people, in the democratic state, who are responsible for its progress or decadence. This very fact has brought out a stream of social revolution. The progress of any society is measured against the literacy and wisdom prevailing among its citizens and the recorded materials containing the achievements and skills of the intellectual heritage.

The custody of the intellectual heritage of the society rests solely on the libraries. The past experiences, coupled with the tumultuous present to march towards a bright future, a community has to utilize the information housed in the libraries as the community has to take lessons from its past master minds, so that there should not be a repetition of the foibles and follies suffered by the earlier generations. Thus, a public library is charged with an immense responsibility of taking its citizens on a path of truth and tranquility.

In this context S.R. Ranganathan has expressed his views as follows: "An institution collectively owned and maintained by a community - be it a nation, local body, educational institution, research institution, business organization, government department, or any other
corporate body — holding a collection of documents for the use of the members of community and to such others as may be allowed by it, and charged with the duty of promoting adequate and proper use of the collection by all members of the community. 

UNESCO in its First International Declaration on the need and function of the public library, has stated that, "As a democratic institution operated by the people, for the people, of the people, the public library should be established and maintained under clear authority of law: supported wholly or mainly from public funds: open for free use on equal terms to all members of the community regardless of occupation, creed, class or race."

As such a citizen in a democratic country is having every right to make use of the information resources housed in the library, whatever he needs. He is absolutely a king in a Democracy. It is the duty of the public library to provide him whatever information he requires.

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Further W.J. Murison explains the concept as, "Now that the franchise is allowed to all persons over twenty one years of age, it is essential that all should have an equal opportunity of improving themselves as political units and of contributing their share to the enlightened electorate which is the prerequisite of truly democratic government."

"... The growth of government controls and involvement with people's everyday life has now become so complex that many problems present themselves at quite basic levels. There is need for a ready accessibility to guidance on all these matters, and the public library can provide this."

The citizens of any democratic society strive hard to keep alive the spirit of democracy in all walks of life, so that an over all development of the individual citizen and the state can be accomplished. The public library helps to an immense extent in this act of attainment through its informational service.

Hence, in a democracy where people are the rulers as well as the ruled, education must be widespread. The

universal adult suffrage needs universal availability and accessibility to books. If the people responsible for selecting the government are to form sound opinions on social and economic matters, they must have free access to accurate information on all topics of public interest. In the eyes of all democrates, the public library system is vital. It is the 'foremost agent' for preventing people from lapsing into illiteracy. It preserves knowledge with a purpose, streamlining it into the service of community. It is also agent to cultivate emotional integration as it does not discriminate users on the basis of caste, creed, sex, race, age, economic and political status and education.

These are a few services rendered by the public library, which strengthen the activities and principles of liberty, equality and fraternity, and which safeguard and secure democracy.

2.3 Public Library as a Social Institution

A number of institutions are established in the society for its well-being. These social organisations are not only serving their communities, but also bring all the members of the society, nearer for better
understanding and maintain unity among themselves. Such an integrated effort of like-minded members of the society in improving upon the state of affairs, which the realisation of results aimed at.

Thus, a public library being an institution for serving the members of the society, becomes a social institution in its own right. The services rendered are unique in nature, as it is serving the entire population, not to a limited clientele found in Academic and Research libraries. There is a continuous interaction amongst the citizens, throughout their life, and the library. The public library brings about an emotional integration as the readings and writings of some or similar books engenders a fellow-feeling among themselves.

In the words of James Thompson, "Libraries command respect in our society. They are as ubiquitous as schools. Their value is acknowledged without reservation and considerable accounts of public money and resources are made available for library purposes." 

A prolific writer of our profession J.H. Shera has brought out the role of public libraries in the changing society thus, "Society needed libraries in order to make the records of the human adventure available over long periods of time by giving protection. We do not know when libraries began but such records that have survived, indicate that they are of great antiquity. Therefore, they must be essential to the development of a sophisticated, and one might say even to a relatively primitive society. They fulfilled a human need and I assume that this first need was one for custody, the one for preservation, to pass on from one generation to the next, the benefits and the thoughts and ideas and beliefs of previous generations. How all this came about, of course, is itself a mystery. But I think we must regard the library as an important element in the total communication process, both in the case of individual and in society, and its emergence was evidence of social maturation. The more sophisticated the society, the more complex its social organization, the more it needs libraries."

Time changes, so also the needs of the society.
In accordance with this change, the institutions and organizations also change their attitudes and activities. Hence, a modern public library also has to change its programmes to meet the challenging demands of the society.

It is co-existensive with the entire populace. The public library has been now recognized as multi-complex social institution. The interpretation of the existence of public library for a society is so flexible, as for its aims and objectives are applicable to the entire world.

