CHAPTER VI
KERALA GRANTHASALA SANGHAM AND
A POPULAR LIBRARY MOVEMENT

In Kerala, one of the smallest states in India, having an area of 38,863 sq kms, which represent only 1.18 per cent of the total area of India, and having a population of 25.45 million (1981 census), there are now 5000 public libraries, 200 college libraries, several thousand school libraries, besides a few private libraries maintained by the church, newspapers, political parties and ancient family houses. The best libraries in the State, rich in collection and open to the public, are the Trivandrum Public Library, the Legislative Library, the University Library, and the Public Libraries in Kottayam, Ernakulam and Calicut. Since the establishment of the Trivandrum Public Library in 1829, numerous public libraries appeared in Kerala. The emergence of libraries in different parts of the State, the difficulties experienced in running them and the collapse of several of them forced the public attention on the need for a library movement. Such a movement however, did not take concrete shape until the Kerala Granthasala Sangham appeared in 1945 during the peak days of freedom struggle. ¹

responsible government and the emergence of political parties during the twenties and thirties of the present century accelerated the growth of libraries and hastened the birth of library movement."

Reverence for and interest in books have been found in the people of Kerala right from ancient times. Archives maintained in certain ancient houses, mansions of landlords and palaces of ruling families could be cited to illustrate the point. Evidently the reading habit and the habit of preserving books were found only among the very well-to-do, upper class people in those days. In the ancient times education was the monopoly of Brahmins. In course of time the old order yielded place to new and the monopoly of power and privilege of old order crumbled. The frontiers of knowledge and the reading habit of the people developed steadily, which expanded further with the advent of printing and publication of books, newspapers and periodicals.

Public Libraries appeared in Kerala in the first half of the Nineteenth Century. But there was no organized attempt at library movement until the establishment of schools and colleges in the State.

The first English School at Trivandrum was founded in 1834, during the reign of Maharaja Swathi Thirunal. In 1866 it was raised to the status of a college, affiliated to the Madras University. The first college in Cochin was established after ten years, in 1875. The products of these institutions were later to take initiative

\(^2\text{Ibid}\)

\(^3\text{Wood, p. 7.}\)
in establishing public libraries in different parts of Kerala.

Every village in Kerala has a library. If men decide and work together, they can achieve the goals easily. Sometimes they can achieve beyond their earlier goals. The growth of libraries in Kerala is the best example for this. After the revolution, in many countries, libraries had come up as a part of the socialist regeneration. But in Kerala, the story is different.\(^4\)

**Situation Before the Foundation of the Sangham**

Maharaja Sri Swathi Thirunal extended ample support to the education and libraries. Maharaja Srimulam Thirunal (1898-1924) also extended enough support for the formation and development of libraries in Travancore. During his reign in 1917-18, the Government framed rules for grant-in-aid to libraries and there were 27 libraries in the state which received grant-in-aid from the Education Department.\(^5\) The maximum aid was fixed as Rs.299 per annum and the Government also used to supply all its publications to the libraries, either at a reduced rate or free of charge. It is reported by the Director of Public Instructions that in 1923, the lowest grant to a library was Rs.20 per annum and 12 institutions were given that sum.\(^6\)

During the reign of Maharaja Sri Chitra Thirunal, a Rural Library system was introduced in the state for the provision of adult

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\(^4\)Panikar, p. 14

\(^5\)Travancore Administration Report, 1917 - 18

\(^6\)Director of Public Instruction, Letter No.619/L and P., 15 April 1924, Travancore, 1924.
education.\textsuperscript{7} In the light of the report of the Travancore Education Reforms Committee under the Chairmanship of R. M. Statham, the D P I presented in 1932, a scheme for the establishment of a Central Circulating Library and a large number of rural libraries.\textsuperscript{8}

The emergence and working of a few library associations also form part of the library movement in the State. The Trivandrum Public Library Society, registered in 1847 with a proper constitution and body of rules, was the first of its kind. But its activities were confined to the maintenance of the Trivandrum Public Library and its membership was restricted to the people of the city of Trivandrum.\textsuperscript{9}

\textbf{Libraries and Travancore State}

It has been already discussed about the contribution of Maharaja Swathi Thirunal to the Trivandrum Public Library. From the reign of Maharaja Swathi Thirunal onwards, one could see a steady development of education and libraries in Travancore State.

In Travancore State the first attempt to collect Malayalam books and organize public libraries was made during the reign of Vishakam Thirunal Maharaja (1880 - 1885).\textsuperscript{10}

\textsuperscript{7}Travancore Directory 1938, p. 159.


\textsuperscript{9}Kurian Thomas, p. 66.

\textsuperscript{10}Nair, p. 112
The Suguna Poshini Library at Vanchiyoor in Trivandrum was established in 1884. This functioned for one and a half years.\textsuperscript{11} In 1888 At Karamana in Trivandrum, another library was started known as the S. M. R. V. Association Library. Janapradayani Library at Neyyattinkara and Mundenkavu Sankaravilasam Library at Chenganoor were started in the year 1805 M. E. (1910 AD). In the year 1911 the Y.M.C.A. Library at Keezhkara and in 1913 the Raja Raja Varma Library at Ochira were started. In 1916 Lalithavilasam Library at Padmanabhapuram and Kandiyoor Janapradayani Library at Mavelikara came into existence. At Trivandrum Sri Chithira Thirunal Library was also started. Libraries were started in many villages in Travancore state. Most of the books were in Malayalam. Most of the libraries deteriorated due to the lack of Malayalam books and the lack of a proper association to unite these libraries together. Records are available showing that there were 197 libraries in the State of Travancore before 1945.\textsuperscript{12} There are also records showing that the Travancore Gazette which was published in 1918 had the following information regarding the grants to the libraries:\textsuperscript{13}

\begin{enumerate}
  \item The libraries should be under committees which are approved by the Education Director.
  \item It should be opened for all irrespective of
\end{enumerate}

\textsuperscript{11}Panikar, p. 21

\textsuperscript{12}All Travancore Granthasala Sangham, \textit{Granthasala Manuel}, Trivandrum, 1948, p. 78.

\textsuperscript{13}Travancore Gazette, 1918.

* M.E. denotes 'Malayalam Era.'
any caste, creed or religion.

iii. The rules of the libraries should be approved by the Education Director.

iv. Each library should have at least a collection of 200 books.

v. The amount collected by the library from the members should be Rs. 40.00 per year.

**Libraries and Cochin State**

Cochin State also had libraries before 1900. Ernakulam Public Library was started in 1869, and Trichur Public Library was started in 1873. Cherayi Public Library and Reading Room was started in 1914, Kandungallore Public Library was started in 1912. In 1925 the Government of Cochin had started giving grants to the libraries. When Dr. A. R. Menon became the Minister for Rural Development in Cochin State, he took initiative to start libraries in every village in Cochin State.\(^\text{14}\)

This was the time when Shri Narayana Guru's ideas were spreading through libraries. The first movement to spread the teaching of Sri Narayan Guru was started by Sahodaran Ayyappan at Cochin. The founder of Cherayi Public Library, Shri C. K. Velayudan, says that the influence given by Shri Narayana Guru to read and study was the inspiration to start the Cherayi Public Library. During the 2nd Annual Meeting of this library, Shri K. Ayyappan had given an inspiring speech about the irradication of caste system. This

\(^{14}\)Panikar, p. 22
was the beginning of a new movement known as "Sahodara Prasthanam" (brotherly movement). Hereafter, many libraries were established in different parts of Kerala in memory of Shri Narayana Guru.  

**Libraries and Malabar**

The District Central Library, Calicut, one of the oldest in the Malabar region, came into being in the later half of the 19th century. It was run by the Calicut Municipality as the Municipal Library till 1952 when it passed into the hands of the Local Library Authority constituted for Calicut according to the provisions of the Madras Public Library Act passed in 1948.  

In 1914 Engandiyur Gramina Vayanasala was started and in 1919 Shri Narayana Vilasam Library and Reading Room was started in Panangodu. With the beginning of National Movement, things about the libraries in Malabar region also changed. During the Nationalistic Movement, at Eranatu Taluk in Malabar, many libraries and schools started between 1920's and 1930's. After the Salt Satyagraha of Mahatma Gandhi, the freedom fighters of Malabar had come forward to start new libraries in their region. The Libraries of Malabar had not received any grants from the Government, but the organizers of these libraries had suffered severely because they were involved in the National Movement.

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15Ibid.

Malabar was under Madras Presidency during the British Rule. The first Library Act was passed in Madras (1948) immediately after independence. This Act was applicable to Malabar region also. But this was not suitable for the region.¹⁷

**Early Library Associations**

The growth of the libraries of Kerala before 1945 was not encouraging. Two reasons could be brought to the notice for the slow growth of libraries before 1945: (1) There was no efficient associations to reach the people. (2) The encouragement from the Government was practically nil. There were attempts to form library association. But there was no help and encouragement from the part of the Government towards these early attempts and also it was unable to catch the imaginations of the people of Kerala.

In 1926 an All Travancore Library Conference was held under the auspices of Janapradayini Library of Neyyattinkara.¹⁸ This conference had passed some resolutions and sent it for the consideration of the government. This had brought certain positive attitudes from the government too. The following were the demands passed in the conference:

1. The amount of the grant given to the libraries should be increased with minimum amount of Rs.100. and maximum of Rs.500.

¹⁷Panikar, p. 23.

ii. The land and furniture for establishing libraries should be given from the government free of cost.

iii. All the Government publications should be given to the libraries free of cost. ¹⁹

The resolutions were sent to the Honorary Secretary of Trivandrum Public Library and Education Director. After consulting with the above mentioned persons, the government increased the grant to Rs.200.00. Even though the government did not take any decision about giving the lands free of cost for the library building, they were willing to study each application sympathetically. The attitude the Government took towards this first conference was very encouraging to the leaders of the conference. This brought great faith in the minds of the people to launch such movements in future. This may be the reason why the great Kerala Granthasala Sangham had taken its birth in the land of Travancore itself.

Another conference was held in 1933 at Trivandrum under the auspices of the Sri Chitra Thirunal Library. The Third All Travancore Library Conference was held at Neyyoor in 1935 under the auspices of Dewan Nanoo Pillai Memorial Library. The proceedings and the resolutions passed during these two conferences helped to convince the general public of the urgent need for a strong library movement in the State. Secondly, they reminded the Government of its responsi-

¹⁹Panikar, p. 24.

²⁰Nair, p. 112.
Under the regime of Sri Mulam Thirunal Maharaja, rules were framed to give grant-in-aid to libraries. By 1917-18 there were about 47 libraries and reading rooms in Travancore receiving aid from the Education Department of the State. The maximum aid fixed was Rs.200. per annum plus furniture. The Government also used to supply all its publications to these libraries either at concessional rates or free of cost.

It may be pointed out here that in Travancore, encouragement to libraries formed part of the Government's programme. The Education Reform Committee of Travancore made certain recommendations regarding Government's role in the development of libraries. In the light of these recommendations the Director of the Department of Education prepared a scheme in 1932 to establish a central distributing library and a number of rural libraries. In 1935 Government sanctioned the opening of 64 libraries attached to Government Primary Schools.

In the northern parts, the library movement was in existence from the beginning of the 20th century. In a meeting held at Madras during December 1924, representatives from Kerala also have taken part, and some of the Keralities got included in the library committee. But it was in 1931 that the library movement had a firm footing in the Malabar area.

\[21\text{Ibid}\]

\[22\text{Pillai, (1981), p. 2.}\]
The first library conference in Malabar was held in 1937 at Calicut which led to the birth of an organization known as "The Malabar Vayalasala Sangham." It took another six years for the emergence of the first all-Kerala organization.

