INTRODUCTION AND METHODOLOGY

It is disconcerting that some parts of our country today are groaning under terrorism. Not only that, the monster of communalism of the pre-partition days sometimes raises its ugly head and takes a heavy toll of lives here and there. This gives rise to social tension and a feeling of insecurity among the populace. It is also disgusting to note that the law-enforcing agencies, on the one hand, and the social scientists, on the other, have not yet been able to stamp out the evils of terrorism and communal violence. Since India is a multilingual and multi-religious country, its problems too are multi-dimensional. The historicity of the social fabric of India has to be looked into in all its diversity to strike at the roots of these evils.

During the pre-partition days some minor communal clashes did occur in some areas, but they never flared up to such menacing heights as of today. The reason is not far to seek. The people those days promptly responded to the call of sanity and amity voiced by such illustrious leaders as Mahatma Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru, Dr. B. R. Ambedkar, Bal Gangadhar Tilak, Maulana Jal Kalam Azad, etc. The media, both electronic and print, played a big role in persuading the people to see reason. It therefore, cannot be gainsaid that mass communication if used properly and honestly can produce a magic spell, as it were, and bring about a healthy and positive effect.
With the increase in population, the problems have also multiplied. Our mass communication media like television, radio, press and the films can contribute a lot to the solution of any crisis but nothing concrete has been done so far. The media have often been questioned about their impartiality and distortions. The issue of their autonomy has already been discussed in parliament and at several platforms. The electronic media are controlled by the government and the press is owned either by private individuals or by big industrial houses. Which means the modern media are beyond the reach of the common man who needs correct and free information.

Before embarking on a detailed study of the various relevant problems, we must understand the latest position of mass communication, its agencies, their reach and their potentialities. The first chapter "Challenges before mass communication in the age of information revolution" deals with such problems.

The media, both electronic and print, due to the rising costs have jumped out of the common man's hands. As for the radio, 370 sets cater to 1000 persons whereas the television viewership is confined to 147 sets for 1000 persons of the upper class living in cities. The urban poor can ill afford this facility in their dwellings. The books also occupy the same position: 166 books for 1000 inhabitants. It is clear from these
facts that radio, television and books are a costly affair beyond the reach of the common man. What then, is the alternative media of mass communication? Such an alternative should serve all the objectives and functions of mass communication.

Can public libraries be an alternative? Do they fulfil the requirements of mass communication? What are its objectives and functions? And above all, what is the relationship between mass communication and public libraries. All these questions have been dealt with in the second chapter entitled "Mass communication and public libraries: A study in interaction". This chapter shows that the objectives of both mass communication and public libraries are similar. Public libraries can serve better, as they are open to society.

Since mass communication and public libraries both are related to the welfare of society, it was found that such objectives as information, education and recreation are common in both the disciplines. Education is their first and foremost objective. A study in detail of the educational role of public libraries is needed. It is worthwhile to examine whether a public library can be deemed a "People's University". Consequently, the third chapter is about the "Public library: the people's university". It discusses the multi-dimensional role of the public library in the educational activities of society.
After we know that a public library can fulfil the educational requirements of the public and that it can work as a people's university, especially with the emergence of open universities and open schools all over the country, it will be worthwhile to see the development of public libraries in the social context. The fourth chapter "Emergence and development of public libraries in India" provides a brief account of the progress of the library movement in different states and the advent of public libraries.

This chapter brings into focus the pre and post-historic period of independent India. With the efforts of the library associations in different states and the Indian Library Association and above all through the untiring struggle by Padamshri Dr. S.R. Ranganathan, a lot of public libraries came into being. Some of the states adopted library legislation while others did not. But the evolution of public libraries continued. One of the important libraries and rightly the best public library is the Delhi Public Library. It was Unesco's Pilot project and a model for the development of public libraries in South East Asia. It is then appropriate to know the background of the establishment of this important library. Hence the fifth chapter is on "Delhi Public Library System - A historical background".

This chapter reveals that the Delhi Public Library System
is the result of the efforts of the Government of India and Unesco with clear-cut objectives and guidelines. It is a case study about whether the objectives and functions of mass communication are faithfully carried out by this library. It will be interesting to know what progress the Delhi Public Library System has made since its inception. The coordination between different sections and the staff is quite laudable. The sixth chapter "Organizational and functional setup and services of Delhi Public Library system: A review" throws light on all these aspects.

