CHAPTER -- II
PUBLIC LIBRARIES IN INDIA
Public Libraries play an indispensable role in the life of the community; they promote the reading of literature among grown-ups, adolescents, and children; they provide familiar information and function as centres of reference where the modern citizen can secure reliable and disinterested advice on practical matters and where he is helped to get his bearings in the complexities of modern community life. ¹

The public library plays an important role in a developing country like India in particular. The progress of a country depends largely on education which it provides to the citizen, either through formal or non-formal education. Active and informed participation
of the common masses in the country's affairs is essential for a real democratic set-up. A democratic society needs such citizens as are aware of their environment and are well acquainted with the cultural, social, political and economic heritage of the country. At the same time they should also be capable of analysing and discussing a given situation at a given time so that they could be able to take right decisions at right times. Such decisions might range from ploughing the fields to electing public representations at various levels. In a developing and too big a country like ours it may not be possible to impart formal education to all due to many factors. Besides it, the citizens who have received formal education will also need continuing education for recreation, information and for enhancement of their knowledge. In the light of above, a public library can serve both the categories most economically, efficiently and effectively. 2
A public library also plays an vital role in helping different sectors of the community. It can help farmers to improve their production. It can enable businessmen to improve their business prospects. A public library can create a love of reading in children which can lead to inculcation of reading habits at an early age. It helps students of all ages and provides job information, who are looking for better prospects or those who are unemployed. In case a member of the society intends to pursue self-education, then public library might be the only institution accessible to him. Similarly elderly, poor and handicapped persons also be served by it. A blind person might be provided books in braille. Further an invalid person also be provided with mechanical aids to turn pages. 3

**DEFINITION:**

The modern definition of a public library as approved by the UNESCO and INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION OF LIBRARY ASSOCIATIONS is "Public
libraries are these libraries which serve the population of a community or region free of charge or for a nominal fee.⁴ They serve the general public or special categories of the public such as children, members of the armed forces, hospital patients, prisoners, workers, and employees.⁵

HISTORY OF PUBLIC LIBRARY MOVEMENT IN INDIA

There are no authentic records which throw light on the existence of libraries in the first few centuries of the Christian era in India comparable in magnitude to the Alexandrian library. However, Fahien, the intrepid Chinese pilgrim who spent six years in India collecting authentic Buddhist scriptures in the beginning of the 5th Century A.D., referred in his chronicle, a record of the Buddhist kingdoms and to a Jatavana monestary which was a chief place of Buddhist learning as having a library and reading room.⁶
Nalanda University Library:

Hiuen Tsang, the other Chinese Buddhist monk who followed in the footsteps of his illustrious predecessor a couple of centuries later, sojourned in the Nalanda University and observed that monasteries were great seats of learning in India and had libraries which contained rare books. Likewise, I-tsing, the Chinese scholar who visited Nalanda thirty years after Hiuen Tsang, spent ten years in this splendid library attached to the University and got copied 400 Sanskrit works comprising 500,000 verses. 7

Public Libraries during the Muslim period:

During the Muslim period the growth and development of libraries received considerable fillip. The rulers themselves were passionate lovers of books and some of them even owned private collections. Babar's daughter, Gul-Badan Begum, was one such. It is well known that Humayun tumbled from the balcony of his library
and tumbled out of life. Akbar had zealously built a great library and had a large number of Sanskrit and other books translated into Persian to equip it. His favourite pastime was to have books he loved and read them. Aurangazeb added to the Imperial Library at Delhi many Muslim theological works.

Library of Tipu Sultan:

After the fall of Seringapatnam* in 1799 and the death of Tipu Sultan, his property was sold by public auction for the benefit of the captors; but his valuable library was ordered to be preserved entire with the exception of a few manuscripts which were selected and sent to the Asiatic Society of Bengal and the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge. Marquis Wellesley ordered that the library should be transferred to Ford William in Calcutta (1804) and attached to the college founded for the benefit of the

*It is also named as Srirangapatnam.
junior civil servants of the East India Company to acquaint them with the sciences of 'the Asiatic Languages'. This library comprised nearly 2000 volumes of Arabic, Persian and Hindusthani manuscripts covering all the branches of Muslim literature. There were in all 45 books on different subjects which were either composed or translated from other languages under his immediate patronage and direction.

When the British came to dominate in 1735, they inspired, though they did not actually encourage the setting up of public libraries in the country. In August 1835 the first public library was started in Calcutta from private resources. By 1850 public libraries came to be established in the presidency cities of Bombay, Calcutta and Madras with the support and initiative of the British residents in these places.
The important step came in 1867 when the Government enacted the Press and Registration of Books Act, under which a few copies of the books were required to be given to the Government.