**Early Library Movement and Nationalism**

After the national agitation of 1930-32 library movement began to take momentum especially in Malabar region. Those young people who came out of the jail during this period had taken the leftist attitude. To strengthen the Nationalistic movement, they began to influence the working class and the farmers. These Congress leaders worked under the leadership of Shri. P. Krishna Pillai, E. M. S. Namboodiripad and A. K. Gopalan. The libraries during this period used to get one or two newspapers and it was a practice to read it loud for others. The libraries also collected some books and distributed them to the needed people. Under the leadership of some libraries, the hand-written magazines ("Kaiyezuthu Masika") were started which included articles of national movement.

Shri Harshan Library was one of those libraries which took more interest in Adult Education and Nationalism. Shri K. P. R. Gopalan and Shri K. A. Keraliyan were the founders of this library. This library was started in memory of Harshan of Kannanore who died in Kannonore jail during the nationalistic movement in 1934. Under the guidance of this library a handwritten magazine ("Kaiyezuthu Masika")

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23 Panikar, p. 29.
known as "Shri Harshan" was published. The present Chief Minister of Kerala, Shri E. K. Nayanar, remembers that he had written articles in this hand-written magazine. Many libraries had started taking "Shri Harshan" as the model. Most of these libraries had been concentrating on Adult Education.

As mentioned above, the libraries were the main centers of nationalistic movement. Britain had led India in the Second World War without giving the Indian leaders any word about the possibility of giving freedom to India. To oppose this policy of Britain, September 15, 1940 was declared as the protest day by the Kerala State Congress Committee. In South Malabar at many places, the police and people clashed with each other, and as a result many libraries were destroyed by the police because the leaders of the national movement were also leaders of the library movement. Since the attack of the police turned against libraries, people did not even want to enter the libraries. After 1942 many of these libraries were reorganized. But in 1946 the libraries were destroyed again. It took about four years to re-establish these libraries again.

The Beginning of Granhasala Sangham

29th Chingam 1121 M. E. (September 16, 1945 A.D.) was a milestone in the history of the Public Library Movement in Kerala. It was on that day that the representatives of 47 libraries of the erstwhile Travancore State met in the P. K. Memorial Library, Ambala-


puzha at the initiative of Mr. P. N. Paniker, who was the founder secretary of the library and resolved to form the Travancore Library Association. This was the beginning of a new era in the social life of Kerala. This new movement originated in Travancore with 47 libraries and now this movement had spread to all the nook and corner of Kerala with more than 5000 libraries. (1987 account).

Before 1945 a Central Organization for the libraries was only a dream for the libraries of Kerala. During that time there were separate organizations for libraries in Malabar, Cochin and Travancore. Most of these organizations stood only for name sake. Many must have tried to unite all the libraries of Kerala with a single thread, but it did not bear any fruits. In such a situation, the Granthasala Sangham had started in Travancore and it slowly spread to Cochin and with the emergence of Kerala as a unified state, it spread to the Malabar region also.

The then Diwan of Travancore, Sri C. P. Ramaswami Iyer inaugurated the meeting of the representatives of 47 libraries at Ambalapuzha. All these libraries originated not with the help of the Government, but by the help of noble citizens.

The P. K. Memorial Library of Ambalapuzha took the initiative for the Ambalapuzha Conference of 47 libraries. The great public library movement of Kerala at present with more than 5000 member libraries in the list originally started with 47 libraries.

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26Pillai, p. 4

In a village only a privileged few used to receive newspapers. P. N. Paniker's house used to get one newspaper. About ten people used to gather in his house to listen to someone reading the newspaper. P. N. Paniker took initiative in reading the newspaper clearly for them. His father used to read "Puranas" regularly and finally Paniker also became interested in reading "Puranas." This reading habit in Paniker began to increase as the years passed by. Paniker with the help of other friends started a small library with few books at Nilampur known as "Sanathan Dharma Library."

**P. N. Paniker's Experience with Kandathil Mammen Mapila**

It was the aim of Paniker to promote the "Sanathan Dharma Library." He did his level best to acquire materials for this library. During this time "Malayala Manorama," a daily newspaper which was published from Kottayam became popular in Kerala. It was the ambition of Paniker to have Malayala Manorama in this library. Since they could not afford to buy the newspaper due to the financial difficulties, Paniker decided to go to Kottayam to see Shri Mammen Mapilai, the Managing Editor, to convince him to send them a copy of Malayala Manorama free of cost. Paniker dressed with a towel (thorthu munde) around his waist, started his journey on foot to Kottayam. He had to walk seven miles to reach Kottayam. Shri Mammen Mapila was in a discussion with some gentlemen at that time. Paniker with his village dress did not want to meet Mammen Mapilai in front of these gentlemen. When Mammen Mapilai came out for some reason, he saw Paniker standing out and enquired about the purpose of his official
visit. Paniker presented his request. Hearing the request of young Paniker, the people who were present with Mammen Mapilai said that this young fellow had no sense. And also scolded Paniker, saying that the paper will go bankrupt if all the libraries had a request like this.

But Mammen Mapilai took a very positive attitude about the request of young Paniker. He did not say very much. He only said the following words, "It will bring more publicity to the paper." Mammen Mapilai very generously granted his request and gave a note to Paniker to give to the Manager. Paniker got the paper. He literally ran almost the seven miles back home out of joy and enthusiasm to inform his friends. Thereafter, the library got Malayala Manorama newspaper free of cost by post. Paniker also got a Government Grant for the library. Due to his hard work, the library was able to build its own building after some time.

