CHAPTER VI

PSYCHOLOGICAL STUDY OF THE READERS

6.A. IMPORTANCE OF PSYCHOLOGY IN LIBRARY SERVICE:

It is important to study the psychology of the readers of a library so that the library staff is able to render better service to them. Scholars of Psychology have so far not paid any attention to the study of psychology of library readers, nor have scholars of library science or library administrators or educationists recognized the importance of such a study for improving the library service, and the process of education as a whole.

6.B. RELATION OF THE READER’S PSYCHOLOGY AND UNIVERSITY LIBRARY:

"The psychological tempo of a reader is such that the library cannot retain him as a regular visitor unless he is given pin-pointed and expeditious service in a personal way."

1. An understanding of the psychology of the reader is

important for the proper development of every university library. Various types of readers come to the library with their own individual personality. "Till an appreciation of the value of books blooms in him, transforms him into a willing beneficiary of the library and makes him love to come back to the library quite often, he must be attended to by a library host." 2 One could scarcely contend that all forms of human activity are enabling and this is where vocational planning and guidance can be of considerable help. An important thing is the meaningfulness of the job for the individual worker. The consideration of a meaningful vocation is one of the characteristic adolescent decisions that must be considered by those who are attempting to fulfill the reading needs of readers. 3 Discipline is self-control, self-determination through self-direction and this should result in self-realization through self-expression and self-education. Only a psychological therapy of the reader's talent, powers, capacities, impulses, tendencies, etc. can bring about a desirable mode of disciplined behaviour through gradual and progressive development of self-control and self-determination tempered with influences of domestic, social and moral types.

2. U.G.C. (India) : University and College Libraries, p. 44.
Therefore, the library staff has to inculcate a sense of discipline in the readers through a psychological therapy suited to their various categories.

The most important relationship to consider in analysing the internal organisation of a library system, is the relationship between the library staff and the readers. Friendly relationship should be established by the library staff with their clientele. Patel observes: 'Many problems which arise in the working of the library, trace their origin to the unsatisfactory position of this relationship.' The readers of the university library are of different categories; under-graduate students; post-graduate students; members of the teaching staff, research scholars and outside readers. Each reader has his own individuality and personality. He should, as such, be treated according to his standard, mental disposition and temperament. The same rule cannot be applied to all the readers of different categories. Research scholars are usually very grateful to the library staff for the services rendered to them and in most cases the irritated mood of a researcher's mind will calm down when the cause of the irritation is removed. But the most difficult groups are the

post-graduate students and younger members of the teaching staff. Both these groups have a very strong sense of superiority, sensitivity and self-consciousness. As such, instead of creating scenes in the library, the librarian and his staff should handle these people with tact and diplomacy. "Their watchword should be to forgive and forget."  

To understand the purpose of library service, it is helpful to postulate that the personality of man consists of four parts - physical, emotional, intellectual and spiritual. Library service caters to the intellectual wants of man. Library service does not directly satisfy his other vital wants. The reader must be guided according to his interest, aptitudes and purpose. Certain goals may not be attainable at a certain age and knowledge of a reader's psychology will throw light on this aspect. The library staff, therefore, should know what behaviour to expect from a particular reader of a certain category and cater for him accordingly. In a particular category of readers, there are individual as well as group differences. There should be proper library service practices for all kinds of individuals and groups of readers. The library staff's differential behaviour towards the readers in a library may

reflect effective library service for readers having differing needs.

For proper library service and good relationship between the library staff and the readers are possible only when the library staff is able to understand the reader's personality.

Readers' behaviour in educational life is conducive to the prevailing concept of educational values and the purpose of learning. Hence the relationship between the library staff and the readers is affected by the existing moral values. The readers' way of educational life in modern times is vastly different from that of their counterparts in the ancient or medieval times.

A consequence of the changing societal values, level of education and different situations prompted the present investigator to look into and analyze the relationship as it exists in the universities of the North-Eastern Region.

The relationship between the library staff and the reader's psychology appears, in most cases, to be indirect and remote. The library staff is responsible for the quiet, effective operation of all library services in order that the reader's use of the library may be educationally profitable to him. The library staff should have a thorough knowledge of the aims of library service; he should understand the principles and procedures of library
organization and should be able to integrate them effectively with the educational objectives and procedures of the university. In addition, he should be able to bring his varied abilities to bear upon the solution of the problems of readers; and, since his work is so closely related to that of the reader, he should possess teaching ability of a high order. This teaching differs from the classroom instruction. The library staff's teaching is confined largely to a person-to-person instructional relationship on an informal and limited, rather than on a formal and systematic, basis.

