CHAPTER- TEN

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CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

Public libraries are the agencies of lifelong education and form an essential part of a social fabric. The socio-cultural and socio-economic development of a country depends much on institutions like public libraries. Even the foundation of democracy in any democratic nation is fully based on the performance of public libraries as the national conscience keepers and community information centers through their multifarious activities. Therefore, public libraries do deserve all support and help by the Central, State, and the local self governments of a country.

The greatest contribution of the public libraries lie in their efforts to improve the quality of human beings. In general public libraries help in the overall development of the society, community, religion, industry, agriculture, education, recreation, enlightenment, national planning, and national integration and so on. Despite differences of opinion as to the exact relationship between literacy and economic development, it has been universally recognised that socio-economic development of a nation is impossible in the absence of a qualitative improvement of its human capital.
In the context of Indian conditions, where illiteracy reigns supreme and where the formal channels of education are inadequate, especially for the discontinued and the drop outs, to cope with the explosive situation, it is inevitable to turn the major attention to exploit the potentialities of the public library system. The Indian scene presents a panorama of large scale illiteracy which hinders all programmes like family planning, style of living, national and international understanding, and above all the efforts towards the achievement of economic progress. It is very much doubtful whether our country can attempt any progress with 65 per cent illiteracy looming large over the horizon of India. Besides being partners in the process of formal education, the significance of public libraries lies in their contribution to Adult Education Programmes. With the launching of the new National programme of 'National Literacy Mission' by the Government of India a new dimension has been added to the activities of the public libraries in India.

Though being an important social organization of the nation the public libraries in India have received scanty attention either from the Government or from the public. This utter neglect becomes manifest when a comparison is made between the developed countries and India in terms of money spent on the public libraries. This situation can be partly
attributed to the fact that the public libraries are seldom treated as partners of education or as independent agents as important as education itself. This type of indifference has prevented the public libraries from receiving adequate funds from the Government.

It is clear from the expenditure on public library services in 25 States and 8 Union Territories that:

1) 8 states having library legislation have not been able to raise the necessary funds through library cess during the last 45 years; and that

ii) they have failed to spend even Re 1/- per capita on public library services which is considered to be the minimum.

It is, however, a matter of pride that West Bengal government, without library cess, is spending almost Rs.2/- per capita out of State revenues. This goes to confirm that the State governments, if they are committed to the provision of public library services, can provide adequate funds out of their revenues. Willingness of the Government to provide necessary funds is one of the essential pre-requisites for public library development.

Being a service oriented institution, the public library should link itself with other educational, social and cultural
institutions, including schools, adult education programmes, leisure activity groups, Nehru Yuvak Mandals etc., which are mainly concerned with the promotion of arts and culture. The public library should pay special attention to backward communities, regions, and to the handicapped sections of the community. Those include tribal groups, ethnic groups, ethnic minorities, physically handicapped and discriminated social groups. Special attention needs to be paid to children, women, students and the elderly, and also to rural communities in the context of developmental programmes like adult education, rural development, agriculture, environment and health and family welfare programmes. In this context the rural public library network should be developed to form the community information centres. For this purpose, the resources of various governmental agencies and voluntary organisations engaged in library development and allied activities will have to be co-ordinated under national and State level agencies. Effective use will have to be made of the latest information technology especially for public library service to children, physically handicapped, the illiterate and the neo-literate. The effectiveness of the public library will be enhanced by establishing national, regional, local networks and assuring coordination at the national level agency like the Raja Ram Mohan Roy Library Foundation which shall plan, finance and monitor the
developmental programmes and oversee the development plans of States and Union Territories.

Public Library System in Karnataka: A State of the Art

The Karnataka Public Library system consists of SCL as the apex, urban and rural library system through CCL's and DCL's respectively. During the five years under study the PLS as a whole has grown in terms of reading materials, staff and users. The physical performance of the public libraries have been examined using a number of indicators. The addition of a few lakhs of volumes to the stocks may look impressive, but the average addition to the stock of individual libraries, especially District Central libraries in any year is not that significant. According to the 1991 census the literate population of the State was 1,72,92,117. Taking the total book collection it is estimated that for every 100 literates there are less than 4 books made available in the stock of the library. When viewed from the registered borrower point of view, it is noted that for every 100 literates, it is only 2.4 literates who are the members of the library. Expansion programmes as well as extension work and services are constantly increasing, but the impact is very slow in converting every literate into a regular library user which is
far from satisfactory. The contribution of the library staff in this regard is almost nil.

Financing

This study indicates the lack of deep involvement of all the three levels of the Government in promoting the public library service on healthy lines. The role of different levels of the Government differs from country to country. The composition of the funding in USA is found to be as 50 percent local, 30 percent State, and 20 percent Federal. But in practice all lobbying efforts have produced only 13 percent from states and less than 5 percent from the Federal government. More than 82% come from local governments.