**Paniker and P. K. Memorial Library**

Paniker was appointed as a teacher in a primary school at Ambalapuzha. Ambalapuzha was famous in the early history of Kerala. It was the capital of Chempakasseri Kings. Ambalapuzha had contributed a lot to the socio-cultural life of Kerala. Paniker arrived at Ambalapuzha as a primary school teacher. He used to go to some shops to sit and read newspapers. He wanted to start a library at Ambalapuzha. He consulted with many local people. He printed and circulated a notice stating the need for a library in Ambalapuzha. About ten

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28 Ibid., p. 39
people participated in the first meeting. Shri K. K. Kunchu Pillai, G. N. Nair, K. P. Kesava Pillai, Damodara Kaimol, P. K. Madhava Kurup, etc., were some of them. They appointed a five member committee. P. N. Paniker was appointed as the Secretary of this committee. The Library was named after a famous Malayalam writer, P. K. Narayana Pillai, known as Sahitya Panchavan. They called the library as P. K. Vilasam Library and after the death of Sahitya Panchavan, the library was known as P. K. Memorial Library.

The help of Mr. K. K. Kunchu Pillai for the formation of P. K. Memorial Library at Ambalapuzha was tremendous. K. K. Kunchu Pillai was a well-known personality in the educational field of Kerala. Also he was an able leader of the State Congress. But many so-called civilized people looked at this new venture with critical mind.

For the new library, one Mr. Damodara Kaimol had donated a bench. That was the only furniture for the library for some time. A little later, Mr. Sukumaran Nair, Vettikatu, donated a shelf and few books. Since P. N. Paniker was the teacher for the children of Mrs. Karthianiamma, Alapatu, she had donated a chair for the library. These were the furniture for the library for a long time. The Researcher had mentioned these facts to let the public know that the present library movement with a membership of over 5000 libraries, sprouted with a very humble beginning.

After some time the library had formed a managing committee with Advocate P. Kunchan Kurup as the President, P. N. Paniker as
the Secretary, N. N. Elayathu as the treasurer, P. K. Gopala Pillai and E. N. Nair as members. It was the decision of this committee that resulted in buying a piece of land for the library and to construct a library building there.

In the Socio-cultural field, P. K. Memorial Library had launched certain novel programme. To encourage writers in Malayalam, the library committee had decided to give an award to the best literary book of Malayalam every year. The first prize was received by M. R. Krishna Variyar. Also the library had organized a literary conference every year which was attended by leading writers of Malayalam literature. The following persons were invited regularly:

1. T. K. Velu Pillai
2. Malloor Govinda Pillai
3. Dr. Chelanatu Achutha Menon
4. Vallathol
5. Ulloor
6. N. Gopala Pillai
7. Prof. Joseph Mundasseri
8. G. Sankara Kurup
9. Puthezathu Rama Menon
10. Vadakamkoor Raja Raja Varma
11. K. Kunchunni Raja
12. Godavarma Raja

Paniker's contribution for the growth and development of this library was very great. In fact, Paniker had put his heart
into the library work. And finally he and his colleagues decided to have a conference of the representatives of the different libraries of Travancore. 29th Chingam 1121 M. E. (1945 A. D.) was a landmark in the history of Public Library Movement in Kerala. It was on that day that the representatives of 47 libraries of the erstwhile Travancore State met in the P. K. Memorial Library, Ambalapuzha, at the initiative of Mr. P. N. Paniker, who was the founder and Secretary of the library and resolved to form the Travancore Library Association. Among those who were with Mr. Paniker in this venture, only Mr. Vettikattu G. N. Nair is alive now. Advocate N. Narayana Kurup, Advocate P. Kunjan Kurup, Advocate Parthasarathi Iyenger and Vayanasala Kesava Pillai were also among the founder leaders of the Sangham. Shri K. K. Kunchu Pillai supported the formation of the Sangham even while he was underground in connection with the struggle for independence.

All the 47 libraries which took part in the meeting paid Rs.5.00 each as admission fee and joined the association on the spot. More libraries were to be admitted in due course. An executive committee was selected to prepare the by-laws for the Association and to get it registered.

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30 Nair, p. 3.
31 Ibid., p. 4.
32 Nair, p. 113.

* List of the 47 libraries are given in the Appendix.
Sir C. P. Ramaswamy Iyer and the Inauguration of the Granthasala Sangham

The then Diwan of Kerala, Sir. C. P. Ramaswamy Iyer, was invited to inaugurate the library meeting. There was great opposition from various sides about Sir C. P. Ramaswamy Iyer's presence for the inauguration of the meeting because he was against national movement and many of the active members of Ambalapuzha Library were actively participating in National Movement. But Paniker wanted the then Diwan Sir C. P. Ramaswamy Iyer to inaugurate the function because he wanted Government support for this programme. September 16, 1945 was the date which was finalized for the inauguration.

Sir C. P. Ramaswamy Iyer, in his inaugural address stressed the need for a library movement in the State and also mentioned about the development of library movement in different countries. The then Education Director was the Chairman of the function and Kainikara Padmanabha Pillai had given the chief address.

The meeting requested the government to form a separate section for libraries in the State Department of Education for ensuring the effective working of the libraries. It was also resolved to request the State Government to give financial assistance to libraries.

Resolutions Passed in the Ambalapuzha Conference

1. The Conference extended its great respect to the King of Travancore.

33 Lenin, p. 53
and to the royal family.

2. Conference had suggested that there should be an All Travancore Granthasala Sangham including all the libraries of Travancore.

3. Decided to form an All Travancore Granthasala Sangham with those member libraries who paid Rs.5.00 as the membership fee and also the sangham will include all those libraries whoever would pay Rs.5.00 as the member of the association.

4. To draft the rules and regulations of the All Travancore Granthasala Sangham, to organize the next annual meeting and to bring more members to the association. A managing committee was formed with the following members.34

List of Managing Committee Members

1. K. A. Kesavan, Avoor Library (President)
2. N. Kesava Pillai, Sri Chithira Thirunal Library (Treasurer).
4. P. Madhavan Pillai, Swadesabhimani Library.
6. K. J. Thomas, Sahrudaya Library.
7. V. P. Karunakaran Nair, Kudamaloor Library.
8. T. A. Kasim Pillai, Vingana Vilasini Library.
9. K. Kesava Pillai, Shri Chithira Thirunal Library.