National Library, Calcutta:

The National Library at Calcutta was the object of great patronage in the hands of Sir Charles Metcalfe, the then acting Governor-General of India. On the 21st of March, 1836, this library was formally opened to the public.

The establishment of the this Public Library was a landmark in the cultural history of India. "From the house of Dr. Strong, where it had functioned for several years, it was shifted to the Fort William College building in 1841 and finally removed to the Metcalfe Hall in June, 1844."

Movement in Baroda:

The contribution made by Maharaja Sayaji Rao III of Baroda to modern library movement in India
is highly remarkable. As an enlightened person during the course of his visit to the United States of America, he felt greatly impressed by the role played by public libraries in the advancement of education. Therefore, he decided to establish public libraries throughout his state. In order to organize libraries along modern lines he invited W.A. Borden, Librarian of Young Men's Institute, New Haven, Connecticut. During his tenure of office, 1910-13, he established the Central Library and initiated a public library system. The modern library movement in India may be said to have begun in Baroda during the first decade of this Century. He also conducted library training classes to train the staff in 1910.  

**Library Associations:**

In 1914 the first Library Association in India was established. It was called "Andhra Provincial Library Association." This
Association did and is still doing good work in the library field.

The Calcutta Library Association then came into existence in December 1925, followed by the Madras Library Association which came into existence in 1928.

A notable event took place in 1933 when the "Indian Library Association" was formed. Which gave the library workers a status and a voice.

Another association called the Indian Association of Special Libraries and Information Centres (IASLIC) was founded in 1955. In due course of time library associations were also formed in Bengal, Punjab, Bihar, Assam, Kerala, Maharashtra, Gujarat, Delhi, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Mysore. Besides the state associations, Government of India Libraries Association also came into existence in due course of time.
Delhi Public Library:

The establishment of Delhi Public Library in 1951 is an important event in the history of public libraries not only in India but also in the whole of Asia. It is a joint venture of the UNESCO and the Government of India.

The Delhi Public Library has a stock of 2,70,000 volumes in four languages viz., English, Hindi, Urdu and Punjabi. The number of registered borrowers is about 1,00,000 who borrow about 6,000 books a day. This library has four branches, 8 sub-branches, 25 deposit stations and four mobile library vans which visit 53 places every week. 17

Advisory Committee for Libraries:

The Advisory Committee for Libraries was set up by Government of India under the Chairmanship of K.P. Sinha in 1957. The Committee submitted its report in 1958. It recommended
for a 25 year library plan; levy of cess of 6 naya paise in a rupee on property tax; Government of India should contribute matching grant equal to cess collected by a state; each state should also enact their own state library acts and Government of India should enact central library act.

Library Legislation:

The first important landmark in connection with library legislation is the year 1867 when the Government of India passed the Press and Registration of Books Act. In 1902 it passed the Imperial Library (Indentures Validation) Act and in the year 1948 the Imperial Library (change of name) Act. Early in 1954 it also enacted the Delivery of Books (Public Libraries) Act which was amended in 1956.

In connection with library legislation in the constituent states, there have been six milestones. The first is the enactment of Madras
Public Libraries Act in 1949, the second is Hyderabad Public Libraries Act of 1955 which has become defunct when Hyderabad state was merged with other states. The third is Andhra Pradesh Public Libraries Act of 1960, the fourth is Mysore Public Libraries Act of 1965, the fifth is Maharastra Public Libraries Act of 1967 and the last is West Bengal Public Libraries Act of 1979.  

The UNESCO manifesto entitled "The Public Library A Living Force for Popular Education" of 1949 urges the utilization of public libraries potentialities in all possible ways. "The potentialities of a country's libraries, particularly of its free public libraries are, from the point of view of educational and sociological significance to the people, second only perhaps to the system of formal schooling." The public library is capable of extending its services and usefulness
to all groups and shades of opinion in the community, irrespective of age, religion, profession, sex, political conviction and economic level. No other social institution can perform such a wide range of service to the entire population of an area than a public library. Its definition as a Centre of Communal Study, an information bureau, a continuation school, a training school for democracy, goes to show how far-reaching are its capabilities in moulding the life of the community. 21 Therefore, "the public library should be active and positive in its policy; it should claim a dynamic part in community life; it should not tell the people what to think, but it should help them decide what to think about." 22 If the libraries of a country function on these lines, the imperishable wealth of a nation, knowledge in books, is not only preserved but also used for the benefit and prosperity of the country. They afford an opportunity for
enhancing the dignity and well being of the 'common man. Such institutions are vitally needed to enrich human personality and to arrest the degradation of man into a functional unit. 23 No one who has learned to read beyond the level of bare literacy and who wishes to play his full part in the life of his community can possibly keep in touch with what is happening elsewhere in the world, with what even is happening at his doorstep, without recourse to books and periodicals but few people in the world can buy all the books they need for their own personal use. 24 The Kenyon Committee (U.K.) wrote in 1927 about the public library holds good even today: The public interest in libraries has greatly increased and we believe there is now a far healthier belief in the value of knowledge and in the importance of intellectual life..... The public library is no longer regarded as a means of providing casual recreation of an innocent but somewhat important character; it is
recognised as an engine of great potentialities for national welfare and as an essential foundation for the progress in education and culture without which no people can hold its own in the struggle for existence. 25

OBJECTIVES:

Indian constitution aims at fulfilling the aspirations of the people. It aims at securing for all the citizens of India, justice, liberty and equality. Thus its objective is establishing of a new social order. In other words, it is to be considered as an instrument of social change.