Though the local bodies in India have a long history, all along their finances have been subject to constraints and contradictions. They are not able to provide more than 20% in the case of Karnataka.

The State Government has demonstrated better and is capable of undertaking the public library service for more than one reason, viz., the financial resources of State Government are more sound. Further, education is the concern of the State Government and therefore the public library should be attached to it.
The Central Government is keeping away from this and it is a mockery on its part that library development provision in the successive Five Year Plans is totally neglected. The concern of the central government in this area which can be traced through the important committees appointed to suggest ways and means of building the public library services. But at the same time the recommendations of the committees and commissions are not followed up. At present the central government of India is contributing to the States through RRRLF, but it is less than one per cent of the total income.

While augmentation of financial resources is necessary, the available resources must be rationally spent. This can be achieved through better planning and management techniques. Certain advanced techniques like Cost Benefit Analysis and performance Budgeting have limited applications in Public Libraries. The present methods of generating funds, viz., collection of library cess supplemented by matching grants and provision of lump sum grants are found to be inadequate for a planned development of holistic public library system and services. If the same rate of growth is followed in future, it would take another century for our villages to have their libraries.
The Study of the Finances of Public Libraries in Karnataka

The historical development of public libraries in Karnataka reveals that, the revenue and the sources of finances of PLS in Karnataka has stretched along with the expansion of library services. The study of finances of public libraries begins with the enactment of Public Libraries Act which provides a legal basis for the revenue.

There is a positive correlation between the revenue and expenditure of the PLS. The expenditure is mostly determined by the revenue. The results reveal that the expansion of library services can be undertaken only through resource mobilisation.

The per capita revenue does not provide an encouraging picture. The per capita revenue for the State increased from Rs. 0.47 in 1980-81 to Rs.1.05 in 1990-91. There is a lot of variation between the districts and cities of Karnataka.

The general trend of the State is that the consolidated fund from the State government and the cess form the bulk of the revenues of the public library system in Karnataka. None of the districts or cities appear to be deriving any other sources of revenue in sizeable amounts. Despite fluctuations in the levels of cess and consolidated fund, the cess is stable for all the years under study. However consolidated
fund is maintaining a steady growth. Peculiarly enough the study shows that the other grants in the form of revenue assignment to DCL’s and Octroi compensation for CCL’s has shown decreasing trend during (about 50 per cent) the years under study.

The per capita expenditure on the staff in the State moved from Rs.0.15 in 1980-81 to Rs.0.58 in 1990-91. Per literate person it moved from Rs. 0.40 in 1980-81 to Rs. 1.50 in 1990-91 an almost three fold increase. Surprisingly no recruitment is made for the new staff to the PLS of Karnataka.

The library cess is another major source of revenue, but it has not been revised for the past 27 years inspite of the realization that the expenses are more and increasing year by year. This has paved the way for the slow growth of public libraries in Karnataka.

There are significant variations among the two major units of the State. Since the cess is linked with the property tax, the cities like Bangalore, Mysore, Hubli-Dharwad, Belgaum and Mangalore and the districts like Bangalore (urban) are releasing more cess than other cities and districts.

Two items of heavy expenditure are Staff and Library Reading Materials. The expenditure on staff is almost three
times more than the expenditure on the library reading materials. The study indicates that except CCL's Bangalore and Mangalore the remaining 20 districts and 9 CCL's have spent more money on staff rather than library reading materials. The levels of expenditure on staff in both the units is similar with minor variations. But in the case of expenditure on library reading materials CCL's have spent more than two times when compared to the expenditure of DCL's.

Cess as a source of Finance

The cess as a source of revenue ultimately depends on the nature and conditions under which the property tax is administered. But the property tax which is a major source of revenue for the local bodies is becoming more inelastic forcing them to look for government grants. Property tax holds a pivotal position in the finance of public libraries, and all the weaknesses are reflected in the collection of cess.

During the days when the first Library Act was passed in Tamil Nadu, the factors that tilted in favour of levying cess was to keep the revenues above the political vagaries and also to protect it from the axing of the administrators. The cess was thought of in the immediate years of Independence of India under a host of compulsions, when the welfare concept was yet
to step in the country and the library service was thought of a luxury.

These days cess is losing its significance and relevance as it is working under insurmountable constraints. The imposition of the upper limits of the cess and its linkage with other cesses cannot be expected to yield sizeable amounts. Even the cess, raised at the existing rates is not reaching the public libraries in time.