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34 Ibid., p. 54
Adoor.

10. K. Raman, Vignanodayam Library
11. P. N. Bhaskara Pillai, Sankara Vilasam Library.
12. K. Kesava Pillai, Kavadiyar Kshetra Pravesana Library.
13. L. Vijayamma, Sri Karthika Thirunal Womens' Library.
14. M. C. Mammen, Good Shepherd Library.

5. Requested the Government to organize a separate department for libraries for the smooth and efficient working of the libraries.
6. Requested the Government to give a grant of 50% of the expenditure for the purchase of books, furniture, etc., per year.

The conference passed two other resolutions requesting the Government and the University to provide copies of their publications to the libraries free of cost.

The conference also passed a resolution (Resolution No. 9) appreciating the Government's initiative in taking steps for compulsory elementary education.

The tenth resolution passed by the conference expressed appreciation for P. K. Memorial Library and the Reception Committee for taking the initiative for organizing the conference. The conference authorized the President of P. K. Memorial Library to send these resolutions to the respective places.

The conference decided to have the Head Office in P. K. Memorial Library, Ambalapuzha and immediately after this, an address board was installed here. Also the office had kept 47 files for
The representatives of these 47 libraries met at Ambalapuzha not merely to pass resolutions and go away. They also seriously discussed about the future socio-cultural activities which the Sangham should undertake.

Activities of Sangham Proposed in 1945

The activities of the Association (Sangham) were listed as follows:

1. Enrol all the existing libraries and reading rooms in the Association.
2. Revive the libraries which have become inactive or defunct.
3. Help to start new libraries wherever found necessary.
4. Enrol individual members in the Association
5. Raise a working capital.
6. Publish pamphlets and organize campaigns.
7. Organize a preliminary survey of the libraries.

A committee was authorized to go on deputation to the then Dewan, on the 6th of August 1946. On the basis of the efforts made by the committee, the following sanctions were made:

1. A monthly allowance of Rs.250.00 was sanctioned for appointing organizers.
2. The services of Mr. P. N. Paniker and Mr. P. Madhavan Pillai were lent from the Department of Education.

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35 Ibid., p. 58
3. The grant for the libraries were raised from Rs.200.00 to Rs.240.00 per year.

4. The libraries under the universities were permitted to take membership in the Library Association.

The then Dewan was kind enough to permit the Association to appoint four organizers and sanctioned the necessary expenditure. Accordingly, the following persons were appointed as the first set of Library Organizers in the State: M. P. N. Paniker was appointed as the Chief Organizer, Mr. S. K. Swamy as the Organizer of the Southern Division, Mr. P. Madhavan Pillai as the Organizer of the Central Division and Mr. W. O. George as the Organizer of the Northern Division.\(^\text{36}\)

The Registration of the Sangham

In 1947 the All Travancore Library Association was registered under section 9 of the Travancore Company Act (1939). In the beginning no grant was given by the Government. Yet Library Unions were organized in eleven taluks and night classes were started in 35 libraries for the spread of adult education. In 1948 the Government approved the Library Association as the central agency of the libraries and the monthly grant was raised to Rs.500.00. By then the number of libraries in the Association increased to 525.\(^\text{37}\)

\(^{36}\)Pillai, p. 5.

During this time the Government generously allotted Rs.1 lakh for giving grant to these libraries.

**Kottayam Conference of the Sangham**

The Kottayam Conference held in 1946 marked a turning point in the history of the Sangham, and advanced its objectives and programmes. The Conference urged the Government to enact a library legislation and demand the setting up of a Library Department. The scheme and the draft of the bill prepared by Dr. S. R. Ranganathan were considered by the Conference and modified to suit the existing conditions in Travancore State.

The meeting requested the Government to increase the grant to the libraries and allot 50% of the cost, when new buildings are constructed and furniture acquired. A separate session was organized along with the Kottayam meetings on adult education. This shows the interest of the Sangham even during its early years in promoting adult education.

They also urged the Dewan to take steps to start a Library Science Department in the Travancore University to train adequate number of librarians. This resulted in the setting up of a committee by the Government to review the work done by the Sangham and to recommend financial assistance and encouragement.\(^{38}\)

The committee consisting of Shri Sooranad Kunjan Pillai and Mathew M. Kuzhivel and Dr. Sivarama Subramonia Iyer strongly

\(^{38}\)Nair, p. 113.
pledged for a planned library policy to be framed by the Government in collaboration with Granhasala Sangham.\textsuperscript{39}

The other recommendations by the committee included doubling of the annual grant to the Sangham, authorizing the Sangham to inspect libraries and recommend award of grants to the libraries, affiliating all the libraries including the Department Libraries to the Sangham and authorized the Sangham to train librarians.\textsuperscript{40}

**Grant to Libraries**

For the purpose of determining the amount of grants, the libraries of the State have been divided into nine categories by the Government in consultation with the Sangham. Libraries which satisfy certain requirements laid down by the Government are giving grant-in-aid ranging from Rs.80.00 to Rs.900.00 per annum. A non-official committee has been constituted by the Government to go into the question and to determine the category of all individual libraries and reasonable amount for which they are entitled.

The Table given on the next page shows the divisions of grades with amount of grants with aid and the number of libraries comprehended in each grade during 1954 to 1955.\textsuperscript{41}

\textsuperscript{39}Ibid

\textsuperscript{40}Pillai, p. 6.

\textsuperscript{41}Kaula, 1958, p. 100.
The grants thus disbursed are mainly intended for the purchase of books and periodicals, establishment charges and other similar expenses are to be met out of subscriptions and donations received locally.

It is a matter of gratification to note that library movement in the State gained momentum year after year with the help of the Sangham.

