CHAPTER II
THE BEGINNING OF PUBLIC LIBRARY MOVEMENT IN INDIA

Analysing the library service in India, the biggest democratic country in the world, it is observed that this country has been for centuries, lying inactive in a state of cultural exhaustion. Unlike in the West, it is the university library service that has evolved earlier than the public library service. This might have been due to political reason. In the British period the government needed university graduates for its lower civil service. The then government was not interested in mass education either for adults or for children. As a result of this, integrated library service for one and all was not at all thought of. Unlike the Western countries, the government of our country has not recognized library service as a plan on government level up to the recent times.¹

There has been a considerable transformation in the library scene in India, both in quantitative and qualitative terms, since India became independent in 1947. The development of public libraries in India, in the present sense of the term is a recent move made during the last half a century at the most. Since the conclusion of the 2nd World War, an enormous change has come over in all fields of knowledge - social, economical, cultural and industrial. We may

¹ Sen, pp. 164 - 165
say it with justification that India is now in the grip of industrialization and the concommitment social changes are on us. This change which we are facing now, Europe had faced a century earlier.

The social changes that are now being manifested are necessary adjustments in the paths of progress in which the country is treading. In the field of knowledge and information, the steps that have been initiated both by the central and the state governments show that our path has been selected and in time we shall find out the progress that we have made in the proper development of the true public library in our country.\(^2\)

In a democracy like ours any viable public library service must be founded upon sound legislation, lest the objectives will remain ever unattainable. Very relevantly UNESCO observes: "the absence of provision of library services in many development plans is due to a surprising lack of awareness on the part of expert advisers in other field concerning recent concepts and developments in library service."\(^3\)

As stipulated in the 7th schedule of the constitution of India, provision for public library service is the responsibility of the State Governments. Before going into the details of the public library movement in India, it is appropriate to study the development of libraries in ancient India.

\(^2\) Mookerjee, p. 4.

\(^3\) Rout, p. 6.
Development of Libraries in Ancient India

In India, unfortunately, there are only few records to pre-historic past. Several centuries seem to have elapsed before ancient lore and learning were reduced to writing. Most of the ancient literature was passed orally from generation to generation and was preserved in the form of oral record. Literature and learning passed from one generation to another by the aid of the wonderful memory that those ancients possessed. So long as there was reliance on memory alone, there was no library, indeed, there could be none. This period is termed by one writer as the "pre-inscriptional period." When it began and when it ended are still matters of conjecture. No definite evidence has been obtained so far. Recent discoveries at Mohenjo Daro and Harappa have thrown the date back a good deal, but what that period was and its exact dating and how extensive was the area of civilization to which it can be applied have not been definitely determined.

Turning to the inscriptional period, the period when literature and learning began to be put into writing, again the date when this period began has not been determined. In this maze of conflicting opinions, certain substantial facts to note are: (i) the find of undeciphered seals at Harappan sites, (ii) certain allusions in 'Vashish-theDharma Shastra' and occurrence of words like 'akshara' in the later vedic hymns, (iii) Panini in his classical grammar refers to "lipi" (script) and "lipikara" (writer), (iv) in the sacred Buddhist works, there are numerous references to the art of writing in this country.

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Marshall, p. 105.
"Lekhana" (writing) is praised and the career of "lekhaka" (writer) is considered a noble one. The 'Jetakas' tell us that royal edicts and religious and moral precepts were engraved on silver plates. In 'Tripitaka', another Buddhist work, the use of wooden board for religious instruction is hinted at. At another place, there is a reference to the slate and pen among the equipment of a schoolboy and to a game of lettering for children. All these items of evidence imply the use of writing for public and private affairs. Now the earliest date of Buddhist canonical literature is roughly the 6th century B.C. About Panini's date, the estimate varies between the 7th and 4th centuries B.C. The dates of the Vedic literature, once again, range over an undefined period. The best that can be done, under the circumstances, is to conclude that from available evidence the art of writing was known in India about the 6th century B.C. How much earlier it originated, it is difficult to assert at this stage. The peculiar script on the seals discovered at Mohanjo Daro and Harappa is yet to be deciphered.