The main reason for the apathy of the students to the library is that they are coming to the universities for their post-graduate studies, without having been familiar with larger libraries. The cognitive behaviour of a reader in the direction of self-expression should be noticed by the library staff. In case any lacuna is detected on the part of the reader in the matter of expression for a specific and general demand, it is the foremost duty of the library staff to try to understand his problem. The reader must be guided according to his interests, aptitudes and purpose. The library staff has first to understand the purpose of the reader, with the understanding of his purpose, i.e., his interests and special tendencies and aptitudes, the library
staff should lead him to a particular mode of disciplined behaviour.

The reader must be provided ample scope and opportunities for experience, choice and action. He should be guided to get his experience independently. Learning by doing is an important principle. The staff should not, therefore, do all the things for the reader, thus robbing him of the opportunities for experiencing things for himself. The reader should be encouraged to form desirable habits which are essential for self-control as a means to discipline, and discipline should be positive. The reader should be allowed to correct his mistakes himself within limits. Serious mistakes must be treated with patience and good humour on the part of the library staff.

Individual difference in intelligence among the readers should be observed and assessed by the library staff. Some readers are able to adapt themselves to the new library easily and others feel difficulty in doing so; some are quick, while others are slow; some learn with just a little effort, while others have to labour hard for it; some are able to solve problems directly and quickly, while others fumble with them for a long time, and so on and so forth. No two individuals are alike in their mental make-up. By assessing the individuals, the library staff can help every reader to decide upon his own goals. Developing
concepts, knowledge, understanding, application, interests, attitudes etc. requires different kinds of approach.

Effective habits of self-study and self-learning need to be developed in the readers through proper guidance and supervision. The knowledge of the factors enhancing the efficiency of learning is essential for the library staff. In connection with the different aspects of helping and learning, it is important for the library staff to understand how best different aspects such as knowledge, interests or attitude can be measured. The library staff should devise methods for assessing these individual aspects of a reader, and should decide upon the various uses that the staff can make of these assessments from time to time in guiding readers in his charge.

The library staff comes across a variety of readers and the staff has to help them make adjustments continually. For this the staff has to understand the dynamics of underlying behaviour and behavioural difficulties, traits of exceptional readers, principles of mental hygiene, guidance procedure and so on. With this method or equipment it would not be difficult for the library staff to face problems of library management and discipline. These are the broad areas of the activity of the library staff where the knowledge of psychology is helpful. This, of
course, does not mean that only psychology will help the
library staff to meet all these problems. The curriculum
in psychology or any similar applied discipline may be
woven round these problems in an integrated fashion, so
that the library staff has its own task in focus while
trying to know how it can best be carried out. "The librar-
ian and the library staff are responsible for serving
various categories of university readers by co-operating
with them in an efficient manner and that the activities of
the library are sufficiently important to the university
requiring centralized expert direction." The library staff,
thus becomes the human intermediary between the reader and
the book. All this shows that "reference service is vital
in the promotion of effective use of library resources and
the university librarian must exploit it for the benefit of
readers." In the light of the above, we can revise and
restate the objective in such words as will give the correct
perspective of a university library.

6.C. IMPORTANCE OF KNOWING THE READERS' PSYCHOLOGY IN THE
UNIVERSITY LIBRARY

1. It helps the library staff to see the relation
between the library aim on the one hand and the nature of
the reader, the process of maturation in him, and the methods

7. Ranganathan, S.R. : 'Reference service is the ultimate
   purpose and the culmination of the functioning of a
   university library'. Paper read at the first seminar of
of learning and assessment on the other.

Library aims are based on several things of which the most important psychological consideration is the nature of a reader. Specific library goals are achieved through different orientation methods and the knowledge of teaching of these methods in a proper way.

2. To familiarise the library staff with scientific methods and procedures for determining the applicability of psychological facts and principles in the field of library.

3. To enable the library staff to relate the knowledge of growth and development to learning tasks.

4. To enable the library staff to relate the different types of guidance to the individual needs of development of readers.

5. To enable the library staff to understand the process of character-formation and development and its role in it.

6. To enable the library staff to understand the problems of adjustment among his readers and the way the staff can be helpful in this process.