In his book The Public Library in the United States, Robert D. Leigh, while discussing the role of a public library as a social institution, aptly summarises its overall objectives as follows: 26

1. To assemble, preserve and administer books and other related educational materials in organized
collections, in order to promote, through guidance and stimulation enlightened citizenship and enriched personal lives;

2. To serve the community as a general centre for reliable information.

3. To provide opportunity and encouragement for children, young people, men and women to educate themselves continuously.

Some of the non-traditional activities of the public libraries include:

i) to read out books, periodicals or newspapers to the illiterates and neoliterates at mutually convenient hours every day, or to explain to them the substance of various relevant documents in an informal manner;

ii) to use audio-visual materials for the purpose;

iii) to arrange discussions among them on various matters after they have been exposed to facts or ideas; and
iv) to arrange various socio-cultural programmes like staging of dramas, poetry recitations, singing of songs, etc.

UNESCO has given detailed functions of public libraries in its Bulletin for Libraries: 28

A democratic institution for education, culture and information.

The public library is a practical demonstration of democracy's faith in universal education as a continuing and life-long process, in the appreciation of the achievement of humanity in knowledge and culture.

The public library is concerned with the refreshment of man's spirit by the provision of books for relaxation and pleasure, with assistance to the students, and with provision of up-to-date technical, scientific and sociological information. The public library should be established under the clear mandate of law,
so framed as to ensure nation-wide provision of public library service. Organisational co-operation between libraries is essential so that total national resources could be fully used and be at the service of any reader.

It should be maintained wholly from public funds, and no direct charge should be made to any one for its services.

To fulfil its purposes, the public library must be readily accessible, and its doors open for free and equal use by all members of the community regardless of race, colour, nationality, age, sex, religion, status or educational attainment.

PUBLIC LIBRARIES ROLE IN ERADICATING ILLITERACY

A democracy can never be a reality if knowledge of the political, social, economic and technological affairs is a monopoly of the privileged and the few. A large population which is unable to read and write will find the doors closed to
opportunity and progress. Even if economic conditions are bettered, without improving their educational life, these segments of society would continue to suffer from many socio-cultural disabilities. In fact no permanent solution to their economic conditions also can be found without providing them appropriate education. If the experience of advanced countries affords any example, it can be seen that no country can economically, socially or even politically advance without having sufficiently large number of literate population.

How can the libraries reach these adult illiterates? Several surveys have shown that these adults can learn and in reality they want to do so. The librarians must take bold and effective steps and offer certain services what are not generally accepted as being appropriate for the libraries to provide. Systematic and careful planning is necessary for the most
effective use of available time, money and materials. In a developing country like India, audiovisual techniques must take relatively more prominent position in the general educational programmes. Instead of wasting time and energy in discussing whether this is the library function or not, there appears to be no reasons why libraries in our State should not carry out this activity particularly in the rural areas. The most effective role which libraries can play in adult education is that of helping the people to help themselves. Libraries should strive to be less dominated by a "print mentality" and place more reliance on the use of non-book materials. It is this material which is going to help the libraries in organising the campaign of removal of illiteracy from the rural areas.

What can the public libraries do in this behalf? Public Library services obviously have an important role in supporting and following up
literacy campaign. In fact, the public library movement cannot be separated from the anti-illiteracy movement, since the neo-literates need books and other reading materials to enable them to conserve and expand the knowledge which has been obtained by them.

The use of a public library is an evolutionary process. Public library work is essentially an informal education and that work should be taken to the people on the fringe of literacy or even to non-literate wherever possible. Unless this is done, the library service is in danger of not developing in accordance with the needs of the people. There is a linkage between literate and illiterate, between books and other materials of informal education, which should be effectively found and used. There is also a secondary use of public library materials, in books, periodicals and newspapers, even for neoliterates the link being the library staff. It is possible to impart
the contents of reading materials without people using the materials themselves. Public libraries as information centres, reading circles and discussion groups or both for illiterate groups can be organised. The effect of elementary primary education and literacy courses can be quickly lost if it is not followed at once by the use of reading and other materials.