Turning to the study of the writings themselves, their nature, forms and types, and how far they had been developed and used in ways that might encourage the establishment of libraries, here again we find that, in chronology and in facts, we are not on firm ground, particularly in tracing the origin of the scripts and how they evolved through the ages to the earliest samples known to us. In India, different scripts have been found in the course of archaeological explora-

5 Ibid., p. 106.
The earliest available examples of writing are in two main scripts: "Kharoshthi" and "Brahmi." While the influence of Kharoshthi script on Indian writing is not deemed to be much, Brahmi is considered as the parent script for India. The Kharoshthi script was first found on Indo-Greek and Indo-Scythian coins of the second century B.C. Its real importance in relation to India and Indian scripts, however, came to be emphasised when an inscription on a rock was found in 1836, near Shahbazgarhi on the border of India and Afghanistan. As regards Brahmi, some scholars consider it to be Dravidian origin. Some are of the opinion that it developed from picture writing. Another group traces its connection with the Indus Valley Script. However, from Kharoshthi and Brahmi, particularly the latter, there have developed a large number of Indian scripts. Their study presents difficulties because of their complexity and variety. Buhler, a great authority on Indian writing, distinguishes, however, six main types of the early Indian Scripts: (i) Original Brahmi written from right to left, available samples are few; (ii) Early Maurya type, in which we have the famous inscription of Ashoka, widely spread over the sub-continent, on rocks, cave-walls and pillars; (iii) Early Kalinga or Dravidi type, found in the region on the east coast of Southern India along the borders of the present states of Orissa and Tamil Nadu, containing archaic features and pointing to greater antiquity; (iv) Early Western Deccan or Andhra, and in use from second century B.C. to first century A.D.; (v) Late Maurya type, used in the region from Bihar in the north-east to north-west, samples of this script are few; (vi) Sunga type, a refined form of script used for literary purposes and which influenced the revival of Sanscrit learning in the Sunga period. This development
took place in Brahmanical Schools, and Sanscrit represented Brahmanical culture, just as Pali represented Buddhist culture. Sanscrit came into common use about the second century of the Christian era and soon became the 'lingua franca' of religion and learning and its predominance in Indian life continued till the Mediaeval period of Indian history.\(^6\)

Turning to the materials needed for writing, the most important source for the study of the Indian writings comprise the numerous inscriptions revealed to the world by enterprising human hands during the past hundred years. Commemorative and dedicative inscriptions are mostly incised on stone, while those relating to religious endowments or secular donations are mainly on copper. In addition, there are some recorded on iron, gold, silver, brass, bronze, clay, bricks and like materials also. For writing, palm leaves or birch bark were used. Birch bark (bhurja patra) as a writing material has a history of considerable antiquity in India. A number of manuscripts on this material are still in existence.

Palm leaves constituted perhaps the most common medium in those ancient days. Particularly in the Southern part of the country, Palmyra trees growing in abundance provided adequate materials. The leaves were dried, boiled, dried again and polished. The usual length of the strips was from 1 feet to 3 feet and their breadth from 1\(\frac{1}{2}\) inches to 4 inches. They were incised with a stylus dipped in ink and were bound between two wooden boards with a string.

at one end and holding them all together.

Having discussed the art of writing, let us trace the growth of learning in ancient India. Because among the basic constituents of a library, besides the written script and the materials for writing, there is necessity for the essential mental prowess to aid writing. The living testimony of the 'Vedas', 'Upanishads' and the epics and the Buddhist religious literatures indicate that even at an early date the progress was appreciable. A fact to note is that it was all religious love and, being primarily religious in character, the progress was confined to the priestly class which then constituted the sole group of intelligentsia. Among this class, learning continued to spread by word of mouth for a long time, as the Brahmins considered knowledge to be their sacred preserve. Written records, therefore, were scanty. As time passed, however, the burden on the memory became excessive, and even the Brahmins, felt the pinch. They yielded to the temptation to utilise the facility of writing. 7

In the Brahmanical School, however, the limitation of the art of writing to one class and the then rigid caste organization made it an exclusive one and its progress was halting. A change became evident, however, in the Gupte Period, when, in the time of Harsha, literary activity received a spurt in the wake of Hindu Renaissance. Another helpful factor was the impetus to literary activity received from Jainism. Pious Jains gloried in having beauti-

7 Mookerjee, p. 6.
ful copies, not only of their sacred books but also of other works of merit, prepared and distributed among recognized centres of learning.\textsuperscript{8}

Fa-Hien, the celebrated Chinese pilgrim who spent six years in India collecting Buddhist Scriptures in the beginning of the 5th century A.D. refers in his chronicle, "a record of Buddhist Kingdoms, to a Jatavana monastery which was a chief place of Buddhist learning as having a library and reading room."\textsuperscript{9} Also we get lots of valid information about the social life of the people of India during those days from the writings of Fa-Hien.\textsuperscript{10}

Libraries existed in India from very ancient days when India was reputed far and wide for her different seats of learning. These seats of learning and centres of culture naturally possessed rich collections of books and manuscripts and served, so to say, as modern day residential university centers.\textsuperscript{11}

Reference to Libraries or storehouses of knowledge are very common in ancient literature. These libraries of course cannot be compared with modern public library. Printed books were unknown then and these storehouses of knowledge contained only manuscripts.

\textsuperscript{8}Marshall, p. 110.


\textsuperscript{10}R. C. Majumdar, \textit{An Advanced History of India}, Bombay, MacMillan and Co., No. Date, p. 194.

