CHAPTER IV

STORY OF PUBLIC LIBRARY MOVEMENT IN KARNATAKA

4.1 Introduction

Karnataka has played no mean part in the national scene. Its contributions to the national culture are well-known. Though the kings and conquerors departed long ago, they have left behind them an indelible and enduring imprint through the art and architecture, standing as mute evidence of the glorious and colourful past of the state.

4.2 Brief History of Public Libraries

"Epigraphic evidences are available to show that a great many libraries were attached to universities and Religious Maths. Some such centres where universities prospered were Aihole, Pavittage (Salotgi, district Bijapur), Nagai, Balligavi and libraries were attached to many Religious Maths viz. Jain Math at Swadi (Near Sirsi, U.K.) the Virginamath at Yakkundi, Shivayogamandir near Badami and Sringeri Math, Udagatti". ¹

An attempt to describe in some detail some of the notable centres of learning and their libraries is made below.

Lakkundi

Lakkundi (modern Lakkundi, a village in Gadag taluka, Dharwad district) thrived as a great centre of culture and learning from the 9th century A.D. to the 14th century A.D. with a grand library attached to it. This is reported to be associated with the name of 'Dana Chintawani' (Jewel among donors) Attimabbe who patronised art, literature and religion. In a way Attimabbe may be taken to have promoted the library movement in that she got one thousand copies of Poet Ponna's Santinathapurana made and distributed them among the learned. Ranna another famous Kannada poet was a great admirer of Attimabbe who in turn patronised him.

Pavittage

The Agrahara at Salotagi (Indi. taluka, Bijapur district, present name of Pavittage) was attached to the temple of 'Traipurusha' (triad of Brahma, Vishnu and Maheshwara). This institution helped the spread of knowledge from 10th to 12th centuries A.D.
Legend has it that Mukkanna Kadambe, predecessor of Mayur Sarma, who went to the ghatik-asthana at Kanchi for prosecuting his Vedic studies, extended invitation to 32 Brahmana families to come down from Ahichhatra (Ramnagar, district Bareilly, U.P.) and settled down here. The centre had as many as 32,000 mahajanas living there. Among the various subjects taught was Bharata Sastra also.

According to the four inscriptions found here a great centre of learning flourished here during the 11th and 12th centuries A.D. known for its worship of Naga, the place was called 'Naga vapi', meaning Naga's well.

Later, however, during the days of the Vijayanagar kings, public libraries appear to have flourished. King Bukka is credited to have gifted land to Pauranik Kavi Krishnabhatta for the renovation of the libraries attached to the Sringeri Math.
Sastradana

The system of Sastradana, which contributed to the dissemination of knowledge, continued to be practised vigorously till recent times. Linganna Kavi in his Keladi Nripa Vijaya gives an example of this noble system.

Other centres

Sringeri, Melkote and Udupi were chosen as their headquarters by the three great acharyas - Sankara, Ramanuja and Madhva - respectively. Basava Kalyana is identified with Basaveshwar. Karkala and Mudbidre are important Jaina centres. At all these places excellent manuscripts libraries have been in existence right from the days of the respective religious leaders.

"With the fall of Vijayanagar empire, however, darkness enveloped the land. The Karnataka was split into five parts, Mysore and Coorg were carved into two separate states and remaining portions of Karnataka were distributed among Bombay, Madras and Hyderabad states".  

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Ibid.
4.3 Bombay Karnataka Area

"Native libraries were established at Belgaum and Dharwad in 1848 and 1854 respectively by the British officers to curb the anti-British movement in Karnataka. Though, these libraries did not gain popularity at that time, they appear to be pioneers for public library - movement in Karnataka". 3

Belgaum

The public library picture in the words of K.S. Deshpande, "The Belgaum Native General Library seems to be the first library to be started in Karnataka in the 19th century. It was established in 1848 by J.D.Inverarity, the then Collector of Belgaum. It was housed in a building of its own. It had in 1882, a collection of 1,036 books, of which 622 were in English, 204 Marathi, 34 Sanskrit, 31 Kannada and 63 Gujarathi. ... Besides this, there were seven other libraries or reading rooms in Belgaum district, round about the year 1882. These were established as stated below:

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(a) Library at Chikkodi, 1886, (b) Nippani Library, 1875, (c) Gokak Library, 1865, (d) Athani Library, 1865, (e) Sampagaon Library, 1866, (f) Khanapur Library, 1868, and (g) Saundatti Library, 1870."\(^4\)

**Dharwad**

"The Native General Library of Dharwad was established in 1854 by L.S. Nagpurkar. It had in 1882 a collection of about 414 books in English, 30 in Marathi and only 7 in Kannada, is now known as Garag Shiddhalingappa Municipal General Library"\(^5\).

