

Chapter- 5

SOCIAL WELFARE ACTIVITIES OF PUBLIC LIBRARIES IN COLONIAL BENGAL

Library system accepted as measuring unit to the evolution of human civilization and culture. It has been rendering basically four responsibilities such as, to collect and preserve, arrange and disseminate all writing, printed or in other way preserved documents of human knowledge of past for present as well as future use. It is evident from its chronological background that, it is an inevitable creation of culturally conscious society, flourished to meet the need of society in ages. Naturally, its aims, objectives, nature, organizational pattern, documentary sources, arrangement, pattern of services etc. framed based on the society's needs. Social background in which library set up, created by circumstances, such as, co-operation of state, financial development, political stability, geographical location, cultural prosperity, personal and collective initiation, awareness of role of library etc. If any discrepancy arises in above circumstances evolution of library becomes stand still and it cannot discharge its social responsibilities.

In early nineteenth century public libraries were meant to a social agency to spread education, as according to the census of 1881, full literacy among Indian males was 6.6 percent while it was 0.3 percent among females. During swadeshi period even afterwards, libraries had to discharge their duties to boost nationalism. They 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, adult education programmes in villages and cities, night school in cities for workers, Books and Newspapers reading, story Telling, exhibition, radio Talk, etc. to continue education of neo- literates to attract mass- base. Libraries used to organize health awareness programme by magic lantern. Villagers used to assemble to the library premise to hear news, krishikathar asar, weather report etc. from radio set. Jatra, Kathakatha, Panchali were staged to spread mass-education and boost patriotism. Libraries included women empowerment, child, student and labour

welfare to attract mass base. In present chapter we intend to discuss social responsibilities of some public libraries and society- cum libraries.

RELIEF WORKS AND VILLAGE CONSTRUCTION WORKS

Constructive work in the village was taken up in earnest during the swadeshi period and onwards by many samitis as well as many public libraries. The Suhrid Samity of Mymensingh made considerable use of magic- lantern lectures.¹ Efforts were made to strike roots in the countryside through social work in the villages. Coldly rational arguments gave place to an appeal to the emotions and the imagination, through songs, plays and jatras, patriotic festivals and the rakhi- bandhan rite. Apart from Suhrid Samity, members of Swadeshbandhab, Anushilan and Jugantar and local libraries were also busy to preach social and political issues by magic- lantern lectures in melas or in library premise to attract mass base. In the latter half of 1906, the Barisal Swadesh Bandhab Samity organised famine relief work on a truly impressive scale; it ran 160 centres, and Nivedita later hailed this work as ‘the greatest thing ever done in Bengal’.² Both samitis and libraries had collected information relating to the population, resources and topography of the village.³ The programme of social service, such as, cremation of dead bodies, nursing of ailing persons, serving poor people on the occasion of festivals and opening national schools helped samitis as well as libraries to broad- base their activities.⁴ Srirampur Hitakarini Sabha in Hooghly basically organized to serve locality. The welfare committee renamed as ‘Srirampur Hitakarini Sabha’ when Dutch left India in 1845. It was transferred to the house of Shiv Chandra Palit Lane and later in the house of Ganger Saheb. That organization had played the role of library. As a result, the name of the Hitakarini Sabha changed its name in to Srirampur Public Library by a resolution of 1871 under the President ship of sub-divisional officer Traven Plauen. It is found that the library had performed different social welfare activities from its inception. Radio-talk relating krishikathar Asar, weather report, news attracted people to the library. Members had also lent books from door to door.⁵

Jay Krishna helped the democratization of knowledge by founding, with some other educationists, the Vernacular Literature Society and Public Library in Uttar Para out of his nationalistic wisdom. He was also an early leader of the library movement in India. If anyone action symbolized the character of his educational endeavours,

it was the foundation of the Uttar Para Public Library in 1859. Unlike many English-educated men of his time, he was fully aware of our rich cultural heritage and supported Sanskrit education by offering scholarships and assisting oriental seminaries. Radio-talk, arrangement of lectures through magic lantern, lending of books from door to door were regular service to the common people.⁶

Rajnarayan Basu Smriti Pathagar played memorable role to spread education in the district and participated directly or indirectly to the revolutionary activities of Swadeshi Age of Midnapore as well as Bengal. Book reading, newspaper reading, lending of books from door to door, radio talk and other cultural programme were performed with great zeal to spread education to common people.⁷

In Krishnan agar Public library, a charitable school was set up to spread literacy among common people. Drawing, essay competition, recitation, lecture with magic lantern were rendered in the library to continue education of the neo- literates.⁸

Mahesh Public library in Hooghly is found discharged many social responsibilities. Clothes were distributed regularly to the poor and destitute persons during Puja and Ratha festival from Mahesh Public library and Free Reading Room. Village women also used to look the chariot during Ratha festival comfortably by the management of library. Members of the library is said engaged in road repairing and cleaning of sewage of the locality.⁹

Organisers of Bhawanipur Institute were keen to cultural development of the locality with the help of library. The library had debate section, social welfare section and acting section. Its social welfare section relentlessly engaged in magic lantern lecture on health awareness, distribution of food, cloth, medicine during famine to attract mass base. Chitta Ranjan Das was secretary if it's social welfare section. In 1915, Bhawanipur Institute had attached to the library and the library was known as 'Cotton Library and Bhawanipur Institute'.¹⁰

Sripur Student library, the earlier name of Sripur Kalyan Samity established in 1891. The library with its 6 departments actively engaged to the all-round development of the village. Repair and building of roads, cleaning of sewage etc. were its welfare activities to attract common people to the library. Name of library was changed to 'Sripur Benevolent Association'.¹¹

Both Girindra Nath Mukhopadhyay and Kumar Munindra Deb Roy are memorable to give an account of social service of Bans Beria Public Library. Girindra Nath Mukhopadhyay, son of Bansberia and student of Scotch Church College, arrested in charge of murder of one English Police officer of Maharashtra in 1897. After his acutance in 1903, Giirindra Nath contacted with Savakar and later went to America with revolutionary Chandra Chakraborty and Avinas Bhattacharya to fetch arms as sheep- mate. There he joined in 'Gadar Party' in relation with M.N. Roy. After some time, he contacted with Dr. San-yeat according to his direction. He returned to the land in 1919. In 1928, Gymnastic Centre, Sunday Society and well fare activities were formed at Garbari under the guidance of Girindra Nath Mukhopadhyay.

It is worthy to mention the contribution of Kumar Munindra Deb Roy, son of Bansberia King Family to library movement in Bengal. During his student hood, he joined to the social service. He won 'Silver Jubilee Medal' and 'Coronation Medal' for his participation to the social welfare activities. Once he participated to publish monthlies,'Pathagar' and 'Purnima'. He was the president of Ninth All India Library Conference. His 'Desh Bidesher Granthagar' published from D.M. Library, Calcutta. It was the second book of the services of Bengal Library Association. In his book, he elaborated aims and objectives of library. He made theoretical explanation on public library, school library, and college and university library. He is views on rare of library to in building nation and relation with public are inevitable now a day.¹²

In 1947, English name of the library had been changed to Bengali name and Friend's Club and Tarun Sangha had been unified and emerged as Panihati Bandhab Pathagar and Sabuj Pathagar. In addition to daily activities, library used to organize adult education programme, welfare activities in religious gathering and study circle regularly. Suddenly malaria and beriberi had broken out in the locality. Youths of the library had served the patients. Adolescent wing was opened in 1946. The library also frequently engaged in village construction and cleaning works.¹³ Up to 1926, employees of the Barisha Pathagar had discharged their service honorary. In 1939, during Second World War peoples were anxious to security. Quit India Movement, deadly famine and communal riot had agitated the country.

Barisha Pathagar had discharged its services in such crucial situation by offering cloth, food, shelter etc. and regularly engaged in cleaning works.¹⁴

Sarsuna Prativa Library used to perform literacy programme, literacy circle, debate, library orientation and extension programme in addition to the normal book lending. In 1906 Prativa Library and Sarsuna Association opened 'Public Assistance division' to assist food, cloth, medicine, shelter, education to poor and distress. It had donated to Barisal and Faridpur (East Bengal) during famine in 1909. Members of the Association with the help of local people collected money, rice and clothes and send them to the Prafulla Chandra Roy in two times to assist flood- affected people of North Bengal in 1992. In that year, the Association too opened general department to co-ordinate activities of other departments. Volunteers of the Association had supplied indigenous goods during boycott of foreign goods. The Association and library had arranged medicine, sick diet, treatment and service in malaria and cholera affected village in 1919. During famine in 1943, the Association arranges free kitchen culture for distress and charitable milk-centre for child and poor under the co-operation and help of Biren Roy, the then chairman of south sub-urban Municipality and active effort of eminent worker of the association Binod Behari Mukhopadhyay. The association and library had performed so many welfare activities including cleansing of sewage in locality and set up rare example of library extension service during the period.¹⁵

Like other Public libraries in Bengal, Anulia Public Library had also attached with a club, known as recreation club. Since its foundation and in its changed status too, the library has been rendering immense service to the community by means of constructing and repairing roads, cleaning sewage of the locality. To perform the works, the library had collected aids from various authorities and organizations.¹⁶

Shantipur Public library has turned as educational and cultural centre of the locality by performing social welfare activities. Community Information Services are important features of the library and these were performed with the help of newspaper reading, radio talk and lecture through magic lantern.¹⁷

Kodialia Haranath Binapani Library in South 24 Parganas district bears a nostalgic history. Following ideals of Subhas Chandra Bose, a band of enthusiastic youth comprising Jyannendra Nath Ghosh, Bipin Behari Roy Chowdhury, Surendranath

Sil, Ramapati Das, Tarapasanna Basu and Jogendra Nath Chowdhury had decided to set up a library to discharge social service to the common people of the locality. Distribution of cloth, medicine to sick and destitute, awareness programme through newspaper reading, radio talk, magic lantern lecture, lending of books from door to door were some of its community welfare service.¹⁸

Madarat Bandhab Pathagar was established in 9th May, 1913 by a band of educated and energetic youth to spread literacy and to develop mental horizon of the common people of the locality.¹⁹ Mudialy Library is found to orient common men to library by lending books door to door.²⁰

Sisir Bani Mandir Pathagar attached with the origin and development of the Guptipara Village Improvement Society in Hooghly. Eminent political leader and social worker Sisir Kumar Bandopadhyay was the founder of the society and library. In addition to normal activities of the library, library staff extended their activities towards mass literacy campaign; lending of books from door to door to spread female education, exhibition on health awareness programme to prevent Malaria and Kalazar etc.²¹

Sushil Palit and Jagadish Palit came to Bankura from Avayashram in Kumilla following the directives of Gandhiji. They set up Harijan (untouchable) school and library in the Databandh area of Bankura. Jagadish Palit had turned the library in a purposeful and prestigious organization. The library caught attention of common people basically for its welfare works. Beside lending of books from door to door, it engaged in village construction, repairing and cleaning work. To fulfil information, need of the common people, the library used to arrange radio talk, newspaper reading, magic lantern, lecture apart from distribution of food, cloth and medicine to destitute.²²

Makardah village in Howrah is famous due to goddess Makarchandi. The village had acquired separate status not only for religious factor but also to spread education. As a result, schools and library was established in the village. It was 1885; 'Saraswati Pustakalaya' was established in a big house in Srimanipara. Later it transferred to the house of Haladhar Srimani. Welfare of poor and Social functions was performed regularly in the library in addition to the lending of books.

In the first annual function of the Library, Kokileswar Shastri was present. He presented gold and silver medals to the successful essay competitors.²³

Prasanna Kumar Library in Association with Swasthyasree Byamsamiti would also perform social welfare activities at Beldanga area in Murshidabad. The library is said to performed village construction, cleansing work, relief work during famine community information work by holding radio talk, newspaper reading apart from lending books from door to door.²⁴

Saraswati Karma Mandir in Burdwan was a voluntary organization established in 1922. It used to discharge welfare activities in Raniganj area. A library was also attached with it. A first-class gymnasium, a service centre for destitute and a dramatic performance stage were also attached with the Saraswati Karma Mandir. Apart from book- lending, football match, service to patients, cremation and dramatic performances were regularly performed by the library.²⁵

It was early part of Twentieth Century; Dakshin Kolkata Sevak Samity with library had earned a key role in history political consciousness and social welfare of the southern part of South Calcutta. Subas Chandra Basu with the help of some local volunteers established it under the chairmanship of C.R. Das in 1923. Cremation of dead bodies, distribution of food, cloth, medicine to poor and women were routine work of the Sevak Samity.²⁶

During famine in 1943, miserable effects of famine were exhibited on the barren land of Asutosh Palla on behalf of Howrah Adhyan Sammilani library. A relief camp was also opened in the library for famine affected people.²⁷

Guskara in Burdwan was famous for nationalistic activities during British period. Youths of the locality used to assemble under the banner of Hindu Milan Mandir and performed many social welfare activities to attract common people's faith towards them.²⁸ Literary campaign, poor welfare programme, medical aid and many other cultural activities were performed in regular basis in Shanti Samsad Sanskriti Pathagar in South 24 Parganas Samsad.²⁹

Mass mobilization activities, by means of organizing night school, social welfare activities used to perform in the Tenya TMA library in Murshidabad with full passionate zeal. Common men of the locality had actively participated to organize

the library to spread literacy and cultural awareness among people.³⁰ Bandhab Samity' in Puras had acquired fame for their welfare activities. Both literacy and health awareness programme were performed by radio talk, newspaper reading, magic lantern lecture and lending book from door to door.³¹ Famine relief camp was opened in Kulgachia Public Library, Howrah during famine in 1942. Library members were often render their service to construction, repair of roads, dams and several cleaning programme apart from lending books from door to door.³² Volunteers of Narayangarh who were also organizer of library would arrange relief work to destitute during natural disaster, construction, repair and cleaning work in villages to attract common people.³³

Garia Public Library in South Calcutta had maintained social responsibilities of the locality side by side its educational and cultural awareness.³⁴ Social welfare works which included distribution of cloth, food, medicine etc. during famines and riots were part and parcel of Woodburn Public library, Bogra.³⁵ Barishal Public Library would raise fund to supply, devastating epidemic time and again which were inseparably related to Bengal. It had earned fame by organising urgent relief work in hard toil and effective organisation. The library became fortunate enough to receive direct assistance and inspiration of Aswini Kumar Dutta in that social welfare work.³⁶

Apart from physical and moral training, preaching swadeshi message through multifarious forms, public libraries and society libraries are found organised crafts schools, arbitration courts and implemented the technique of passive resistance etc. Both Noakhali and Kishorganj Public Library are found engaged in a variety of activities, such as, social work during famines, epidemics or religious festivals.³⁷ Raj Shahi Public Library would raise fund to supply relief work in famine, flood, storm, devastating epidemic time and again which were inseparably related to Bengal. It had earned fame by organising urgent relief work in hard labour and effective organisation.³⁸

Scholars and intellectuals of Raj Shahi founded 'Anjuman -I-Himayet-I-Islam'' which later renamed as Shah Makdum Institute to spread education culture and to discharge social welfare activities. It was set up to preach and spread mainly Muslim community related social, worldly, cultural and religious knowledges.³⁹

‘Hitaisini Sabha’ of Habeti Parganas was a famous social and cultural association. The association with the help of Kumudbasini library performed different social welfare activities.⁴⁰ Ram Krishna Library was familiar for its relief works during famine, cyclone, flood, epidemic which was inseparably related to Bengal especially East Bengal.⁴¹

Naihati Tarun Sangha Club, 24 parganas and Kalighat Tarun Sangha, Kolkata often engaged in village construction work to build river-dam, to clean sewage, to prepare road and welfare activities during festival, natural calamity and famine.⁴² During 1939 to 1946, Shanti Samsad Sanskriti Pathagar in South 24 Parganas not only desisted in book-lending, it also had played a key role to the constructive work of the locality, like, building of roads, cleaning of sewages etc.⁴³

ARRANGEMENT OF LECTURES

During the swadeshi movement and afterward political incidents influenced public oratory greatly. The number and size of meetings increased vastly under the supervision of public libraries and samitis. Rabindranath is found was on the chair of Sabitri Library.⁴⁴ Social activities of Chaitanya Library based on mainly to spread social, cultural and political awareness. Regular lectures and essay competitions used to organize from the library. Total seventy lectures were arranged from 1890 to 1948. Rabindra Nath himself delivered eight lectures here and each of them published as essay latter. His lectures were ‘Europe Jatrir Dairy’, ‘Engrej o Bharatbasir Sammandha’, ‘Bankimchandra’, ‘Mayeli Charcha’, ‘Swadeshi Samaj’, ‘Path o Patheyo’, ‘Hindu Biswavidyalaya’ and ‘Bharat Barsher Itihaser Dhara’. Dwijendra Nath Tahakur delivered lectures on ‘Aryani and Sahebiana’, ‘Sadhana Prachya o Pratichya’ etc. Rajani Kanta delivered lectures on ‘Hindur Ashram Chatustay’, Sister Nibedita, Ramendra Sundar Trivedi, E B Havel delivered lectures on ‘Sannyas o Garhastha Bitarka’, ‘Aranye Rodan’ and ‘Kalar Byabahar’ etc. About 1500 to 2000 thousand participants used to attend in some of seminars of the library. It was reported in its Annual report that; major portion of attendants were elite. During 1890 to 1917, 54 essay competitions, both English and Bengali were held in the library.⁴⁵ In this connection, it is noted that Rabindra Nath presented paper on ‘Swadeshi Samaj’⁴⁶ in presence of Ramesh Chandra Dutta, Gurudas Bandopadhyay, and Hirendra Nath Dutta in the Minarva Theater in

Calcutta in 19th July 1904. It is reported that about one thousand people had returned due to want of space in the auditorium. Under tremendous pressure from the Bengali Public, Tagore had to present his Lecture again 9 days later at the Curzon Theatre to an audience of 1200 people.⁴⁷

Like Chaitanya Library, Rammohun Library was also a dissemination centre of educational, cultural and political awareness. Gobardhan Das, Damodar Das had donated two thousand rupees in a condition that peoples from all sphere of the community could be read books and journals in freely and words 'free reading room' would be attached with the Rammohun library. Rabindra Nath used to attend in different conferences in the library and presented important essays on current political, social, educational and cultural incidents. Other eminent personalities in India used to attend in this different conference. Dr. Jagadish Chandra Bose delivered lecture on the objects of the library in its 9th annual general meeting as, it is the earnest desire of the promoters of Rammohun Library to make it a Centre of culture and intellectual activity. It is not merely to be a place of people to come and while away their time by reading light literature. 'We intend to help serious readers to choose best books to read. We want to create in them a love for knowledge, a keen desire for advanced lectures, to be delivered by our most eminent thinkers on literature, art and science. It is our desire that this institution shall at, no distant date, be a great centre of Educational Extension Movement. At present the library collected 56,368 volumes'.⁴⁸ Many meetings used to hold in the library premise at that time. Anti-Partition movement in Midnapore was started from the meeting of Belly Hall as it was commenced at the Town Hall in Calcutta in 7th August, 1905.⁴⁹

Hat Gobindapur Bani Mandir Pathagar in Burdwan was established to create nationalism among people of the locality by amplifying education, knowledge and culture. From 1929-33 mass-education and mass-health consciousness started with the help of lantern- lecture. Youths of the locality demonstrated the fact of British oppression and exploitation with the help of lecture.⁵⁰ In this background, peripatetic library or mobile local study circle and 'Swadeshi Bhandar' were organised in 1930. Organisation of lectures, exhibition of swadeshi crafts, seminars to preach nationalism, oriented common people of Narayangarh and its adjunct area to the library.⁵¹ Raj Shahi Public Library had not only preserved rare documents

but it counted as the centre of learning and culture of Raj Shahi. Frequently eminent persons were invited to the library. They delivered lectures on the popular topic.⁵² In 'Purnima Sammilani' of Victoria Library, Natore eminent litterateurs of countrywide, Tarashankar Bandopadhyay, poet Bibhuti Bhusan Bandopadhyay, Vivekananda Bandopadhyay, editor of 'Jugantar', Chapala Kanta Bhattacharya, editor of 'Ananda Bazar' etc. would attend as guest in different yearly conferences.⁵³

LITERARY CIRCLE, DEBATE AND CULTURAL COMPETITION

According to Carpenter, the upper rooms are reserved to accommodate respectable visitors as well as hold public meetings and to deliver lectures- in fact to serve the purpose of town hall. Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar, Bhudev Mukhopadhyay, Keshab Chandra Sen, Hemchandra Bandopadhyay and many distinguished personalities expressed their pleasure to visit the library. Madhusudan Dutta took guest-ship in the Joy Krishna public library for two times.⁵⁴

In 1933, session of the Asian Library Conference was held in Srirampur public library. Kumar Munindra Deb Roy, Newton Mohan Dutta, Heramba Nath Maitra, Dinesh Chandra Sen, Ramananda Chattopadhyay, Khodabox and many other learned persons had attended its different functions at different time.⁵⁵ In 1937, Twentieth Bengal Literary Conference was held in the Chandannager public library and Rabindra Nath Tagore was the inaugurator of the conference.⁵⁶

Literary discussion, study circle, debate, magic lantern lecture, general knowledge, drawing, recitation, storytelling, radio- talk etc. were regularly performed in the Bali Public library from the very beginning. Eminent personalities visited library in different time. Sarat Chandra Chattopadhyay, Subhas Chandra Bose, Ramananda Chattopadhyay, Bijoy Lal Chattopadhyay, Hemendra Prasad Ghosh, Amullya Charan Vidyabhusan, Brijendra Bandopadhyay expressed their pleasure to visit library.⁵⁷

During 1933- 36, many notable meeting and conferences were held in the Nabadwip public library. Literary conference of Nabadwip Purnima Sammelan, Examination and Convocation of Bibudhajanani, felicitation of education minister khan Bhadur Ajijul Haque and Hari Shankar Pal, Mayor of Calcutta etc. were some of them.⁵⁸ Beside lending, extension and orientation activities, such as Book

reading, radio- talk, exhibition, cultural competition, indoor and outdoor sports and games used to perform in the Saptam Edward Memorial Hall, Alipurduar.⁵⁹ Mass literacy programme was main objective of Bishnupur library. Study circle, exhibition, regular lectures, cultural competitions, sports and games used to perform in the Bishnupur library as part its mass mobilizing activities.⁶⁰ Bhabanipur Institute had debate section. Samillani Pathya Samity o Sadharan Pathagar also performed library orientation programme, besides lending of books. Recitation, Study circle, Newspaper reading were regularly performed in the library.⁶¹ In Barisha Pathagar, Dijendra Nath Roychowdhury engaged himself to hold conference, lecture, debate, essay, and cultural competition etc. to spread knowledge and culture.⁶² Contai library had engaged in various forms mobilizing efforts, such as, moral and physical training by means of organizing book and newspaper reading, lectures, health awareness programme with magic lantern.⁶³ Panihati Bandhab Pathagar, Sabuj Pathagar and Sarsuna Prativa Library used to perform literacy programme, literary circle, debate, radio- talk, library orientation and extension programme in addition to the normal book lending.⁶⁴ Apart from social welfare activities, 'Friend's Association' at Bainan in Howrah is found actively engaged to the educational and cultural development of the villagers since 1910.⁶⁵

Radhika Nath Nandi is still alive for his contribution to spread education in Jalpaiguri District. He had planned to set up a library to spread literacy among common people of Duars. In 1910, he had performed this noble work, to start Moynaguri Public Library at the waiting room of Jotedars beside the khasmahal office. At that time, library premise had earned fame as educational and cultural place by organizing lectures, cultural competition, exhibition and indoor-outdoor games and sports.⁶⁶

Garal Gacha public library in Hooghly had won fame at that time. Dr. Sashibhusan Mukhopadhyay used to organize seminar on literature, contemporary topics and popular science to educate common man of the locality when he was president of it.⁶⁷ Literacy programs and many topics on social and political issues were regularly discussed in the reading circle, magic lantern lectures of libraries of Chanduli, Santragachi and Madhab Smriti Pathagar. These libraries used to perform several sports and gymnastic programmes as part of their mass mobilizing activities.⁶⁸

Bangaon Public Library and town Hall was started in the room of Lawyers' Library. Literary and cultural programmes used to perform in the library side by side physical exercises. Villagers used to assemble in library premise to hear radio talk. Famous novelist Bibhuti Bhusan Bandopadhyay was felicitated in a literary conference of the library in 1938.⁶⁹ Mirjapur Satsahitya Sammilani Library used to organize study circle, story- telling, newspaper reading, recitation for neo-literates.⁷⁰ Anandapur Public Library would organize orientation and extension programme by performing cultural events, radio- talk, magic lantern lectures and lending books from door to door by its members.⁷¹ Mass literacy campaign was an important activity of Hitasadhan Samity Pathagar of Kotulpur in Bankura. To fulfil the object, it used to organize several educational cultural and physical fitness activities.⁷²

History of freedom movement and freedom fighters, like, Shivaji, Matzzini, and Garibaldi etc. were discussed in that study circle of Hat Gobindapur Banimandir Pathagar in Burdwan. Srigopal Bandopadhyay of the village Palsheet and Hemakesh Chowdhury of Khanagram was communicator of the study circle. Gobindapur, Palsheet, Begut were also included in the study circle.⁷³ Naihati Tarun Sangha Club and Tarun Sangha library were not only confined in lending of books, but members used to engage several welfare and constructive activities.⁷⁴ Beside daily lending of books, Bharat Chandra Roy Gunakar Smriti Sahitya Mandir Rural Library used to hold book- reading, story- telling, cultural competition, recitation etc. to continue education of neo- literate and illiterates.⁷⁵ Dariberia Bapuji Pathagar in Midnapore used to hold book and newspaper reading, story- telling etc. to spread literacy.⁷⁶ Anayetpur Union Library in Malda was established in 1937. Mass literacy programmes were regularly performed with the help of radio speech, news and newspaper reading, books reading etc.⁷⁷ Sometime government bureaucrats in British period acted towards the interest of common people through elsewhere they belong to the elite class. Sushil Chandra the then SDO of Dinajpur was such type of benevolent person who had inspired common people of the locality to set up a library in kaliaganj under jurisdiction of Dinajpur district to spread literacy among common people.⁷⁸ Lectures, debates, social functions were regularly performed in Garh Bhawanipur R.P. Institute, Old Boys (Rural) Library in Howrah.⁷⁹ Mobilising activities, such as, newspaper reading, study circle,

cultural competition was regularly performed in the Madhyahingli Tarun Sangha Pathagar in Midnapore and Sautiya Kishori Ranjan Smriti Pathagar in Midnapore.⁸⁰ Sahid Pathagar in Midnapore and Hetampur Ram Ranjan Library in Birbhum were successfully participating mobilizing efforts by organizing book and newspaper reading, seminar, exhibition, debate etc. beside lending of books.⁸¹ Besides daily lending, Kharagpur Milan Mandir Pathagar in Midnapore had organized debate, recitation, drawing competition etc. to spread literacy and to train neo-literate of the locality.⁸²

The library turned into a cultural institution not only in Rangpur but also in whole Bengal. Literary discussion, study circle, lectures on current or any important topics etc. were part and parcel of Rangpur Public library. Social welfare activities were other features of the library.

Rangpur Public library with the help of Rangpur Sahitya Parishad performed these activities with full dignity. Due to want of sources, continuous history of Rangpur Public Library was not known to us.⁸³ Easy communication between Jessore and Calcutta was helpful to cultural revival of Jessore. Jessore Institute was turned into a complete cultural Centre. Readers of different ages would crowd in Biswanath Library Hall, regular literary circle, 'Purnima Sammelan' and musical competition would hold in front of library hall.⁸⁴ Library orientation and extension programme in the forms of literary discussion, literacy conference, reading circle, recitation, essay competition etc. were regularly hold in Woodburn Public Library, Bogra and Raj Shahi Public library.⁸⁵ MacPherson Library became foot- stool of social and cultural celebration. 'Purnima Sammilani', literary organisations have been held regularly in the library. Members assembled at the literacy circle in each full moon. Local and external litterateurs used to attain in the circle. Later, all activities of Bagerhat literacy association had performed from the library. Some total, the role of the library was immense in a small town like Bagerhat in that age.⁸⁶

DRAMA, JATRA, KATHAKATA, PANCHALI, KABIGAN AND OTHER FOLK- SONGS

Drama, Jatra, Kathakata, Panchali, Kabigan and other folk- songs were also medium of mass education when number of educational institution and literacy rate are too low in Bengal. Gradually they were used to preach nationalism during

swadeshi period and onwards. Apart from Mukunda Das in Barisal or Suhrud Samity of Mymensingh, local libraries had published swadeshi pallisangeet, insisted village poets to compose swadeshi songs in local dialect suitable for village audiences. In Bankura, local Bhadu folk- songs became a vehicle for swadeshi propaganda.⁸⁷ In Barisal, Aswinikumar Dutta persuaded the Muslim folk poet Mofijuddin Bayati to compose swadeshi songs in village dialect, utilizing the traditional form of the jari- gan.⁸⁸ Apart from songs of Rabindranath and other reputed author, public libraries used to hold folk- songs, like, Bhadu, Tusu, Jhumur, Sari, Jari, Raibense, Gmbhira, Bhatiali as vehicle to preach nationalism and to attract common people to the library culture. Girishchandra's Sirajuddoulah, Mir Kasim, and Chatrapati Shivaji; Khirodprasad's Palasir Prayaschitya and Nandakumar, and Haripada Chatterjee's Durgasur and Ranajiter Jiban⁸⁹ and other proscribed dramas were often staged on the stages of Calcutta and library premise of mofussil Bengal. Libraries were fully use jatra, Kathakata, the traditional open-air folk- entertainments to gain mass base. In Jatra the great name of course is Jogneswar De, far better known as Mukunda Das. He at one time or another visited nearly every district in Bengal⁹⁰ and his visit had a tremendous impact even on the Muslim masses.⁹¹ Drama, Jatra, and pally sangits were often performed in melas, patriotic festivals, religious festivals on behalf of libraries. Besides daily lending, dramatic performances and social functions, like, Jatra, Panchali and Kabigan etc. were performed regularly in well decorated stage of Shibpur Public Library.⁹²

Bhabanipur Institute had acting section. Patriotic dramas were often staged in its well decorated stage. Samillani Pathya Samity o Sadharan Pathagar earned fame for its Dramatic performances.⁹³ Drama, Jatra, Kathakata were also medium of mass education when number of educational institution and literacy rate are too low in Bengal. Nirmal Shib Bandopadhyay, younger son of Jadavlal Bandopadhyay had organized the library in memory of his elder brother Atulshiba benevolent person and honorary magistrate of Lavpur. It is found that, it was a first-class stage and club with library to perform acting. Tarashankar Bandopadhyay, the famous novelist of Bengali literature was the worthy son of Lavpur had closely attached to the library. He used to participate acting on the library stage.⁹⁴ In 1914, college and ex- student Association library was established in Jalpaiguri. The association used

to stage drama in a year. They set up Sashi Kumar Neogi Memorial from the fund of the collected Drama Charity show.⁹⁵

MUSICAL AND DRAMATICAL PERFORMANCE

Mirzapur Satsahitya Sammelan in Modern Midnapur, present Sahriday Netaji Gramin Granthagar in Bankura, and Madhutoti Swaraswati Library in Purulia and Saraswati Karma Mandir in Burdwan are found organized Musical and dramatic performances by acting swadeshi dramas and performing 'Bhadu', 'Tusu' and other folk- songs with great zeal to gain broad base.⁹⁶ Dramatic performances on swadeshi dramas were showed in patronization of Kulgachia public library, howrah.⁹⁷ Musical and dramatic performances would hold in Woodburn Public Library.⁹⁸

Dramatic and musical performances on patriotic theme were often performed in the open spaces of Roy Gunakar Bharat Chandra Smriti Sahitya Mandir Rural Library.⁹⁹ Different types of drama would stimulate on the movable stage of B. Sarkar Memorial Hall. Renowned actors would frequently come and go to participate acting. In these ways the cultural courtyards of Jessore institute were resounded. Musical and dramatic performances would perform in Rangpur Public Library with full dignity.¹⁰⁰

GYMNASTIC ACTIVITY

It was felt that without hard and fast rules, physical and mental strength a powerful body and military organization never has been and never can be created. An elaborate arrangement was made for the promotion of physical and mental capacity of the participants among the members of the library as well as common people of the adjunct areas. The participants were expected to be largely school boys, 'their ages ranging from 22 to 9, mostly below 15'. They received instructions in using arms and ammunitions, lathi play and sword exercise. The drill and mock- fights with lathis, swords etc. among members were often staged on the open spaces of the libraries.¹⁰¹ Physical and gymnastic programme used to embody effectively in Rangpur Public Library.¹⁰² Jessore Public Library in association with Town Club used to participate different physical exercises. It would frequently win matches through the year.¹⁰³ Under the supervision of Aswini Kumar Datta, Barishal Public Library used to hold mock- fight and drill throughout the year.¹⁰⁴ Following the

directives of the Anushilan Samity, lathi play and sword exercise were often stage on the open spaces of Dacca Rammohan Library.¹⁰⁵ In 1907, Sarsuna Prativa Library and Sarsuna Association set up Gymnasium to develop physical fitness of the people.¹⁰⁶ Moynaguri Public Library in Jalpaiguri, Contai public library and Mirjapur Satsahitya Sammilani Library earned fame for sports and gymnastic activities. Libraries had collected many shields as sign of performance in sports.¹⁰⁷

In 1920, Aswini Kumar Chattapadhyay and Bankim Chattapadhyay, two educated, energetic and enthusiastic brothers of Beldanga under Murshidabad district have established the library, Prasanna Kumar Memorial library in memory of their father to spread literacy among people of the locality. After long interval, the library had received patronage of Swasthyasree Byam Samiti. During Swadeshi Movement, many Gymnastic societies were established in different parts of Bengal to conduct mass mobilization activities. Beldanga was not desisted from it. Famous gymnastic Bishnucharan Ghosh and Manotosh Roy had set up Gymnasium to train physical exercises to the local youth under the name of Swasthyasree Byamsamiti. Social welfare activities would also perform from the society.¹⁰⁸

Library of Howrah Assembly established for all round development of the child. In due course, it was renamed as Howrah Assembly in 1933. Band Party of the assembly won fame at that time. Young numbers showed excellent performance in military band. In the foundation ceremony of the Mahajati Sadan, the Band party invited and showed their performance. Subhas Chandra used to invite the party to different conference of the Congress. The library of the assembly created reading habit to the locality.¹⁰⁹

Kalighat Tarun Sangha in Calcutta, present Sahrday Netaji Gramin Granthagar in Bankura, and Madhutoti Swaraswati Library in Purulia, Hitasadhan Samity Pathagar of Kotulpur in Bankura are also found attracted peoples of the localities by organizing mock- fighting, drilling and physical events.¹¹⁰ Saiyad Amir Ali Library established at Mominpur area in Middle Calcutta during Civil Disobedience Movement in 1929. Mass- literacy and mass- mobilizing programme, such as, drill and mock- fight with lathi, sword, dragger was often played to attract youths towards library.¹¹¹ Saraswati Karma Mandir in Burdwan and Dariberia Bapuji Pathagar in Midnapore used to hold sports and gymnastic activities through

playing lathi, sword, dragger to boost nationalism.¹¹² Mukherjee family, the Zamindar of Champadani set up Kumud Smriti Sangha and library to continue body building excise and fulfil sports needs of the locality.¹¹³ Guskara in Burdwan was famous for nationalistic activities during British period. Youths of the locality used to assemble themselves under the banner of Hindu Milan Mandir organized by Kaitista Chandra Chatterjee. Bhabani Ghosh, Lal Mohan Maji, Shibuji Chongdar and many others were engaging to body building exercises, sports and boxing etc.¹¹⁴

The name Kandra Jnadas Pallimangal Library in Burdwan was added to Pallimangal Samity in the 5th decade of the Twentieth century. Pallimangal Samity established in 1939 at Tahakurpara inside the Kandra village. Founder member of the club was Sri Mohan Thakur, a freedom fighter of the locality. The club had Gymnasium and library sections. Youths had trained boxing, stick playing etc as a part of physical exercise and library started with 20 books and 9members.¹¹⁵ Mobilising activities through both physical and gymnastic activities were regularly performed in the Madhyahingli Tarun Sangha Pathagar, Sautiya Kishori Ranjan Smriti Pathagar in Midnapore and Tenya TMA library in Murshidabad.¹¹⁶ Narayangarh Sadharan Pathagar caught attention of the villagers for its physical and gymnastic works, like, play of lathi, sword and dagger.¹¹⁷ Sports and gymnastic events were embodied in Sahid Pathagar in Midnapore and Hetampur Ram Ranjan Library in Birbhum to mobilize common people to patriotism.¹¹⁸

WELFARE OF FEMALE, STUDENT, CHILDREN AND LABOUR

During nineteenth century, mainly Brahma leaders were enthusiastic to publish magazines and set up societies for the development of female education. Each society had library to fulfil their objectives. So, societies and libraries were complimentary to each other. Keshab Sen's wife and Pratap Chandra Majumdar edited 'Arya Nari Samaj' (1879) and 'Paricharika' respectively. Females belong to 'Sadharan Brahma Samaj' community established 'Banga Mahila Samaj' and arranged a craft exhibition. Several institutions established in Calcutta and Mofussil for the development of women. 'Madhya Banga Sammilany', 'Bikrampur Sammilani' and 'Uttarpara Hitakari Sabha' were renowned among them. Swarna Kumari Devi had established 'Shakhi Samity' to spread education among women

and to develop craft education among widows. Sister Nivedita was also energetic to spread female education among Hindu community and she attached herself to number of societies. These samitis were performing their mission with the help of attached libraries. Advancement of education and spread of progressive ideas in the country accelerated the emancipation of women. In spite of some limitation in social sphere, their contribution to set up educational institutions and libraries could not be denied. Educated women were boosted up with nationalism. Swarna Kumari Devi and her two daughters, Hiranmoyee Devi and Sarala Devi successively edited 'Bharati' an organ of nationalism. They took an active part in the struggle for freedom. Swarna Kumari Devi, Kadambini Gangapadhyay and other Bangalee women attended Calcutta Congress in 1890 as representative.¹¹⁹ According to police report, a number of Barisal public women made over their savings to the Swadesh Bandhab Samity.¹⁰² Women are found observed rakhi- bandhan, arandhan, smashed their foreign churis, met reading of Banga lakshmir brata- katha and so many political programmes under samitis as well as libraries.

In 1923, Lila Nag organized a women's organization, 'Dipali Sangha' at Dacca and she became its secretary. She established welfare charity primary schools and libraries under the assiduity of 'Dipali Sangha'. Later she too established 'Nari Siksha Mandir'. She was peerless to spread female education.