\textsuperscript{11}Sengupta, p. 41.
"Vidya-dan", i.e., imparting of knowledge has been considered as the most sacred task in ancient India and Manu rightly allotted this job to the most gifted persons of the society of that age. The Brahmins were at the upper most rung of the ladder and so they were made responsible for performing the task of imparting knowledge (Vidya-dan). Vidya Bhandaras (libraries) being indispensable took a place of pride in the society. It was Jinabhadra Suri (1418-1458), who founded the famous 'bhandaras' at Jaisalmer, Danlatabad, Mandu, Ahmedabad, Kambhat, Patan and other places. Some of these stand today as living monuments to the progress of learning in ancient India. So far the discussion was about three important questions, viz., when did the art of writing begin to be practical in India, what were the materials used for the purpose of writing and what were the writings themselves, their type and evolution. The reason for doing so was to analyse the basic constituent elements of a library as they were in ancient India to understand what were the possibilities for the growth of libraries at that time and how far circumstances were favourable or unfavourable for their development. Let us now turn to examine the libraries of ancient India.

In India, literature and learning flourished undoubtedly since the remote past and the history of our cultural heritage extends far back. It is also true that there is no evidence of any libraries

during the very ancient period, but there were collections of manuscripts at few centers. And the reason for this is so obvious. The prevalent conditions at the time were not favourable to the development of libraries. At the time, learning and love were primarily religious in character and they were the monopoly of the priestly class. This class was averse to sharing its gifts with other classes of the society.\textsuperscript{13}

They were suspicious and hesitant at recording any thought because such recorded material might pass out of their control. Brahmanical schools persisted in the traditional methods of oral teaching and learning and relied upon their remarkably developed memory. The art of recording was not at all encouraged and consequently materials for any library collection as such could hardly grow.

Early libraries were found at early educational centers. The students, according to Indian tradition and culture, had to spend five to fifteen years in the "Gurugriha" or "Ashrama" (house of the teacher). Many of the Ashramas were famous for education and scholars from far and wide flocked to these ashramas which possessed rich collection of manuscripts on different subjects.\textsuperscript{14}

Here, at the feet of the "Guru" or preceptor all the pupils learnt the 'Sastras', the Vedas and the Upanishads—right from the early days of Upanayana (tying a ceremonial thread like a cross belt for a Brahmin child) to the day when they were declared

\textsuperscript{13}Marshall, p. 112

\textsuperscript{14}Sengupter, p. 41
fit to enter life, after the rigorous training in the discipline and in the Sastras and Vedas was over. This stage was known as the 'Snataka' or the graduation stage of modern days. Printed books did not exist then, and the huge collection of manuscripts in the studios and serious students, who, in case of any difficulty anywhere, had the liberty to discuss the matter amongst themselves and also with the teacher. "Indeed the teacher of those days; was a veritable encyclopedia of knowledge and was the ultimate authority in the matter of commenting on Sastras."\(^{15}\) As has been said all the ancient love was carried or borne in memory by the preceptor who could recapitulate everything verbatim—word for word without any effort. Such episodes of reciting the Sastras for days together were not uncommon in those days.

Such small Ashramas as a rule could not accommodate large number of students, and their maintenance was a charge on the local nobility or the King who used to make grants of land from which income and produce were used to maintain these institutions. But there were instances where quite a large number of students flocked round a famous teacher, who was obliged to run a bigger Ashrama with a larger grant. Instances were not uncommon when Universities—with thousands of students, were thus endowed by the ruling chiefs.

In the ancient literature of India there were copious references to teachers who were known as 'Kulapatis'—if they could arrange for the teaching and maintenance or boarding and lodging of 10,000

\(^{15}\) Mookerjee, p. 7
students. These Ashrama Universities may be compared to the residential Universities of our days. It goes without saying that these huge establishments or institutions were equipped with regular libraries-not of printed materials but of manuscripts of different varieties and on different subjects for the use of students and teachers. Such libraries or storehouses of knowledge were undoubtedly looked after properly and were preserved in the best possible manner. These were the storehouses of culture and learning, for in those days the teachers and the taught had to depend on these invaluable records in case of any difference of opinion amongst themselves. We have seen that the teachers of those days could without any effort recite the ancient Sastras from memory verbatim and in case of doubt the actual manuscripts were referred to and the divergences corrected.

**Ancient Seats of Learnings and Libraries of India**

It is appropriate, at this point, to enter into a discussion about some of our ancient seats of learning which had excellent collections of hand written books; where renowned scholars, even from abroad, had come to acquire the endless knowledge of the east.