The rate of change in the society is so bewildering as mind-boggling, that here in lies the most primary and immediate challenge to the public library. The public library must be flexible and adaptable itself to this changing and challenging needs of the society to which it serves. It must keep pace with the current demands of the community and it must also readily avail itself to the community's advantages of utilizing and exploring the knowledge and invention as the public library not only provides, it guards the knowledge as a custodian also.

This custodial aspect of library work changed during the 19th century, because, "Learning and educational
systems expanded, and more subject specialization introduced new disciplines, which created new fields of study and research. As a result libraries grew in size and number. Furthermore, book production that increased rapidly, and professional journals that had come on the scene called for new organizational skills to facilitate access to the increasing and varied store of materials.

Also a new relationship to the growing user population had to be developed as libraries were changing from exclusive institution to social ones.⁸

The public library is striving hard in meeting the needs of its community at all levels, and touching all the social strata viz., urban, suburban and rural, rich and poor; old and young; literates and illiterates; diseased and disabled, prisoners; normals and abnormals; and that section of the society which is constantly on the move like sea-farers and so on. The information urge of these people is a problem and the public library has involved to solve these by opening branches at

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appropriate places and through mobile library services and other modes of communication.

In this connection, Bryan Luckham's study of public library in society interpreted by James Thompson clarifies the situation and the status enjoyed by the public library in its interaction with the needs of the population. Thompson states that, "Two principal and basic points emerge from Bryan Luckham's study of the public library in society. The first is that libraries are shaped by society, not by librarians, and thus; 'The philosophy, objectives and role of the public library have sometime been discernible only in retrospect by the historian, endowed with the objectivity given by distance. It must always be remembered, professionally that even Dewey's and Panizzi's among librarians did not work in a vacuum, indeed, it might be posited that it was their recognition of their social role that made them great librarians. Luckham also notes, in connection with various committees of enquiry into library matters: 'It is significant that the major developments in public libraries may well have been determined outside the profession.'"

"Luckham's second point, to do with librarians
themselves, is a concomitant of the first. This is the crucial importance of the individual librarian's response to society's library needs: "The public library... is a social institution operating in a dynamic environment of aspirations, expectations and ideologies, manned and controlled by personnel who can modify the character of the services offered in significant, even subtle ways."³

A modern public library is a social institution geared to serve its society. It is 'free' for all people. It provides an opportunity by making available various types and forms of informational, educational and recreational materials. The one and only way to serve a large mass of population with all the communication media, is through the public library. The adventures and experience of the mankind have been described in the printed book. By exposing oneself to the accumulated experience of the past, can help in saving a lot of time, money and energy in undertaking certain tasks. The community can ill-afford duplicating its efforts in its stride towards peace and happiness, growth and progress.

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The public library takes one away from the trial and error and trivialities in pursuit of the advancement of knowledge.

2.4 Public Library as an Educational Institution

The progress, both material and spiritual, of any society, community or country depends much upon the educated elite. Education paves the way for the economic development and social consciousness amongst the people. The measurement of the development of any community is viewed against the economic as well as educational or intellectual level. This concept of educating the masses is not at all a new one. It starts from the birth of the child and goes through adulthood and takes its full circle at the old age - rich with knowledge, experiences and wisdom. The value of education has been recognised from time immemorial. The society is transmitting and cultivating knowledge and skill, rules of conduct, usages and customs. Education has kept pace with the mankind throughout the complex and checkered history of race.

Educational institutions have become one of the important aspect of any society. Education has become a
sub-system of the society. Academic institutions have come in every community sponsored by either individuals, or private bodies or by governments. The aim and aspirations of any society are translated into reality by these educational institutions.

Education is an act or process of learning, i.e. training the youth for their stability in life. It is the acquisition of knowledge and skills, which brings about discipline of character and prepares one for happy and contented living. These are the basic functions that education has to discharge.

The present days provide ample opportunities to bring about any radical change in education in accordance with the contemporary needs. It is possible to muster together the human and material resources needed for the task of a gigantic re-construction of education and society. At this juncture, the opinion and ideas of Gandhiji are worth considering, as has been brought out by Flossie Williams, "The substance of Gandhiji's Ideas on Education" are:

1. "A universal compulsory education of seven years from 7 to 14 years for all boys and girls."
2. It should be given through the mother tongue.

3. Education should be correlated with production work.

4. Self-sufficiency is the acid test of education.\(^{10}\)

In the words of eminent Indian educationist, D.S. Kothari, "The basic of the education is to promote powers of the mind, acquisition of special skills and advancement of knowledge, but above all, to generate in the young generation a sense of purposefulness and maximum dedication, confidence in themselves and faith in the country's future."\(^{11}\)

In simple terms, the objectives of education are to develop the minds of students, impart formal education, develop the overall personality of the pupil, leading to the development of the community.