7. To enable the library staff to work out effective methods to guide the readers on the basis of efficient methods of learning and to inculcate them in readers.

The librarian and his staff must consider several factors in deciding how to act towards the readers. They
must weight and manage their own behaviour and must also
assess the behaviour and needs of the readers. This is
essential for harmonious relation and co-operation between
the two sides. Without such relationship the staff cannot
give the best service to the readers, and the readers
cannot derive the best benefit from the library. The
behaviour of readers in social life is conditioned by the
prevailing social values and the purposes of learning.
Thus the relationship between the library staff and the
reader is affected by the existing moral, economic and
political values. The results of the changing societal
values, level of education and different situations have
promoted the present investigator to assess and evaluate
this relationship, as it existing in the libraries of the
universities of the North-Eastern Region of India.

6.D. IMPORTANCE OF READERS' PSYCHOLOGY IN THE UNIVERSITY
LIBRARIES OF NORTH-EASTERN REGION OF INDIA:

Most of the students of the universities of the North-
Eastern Region of India, who come from suburban areas, do
not even know how to consult a catalogue. Here is, therefore,
an opportunity for the university librarian and his staff
to play the role of a guide to the students in the use of
library resources. Of course, the library staff has
limited opportunities to observe and understand the reader's
personality. However, it is essential for the library staff to know how to interact with each of their readers. Several techniques can be applied to gain knowledge of the personality and characteristics of each reader.

Some attention should be given to the psychological variables of readers by the staff members at the libraries of the universities in question. The study of readers' personality is a vital part of library staff's job.

Psycho-analytic principles classify mankind into two main categories - extroverts and introverts. The readers of libraries also can be broadly divided into these two classes. Then there is a third category - that of freshmen, who deserve special psychological treatment from the library staff. The present investigator deals with all these classes in respect of their psychology and how the library staff should treat them in view of their special psychological problems and needs. Some instruments aim to determine whether a person is an introvert or an extrovert.

6.E. THE EXTROVERT READERS :

The extrovert is directed outward. He is energetic, vigorous, talkative, self-confident, assertive and given to impulsive action. He is friendly to others and can be easily swayed by suggestions of others. 8 So, they can

easily ask the library staff any question. An extrovert is primarily a man of action.

6.F. THE INTROVERT READER:

"The introvert tends to be absorbed in himself, fearful, shy and slow and cautious in action."9 "The introvert type of readers are too self-conscious, they are mostly busy with themselves in thinking and feeling."10 They are easily embarrassed in the company of others and are timid and cautious. Such types of readers are unsocial. Nevertheless, they are deliberate and go by thinking out and by convictions. The introvert readers are more paralysed by the presence of more people, their best work being done when they are unobserved. The fundamental characteristic of introverts is 'thought', while feelings in them are unconscious. They are essentially subjective, theoretical and may have intellectual power. They are tasteless because they lack intuition; callous because they lack feeling, inhuman because they are devoid of sensations. They are afraid of criticism. Perseverance, reservation and daydreaming are some of the important characteristics of introverts. Therefore, this type of reader cannot express his feelings properly and hence is often misunderstood. These readers are of senserial type; they appreciate the good tings of life. An introvert seems to be self-possessed.

but behind his apparent self-possession there is
uneasiness.

6.0. THE FRESH READER:

There is another type of reader known as freshmen,
that is, a new member of a university library. When a
freshman comes to a university, he must become acquainted
with new procedures in the matter of teaching and learning.
These new procedures require constant and intensive use of
books and libraries. Formerly he has been concerned mostly
with the mastery of tools, the acquisition and assimilation
of facts, and the identification and understanding of rules
and principles. His reliance has been chiefly upon his
teachers. In a university he must constantly engage in self-
initiated, intelligent and independent learning activities.
Most of his learning must come through the wise and diligent
use of selected and varied books which are available in the
library of his university. But he would not know in the
very beginning, the rules, regulations and services of his
library. The variety and size of the collection in a
university library can easily bewilder him/her. The freshmen
do not know the library staff from whom they can take help
in order to find out their proper materials. Sometimes the
fresh reader feels shy to take help from the library staff.
For this type of readers, members of the library staff should themselves go to the reader to help him. The library staff should try to make friends with the fresh readers of the library. The library staff has to give a different type of guidance to the freshman, as compared to that given to the old readers. If the freshman is not helped, he might feel inhibited in the use of a library. Freshmen do not know what a library catalogue, and bibliography etc. are. Even after knowing about these tools, the reader may want more help from the library staff.