Such libraries or storehouses of knowledge were properly organized and maintained. "A few notable examples are those attached to the centres of learning (Universities) at Nalanda, Rajagriha,  

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16 Ibid.
The University of Takshashila (Taxila) in the 6th century B.C. maintained an excellent library. From the list of specialized subjects taught at the university we can infer the richness of the collection of this library. The libraries attached to Nalanda University centred round Dharmaganja, comprising of three large buildings known as "Ratnasagara" (Ocean of Jewels), "Ratnadadhi" and "Ratnaranjake", signifying that they contained precious treasurers in the form of manuscripts on Religion, Literature, Social Sciences, etc. For example, 'Ratnasagara', a nine storied building housed rare and sacred works on Tantrik manuscripts, etc. It was from these rich storehouses of manuscripts the Chinese scholar I-Tsing copied out various manuscripts to carry home. I-Tsing stayed there from 675-685 A.D.

According to Dr. R. K. Mookerjee, Taxila was the intellectual capital of Indian continent. It was not a seat of primary or elementary education but of higher education of a university type. The name and frame of Indian culture in those days drew hoards of scholars and missionaries from far off countries like China, Tibet and other adjoining areas. Fahien, Hiuen-Tsang, I-Tsing and others were but individual members of noble bands of missionaries, who during the period of ten centuries came to India on religious and literary pilgrimage to drink deep at the fountain of knowledge and culture. The monasteries at Pataliputra and Tamralipti- were the monasteries where Fahien could get the manuscripts of transcrip-
tion. These institutions had stores of manuscripts which may be the closest parallel to the modern libraries. Those storehouses of knowledge were indeed very large—as Fahien had to stay at Pataliputra for 3 long years to copy what he wanted from the library. In all the university centers of those days, the storehouses of knowledge had a big part to play as a tool of reference.  

Purushapura (modern Peshwar) was a famous seat of learning prior to Nalanda. The famous Brahmin scholar and teacher, Asva Ghosa was converted and initiated into Buddhism by Parsva, who lived and had a special chamber of his own in the monastery. Most of the ancient viharas or monasteries more than a hundred in number were rich enough in collections of manuscripts and there were more than 5000 monks living and learning in these monasteries.

The Buddhist period which ended with the sixth century A.D. was a period of learning. The libraries attached to the Buddhist monasteries were great centers of learning.  

Hiuen-Tsiang had visited India during 629-645 A.D. His works are chief sources of information for us to know about script, writing materials, education and libraries. He stated that the forty-seven worded script in practice in those days was believed to be handed down by "Deva-Brahma." He mentioned that the king used to maintain helpers for records (librarians). When he visited

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18Mookerjee, p. 10

Kashmir, he mentioned that the king of Kashmir appointed Bhadantha to cling with his disciples to look after the needs of twenty clerks to copy out the manuscripts he wanted from the palace library. It is known that he lost a bundle of manuscripts while he was crossing the Indus River. In one of his letters to Sathavira Prajna Deva he enclosed a list of the lost manuscripts and requested him to send them.20

The Medieval Period

In the medieval period we find the ruling chiefs and Muslim conquerors maintaining rich collections of manuscripts. The extensive properties granted from time to time to religious organizations or "Mathas" in charge of "Mathadhipatis" in the north and Muddari-yars (or jiyars) in the South were meant for the proper upkeep of these organization which often included "Tolas" or 'Chatuspathis' and collections of manuscripts.21

Medieval Indian libraries can be divided into four classes: (a) libraries attached to temples and mosques; (b) Shahipustakalaya, or libraries of the Hindu kings; (c) libraries of educational institutions; and (d) libraries established by philanthropists. In other words, religious libraries, private libraries, academic libraries and public libraries. Each of these libraries had thousands of volumes. Mithila and Nabadwip were famous centers of learning in the medieval period which attracted scholars and prompted prepara-

20P.S.G. Kumar, Indian Library Chronology, New Delhi, Metropolitan Book Co., Pvt. Ltd., 1977, p.13
21Sengupta, p. 43
tion of manuscripts on Nyaya, Tantra, etc.\textsuperscript{22}

In Tanjore and Sarabtoji, the last ruling prince collected all records, manuscripts and printed books in the country and organized and founded the Saraswati Mohal Library, which is even now one of the finest libraries. We have instances of private collections also in the south and in the north of India. Mohammed of Ghazni maintained a library of more than 30,000 volumes. Mohammed Gavan, a minister of the Bahamini Kingdom owned a library of 3,000 volumes.\textsuperscript{23}

**The Moghul Period(1526-1756)**

The coming up of the Muslim power in India during the 13th century A.D. marked the dawn of another era in learning and scholarship. Moghal rulers gave considerable importance to libraries. This is evident from the fact that scholars were appointed as librarians and they were very much honoured. Till the time of Akbar in the Medieval period we find the ruling chiefs and Muslim conquerors maintaining rich collections of manuscripts. Private libraries were also common. The nobles vied with each other in adding rare books to their libraries, bought at high prices. Abdul Rahion Khan-Khan possessed a big personal library, in which most of the books were illustrated by a Hindu painter. Many learned men and scholars used to come to the library for study and self-improvement. It may be noted that sufficient attention was given for the upkeep and preservation of these libraries. Abdul Rahim Khan's library employed a librarian, painters, book binders, and scribes, all kept

\textsuperscript{22}Mookerjee, p. 19

\textsuperscript{23}Ibid.
Maharaja Chikka Deva Raya of Mysore (1676 - 1704) was an author of repute. He collected in his library the rarest Sanscrit and historical works which were unfortunately subsequently destroyed by Tipu Sultan. Maharaja Sawai Jai Singh possessed an unrivalled library containing all astronomical and historical works. Almost all the books were destroyed after his death. He procured most of the books from Europe, besides those available in India.

Tipu Sultan also had a famous library in the South, but it was pillaged in a clash of arms. The collections of this library were catalogued by Captain Charles Stewart and printed in Cambridge University Press in 1809. It ultimately crossed the seas and is now preserved in the India Office Library, Commonwealth Office, London.

The greatest library that existed during the Moghul period was the Imperial Library of the Moghuls meant exclusively for royal use, though scholars could have access to it. All the Moghul Emperors from Babar to Aurangzeb were men of literary taste and took keen interest in the development of the imperial library. They were very eager to collect and preserve rare books and they valued presents of scholarly books from learned authors. Their examples were followed by nobles and courtiers, who had their own libraries.

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24 Sengupta, p.44
25 Ibid
26 Ibid
Akbar the great had a splendid library of his own consisting of more than 25,000 books and manuscripts. He also introduced reforms in library management, classification and storage of books. He brought it to the level of efficiency which compares favourably with the modern standard of classification. The library was divided into different compartments according to the value of the books and estimation in which the different sciences were held. They were further divided according to different languages in which they were written, such as Hindi, Persian, Greek, Kashmiri, Arabic, etc. Each section was subdivided into prose and poetry and the books were arranged accordingly. (Akbarnameh I, p. 110). The library was well managed and had experienced officers to supervise and direct its affairs. An officer who had title of the Nizam was in charge of the library. He had several assistants under him to enter the books in the register and to keep separate registers for separate subjects and number of books. We may call those subject records of library holdings "Register Catalogues." He was also responsible for the selection and purchase of books for the library. The people were employed for the care, upkeep and correction of books and manuscripts, like the scribe, Warraqalhaf (cleaners), book binders, painters, etc. Skillful copyists (Khusnavis), gilders, cutters, were also employed to do various specialized jobs. The translators were also kept on permanent basis. "The books after being copied by the scribe were sent to another officer, who compared

27 Mookerjee, p. 19
the copy with the original and corrected the mistakes." The issue and restoration of each book was watched carefully and any defects immediately detected.

During this period the Hindus also possessed huge libraries at their famous seats of learning such as Varanasi, Tirhut, Mithila, Nadia, etc. These libraries stocked huge files of rare, authentic ancient works on philosophy, medicine, religion, history and many other sciences.

According to Dr. Frazer, several libraries of the Hindus were filled with rare and precious Sanscrit manuscripts. ("Travels in India in the 17th Century, p. 392"). When the traveller Bernier paid a visit to Varanasi, he was received warmly at the university library. Bernier saw there a large hall entirely filled with manuscripts. These libraries were later on destroyed by Muslim invaders. The Brahmins of Kashmir held a sufficient stock of books which they regularly studied.

During the Mughul rule the Royal Libraries at Delhi, Agra, Fatepur Sikri and Lahore were rich storehouses of knowledge and culture. A good deal of literature of Bhakti, Sufism, Love-lyrics, Martial Poetry and secular prose, produced in the medieval period found their place in the libraries. During the later half of the 18th century, the Mughal empire gradually declined. This was a serious setback to the development of libraries.

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28 Sengupta, p. 45.
29 Ibid., p. 46.
Growth of Library in Modern India

A study of the growth of the library in modern India takes us back to the year 1498 when Vasco da Gama's three little ships cast anchor off Calicut. According to certain historians, this date is considered as the beginning of modern India. The discovery of sea routes to India has brought her into contact with the Western Civilization. The Portuguese cut a path which was followed by other European nations, the Dutch, the Danes, the French, and the English. It was the fabulous wealth of India that had drawn these people to this country.

Dr. Aditya Kumar Ohdedar in his book "The Growth of the Library in Modern India: 1498-1836" points out that the Jesuits penetrated into the Mogor, that is, the land governed by the Moghuls, and possessed in course of time a handsome library at Agra. Besides European books, the library of the Jesuits had a number of books written in oriental languages by themselves. The Jesuits took every opportunity to acquire oriental documents. Before discussing about the contributions of Europeans in the field of libraries, it is important to have a glance at the advent of printing press in India.

