CONCLUSION

A close analysis of the "History of the Public Library Movement" in Kerala reveals that the libraries of Kerala have played a vital role in the total life of the people. These 'vidyabhandaras' (libraries) are not only centers for quenching the desire for knowledge but they also function as effective agencies for socio-cultural changes in the state. The study unveils that only in comparatively recent decades, the library has been recognized as a necessary institution for the widest possible diffusion of knowledge and for the formation of a social, cultural and political conscience; one of the positive instruments of a sound system of education. A retrospective analysis of the development of public libraries in Kerala proves that these libraries have brought new perspectives to the field of education. In ancient times as elsewhere in the country, education in the state was the monopoly of the Brahmins and libraries were controlled by these privileged classes. The establishment of public libraries and the outbreak of a popular library movement in Kerala opened new vistas for all to educate themselves and thus bring the greatest honour to the State as the most literate state in India.

Now education and libraries are no longer in the exclusive possession of the chosen few, but a cordial and accessible abode of knowledge, contributing to the requirements of the most illiterate as well as the most informed.

In ancient Kerala, when caste system was so rigid, education was denied to the poor and the so called low caste and untouchables.
Educational opportunities were opened only to the higher caste. But the emergence of this popular library movement led to the establishment of public libraries in the nook and corner of the State and the doors of these libraries were opened to all irrespective of their caste, creed, sex or religion. Thus a new era commenced in the social life of Kerala.

Once a state with inflexible and unbending caste and class distinction, Kerala has now come to the forefront as a prophet to proclaim the message of social equality. The libraries started in the state by the Kerala Granthasala Sangham are meant for all. People from all walks of life started coming to these social institutions. These institutions functioned as an agency not only for educating the people, but also to create an awareness in them that all are equal.

A new era has started in the field of information science when the libraries recognized their responsibility as an agency not only to preserve the information but also to disseminate it to the public. This was not the ancient concept of library. As elsewhere in the world, libraries of Kerala also underwent gradual changes and finally became an agency to spread knowledge to the masses. Every public library has to expose the public to the great changes that take place in the world, so that people who are governing themselves can exercise their judgement properly, and progress towards achieving certain noble ideals for the good of all. Simultaneously, it should be stressed here, that the library system in India itself has to undergo a thorough change to cope with the present information explosion.
There is a most urgent need for our people to broaden their intellectual horizon with all possible speed. The tension is great upon the agencies of information—the schools, the libraries, the press, the radio and television, the stage and the film world. But the pressure is more on public library because it is at once the most easily accessible and most independent of all these agencies. The public library must become the nucleus of our nation-building activities. This may sound a little unrealistic to many, but unless the libraries render this service to the people, they continue to sing the outmoded "sloka"—recitation and wallow in ignorance of what is happening around the world and depart from this world with an impoverished body and soul!

What is stored today in a public library is for the common good of all and is the treasured property of all. It may, however, be observed here that the nomenclature and perspective of the library has been changing from time to time. With the emergence of wide literacy and nationalism, there was a tremendous upsurge for an irresistible desire to know the best in the world. Since ancient times, the libraries of Kerala have always been necessary appendages of learning. It may be worthwhile to note that from private collections (in ancient times) to subscription libraries (in medieval period) and to an integrated library system to one and all (in modern times) is a remarkable growth accomplished in the course of time.

The democratic setup of a country gives due consideration to the radical concept that every man is a scholar and should have access to the storehouse of learning. Democracy insists on the right of every citizen to his book not merely to those in the upper intellec-
tual strata but down to the last man. The five principles laid down by Late Dr. S. R. Ranganathan, the father of Indian Library Movement, are the guiding principles of every public library. These five cardinal principles of the libraries are:

1. Books are for use
2. Every reader his book
3. Every book its reader
4. Save the time of the reader
5. Library is a growing organism

Every public library has to follow these principles. Books are for use and not for preservation. The activities of the public libraries of Kerala prove that they care for the educated as well as for the uneducated. The new vital function of the libraries of today is the establishment of exact and expeditions contact between the right reader and the right book. This concept has led to the emergence of library service to the masses.

