REPORT
ON
PUBLIC LIBRARY:
Reading Habits
And
Socio – Cultural
Change

A Study of West Bengal,
Assam, Tripura and Mizoram
Public Libraries and the role of
Raja Ram Mohun Roy Library
Foundation

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Foreword

This project report is the outcome of Tagore National Research Project 2013, under the sponsorship of Ministry of Culture, Govt. of India released through the Raja Rammohun Roy Library Foundation Kolkata.

I am thankful to the Ministry of Culture for selecting me the National Tagore Fellow 2012-13 especially during the historical time when the entire nation was celebrating 150th anniversary of the great poet and visionary.

I chose the subject concerning library as it was a favourite subject of Tagore who took library movement in his stride with great seriousness and his argument in favour of socio cultural relevance of library was laid down in his famous essay ‘Library’.

I took the cue from his writing and submitted my proposal for study under the project on ‘Library : Books and Socio Cultural changes in West Bengal with particular reference to the contribution of Raja Rammohun Roy Library Foundation over the years.’

The selection committee accepted my project proposal with a suggestion to extend the study limit beyond West Bengal and include some NE states. Accordingly I included 3 NE states like Assam, Tripura and Mizoram under the scope of study. It gave my study a new dimension.

My studies could be divided in three major areas.

1) To position the Public Library in Social Surrounding and its relation with culture. As society is influenced by multiple factors of cultural changes libraries as a social institution is also subject to such changes. We have traced that evolutionary path and followed the trail of such changes – abinitio.
With a view to finding facts first hand I undertook field visits as far as practical for a single researcher. I visited as many as 50 libraries from a Central Library to a miniscule grass-root unit in a remote part. In West Bengal, Tripura, Assam and Mizoram. I visited schools and colleges at Dhupguri (North Bengal), Seorafuli at Hooghly, W.B. and Vidyanagar at South 24-Parganas. Met book lovers at Kolkata and Guwahati Book Fairs. Met with about 100 authors and intellectuals in Assam, Tripura and Mizoram.

I visited central libraries in Kolkata, Guwahati, Aizwal, Agartala and Mumbai and addressed readers and library staff at Maharashtra Central Library Mumbai, DTS women University, library staff, in Mumbai, addressed representative/staff of Public libraries at Balurghat, gave a talk to the organizers and book lovers at Kolkata Book Fare 2013 and also addressed book lovers at Guwahati Book Fare, on January 4, 2013. I am thankful to the Directors of Library Services of Tripura, Mizoram, Assam and Librarian of State Central Library, Kolkata for granting me interview and extending all supports. All librarians and library directorate officials of all states I visited co-operated with me and accompanied me in my visit to rural libraries. The another important part of my study was to evaluate the role of Raja Rammohun Roy Library Foundation, rendering valuable services silently to the growth and development of libraries under the able leadership of the Director General Mr. K.KI. Banerjee. The establishment of the Foundation in the name of the Father of the Indian Renaissance Raja Rammohun Roy is an epoch making event. The major task of the Foundation is to act as a Funding Agency for keeping up the spirit of the public library movement in India. The pro-active role of all its staff working as a team, from a well decorated beautiful edifice at Salt Lake is indeed an example that a Public Sector Organisation can rise to the occasion. To all libraries in India the RRRLF stands as the custodian of Public Library movement and suggests for amelioration of certain impediments.
In fine, the purpose of my study is not merely an academic exercise nor I am a statutory enquiring authority. Notwithstanding to go into more administrative details, I have to ensure myself that my study does not remain an ‘idle tears’, full of ‘sound and fury and signifying nothing’ – rather my report may be cited as a pathfinder to resolve some problem - areas the public library movement is new suffering from. Books are now having less to lesser takers comparing to the previous days. Books are for reading and only reading begets social consciousness and makes value based well tempered citizens. Economic progress vis-a-vis exclusive growth is related to exclusive and quality education. Library is the vital instrument to generate quality education and has no parallel. My last but not the least part of my study delineates a series of suggestions to bring back 4th shattered library movement on the rails. They are not meant for only crisis management but for plugging some present loopholes and help framing up a national library policy by the newly established library commission founded by Govt. of India. Libraries, the oldest social institutions must be saved from any down turn.

In conclusion, I express my heartfelt gratitude to Mr. Jahar Sirkar, IAS a highly acclaimed scholar and a seasoned civil servant who happened to be the Secretary of culture, Govt. of India who inspired me to take up the project. I am also grateful indeed to Mr. K.K. Banerjee the Director general. Raja Rammohun Roy Library Foundations and all his cordial staff for rendering me all possible help ungrudgingly.

I thank to my daughter Baishali, and my two research assistants Ankita and Angana to assist me in my endeavours.

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CHAPTER – I

INTRODUCTION :

A Public Library is the end product of man’s struggle against monopoly and concentration of human knowledge in the hands of few. The concept of democratization of knowledge came in the Nineteenth Century England as an outcome of long renaissance movement.

From Library to Public Library

From ancient clay tablet storehouse to the new age digital library this transformation was not simple and easy and took about 2500 years to cover the path. Library is one of the few oldest institutions that still survive. During old days libraries acted as cradle of civilization.

During Vedic era in India knowledge dissemination process used to be oral and could only be stored in human memory but as soon as man innovated alphabets tried to write down his acquired knowledge and wisdom about God, nature and other human species. His emotion and feelings henceforth would be taken down on available medium that could be preserved for posterity. That store house of all accumulated wisdom would be called library and the historians traced such libraries in Asyria before the birth of Christ (BC
668 – 26). The Asyria library preserved on clay – tile books as carved and engraved clay tiles were used as writing medium. Then papyrus sheets replaced clay tablets. During the Roman Period the great Alexandria Library in Egypt had 500,000 rolls of Papyrus sheets. With the fall of Roman Empire, the library was destroyed.

In India, processed palm leaves or banana leaves were used as writing medium till the late eighteenth century. Hand made papers were used although palm leaf paper became very popular and all great Indian literatures were scripted on palm leaves. Libraries came long before the printed books. There were store houses of scripts at every monastery, church, temple and seminary. A library was a pride possession of the Kings and Nawabs. Even individual scholars would procure scripts for their personal study and research. A scholar like Huen Tsang would traverse all the way from China to India in search of scholastic scripts. Atish Dipankar and Raja Rammohun Roy undertook adventurous trek to Tibet, a forbidden state in search of scripts stored in monasteries or in private possession.

As books were kept under surveillance in the private libraries keeping them beyond reach of common people, there was also urge among some private people for personal book collection outside the monasteries. Books were stolen, looted and even destroyed. The foreign invaders at the first
opportunity would attack libraries to eliminate the last vestiges of Country’s culture and wisdom. They would destroy books and temples and would loot treasures. In many cases the scholars flee their country with some valuable books in their possession for safety. The Vaisnabites got away the same way from Bengal to Vrindaban with huge manuscripts in the face of Muslim invasion. When constantepole fell to the Turks the resident Greeks flew to Italy with bundle of books and their creative brains leaving behind everything. That gave birth to European Renaissance after 1453.

Although organized libraries were under the control of mainly religious establishments on the other side private libraries sprang up even during the manuscript era (14th century) the tastes for private book collections flourished outside the monasteries. College and universities in Europe set up their own libraries. Professional copyists emerged to copy scripts legally or clandestinely. Some would commission original writers to write for them exclusively. Book trade in different form existed and people who needed would buy scripts from that market. But since then some private collections became a part of modern library. In India all Rajas and Zaminders had such mini to sizeable libraries in their palaces. When Tipu Sultan of Hyderabad was defeated by the British, his valuable library was pulled down and all books were brought in Kolkata and were given to Fort William library and partly to the Asiatic Society Library. During Tipu’s time
imported printed books were available. Printing press for commercial printing came to India only at the end of eighteenth century but printed books used to be imported from Europe. Tipu’s library accessed a large number of printed books and manuscripts. Many manuscripts would have been collected by private collectors by any means. Till today many Indian families possessed manuscripts inherited from their ancestors as family treasures.

In Europe many private collectors set up their valuable libraries for instance Sir Thomas Bodley’s. Bodleyan Library was a legendary private collection of books by a single man – that is now an independent library at Oxford.

In Bengal too private collections of big Rajas, Zaminders and of many celebrities now include many public library shelves. I can give atleast two instances from my visit to West Bengal libraries. Zaminder Joykrishna Mukherjee of Uttarpara built a magnificent palace to house a public library on the Ganges. A similar beautiful house came up on the donated land on the bank of the Hoogly at Bally – the entire building cost was borne by the local gentry.

When the public library movement reached crescendo hundreds of generous people showed up to support a public library in their locality. Many of those libraries have now crossed their centenary year. People helped them build up
brick to brick and felt pride to associate themselves with their growth and development. In India volumes of valuable private collections of the Maharajas, Zaminders and intellectuals were donated to school / college or public libraries. During the first half of the nineteenth century a call was given to donate books to Calcutta public library. Many responded to that call.

All public libraries in India were enriched by such private donations of books. Heirs of many book collectors donated their entire library with log stock and barrel. Not only books public library movement in India reached so high a pitch that many even donated entire house to a public library. About 60 percent Public Library buildings during the 19 – 20th century were built on donated land.

**Library came to Public**

Printed books proliferated in European market by the later part of fifteenth century. That brought about a revolutionary change in public mind. Books for the first time were made available to the reach of public yet even the renascent Europe had to wait for three hundred years for reaching books to public. News papers were well established by the turn of eighteenth century. But public library in England came only in 1850. Meanwhile books were generally collected by the libraries owned by Cathedrals, Colleges and Private Collectors. Yet the messages of cultural change were disseminated through books. But the general people could hardly afford to
buy books. The common people had to wait till the 2\textsuperscript{nd} half of the nineteenth century to have access to the repository of books at free of cost or at nominal cost. A library for the people and by the people came into reality only in the middle of the 19\textsuperscript{th} century. The United States of America started public library in 1849. Next year P.L came in England – as a great surprise to common people when they saw all the books were available under one roof and people irrespective of their status were free to have access to any of them. That was to open the gateway of knowledge to all, yet this was not very smooth transfer of power to people for England. When the Public Library Act was passed in 1850* there was mass agitation by a section of people to thwart this enactment under the pretext that too much learning for ordinary men would be counter productive and would also make harm to people by and large. Stormy public meetings against public library enactment ripped through the then English Society. It reminds the same reactionary protests by the conservative intellectuals in Calcutta during the same period against widow remarriage. Whatsoever progressive reform agenda was being tried to implement faced stiff opposition by those even who were educated and representative elite group of society.

The public library is a concept based on humanist democratic theory. The protagonists of public library movement would believe in democratization of knowledge and people’s right to know. This concept planted seed of all other
human rights that now cover all humanity with the seal of the UN. Right to Information and right to Education emanate from the right to Knowledge, the basic philosophy of public library.

The Public Library Act of UK for the first time gave people the legal right to access to a public library to gain knowledge. The legislators sought to create separate public library organizations, completely free of charge for entry and accessibility to books irrespective of caste creed and religion. The civic authoritees were directed in this act to play their role as facilitator to public libraries. It became the onus of the civic bodies to provide buildings for public libraries but not the books. However the insituational and private libraries were kept out of purview of the Act.

The Act faced the Music

This provision came under strong criticism. The civic bodies were pressurized to release grants for books. But in close scrutiny the provision was quite in conformity with the concept of freedom of knowledge. Once a PL accepts Government grant it indirectly makes public library subservient to the benefactor.

In the end of the day it may affect a public library to choose its course, independent of the civic bodies. We have seen from Indian experiences in the later period that the library Act became the instrument for political control. Sponsored public libraries were brought under both
bureaucratic and political control. This was reflected from book selections to transfer and posting of the staff.

In England however civic control over the libraries could not tighten its grip although civic bodies were forced to release some grant-in-aid to the libraries but it never exceeded to a point that could dominate public library units.

**The Impact of Public Library**

The Public Library created a great impact on human mind and human society. With the advancement of human progress, Books proliferated and through books millions got educated. Education brought about further changes. The first change was the change in the mind set. Humanity now acquired power of reasoning and the value of rationality and they no longer would submit to superstition and dogmatism.

Thus the dissemination of knowledge among the people in quickest possible time was made possible through printed books. Unlike manuscript, printed knowledge would no more be possible to keep hidden under the domain of the church or under private possession by a few. Knowledge now could be diffused to the millions thanks to the open access Public Library. Monopoly on knowledge was cracked down. A new world order was ushered in different parts of the world with the new thoughts. Books transcend expressions of social activity and ethos of civilization. It leads people from 'instinct to inspiration,' arouses spirit of enquiry and quest for the sublime. They create feelings of togetherness – leading unto
the path of revolution. Books can make an individual knowledge rich. In fine the widespread knowledge sharing promotes one to maximize public benefit.

**Public Library Comes to India**

However there is great similarity between the societal response to public library among the people of England and India although Indian Society never adversely reacted to the public library concept. Rather public libraries were welcome in the society and people at large pledged their support in favour of public library movement.

Here a question may be asked legitimately. Why public library movement got a smooth sail in India not only that the movement turned in all practical purpose a social movement lets find out the answer. Public library in India was founded in Kolkata in 1835 (see Chapter Libraries in Bengal).

By that time quite a sizeable number of politically and socially conscious Indian citizens were prepared to accept anything that help them further their knowledge scientifically culturally and intellectually. Interests in various disciplines had already been cultivated by the students of Hindu College. Under the able leadership of Raja Rammohun Roy a sizeable group among the Calkatans became interested in further education. So they thought a public library would bring some fresh air to them. A group of English speaking youths already emerged in Calcutta who were the products of Hindu College
and would be keen to read more books in English. So many of them became members of Calcutta Public Library.

By the turn of twentieth century the freedom movement reached its higher peak in India, the patriotic students found two vital points to support the public library movement.

Firstly, the library as a social organization remained autonomous, a non-governmental institution where a future leader of the country could put his / her first imprint of leadership. Involvement in public library initiative helped youths develop socio-political leadership skill and organizing ability. Public library used to be breeding ground for future leaders. Secondly, a library provides scope for continuing education on plethora of subjects. Libraries would store sufficient number of patriotic literatures and even proscribed books were available clandestinely. So public libraries were to offer both opportunities and challenges to many. Moreover, during the Raj many Indians changed their fortune by becoming entrepreneurs. A number of ‘Swadeshi’ enterprises came into being at the initiatives of the educated Indians. But as public library in India now has become half bureaucratic and half political institution. When the new high technological order abrasively created impact on techno based social change universal book reading habit is bound to suffer. This attitudinal change is not providential and is a natural phenomenon. Throughout the world this tremor is felt and hue and cry is being raised whether the books in this present format (printed under two covers hard bound or paperback)
will last for new many days when the new generation tend to switchover to digital technology and has very little disposable time at hand how long they continue to visit public libraries? When books can be collected or read from alternative sources more conveniently.

However, the use of internet and e-books are not so pervasive in rural India and we are behind several decades of some advanced countries in e-governance. So, more marginal adjustments to modernity could keep our library services intact for few more generations. The present decade brought before the Indian Public Libraries a major challenge of transforming the public libraries as more effective vehicles for information society.

When the public libraries are in a moribund stage due to the financial crunch and absence of moral support from the Government, the readership is rapidly declining on the other hand. The Govt. of India is planning a very happy and bright future for the same library system. Permanent library commission is imminent to revitilise the public library movement. Not only that libraries are supposed to get reincarnation as vital information centres from the apex to grass root level.

The following excerpt from the report of the working group of the knowledge commission will reveal how public library system is poised to appear in a new social role.
Public libraries play a pivotal role in dissemination of knowledge and are an extremely important element of the foundation of a knowledge economy. There is widespread agreement that there is an urgent need for reform in the Libraries and Information Services (LIS) sector. Several initiatives in this regard have already been taken by the Government. NKC has consulted extensively with diverse stakeholders, including a Working Group of experts and professionals. NKC's recommendations for formulating strategies in the LIS sector are as follows:

1. **Set Up a National Commission on Libraries**

   A permanent, independent and financially autonomous National Commission on Libraries should be set up by the Central Government as a statutory body to address the information and learning needs of the citizens of India. To launch the process in a mission mode, a National Mission on Libraries should be set up immediately, for a period of three years.

2. **Prepare a National Census of All Libraries**

   A national census of all libraries should be prepared by undertaking a nation-wide survey. Collection of census data on libraries would provide baseline data for planning. The Task Force that has been set up by the Department of Culture for this purpose should be given financial and administrative support to implement this activity and complete the survey on a priority basis (within one year).
User needs and reading habits should be periodically surveyed at the national level as part of the National Sample Survey.