In several countries, public libraries have been established as part of literacy programmes, and once a public library service is established, such libraries by their very nature, dissipate resources that would be centrally provided and controlled.

Three things emerge from what is stated above. Firstly, the Government will have to constitute an agency to organise literacy campaign on permanent basis. Secondly, the libraries will have to co-operate with the agency by stocking required reading material and using audio-visual means to organise and to support the literacy campaign by
even organising mobile libraries for neo-literates combined with apt films and other audio-visual materials. In other words, library service will have to be linked with social education movements. And thirdly, the production of necessary reading material for neo-literates. In order to provide effective reading material, it is essential to constitute book development council which would of course have close connection with the library service. This Council will draw up state plans for book and other material production. Publishers must also evince sufficient interest in such materials. Good library service is of importance to publishers because it can guarantee a market. This is specially true of children's books, which are the essential basis for developing functional literacy at an early age. Local publishers including of course Government sponsored agencies can make great contribution to meeting the challenge of out-of-school education and producing work-books and follow-up literature for literacy campaign. We
have therefore to harness local publishers and local authors and illustrators producing such materials.

PUBLIC LIBRARY AS AN EDUCATIONAL CENTRE:

1. Formal Education:

The general impression prevailing in our country of a public library is that it is an institution providing books, chiefly novels for recreational reading. This impression is based on the actual service rendered by the large majority of the public libraries in the country. Few people regard it as a place which can be approached for serious reading for educational purposes. But the public library has an important educational function to perform.

It must serve the teachers and students of the educational institutions in its area by acquiring books of academic importance suited to their needs. No educational institution is able to make available in its own library all the books
required by its users. The public library should therefore supplement the resources and services of these libraries.

2. **Life-long Self-education:**

Formal education, in the present context of the phenomenal expansion of knowledge, can be regarded only as a preparation for the future self-education of those who have undergone it. They have to keep themselves abreast of the continuous developments in their respective fields. Otherwise they will soon be overtaken by these developments and become out of date. It is in this sense that education is described a life-long process. This is possible only if they have access to public libraries, well equipped with up-to-date books in the various branches of knowledge. Without these facilities there is the real danger of those who are educated relapsing into the uneducated state.
3. Education of Working Groups:

The public library is also an educational centre in another sense. It should stock books relevant to the needs of people engaged in different vocations in its area by reading which they will become better informed and educated in their areas of work and will be able to increase their work efficiency. This will lead to greater productivity.

4. Adult Education:

According to the 1981 Census of India the percentage of literacy in the country was only 36.23. This implies that 6,377 out of every 10,000 people are not able to read and write and consequently are without the basic means of self-education. The society has a responsibility to increase the number of literate and educated people through appropriate programmes. The adult education drive is geared to this end.
The aim of adult education is to create an educated mind among the adult illiterate. The public library, with its infrastructure in terms of men and materials, can play an important role in this programme. Some of the activities it can organise for this purpose are arranging talks on topics of interest to the different sections of illiterate people, organising reading clubs at which books will be read out to them, holding exhibitions and presenting educative themes through films, radio, television, etc.

5. Distance Education:

Distance education comprises all those efforts aiming at enabling people to acquire an educational qualification without being enrolled in a formal educational institution. With many Universities extending these facilities now and open Universities being established exclusively for this purpose, this is gaining steady popularity. The new
National Education Policy lays great stress on it.

Distance education basically involves self-study for which library support is absolutely essential. Indeed, a strong public library system is the most important element in the infrastructure to be provided for the successful implementation of distance education programmes. In its absence, those who join this stream will not have the opportunity to read the type of books that they should, to become really educated. They will have to be content with confining themselves to sub-standard books euphemistically called guides which might, at best, enable them to pass the examinations in the existing system. The major objectives of education of enabling the educands to acquire a thorough grasp of their subjects, developing their thinking abilities and critical faculties and their overall personality development
will all become casualties. The inevitable consequence will be a fall in the standard of education in all respects. A degree acquired through this means will be a totally misleading sign-board of the real educational attainment of the persons. To prevent this situation it is essential to provide facilities for learning through reading authoritative books in each subject area by the establishment of a strong public library base. 30

Conclusion:

Public libraries are meant to serve the public without any discrimination. The people in the society will look at the public library to satisfy their different approaches on information i.e. information, education, recreation, entertainment and inspiration. It has to provide reading material to the educated public for their continuous education. Experience shows
that the neo-literates degenerate into illiterates, unless the reading material is provided to them regularly.

Public library can play an important role in the democratic society. In the democratic country the people can form the government according to their choice. The public library has a ultimate responsibility to help the people to choose the right government by making them educated and well-informed about the latest developments.
REFERENCES


5. Krishan Kumar, op. cit., P.73.


7. ibid.

8. ibid., P.355.

9. ibid., PP.355-356.


27. ibid., P.182.