The research work carried out here about the History of the Public Library Movement in Kerala brings to light that Trivandrum Public Library is one of the oldest libraries in Modern India. It came into existence even prior to the establishment of the Imperial Library of Calcutta, the present National Library of India. The dispute about its commencement date could undoubtedly be solved with the help of the committee reports available in the library. The committee reports say that the Trivandrum Public Library started to function in 1829. However, other supporting documents are available. The Royal Edict (Neetu 216) of Maharaja Swathi Thirunal dated September 1836 sanctioning rupees 1000.00 to the Trivandrum Public
Library is also an evidence to prove that this library was already functioning when Maharaja Swathi Thirunal issued the Royal Edict.

A. Sreedharan Menon, a modern Historian of Kerala in his book "Social and Cultural History of Kerala," says that the Public Library of Trivandrum was established in 1829. The opinions given by scholars like V. K. N. Menon and Sreedhara Menon and Kurian Thomas, a research scholar in Library Science, who wrote a book on the history of Trivandrum Public Library, and the evidence available in the contemporary records show that the Trivandrum Public Library was established in the year 1829.

Secondly, it shows the interest of Maharaja Shri Swathi Thirunal in the growth and development of the Trivandrum Public Library. This was the largest grant given to the library from the Government during that time.

This study very clearly establishes that the growth of public libraries during the native kings and British were very slow even though there were some traces of encouragement during the reign of Maharaja Shir Swathi Thirunal and Maharaja Shree Mulam Thirunal. The amount donated by Maharaja Shri Swathi Thirunal was the largest grant given to the library from the Government during that time. The names of eminent Britishers such as Col. Edward Cadogan, Mr. J. Roberts, Mr. Allan John Brown, had to be mentioned for their contributions towards Trivandrum Public Library and for introducing English education in Kerala. The foreign settlers brought liberal ideas to Kerala. The study indicates that some foreigners even initiated to start libraries in Kerala. But when we analyse the contributions made by the British during their entire period of rule for the esta-
establishment of libraries, it shows a very slow growth. The graph attached in the next page clearly reveals that the growth of public libraries in Kerala under the rule of the native kings and the British were very slow and after the Indian Independence, the libraries have taken a swift and fast growth.

During the time of our freedom struggle, the public libraries began to emerge one by one. These public libraries became the hub of the national movement. People began to gather together in these libraries to exchange their views and enable inspiration. Due to these reasons the libraries were attacked by the Britishers and many libraries were demolished. People became afraid of going to the libraries to avoid arrest and imprisonment. These public libraries were the vanguards of nationalism and patriotism.

The development of Public Libraries after the long-awaited and much needed political independence was amazing and this throws light on one basic popular idea, i.e., only in a free environment and circumstance, matured growth would take place whether it is in the case of individuals or institutions.

The public library movement in the modern sense got really extended widely as a part of the national awakening for freedom. The work of Dr. S. R. Ranganathan, the father of Library Movement in India, the steady and fast increase of literacy percentage in Kerala and the establishment and activities of Kerala Granthasala Sangham have all been the contributing factors in a big way for the growth of public libraries in Kerala during the immediate pre-independence period. The national independence gave a tremendous impetus to this growth.
GRAPH SHOWING THE HISTORY OF PUBLIC LIBRARIES

IN KERALA 1829 - 1980

No. of Libraries

YEAR

1829-1960
1860-1890
1890-1920
1920-1946
1947
1950
1960
1969
1970
1980
Kerala Granthasala Sangham has launched a mass and popular movement of establishing a network of libraries throughout the State. The present statistical report shows that at every 10sq. kms. there is one library for the use of the public.

Due to the work of Kerala Granthasala Sangham, now every village in Kerala has a library. This shows that if people decide to work together, they could achieve the goals easily and much faster. Sometimes they could achieve success beyond their earlier goals. The growth and achievements of the Kerala Granthasala Sangham is the best example for this. It started with a meeting of 47 libraries of the erstwhile Travancore State at P. K. Memorial Library, Ambalapuruzha, and now has grown like a banyan tree, spread all over Kerala and having at present more than 5,500 member libraries.

The hard work and sacrifice done by Shri P. N. Paniker is highly commendable. In fact, Paniker has put his heart and soul into the library work.

The Kerala Granthasala Sangham had not only worked as an agency to establish libraries for supplying books to the people for reading, but it has a multi-dimensional programme aimed at the total development of the people by forming a better and enlightened society for the nation. The following programmes were very successfully carried out by the Sangham:

1. Adult Education Programme
2. Establishing Nursery Schools in the libraries as a part of Childrens' educational programme.
3. Establishing a society of friends of books.
6. Publish magazines to educate the masses such as "Sakshara Keralam."
7. Establishing cultural associations.
8. Organizing cultural and literacy march and procession to create awareness.
9. Establishing the bell bicycle libraries to reach to the villages.
10. Popularising Hindi Language as a part of national integration programme.
12. Establishing women's wings in the libraries to intensify women's education.
15. Establishing libraries in Leprosy Sanatoriums.

The task accomplished by the Sangham in the field of adult education is remarkable. The Sangham had selected under-developed blocks for this adult education programme. Usually, the accepted duty of the library worker is to open the library and invite readers to it. But the task undertaken by the Kerala Granthisala Sangham under the banner of adult education was entirely different to the routine duty of a library worker. The new task of the library worker is to educate an illiterate person. They organized study classes
for this purpose. Many people after their daily work, used to attend these night classes. Considering the great service done for the adult literacy programme by the Sangham, UNESCO had selected Kerala Granthasala Sangham to receive the world famous "Krupskaya Award" in 1975.

Another point the researcher like to mention here is the "cultural and literacy" procession organized by the Kerala Granthasala Sangham. It has become a regular feature to witness public and political processions and agitation in this country. For every issue there is a procession. But the Kerala Granthasala Sangham had organized a unique procession known as cultural and literacy procession ("Samsarakarika sakshara jatha"). Thousands of people participated in this new procession. People all over Kerala welcomed such a march. They welcomed the procession with flowers, garlands, garlands made out of currency notes, decorated elephants, musical programmes ("Panchavadyam"), ceremonial lamps and "thalapoli."

The people who participated in the procession were shouting slogans. But these slogans had no political or religious colour. These slogans were meant for erradicating illiteracy from Kerala.*

These slogans were to inspire the farmers, fishermen and daily labourers, who do not get a chance to educate themselves.

*Girls with special dress standing with flowers, coconut and lamps in their right hand, in a tray.

*The slogans are included in Malayalam with English translation in Chapter VI.
The Sangham had started the Adult Education Centers in many villages. People, after their work was over, started attending these night classes conducted by the village librarian. Therefore, the village librarian was not merely a person to open the library doors and to sit there to issue books, but he became the teacher to educate those who could not read and write. The village librarian plays the role of a teacher to educate them to read and write and then attract them to the library to read and grow mentally.

It is important to note at this juncture, that the Public Library Movement in Kerala is a popular movement because the people of Kerala are the main force behind it. This movement is very unique and distinctive in this sense. The movement was started by noble citizens and is still being carried out by the public with very little help from the State Government. The contribution of the Kerala Granthasala Sangham for establishing the libraries in the nook and corner of Kerala needs recognition. The effort the Sangham had taken and the programmes the Sangham had launched for improving the literacy percentage of Kerala is commendable. According to the 1981 census, Kerala has the highest percentage of literacy (70.42%) in India. The reading habit of the people of Kerala is also very high. Every man starts his life in the morning with a newspaper. It is a regular feature in Kerala that early in the morning people assemble at the village tea stalls for morning tea and read newspapers. The village tea stalls will have a minimum of two different newspapers.