3. **Revamp LIS Education, Training and Research Facilities**

The proposed Mission/Commission on Libraries must assess as soon as possible the manpower requirements of the country in the area of LIS management, and take necessary steps to meet the country’s requirement through LIS education and training. To keep the LIS sector abreast of latest developments, necessary encouragement should be given to research after evaluating the research status in this field. Establishing a well-equipped institute for advanced training and research in library and information science and services, would provide the necessary impetus to this task.

4. **Re-assess Staffing of Libraries,**

In the changed context, it is necessary to assess the manpower requirements for different types of libraries and departments of library and information science, keeping in mind job descriptions, qualifications, designations, pay scale, career advancement and service conditions.
5. **Set Up a Central Library Fund**

A specified percentage of the Central and State education budgets must be ear-marked for libraries. In addition, a Central Library Fund should be instituted for upgrading existing libraries over a period of 3-5 years. The initial funding from the Government may be `1,000 crores, which may be matched by the private sector through corporate philanthropy. This fund should be administered by the National Mission/Commission on Libraries.

6. **Modernise Library Management**

Libraries should be so organised and the staff so trained that they become relevant to user communities (including special groups) in every respect. Also, to optimise resources, efforts should be made to synergise the strengths of different types of libraries through innovative collaboration. NKC proposes the creation of a model Library Charter, a list of services to be performed by libraries, a Library Network and a National Repository for Bibliographic Records.

The most vital item of those six principles, a national commission as libraries tops the list of priority. The National knowledge commission dwelt at length the Importance of Public Library in ‘knowledge creation’, ‘knowledge application’ and ‘knowledge dissemination’. The commission aims at promoting the use of knowledge capabilities in making Government an effective, transparent and accountable service
provider to the citizen and promote widespread sharing of knowledge to maximize public benefit as well as promote the utilization of traditional knowledge.

**Mission Impossible**

To realize that dream the library and information services are to be made most effective vehicle for all pervasive information revolution in the country is no doubt a Mission Impossible. For that the stake holders of each focus area will need well organized and systematic library and information services to support the activities.

In this light the library commission. The proposed statutory body permanent in nature would go a long way to build excellence in the entire educational system. The commission will guide the libraries to meet the knowledge challenges. That’s why the knowledge commission set up a working group on libraries with the following broad Terms of References:

1) Redefine the objectives of the country’s Library and Information Services (LIS) sector.
2) Identify constraints, problems and challenges relating to the LIS sector.
3) Recommend changes and reforms to address the problems and challenges relating to the LIS sector, to ensure a holistic development of information services in all areas of national activity.
4) Take necessary steps to mobilize and upgrade the existing Library and Information Systems and Services, taking advantage of the latest advances in Information Communication Technology (ICT).

5) Explore possibilities for innovation and initiate new programmes relevant to our national needs, especially to bridge the gap between the information rich and the information poor within the society.

6) Suggest means of raising standards and promoting excellence in Library and Information Science education including re-orientation and training of working professionals.

7) Assist in setting up facilities to preserve and give access to indigenous knowledge and the nation's cultural heritage.

8) Set up adequate mechanisms to monitor activities for securing the benefits of acquisition and application of knowledge for the people of India.

9) Examine any other issues that may be relevant in this context.

The Terms of Reference were the main concerns which the Working Group tried to address in its discussions. Keeping in mind the objectives of the Library and Information Science and Services (LIS) sector as laid down by the Working Group, it suggested some major areas which needed extensive discussions by professionals or experts who have specialized
in different fields. Further details of the experts consulted are included in Appendix 1.

**Preamble**

Libraries are recognized to have a social function in making knowledge publicly available to all. This role becomes even more critical in making India a knowledge society. To fulfill this potential, existing libraries must modernize their collection, services and facilities, become more pro-active and collaborate with other institutions and agencies. In today's context, libraries have to play two distinct roles - to serve as a local centre of information and knowledge, and be a local gateway to national and global knowledge.

Keeping in view the above, the Mission Statement of the LIS sector should be:

The library and information sector is committed to support the creation of a knowledge society by providing equitable, high quality, cost effective access to information and knowledge resources and services to meet the informational, educational, recreational and cultural needs of the community through a range of national, institutional and public libraries.

Recognizing that the Libraries' objectives are to disseminate knowledge as widely as possible; serve as a major vehicle to facilitate creation of new knowledge; facilitate optimal use of knowledge by all sectors, such as government, industry, rural sector and civil society; and ensure that people from all
sectors and all parts of the country have easy access to knowledge relevant to their needs, in their own language; the Working Group on Libraries makes the following recommendations.

Recognizing that the Libraries’ objectives are to

- disseminate knowledge as widely as possible;
- serve as a major vehicle to facilitate creation of new knowledge;
- facilitate optimal use of knowledge by all sectors, such as Government, industry, rural sector and civil society; and
- ensure that people from all sectors and all parts of the country have easy access to knowledge relevant to their needs, in their own language;

the Working Group on Libraries makes the following recommendations.

I shall discuss about the recommendations of the working group in the concluding chapter, prior to that I must present the status of the public libraries in the light of my field experiences.

**Libraries Since Independence**

After the independence people’s enthusiasm about public library gradually lost its spirit. The public libraries in West Bengal were the institutional symbols of renaissance movement and freedom struggle. A large number of
literatures on freedom movement emerged during the freedom struggle that stirred public mind. In Bengal such books made tremendous impacts on youths and many books were proscribed by police. All such books were in great demand. At the same time lives especially in villages used to run at a slow space. The youths unlike the present day had no gadgets to play with. Library cum club’s were the only attraction for youths to spend their leisure. So public libraries and the clubs were the regular rendezvous for the youths. Where they would imbibe the Swadeshi spirit.

With the passage of time and with the expansion of career opportunities present day youths show more keenness to career information. Their purpose of study is now more pin pointed to career. They decided to read only those books that would directly help their careers. Reading for absolute learning is replaced by selected reading. Born and raised in a high-tech society, growing up by playing video or computer game and surfing social media the modern kids had already learned how to absorb cultural shock of new media. Meanwhile school and college examinations became more competitive.

It is found from empirical studies that humanity students used to be more inclined to read books both fictions and non fictions. As more and more brilliant students are being diverted to science stream at Higher Secondary level, they tend to be more inclined to text books only. But their landing into good jobs does not correspondent to their reading habit.
The career oriented education system compels even a brilliant student to opt for private tuition for all subjects so they deprecate reading anything outside syllabus under compulsion. Board and University examination seldom require originality or creativity from a candidate in their answer scripts. They seldom realize that book reading can take them to some extra miles. Guardians would always grumble if their words are more inclined to read books outside their syllabus.

In this ‘Xerox age’, lending sections of public libraries are hardly used by the students. At the same time all age readership has slumped down by 40 to 50 percent over the years. The state Central Library in Kolkata now issue 30 books daily on average but among them hardly any college and University students could be found. If they visit library at all they use mostly the reading room facilities which public libraries are now giving more emphasis on buying more competition success books and magazines for jobseekers. This is the average library readership scenario for young readers for the entire north-eastern states including West Bengal. Moreover the lackadaisical attitude of the state governments have made the situation bad to worse. Our study will give some statistical data to assess the current readership status.

Taking in view of the declining public interest in library movement, let us thrash out governmental measurers to revitalize library movement as a whole. The absence of enthusiasm from readers resulted in Government apathy.
Government has placed library at a low priority. About 40 to 50 percent posts of library staff are now lying vacant in West Bengal and there is no hope for those posts being filled up in near future. As a result of that some small sponsored libraries are opening on alternate day only. Even for a big libraries if more than two staff did not show up in a day it may lead to half day closure or at least may cut two hours for the scheduled closing hour.

There has not been any study from the library directorate of West Bengal, Tripura and Assam and Mizoram behind the declining trend of readership. Nor any state Government came out with a specific library policy.

I wrote a letter to the Hon’ble Minister Abdul Karim Chowdhury in charge library and Mass Education Government of W. Bengal to record his views on that matter. However the Hon’ble Minister did not grant me interview and preferred to remain silent. However, a separate chapter on West Bengal libraries will give the detail picture of the present status of public library movement in the state.

I have discussed separately the role of Raja Rammohun Roy Library Foundation to keep the library movement from near collapse. They are making their frantic bid to keep the public libraries floating against deluge. Had there not been the RRRLF to provide some infrastructural support and a significant library development many public libraries would have by this time died their natural deaths. A library is not a
public office that its magnificent office space and mere presence of staff could justify its purpose without giving some expected service to the readers at large. A public library without public (reading public) has no useful role to play. The success of a public library depends on how many readers of the library is able to mobilize under its fold. A public library must be sensitive to the community and its neighbourhood. If people develop apathy and shyness towards library, the library must not give them up in desperation, rather would build up a close PR contact with the community and social institutions to convince the public about the utility of the library. In many libraries television sets are installed to make the readers library bound. In many libraries children are provided with soft toys to play with. This seems to be wrong approach, TV sets and soft toys are the diversions and can not be the substitute for books. TV viewers may develop a separate addiction for TV that would keep them away from reading books. Libraries must learn that books have no alternative. TV addicts seldom read books. Developing interest in books has a specific purpose to augment people's cognition. Pleasure seeking is not the only purpose of book reading nor is the mere time passing. Book reading has so many dimensions. It opens up all faculties of mind. A visit to library widens readers spectrum of knowledge that strengthens one's entire perspective and stimulate interdisciplinary faculty. Book reading makes a balanced personality, a complete man is born out of reading.
At the same time the main objective of a public library is not to bring a person to library under allurement. Library must not offer anything that has no connection with reading. To create interest in reading, library can draw cultural programmes for the kids, story telling sessions by the authors, seminars, workshops etc. There may be audio drama, dance drama, video shows on anything regarding books and authors. A public library must create a proper ambient to attract readers.

However, persuading readers to come to the library and read books is the separate inter personal communication issue. Govt. has never tried any advocacy campaign in favour of public libraries. Since taking over libraries following the library Act, in 1979, it was the priority of the Government of West Bengal to tighten political control over Public libraries. No doubt public library is the public forum at the micro level. Its political control means controlling the public opinion. Every public library has a sizeable members in its membership register but they seldom take any interest in day to day affair of the library. They become active during the election of the managing committee. There activism is emptied as soon as the election is over. Had the socially conscious and literary minded people would have taken keen interest, the movement had not come to this state of affair. The public library needs social leadership not the bureaucratic control but social control must emerge out from within with a spirit of service. The society first realize that more a person read more a
community will gain-intellectually. Where the school education ends, the life long continuing education begins and only library can provide that education to the people because it is neither forced upon nor examination oriented.

**Study objectives :**

1) The main objective of my study is to evaluate the present status of public library movement in India. ‘Movement’ the very word is misnomer and implicates more to the agitational politics in the present day context. Notwithstanding, I take up the meaning from the Webster Dictionary that delineates ‘movement’ as taking a step as to gain an objective. The objective of public library was defined previously and now my study centres around the issue how the public libraries are able to fulfil those objectives. Where the shoe pinches and what measures a public library can take create public awareness and promote reading.

2) In this context we have indicated some socio cultural changes in West Bengal and some other NE states and evaluate the role of public library. In this context the social relationship between a community library and the community at large must be critically analysed as the concept of public library emerges from the basic community – library relationship.
3) The study will give special emphasis on the present status of the age-old heritage libraries with particular reference to West Bengal from where the movement originated.

4) The study will critically analyse the West Bengal library Act 1979 and its impact on the library movement.

5) The study will delve deep into the most vital problem that is gradually becoming both intensive and extensive – that is declining in reading habit. My several survey reports from a number of clusters will reveal the present status of readership. At the same time some alleged bureaucratic impediments tend to dispense the public libraries with due benefit the state Government plans to give out to the people.

6) I have enquired with the trend of library movement in some selected states in the Northeast like Tripura, Assam and Mizoram. These are the states who suffered from the insurgency and recovered or yet to recover from its distressing impact. The library movement suffered a set back in those states but need to be resurrected. How they are coping up with problems and how people accepted libraries in their stride to recovery. In fine I liked to conclude that trend toward a unification of human thinking: that is books and nothing but the books. All books provide information interests and actions for all human activities. They provide information on choices, values and faith all of which is stored in a library. The
key to the library, the store house of learning is not yet lost and are kept in the custody of both the reading public and the custodians of library. How both could be made motivated? energised and activated? The crux of my study is to find answers to above. The following chapters will unfold those insight of the problems and their possible remedial measurers.

7) Last but not the least I have included in my study an objective evaluation of Raja Rammohun Roy Library Foundation, its role to revitalize the library movement by providing infrastructural support and undertaking some independent projects to promote culture under its folds.

8) The concluding chapter deals with some valuable suggestions for the overall improvement of public libraries and the pointing out some special areas need immediate amelioration. Another vital question is how far the public libraries funded by the RRRLF have been successful to multiply their resources over the year. In fine, the genesis of the study is to find out the pacemaker for normal functioning of the entire system and how public libraries are preparing themselves for the impending ‘Information revolution’.
CHAPTER – II

FROM PRIVATE LIBRARY TO PUBLIC LIBRARY:

The Right to knowledge as a fundamental right for a democratic society just begun with the public library concept that came into being only during the nineteenth century and metamorphosed into a silent social movement. It is interesting to note that there was a time gap between the first public libraries opened in France, England and Italy and the first public libraries Act came in the U.S.A in 1849 and in England in 1850. Even the first Indian public library, Calcutta public library came in 1835. The protagonist of public libraries in Europe like Thomas Bodely (England), Trenderrigo Horromim (Italy) Cardinal Mazrim (France) opened their huge private collections for general public and thus planted the seeds of public library concept. They probably were inspired by the uquitarian concept emanated from the French Revolution and took voluntary action to make over their own private collections of books to the public procured after spending enormous amount of time and money. They were known as ardent book lovers who developed passion for collecting rare books at any price from across the globe. But they thought not to keep knowledge concentrated into their drawing rooms and vowed to dedicate their entire collections for the benefit of humanity. They thought books were not to keep in close shelves rather unlock the armirah for the true
book lovers at free of charge. The effectiveness of book reading could be intensified if books are read by large number of people.

With this thought in mind they opened the gate of their drawing room where their precious collections were located. The library Acts in different countries only gave legal sanction and Government boost to this thought. The law was made to make books available to the people countrywide at free of charge, either to build up new infrastructure for the public libraries or to grant aids to the existing private libraries for their further development and undisturbed survival.

**Public Library : Power house of knowledge**

Importance of library was felt in all times of human civilization. Otherwise the state would not have been involved even in ancient time in building libraries although it was exclusively privileges of the crown.

T.D. Waknis defined library as a ‘power House of knowledge’. According to him libraries since the age old days were bolstered by a philosophy of its own, that was to preserve a treasure of a generation for the posterity – in form of either clay tablets or papyrus leaf : written with the entire art literature history and spiritual thoughts with an expectation that their future generation would be benefited by them. The selected people who needed them for education were to be allowed access to such libraries.
Even at the age of public library the same philosophy was standardized with adequate modification. Firstly, the public library was declared public property. A library was defined as organized collection of printed books and periodicals or of any other graphics or audio visual materials and the services of a staff to provide and facilitate the use of such materials as are required to meet the informational, research, educational and recreational needs of its users. Traditionally, library meant to be a building or room of books and documents preserved for public access, but in the post Second World War era a change was gradually introduced. From a public establishment, library soon turned into a 'service'. A place where people could access and adopt ideas and knowledge, libraries were rightfully treated as an archive where people were welcomed to visit, read, loan and return the books to the librarian, whose role was primarily of a passive warden to only deliver the books to the readers and nothing beyond that. Books, during the early period, were largely available in single copies and thus wasn't available for taking out of the library premises. Despite the development ushered in the front of writing style and quality, things failed to improve the setbacks associated with the materials that, if any single copy of books was lost it was lost forever.

However, with changing passage of time and following transformation of the societal structure, the library no more functions as a mere museum to exhibit literature. The philosophy of modern library has now been changed
significantly from a storehouse of books to ‘public centric service institution’ libraries are now expected to convert reading enthusiasts to actual readers. By the strict sense of the term, the ‘actual reader’ is someone who loves book and has developed a habit of regular reading and visits library religiously.

History of human civilization denotes the presence of library system as an integral element of societal growth. It was originated to spread information, knowledge and education to comply with the basic need for a generation to go forward and function properly. The character, structure and format of a library are subject to alteration, based on the requirement of the society it serves in.

The researchers also observed that although the primary function of library system focuses around social need, it also plays a critical role in political, economic and cultural development of the civilization. It acts as a preservatory body of cultural advancement and education, provide reading materials to a generation for their alleviation, unties their prejudices and opens up the plethora of opportunity to know their nation, its people and the world outside. For centuries, it has helped the academics to serve the world better, entrepreneurs to know about the nuances of businesses, the leaders in decision making, researchers and students to find correct and relevant facts to meet their enquiries.
The institution of library takes key charge in the following three primary spheres of development in respect of education, culture and information.

An instrument of education: Education is the sole device that creates consciousness and awareness of development in a nation. From broadening the mind, spiritual connotation and righteous impulse to spreading information and using that same information for the personal and professional development, education facilitates the process of individual awakening. Library plays the principal source from where the idea of innovation and development stems in the form of education. It not only an active facilitator to teaching by assisting the students, researchers and educators, but it also promotes innovative means of learning outside the ambit of institutionalization. Library is an instrument of self education, awareness and intellectual awakening. The Indian knowledge commission has delved deep into the maker (see knowledge commission).

Facilitator of cultural growth: At the onset of its origin, library was not acknowledged as an institution, it was rather considered as a social body run by few groups for the purpose of transmission of knowledge and awareness. Since ages, library has been playing an incessant role in building a connection of intellect and outlook between the readers beyond the restriction of border, inhibition, linguistic and cultural differences. The books have not only instilled knowledge about the world, but also open up the plethora of
information about other races towards a society. Before the arrival of technology, the only way of knowing the cultural diversity of our nation and the world at large was only possible through the pages of books stacked for public use in the libraries. One of the most crucial driving motives behind the concept of library was to establish a cultural bond between the readers irrespective of ethnicity, creed and religious beliefs. Many of these roles are now shaved by communication media but my investigation will show books’ role, notwithstanding have not been diluted rather have been reinforced for various reasons (see Reading habit).

**Advocate of information based society**: It’s through the explosion of information that the development of the nation from political, economic and social front became possible, the first impetus for which was brought in by the library system. For every society to excel, the key lies in its ability to transmission and utilization of information. Only through the passing of correct information a society can thrive on success. Today, as we entered the age of information, the core function of libraries has multiplied its significance. To improve the economic developmental standard of a society various specialized and business organizations have been formed and along with that the utility of libraries have also been increased. To excel and to ensure right decision making it needs to be aware of what is the historical background of a specific trade or concept or theory, what are the trends
approaching that field, what are the developments setting in the information which one can obtain from a library.

However, in view of the present technological development it has now become essential for the libraries to upgrade the system and cope with the increasing demand of the readers. Only then it can keep up the fundamental philosophy and acclimatize to the new age informational necessities.

**Changing concept of libraries** - Since a long period of the first century of library establishments, the materials were only available in single copies, as the process of copying was arduous and materials appropriate for preservation weren’t adequately available. But as time progressed, fifteenth century saw a lot of development in the art of printing and with that, the utility of libraries faced a decline. But that was only on the surface, as the improvement in printing process never deterred the scholars’ enthusiasm to share their knowledge with the common mass.

However, it was nearly after four centuries since then that the public became visibly aware of their democratic rights, national condition and realized the need to improve their understanding of the world around them to attain a better way of life for the self and for the nation at large. But despite the urge to learn better and employ that learning in real life, the library authorities didn't encourage the free circulation of books. It took two world wars in twentieth century for the librarians to realize the importance of encouraging people for
building the reading habit for their awakening. As the power distribution among the super nations were undergoing polar shifts and it became utmost crucial for the mass to be aware of their rights and responsibilities, the libraries started assuming more importance. T. D. Waknis wrote, "Article 27 of the Declaration of Human Rights approved and signed by most member nations of the United Nations Organizations empathetically laid down that it was the right of the common man to share the benefits made available to the world by poets, artists and scientists".* Library turned into an establishment that propagated dissemination of education and knowledge to the men devoid of the restriction of traditional schooling. Gradually, transformation of the library system from the "storehouse of old knowledge to workshops of new knowledge" took shape by the end of twentieth century.

**After the emergence of public library:**

Since centuries libraries are considered as the institution of knowledge distribution organ for the betterment of the people and for fostering their cultural heritage. To-day the most part the current information society owes its status to the emergence of public library, where knowledge was set free for public use for the first time. Public library, by definition, suggests the umbrella under which the Central and State libraries are formed, run, possess and circulate knowledge for

* Declaration of Human Rights
public utilization. Libraries are still service providers to the people.

In India, the public libraries are in general formed under the category of Government libraries or Non-government libraries. The government libraries, with aid from the higher authority, are often free-to-use and encourage horizontal knowledge distribution. However, in case of non-governmental libraries, the readers are ought to pay some nominal fees to read and borrow books. These non-governmental libraries are run and managed by social organizations, private bodies, local authorities or voluntary trusts and organizations. Besides specialized libraries at numerous corporate and public sector organizations are updating employees with the advancement of knowledge.

The principle attribute of such kind of libraries lies in the fact that, unlike speciality libraries, a public library serves the need of a wide range of public to meet their wide range of requirement on a wide range of topics. In that context, the public library, in essence, promotes democratization of knowledge and education where it empowers the people to choose, crossover the doorway and acquire information on his own choice of subject. Unlike traditional education system where a drape of regulation spreads over the learning process, the public library system encourages empowerment of the readers to choose what he wants to know and how. From this perspective, J.H. Shera describes in his book Sociological Foundation of Librarianship, the concept of
'library' as a social agency than an institution. It's rightly so, for it promotes liberal education devoid of all disparity to propagate social and cultural transformation.

As mentioned in the UNESCO manifesto, "Public Library is the local centre of information, making all kinds of knowledge and information readily available to its users". It's the first step towards knowledge that provides the fundamental condition for lifetime learning, independent decision making and individual and social empowerment. The American Library Association (ALA) in 1943 states, "public libraries are the bodies that transmit information and ideas that are necessary for a community's current well-being and future progress."

While these two views illustrate the functional aspects of public libraries, there is a need to delve into the whole characteristic of this library system by considering some established definition below;

Thomas describes public library as the "one which is authorised by legislation, open to the public without charge and financed out of public fund." According to S.R Ranganathan, public library is a library that is owned and maintained by the public for the socialization of its books and kindred materials for free service to the people of the area. Encyclopaedia of Library and Information Science states, "Public library is a public institution, supported by taxation, one that opens it collections, facilities and services without distinction to all citizens". Librarian’s Glossary writes about public library as "a library provided wholly or partly from
public funds and the use of which is not restricted to any class of persons in the community but is freely available to all."

Therefore, as it can be summarized from the above definitions, a public library is a social institution established by the Central or State laws, run by the finances of the public and accessible to all without any discrimination. It's aimed to provide free diffusion of knowledge, education, information and recreation.

In many places state laws are still forthcoming but library structures are formulated on the basis of public library system both in structure and principle.

As per the description offered by the International Organization for Standardization, Public Libraries are "Those which serve the population of a community or region free of charge or for a nominal fee; they may serve the general public or special categories of users such as children, member of the armed forces, hospital patients, prisoners, workers and employees". Based on that view it can be stated that this is a kind of library that is meant to offer services to the public at large or for special categories or public or for both, with free of charge or with some price for subscription and usage. A public library, in comparison to the private ones, is available for use to those who wish to use it for their particular purpose and able to use it. Public library is different from every other kind of library also because it's not just a mere cascade of information, but an extensive range of functions for the wider
masses for ensuring better moral, cultural, economic and social value education. Unlike private libraries, public libraries receive financial assistance from the government authorities either in whole or in parts.*

Since the beginning of last century, information is being regarded as a "national resource" or the source of all development, energy and national strength. It is indispensible now and the only way for a community to bring in development is only through the proper utilization of information available at its end. It has been realized with time, that Public library is the most effective way possible to present plethora of information at the doorstep of all public who are capable of using the service.

When Indian constitution came into effect in 26th January, 1950 it meant to fulfil hopes and ambitions of the countrymen by ensuring their basic rights and liberties and by establishing proper resources to them. Now, the aim of public library is to offer free and wide access to information and knowledge to every group of readers irrespective of their background, which in the long way facilitates the social, cultural and economic welfare and progress of a country. Therefore, public library helps in the achievement of the basic aims and goals laid of our constitution.

In all practical purpose a Public Library is to people what a lighthouse is to a sheep.

* Public Library Chapter – 7 P – 88 by Dr. Mahapatra.
UNESCO Public Library Manifesto,

The following key missions which relate to information, literacy, education and culture should be at the core of public library services:

1. creating and strengthening reading habits in children at an early age;
2. supporting both individual and self conducted education as well as formal education at all levels;
3. providing opportunities for personal creative development;
4. stimulating the imagination and creativity of children and young people;
5. promoting awareness of cultural heritage, appreciation of the arts,
6. scientific achievements and innovations;
7. providing access to cultural expressions of all performing arts;
8. fostering inter-cultural dialogue and favouring cultural diversity;
9. supporting the oral tradition;
10. ensuring access for citizens to all sorts of community information;
11. providing adequate information services to local enterprises, associations and interest groups;
12. facilitating the development of information and computer literacy skills;

13. supporting and participating in literacy activities and programmes for all age groups, and initiating such activities if necessary.

Thus, a public library has 5 main primary objectives for its readers and the community at large. They are; information, education, recreation, entertainment and inspiration.

People need information for all purpose information: A professional or a trader needs special information for their occupation. The layman also needs information, for special purpose or for general needs, to grow or move forward for their survival. Students are the largest information seeker for the sake of their study development or for information for general upbringing. For a developing country like ours, with low rate of literacy and rising level of inequality in annual income among different social classes, public library acts as the source of public-education where readers can utilize the books and literatures for self-improvement. For the children who have to drop-out from schools due to family reason or financial weakness, Public Libraries can make education accessible to all without the restriction of class bias or other discrepancies. Middle aged or old aged people who wish to continue education beyond the walls of traditional schooling can access public libraries for their and the democracy's development at large.
Public libraries also aim at providing a source of entertainment and recreation for their users through relaxation and knowledge indulgence. These libraries also aim to infuse inspiration among its users to achieve better in life, to know deeper about things and to rise higher in success by way of organizing discussions, celebrations, workshops and cultural shows.

It should be noted in this connection that other mass media like television and radio also run on the same objective as like these public libraries, they also have greater interest sustaining quotient from the audience perspective, but public libraries, being an institution of books and literature aim to serve the users not only for momentary enjoyment but also for lifelong utilization. Through the books a reader can not only be able to integrate the knowledge about life, his nation and the world outside, but also be able adopt a sturdy decision making capability and vision for endurance. Books provide a backgrounder, a perspective knowledge that is more sustainable. We have discussed the issue separately.

**Epitome of egalitarian education**: The central force of education and knowledge stem from the institution of 'library' even before the idea of traditional education materialized and became available to public. The section of educated people, who considered library as an epitome of egalitarian education, formulated and promulgated library movement principally in the United States and in Britain. The movement meant to appreciate the role of library for regenerating progressive
ideas and thoughts and advocating its wider use. That’s why the western super power nations conceptualized public libraries as most effective weapons for nation building.

During mid 19th century as the Modern libraries in Italy, Germany and France, Bodleian library in England, Cambridge library, British museum library, Boston library and library of Congress played key roles in the materializing this revolution on a global scale.

Modem library system saw the light of reality in England in the form of religious, aided and technical institutions, even before the Public Libraries Act of 1850 was passed by the United Kingdom Parliament. The law empowered the local boroughs to build and run libraries for public use, which at that time felt essential to meet the social, economical, cultural and moral concerns. The Adams report commissioned by the “Carnegie United Kingdom Trust” * in 1915 played the most notable role in fortification of cooperative library system in Great Britain. Libraries for rural areas and central library for the students were formed based on this report and other recommendations made in the report later instigated a wide-scale revolution throughout the country. Kenyon report in 1924 led to the formation of regional library system and Central Library for Students were reformed into the National Central Library. McColvin report was launched in 1942 with statements of rising dissatisfaction on the system while the Vollans report in 1952 examined some of the major problems with the modern public library system. A need for supervision

* Andrew Carnegie, a scotsboy who became millionaire in the U.S.A. made huge grant of money for the building of Public Libraries in many towns in England and is remembered as a pioneer in public library movement. He made a library trust.
of the public libraries were felt during this time, as a result of the Roberts report was published in 1959 in demand of the 1964 Public Libraries Act for the purpose. Parry report was published in 1963 in demand of university libraries and 1969 Dainton report focused on centralization of the present library system.

During the late 19th and early 20th century six basic characteristics of public libraries were conceptualized in the U.S.A as follows:

I. It would be supported by tax dollars

II. The libraries will be administered and managed by a board specially appointed to ensure public interest

III. The libraries would be open to all

IV. It would be run as a voluntary service

V. It should be established by the state laws

VI. Services will be provided to the users in free of cost

The free library movement was formed in America to demand for public library and professionalization of librarianship for which philanthropy, women’s voluntary associations, and 'library laws' turned out to be the key driving forces.

The core purpose of this worldwide movement was to make library system people friendly and encourage the habit of social reading. Codification of library laws and equal and
balanced accessibility of library services also became indispensable to ensure cultural and social development.

**Indian libraries during the hours**

In India, the library revolution ushered in the year of 1784 with the establishment of Asiatic Society by Sir William Jones. Later, development of libraries by the Bombay government in 1808, establishment of Calcutta Library Society in 1818, Calcutta Public Library in 1835 and Connemara Public Library in 1896 strengthen the movement. But, Maharaja Sayajirao III, Gaekwar of Baroda appeared as the father of Indian library movement during that period. He believed in the power of education to eradicate social and economical discrepancy and with that view, he decided to establish the first library in the town of Taluka to ensure free education for all. In next few years he extended the library system through many parts of Gujarat with complete financial assistance of the State. In 1906 he went to America and witnessed their library system and its wide reaching impact and he became motivated to start a similar movement in his own land. William Alanson Borden, a pupil-assistant of Charles A Cutter, working as Librarian of the Young Men’s Institute, New Haven, Connecticut came to India upon the invitation from Maharaja Sayajirao to establish potential library services. Library movement officially started in 1910, when Borden was appointed as the Director of State Libraries in Baroda. He submitted a proposal to Maharaja Sayajirao with the steps to be taken to ensure quality library services in the country,
which he accepted and ordered to implement in parts. As a result, 85% of the Baroda population had access to libraries within two decades and the network of libraries spread all over India.

A major part of contribution of the modern library movement is also awarded to Shiyali Ramamrita Ranganathan who established notable libraries in Madras and various other parts of India, passed the Madras library act in 1948, started library science courses and wrote a number of books and journals on library classification and development.

After the arrival of British rulers, Circulating Libraries were established in different parts of Calcutta. The establishments of Asiatic Society (1784), Calcutta Library Society (1818), Calcutta Public Library (1835) and Imperial Library (1891) built up and developed the library movements in Bengal.

The pioneer of library movement in Bengal was Kumar Munindra Deb Ray as per the history. Other than him, Susil Kumar Ghosh and Tinkari Dutta also played important roles in promoting the movement on a national scale.

The contribution of Rabindra Nath Tagore in the development of library system in Bengal is unquestionable. He was selected as the first secretary of Bengal Library Association. His two famous essays on 'Library' and 'Responsibilities of Library' are still considered to be the ideal description of how a library should operate. Prabhat Kumar Mukherjee, former librarian of Visva Bharati University and Prof. Nihar Ranjan Roy, author,
once librarian of Calcutta University and director of National Library glorified the Bengal library movement with their lifelong contribution.

(See Tagore on library in the Chapter RRLF’S contribution to library regeneration)

**Public library in India:**

Although a public library system in Calcutta was originated during the first half of the 19th century and contributed profusely to the manifestation of Indian Renaissance, the library movement, however, begun in a moderate way. It was few Shelves with several hundred books in English and Persian, the first Government library started in the Fort William College in 1800 in Calcutta. The college was set up by the then Governor General of Bengal Presidency at Fort William as an Administrative Staff college for the East Indian Company's civilians. Wellesley felt the need for junior civil servants who were immigrants from England to orient them with Indian culture and customs as well as to place them on solid foundation of industry, intellectual Prudence, integrity and bond of religion. A need for resources in form of printed books were available in the market as well as obtained from some relevant manuscripts, prompted the college authorities to organize a college library for the use of the students. It is to be noted especially, that the early civil servants of the East India Company were not all vagabond fortune seekers and adventurers. Many of them were scholars, came to India with
great regard for her ancient heritage and tradition. They took this opportunity of serving India as an epicentre of culture and scholarships, birthplace of great art and architectures, languages, literatures and philosophies hitherto unknown to the Western world. These people were known as Indologists and orientalists, and founded a great link between the East and the West.

The Fort William College library formed a nucleus of future Imperial Library which was set up in much later period.

The library movement in Bengal was pioneered by Mr. William Jones, the founder of The Asiatic Society. It was the objective of Mr. Jones, who was a great scholar himself, to trace the hidden treasure of Asia. He sought to revive those treasures buried in the heaps of manuscripts and to retrace, restore and revive their lost glory and to make them known to the Western world. The Asiatic Society became the meeting point of scholarly pursuits and was able to draw attention to the Directors of the company for lending supports.

After 16 years of the foundation of the Asiatic Society, another attempt of founding a library came from Lord Wellesley, the then Governor General of the East India Company. It was basically a college library intended for use of Fort William college students. But it was a library with a difference as Fort William College was not an ordinary college, set up as an administrative staff college for the East India Company civilians. It was the policy of the company to
employ junior company civil servants who emigrated from England to serve the company as fresher. The company rulers took cautious steps to administer their newly acquired empire that had a great civilization and an inimitable culture. They found Indian people intelligent, cultured and sensitive to their religious traditions. To handle them with care, the English civilians must thoroughly be educated in India's cultural traditions and values. In addition to native language training with this view, the Fort William College started a library for the use of the students with books in English and Persian. The college recruited number of Bengali intellectuals, Sanskrit scholars and linguists. William Carey, the noted English scholar and linguist, who was one of the founders of Serampore Baptist Mission, joined Fort William College as a faculty member.

**Emerging Book market**

It is also interesting to know that by 1800 AD, bookselling trade had already struck root in Calcutta. It is gathered from the invoices supplied by the Calcutta booksellers to the Government for payment of books supplied to Fort William College library that there were as many as nine booksellers who supplied books to the Fort William College. Books like scientific and historical text, belle-lettres and the works of classical authors were supplied to the Fort William College library. It proves that the reading habit among the early European settlers in Calcutta was not few and far between; otherwise as many as nine booksellers in Calcutta market in
those days wouldn't make business. The Fort William College library wasn't limited to the typical college library of today. David Brown, on behalf of the Fort William College authorities, made a public announcement in the Press that with the inception of the Fort William College library, a public library was founded and invited people to make donations of books. The announcement evoked a good response. The early company civil servants were mostly booklovers and had their own valuable collections. Books would be imported from England via private booksellers and would found places in the shelves of private book collectors. So it wasn't very difficult to get books from private donations. Abdul Fazal and Kabir informed that a valuable collection of books from William Cowper, a late justice of Supreme Court of Calcutta, came to the library as a donation.

The Fort William library, very soon developed into a specialized library with a substantial number of collection of oriental literatures. In those days, all Indian Nababs and Maharajas, even the Zamindars used to have their private libraries, a part of treasure of their palace. Tipu Sultan of Mysore had such a rich library. When he was overthrown by the British, all his collections were brought to Calcutta. The Governor General ordered some selected books to give to the Asiatic Society Library, the rest were kept for the Fort William College.

* His statement is adequate evidence that the Fort William College Library used as public library with open access to outside readers.
As time went by, the Fort William College library was enriched with more valuable collections. Many books were printed at the Fort William College Press (more than 100 volumes between 1800-1805). More books were imported from England. With the collapse of Mughal Empire, the huge royal library was dismantled and their volumes were distributed in different parts of the Empire. The Fort William college library was also enriched with some of their volumes. The library also possessed a large number of manuscripts, especially from the library of Tipu Sultan. Some of those manuscripts were sent to England for printing in Book form. The library was not only used by the students, but by a large number of public. It shows the amount of interest aroused among the reading public. However, over use of library made some disorder, as a result of which, many valuable books were found missing. Consequently, the authorities barred entries of the local people in the library and kept it open exclusively for the Fort William students. So it again turned into an exclusive college library. By 1809, a descriptive catalogue of oriental literatures, including the collection from Tipu Sultan was published. Tipu was known as a warrior but his scholastic taste was almost unknown. The collection of Tipu Sultan included manuscripts in Arabic, Persian and Hindi. It was known that Hyder Ali and Tipu Sultan, both father and son, wrote their memoires and they were translated in several languages, but all remained in manuscript forms.
Over the next 30 years, until the abolition of Fort William College in early 1854, the library faced closure in several times. Many of its collections were transferred to other libraries. In 1833, the East India Company, Government took a decision not to rent out any portion of Writers' Building to any outside institution. And since, the Fort William College was housed in a portion in Writers' Building, it had to close down. But the problem arose to relocate the library. A proposal to transfer the library to the Asiatic Society was also considered, but rejected as inappropriate. However, in the long run, the transfer of books could not be avoided and were distributed chiefly to two institutions - Calcutta Public Library and the Asiatic Society.

**Fort William College Library**

Calcutta Public Library, the official public library in Calcutta, was established in 1835. In 1854, the Fort William College outlived its existence and was abolished by an official decree. A portion of the library was still kept open for the use of junior civil servants. All the historical collections of the library were transferred by this time and only 12 thousands books were kept for the use of civil servants.

The Fort William College's role in shaping the intelligentsia of both the British residence and the Indian elites living in the 19th century Calcutta, made a far-reaching effect to the awakening of Bengal. The college was not only a mere administrative college for the civilian orientation, but became
a spring board for cultural awakening. The vernacular books the Fort William Press printed were the testimony of early Bengali prose. That was the first experiment of literary prose in Bengali, free from the influence of Sanskrit, although the prose of ‘Mrityunjoy Vidyalankar’ hollowed the syntax of Sanskrit prose style but that was no doubt an experiment that the Bengali prose could be the medium of literary communication. Previously, for 900 years, poetry ruled exclusively in Bengali literature. In Fort William College's pursuit of Bengali prose inspired Raja Rammohan Roy to adopt simpler Bengali prose style and merit effective medium for communication.

Books are like earthen lamps, that can lit unlimited number of lamps and remove darkness. Books provide ideas to motivate the posterity to write more books. Even one book encourages another contemporary author to develop the style of writing to attract the wider masses. The installation of the Fort William College library wasn't meant to spread education among the masses. It was built with a limited purpose. The objectives of Asiatic Society and the Fort William College library weren't identical. But the history put them together to serve the identical purpose that was to arouse the contemporary generation appreciation for both the cultures, the East and the West. The growing number of users of the library proved that both the conqueror and the conquered nations could meet on a common ground that was the persuasion of knowledge and wisdom. Both the Asiatic Society Library and Fort William
College Library played their roles significantly. Both of the institutions catered to the need of the emergent intelligentsia of Bengal, who used those libraries as resource centres to imbibe new Western thoughts and learned to revaluate the existing believes and ideas of the society in the light of reason and logic. The huge collection of the Fort William Library was made over to many libraries in Bengal. Asiatic Society, the Calcutta Public Library and the Imperial Library became the direct beneficiaries from its valuable stocks.

