



Public Libraries In Colonial Bengal With Special Reference To Social Practice

Sukumar Mandal Assistant Professor, Department of History, Hiralal Bhakat College , Nalhati, Birbhum, West Bengal.

ABSTRACT:

The library system has been acknowledged as a unit of measurement for the advancement of human civilisation and culture. It has primarily four responsibilities, including collecting, preserving, organising, and disseminating any written, printed, or otherwise preserved document of human knowledge from the past for current and future use. It is clear from its historical context that it is an inevitable creation of a culturally conscious civilization that has thrived to suit the needs of society throughout the years. Naturally, its goals, objectives, nature, organisational structure, documentary sources, arrangement, and service pattern are all shaped by the requirements of society. When the library was built, factors like state cooperation, financial development, political stability, geography, cultural prosperity, personal and group initiation, as well as understanding of the library's purpose, all played a vital role.

Keywords: Public, Libraries, Colonial, Bengal, Social.

INTRODUCTION:

According to the census of 1881, full literacy among Indian males was 6.6 percent, while it was 0.3 percent among females. Public libraries were intended to be social agents to promote education in the early nineteenth century. Libraries had to fulfil their responsibilities to promote nationalism throughout the Swadeshi period and even later. They expanded their welfare activities by setting up relief camps during wars, cyclones, floods, and famines; distribution of medicine during plagues, cholera, and malaria; adult education programmes in villages and cities; night schools in cities for workers; reading of books and newspapers; story-telling; exhibitions; radio talks; and other activities to keep illiterates educated and attract a mass audience. By using a magic lantern, libraries were used to arrange health awareness programmes. Villagers used to congregate outside the library to listen to the news, krishikathar asar, and weather reports on a radio set. The Jatra, Kathakatha, and Panchali events were held to promote mass education and patriotism. To appeal to a broad audience, libraries incorporated topics such as women's empowerment, children's, student, and labour welfare.

VILLAGE CONSTRUCTION WORKS AND RELIEF WORKS:

Numerous samitis, as well as many public libraries, took up constructive work in the village in earnest throughout the Swadeshi period and onwards. Mymensingh's Suhrid Samity made extensive use of magic-lantern lectures [1]. Through village social work, efforts were made to establish roots in the countryside. Through songs, dramas, and jattras, patriotic festivals, and the rakhi-bandhan ceremony, coldly rational reasoning gave way to an appeal to the emotions and imagination. Apart from Suhrid Samity, members of Swadeshbandhab, Anushilan, and Jugantar, as well as local libraries, were busy preaching social and political concerns at melas and libraries to draw a large audience. The Barisal Swadesh Bandhab Samity organised famine relief work on a massive scale in the second half of 1906; it ran 160 centres, and Nivedita later praised it as "the finest thing ever done in Bengal." [2] Both the samitis and the libraries had gathered data about the village's population, resources, and topography. [3] Social service programmes such as cremation of cadavers, nursing of the sick, serving poor people at festivals, and opening national schools assisted samitis and libraries in broadening their activities. [4] The Srirampur Hitakarini Sabha in Hooghly was formed primarily to serve the local community. When the Dutch left India in 1845, the welfare committee was renamed "Srirampur Hitakarini Sabha." It was afterwards moved to Shiv Chandra Palit Lane's house and then to Ganger Saheb's residence. That organisation had formerly served as a library. As a result, the Hitakarini Sabha was renamed Srirampur Public Library by a resolution passed in 1871, with sub-divisional officer Traven Plauen as President. It was discovered that the library has been involved in various social welfare programmes from its inception. People came to the library to listen to Krishikathar Asar, weather reports, and news on the radio. Members went door to door lending books as well.[5]

Out of his nationalistic insight, Jay Krishna helped to democratise knowledge by forming the Vernacular Literature Society and Public Library in Uttarpara with some other educationists. He was also a pioneer in the Indian library movement. It was the founding of the Uttar Para Public Library in 1859 that best exemplified the character of his educational endeavours. He was fully aware of our rich cultural past, unlike many English-educated people of his period, and supported Sanskrit study by granting scholarships and aiding eastern seminaries. The common people received regular services such as radio broadcasts, lectures delivered via magic lantern, and book lending from door to door. [6]

Basu, Rajnarayan, and Smriti Pathagar had a pivotal role in promoting education in the district, and they took part in the revolutionary events of the Swadeshi Age in Midnapore and Bengal, either directly or indirectly. Book reading, newspaper reading, door-to-door lending of books, radio discussion, and other cultural programmes were all done with tremendous fervour in order to impart education to the general public. [7]

A benevolent school was established in the Krishnan Agar Public Library to promote reading among the general public. Drawing, essay competitions, recitations, and lectures with magic lanterns were held at the library to keep the neoliterates educated. [8]

Mahesh Public Library in Hooghly has been judged to have fulfilled numerous social obligations. During the Puja and Ratha festivals, Mahesh Public Library and Free Reading Room distributed clothing on a regular basis to the impoverished and destitute. Thanks to the library's management, village women were also comfortable looking after the chariot during the Ratha celebration. Members of the library are alleged to be working on road repairs and sewage cleanup in the area. [9]

The organisers of the Bhawanipur Institute were interested in using the library to promote cultural growth in the community. There was a discussion section, a social welfare department, and an acting area in the library. Its social welfare branch was constantly involved in magic lantern lectures on health awareness, food distribution, textiles, and medicine distribution during the famine to draw a large audience. Chitta Ranjan Das was the social welfare section's secretary. The library was renamed "Cotton Library and Bhawanipur Institute" in 1915, after Bhawanipur Institute was added to it. [10]

Sripur Student Library, formerly Sripur Kalyan Samity, was founded in 1891. The library, with its six departments, is actively involved in the village's overall development. Repair and construction of roads, sewage cleansing, and other welfare operations were used to draw the general public to the library. The library's name has been changed to the "Sripur Benevolent Association." [11]

Both Girindra Nath Mukhopadhyay and Kumar Munindra Deb Roy are remembered for their accounts of Bans Beria Public Library's social work. A Bansberia native and Scotch Church College student, Girindra Nath Mukhopadhyay was arrested in 1897 for the murder of an English police officer in Maharashtra. Girindra Nath met Savakar after his arrival in 1903 and then travelled to America with rebels Chandra Chakraborty and Avinas Bhattacharya to obtain weaponry as a sheep-mate. In respect to M.N. Roy, he joined the "Gadar Party" there. After some time, he followed Dr. San's instructions and contacted him. In 1919, he returned to the farm. In 1928, under the direction of Girindra Nath Mukhopadhyay, the Gymnastic Center, the Sunday Society, and other well-being activities were set up in Garbari, Bangladesh.

Kumar Munindra Deb Roy, son of the Bansberia King Family, made a significant contribution to the Bengal library movement. He entered the social service throughout his school years. For his contributions to social welfare, he received the "Silver Jubilee Medal" and the "Coronation Medal." He used to help publish the monthly magazines "Pathagar" and "Purnima." He presided over the Ninth All India Library Conference as its president. His "Desh Bidesher Granthagar" was published by Calcutta's D.M. Library. It was the Bengal

Library Association's second book of services. In his book, he elaborated on the goals and purposes of the library. He went over the differences between a public library, a school library, and a college or university library. His thoughts on the importance of libraries in the development of a nation and relationships with the general public are now unavoidable. [12]

In 1947, the library's English name was converted to Bengali, and the Friend's Club and Tarun Sangha were amalgamated to form Panihati Bandhab Pathagar and Sabuj Pathagar. Aside from daily activities, the library used to host an adult education programme, welfare activities at religious gatherings, and a study circle on a regular basis. Malaria and beriberi had suddenly appeared in the area. The patients had been served by library youths. In 1946, the adolescent wing was inaugurated. The library was also involved in local construction and cleanliness projects on a regular basis. [13] Barisha Pathagar employees have honorary fulfilled their service until 1926. People were concerned about security in 1939, during the Second World War. The country had been inflamed by the Quit India Movement, a devastating famine, and communal riots. Barisha Pathagar had rendered its services in such a critical situation by providing clothes, food, shelter, and cleaning services on a regular basis. [14]

LECTURES ARRANGEMENTS:

Political events heavily influenced public oratory during and after the Swadeshi movement. Under the supervision of public libraries and samitis, the frequency and size of meetings rose dramatically. Rabindranath Tagore was discovered on the Sabitri Library's chair. [15] The Chaitanya Library's social activities are primarily focused on raising social, cultural, and political awareness. The library used to host regular talks and essay competitions. From 1890 through 1948, a total of seventy lectures were held. Rabindra Nath gave eight lectures, each of which was later published as an essay. "Europe Jatrir Dairy," "Engrej o Bharatbasir Sammandha," "Bankimchandra," "Mayeli Charcha," "Swadeshi Samaj," "Path o Patheyo," "Hindu Biswavidyalaya," and "Bharat Barsher Itihaser Dhara" were among his lectures. Dwijendra Nath Tahakur gave talks on topics such as "Aryani and Sahebiana," "Sadhana Prachya o Pratichya," and so on. Sister Nibedita, Ramendra Sundar Trivedi, and E. B. Havel gave talks on "Sannyas o Garhastha Bitarka," "Aranye Rodan," and "Kalar Byabahar," among other topics. Some of the library's seminars used to attract between 1500 and 2000 people. According to the organization's annual report, the majority of attendees were elite. From 1890 to 1917, the library hosted 54 essay competitions in both English and Bengali. [16] Rabindra Nath presented a paper on "Swadeshi Samaj" [17] in the Minarva Theater in Calcutta on July 19, 1904, in the company of Ramesh Chandra Dutta, Gurudas Bandopadhyay, and Hirendra Nath Dutta. Due to a lack of seating in the auditorium, it is estimated that around a thousand individuals returned. Tagore had to repeat his lecture nine days later in front of a crowd of 1,200 people in the Curzon Theatre, under immense pressure from the Bengali public. [18]

Rammohun Library, like Chaitanya Library, served as a hub for educational, cultural, and political awareness. Gobardhan Das and Damodar Das gave two thousand rupees on the condition that people from all walks of life might read books and periodicals for free, and the term "free reading room" would be associated with the Rammohun library. Rabindra Nath used to offer key essays on current political, social, educational, and cultural events at various library conferences. This different gathering used to attract other renowned Indian personalities. It is the earnest aim of the founders of Rammohun Library to make it a centre of culture and intellectual activity, as Dr. Jagadish Chandra Bose gave a talk on the library's objects during its 9th annual general meeting. It is not only a location where individuals can come to pass the time by reading light literature; we want to assist serious readers in selecting the best books to read. We wish to instil in them a passion for learning and a strong desire to attend advanced lectures presented by our most illustrious thinkers in literature, art, and science. It is our hope that this school will become a major centre of educational extension in the not-too-distant future. At the moment, the library has 56,368 volumes. [19] During the period, several meetings were held on the premises of the library. The anti-partition movement in Midnapore began with an assembly at Belly Hall, just as it had begun at the Town Hall in Calcutta on August 7, 1905. [20]

Hat Gobindapur Bani Mandir Pathagar was founded in Burdwan to promote nationalism among the local population by enhancing education, knowledge, and culture. From 1929 to 1933, lantern lectures were used to promote popular education and health awareness. With the help of a lecture, local youths revealed the facts of British oppression and exploitation. [21] In this context, in 1930, a peripatetic library, or movable local study circle, as well as a "Swadeshi Bhandar," were established. Lectures, exhibitions of Swadeshi crafts, seminars to teach nationalism, orient Narayangarh's ordinary people, and its adjunct area to the library, were all organised. [22] The Raj Shahi Public Library operated as a repository for rare records as well as a centre for study and culture in Raj Shahi. Eminent people were frequently invited to the library. They gave talks on the popular subject. [23] The eminent litterateurs of the country, Tarashankar Bandopadhyay, poet Bibhuti Bhusan Bandopadhyay, Vivekananda Bandopadhyay, editor of "Jugantar," Chapala Kanta Bhattacharya, editor of "Ananda Bazar," etc., would attend as guests to different yearly conferences in the Victoria Library's "Purnima Sammilan [24]

FEMALE, STUDENT, CHILDREN AND LABOUR WELFARE PRACTICE:

During the eighteenth century, primarily Brahma leaders were excited about publishing journals and forming associations to promote female education. Each society had a library to help them achieve their goals. As a result, societies and libraries were mutually beneficial. "Arya Nari Samaj" (1879) and "Paricharika" (1879) were edited by Keshab Sen's wife and Pratap Chandra Majumdar, respectively. Female members of the "Sadharan Brahma Samaj" society formed the "Banga Mahila Samaj" and held a craft show. Several women's

development institutions were created in Calcutta and Mofussil. Among them were the "Madhya Banga Sammilany," the "Bikrampur Sammilani," and the "Uttarpara Hitakari Sabha." Swarna Kumari Devi founded the "Shakhi Samity" to promote women's education and the development of craft education among widows. Sister Nivedita was very active in spreading female education in the Hindu community, and she belonged to a variety of organisations. With the assistance of the attached libraries, these samitis completed their objective. Women's emancipation was hastened by advances in education and the diffusion of progressive ideals throughout the country. Despite various societal limitations, their contribution to the establishment of educational institutions and libraries should not be overlooked. Nationalism improved the status of educated women. In succession, Swarna Kumari Devi and her two daughters, Hiranmoyee Devi and Sarala Devi, published "Bharati," a nationalist publication, in succession. They were active participants in the fight for independence. In 1890, Swarna Kumari Devi, Kadambini Gangapadhyay, and other Bangalee women were elected as representatives to the Calcutta Congress. [25] According to police reports, a number of Barisal public ladies allegedly gave their savings to the Swadesh Bandhab Samity. Rakhi-bandhan, arandhan, shattered their foreign churis, the meeting reading of Banga Lakshmir Brata-katha, and many other political programmes are observed in samitis and libraries.

Lila Nag founded the "Dipali Sangha," a women's group in Dacca, in 1923, and served as its secretary. Under the auspices of "Dipali Sangha," she created welfare charity primary schools and libraries. She then founded "Nari Siksha Mandir" as well. In terms of spreading female education, she was unrivalled. [26]

Lila joined the revolutionary group "Sreesangha" in 1925 and remained in contact with it until 1937. She founded the "Diplai Chatri sangha" in 1926. Its branches were established in several cities in Bengal and Assam. For the comfort of female revolutionaries, she established the "Chatri Bhawan" residential boarding house in Calcutta. In 1927–28, she established the "Nari Atmaraksha Fund" to provide shelter and support to oppressed women in East Bengal, following the organisation of a women's self-defense training course. Under her editorship, the female organ "Jayashree" was published in 1930. In the same year, she established the "Dacca Mahila Satyagraha Samiti" and assumed control of "Srisangha." In 1938, President Subhas Chandra Bose appointed Lila Roy to the female sub-committee of the executive committee of the National Planning Committee of Congress. In 1946, she went to riot-torn Noakhali for relief and helped to start the National Service Institute, a nonprofit institution, which she later became the secretary of. [27]

Joyti Chakraborty was a pivotal figure in the women's movement. After the Jalianwalabag massacre in 1919, she was enraged by British control. She and Sushila Mitra, together with a few patriotic women, created the "Seva Samity" to unify the female population against the British government's persecution. The organization's secretary was Jyoti Chakraborty. The

society's goals were to expand self-education among women while also training them in various service-oriented and constructive activities. In a very short time, "Seva Samity" became popular among ladies. Sushila Mitra, and she preached a boycott of British goods from village to village. Strikes, Satyagraha, picketing, and anti-government preaching were all active in the "Seva Samity". [28]

Bimal Prativa Debi was a key figure in the oppressed Indian labour movement. Through the influence of her father's colleague, a revolutionary leader, she was indoctrinated into "Swadeshi" in 1918. In 1921, Bimal Prativa became a member of Urmila Debi's "Nari Karma Mandir." She was elected to lead the Bengal section of the "Bharat Nawjawan Sabha." During the anti-salt act movement in 1930, she co-founded the "Nari Satyagraha Samity" alongside female Congress leaders and served as its joint secretary. [29]

