

## Chapter 10

# PUBLIC LIBRARY MOVEMENT IN INDIA

### 1 EARLY LIBRARIES

The spread of knowledge through recorded communication and the development of libraries are interrelated. The growth of education has spread knowledge. This has stimulated the practice of building collections and preservation of reading materials. Thus leading to formation of libraries.

From the archaeological as well as literary evidence, it becomes clear that writing and reading of manuscripts were regularly practised in ancient India since the fourth century B.C. This must have led to the growth and development of collections of manuscripts at important centres of learning besides private collections. Many of these important centres received royal grants. The scholars from all over India and abroad too came over to receive education. Obviously these institutions maintained their own manuscript collections. Many original works and commentaries were written here. The important centres of learning such as Nalanda, Vikramsila, Odantapuri, Somapuri, Jaggadal, Mithila, Vallabhi, Kanheri etc had famous libraries attached to these.

The Buddhists of India laid special emphasis on the writing of manuscripts and maintaining their collections. The Jains and Hindus also made immense contribution in the field of learning. They patronised education and literary activities, established innumerable institutions called upasrayas and temple colleges. These institutions established and maintained their respective libraries.

From the earliest times the kings and nobles of India patronised education, and encouraged writing of manuscripts and their preservation. The tradition was continued till the nineteenth century. Even the princes of small states maintained their manuscript libraries. Some of these have continued up to recent times. The Emperors of Timuride dynasty -were patrons of learning. With the exception of Aurangzeb all the early Mughal rulers extended their support to art, music and literature. The libraries also made remarkable progress

during their times. The Mughals maintained and preserved the important government documents and state papers. Akbar introduced reforms in the classification and storage of books. In seventeenth and eighteenth centuries the development of libraries received an impetus due to the rise of European settlements in India. The christian missionaries with a view to propagate religion, promoted learning, introduced printing and also established libraries.

The number of early libraries was very few. These were almost an exclusive possession of royal and feudal courts and scholarly individuals of the priestly classes and the various religious and monastic organizations. These libraries were more like store houses. The modern concept of a library being a service institution was missing.

The early libraries did not serve as an instrument of mass education. There was no conscious attempt to establish and maintain public libraries to serve the public without any restriction. Therefore, the question of a public library movement did not arise.

## 2 NINETEENTH CENTURY

Let us examine some of the important developments which led to library movement. The year 1808 is considered an important date, when the then Government of Bombay, initiated a proposal to register libraries which were to be given copies of books published from "Funds for the encouragement of Literature".

The Calcutta Public Library was established in August, 1835. It was meant to serve the needs of "all ranks and classes without distinction". The Imperial Library was established in 1891. Lord Curzon, the Viceroy of India, promulgated the Imperial Library Act, 1902, amalgamating Calcutta Public Library with Imperial Library. Soon after independence, the Government of India renamed Imperial Library as the National Library. The National Library of Calcutta has not been able to provide national leadership in library matters.

By the middle of 19th century, the towns of Bombay, Calcutta and Madras had subscription libraries, set up with the active support and initiative from the Europeans. These can not be considered as free public libraries.

In 1867 Government of India enacted the Press and Registration of Books Act (XXV), under which the printer of a book was supposed to deliver free to the provincial Government concerned one copy of the book and one or two more copies, if the provincial Government so desired. The additional copies were to be transmitted to the

**Central Government.**

Khuda Baksh Oriental Public Library (Patna) was established in 1876. Maulvi Muhammad Baksh Khan, on his death, left a collection of 1,500 manuscripts. It formed the nucleus of the library. In 1891, the library was opened to the public. It has an excellent collection of Arabic and Persian manuscripts.

In 1860, a small library was established in 1860 by Jean Mitchel in Madras as a part of the Museum. It was opened to the public in 1896. It was named Connemara Public Library. It was a free public library, only a nominal deposit, being refundable was required. In 1948, it became State Central Library.

By the end of nineteenth century, all the provincial capitals as well as many of the district towns especially in the three presidencies had so called public libraries. Even princely states such as Indore and Travancore-Cochin had public libraries in their capitals. However, the masses in general did not take full advantage of these institutions.

**3 TWENTIETH CENTURY**

The contribution made by *Maharaja Sayajirao III of Baroda* to modern library movement in India is really remarkable. He was 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 century. He also conducted library training classes to train the staff in 1910.

By the time Borden left the State, on May 15, 1913, "Baroda City had its Central Library, comprising Reference and Lending Departments with a book stock of 40,000 volumes. Twenty-five thousand more books were awaiting addition as soon as more space was provided. There were several thousand Sanskrit manuscripts and many other rare works in the Indian languages. Two of the three *prant* libraries had been established and thirty-six of the thirty-eight towns had provided their own libraries. Two hundred sixteen of the four hundred twenty-six large villages had founded their libraries. Even

the small villages had come forward and had initiated their own libraries. There were 140 travelling libraries as well. Borden reported a total circulation of 1,50,000 volumes in the preceding year, reminding his readers that there were only 2,00,000 literates in the entire state".<sup>1</sup> By the time Borden, left Baroda, he had achieved a great deal, in the form of planning and establishing a network of public library system in Baroda. He had also succeeded in creating a favourable environment for the growth and development of public libraries.

Maharaja Sir Sayajirao III passed away on 6th February, 1939. According to the Annual Report<sup>2</sup> of the Baroda Library Department for the year 1940-41, Baroda was covered by a network of about 1,400 libraries. Besides, there were stationary libraries and reading rooms. About 400 travelling library boxes which circulated books among delivery stations throughout the state.

The Report listed the state of rural library service as given below:

District and town libraries	46
Villages	1,270
Mahila (Ladies)	18
Children's	12
Reading Rooms	
Towns	4
Villages	152
Total	<u>1,502</u>

Due to the far-sightedness of Sayajirao III, Baroda State was able to provide free library facilities to all citizens of the State. This was a unique distinction for the State as compared with other Indian States. However, due to lack of sustained support on the part of the government, the library system deteriorated over years. This is evident from the fact that in 1939-40, total expenditure incurred by the State was Rs 86,567 and in 1947-48, it went up to Rs 1,16,523. It is a pity that an excellent library system developed as early as 1910 could not be sustained due to lack of interest on the part of the state government.

<sup>1</sup>Murari Lal Nagar, *Foundation of library movement in India*, Ludhiana (Punjab), Indian Library Institute and Bibliographical Centre, 1983, p. 79.

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 171.

Under the auspices of Ram Mohan Library, a conference of the representatives of libraries of Andhra Desa was convened in 1914. As a consequence, in 1914, Andhra Desa Library Association was formed. This was perhaps the first library association to come into being in India.

In 1915, Punjab University invited an American Librarian, named Asa Don Dickinson to reorganize its university library. He remained in India for about a year. During this period, he reorganized the library, and also conducted library training classes around the year 1915. He prepared a *Prime of librarianship* (the first book on library science published in India).

In 1916, library workers in Andhra succeeded in starting a library periodical in Telegu, entitled 'Granthalaya Sarvasvamu'.

The first All India Public Library Conference took place at Madras in 1919. Soon after this event the All-India Public Library Association came into being. This Association held nine conferences in different parts of the country from 1919 to 1934 but later became defunct.

In 1930 there took place another important conference of librarians, and friends of library. This was the first meeting of the Library Services Section of the First All-Asia Educational Conference held at Banaras in December 1930, Newton Mohun Dutt, the then Curator of Libraries, Baroda, presided and S.R. Ranganathan acted as the secretary.

First All-India Library Conference was inaugurated on 12th September 1933 in Calcutta. On 13th September 1933, draft constitution of Indian Library Association was adopted. However, ILA has not succeeded in providing leadership to the profession.

In 1937, University of Madras started a one year course leading to post-graduate Diploma in Library Science.

Due to the efforts of S.R. Ranganathan, the Madras (Tamil Nadu) Public Libraries Act, 1948 was put on the statute book on 29th January, 1949. Madras was the first state to provide the public library system through library legislation. The act has failed to raise enough funds to provide adequate service to the entire public. The library cess was dependent on property tax. Property tax is such that many of the zila parishads and municipalities do not follow systematic approach to collect property tax, whereby they are not able to collect the full amount. Thus the amount collected as library cess is not large enough.

Delhi Public Library was set up in 1951 as a model public library. It was established as a Unesco pilot project.

Under the five year plans, the Planning Commission, Government of India, has included library development. In the first five year plan (1951-56), the objective was to set up a National Central Library, a State Central Library in each state, along with a network of circulating libraries consisting of deposit stations and mobile vans in villages. By the end of the plan period, there were nine state central libraries and about 100 district libraries.

In 1954, Government of India passed the Delivery of books (Public Libraries) Act. The same was amended in 1956 and included newspapers. Under this Act, every publisher is obliged to send at his own cost a copy of each book or newspaper published by him to the National Library at Calcutta as well as to each of three public libraries at Delhi, Bombay and Madras. This has laid a base for depositories of Indian publications.

During the Second Five Year Plan (1956-61), an amount of Rs 140 lakhs was provided to the States for library development. The objective of the plan was to establish district libraries.

In 1957, Advisory Committee for Libraries was set up by Government of India under the chairmanship of K.P. Sinha. The Committee submitted its report in 1958. It recommended 25 year library plan; levy of cess of 6 naye paise in a rupee on property tax; Government of India should contribute matching grant equal to cess collected by a state; each state should enact state library act and Government of India should enact central library act. However, no action has been taken on these recommendations to a large extent.

Hyderabad state enacted Hyderabad Public Libraries Act in 1955. This became defunct due to the Merger of Hyderabad with other states. Andhra Pradesh Public Libraries Act 1960 came into force in 1960. The Act provides for levy of library cess of 6 paise in every rupee of property tax collected by a municipality/local body. The state government contributes an amount not less than the amount of cess collected in each district.

During the Third Five Year Plan, the goal was to cover the entire country by means of a network of central, state, district, branch, village and mobile libraries. The Working Group set by the Planning Commission set a target of setting up of a network of libraries, reaching up to village level having a population of 2,000.

Karnataka was the third state to enact library legislation. The Mysore (Karnataka) Public Libraries Act, 1965 was passed in the year 1965 and came into force on April 1, 1966. The Act provides for the establishment and maintenance of public libraries and the organization of a comprehensive urban and rural library service in

the State and for matters connected therein. In order to implement the provision of the Act, a Department of Public Libraries was established, which started functioning from November 1, 1966. State library authority, city library authority and district library authority are empowered to establish and organize libraries at the concerned levels.

This library cess in the form of surcharge on tax on urban properties, urban and rural land, entry of goods into local areas, vehicles, professions, trades, so on. This amounts to a good collection of library cess to support the funds made available by the State.

The Maharashtra Public Libraries Act, 1967 was passed in 1967. Under the act, no library cess is levied. The subscription libraries are considered as public libraries. The Act allows charging of fees or subscription. So called public libraries should be called as subscription libraries.

In the year 1979, the West Bengal Public Libraries, Act, was passed. It does not levy cess but under the act, it is the responsibility of the State government to establish and maintain public libraries just as the state maintains other forms of educational institutions.

In five year plans, there was provision for improvement of libraries and some progress has taken place. States have established state Central libraries, large number of districts possess district libraries and quite a large number of rural libraries have been set up. There is a long way to go before an effective Public Library system could be established in each state. This presupposes a suitable social and literary setting which is certainly missing to a large extent.

Year 1972 was the year of celebration of the bicentenary of Raja Rammohan Roy. He was a great social reformer. The Government of India decided that a Library Foundation carrying library service to the towns and villages should be the best homage to the memory of Raja Rammohan Roy. Thus the Raja Rammohan Roy Library Foundation (RRRF) was established with its head quarters in Calcutta, to promote and support library movement in the country. It has played a significant role in the growth and development of public libraries in India by providing grants for purchase of reading materials, and for construction and extension of library buildings. Recently, it has taken active part towards formulation of draft on 'National Policy on Library and Information System'. National Adult Education Programme (NAEP) was inaugurated by the Ministry of Education and Social Welfare (Government of India) on 2nd October, 1978. The programme did not succeed because of the half hearted efforts. Public libraries can play an impor-

tant role in the eradication of illiteracy and removal of social imbalances. However in the list of implementational agencies of the programme, public libraries did not find a place. This would have provided an important opportunity to public libraries to serve the public. This would also have given an impetus to the growth and development of public library movement in this country.

A Planning Commission Working Group was constituted to give a report on 'Modernisation of Library Sciences and Informatics for the 7th Five-Year Plan 1985-90'. The report has been submitted.

In 1985, a Committee on National Policy on Library and Information System was appointed by the Government of India, Department of Culture, to advise the Government on the formulation of national policy, under the Chairmanship of D.P. Chattopadhyaya. The report of the Committee was submitted to the Minister of Human Resource Development, Government of India, vide letter of May 30, 1986. It is a happy sign that Government of India has shown interest in laying down 'National Policy on Library and Information System'. Chapter III deals with 'The Public Library System'. According to it "the most important task before the Government is to establish, maintain and strengthen the free public libraries in the country and enable them to work as a system . . . . The main thrust in this area should go to the rural public library . . . . All the libraries within a State should form part of a network extending from the community library of the village through intermediary levels to the district and to the State Central Library . . . . To bring about this development of the public libraries in a State it is vital that each state enacts its own library legislation". Most of the recommendations are sound. Let us hope that Government of India will accept the recommendations and implement them whole heartedly.

#### 4 ROLE OF INDIVIDUALS

It is rather strange that philanthropists have not given much attention to development of public libraries in this country. In spite of this, there have been many individuals, who have done their best to help in the growth and development of public library movement. The contribution of S.R. Ranganathan is unique and remarkable. He is regarded as the father of Indian library movement. He was instrumental in getting public libraries acts enacted in Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka. The library movement in Baroda originated as the peoples movement under the leadership of Motibhai Amin (a public leader) in the form of Mitra Mandal (Society of



Friends) as early as 1906, which received state patronage in 1910. He strove hard to make libraries popular in Gujarati speaking areas. Among the pioneers, whose name would be written in golden letters, we may include Maharaja Sir Sayajirao III, who succeeded in setting up a chain of public libraries in the then State of Baroda. Newton Mohun Dutta, Curator of Libraries, Baroda, did good work.

There have been a number of pioneers, who contributed to library movement in Andhra Pradesh. Out of them, Sir Iyyanki Venkata Ramanayya holds a place of pride. From Bengal, we have the name of Manindra Dev Rai Mahashaya of Bengal, who was closely associated with library movement in Bengal. He made great efforts to get Bengal Libraries act enacted. Master Motilal (1876-1949) established in 1920, Shri Sanmati Pustakalaya in Jaipur (a public library) by his own efforts and meagre resources. He made pioneering efforts in the promotion of free public library services at a time, when the concept of public library was hardly known. From Punjab, we had Sant Ram Bhatia, who played an important role in promoting the cause of public libraries in Punjab.

## 5 PRESENT POSITION

### 51 *Andhra Pradesh*

The number of public libraries as on 31.3.1984 is shown below:

<b>I. Government Libraries</b>			
State Central Library	1		
Regional Libraries	6		
Mobile Library	1		Total 8
<b>II. Zilla Granthalaya Samstha Libraries</b>			
District Central Libraries	22		
City Central Library (Hyderabad)	1		
Branch Libraries	796		
Mobile Library (Hyderabad)	1		
Village Libraries	337		
Book Deposit Centres	582		Total 1739
<b>III. Aided Libraries</b>			
Gram Panchayats	1534		
Cooperative Societies	67		
Private Management	730		Total 2331
<b>GRAND TOTAL</b>	<b>4078</b>		

It has been estimated that 28.31% villages have been covered by branch libraries. The expenditure on libraries during 1984-84 was Rs 253.69 lakhs. Out of this only Rs 3 lakhs were provided by RRRLF. The situation is much better compared with other states.

*52 Bihar*

Bihar has 1 State Central Library, 8 divisional public libraries (at Divisional level), 31 divisional public libraries (at District level), 27 subdivisional public libraries 480 block public libraries, 4,000 village public libraries and 17 mobile libraries. The library movement is discouraging in the state.

*53 Delhi*

Delhi Public Library is a large system, which was set up in 1950. It has 54 branches and a large number of service points served by 5 book mobiles. It has a collection of 7,32,606 volumes of books and subscribes to 220 periodicals. Hardayal Municipal Library (established in 1884) has a rich collection of rare and old books from 1634 onwards. Marwari Public Library (established 1915) is a small library having 27,500 volumes. Parshottamadas Tandon Library has a collection of 53,541 volumes. For a large city like Delhi, Public Library system is inadequate.

*54 Gujarat*

Gujarat has 47 government run libraries (1 State Central Library, 1 Central Library, Baroda, 17 district libraries, 2 integrated libraries, 20 Taluka libraries, 2 women libraries and 4 other libraries) and 6,602 public libraries are grant-in-aid libraries. During 1983-84, Government spent Rs 34 lakhs on 47 government run libraries. Grant-in-aid libraries received Rs 38 lakhs, which is a meagre sum.

*55 Himachal Pradesh*

The state has a Central State Library at Solan, 11 district libraries, 2 rural public libraries, 3 tehsil libraries, 5 community centre libraries, 50 pargana village libraries, 12 pargana (integrated) village libraries and 9 block libraries under the education department of the state. In addition, there are 5 municipal committee/corporation libraries, 138 small panchayat libraries.

*56 Jammu and Kashmir*

There is one Central Library, 14 district libraries, some tehsils also have tehsil libraries. Besides there are block libraries.

*57 Karnataka*

The following is the picture of libraries in operation:

State Central Library 1

City Central Libraries 10

District Central Libraries 19

Branches etc 320

Village Centres 1926 (under RRRLF scheme)

Grant-in-aid libraries 204.

According to H.A. Khan<sup>3</sup>, there are at present 484 library units consisting of 75 urban units, 220 rural units, 108 urban service stations and 81 rural service stations.

#### 58 Kerala

There are about 4,200<sup>4</sup> public libraries in Kerala. Kerala Grandhasala Sangham is basically an association of librarians. It has been given the responsibility of distributing government grants to libraries based on grading. There are about 4,200 libraries affiliated to Sangham. Each librarian receives Rs 75 as honorarium. The libraries receive Rs 300 to Rs 2,000 per annum depending upon grading. The libraries function as cultural centres. Each library is an independent unit. The State spends about 15 lakhs per year on these public libraries. It may be mentioned that Malabar region is governed by Madras Public Libraries Act of 1948. The local bodies collect library cess of 3 paise per rupee as surcharge on property tax or house tax. The State provides matching grant. Many small libraries in Malabar region are receiving grants from Sangham.

#### 591 Madhya Pradesh

The public library set up is given below:

Central Library

Regional libraries 5

District libraries 42

Information Centres 6

Private public libraries 80

Gram Panchayat Libraries 15,800.

These libraries are independent units, providing services with limited resources. Their state departments (Education, Panchayat Raj and Information Publicity) are responsible for public libraries' information centres.

<sup>3</sup>H.A. Khan, "Karnataka Public Libraries Act" in *Library legislation in India: Problems and prospects*, edited by R.K. Rout, New Delhi, Reliance Publishing House, 1986, p. 163.

<sup>4</sup>M. Bavakutty, "Public library set-up in Kerala", *Ibid*, p. 224.

592 Maharashtra

Before the enactment of Maharashtra Public Libraries Act, 1967, the number of public libraries in Maharashtra was 474. On March 1982, there were 3,120 public libraries. The library facilities are not satisfactory.

593 Punjab

Punjab Public Library (Lahore) was established in 1884. It was opened to public in 1885. The Municipal Public Libraries at Ludhiana, Patiala, Amritsar, and Kapurthala were established in 1878, 1898, 1900 and 1904 respectively. Central State Library at Patiala was established in 1956. There are District libraries at Jullundhur, Sangrur, Nabha, Bhatinda, Hoshiarpur, Gurdaspur, Ropar, Kapurthala, etc. All districts have district libraries. Municipal libraries also exist at Sangrur, Jullundhur, Ludhiana, Hoshiarpur etc. There are about 100<sup>5</sup> Municipal libraries, managed by Public Relations Department in collaboration with Panchayats and Youth Clubs. There are about 1,200 rural libraries and 3,000 reading rooms. The grants are meagre. The services of most of these libraries consist of lending of books for home reading. Punjab is a prosperous state but library services are inadequate as compared with many other states. Except for libraries in major towns, rest of the libraries more or less serve as reading rooms, which are kept open for few hours. The rural areas have been neglected to a large extent.

594 Tamil Nadu

The number of public libraries is given below:

State Central Library (Connemara Public Library, Madras) 1

District Central Libraries 17

Branch Libraries 1,511

There are 17 local library authorities. They run 17 district central libraries and 1,511 branch libraries. The number of staff working in the local library authorities is 3,279. Their services were provincialized with effect from first April, 1982. During 1984-85, the local library authorities collected Rs 1.44 crore as library cess including Rs 55 lakhs from Madras City. Each financially weaker local library authority was given a special grant of Rs 11 lakhs per annum with effect from 1984-85. An outlay of Rs 5.55 crores has been made for the Public Libraries Department in the Budget Estimates for 1986-87.

<sup>5</sup>K. Navalani, "Punjab libraries and library legislation in Punjab", *Ibid.*, p. 270.

The picture seems to be improving.

### 595 *West Bengal*

Between 1947 and 1978, the number of sponsored libraries was about 750<sup>6</sup>. Between 1979 and 1982, there were additional two thousand new sponsored libraries (that is after the enactment of West Bengal Public Library Act, 1979). Calcutta Metropolitan Library was inaugurated on 20th December 1980. During 1984-85, Rs 550 lakhs was allocated for library services.

### 596 *Comments*

In India, there has been uneven growth of public libraries between different states/regions and even within a local library system. Public libraries at different levels have multiplied in terms of quantity. The number of public libraries seems to be vast. There is much to be desired regarding quality of library services. Book stocks are inadequate. There is lack of qualified personnel. Audio-visual materials are lacking. It may also be added that rural areas are badly served as compared with urban areas. Large majority of so-called libraries are nothing but reading rooms open for short hours. The public in general has not taken full advantage of existing public library services. Their attitude is almost apathetic. For this libraries are to be blamed to a large extent. They have not given enough attention to publicize their services. Provision of extension services can be useful in this context. Even in those states having library legislation, implementation of the provisions of the act has been inadequate and tardy. It is interesting to note that those regions which are economically backward are badly served by library services. Unfortunately, many of the public libraries are independent units. Being financially weak, often they are not in a position to provide adequate services on their own. It is desirable that public libraries should be integrated into large library systems, so that these can become viable units. At this stage of development each state has a state central library. Almost each district has a district library. It is rural area, which needs to be given greater attention.

### 6 WHY PUBLIC LIBRARIES HAVE NOT DEVELOPED?

After independence, there has been a hard struggle for allocation of

<sup>6</sup>D.K. Roy, "Library legislation in West Bengal", *Ibid.*, p. 279.

funds for different purposes. Libraries had to compete with basic services such as health, food, communication, etc. India has been faced with unfavourable circumstances due to rising unemployment, galloping inflation, growing population and the increasing threat of serious energy crisis. It is but logical, that any government under these circumstances would give high priority to the solution of these problems over library development. Obviously, in such a situation a government would be unwilling to increase financial support to a desirable level. Because of this many of state governments have been reluctant to enact library legislation. An enactment of a library legislation means that the State Government commit itself to provide financial support for establishment and maintenance of public libraries at a particular level. The same is true for the central government.

## 7 CONCLUSION

The public library movement in India has not taken strong roots. Public library movement first started in 1910 in 'Baroda' state. After 1939, the movement deteriorated due to lack of support from State Government. The public library development has been slow and sporadic. This is mainly due to lack of library legislation in different states and union territories and also at the national level. At present only five states (Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and West Bengal) have enacted library laws. A number of other states have been considering the matter but have not been able to pass a library law. It is essential that all the states and Union Territories bring forth a library legislation at the earliest. In addition, there should be a library law at the national level.

A library law would provide adequate provision for financial requirements. This would make it possible for the establishment, and proper maintenance of public library system. Adequate public library services to rural and urban population can be only through a sound library legislation.

Librarians should not insist on the levy of library cess in the library bills to be enacted. However, a bill should make a provision for financial responsibility upon the government to provide reasonable library service to the rural and urban population.

It is suggested that the library associations at different levels should aim to awaken the public to ask for their library rights. In this context, Indian Library Association can play an important role. Public can achieve its library rights only if public library acts are put

on the statute book.

There is a need to set up a national library system consisting of library systems at various levels. State public library systems should be integrated into the national library network. The emphasis should be on resource sharing to the maximum. In a country like India, role of public libraries in adult education especially towards neo-literates must be recognized fully. Therefore, public libraries must be involved into any such programme. We should also have a national library policy, which should lay out broad priorities. In the document *National Policy on Education 1986* issued by Ministry of Human Resource Development (Department of Education), Government of India, broad guideline has been given. According to it, "together with the development of books, a nation-wide movement for the improvement of existing libraries and establishment of new ones will be taken up. Provision will be made in all educational institutions for library facilities and the status of librarians improved." Hopefully, this will provide impetus to growth and development of public libraries.

There are certain preconditions, which must be fulfilled for the emergence of a public library movement. One of the important precondition is the willingness on the part of the community to agree to the use of its resources for the creation and development of public libraries beyond the mere idea of private ownership. In India, social, economic and political conditions for the acceptance of the above idea are not conducive but the situation is certainly improving. Librarians must work towards creating suitable environment for the acceptance of the idea to allow the use of the resources of the community for the library purpose.

The Britishers did not encourage the growth and development of public libraries during the period of their rule. It is only during the last 35 years or so that a conscious attempt has been made to establish and maintain a network of public libraries (in the modern sense) to serve the public to meet their requirements to the extent possible. Generally speaking, situation in the states having a public law is comparatively better than rest of the states. However, there is much that remains to be done. There is a long way to go before a strong public library movement becomes a reality. Ideally, one would wish that every member of the community should have free access to a public library without any restriction. The public library should be easily accessible to him and also meet his requirements adequately for information, education, inspiration, leisure and culture.

FURTHER READING

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