In the field of women's education also, Kerala is in the forefront. The Kerala Granthasala Sangham has started literacy centers for women in many libraries. This attempt of the Sangham was well
accepted by the people of Kerala. Many women came forward to attend the literacy classes. Most of them became members of the libraries in their respective villages.

Experts from the Ministry of Education, Government of India and the UNESCO supported the Adult Education programme started by the Kerala Granthasala Sangham. With the help of the ministry of Education and UNESCO, many Adult Education centers were opened in different villages.

After educating the illiterate adults to read and write, the Sangham continued with follow-up work. They did not leave these new literates alone. Those people who became literate, were to be helped with reading materials according to their reading ability. The Sangham undertook the task of producing sufficient books written in simple style on useful subjects by good authors mainly for these neoliterates. Most of the village libraries started a separate corner for neoliterate books.

UNESCO had sent a study team to make note of the adult literacy programme of the Kerala Granthasala Sangham. Considering the great service rendered by the Sangham in the field of adult education, the experts of the UNESCO selected Kerala Granthasala Sangham to receive the world famous "Krupskaya Award" for the year 1975.* In a letter from the Government of India to the State Secretary for Education, communicating the award, it was mentioned thus:

*A xerox copy of the UNESCO Award is given in the next page.
UNESCO AWARD, 1975 to
Kerala Grandhasala Sangham for
Adult Education Programme

The Krupskaya award - a facsimile
"This is indeed an honour bestowed not only on the Sangham but on the adult education efforts of the country." This was a proper recognition for the enormous task accomplished by the Sangham in the field of adult education.

Another commendable achievement of the Sangham other than establishing the libraries is the introduction of nursery schools within the libraries. The motto of the Sangham for this programme is "read and grow." The Sangham has introduced "Childrens' Corners" within the libraries for the benefit of young ones.

The study reveals that at every 10 square kilometers there is a public library. This helps the rural population to be in touch with the ever increasing knowledge. These rural libraries are the backbone of the library movement of Kerala. The activities of libraries established by the Sangham and the rest of their activities attracted the masses. The establishment of libraries in Leprosy Centers, and Jails, and the Bell Bicycle Libraries, etc., are the unique and incomparable features of Kerala Granthasala Sangham.

With the efforts of Kerala Granthasala Sangham, and the agencies like "Kerala Sastriya Sahitya Parishad," Ernakulam district was able to achieve one hundred per cent literacy in the beginning of 1990. Ernakulam is the first district in the whole country to achieve total literacy. The District Collector, K. R. Rajan, took the initiative to call the volunteers and voluntary organizations to launch a new literacy programme known as "Operation Floodlight."

The government-sponsored intensive literacy drive, "Operation Floodlight" has spread a new brilliance over the district of
Ernakulam, which has become the first district in the country to achieve hundred per cent literacy as I have stated on the previous page. Popular committees were constituted in all the 1,100 wards and district level literacy council was set up to co-ordinate the programme. Street-plays, seminars and cultural programmes were organized at every nook and corner of the district to stir the imagination of the masses. Class timings were adjusted to suit the convenience of the people. Seashores, courtyards and even pavements became classrooms.

The campaign was not just to make the illiterate literate, it has led to a social renaissance.

The present library situation in the State has certain deficiencies also. They are the following:

1. The libraries affiliated to the Sangham do not belong to an integrated and systematic public library system. They stand as isolated monuments with a great desire for knowledge.

2. The meager financial resources available with the state government as a whole to be expended for the public library services are being dissipated among thousands of small libraries. The State is spending about Rs.15 lakh every year for public library service which is insufficiently spread over the large number of libraries in the form of inadequate grants and consequently the benefits which the people receive are not commensurate with the total amount spent by the government.

