CHAPTER III

PUBLIC LIBRARY MOVEMENT IN INIDA
Libraries in Ancient and Medieval India:

India has been the cradle of one of the earliest and brilliant civilizations. The greatest and wisest of her monarchs patronized learning and libraries. They saw in the foundation of the university and academic institutions the most enduring memorials of their thrones. References are also available to prove that the great Indian universities like Nalanda, Taxshil (600 B.C.) and Vikramashila had their own libraries with a massive collection of rare documents. The Buddhists of India laid special emphasis on the writings of manuscripts and maintaining their collections. The Mughals had also set up royal and pompous libraries. Well known among these libraries was a library set up by the Mughal Emperor Humayun at Agra Fort. Akbar also set up a library with Faizi as librarian. He introduced reforms in the management, classification and storage of books. Among other rulers the names of Maharaja Ranjit Singh of Punjab and Maharaja Sawai Man Singh of Jaipur will always be remembered with veneration in the history of library service in India. The libraries of ancient and medieval period were managed and patronized by Kings, big capitalists and scholars of repute. These functioned almost as private libraries and there has no free access for the common people. These libraries could not play any vital role in providing initial and continuing education to the common masses.
As a result of this, the common masses of the country remained deprived of library service until the advent of the British.

**Library movement after the advent of the British:**

The genesis of the public library movement in India may well be traced with the advent of British rule. They brought Indians in touch with the best English thought. They have inspired Indians to setup public libraries. In Maharashtra, Gujarat and West Bengal a number of libraries were opened with the encouragement received from the Britishers in the second half of 19th century. The important libraries set up in the nineteenth century were Andrews Library (1850) of Surat, Gaya Public Library (1855) of Gaya, Long Library (1856) of Rajkot, Connemara Public Library (1860) of Madras, Government Library of Junagarh (1867). Nonetheless the benefits of these libraries were confined to the upper class and elite of the society. The lower strata of the society could not make use of these libraries.

**Development of 20th Century:**

The advent of the twentieth century marked the dawn of a new era in our public library history. In the nineteenth century the public libraries flourished on the official backing and patronage. The
period from 1900 and 1937 was characterized by the Indian intelligentsia taking up the cause of public libraries.

The most significant event of the period was the starting of library movement in Baroda, Maharaja Sayaji Rao Gaikwad III, the then ruler of the erstwhile Baroda state invited the famous American Librarian W.A. Borden to organize public library system in Baroda. By the year 1910, Borden was able to establish an elaborate and well-integrated public library system composed of the Central Library, Village libraries, Travelling libraries and Manuscript libraries. Central Library in Baroda had an excellent collection in those days. It was considered the third largest one in the country. The entire expenditure of the Central Library Baroda was borne by the State Government. Village libraries were controlled by the Central Library. The Travelling Libraries looked after the circulation of books in remote areas of the state where no libraries were established. There were some manuscript libraries with rare collection. Vernacular libraries were also established for people not knowing the English language. Separate libraries were opened for women and children as well as audio-visual section for the illiterates and semi-literates. "This was the dawn of public library system in the modern sense and for years to come this pioneering work of Sayaji Rao Gaikwad III
fixed the imagination of Indian librarians and served as a beacon light to lovers of libraries all over the country”.

Munindra Raj Mahashay organized public library movement in Bengal. He was a great lover of libraries. He was the President of Bengal Library Association. The Association was very active and impressed upon the government the need to assist libraries with adequate finances. All the libraries were under the Education Department. The unique feature of library development was that the management of District Library was the responsibility of the District Library Association. Each district should have a registered Library Association and it was association's responsibility to run the libraries. Under the scheme, all the District Libraries were established and they become the focal point to coordinate library services to rural areas. This spread of library movement in eastern India was a milestone. Yet another significant event in this direction was the setting up of a committee in Bombay state under the Chairmanship of A.A.A. Fyzee in 1939. The committee recommended for strong network of public library system in Bombay State. The committee was for setting up State Central Library, District Libraries, Taluka Libraries, Block Libraries linked with each other.
After India became independent, the imperial library founded by Lord Curzen (1891) was renamed as the National Library of India, by an act, Imperial Library Act, 1948.

Progress under Five Year Plans:

The Government of India took keen interest after independence in providing public library service to the masses. During the First Five Year Plan (1951-56), the Government paid attention towards the improvement of Public Library services along with the Community Development Programme. It was proposed under this plan to set up a National Central Library and One Central Library in each state. Delhi Public Library (1951) and Indian National Scientific Documentation Centre (1952) were set up during the First Five Year Plan Period. The Delivery of Books Act (1954) was prescribed that every Indian publisher should send free of cost one copy of each of its publications to each of the three libraries in Calcutta (National Library), Madras (Connemara Public Library) and Bombay (Asiatic Library).