The potentialities of the Delhi Public Library System stand out in bold relief. Now let's evaluate its services and functions keeping in view its objectives and guidelines as enunciated by Unesco at the time of starting this library. After many a personal visit to the Delhi Public Library System and after conducting a literature survey, it was found that the evaluation of the Delhi Public Library System was first carried out by Unesco itself in 1956 after five years. It was also the last study undertaken by Unesco. Though a few random surveys were conducted from time to time at some branch libraries of this system by the students of the Department of Library and Information Science, University of Delhi, no exhaustive, in-depth study was ever attempted. The library management and the Government of India never tried to make such a study since last 5 years.
Therefore it is more interesting to evaluate the services of this library. The seventh chapter "Evaluation and findings of Delhi Public Library System" is devoted to better understand the activities of the library.

This chapter reveals that the library is following Unesco guidelines in letter and spirit. Still there is scope for making some alterations and changes here and there. Such possible changes are covered in the eighth chapter entitled "Suggestions and Conclusion".

Additional References of books, articles, seminar proceedings have been provided. It also has appendices.

METHODOLOGY: The central library is generally known as the public library. It is situated close to old Delhi Railway Station where thousands of people look at it every day from outside. Some people go into the library and delve into the reading materials, others go without any specific objective. Every day about 8,000 to 10,000 books are issued to the readers under the Delhi Public Library System according to D.P.L. annual report. But the central library attracts the maximum number of readers. In this situation it is very difficult to classify the readers and select them for eliciting information. Delhi Public Library is having 178 libraries which are spread throughout the Union territory of Delhi.
The selection of the readers was made on the basis of their place of stay, rural and urban background, literacy rate and religion. A questionnaire was issued to get information about the reader's occupation, social background, educational level, religion, caste, and the distance of the library from the reader's residence. Other questions pertained to reference, children's section, circulation, membership, catalogues, social education service, building, sanitation, behavior of the staff and disturbance in the library. Information was also sought about the readers' satisfaction regarding such services as shelving, display, new books, magazines, newspapers, old files of newspapers, reservation of books, overdue charges and problems in becoming members. Accordingly questions were set in the questionnaire.

The selection of the sample readers study was a problem. The readers belonged to different languages. The questionnaire was in English but its Hindi translation was made available only if the readers found any difficulty. Only those readers who were available on the survey dates were selected as also the readers from the central library, branch and community libraries. The questionnaires were distributed personally and collected at the same time. This exercise continued for several days. Data as collected from nine service points.

Besides the questionnaire method, interviews were also
conducted to gain information from children, the blind and the sick. A lot of interpretation is based on personal observations and interaction with the professionals in the field of library and information science.

For getting information about the Delhi Public Library System, several visits were made to the main library and branch libraries and their cultural programmes watched. Personal visits were made not only to mobile libraries to see the queue of the book lovers in the scorching sun but also to sports libraries, rural library, Bawana, braille library, and depository stations. All the sections were keenly observed and the staff consulted to know the routine work.

For literature survey, a number of public libraries like the National Library, Calcutta, Khuda Baksh Khan Oriental Public Library, Patna, Sinha library, Patna, State Central Library, Bhubaneshwar, Sambalpur University Library, Delhi University Central Library, the Department of Library and Information Science, University of Delhi, BHU, and Jamia Millia Islamia were visited. As regards old newspapers and photographs, the Nehru memorial Museum and Library was surveyed for several days. Most of the reading materials on Delhi Public Library system was collected from the Delhi Public Library itself. The annual reports, occasional publications, investigation reports of Unesco and other bodies were collected from 1951-52 to 1990-91.
The mass communication literature was collected from the Library and Documentation Unit of the Indian Institute of Mass Communication, New Delhi. In order to understand the concept of mass communication, discussions with the faculty of the Indian Institute of Mass Communication were held.

Comprehensive data collection from 1951-52 to 1990-91 was completed after thorough discussions with the communication experts and presented in the form of computer generated block diagrams, statistical tables, graphs, organizational charts, flow charts and other illustrations.