The importance of education is further explained by Josefa E. Sarob in the following sentences, "The

\(^{10}\) Williams, Flossie : Essence of Gandhian Concepts on Education, The Sunday Standard, 2-10-77, p.II.

\(^{11}\) India, Ministry of Education, Report, (Chairman, D.S. Kothari), New Delhi, NCERT, 1971, p. 7.
importance of education has been increasingly recognised with the passage of the centuries. Today, no one, whatever his cultural level or social position, can hope to shape and improve the lives of himself and his kind without the help of education. For this reason, questions which relate to education preoccupy every one in some way or other and education presents itself not only as a means of individual betterment and spiritual and cultural enrichment, but also as a powerful instrument of social and economic development.¹²

Education is a continuous process and it has to go in accordance with the growing needs of the society in the sphere of commerce, technology, political and social issues. The schools, colleges and universities are imparting formal education to enter into any field of society.

Education and Library

The acquired and acquainted knowledge and skill by the individual in the community, got through the formal

education must be kept alive. The spirit of pursuing the
unknown to know, less known to know better, abstract
ideas in minds to take some concrete shape, the career
of studentship must continue even after getting out of
the portals of academic institutions. The wandering
mind in pursuit of furthering its horizons of knowledge
can find a recluse in only one place, which provides
large avenues for an agitated mind, full of ideas and
uncertainties, is the public library.

It is to say that the library services and
education must go hand in hand. This idea is explained
by Nourse as, "The educational goals of the public library
are less obvious but more complex; further more, they are
in a process of flux and should probably be encouraged to
change even more rapidly in the future. The people's
university is still that supplying not only specific
answers to specific questions (some quite technical), but
also an unstructured intellectual browsing opportunity
for any individual."13

13 Nourse, E. Sheplay: Areas of Inadequacy in Serving
Multiple Needs. In Libraries at Large: Tradition,
Innovation and National Interest, Ed. by Douglas
M. Knight and E. Sheplay, Nourse, New York, Bowker,
1969, p.165.
Thus, the library’s role in education is a prime one, as public libraries cannot fulfil their responsibilities in isolation from educational system.

There must be a happy and harmonious relation between the library planners and the planners of education in society. The impact and outcome got through such a blend will go a long way in the development of the community. How such a situation can be effected is beautifully expressed by Penna as follows: “The library planners who examine the problems and challenges facing the educational planners will be struck by the numerous ways in which library service can help. The problem of relapses into illiteracy has already been briefly mentioned. As a communication centre the library has a part to play in developing a teaching force capable of breaking with traditional methods which are inadequate at a time when both social concepts and the content of knowledge are changing so rapidly. No less relevant is the role of library service as an ally of education in helping to form attitudes, develop abilities and provide tools and practical skills for tackling economic and social problems. Library service also has a special part to play in educating a generation of young people capable of thinking for themselves and willing to accept and promote innovations.”
"Books and libraries are a means not just of obtaining access to required information - important as that may be - but of giving the student independent access to all kinds of ideas and information. Younger pupils cannot only accumulate facts, but apply them and compare points of view. Older students may begin the process of assessing and evaluating ideas and information. This coupled with the ability to break down required information, is surely of the essence of education." 

The public libraries are essential institutions or organizations bridging the gap between formal and informal education. These are fountain heads for self-education. Self-education is the application of former education having a lot of opportunity to apply the intellectual faculty of the individual. Thus, all the facets of human mind and the human personality blossom forth.

It is an established fact that public library provides means to an individual to continue his education, through self-efforts. The spectrum of the public library

service are directed towards self-education. Public libraries can promote true citizenship of the community, of the nation, of the world. The treasure-house of knowledge, stimulates social reform, cooperation, builds up moral courage, induces tolerance and invokes sympathy, in an atmosphere of freedom. Public library is a place where the understanding between nations are consummated. Public library serves peace as well as democracy.

Education and library are interrelated in subtle ways. Each one is complementary to the other.

2.5 Public Library as a Cultural and Recreational Centre

Society comprises of a number of social institutions established to embellish certain ideals or goals, with a purpose to fulfil in a most democratic way. Taking one's existence in a serious way is one thing, where the ideals are achieved. But one has to look towards the brighter side of life also. After the day's hard work from dawn to dusk, one deserves a better leisure time to spend the time with his family, with friends, with fellowmen, and to exchange ideas with like-minded people. For this activity he forms clubs, associations, circles, centres etc. They are formed to understand each other in a better way in a
relaxed atmosphere. The mutual understanding among the citizens of a community, definitely paves the ways for its progress in all its facets. The recreational and cultural aspect of any society finds avenues in such centres. There is a lot of opportunity to bring out the latent talents of the people of the community. Such a time, spent leisurely, definitely refreshes the minds of the people and they can take up the world with its seriousness again to fulfil their desires, with full vigour and gusto.