Subhas Chandra Bose's zeal helped launch the "Mahila Rashtriya Sangha" in 1928. Its secretary was Latika Ghosh, and its president was Pravabati Basu. It brought together females from rural and urban areas and encouraged them to embrace their nationality through a variety of gymnastic activities. Latika Ghosh developed a number of education centres in Calcutta, including libraries, where women were educated about health and associated issues. Women received training in nursing and midwifery at the centre. [30] Susama Sengupta believed that education would increase patriotism. In 1933, she created a school with a library to help women have access to education. During her time in Dacca, she was quite close to Lila Roy's "Dipali Sangha." She was a member of the "Mahila Atmaraksha Samity" and the "Bharatiya Jatiya Mahila Fedaration", as well as an educator. [31] Sarala Ghosh, in addition to her medical practise, became involved in social welfare activities. She volunteered to help poor patients like her father, Annada Prasad Ghosh. [32]

The origins and development of the Guptipara Village Improvement Society in Hooghly are linked to Sisir Bani Mandir Pathagar. The society and library were founded by the eminent political politician and social worker, Sisir Kumar Bandopadhyay. In addition to the library's regular activities, librarians expanded their efforts to promote female education. [33] The organisers of the Ariadaha Library did not overlook the importance of child education. The Ariadaha Library's children's department began in 1939. In 1945, the Biswabharati affiliated "Lok Siksha Samsad" was established in the library to promote education among the villagers. [34] The Sripur student library's children's department was established in 1934 to encourage children to read. The Sripur Student Library established a free primary school, Sripur Student School, and a night school in 1935 and 1938, respectively, under the auspices of the Sripur Student Library. [35]

Mulajore Public Library organisers were also concerned about children's education. In 1942, Biswa Biswas presented an almirah with twenty books to the Mulajore Public Library's children's section, which he named Kamala Smriti Sishu Bibhag in honour of his wife, Kamala

Biswas. In addition to lending books, the library used to host recitations, debates, symposiums, and essay competitions on a regular basis. [36] The Howrah Assembly Library was established for the children's overall development. [37]

One of Chandannagar Pustakagar's most important efforts was student welfare. It has been involved in a number of charitable activities, including recognising top performers in the Chandannagar area, donating school tuition to deserving youngsters, and awarding several memorial prizes to accomplished individuals. There are numerous rare collections of periodicals and books on various subjects in the library. [38] At the Saraswati Pustakalaya's first annual ceremony, Makardaha, Howrah, and Kokileswar Shastri were present. He awarded gold and silver medals to the winning essay contestants. [39] The library in Gondalpara Sammilan Town was run by students who volunteered their time. [40] The Kulgachia public library is well-known for hosting child development programmes such as story-telling, drawing competitions, recitations, and awarding prizes to top students in final year exams. [41]

In May 1867, the Sashipada Institute library and free reading room opened to the public. Sashipada Bandopadhyay (1840–1925), the organization's founder, was born in Barabazar, near Calcutta. He turned to Brahmoism under the influence of Debendra Nath Tagore. As an educator and social reformer, he established a night school with a library for the working class, which was eventually renamed "Library and Free Reading Room" in honour of its founder. Sashipada began publishing a pictorial monthly called "Bharater Shramajibi" in 1872. Its linked library provided services to develop the mental horizons of the working class, which were nearly non-existent in many elite universities at the time. [42]

CONCLUSION:

Public libraries were inevitable creation of culturally conscious society, flourished to meet the need of society in ages. Naturally, their pattern of services framed based on the society's needs. They were manifested as Centre to spread of education when society suffers from low literacy. They performed book and newspaper reading, study circle, exhibition, lecture with magic lantern, opera show including literacy campaign to educate illiterate and neo literates. They gave priority to village construction and relief work to deepen their mass base. Construction of road and dam, cleaning of sewage of the locality, burning of dead bodies, nursing of ailing persons, lending of books from door to door were their significant social works. They also extended their welfare activities by arranging relief camp at the time of war, cyclone, flood and famine, distribution of medicine during plague, cholera and malaria which were inseparably related to Bengal.

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