Dr. S. R. Ranganathan in his book, "Free Book Service for All" describes the objectives of the Sangham.42

1. To function as Central Organization for all the libraries in Travancore State.

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42Ranganathan, 1968, p. 94.
2. To encourage adult education.
3. To help the educated to read and acquire more knowledge and,
4. To impress upon the Government to open a Library Department.

The Kerala Granthasala Sangham has been holding sway as far as the libraries in the Travancore and Cochin areas are concerned. In its constitution and in its functioning the Sangham differs from the library associations of other states in India. It is more appropriately described as a federation of libraries. It has done commendable work in stimulating local initiative for establishing libraries and in creating library consciousness in the people.\(^4^3\)

Even from the time of its inception of the Travancore Library Association, (Grandhasala Sangham) tried to extend its activities to Cochin and Malabar areas. A committee visited the libraries in Cochin and tried to evolve a common formula for the working of the libraries in the Travancore and Cochin Areas. A special meet was organized in the Ernakulam Public Library which appointed a 21 member committee to report within a month to indicate how to regulate the working of the libraries and how to evolve a uniform pattern for them.

In Malabar area, social and political workers considered it as their responsibility to start reading rooms which in turn trans-

Selected members of the Travancore Granthasala Sangham had visited Cochin in 1949. This was an additional inspiration for spreading the activities of the Granthasala Sangham to Cochin and Malabar also. The details of this visit of the committee members of Travancore Granthasala Sangham to Cochin was written in the personal diary of Shri P. N. Paniker. It says that Shri P. N. Paniker had met many able and generous citizens and held discussions with them. He had attended several meetings and gave enough instructions to the workers of the Granthasala Sangham over there. The information available from Shri P. N. Paniker's personal diary are very valuable for the re-construction of the history of Sangham's activities.

Sangham's Headquarters in Trivandrum

Shri K. M. Lenin in his article about the Kerala Granthasala Sangham jokingly says that for a long time the handbag of Mr. P. N. Paniker was the office of the Sangham. This was true also. It was Paniker who did most of the job. He used to walk miles after miles to meet someone or to give instructions to some library workers. He had all the documents and other information in his handbag. It took a long time for the Sangham to have its own office.

The Sangham, when it was first formed, had its headquarters in one of the rooms of the P. K. Memorial Library, Ambalapuzha. After some time the office was shifted to Trivandrum for activating...
its programme since Trivandrum being the capital city of Kerala.\(^{45}\)

When the headquarters of the Sangham was shifted to Trivandrum, it got its office temporarily in Sri-Chithira Thirunal Library, Trivandrum. There was absolutely no place to set up an office. Therefore, the Sangham had to keep its files at one corner of the library. It was impossible for Sangham to function this way.\(^{46}\) The office was then shifted behind the University of Kerala in a rented building. The closeness to the University helped the Sangham a lot. After prolonged discussions with the University authorities, on 26th June, 1948, a room was allotted to the Sangham in the Sanskrit College Campus, Trivandrum.\(^{47}\)

When Mr. C. Kesavan became the Chief Minister of Kerala, the Sangham approached him for a building. He was kind enough to sanction the Thulasi Hill Bungalow, Pattom, for the office of the Sangham in 1951 even though he had to face lots of oppositions from some officers.

It was the intention of the Sangham officers to construct a building for the Sangham. They started working towards this goal. The members of the Sangham had proposed a plan to have the Sangham office constructed in the Trivandrum Public Library campus. The then librarian opposed this move. By the time the term of Shri C.

\(^{45}\)Pillai, p. 7.


\(^{47}\)Ibid., p. 146.
Kesavan's ministry was over. So the Sangham could not influence the next Chief Minister, Shri Pattom Thanu Pillai. Finally the Sangham got a portion of the land near Trivandrum Public Library. Sangham was able to build its own building only after the E. M. S. Namboodripad's ministry came to power in 1957. The new office of the Sangham was inaugurated by Prof. Joseph Mundasseri, the then Education Minister of Kerala on July 31, 1957.

Grant and Gradation

During the course of time, drastic changes occurred in the gradation policy of the Government. The standards for grading libraries is given below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Books</th>
<th>Issue</th>
<th>Periodicals</th>
<th>Building</th>
<th>Rate Rupees</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>*Special</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>7,500.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>8000 and Above</td>
<td>12000</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>own</td>
<td>1,800.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>5000 - 8000</td>
<td>8000</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>own</td>
<td>1,000.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>4000 - 5000</td>
<td>6000</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>own</td>
<td>850.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>3000 - 4000</td>
<td>5000</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>own</td>
<td>600.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>2000 - 3000</td>
<td>4000</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>own or rented</td>
<td>500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>1000 - 2000</td>
<td>2000</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>own or rented</td>
<td>375</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

48 Pillai, p. 8.

The number of books, number of books issued, number of newspapers, number of periodicals, salary given to staff, own building or not, etc., are considered now as essential criteria for fixing the grants. The minimum annual grant is raised upto Rs. 375.00 and the highest is Rs. 1,800.00.

As per an ordinance dated 16-3-77 and act No. 19 of 1977, the Government took over the Grandhasala Sangham and a Control Board was appointed.

An annual grant, to be fixed each year by the Government on the basis of the actual expenditure incurred by the Sangham, will be paid towards its establishment and organizational expenses. The following items will come under the term "Organizational Expenses."

1. Organization of new libraries not including purchase and supply of books.
2. Inspection of libraries.
3. Conducting discussions, meetings, and seminars.
4. Giving instructions towards improving the tone and efficiency of libraries.
5. Publishing articles, pamphlets, etc., connected with library movement and reviewing books, and
6. Supply of list of books useful for libraries.

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50 Ranganathan, 1968, p. 94.
The Kerala Granthasala Sangham which started functioning with just 47 member libraries in 1945 has grown into a large organization or movement with 5,000 member libraries. The Sangham has launched many programmes to make people aware and informed, irrespective of age, sex, caste or religion.