It is an agreed fact that a public library is a place where people throng for knowledge and recreation and to meet each other. The recreation is provided in a library is of a high quality and good taste.

It is a place where cultural heritage of any community is gathered in the form of graphic materials. The citizens get ideas and inspirations here.

The public library is not merely a place to provide books and kindred material right across the issue counter to its users, it is an institution goes to the very heart of the citizens of the community. It actively participates in all the communities cultural and other programmes. By understanding the communities aims and aspirations, it revitalises it.
In the words of James Thompson, "On a more abstract level library power arises from the connection of libraries with culture, in an intellectual and artistic sense. Libraries not only contain creative and imaginative works in literary form, but most widen their role to encompass the whole range of cultural activities."\(^{15}\)

Library involvement in general, cultural activities is not a new thing. Libraries are not only accommodating books, they have provided an accommodation for meetings, seminars, lectures and all other extra-library activities evolved out of the needs of the community. As the role of library were well-understood in a socio-democratic way, people demanded an arena, a forum, a stage to demonstrate their cultural heritage. Thus, by the turn of this century the libraries are planned, designed and constructed, taking into consideration of this vital aspect, with lecture halls, meeting rooms, seminar halls, exhibition halls etc. as a permanent feature. Many influential voices have been raised in support of libraries as community cultural centres.

The suggestions made by Lord Goodman in the seminar...

'Public library aims and objectives' are worth mentioning in this connection. They are:

" - To promote and encourage the use of public libraries as centres, where individual can take part in the arts in a positive way."

" - To encourage the public librarian to assume the role of initiator and organizer of cultural events."

" - To encourage the public librarian to liaise with local societies and cultural organizations, fostering the creative use of leisure in the field of the arts."

" - To promote and encourage the use of the public libraries as a 'Special Library', agency for local associations and cultural organisations."

" - To promote and encourage the use of public libraries as cultural information centres."

" - To promote 'the provision of leisure material for the individual."

" - To promote the provision of leisure and amenity
services to special groups in the community."^{16}

The public library assumes two prime advantages at the time of its establishment, as a social and cultural focus: its location is usually central and its visual impact is imposing. As a consequence of all the above mentioned facts, the public libraries, of this century offer a very wide range of facilities for cultural activities. The physical as well as material facilities provided by public libraries are as under:

They are equipped with latest photo-phone arrangements in their auditoriums to arrange for lectures, seminars, book talks, poetry recitals, group discussions, dramas and music-concerts etc. The same hall gets converted sometimes into an exhibition hall for the display of books, handicrafts, paintings and other materials. Quite a number of libraries have a separate books-exhibition halls.

They have in their collection gramophone records both - non-commercial as well as recreational, along with

tapes and cassettes. The users are served with their choice, in a separate room, with ear phones, called as 'Listening posts'.

They show films of educational, cultural as well as of recreational value at regular intervals. They are equipped with radio, television and video tape recordings also.

At times public library assumes the role of publisher on behalf of the entire community by bringing out informational publications.

As a centre of cultural activity in a society, public library fulfils two tasks. Firstly, it promotes in particular overall development of an individual, and develop the cultural aspect of the society in general. Secondly, it gets an opportunity to expose its collection to the citizens to make use of it to the maximum extent.

In brief, the progress of any community or nation can be judged on the basis of the books published. Books are the embodiment of knowledge. The knowledge gained by masterminds, and intellectuals are enshrined between the two covers. The store-house of such knowledge is the Public Library. It is an institution established by the society
for its informational needs. Thus, public libraries are not only the custodians but also the disseminators of the knowledge. It promotes through its materials, the advancements of all the spheres of life - social, economic educational, political, cultural as well as spiritual. It keeps its citizens well-informed. With the current affairs that go on, around them, without the public library the doors of the world which is full of fun and adventure of human spirit, surpassing all the artificially created barriers would be closed. The public library is pulsating manifestation of the society, of the nation. It is an integral part of the society. The public library is as essential as any other social institution for the betterment of society. It removes cobwebs of ignorance. It enlightens its citizens to march towards the progress on just and truthful path, thus, enabling nation's to have peace and happiness to prevail upon them. Public library achieves this task through its silent, constant service, with its benign existence in the changing society full of turbulence and dynamism.