It is evident that the cess levied on the property tax alone does not yield adequate revenue. To increase the revenue it is possible to levy cess on multiple taxes like octroi duty, motor vehicle tax, professional tax, and entertainment tax besides property tax. Though it is theoretically sound, it is subject to changes. For example in Karnataka octroi duty was in vogue up to 1981 and was suddenly abolished in the name of national economy and convenience. The Andhra Pradesh Government’s decision to abolish motor vehicle tax on two wheelers is another example. In the event of abolition of such taxes, the cess also stand cancelled forcing the public library system to lose the revenue. As and when such abolition occurs, exploring a new tax base becomes a gamble.

The present picture of public libraries in Karnataka is a matter of disappointment. The paucity of funds has led to
deterioration of (both in quantity and quality) acquisition of reading materials, inadequate building facilities and uncomfortable furniture. Any one will strike a pessimistic note about the prospects of public libraries in the State. A bold approach to infuse new dynamism is the need of the hour. This in turn calls for vast amounts of money with the involvement of the Central and State governments.

**SUGGESTIONS**

1. To provide comparatively satisfactory and adequate public library services in both urban and rural areas of the State, there is an immediate need to amend the KPL Act, 1965 and its sections 30 and 31. In addition to this, if care is taken for its total implementation, then the system can expect sizeable financial resources.

2. In order to ensure a stable financial support on a permanent basis the State government should make a provision of finance at the per capita rate of Rs. 5/- in general or Rs. 10/- per literate person.

3. Wise minds should prevail upon the concerned authorities to amend the provisions of KPL Act, 1965 to impose the library cess in the form of surcharge on ;
a) Excise duty on liquor;
b) Entertainment tax;
c) vehicle registration tax;
d) Professional tax; and
e) Registration of immovable property other than agricultural land at the rate of 10 paise for every rupee which in turn facilitate a perennial source of income for the entire Karnataka Public Library System.

4. It is common experience that local bodies like Municipal Corporations and Panchayats including D.C. office make enormous delay in collecting and remitting the cess collected to the appropriate budget/accounts head. Therefore steps should be taken to systematise the process with clearcut instructions regarding supplying the details of the collected cess and its remittance.

5. A 'Public Library Foundation' is to be established for each City/District with a separate Board of Directors. Its main objective should be to explore the philanthropy, collection of gifts, exchanges, building funds etc. for total development of public libraries.

6. In view of the insufficiency of the consolidated fund to cater to the requirements of the staff's salary and other stipulated expenses, the uncertainty of octroi
compensation, land revenue assignment and the subsequent effect in the form of cut in the purchase of reading materials, it is strongly felt to suggest to the concerned government authority to allocate a minimum of 5% of the State education budget for the development of public libraries.

It is well known that education is a State concern and the public library's major objective is to provide life long education. The expenditure on education in Karnataka for the years 1988-89 was Rs. 620 crores. It has increased to Rs. 872 crores for the year 1990-91. At the same time the per capita expenditure has also increased at a faster rate. It was Rs. 142 in 1988-89 and has increased to Rs. 194 for the year 1990-91. To compare the expenditure of public libraries with education the total expenditure for the year 1990-91 is less than Rs. 5 crores and per capita Rs. 1.05 only. In the light of this situation and to provide a permanent solution for the public libraries in the State a minimum of 5% of the education budget should be given to public libraries in the form of State Government grants.

7. It is realised that the Functions and Objectives of the Public Libraries and Adult Education Programmes are found to be almost similar in many respects. Every year
the State Government spends over Rs. 6 crore on the programme of eradication of illiteracy. If the activities of Adult Education Department is merged with the Public Libraries Department, their supplementary and complementary role will result in making the programme more effective and efficient. Therefore it is suggested that to maintain the true spirit of the statement "Public Library is the people's university" the two Departments are to work shoulder to shoulder whereby duplication can be avoided. It also paves the way for a large scale financial base to activate the ordained functions of the public library.

8. The Central government has its rightful place in supporting the State in many vital spheres. Eradication of illiteracy, informing the public about day-to-day affairs, communicating the knowledge of the past and present through suitable media and to keep alive the cultural heritage of the country is the responsibility of the public libraries. This is the major contribution in keeping the public awareness which is very essential in a democratic country like India. Under the circumstances, it is the obligation of the central government to sponsor the public library development in States. In this respect, having first hand knowledge of the Central government sponsored areas and programmes, it is strongly
suggested that the Central government should extend its financial aid to the tune of at least Rs. 5 crore every year for the development of public libraries in the State.

9. It is the experience of all in every sphere of activity that the free services are often misused, or rarely used or neglected. In this mad world it is better to charge some fees for the services offered. Therefore public libraries should bring suitable amendment in the Act to fix a nominal membership fees in the range of Rs.5 to Rs.10 according to the situation. Further the services that are offered in the form of bibliography, xeroxing, lending the rare and valuable documents, video and audio cassettes etc. should be charged. This will fetch a good income to the library and help to develop its rich resources for the benefit of the community it serves.