3. With the limits of meager financial resources, these libraries are able to provide the people only with a limited book collection which is totally inadequate for their needs. So the concept
of a public library service becomes restricted.

4. Though there has been quantitative expansion of public libraries, there has not been quantitative improvements in the book collection. This is so because most of these libraries came into existence with donated books.

5. The bulk of the book collection of most of the libraries is formed of novels and other forms of fiction, while books needed to cater the educational, vocational and reference needs of the community, that a public library seeks to serve, are by and large ignored.

6. At least the district headquarter's public libraries should be computerized to cope up with the growth of knowledge.

7. Majority of the libraries are not properly managed and systematically organized. Certainly, it is not possible for the libraries with very little financial help from the Government to engage professionally trained librarians.

In Kerala, where the provision of public library is considered as a responsibility of the general public, we have more than 5500 public libraries. In other words, Kerala has more than 4 libraries for every village. Most of these libraries are represented by a shelf with books collected without any criteria. Most of these books come under the category of fiction and can cater only to recreational reading. Even though recreational reading is a major part of the programme of the public library, considering the modern trend, the public library must be upgraded to cater to the needs of the public in their educational aspects.
It is claimed that about 50% of these libraries have their own buildings. Here again, in most of the cases, the buildings are for namesake, ill-maintained and insufficiently furnished. They cannot provide suitable environments for good reading. There are exceptions. Kerala has some very good libraries at Taluk and district levels. The Kottayam Public Library and Quilon Public Library have made commendable progress. The public libraries at other district headquarters are also providing good service within the available resources and facilities. But even larger libraries require changes in their acquisition, policy and objectives.

8. Equip the public libraries with educational and reference books so that these libraries could work as a center for "Distance Education."

All these above mentioned factors are severly affecting the growth of the public library system of Kerala. If a library movement with the backing of the masses could grow and develop into a great force, it could have achieved great things if the Government also opened their eyes to do their part. Until 1989, the Government of Kerala could not bring a proper library legislation. While even prior to the attainment of independence, Kerala made earnest efforts towards library legislation. Dr. S. R. Ranganathan prepared a draft bill in 1946 which could not be passed due to the opposition from the bureaucracy. Again in 1959 the Communist Ministry headed by E. M. S. Namboothiripad tried to pass a library bill. Even this time the attempt did not become fruitful. The succeeding government also assured the people of proper enactment of a bill for the esta-
lishment and organization of public library system in the State. But it remained an unfulfilled promise till 1989. The diagram attached in the next page is a proposed plan for the administrative set up of a public library system for Kerala State. The present set up is weak and it cannot meet the growing demands of the people.

One important Malayalam weekly has rightly expressed that while 54 crores of rupees are spent on education in the State, not even one per cent of the same has been set apart for providing extra reading facilities for the people.

The purpose of the public library has been discussed in many places in this research. The most frequently stated purpose is "to serve the need of the people." There exist a need for some sort of information and the public library has to supply this. If we have a right to know, where do we get that right? Obviously, we get it from the State. We conceive that our "right to know" should flow from the constitution. So it is the duty of the State Government to see that this need is met. Unfortunately, Government of Kerala could not pass a library legislation suitable to the situation. Many attempts were made in the past to pass an enactment for the libraries such as the Library Bill of 1959, Library Bill of 1971, Library Bill of 1978, etc. The cause of the delay in bringing the library legislation has affected the all round growth of the public library system in Kerala.