During the Second Plan (1956-61), a sum of Rs.140 lakhs was spent by the Central government for public library development. An additional provision of 10 lakhs was made to set up a Central Institute at Delhi for training of librarians. The refresher
course on "The Public Library and National Development" was inaugurated in March 1959. The Government of India, on the recommendations of the seminar on "Role of libraries in Social Education" held in New Delhi in 1955, set up an Advisory Committee for Libraries (1957) under the Chairmanship of Shri K.P. Sinha. The Committee was asked to make recommendations on the administrative and financial measures necessary to support the public library set up in India.

The Committee submitted its report in 1958-59. It recommended an integrated library system in the states linking the State Central Libraries with the National Libraries. State Central Libraries were also expected to link with district, block and village libraries. The committee also recommended setting up of an independent department of social education and libraries in every state. It also strongly recommended levy of library cess. The committee felt that cess was a reliable source of finance. The state and central governments were asked to supplement the amount collected by levying cess. The committee was in favour of a public library system controlled and managed by state library authority.

During Third Plan, the Planning Commission (India) appointed the working Group on Libraries in June, 1964. The group
formulated over-all policies, priorities and programme of public library development costing rupees 30.99 crores under the different heads.

The working group on the development of libraries surveyed the existing conditions of library services and made recommendations regarding the structure, hierarchy and administrative set up of libraries.

The group recommended:

a. Creating of a separate branch/division in the Central Ministry of Education for library affairs.

b. Setting up of Directorate of Libraries in each state with a qualified Director.

c. Constituting an All India Library Advisory Council with Union Minister of Education as Chairman; and

d. Establishment of at least three model libraries in the country on the pattern of Delhi Public Library.

The group also prepared a Model Public Library Bill which was circulated by the Government of India to the states for adoption. Further, the working group strongly recommended that 1.5% of education grants should be earmarked for public libraries. Unfortunately, its recommendations were not implemented by the State governments.
In the Fourth Plan Period (1969-74), the Government of India took a highly laudable step by establishing Raja Ram Mohan Roy Library Foundation in Calcutta in 1972. It is an autonomous body with Union Minister of Education as its President. It aims at vitalizing the state libraries to work more effectively and setup a nucleus of district libraries so as to disseminate knowledge for the benefit and improvement of the layman. A good and integrated network of public libraries is highly necessary for the development of human resources.

In pursuance of its aims and objectives, the Foundation gave assistance to more than sixteen thousand public libraries. It is infact the first concerted effort to promote an integrated public library service at national level.

The eradication of poverty and attaining self-reliance are the two watchwords of the fifth five year plan. Education including libraries in this plan, put emphasis on

a) ensuring equality of educational opportunities as part of the overall plan of ensuring social justice.

b) Establishing closer links between the pattern of education on the one hand, the needs of development and employment market on the other.
c) Improvement in the quality of education imparted and
d) Involvement of the academic community in the tasks of social
and economic development.

The Sixth Five Year Plan (1980-85) emphasized essential education of all adults, to be achieved by inter-sectoral and inter-agency coordination. These efforts were to be supported by post-literacy, continuing education through a network of rural libraries.

An important development during the seventh plan (1985-90) was the adoption of the National Literacy Mission which emphasized the education of women and also the establishment of rural libraries.

Universalisation of elementary education, eradication of illiteracy and strengthening of vocational education to the emerging needs of urban and rural settings were the major thrusts during the eighth plan (1992-97). The plan stated that in those states with an advanced library system, rural libraries should become the focal points for post literacy and continuing education programmes.

Surprisingly there was no mention about libraries in the 9th plan (1997-2002). However, efforts made from time to time led to the establishment of State Central Libraries, District Libraries and
quite a large number of rural Libraries. But there are promises to keep and miles to go before India could boast of an effective, well integrated public library system in each state. The need for a compulsory library legislation in every state is greatly felt. Such legislation would facilitate free public library service for educating our masses throughout the length and breadth of the country.

**Library Legislation:**

Library legislation is essential for the establishment and orderly functioning of a network of public library system. It makes possible for proper supervision. Such legislation would ensure continuous flow of finance towards public library development. Statutory provisions also save public libraries from the whirlpool of party policies and ensures the provisions of universal, standard and adequate library service.

Throughout the world, legislation has been the potent source of library development. The UNESCO Regional Seminar on "Library Development in South Asia (1960)" highlighted the need for library legislation. The seminar recommended member states to enact library legislation for the establishment of public library based on local taxation with national and state aid to guarantee a basic minimum of funds for public library.
The Report of the Advisory Committee of Libraries (1959) recommended a comprehensive State Library Law. This would bring homogenous and unified library service to the state and it would ensure statutory recognition of state's responsibility for the maintenance of public libraries in the state. The working group of libraries appointed by Planning Commission urged the need for library legislation. However, in India, only seventeen states have adopted library legislation. The different states in India have their own library systems, structures, pattern of organization and finance.