The advent of the printing press in India was not by design but by accident. In 1556, certain fathers of the society of Jesus (Jesuits) set out from Portugal. Some of them were bound for India, while others were bound for Abyssinia. After their arrival in Goa, the batch of Abyssinians, who had brought a printing press for work

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in Abyssinia with them, cared not for some reason to proceed further. When held up at Goa, they erected the press in the College of St. Paul there.

India did not evince interest in the exploitation of the art of printing until the advent of Portuguese. The first books printed in India was in Portuguese. It was entitled "Conclusoes outras Coisas" issued from a press in Goa in 1556 by its author, Antonio de Quadros, a professor in the College of St. Paul.

The Aggystonian Monks built a big library at Goa and this library possessed 10,000 books. The English East India Company had libraries at their various factories. The library at Masulipatnam existed even before 1671. The books were mostly theological. Prior to the erection of Fort William, the Company kept a library at Calcutta before 1700.

The library in Fort St. George is worth mentioning. Earlier in 1690 Fort St. David Library was established. Both these libraries and other factory libraries were mainly used by the European inhabitants. Bartholomes Ziegenbalg was a pioneering protestant missionary, who with the help of Plutscho established a charity school at Tranqueber in 1706. By 1712 the number of such schools rose to five. These schools were regarded by the Danish missionaries as a driving force for bringing in the use of books among the people. The European

31 Marshall, p. 113
32 Ibid
33 Sengupta, p. 47
missionaries contributed a lot in establishing libraries among the natives of Bengal.

**English Settlement in Calcutta and the Growth of Circulating Libraries**

From 1758 European residence at first collected around the old fort. The new Fort William was completed in about 1773. Calcutta became the chief center of the activities of the Englishmen in India. From Bengal Gazette and the Calcutta Gazette we learn that one John Andrews was running a circulating library at old Fort for recreational reading for Englishmen. At the beginning of 1781 this library had been shifted from the old Fort to a cool and commodious place. A catalogue was maintained and new additions were announced in the columns of Calcutta Gazette. There was another circulating library kept by MacDonald and Arnot.

A big new library entitled Calcutta Circulating Library was started by Messrs Cock, Maxwell and Co., in 1787. This library was shifted to Court House Street. At the beginning of the nineteenth century, particularly in 1805 we have evidence of another circulating library - Hurkaru Library, which had a stock of quality books. The vogue of the commercial circulating libraries owed their growth and existence mainly to the expanding population of Englishmen in Calcutta and the popular demand for books as a means of amusement, recreation and relaxation.

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34 Ibid., p. 48

A New Era in Public Library Movement in India

In 1808 the Government of Bombay proposed to register libraries which were to be given copies of books published from the funds for the encouragement of literature. According to 'Sinha Committee' this was the significant date from which public library development in India started.\(^\text{36}\)

During the first half of the 19th century the three presidency towns had their public libraries. These libraries were mostly financed by the Europeans residing in these towns.

Of all the earliest public library development in India, the development of public libraries in Baroda was unique. Baroda developed a network of public libraries to serve the entire princely state. Maharaja Sayajirao Gaekwar III of Baroda who travelled all over the world was deeply impressed by the role played by public libraries in U.S.A., and thought of extending such benefits to his own subjects.\(^\text{37}\)

During his second visit to U.S.A., he secured the services of Mr. William Alanson Borden, an eminent library expert, who had been a lecturer at the famous first library School established in 1887 at Columbia by Dr. Melvil Dewey.\(^\text{38}\)

Mr. Borden carefully studied the situation and assessed the need and available resources and recommended a programme of

\(^\text{36}\)Ravindran, p. 25


\(^\text{38}\)N.C. Chakravarthy, Library Movement in India, Delhi, Hindustan Publishing Corporation, 1962, p.3.
library development that will lead to establishment of a library in each town area and in each village, that had a primary school. A programme of financial assistance from the state revenue and funds of local authorities, like District and Municipal Boards was framed and the supervision and control of the system was entrusted to an Assistant Curator and his staff, exclusively meant for the purpose.  

The people in the State responded admirably to the Government's move and in about 20 years all the 45 towns and as many as 818 villages in the state could boast of a library in a well-supervised library system.

"Though libraries as such were not unknown in India from the early days - the character of these libraries, both public and private i.e. institutional and personal including those that were owned by the ruling chiefs - all were for the use of the limited few only. The role of libraries in the 19th and in the present 20th century as evidenced in the case of Western countries was not known then. The libraries then existed were neither meant for public nor were the ordinary people then in need of libraries."  

It was for the limited few that the libraries existed - viz, the scholars, the Brahmins, and the interested learned men were the main agents who had access to these treasure - houses of knowledge. The libraries were personal properties. They did not appeal to the public.

39Ibid, p. 4.