Further, in Hubli, Hubli library was started in 1865, with the support from Municipal funds and subscription. It contained some 850 books by 1882, in English, Kannada, Sanskrit, Gujarathi and Marathi.

The Ranebennur Library was established in 1873.

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"The Lokamanya Dharmartha Vachanalaya of Shirahatti was established in 1881 by the then Sangli Government with the active cooperation of the eminent citizens of the town".6

**Jubilee Libraries**

Subsequently at Karwar, Kumta and Kundagol, 'Jubilee Libraries' came into being.

**Bijapur**

"At about the same time, there were in the Bijapur district seven libraries or reading rooms, one each at Bagalkot, Bagewadi, Bilgi, Bijapur, Indi, Kaladgi and Muddebihal. The Indi and Muddebihal libraries were maintained from the interest of permanent funds. The Bagalkot, Bagewadi, Bijapur, Bilgi and Kaladgi libraries were maintained partly from subscriptions and partly from yearly municipal grants".7

Karwar

The Karwar General Library came into being in the year 1864, due to the interest and enthusiasm of the learned men of the region. Though shifted from place to place during its earlier years, the library has its own building now, constructed in 1912-13, by the funds granted by the then Government. The library had a total collection of 12,069 till 1964. The library was taken over by the Department of Public Libraries, in the year 1977 and is now the District Central Library of Uttar Kannada.

The Karnataka Vidyarthi Sangha

"The Karnataka Vidyarthi Sangha started way back in 1890 was a pioneer in the revival of interest in Kannada language, literature and culture". The Sangha started a reading room with the name Shantesh Vachanalaya.

"Under the auspices of the Shantesh Vachanalaya, the First All-Bombay Karnataka Library Conference was held in 1929, which brought into being the Karnataka Library Association".

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The then Bombay Government in the year 1939 appointed a Committee under the Chairmanship of A.A.A. Fysee to study the then existing situation of library services and recommend suitable means and measures for the development and strengthening of public library services in the province. The Committee put forth a scheme of developing libraries in the province in six stages. The first stage was setting up of the Central Library and 3 regional libraries. As a result Regional Libraries at Ahmedabad, Dharwad and Poona came into being with the responsibility of acting as regional depository centres for copy-right collection in respective regional languages. The Karnataka Vidya Vardhaka Sangha took the responsibility of managing the Regional Library at Dharwad. In 1967 about 17,000 valuable copy-right books were shifted to State Central Library, Bangalore. The remaining collection was merged with the collection of City Central Library Dharwad.

The Karnataka Library Association

"In the wake of the establishment of the Regional Library, the Karnataka Library Association also became
very active. The Association secured recognition from the State Government (Bombay Government) in 1950. It also began to receive an annual grant-in-aid. Its constitution was finalised. The Association published a book on Library Science written in Kannada by experts. It also conducted library training classes. The compilation of a directory of libraries in Karnataka had been contemplated by it.\footnote{\textit{Op.cit.} 4. pp. 45 \\& 47}

Under the auspices of the Association the Second All-Bombay-Karnataka Library Conference was held in 1948 at Dharwad. The Third and Fourth Conferences were held at Kundgol and at Kumta in 1952 and 1955 respectively.

The Fifth Conference was held in 1958 venue: Dharwad. The important outcome of the Conference was the decision to transform the Karnataka Library Association into that of an all Karnataka nature.

4.4 Old Mysore Area

The existence of public libraries in the Old Mysore area was conspicuously absent. However, the development of

public libraries throughout the state was thought of at the Conference of Education Committee convened in 1913, presided over by late N. Vishweshwaraya, the then Diwan of Mysore. He sponsored a scheme for a planned programme of development of public library facilities. As the outcome of the recommendation of this committee in 1914, two libraries were established one at Bangalore and another at Mysore.

The Bangalore Public Library

The public library at Bangalore, rightly expressed by S.R. Ranganathan as, "Beginning as Subscription Library."

"The Bangalore Public Library, is I am told, a brain-child of Mokshagundam Vishweshwaraya. He conceived it in accordance with the ideas about a public library prevailing 50 years ago. It was in effect meant to provide reading materials to scholastic minded, fairly rich, and leisured class of people. It began as a subscription-library. It was a public library in the sense that it was open to any member of the public to become a paying member. The message sent on its formal opening on 1st May 1915, by Vishweshwaraya had, however,
the pregnant words, 'Cherish the hope that it will be a lasting benefit to the citizens of Bangalore'. The management of Bangalore public library continuously liberalized its services. From the very beginning it maintained a 'Free Reading Room' for the use of newspapers and periodicals by any persons without payment. It also allowed non-subscribers to read the books of the library within the library premises. But the privilege of taking books home was denied to a non-member.

"In spite of the concessions given to non-subscribing public, the Bangalore Public Library could not answer the modern definition of a public library".