Public Library Structure in India:

According to the Constitution of India, Public Libraries come under the jurisdiction of State Government as they are in the state list. India has 28 states and 7 union territories. The states which have adopted library legislation Tamil Nadu (1948), Andhra Pradesh (1960), Karnataka (1965), Maharashtra (1967), West Bengal (1979), Manipur (1988) and Kerala (1989) provide better library service. A good number of public libraries are existing in other states like Assam, Bihar, Gujarat and Madhya Pradesh.

There is no common administrative pattern for planning and management of public library services in different states and Union Territories. In most of the states public library services are
with departments of education. In some states they are a part of cultural departments. In the remaining states they are with the general administration. Public library services are considered a neglected activity in terms of planning and administration.

The Advisory Committee appointed by the Government of India in 1957 had recommended a specific public library structure. The recommended structure was supposed to consist National Library as an apex body. At the State level, State Central Library was to be the most important one. At the lower level District Central Libraries, Branch Libraries and Panchayat Libraries were supposed to exist.

In pursuance of the recommendations of the Advisory Committee (1957), National Library was set-up in Calcutta. Further, almost all states established State Central Libraries, District Central Libraries could also be established in pursuance of the recommendations of the committee.

The organizational pattern of the libraries below the district level is not uniform in the country. The District Central Libraries have branches in towns and villages. Generally speaking in the south they are called Branch Libraries, in the West Taluk Libraries, in the North Tehsil Libraries and in the east sub-divisional
libraries. Further below, there are Block and Rural Libraries. Most of these libraries are private libraries run by voluntary organizations, registered or unregistered. Library service is also provided by the Nehru Yuvak Kendras for the welfare of non-students youth. Jawahar Bal Bhavans sponsored by the Bal Bhavan Society of India and Aurobindo Bal Kendras were set up in big cities for the education of slum-dwelling children.

**Financial pattern of Public libraries in different States:**

At present almost all the states have set up State Central Libraries. There are also Regional Libraries in Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra and Rajasthan. These two types of Libraries are treated as government libraries and are getting funds directly from the state governments. But there is no uniformity in the financial pattern at district level libraries. So far only 17 states in India have enacted library legislation. Some of the Public Library Acts provide provision for library cess collection by local bodies. There is provision for cess collection in Madras Public Libraries Act, Andhra Pradesh Public Libraries Act, Mysore Public Libraries Act and Kerala Public Library Act. Local Bodies like Municipalities and Panchayats shall collect library cess as surcharge as house tax in Madras, Andhra Pradesh and Kerala. The Mysore Public Libraries Act moved a step forward in this direction and made a provision for
collecting library cess not only on house tax proceeds but also on land revenue, motor vehicles tax, sales tax and professional tax. The widening of tax base is a progressive step which can provide more funds for the development of public libraries. Other states could emulate Karnataka.

There is no provision for levying library cess in the acts of other states. Public libraries in West Bengal and Manipur are managed and financed by the State governments. Sponsored and Aided Libraries receive grants from the State governments. Lack of provision for library cess will hamper the formation, growth and development of library services. A library system based on modern concept of service and approved standard needs ever increasing recurring grants. This can be met only when permanent sources of revenue are tapped. The provision for library cess in the library acts becomes necessary as in other countries.

There are two sources of financing public libraries – appropriation from public funds and from library cess. In developed countries like United States of America, some federal states are financing public libraries through appropriation from public funds. But in a developing country like India, it may not be feasible. As growing institutions, public libraries require ever-increasing funds. The State revenues are already meagre. It is common experience that, though
education is a state subject in our Constitution, yet most of the Indian States have failed even to provide compulsory Primary education despite their loud proclamations. Whenever there is a financial stringency the axe usually falls on education and if library depends on the mercy of the State government, its fate can be well imagined. The local Library Authorities may become financial pawns in the hands of local governments for subsidies.

As a result the recourse of the collection of library cess is necessary in India. The library cess alone cannot meet the entire bill of the public library system. A simultaneous provision from general revenues could be linked with it to ensure adequate funds. Moreover, for levying of library cess, we must use up-to-date financial tools provided by modern theories of public finance which would permit a strong and flexible financial base for the development of public libraries.

Library legislation is necessary for uniform, systematic and successful growth of public library system. Most of the Indian states have not enacted Public Library Acts. This does not mean that growth of public libraries is not possible in the absence of legislative support. As a matter of fact some of the states like Bihar, Gujarat and Madhya Pradesh are carrying library service
satisfactorily without library legislation. But things can certainly improve with legislative support, particularly in a developing country like India. Even in advanced countries, public library legislation has played significant role in a systematic development and balanced growth of public libraries.

Now, the State Governments in India are hesitant to pass mandatory legislation that will increase the tax burden on the masses. The problem could be solved by the grants from the Central Government to make up the deficiency in the State's budgets. In times of inflation, at least 10 percent of the amount spent on education should be earmarked on libraries. Apart from the legislation, standards of Public Library Service on National, State and local levels should be enunciated. This will create an effective, efficient and economical public library system in India, such a system can play a vital role in the eradication of illiteracy, removal of social imbalances and make India safe for democracy.

REFERENCES: