

# BRITISH INTERVENTION AND DEVELOPMENT OF PEOPLES' INFORMATION SYSTEMS IN KERALA

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The compelling social need for initiating younger members into definite states of knowledge seems to reach back into primitive states of human evolution. It is apparently this motive that led to the invention of writing which could communicate knowledge through space and time, and also in the birth of the institution which is to store and disseminate the accumulated knowledge of society to its members.

The existence of and access to such social accumulation of knowledge is of utmost significance for the relationship it establishes between society and its single members. Society has to transmit to the individual a required portion of knowledge in the interest of common welfare. Any member should also be able to draw at will the required knowledge from the store of knowledge. Unless this accumulated knowledge is active in society an individual will not be able to perform his due function as a member of society and contribute positively to the welfare of society. In such a situation the society will not be able to conduct its communal life on the highest level, which is actually possible.

*Library Science*, which deals with management of recorded knowledge of the society, is a social science and librarianship is ultimately social in its purpose. According to Maurice B Line librarianship is a communication between knowledge and society. All social systems are the result of unending evolution, which extends over centuries, which derives their factors from their different stages and systems, the common traditions and customs and laws and decrees passed by rulers in different ages to make the institution more useful to greatest possible numbers. So library movement and library and information systems of a particular region can be fully understood and evaluated only if we have an awareness of the influences that reached it through time and space.

India has a profound history of library systems, techniques and laws. Right from days of antiquity, Indian culture, philosophy and religion

occupied a place of pride throughout the world and the neighboring countries were all under the magic spell of its splendor and magnificence. Thousands of scholars from all over the world took hazardous journeys to use the huge collections of our recorded knowledge arranged in the most helpful sequence in our ancient seats of learning. Those collections of documents were open to all irrespective of caste, creed or region for any length of time. Even free boarding, and lodging facilities were given to the needy users from far away places, for the period during which they used the collection. Even though they were known as academic libraries; those at Nalanda, Taxila and Pataliputra showed more public library character than any of the present day libraries of that size.

Kerala, the southern State of India also boasts of a library history parallel to that of India. The beginning of educational and cultural activity in Kerala may also be traced back to very ancient times. In ancient period Kerala, as an integral part of the socio-cultural unit called *Tamilakam* formed part of the educational system of Tamils. As in other parts of India in *Tamilakam* also religion influenced all aspects of life, especially education. Theology laid down the law and the rule; of conduct. Among them was the faith that free gift of knowledge and its carrier-books-as charity would earn merit for the giver and that this merit could be exchanged beneficially in the life after death. For example according to Manu the ancient codifier of law in India, free book service would earn even more of merit than the gift of the whole earth. Thus religion was one generator of force leading to free book service in those ancient days.

Collections of recorded information formed an integral part of the education in Kerala from very ancient days. The places where collections of manuscripts were maintained were considered as important centers of learning and most significant places of education and wisdom. There is an ancient Sanskrit saying, which means that to have a library is having a school at home. This gives us an idea of the prestige, privilege and responsibility of one who possessed a library.

Many stanzas of the Sangam work *Purananuru* tells us that in those days common people were very much aware of the importance of education and collections of manuscripts. Stanza 3. 12 of *Purananuru* a classic of Sangam period states that it is the duty of father to educate his son so that he will become virtuous. Education was also not considered a too formal process limited within any age group or other boundaries. Avvaiair the most revered Sangam saint poetess advises to the young: "learn while young; letter and number, claim esteem; avoid ignorance, crave to be versed in knowledge, learn all sciences and cease not to learn. " During those

days there were facilities to proceed studies on any division of knowledge informally by any one who has interest.

#### SCHOLAR HOME PUBLIC LIBRARIES

The nature of the ancient libraries of Kerala was highly related to the education system of the people. The teaching learning method followed in ancient Kerala was the same practiced in *Gurukula System* of education throughout India at that time, In ancient literature of South India there are copious references to teachers who would arrange for the teaching and maintenance of boarding and lodging of students. The great scholars molded their family situations in a way in which it would blend with teaching learning process, which they are to undertake. This resulted in hereditary specialization by families in specific subject fields. There were families in Kerala, which specialized in particular subjects like Thaikatt Illam in Architecture. In Ayurveda, the Indian system of medicine there were eight great families, hereditary custodians of the science and practice of medicine well known throughout India. In martial arts, in astrology, even in literature we can find families maintaining such tradition. These houses can be compared to the subject departments of the present day universities or specialized research institutions. Access to them was freer than the present days. Qualification was purely merit and devotion. But inside, life and work was more strict and tough than we people can imagine in our present day situations.

It goes without saying that these scholar houses possessed great wealth of manuscripts on their topics of interest for the use of teachers, students and the interested users who came searching for them. Many original works and commentaries were written there. Each of the generations added their contribution to these collections. These collections of knowledge were undoubtedly neatly classified and catalogued and preserved in the best possible manner with reverence by persons who have familiarity with the thought content of these documents. Still Kerala maintains this tradition in some subject fields like martial arts, music, Ayurveda, dance etc. and at these ancient houses we can still see huge collections of valuable manuscripts on their subjects preserved with utmost care for use.

This was the library situation of ancient Kerala after manuscripts and other ancient forms of books became popular. They are to be considered as public libraries for the difference they had with the institutions, which we call public libraries, was their specialization, which gives them an

academic library character. But their services were available to all seekers and not limited to students. More than that, different collections of various subjects that existed in a region formed together a network without itself being aware of it. In their totality they formed a system almost like our public library system as well as universities. Specialization of units gave them efficiency.

#### LIBRARY SERVICES BY GOVERNMENT

The South was also familiar with huge recorded collections as in Assyria and Alexandria. There is a tradition about a big library established by the king functioning at Madura in the Sangam age two thousand years ago. It would not have suddenly come into or went out of existence. There would have been in existence such huge libraries for long time at many places in south India.

Gradually temples and Government entered into the field of education and organization and dissemination of knowledge. Temples became centers of all Cultural activities and naturally educational institutions formed part of the temple establishments. When the great centers of advanced learning and their libraries at Nalanda, Vallabhi, Vikramasila etc. existed in North, institutions similar to them existed in Kerala. They were commonly called 'salas' or 'chalas'. Usually they were attached to temples. Most important of them were Kandaloor Salai, Parthivasekarapuram Salai, Sreevallabapuram Salai, Tiruvalla Salai, Tirunelli Salai and Kottarakkara Salai. Most of them were very much like Post-Graduate Institutions, which imparted higher education in special subjects. Temples met all expenses of education including food and accommodation. Kandalor Salai was an ancient institution, the Nalanda of the South and it was looked upon as a model by the people of that time. In Kandaloor – Salai even a martial art department was there. It gave training to young who opted for military service. This subjugated the Salai to incessant attacks by Cholas the enemy kingdom and caused its destruction. In the salais there were all facilities for the students to get instruction in any subject and proceed by themselves in the higher branches of knowledge. Their collections of manuscripts were vast and varied. The organization and service was efficient. These centers of learning played important part in propagating knowledge and Culture and all these institutions had their libraries, which contained books in all branches of learning, which were being copied from time to time.

## PROFESSIONAL STATUS OF LIBRARIES

Librarianship was also considered an esteemed profession in ancient Kerala. During the period of the scholar home libraries, and salais only highly educated persons could work as librarians. The person who kept the documents has to have a very, good knowledge about the thought content of the documents. The tradition of scholar librarians continued up to the medieval period. The copper plate grant of king Trailokyamalla a Chalukyan ruler, of 1058 AD furnishes details of an educational institution maintained by him. It was equipped with a library with six Saraswati Bhandarikas (librarians). The inscription further furnishes us details regarding distribution of land, which tells us the dignified and honored position; the librarians had in temple colleges and other cultural and educational institutions.

The importance which the ancient people gave to the collection and dissemination of recorded knowledge, and the role they assigned to the library in educational process contributed to the academic excellence of those times, fruits of which are the ancient classics which come to us from those times. 'Thirukkural' the classified and neatly arranged little work said to be a mustard seed containing the whole universe of knowledge, 'Purattirattu' a book of about 2000 abstracts of all the important works of the South India and many other works which in their way of referencing, footnotes etc outshine present day research works took birth at that time due to the merit of the information support system they were having. In modern times such works have rarely been produced. Any qualitative assessment of contributions to knowledge done during, the ancient days, in comparison with the present ones can reveal that our ancestors were in a higher level than us.

The hundred years war between the Cheras and the Pandays destroyed most of the educational institutions and libraries. Then Aryans who started migrating- into Kerala from 8th century slowly gained upper hand in Kerala society. Result was introduction of caste system and loss of access to educational institutions for some classes. The next centuries in which major kingdoms of Kerala took shape, were full of wars between local rulers to establish their authorities and mark their boundaries. All that remained from the traditional schools, libraries etc. got disturbed and disappeared during these troubled times.

## FREE ACCESS TO ALL

Almost all works on history of public libraries considers it an institution of recent origin; that of the nineteenth century. So there are many arguments against considering, these ancient libraries as public libraries. Mostly ancient libraries existed as part of academic institutions and so we usually classify them under academic libraries. But as we have seen in Kerala's ancient days those libraries were freely open to all and were able to give authentic and efficient information service to the public than our present day public libraries. In our present day also distance education, which only can reach 75 per cent of the common people who cannot approach formal system, is using public libraries as their study centers. So in all times libraries will inevitably be connected with education. Another argument that ancient libraries were mere storehouses of books also cannot stand. The fruits of their activity are still live in our culture. Then the collections were private, were also not a matter of concern, for as we saw in Kerala's scholar homes they are maintained for the people.

Even in these days of mushroom growth of new institutions, it is the principles of access - as Unesco defined; open for free and equal use of all members of society - is that which differentiates public library from other libraries. The popular view about the ancient libraries is that they were not accessible to the common people in general. They did not have therefore any direct link with and impact upon lives of the people. But, the study of ancient Kerala's libraries shows that the view is not true. In ancient Kerala education as well as access to houses of recorded knowledge was open to all and there was a high level of literacy. Acquiring knowledge was not a privilege confined to any class or caste is proved by the fact that scholars of Sangam period were drawn from all walks of life and from all tribes of ancient south. According to an estimate among the 192 Sangam poets, there were 13 kings, 29 Brahmins, 57 wandering story tellers, 36 women, 17 hill men, 13 foresters, 7 vaniyars, 7 artisans, 1 shepherd, 1 potter etc. Pananar and Kapilar the great Sangam poets of Kerala, and Avvayar belonged to the Pana caste, which is a lower caste in, present society. If we consider the present day; 90 per cent of the scholars will be from upper strata of society. In ancient days it was not like that. Even female education was not neglected. As a result we hear several scholarly women who contributed much to the cultural life of their times. Purananuru mentions about 15 poetesses by name, most of them belonging to castes now considered inferior. So in ancient Kerala education was more democratic and all the record collections maintained by educational institutions were maintained for the whole society.

## ORIGINS OF LIBRARY LEGISLATION

But like the arguments on limitations in use put against the view of free access to all, to some extent restrictions were there in the access to ancient collections and their use. An inscription of Kerala King Karunandakan (857-890 AD) tells us the existence of strict rules inside the Salai's of Kerala. But even in these days we cannot find any library, which exist efficiently without any rules and restrictions. Without some prescribed rules and procedures, no institution can exist. In ancient days these restrictions were more severe. But they were meant to protect those manuscripts and their information from destruction. Books in the modern sense were unknown and all that those libraries possessed were manuscripts copied with love and care and patient labor and often at considerable expense. Most of them existed in originals only and if they are lost or destroyed the knowledge stored is also lost forever to the society. So rules for their preservation and restrictions on their use were strictly enforced but judiciously.

They were made available to all those real seekers of that particular thought content. In those ancient customs and rules created and adhered to maximize the utility of those graphic records to society, we find the primitive stages of library legislation. Common customary law and laws and decrees passed by kings to promote the welfare of the greatest numbers; are all legislation in their broad outlook.

Even though the terms 'library' or 'public library' was not in existence, the social institution, which gathered, preserved and disseminated knowledge existed in Kerala along with the communicating man. They reached their most active period when the scholar homes and Salais existed in Kerala. When we evaluate them giving consideration of the limitations of those times and in comparison with the present state of public libraries in Kerala which we consider progressive, we find that the organization and services of those ancient days were more specialized, efficient, reliable and authentic. They suited the society that created them than that of the present set up suiting the present day society. Even than as said by Thompson, it is too strange for us to have to argue that library systems, their basic rules and principles have by and large been established over a very long period of time.

Before the rulers settled after the continuous wars lasting for hundreds of years, for their socio-political and administrative reforms; came the foreign intervention with the landing of VascoDa Gama. Then the French and English followed him. West brought with them their culture, thought, religion and systems that could be installed in our land.

As a result Kerala got an exposure to the specialized library systems of the west. The development in the sociological thought has shattered all the social barriers and forced the society to move towards a socialistic pattern. It implied equal right to all for free public library and information service. It has to be free and supported by legislation because the Poorest in the community should get as much that service as the richest. The developments in political thoughts influenced the equal distribution of sovereignty among all adults of the nation through adult franchise. To make this full form of democracy safe and beneficial, it is essential to keep one and all of the citizens furnished with correct information, to provide opportunity for independent judgment on the basis of perusal of all possible views. In its own interest democracy is obliged to provide free and extensive information service to the people. Industrialization has also made the people's information systems very important. Population pressure has already gone beyond the capacity of the natural and near natural resources to feed, clothe and house all the people. Therefore there is need for intelligent conservation of all available resources by everybody maximizing the production of natural and near natural commodities by intensive cultivation and the transformation of non-consumable raw materials into beneficial commodities through technology of ever increasing sophistication. These required continuous dissemination of latest scientific ideas and knowledge among one and all of the people. This is development of the human resources of the nation. As the Sangam classic Tirukural has stated the wealth of all wealth is the wealth of human resources. This makes library and information service the primary responsibility of the State. For the social political and industrial development of a nation universal education is a necessity. Experience throughout the world has proved that free education for all not backed by free library and information service for all is like a mud house without a roof.

#### REVOLUTIONARY CHANGES IN LIBRARY CONCEPT

Knowledge explosion, innovation and speed in printing technology, resultant huge mass of printed materials produced every minutes and dependence on information for all aspects of human progress have forced the library to adopt itself quickly and efficiently to these changing situations. Those, which failed to change remained mere curiosity shops.

Through a very fast process of evolution during this century, service oriented libraries of modern world have changed to a state where they are more or less different service outlets, each outlet having the common



attitude and approach, common aims and objectives and more or less uniform organizational and administrative set ups with the whole information resources of the nation at its disposal for dissemination. In this world of fast changing technologies and knowledge explosion, the public library and information service will be futile unless it is organized by staff with proper professional specialization. So a specialized profession also evolved for this particular work.

In 1927 Kenyon Committee reported that 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 in all busy centers of national activity than in any previous period of history. In such centers the public library is no longer regarded as a means of providing casual recreation of an unimportant character. It is recognized 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.

The developments in the library and information service scene that is fastly achieving new dimensions around the world influenced India also. The movements for evolving, establishing and coordinating library systems in India at the national level and at State level were quickened. A study of the library movement in Kerala in the modern period, cannot disregard the direct and indirect influences from these national level movements and the developments in other states. In this study a brief survey of these developments around Kerala is attempted, so that their inter-relationship will become apparent and the library movement in Kerala will appear in perspective as a factor of the developments in the nation as a whole.

Even before India achieved independence, from the part of the Government there were attempts to improve the public information system. Bombay Government's attempt to register and support libraries in 1808, Government of India's Press and Registration of Books Act 1867 and the Imperial Library Act of 1902 were some of them.

#### BARODA PUBLIC LIBRARY SYSTEM

Even though Visakam Tirunal Maharaja of Travancore was the first ruler to issue consolidated rules related to all aspects of Public Library System defining the purpose and methods of organizing them the credit of having initiated the first well articulated system of public libraries under a Government order in the country goes to Sri. Sayajirao Gaekward of Baroda State. The Maharaja an enlightened ruler had in 1906 initiated a scheme of compulsory primary education, the first State in the country to

sponsor such a progressive measure. He was of the opinion that the State aided free public libraries are absolutely essential for continuing education. Money spent on few years of compulsory primary education would go waste unless there is adequate provisions for follow up work as a life-long process. Only free public library service can keep mass, literate after their formal education is over. Maharaja linked up primary education with a free public library system as a matter of rule.

The library movement in Baroda started in 1910 when primary education also was made free and compulsory. Maharaja invited Mr. M.A. Borden an American Librarian in 1910 to introduce a scientifically organized library system. With the assistance of Borden the Maharaja established the State Central Library and a planned network of free public libraries throughout the State. A libraries. First library school was started in 1910 by Borden to train the professionals who were required for running these libraries. A library science journal was also started in 1912. The result of these activities is visible even today in those regions. Even today 85 per cent of the people of Baroda have library facilities. But after that Maharaja there was no follow up work. Maharaja was very much like Sri. S.R. Ranganathan a man ahead of his time and our time also. It took exactly 42 years of struggle after Indian became Independent, in this modern world, for Kerala to enact a library legislation. Even then it could not envisage a system as efficient as that which Baroda have in the beginning of the century. No democratic ruler of Kerala showed a benevolent attitude to this social legislation like Sayajirao.

#### KERALA ACCEPTS WESTERN CONCEPT OF PEOPLES LIBRARY, 1829

It was the alarming increase of illiteracy that led to the intervention of the State in the sphere of education and the formulation of positive educational policy. In Kerala the direct activity of the State in the field of education began when Her Highness Rani Gouri Parvathi Bai, with the assistance of Col. Munro introduced a system of free and compulsory education under State control in 1817 AD. Maharaja Swathi Tirunal (1829-1847) a versatile genius and great man of high accomplishments continued these educational reforms. He is considered to be the ruler- of Kerala who laid the foundation of modern system of education in Kerala. In 1830's English education was recognized as a civilizing agency and government started patronizing the spread of English education by opening English schools. It was he who started in 1836 the first English public school in Travancore. District schools were also started in the same year.

## TRIVANDRUM PUBLIC LIBRARY, 1829

At the beginning , of nineteenth century, in Kerala also there was no institution with the name public library. The first public library and the oldest of its kind in India came into existence during Swathi Tirunal's reign. The then British resident of Travancore was Col. Edward Cadogan. He was the grandson of Sir Hans Sloans, the founder of the British Museum and he could very easily make the Maharaja and high officials aware of the need for a modern educational system. Swathy Tirunal was also a great scholar ill many languages, a poet, a musician, and a musical composer of very high order. He was easily impressed by the idea of an institution like British Museum. Joining together they established in 1829 the Trivandrum Public Library.

Swathi Tirunal took active Interest in the affairs of the public library throughout his reign. An association called Trivandrum Public Library Committee of ' which the British Resident was the president first managed the library. In 1889 the Trivandrum Public Library Committee entered into an agreement with the Government according to which their entire assets were handed over to the Government. The condition was that the Government would erect a suitable building for a new library for the benefit of the public and to that end provide a well stocked furnished reference library and Should undertake the maintenance of the same in a suitable manner under Such regulations as may be best calculated to carry out the end in view. Accordingly Government took over the management of Trivandrum Public Library and it was treated as one of the minor departments of the state. The British Resident continued to serve as the president of the committee.

## EDUCATION AND LIBRARIES IN COCHIN

In Cochin, the Government undertook the responsibility of educating the people in 1818 when the first State owned schools were started there. Six District schools were started in 1877. Christian Missionaries also established many educational institutions in different parts of Travancore, Cochin and Malabar area. In the later half of the nineteenth century Governments of Travancore and Cochin began to patronize English education at higher levels and so opened a lot of English schools and colleges. The first college was started in 1875. In all these educational institutions very efficient library systems and services were also organized on the pattern of library service available in Britain. The teachers and library staff were usually Britishers at the beginning. The products of these

educational institutions realized the value of libraries. They took initiative in influencing the rulers to establish libraries in different parts of the country so that libraries will be accessible to them in then- public life also. Government –supported public libraries were established at Ernakulam in 1869, Trichur in 1873, Kottayam in 1881, Tellichery in 1901, Calicut in 1924 and Cannanore in 1927. These libraries continuously maintained good collections and services up to 1950's.

#### LIBRARY AWARENESS

Social and political activists who used the services of libraries established by Government became aware of the wide possibilities of such institutions. Spread of education and the birth of a large number of newspapers and journals in the state and the revolutions that were going on in the social and political spheres of life kindled in the people a desire to have such public libraries very near to them so that they can also get the daily news and discuss on them. All these contributed to the birth of a people's library movement in the end of the nineteenth century in Kerala.

Government supported and nourished the people's movement but at the same time it also continued its own independent projects of library development resulting in two parallel movements in the region's library field. Government's contributions strictly adhered to some generally accepted library principles, which were static throughout next century.

#### INITIATION OF MODERN LIBRARY LEGISLATION

State Government was continuously active in library affairs. It was aware of its responsibility to establish and maintain library and information services for the people. During the reign of Sri Moolam Tirunal Maharaja of Travancore rules were framed to give grant -in-aid to libraries for the first time. The rules were published in Travancore Gazette in 1918. The conditions prescribed by this rule for a library to be eligible for grant are:

*The libraries should be under the administrative control of a committee or officials recognized or appointed by the Director of Education.*

*The reading facilities in the library must be open to all free of cost.*

*No restrictions based on caste or religion should be imposed on its users.*

*The Director of Education should approve the rules of the library or reading room.*

*The accounts, registers and records should be maintained in a proper way and must be supplied for verification to the Assistant Inspector of Elementary Schools whenever he calls for them.*

The rules also prescribed some minimum standards related to the collection

to be maintained, services to be done etc. and explained the procedures for fixing tile rate of annual grants, and grants for construction of building, and purchase of furniture and equipments. It also sanctioned the issue of government publications free of cost or at reduced rates to these libraries.

These rules framed by the Government in its own initiative contain the basic objectives of public library and the most important factors of modern library legislation. In these rules Government accepted that libraries are also educational institutions, which have to play a role equal to that of schools and colleges, in education. The rules accept that it was Government's responsibility to establish and maintain library service for the public. The unique feature of the rules was its acceptance that public library service must be a free service to the public. The reading and consultation facilities are to be made available to the public free of cost by all the libraries that get Government grant. It was only from the later half of tile nineteenth century that social forces worked towards free book service for all; even in western countries. Providing totally free library service to the public is yet an ideal to be realized even in the states, which have enacted library legislation including the present day Kerala where this law was in force in earlier days. Free supply of Government publications to libraries was also a progressive move provided in these rules.

#### LIBRARIES FOR THE SPREAD OF EDUCATION

Government encouraged the establishment and sustenance of libraries as a part of its programme for expansion of educational facilities in the State. Before 1928 Government has established a number of libraries especially for the use of women. The Travancore Educational Reform Committee under the Chairmanship of RM Statham, in 1932 made certain recommendations regarding the development of public libraries in order to advance education and to provide facilities for adult education. Immediate action followed. The Director of Public Instruction was asked to prepare a scheme and accordingly he prepared a scheme for establishment of a central circulating library and a large number of rural libraries. In 1935 Government sanctioned the opening of sixty such rural libraries attached to primary schools under Government in important underdeveloped areas of the State. Government feared that literate people would lapse into illiteracy unless reading and study can be practiced with the aid of libraries in these regions. Provision was made for each library to receive a particular number of periodicals and newspapers. The system gradually developed into 354 libraries with an average of 500 selected standard books and 42 newspapers and periodicals.

In Cochin also parallel development was going on during this period. The Government of Cochin began to establish experimental village libraries since 1926 in various parts of the State to support its programme of adult education. In 1946 there were three types of libraries. Seventeen public libraries, five major rural libraries and above five hundred village libraries. The annual expenditure for library development in the State during 1947-49 was Rs.50,000.00.

#### STATE CENTRAL LIBRARY

The Trivandrum Public Library, run directly by the government from 1888 was transferred to the control of the University of Travancore in 1938. A new committee was constituted by Government with Pro-Vice-Chancellor as the president and the University Librarian as secretary. The committee had full powers to manage the affairs of the institution and to approve all expenditure. But this transfer of institution met with resentments and protests from the library conscious public, and newspapers published editorials and a number of articles against this order. The apprehension was that, following the transfer of the library to the control of the university; the library may not be accessible to the public as before and the usefulness of the rich collection might be, reduced, restricted and limited. The concern of the public expressed through newspapers and in some cultural functions during the period vindicated one thing. In the preceding half century during which it was a direct department of government, the library has served the public very efficiently. The discontinuation or change in its service was too disheartening to the literate public.

Due to the forceful public opinion, a resolution was unanimously passed by the legislature in 1948. It resolved that Government should take over the institution from the university and manage it as a separate department as was done up to 1938. Accordingly the Government resumed the control of the institution in 1949. The committee was also reconstituted with the Minister for Education as President and the Librarian as the convener of the committee. The committee continued to be in charge of the management of the library. In 1956 Government included this library in the plan scheme and sanctioned about seven lakhs rupees for converting the library into State Central Library and the District Distributing Library for Trivandrum. A State Librarian was also appointed. To increase the libraries usefulness and to extend its services half a dozen libraries from the northern border to the southern border of the State were affiliated to it within two years.

### LOCAL LIBRARY AUTHORITIES

Malabar region which formed part of the Madras State and which came to Kerala with the re-organization of states had in 1956 about 500 libraries excluding those run by Local Library Authority under the provisions of Madras Library Act. Local Library Authorities was constituted in 1951 for the whole of Malabar. The Calicut Municipal Library with a large collection of books was converted into District Central Library. So in Calicut, Cannanore and Palghat three Local Library Authorities started functioning in 1959 according to the provisions of Madras Public Library Act. Recently Kasaragod and Malappuram Districts were formed dividing Cannanore and Calicut. In each district, local library authority has a district central library at district headquarters and branch libraries under it.

### RULES AND STANDARDS

In 1959 Government issued an order constituting a State Library Advisory Board. The Board consisted fifteen members with Minister for Education as Chairman, Director of Public Instruction as Secretary and State Librarian as ex-officio member. The functions of the Board were to formulate rules related to libraries and advise the Government on the affairs of the libraries and the Kerala Granthasala Sangham. Through an order issued in 1958 the Government canalized the disbursement of grants to rural libraries through District Education Officers.

Another order concerning the grant for construction of library buildings and purchase of equipments made the libraries strictly adhere to the approved designs published with that order, for building and equipments. In 1996 Government decided to continue a system of grant in aid to libraries until a Library Act could be passed. A Government Order consolidated the various rules and orders relating to the payment of grant to libraries. This order made provisions for, annual grant to libraries, building and furniture grant to libraries, annual grant to Granthasala Sangham and allowances to librarians. In 1971 Government constituted a gradation committee, which is to tour throughout the State and review and report about the libraries receiving grant. In 1976 and 1981 Government issued orders classifying, the libraries into six grades and fixing the different rates of their annual grants.

### PEOPLE'S MOVEMENTS

As in other regions of India Kerala also witnessed sweeping changes during the period of 1850 to 1910. The terms modernization, reformation,

renaissance etc are used to denote these changes. Chattampi Swami who is considered as the harbinger of renaissance who inspired Narayana Guru and a host of other leaders identified the existing restriction for the people to acquire knowledge as the major hindrance for social and economic development of the region. He used pen as a good weapon for the first time to fight against social inequalities and he and his disciples published and circulated books on highly relevant social and religious topics. Similar books were read and circulated from some village homes where people assembled for reading and discussion.

In Kerala, influenced by the British, the rulers of different regions have contributed much to the growth and modernization of libraries than anywhere else in India continuously throughout nineteenth and twentieth centuries. In library field, Kerala is also known for a century old people's library movement. It was a unique movement in its nature and growth. It has a spontaneous growth from the minds of the people. It grew parallel to the library development projects of the State.

Various social and political forces directly or indirectly contributed to the birth and growth of people's library movement. The second half of the nineteenth century witnessed the full flowering of national political consciousness and the growth of an organized national movement in India. This resulted in recognizing the increased importance of the individual.

Creating public opinion and spreading political ideas warranted an educated and informed public. Political workers therefore gave more emphasis to social education activities including the establishment of public libraries. The people's library movement got special impetus, also from the emergence of political parties social reform movements, communal and religious organizations and the struggle for responsible government in the State.

#### POLITICAL AND SOCIAL REFORMATION

The spread of western education influenced movements for social and political reform in Kerala from the end of nineteenth century. Rulers of Kerala were benevolent and modern in outlook. So most of the people's movements were bloodless revolutions that reaped victory. The Maharaja of Travancore set up the first legislature in any Indian State in 1888. Three years later representatives of the slowly growing middle class presented to the king a memorial known as 'Malayale Memorial', signed by more than 10000 persons. It appealed to the king to give a share to the people in the administration of the State, which was then largely done by persons imported from Madras. This agitation continued for a decade. It awakened



the middle class of Travancore to a sense of their inherent rights, thereby paving the way for a new chapter in the political history of the State.

In all the communities in Kerala, from the highest to the lowest in social strata; obsolete customs and practices were alive during nineteenth century. The western educated and progressive minded younger generation started reform activities and resisted outdated customs, traditions and systems of inheritance, succession and family organization.

#### NATIONAL MOVEMENT

The Freedom movement also developed the spirit of library movement in Kerala. In 1903 Indian National Congress held a large public meeting at Calicut under the Chairmanship of a veteran congress leader C. Vijaya Raghavacharyar. In 1910 a branch of the famous Home Rule League of Mrs. Annie Besant was formed in Malabar. Civil Disobedience Movement of 1930 and 1932-33 and regional social movements like Guruvayoor Temple Satyagraha for permitting the lower caste people to enter into the temple stirred the Kerala society, Peasants, workers, teachers and many other groups became organized and were drawn into politics.