In 1925, Lila joined a revolutionary organization 'Sreesangha' and she was touch with it upto 1937. In 1926, she formed 'Diplai Chatri sangha'. Its branches were set up in the different cities of Bengal and Assam. She set up a residential boarding. 'Chatri Bhawan' at Calcutta for the convenience of female revolutionaries. She opened 'Nari Atmaraksha Fund', for the shelter and assistance of oppressed female of East Bengal in 1927-28 when a training of self- defence of women had been arranged. In 1930, female organ 'Jayashree' was published under her editorship. In the same year, she formed, 'Dacca Mahila Satyagraha Samiti' and took charge of 'Srisangha'. Lila Roy became nominated as member of female sub-committee of the executive committee of the National Planning Committee of Congress under president Subhas Chandra Bose in 1938. In 1946, she visited riot- effected Noakhali for relief and set up national service institute, a charitable organization and became its secretary.¹²¹

Joyti Chakraborty was revolutionary personality in women's movement. She was terribly perturbed towards British rule after Jalianwalabag massacre in 1919. She and Sushila Mitra with some patriotic female formed 'Seva Samity' to united female community against oppression of British Government. Jyoti Chakraborty was the secretary of the organization. Objectives of the society to spread self-education among female side by side trained them in different service oriented and constructive activities. Within very short time, 'Seva Samity' became popular among women. She and Sushila Mitra preached to quit British goods from village to village. 'Seva Samity' took active part in Strike, Satyagraha, picketing and all type of anti- government preaching.¹²²

Bimal Prativa Debi played an important role in labour movement in subjugated India. In 1918, she indoctrinated to 'Swadeshi' by the influence of her father's colleague, a revolutionary leader. Bimal Prativa joined Urmila Debi's 'Nari Karma Mandir' in 1921. She became the chairperson of Bengal branch of 'Bharat Nawjawan Sabha'. In 1930, she formed 'Nari Satyagraha Samity' with the female leaders of Congress during anti- salt act agitation and became joint secretary of it.¹²³

'Mahila Rashtriya Sangha' was formed by the assiduity of Subhas Chandra Bose during 1928. Latika Ghosh was its secretary and Pravabati Basu was its president. It organized females of villages and towns and boosted them to nationalism by performing different type of Gymnastic activities. Latika Ghosh organized many education centres including libraries in Calcutta where health awareness and related topics were discussed to the women. Nursing and mid- wifery training of women were imparted from the centre.¹²⁴ Susama Sengupta believed education will boost nationalism. She opened school including libraries to spread education among women during 1933. She closely attached with Lila Roy's 'Dipali Sangha' during her time in Dacca. She was not only educationist but active member of 'Mahila Atmaraksha Samity' and 'Bharatiya Jatiya Mahila Fedaration'.¹²⁵ Sarala Ghosh engaged herself to the social welfare activities beside her medical profession. She engaged to the service of destitute patients like her father Annada Prasad Ghosh.¹²⁶

Sisir Bani Mandir Pathagar attached with the origin and development of the Guptipara Village Improvement Society in Hooghly. Eminent political leader and

social worker Sisir Kumar Bandopadhyay was the founder of the society and library. In addition to normal activities of the library, library staff extended their activities to spread female education.¹²⁷ Child education had not omitted attention of organizers of the Ariadaha Library. In 1939, child section of Ariadaha Library was opened. In 1945, 'Lok Siksha Samsad' affiliated by Biswabharati, was opened in the library to spread education among people of village.¹²⁸ Child section of the Sripur student library started in 1934 to develop reading habit of child. A free primary school, Sripur student school and night school started in 1935 and 1938 respectively under the assuinity of the Sripur Student library.¹²⁹

Education of children was also caught attention of organizers of Mulajore Public Library. In 1942, Biswa Biswas donated an almirah with twenty books to the child section of the Mulajore Public Library and the section named as Kamala Smriti Sishu Bibhag to keep memory of his wife kamala Biswas. Library used to organize recitation, debate, symposium, essay competition regularly in addition to lending of books.¹³⁰ Library of Howrah Assembly established for all round development of the child.¹³¹

Student welfare was one of important activities of Chandannagar Pustakagar. It has been performing several welfare activities, like, felicitation of position holder in Chandannagar area, donation of fees to needy school students and to provide different memorial prizes to proficient them. The library has numerous rare collections of periodicals and books on different subjects.¹³² In the first annual function of the Saraswati Pustakalaya, Makardaha, Howrah and Kokileswar Shastri was present. He presented gold and silver medals to the successful essay competitors.¹³³ Gondalpara Sammilan Town library was managed by the voluntary service of the students.¹³⁴ Kulgachia public library earned fame to hold child development programme, such as, story- telling, drawing competition, recitation, distribution of prize to rank- holders in final year examination etc.¹³⁵

The library of Sashipada Institute library and free Reading Room was opened to public in May 1867. Founder Sashipada Bandopadhyay (1840-1925) was born in Barabazar near Calcutta. Under influence of Debendra Nath Tagore, he converted to Brahmoism. As an educationist and social reformer, he opened a night school including library for labour class, which later renamed as 'Library and free reading

room' attaching with its founder's name. In 1872, Sashipada published a pictorial monthly 'Bharater Shramajibi'. The library attached to it had discharged services to develop mental horizon of labour class which was almost absent in many elite institutions of that period.¹³⁶

Observation

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.

Public libraries are found as organizer of lectures during the period. Apart from Chaitanya Library, Rammohun Library, Rajnarayan Basu Smriti Pathagar, Raj Shahi Public Library, Victoria Library, Natore most of the public libraries were ost of lectures to orient common people to libraries. Literary discussion, debate, cultural competition, sports and games used to impart from the public libraries as a part of mass mobilizing activities. Initially Jatra, Kathakata, Panchali, Kabigan, Kirtan and other folk songs were performed by the public libraries to spread mass education and culture but gradually these items were used to preach nationalism. Welfare of women, children, labour class, students and minorities included in libraries social activities in due course.

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