This study should be viewed with a national perspective and outlook. Late Prime Minister of our country, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru observed that if people give up the habit of reading, obviously they become lop-sided and cease to grow. The reading habit of a
person will develop his thinking habit and a nation needs thinking citizens. So the flame of reading has to be kindled both in young and adult. This is the deeper function of the libraries. With the diffusion of universal education the masses of our country will have a better chance of life. This type of an education backed by an efficient library service, through a network of public libraries, urban and rural, there will be hope for our people for their social, cultural and economic well being. The libraries are agencies for nonformal education. The formal education alone is not able to meet the educational needs of the people especially in the third world. Against the speedy and revolutionary changes taking place in a civilized society we have the picture of a vast subcontinent of illiterate, ignorant, poverty stricken, superstitious and exploited mass on the one hand and on the other hand there is a microscopic minority of the elite. This is the picture of "Mother India" what we have today. Our constitution has started the scheme in which within ten years, all children below 14 years of age would be taught to read and write. After 43 years of independence, literacy rate is only less than 37%. In this situation the crying need is an effective alternative to the costly, slow, elitistic formal education. The answer clearly is some kind of non-formal education with the assistance of public libraries.

The government of India had launched a new educational programme known as Distance Education. This programme is based on the philosophy that (i) education is not a once for all process, but it is a life long process, (ii) no one is too old, too shy, too big or too small to learn at any moment, and above all (iii) an adult
is conscious of the loss of not learning and even if he is not, he could be made to do so. Dr. S. R. Ranganathan's law of Library Science, "Every reader his or her books" presupposes education for all. A public library can provide reading material for distance education.

The formal education is considered to be inadequate in meeting the developmental needs of the people and societies in the third world, particularly due to the limited resources available for its expansion to cater for the unlimited population growth. On the other end, nonformal education could be popularized by the Government because it is cheaper than the formal educational programme and also it is a way of minimizing inequalities in society.

Victor M. Mlekwa says that it has become more and more obvious that formal education would not be able to meet all the development needs of individuals, groups, communities and nations particularly in the Third World. Educational thinkers even began to talk about the world educational crisis, pointing out a number of indicators of the failure of formal education. Perhaps the most obvious of all was the fact that formal education was increasingly becoming too expensive for the developing countries which, on top of having limited resources for educational expansion, had also practically unlimited population expansion. Secondly uncontrolled educational

__________________________


expansion would probably lead to serious social and political pres-
sures, resulting in political as well as economic instability. For
example, uncontrolled expansion in education will lead to unemployment.
Unemployment will lead to economical and political problems in the
country.

Since formal education is class based it leads to accentua-
tion by social classes. Many factors account for this, bearing in
mind: (a) the fact that the children of the well-to-do will normally
get an upper hand (b) fewer schools are provided in rural areas as
compared to urban areas and therefore the children of the poor agri-
culturists have fewer chances of receiving education. The introduction
of non-formal education on the other hand may not be able to solve
all these problems and nonformal education is not a substitute for
formal education. But the government could study these cases carefully
and introduce very strong nonformal educational programmes such as
the programmes of the Kerala Granthasala Sangham. The Sangham was
highly successful in their nonformal education programme such as
Adult Education Programme, Women's Literacy Programme, special educa-
tional programmes for farmers, fishermen, etc. The libraries of
Kerala have functioned as a social institution to cater to the needs
of all the people irrespective of caste, creed or religion.

The public libraries of Kerala are the living monuments
of social equality and social justice. Once upon a time Kerala was
a State with rigid caste system and education was literally denied
to the lower castes. Education was in the exclusive possession of
the Brahmans. But now the situation is entirely different. Entrance
to the educational institutions are opened to all irrespective of
any caste, creed or religion. The role the public libraries played in irradiating the social evils is remarkable. Thus, the public libraries of Kerala not only function as a center of learning but also as a center to uplift the society socially and culturally. And thus it brought a social renaissance in Kerala.

It must be said in all fairness that in this period of transitional demoralization and unhealthy spirit of disintegration in many parts of our country, improved and adequate library facilities are bound to make people aware of their rights and duties and definitely help in sweeping away many cobwebs and thus make the atmosphere clear for great progress of the nation. Well planned and highly organized library service can establish confidence among millions of people in our country and put an end to the disharmony, thus aiding the nation to grow steadily. And then, perhaps the people will play their due role in the great reconstruction of our country.