In the forties besides Quit India Movement the agitation for self-government in Travancore and Cochin States gathered momentum. In Travancore the Travancore State Congress and in Cochin the Cochin Praja Mandalam led the movement. The common culture, language, literature and the parallel social and political reform movements going on in the States of Kerala, Cochin and Malabar and the spread of national movement quickly gave birth to the idea of a United Kerala by the dissolution of the political boundaries which kept them as distinct political units.

#### SEEDS OF PEOPLE'S LIBRARY MOVEMENT

It was the newspapers and the curiosity for the daily news that prompted the speedy establishment of thousands of village libraries in a very short period. Writings of Mahatma Gandhi and other leaders of the national movement exercised tremendous influence on the people. The persons who undertook leadership in social and political reform movements in Kerala read and translated those works into regional language.

In Kerala during the days of the national movement, the persons belonging to the congress socialist party, which developed within the congress, took active interest in cultural renaissance. They knew that political and literary works dramas and discussions were the best mediums

used throughout the world to educate the public, to rouse their political and social consciousness and to kindle the fire of revolution. Result was a progressive literature movement. A flood of novels, dramas and poems dealing with social political and economic issues appeared. They were produced with the intention of creating an awareness of their rights among the peasants, workers and lower middle class and to infuse into them the thought of the need to fight for their rights. But majority of people remained beyond the reach of these mediums due to literacy, poverty and lack of communication systems. So the political and social reformers searched for venues closest to the people from where almost a natural dialogue with the common people can become possible. Their search ended in the venues or institutions that were public libraries.

Many public libraries like Trivandrum Public Library established by Government were functioning satisfactorily, disseminating knowledge, news and ideas to the people. Already the people with their own initiative established many libraries on this model. The first attempt by the people to establish such an institution was during the reign of Visakam Tirunal Maharaja. With his support a library named Suguna Poshini was established in 1880 at Vanchiyoor Trivandrum and a vast collection of Malayalam books was organized there. The SRMV Association Library at Karamana started functioning in 1888. Jnanapradayini Library of Neyyattinkara, Sankara Vilasam Library and Chithira Tirunal Smaraka Granthasala of Vanchiyoor Trivandrum came into existence before 1920 due to people's initiative. All these libraries conducted literary and cultural activities and discussions on topics of current interest. The contribution of Chithira Tirunal Smaraka Granthasala of Vanchiyoor to Kerala culture and literature was enormous. For almost six decades it functioned in close association with the most notable cultural and literary figures of the region. Popularization of standard literature and arts done by this institution was to a remarkable extent.

#### VENUES TO SPREAD REFORM MOVEMENTS

The political and social activists found in these libraries their base, the nucleus in society from where they can spread their reform movements and activities. With this motive they involved or infiltrated into the existing people's libraries. They used them and also established thousands of new libraries in the places where they were not already available. The Congress and Communist workers organized in them study circles, evening classes, adult education programmes etc. The novels, poems and essays of the progressive literary movement were usually circulated through these

libraries. Their dramas, which discussed the social, political and economic problems, produced with the intention of attracting and retaining more workers for the national movement and for forming public opinion, were staged in connection with the programmes organized by these libraries.

Enormous quantity of reading materials discussing the political and social problems, published by the political parties, communal organizations, trade unions, youth associations and women's organization flowed into these village libraries. The increased use of the libraries and reading rooms has raised them to the level of cultural centers of the localities. This tendency was more noticeable in the rural areas and therefore apparently the villages were the beneficiaries. In fact these libraries and reading rooms attained almost the position occupied by temples in medieval Kerala. They were similar to the scholar homes and salais we came upon in the ancient Kerala in few aspects. The depth of the knowledge activity, the ancient institutions have had the new ones lacked. But the inviting atmosphere was present here also.

Such a long, continuous and live involvement of the State and the people in library affairs is a rare phenomenon. The concept followed by the State in library development was establishing and maintaining public libraries in all places as independent self-sufficient units. State also fully supported people's move for establishing and maintaining such units almost independent of State control. When the western concept of each public library as service outlet of a library and information dissemination system for the people took birth State tried to establish such a system and it resulted in the Kerala Public Library Act of 1989.

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