40Mookerjee, p. 20
With the spread of English education in India, need for libraries in the modern sense was felt and libraries came into existence. The library movement in India can be said to have began with the beginning of this century. It is agreed in all hands that Dr. S. R. Ranganathan has been a dominant figure in the Indian library world. As it is rightly pointed out by Mr. Berwick Sayers, his literary activity is perhaps unequalled in the library field before, and hardly likely to be surpassed.41

The National Library, Calcutta

The National Library, Calcutta, is the single most valuable collection of documents on the subcontinent. The British Government in India established a library called the Imperial Library at Calcutta where the headquarters of the Government shifted from Calcutta to Delhi in 1911 but the Imperial Library continued to function in Calcutta. Soon after the independence of India, the Imperial Library was, by an Act of the central legislature, renamed the National Library and was shifted from its Esplanade premises to "Belvedere" the Old Viceregal Lodge. This brought about a change in nomenclative but did not change its character. In 1954, the Delivery of Books Act (Public Libraries Act) was passed under which publishers were required to deposit at the National Library, within a month of their publication, a copy of all books and periodicals published in India. It was from this date that the National Library acquired a distinct

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41P. N. Kaula, (1958), p.50
role.\textsuperscript{42} It has the makings of a foremost research library in the field of humanities in India on account of its large collection of books in major Indian languages, its excellent holdings of books on British India in the English Language, its acquisition of the Sir Asutosh Mukerji collection of 76,000 volumes, besides the Buhar collection of manuscripts and other special collections.\textsuperscript{43}

**The Public Library System**

Whether it is the National Library (Calcutta), Asiatic Society Library (Bombay), Saraswathi Mahal Library (Tanjavur), Khuda Baksh Oriental Public Library (Patna), Trivandrum Public Library (Trivandrum) or Connemara Public Library (Madras), these are public libraries in their basic character and are essentially the products of British rule. The tallest among the public libraries in modern India however, owes its birth and growth to Independent India. In spite of the fact that library legislation has been introduced in several states like Tamil Nadu (1948), Andhra Pradesh (1960), Karnataka (1965), West Bengal (1979), and Maharashtra (1967), for the establishment of Public Libraries down to the village level, the public library system has not yet taken root. (Kerala did not have a library legislation till 1989). In fact, there have been a series of setbacks due to the delay in bringing Library Legislation.

\textsuperscript{42} P. N. Kaula, *The National Library of India*, Bombay Somaiya Publications Pvt., Ltd., 1924, p. 21

Library Movement in India - An Evaluation

Thus, in short, the survey of the past position of libraries in our country has shown that even though public library service as it obtains in the West has been a recent innovation in our country—the existence of libraries of different sorts were not unknown and actually has done enormous good to those who wanted to be benefited by them. Whatever might be the state of affairs in the past—the current was always in motion and the ebb tide and flow tide have had the effect on the system of library development through centuries and the British rule did actually initiate that cohesion and integration.

With the growing needs of the reading public, it has become necessary to provide a perfect and well established library system throughout the country. The first significant date in the development of libraries for the public in India is 1808 when the Bombay Government initiated a proposal to register libraries which were to be given copies of books published from the "Funds for the Encouragement of literature." By the middle of the 19th century, the three presidency towns of Bombay, Calcutta and Madras had their public libraries, founded mostly with active support and initiative of the Europeans in these towns. They were, of course, public libraries in the full sense of the term. Founded in imitation of their Western counterparts, the use of these libraries was confined to this upper layer of the

society. Besides, they were subscription libraries and not free libraries, which alone can, now-a-days, lay claim to the title of public libraries.

The movement spread beyond the metropolis and grew particularly strong in the last two decades of the 19th century. By the end of the century, all the provincial capitals and even many of the district towns, at least in three presidencies, had their public libraries. Even some of the princely states, like Indore and Travancore-Cochin had the distinction of having public libraries in their capitals.45

The second phase in the history of library movement lasted from the beginning of the 20th century to 1937. If the first phase of library movement was remarkable for the official backing and patronage of scattered libraries here and there, the second phase was characterised by the Indian intelligentsia taking up the cause of libraries.

The phase began symbolically, with the throwing open, in 1890 of the reading room of the Calcutta Library - later known as the Imperial Library and now as the National Library - to the public. The pride of this period was, of course, the library movement in Baroda. From 1906 to 1911 Sir Sayaji Rao III, the Ruler of the State built up an elaborate library system composed of the central library, village libraries and travelling libraries which for many years to come stimulated the imagination of Indian librarians and served as a beacon-light to lovers of libraries all over the country.