6H. DISCUSSION ON THE COLLECTED DATA :

If a reader is unable to locate some particular reading material inside a library, he is expected to ask for help from the library staff. But some of the readers usually try to locate the reading materials all by themselves; and if they fail to do so, they do not even care to ask for help from the library staff. This may be an outcome of a number of factors. The reader concerned might be new to the library, or the reader concerned might be an introvert. Further, the employees themselves may have certain defects. For example, they generally come forward to help the reader, if he happens to be a teacher or a senior student - who have known the employees for a long time, but a fresh student may not get proper attention if he asks for help. It is
evident from the above that introverts and freshmen deserve much greater attention and sympathetic dealings from the staff of a university library.

From Tables 6.1 and 6.2, certain important points become clear. Our hypothesis is that the proneness to ask for help becomes more and more pronounced as the reader becomes more and more acquainted with the library. In other words, the more senior a reader becomes, the more he starts asking for help. And therefore, the teachers, the research scholars, and, if and when necessary, the employees may ask for help more often than a fresh student.

It is seen that the teachers, particularly in A.A.U., D.U. and G.U., in very high proportions ask for help from the library staff. In the G.U. the proportion is significantly high - 100% during R.C.T. and 98.3% during R.I. The corresponding figures in the A.A.U. are respectively 87.4% and 93.9%, and those in the D.U. 88.06% and 95.2%. In the N.E.H.U., during R.C.T., the proportion is comparatively low - 72.31%, although, during R.I., the proportion is absolute i.e. 100%.

As for the research scholars, it can be seen that like their teachers the G.U. research scholars top the list of percentage of readers who ask for help from the staff - the proportions being 81.4% during R.C.T. and 94.7% during
H.T. It can be seen that, in general, the proportions of research scholars asking for help from the library staff are below the corresponding percentages of the teachers asking for help. For example, in D.U., during R.C.T., the proportion of research scholars is 66.67% while it is 75.71% for teachers (66.67% ÷ 88.06 = 75.71%). Equivalently, during R.C.T., the proportion of research scholars in the G.U. asking for help is 81.10%. In case of the research scholars of N.E.H.U., a high percentage (60.9%) during H.T. and 78.02% during R.C.T. ask for help from the library staff.

Coming next to the students, it can be seen that, during R.C.T. less than half of them ask for help, although, during H.T., they ask for help in proportions marginally more than half, although in the D.U. this proportion is slightly higher (62.20%). It is seen that in the A.A.U., the proportions of students as compared to that of the teachers asking for help is 52.97% (= 43.12% + 18.4%). Similarly, in the D.U., during R.C.T., the corresponding figure is still smaller, i.e. 35.36% (= 31.1% + 4.26%). The corresponding figure in the G.U. is 38.26% only. But, of course, during H.T. these proportions become definitely higher than the ones during R.C.T., the figures being 57.6% (= 54.1% + 3.5%), 65.31% (= 62.20% + 95.2%), 53.73% (= 52.8% + 98.3%) and 53.8% (= 53.8% + 100%) respectively for A.A.U.L., D.U.L., G.U.L, and N.E.H.U.L.
It is seen that university employees ask for help in significantly high proportions during H.T., although during R.C.T. the proportions are definitely low, except in the N.E.H.U., where the figures are 84.87% in A.A.U., 77.78% in D.U., 63.64% in N.E.H.U. during H.T. and 43.78% in A.A.U., 38.46% in D.U., 60.42% in N.E.H.U. during R.C.T.

Lastly, from Tables 6.1 and 6.2 it is seen that the outsider - visitors to the G.U.L. ask for help in a very high proportion (91.3%) during R.C.T.; during H.T. the corresponding figure is comparatively low (64.71%), while the 50% outsider visitors of N.E.H.U. ask for help from the library staff during R.C.T. and 50% during H.T.
Table 6.1

Numbers and percentage of readers of various categories who ask for help from library staff, when necessary during regular class time (A,C,T,) (percentages are shown in brackets)

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Table 6.2

Numbers and percentages of readers of various categories who ask for help from library staff if and when necessary during holidays (Percentages are shown in brackets).

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