The Kerala Granthasala Sangham had grown into a powerful, social and cultural organization. The Sangham had launched many programmes to stimulate the social and cultural growth of Kerala. The following programmes were premiered by the Sangham: 51

1. Adult Education Programme
2. Nursery School
3. Society of Friends of Books
4. Neoliterate Books
5. Printing Press for the Sangham
6. Condensed Course for Women
7. Sakshara Keralam Magazine
8. Cultural Association
9. Great Cultural and Literacy Procession
10. Granthasala Seminars
11. Award for the Best Library.
12. Bell Bicycle Library
13. Popularization of Hindi Language

When the Sangham celebrated its Silver Jubilee in 1970, it was felt that the number of readers has not increased in line with the increase in the number of libraries. The Sangham wanted to find out the reason for this strange phenomenon. So the Sangham organized sample surveys in different parts of the State. It was revealed that even in the capital city of Trivandrum, there were certain wards having more than 80 per cent illiteracy. This prompted the authorities of the Sangham open their eyes and think of taking some measures to eradicate illiteracy from the State. While one of the primary aims of the Sangham, from its very inception had been the spreading of literacy among the rural folks and though it had been engaged in such literacy activities since 1950, the 1970 census figures showed that nearly 40% of the total population of 2.12 crores in the State remained illiterate.

The Sangham submitted a proposal to the Government of India to start 7000 literacy centers in Kerala with its 3500 odd libraries of that time as the nucleus. The Government of India sanctioned a pilot project in 1971 to start 20 literacy classes. Underdeveloped blocks were selected for this programme.
The Cultural and Literacy March of 1970 made the organizers of the Sangham to open new ways. One of the most important of these programmes was the Adult Education Programme. The Sangham from its inception onwards was working towards adult education programme. With the co-operation of the Central Government, some centers in Kerala were started as pilot projects for adult education. Athiyannur and Malapuram were selected as the centers of these pilot projects.

Since this was a new programme, the workers of the libraries were not at all familiar with it. Therefore, the Sangham had conducted a training programme for the workers, to instruct them in this new adult education programme. Training programme was conducted by Prof. A. G. G. Menon. But the workers were not at all confident. The usual duty of the library workers was to open the library and invite the readers. But the present task is not this. The library workers should teach the people. For that they should organize a place for this education programme. The workers had doubts about the success of this programme. The organizers had finally decided to conduct a cultural procession which would go through the centers and reach at a common place within two days. The Sangham had decided on November 14 and 15, 1971 as the dates for this procession. The procession started on November 14 at 9:00 in the morning from Aralummoodu Block Office under the leadership of the President of the Sangham. A vehicle with a loud speaker moved in the front of the procession followed by the members who assembled to participate in the march.

The procession was a very successful one. The people greeted the procession with great enthusiasm and they even burst fire crackers to show their happiness and co-operation. This new venture to start
adult literacy programme was welcomed by the people. Upto now the Granthasala Sangham was giving importance to the educated people. Now they have turned their attention to the uneducated mass. The centers started functioning. At Punkulam also they started an Adult Literacy Center. They conducted the classes in a thatched shed at night with the help of kerosene lamps. There were enough benches and desks for the people to sit and write. Those people who were studying were at the age group of 16 - 30. They attended the literacy classes in the evening after they returned from their daily work. They selected a secretary and had two teachers. They started writing notes in the notebooks. They all came on their own for studying and getting knowledge. This place was visited by the Sangham Secretary P. N. Paniker and he was very happy to see young and old attending night classes to acquire more knowledge.

When this programme was started at Venniyoor, they had about 50 members attending the night classes. The Sangham had started separate literacy centers for women. This attempt also was well accepted. Many women came to attend the classes. Many of them became members of the libraries in their respective villages.

Experts from the Ministry of Education, Government of India and the UNESCO agreed with the findings of the Sangham in the new programme of adult education and suggested an overhauling of the project. Hence it was decided to extend the duration of the project to 10 months with at least 300 instructional hours. During the next year, a new set of 20 centers were sanctioned to the Sangham. These were also organized in the same areas as in the first project. Many more centers were opened in different villages in Kerala for adult
education programme.

Those people who were literate, were to be helped with reading materials according to their reading ability. Sufficient books written in simple style on useful subjects by good and experienced authors were produced. As an experimental measure, the scheme was started in 250 libraries including Harijan Welfare Libraries during 1979-80."53

The Krupskaya Award of UNESCO

Considering the great service rendered through the adult literacy programme by the Sangham, UNESCO had selected Kerala Granthasala Sangham to receive the world famous Krupskaya Award for the year 1975. This was actually a morale booster for the Sangham. In a letter from the Government of India to the State Secretary for Education communicating the award, it was mentioned thus:54

"This is indeed an honour bestowed not only on the Sangham but on the adult education efforts of the country. On behalf of the Government of India, I would like to convey an appreciation of the services rendered by the Sangham. We hope the association will continue its pioneering work with the same zeal."

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53 Pillai, p. 19.

54 Ibid., p. 21.
UNESCO AWARD, 1975 to
Kerala Grandhasala Sangham for
Adult Education Programme

The Krupskaya award - a facsimile
**Nursery School**

Since growing children needed special attention during their formative stage, the Sangham decided to start nursery classes attached to 100 libraries to begin with. The motto of the Sangham is to "read and grow." The contribution of the Sangham in this field has been fully recognized and appreciated by all. For the benefit of the children, about 1000 libraries started childrens' corner, which permitted children to use part of their library facilities.

**Popularization of Hindi Language**

The Central Government also co-operated with the Sangham in this project for popularizing the National Language. Government had given a grant for this and asked the Sangham to follow their instructions strictly. The Sangham had purchased Hindi books which were approved by the Government and supplied to the selected libraries. The "Granthalokam," a magazine published by the Granthasala Sangham had a separate section for publishing articles in Hindi.\(^{55}\)

**Womens' Center**

The Sangham had conducted a survey among women and found out that majority of the women of the poor community had not received their primary education. Therefore, the Sangham submitted a proposal to the Central Government to help them start 1000 Womens' Educational Centers in the State. Even before submitting the proposal, many

libraries had started women's centers for literacy development. The Sangham had adopted new and encouraging programme for women. Therefore, many women were attracted towards the libraries. It was not the usual practice of the women of Kerala to come to the library and collect books for reading. Sangham wanted to change this trend and worked for it. Sangham was successful in this attempt and women started becoming members of the libraries increasingly.