"The Mysore Public Libraries Act, defines the future of the Bangalore Public Library in precise terms in section 36, read as follows:"

"36 Mysore State Central Library (i) As from the appointed day, the Public Library, Bangalore, shall be the Mysore State Central Library". 11

Hassan

"The public library at Hassan was opened in the year 1916 by the late M. Vishveshwaraya, the then Diwan, in commemoration of the coronation of King George V, and it was called 'The King George V Coronation Institute Library and Reading Room'. In 1970, this library was converted as District Central Library, and afterwards named as City Central Library in 1978".

Sakleshpur

"The Coronation Reading Room and Library, situated in the centre of Sakleshpur town, was established in 1914. It was being managed by a committee of 5 members".

Tumkur

"A feature of the library movement in the state was the starting of an integrated library service in compact areas under a Government of India scheme of educational development. Each such area was supplied with periodicals, journals and books of interest, which were circulated in the villages of that area..."
"There were ten public libraries in Tumkur district as on 1st January 1968, namely (1) Sri Krishnarajendra Library, Tumkur, (2) Bharat Sevadal Free Reading Room and Library, Tumkur, (3) Yuvak Sangha Free Reading Room and Library, Sriramanagar, (4) Nehru Free Reading Room and Library, Kyatsandra, (5) Friends Union Library, Gubbi, (6) Lakshmijenardhanaswamy Library, Kadaba, (7) Library and Reading Room, Chikenayakanahalli, (8) Vasavi Pustak Mandir, Madhugiri, (9) Yuvak Sangha Reading Room and Library, Nagalapur, Turvekere Taluk, (10) Anubhava Allama Prabhu Library and Reading Room, Tiptur".

"Among these, the Sri Krishnarajendra Library, Tumkur, was started in the year 1818 by the late C.Krishna Rao, retired Deputy Inspector-General of Education, who was its Founder-Secretary".  

The same library has been converted as District Central Library of Tumkur District in 1972.

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4.5 **Hyderabad Karnataka Area**

"Speaking of the remaining regions one may say that Hyderabad Karnataka is not so well off as the rest in respect of libraries and institutions of higher learning. On the eve of the reorganization of the states, the Hyderabad Karnataka area comprising the districts of Bidar, Gulbarga and Raichur was being governed in the matter of library facilities by the Hyderabad Library Act". 14

**Bidar**

Prior to the introduction of the Karnataka Public Libraries Act in 1965, there were three public libraries, two at Bidar and other at Hudgi in Humnabad taluk.

"The Public Library and Reading Room, Bidar is the oldest of the grant-in-aid libraries in the district. It was started in 1939 near the Osmania Mosque. As in 1976, it contained 5,000 volumes."

Municipal Library

"Municipal Library was started in 1959. In 1975 it contained 4,381 books.... It is housed in its own building".

Hudgi

"The Sarvodaya Library, Hudgi, was started in 1956 and is housed in its own building. In 1975, it contained 2,845 books". 15

4.6 Madras Karnataka Area

Mangalore

"A District Authority was functioning in South Kanara previously, under the Madras Local Libraries Act, 1948.... According to the Act, every district was to have a Local Library Authority under which any number of libraries could be started with the assistance of municipalities and other local bodies".

"Under the scheme, a well-equipped library was started in Mangalore in 1951, and it was called the Karnad Sadashiva Rao District Library. The Local Library Authority had its branch libraries at Udipi (1954), Belthangadi (1954), Karkal (1954), Coondapur (1955), Puttur (1955), Bantwal (1962) and Sullia (1968), and 35 delivery stations."

In 1969, all the libraries of the region were converted into City Central Library and District Central Library in accordance with Karnataka Public Libraries Act, 1965.

In the year 1958 at the instance of S.R. Ranganathan who was invited to Mangalore to inaugurate Library Week, the South Kanara Library Association was started. This association is playing an active role in the cause of promoting the library facilities in the region.

4.7 Coorg

The Coorg district is surrounded by the scenic beauty of green hills and coffee plantations.

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The British officers and the rich coffee planters started a subscription library at Mercara and later handed it over to the Fort Club. It was known as Mahatma Gandhi Public Library, and it was converted into a District Central Library of Kodagu district, in 1970.

Though attempts were made in Karnataka for the development of public library services, the situation remained unsatisfactory. The reasons responsible for such a situation being three fold: (a) the Governments - Central, State as well as local, did not bestow due sympathy towards those institutions, (b) the public also did not evince keen interest and took initiative in utilizing and developing the public library services, owing to the fact that 62% of our State's population being illiterate, and (c) the financial assistance by the Government is too meagre to think of launching any developmental programmes by the public libraries. It can be surmised that both the people-in-power as well as people in general were unable to gauge the value of the public libraries and their services.