There were, again, in all the major provinces and states of India, librarians and public men who devoted themselves wholeheartedly to the cause of libraries of their own regions. Many of them have fallen on the way, but some of them, like Dr. S. R. Ranganathan, Sant Ram Bhatia and others were fortunate to see the development of library movement in this country. The contributions of Dr. S. R. Ranganathan to the library movement had been profound.\(^\text{46}\)

A notable event of this period was the founding of the India Library Association in 1933 as a result of, mainly the efforts of Khan Bahadur Asadulla. The Association gave library workers in India, for the first time, a status and a voice which, feeble as it was at first, was in due course bound to be held by political leaders and Government. Many provinces had set up their library Associations in the latter part of this period.\(^\text{47}\)

The third phase of the library movement began in 1937 when the Congress came into power in many provinces. This phase was really a synthesis of the previous two phases. For this phase, as in the first phase, the government played a dominant role in setting up libraries for which there was a strong popular demand. Though the main trend of this phase, the setting up of village libraries through Government effort, was anticipated in some places— for example in Travancore, where the State Education Department had set up 80 rural libraries in 1955 - it was in this period, that it developed into a vigorous

\(^{46}\text{Kaula (1958) p. 50.}\)

\(^{47}\text{Satyanarayana, p. 4.}\)
movement. Assam, Bihar, Bombay, Orissa, Punjab, Cochin and some other provinces and states set up village libraries, and, in some cases, even travelling libraries. It is estimated that in 1942 there were 13,000 village libraries in India.48

The encouragement of village libraries continued beyond 1942, though not with the same degree of enthusiasm as before. These libraries were the product of the Indian Adult Education Movement which swayed the country at that time. This was signified by the recommendation of the Central Advisory Board of Education in 1940 that libraries were essential to the progress of Adult Education in the country.

The fourth phase of the Indian Library Movement, through which the country is passing today may be described as one of consolidation - consolidation with a view to husbanding our resources so as to yield a library service to the maximum number of people. There have been two milestones during this phase. The first is the library Act of Madras, 1948. This was the first legislation of its kind in India. The second milestone is the inclusion of the scheme of "Improvement of Library Science" in the First Five Year Plan of Educational Development 1951 - 56. This scheme envisaged a network of libraries spread all over the country.

Now our Government is much concerned about irradiating illiteracy from the masses. Because, an enlightened citizen only is an asset to the nation. Our planners have never lost sight of this glaring truth. As stipulated in the 7th schedule of the Constitu-
tution of India, provision for the public library service is the responsibility of the State Governments.49

Today we are passing through the most critical juncture in the history of mankind. Humanity is on the crossroads. Phenomenal progress in Science and Technology during the past couple of centuries and the recent decades has placed mankind amidst an unprecedented explosion of knowledge and information. One estimate reveals that in one passing decade the entire quantum of knowledge gets doubled. Today one Oxford or Cambridge graduate has more information and knowledge of the combined knowledge of the immortal trio-- Socrates, Aristotle and Plato. Notwithstanding this withering frontiers of knowledge, modern man finds himself miserable. Laser beams, atom smashers, the miracle chips, the brain scanner and the other marvels of science have not been able to land mankind in a kingdom of contentment and bliss. The dread of a nuclear holocaust leading to the annihilation of all life from earth is deep in the heart of every citizen of the world.50

Therefore, it is inevitable that peace, harmony and prosperity will be elusive for all of us unless we, by a feet of combined efforts set right the above mentioned ills. And the only way to achieve this end is by dissemination of knowledge and awareness among the masses. The Public Library is the best medium to achieve this.

49Rout, p.6.

50Ibid., p. 4
The Union Government has realised the importance of establishing a network of libraries in the country to eradicate illiteracy from the masses. They give all the possible supports to the State Governments in this venture. Among other states, Kerala has the highest literacy percentage. One of the reasons for this phenomenal growth is the establishment of public libraries throughout the State.

In sum, the volume of recorded materials in all the major areas of thought and experience can be expected to grow steadily year by year. This rising flood of information will continue to come in a multitude of forms, both book and nonbook. As far ahead as anyone has tried to see, it is judged that books instead of disappearing will become even more common and more widely available than now, and the business of printing and publishing will continue to grow.

In the concept, librarians and libraries become invaluable parts of the entire selective learning enterprise. Educating all students progressively in learning how to learn makes it necessary that the library become the center of an increasingly important part of the student's learning activity. There is a vast gap between concept and practice; between the theory of what should be and what actually is. However true the affirmation that "the library is the fastest growing element in the modern world" may be by comparison with the past, the yet unsolved problems, the things yet to be done, and the people yet to be convinced are multitudinous when the great gulf between the actuality of the present and the needs of the present is recognized, to say nothing of the greater requirements and demands
Books are among our greatest instruments of freedom. They are the natural medium for the new idea and the untried voice from which come the original contributions to social growth. We believe that free communication is essential to the preservation of a free society and a creative culture. Public libraries serve the educational process by helping to make available knowledge and ideas required for the growth of the mind and the increase of learning.