The Great Cultural and Literacy Procession

We are familiar with public processions and agitations. But cultural and literacy procession is not usual. But in Kerala, under the leadership of the organizers of Granthasala Sangham, a cultural and literacy procession was arranged. This was the first time in India such a procession was organized. This cultural procession was a part of the Silver Jubilee Celebrations of the Granthasala Sangham. Hundreds of people participated in this procession. People from all over Kerala had welcomed such a procession. They received the procession with flowers, garlands made out of currency notes, decorated elephants, musical programmes ("Panchavadyam"), ceremonial lamps and "thalapoli" (girls standing with flowers in a tray).\(^5^6\)

The people who participated in the procession were shouting slogans. But these slogans had no political or religious colour. These slogans were for eradicating illiteracy from Kerala. Written on the next page are some slogans in Malayalam, with its translation in English, so that it could be clearly understood in its spirit.

\(^{56}\) Bhaskara Paniker, p. 229
നുസ്തൂക്കളുടെ ഉദ്ഭവവാക്യം

ശ്ലീഷ നീണ്ട സംസ്കരണ?

തീകുന്ന വിദ്യാഭ്യാസം?

ആധുനിക സിദ്ധാന്തം പ്രതിപാദിക്കുന്ന കവിയുടെ പരമ്പരാഗത ?

നിരപ്പുള്ള പരിഹാരം വക്താവുകൾക്ക് സംസ്കരണങ്ങൾ കലാശാലയിലുമുണ്ടായിരില്ല 

നിരാകരിക്കാനൊരുകലാശാല 

മാർഗ്ഗികിക്കുക നിരഞ്ജന കലാശാല സംസ്കരണങ്ങൾ 

പരമ്പരാഗത വിദ്യാഭ്യാസം, 

മാർഗ്ഗികിക്കുക നിരഞ്ജന 

നിരാകരിക്കാനൊരുകലാശാല!
Oh! Fishermen
Don't you want to learn reading?
Oh! farmers
Don't you want to learn writing?
Come to the Adult Education Center
And learn to read and write

Oh! brethern
You are capable of conquering the Arabian Sea
And you are strong enough to crush even the rocks
Don't you want to learn the art of writing?

We have no colour of politics
We have no poison of caste and religion
The libraries are together
United with a thread in this Association

Our aim is not crime and corruption
We don't cheat others
Throw away ignorance in Arabian Sea
That is our slogan, that is our aim

Fight against ignorance and illiteracy
That is our slogan
We will learn and we will grow
That is our slogan!
The "Sakshara Keralam" which was published by the Sangham in 1972 for the neoliterates, was sent free of cost by post to the neoliterates. In addition to this, workshops were organized for the production of books for the neoliterates.\textsuperscript{57}

A three-day workshop on curriculum preparation was organized under the auspices of the Sangham in collaboration with the Indian Adult Education Association in Trivandrum in 1977. The Sangham has a section for reviewing books and publish articles on library movement.

**Bell Bicyle Library**

In addition to issuing books to those who come to the library, some of the member libraries have a system of taking the books to the doorsteps of readers. Books were carried to the villages in a box attached to the bicycle and at street corners people assembled and the books were distributed to them. On a due date fixed by the volunteer, the books are returned by the readers and new books are issued. This scheme was first started in the Koothuparamba Block in Cannanore District.\textsuperscript{58}

When this was found to be a successful venture, it was extended to many more districts like Trivandrum, Quilon, Trichur and Calicut covering 100 villages.

\textsuperscript{57} Ibid., p. 19.

\textsuperscript{58} Ibid., p. 25.
Agricultural Book Corner

With the collaboration of the State Institute of Language and the Farm Information Bureau, the Sangham started a pilot project to organize agricultural book corners in selected libraries. Books on agriculture are supplied to those libraries, to propagate such books in the villages and to improve agricultural practices. More than 2000 libraries are having agricultural corners. Discussion groups, seminars, film shows, etc., on farming are also arranged in these libraries.

Various Other Activities of the Sangham

The Sangham is conducting a Jail Library Service. The Sangham also runs a library in the Noornad Leprosy Sanitorium. This is a peculiar service rendered by the Kerala Granthasala Sangham unique in many respects. This library has about 11000 books and 34 periodicals. Kerala Granthasala Sangham conducts District and Taluk level seminars every year.

The Malayala Manorama(daily) dated 27-12-1970 had praised the activities of the Sangham giving it the highest rank among the voluntary organization in the cultural growth of Kerala. The paper demanded considerable increase in the grant given to the Sangham.

Almost all the newspapers and periodicals published from Kerala have praised the activities of the Sangham on many occasions, especially its contribution in the field of adult and continuing education. These papers have also praised Mr. P. N. Paniker who

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59 Malayala Manorama, 27 December, 1970
worked behind the Granthasala Sangham as its General Secretary since
its inception in 1945 and described him as the life and soul of the
Library Movement in Kerala.

The Deepika Daily (27-12-1970) regretted about the meager
grant given to Sangham while crores are spent on formal education.
In their opinion it is the democratic set up of the Sangham that
helped it flourish in the State. They have also suggested that if
the Government, Local bodies and the Public show more consideration
to this movement, the Sangham can easily do a commendable job.

This popular movement is truly the force behind the growth
of the public libraries of Kerala and if the government supports
its programme with adequate funds and proper legislation, the libraries
of Kerala could serve the public in a more productive and commendable
manner.

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60Deepika, 27 December, 1970.