Public Library comes to town:

The necessity for a public library was felt after dissolution of the Fort William College library. The small European population in Calcutta of that time was however adequate to patronize a number of private bookshops in Calcutta in those days had developed reading habits. Moreover, by 1835 a sizeable English speaking Indian population emerged who could read and write English and yearned for English books on different topics. ‘Raja Rammohan Roy’, Prasanna Kumar Tagore, Dwarakanath Tagore etc. who got English education from early English schools in Calcutta advocated for English education for their countrymen. They would believe that all treasures of knowledge could be located in English books which the progressive Indians should pursue at any cost that was also felt need of the European community living in Calcutta. So, Sir Charles Metcalfe, the then Governor-General at Fort William, gave an advertisement in some Calcutta based newspaper, locating a proposal of public library.
As considerable inconvenience is sustained by almost all classes of the community of Calcutta, owing to the absence of anything like a general library ... it is proposed to take measures for immediately establishing an institution, upon a scale commensurate with the extent and wants of the reading populations. It is of the last importance that the spirit of exclusion be repudiated by all who may wish to share in its foundation ... we shouldn't ask the comer from what land he has arrived, what tenets he possesses; we should not mete his understanding by his creed nor his worthiness by the lot which he feels his life, but of whatever shrine he was taught in his infancy to bow, to whatever hue the north wind has bleached at the southern sun has mellowed his complexion, we should bid him to approach, to drink and to be filled. In a word, the honourable task is proposed of diffusing a literary spirit amongst all classes and creating means for its gratification, of opening a rich source of instruction and enjoyment to all ranks and profession, subject only to that moral propriety and strict observance of decorum, without which no society can long remain respectable. To ensure the most complete success to the proposed institution and to render it accessible to all persons of whatever station, it is proposed to establish two rates of admission; viz., five and three rupees per month, charging also a small entrance of two gold mohurs to the former, in order to create a fund at the commencement and granting to the first class of subscribers some privileges that may not be desired by the second. It is
requested that those who are favourable to the plan now submitted for consideration will send their names to the editor of the Englishman and Hurkaru, and as soon as a sufficient number small appear upon the list, a meeting will be called to arrange the details and all preliminaries.’

Although the admission fee for the library appeared to be bit exorbitant in those day’s standard, it aroused tremendous public response from among more than 1050 citizens spontaneously to the establishment of the public library.

The convenors of the library included no other person than Mr. H.T. Princep, the famous orientalist and two other famous calcuttans - Dwarakanath Tagore and Rasamoy Dutta. Sir Charles Metcalfe was the first secretary. The two advertisements were published in the Hurkaru, Courier and the Englishman. A public meeting was organized on 31\textsuperscript{st} August 1835. In the meeting they discussed about the blueprint of the proposed library. A provisional committee was formed to set up the rules. It was! decided that every member would pay Rs. 300 in one payment and Rs. 100 by three instalments. There were two types of memberships - first class and second class. And third class - under varying fees and facilities. A third class member would pay Rs. 2 per month. The public response recorded to be very encouraging. Subscription and donations poured in profusely. The names of the subscribers used to be published in newspapers regularly. The first donation came from a flourishing bookseller of Calcutta, William Thacker. The books for Calcutta Public
Library came mostly by donations but shelves of the libraries were enriched when government decided to make over a part of huge stocks of Fort William College library to the Calcutta Public Library and the Asiatic Society. The collection of volumes in the library came in total 6500, 5000 volumes from government and 1500 volumes from donations. Books consisted of literature, history, biography, politics and arts. Very soon Calcutta Public Library became the subject of public interest and received wide coverage primarily in the three Calcutta newspapers such as Hurakaru, Englishman and Calcutta Courier.

The newspapers floated many valuable suggestions from the members of the public. Some people suggested many Europeans coming to Calcutta as a civilian or for other purposes would bring a number of valuable publications with them they generally would not take back of those books after their Indian assignments were over. In case of their death in India, their books could even be procured from the street peddlers at low prices. Acquisition of such personal collections would enrich the library. Some suggestions called for creating the post of salaried librarian to induce a well-qualified person with literary qualification to take up the post of a librarian. The concept of a full-time librarian for running the library authority was conceived of in those days. Prior to Calcutta Public Library, some minor libraries were set up at public initiatives like Calcutta Society Library. But the library ultimately failed because of mismanagement. The Hurakaru,
the leading English newspaper set up its own library. The Calcutta Public Library started on an auspicious date, 21\textsuperscript{st} March, 1836. The library was open to the public from 9 am to 6 pm. Mr. Pearychand Mitra became the sub-librarian. It was located at Dr. Tom's building. Besides books, the library also used to subscribe many distinguished journals like Edinburgh Medical journal, Records of General Science, Calcutta Christian Observer, Blackwoods Magazine etc. Besides, the library kept all Indian newspapers. The reading habit of those days could be assessed from the lending figures of books and periodicals. It was estimated that by the turn of 1837, about 2156 works comprising 4105 volumes were circulated in a year.

However, running a full-fledged public library with the considerable number of readers needed sufficient amount of fund to fall back upon. For the lack of enough number of recurring grants. The growth of the Calcutta Public library remained stagnated, in course of time. By the turn of the century, the Governor-General of India made a proposal for floating up the Imperial Library as a central library for the country. Imperial Library came into being in 1901. The government of India acquired the entire collection of Calcutta Public Library and was made over to the new Imperial Library. The Imperial Library was renamed as National Library following India’s independence (see National Library). Throughout the later half of the 19\textsuperscript{th} century and the beginning of 20\textsuperscript{th} century many new libraries sprang in Bengal
in the form of smaller decentralized autonomous library in different localities in Calcutta and neighbourhood, in district headquarters and sub divisional towns. The 20th century also saw the growth of a large number of country libraries in the districts of Bengal. Throughout the 19th century Bengal saw a social awakening in many forms. A class of now literates and highly educated persons emerged thanks to the education movement, public library was a part of it.
Chapter – III

Library and culture

Preservation and maintenance of media and knowledge are essential for the continuity of culture. Doshi and Jain defined culture as acquired or cultivated behavior and thoughts of individual within a society. A society is an organized, interacting, aggregate of individuals who follow a given way of life.

But to make a society vibrant and dynamic society needs constant stimulation by people to change itself with regular intervals. A society by nature a static object only people’s cultural and socio-political leadership can make it rolling. As culture is mainly a communication process, communication is the main vehicle for social change.

In the beginning of history there was only oral communications and at that stage the change process was slow. But when alphabets were innovated that became the first revolution in the process of change. Because with the alphabets it was possible to store the norms, values and cultural heritage of the group to which a person belongs to as a member.

Changing culture of library

So from the time immemorial, People have been trying to establish a store house of knowledge both for the present generation and for the posterity. The concept of library first
emergerged for it was necessitated to preserve the skills and know hows of contemporary art, science, architecture and engineering in recorded form. As there was no printing technology existed at that time. Those records were engraved on stones or bricks and were kept systematically after cataloguing. Some specialized person would be engaged to supervise these arrangements. Anything of Public importance and needed to preserve would be preserved under one roof under the supervision of the in-charge who arrange for cataloguing systematically would write some notes if necessary in the interest of future user.

This was the formative stage of modern library following the manuscript era comprised only printed books of sixteenth century Europe saw the Renaissance in Italy. The renaissance brought about dynamic changes in humanity. Library developed human thoughts, mind set, experience and feeling throughout the history of civilization. Library has not allowed human history to die and retained the legacy for ages. The library is merged in human thoughts, culture and human civilization. The library movement thus is linked to the promotion of knowledge and wisdom.

Sargon the I, the founder of semetic Empire founded the first library of the world in Akkad or Agade in the 7th century B.C. It is known from later archaeological excavation that the first library of the world would maintain subjectwise and descriptive more than 20,000 tablets of burnt clay from the Royee Palace library at Mari, Babylon. Those tablets were the
documents of diplomatic and administrative matters. The royal library of Babylon was the testimony of extensive reading habits of Babylonian people. They would study wide range of subjects like medicine, biology, chemistry, geology and mathematics. The royal library was open to all the huge collection of tablets on different subjects would prove how mass literacy was widespread and in those days, how large was the academic community and scholarly people who were involved in authorship. *

The clay tablets were removed by manuscript following the innovation of papyrus the primitive form of paper. Now all books wet written by hand. Ink was simultaneously innovated as writing material. The birth of the new innovation was Egypt where the Egyptian kings patronized writings of books of various subjects. In 1250 BC, the emperor Ramesis set up his famous library that preserved 20,000. Papyrus roles that contained reference books on various subjects.

The library used to issue papyrus pieces for circulation among the registered readers and there was issue registers to record users name. They are the instances of earlier librarianship practice. The legendary library of Alexandria, in Egypt possessed about 20,000 books. Founded by Tolemy (305 – 283 BC) the library used to employ librarians from among the scholars, critics and grammarians. They would restore

* Dr. Pijush Kanto Mahapatra the Library organization.
manuscripts and would provide explanatory notes, prepared bibliography and provide short biography of some authors.

The library was burnt by accidental fire to the dismay of thousands of book lovers.

**From Origin to Development**

In ancient India historians located famous libraries at Kathiawar, Taxila, Vikramsila, Jagadaala, Odantipuri, Mithila, Nadia and Beneras. In South India famous ancient libraries were traced Nagarjuna Vidyapith (7th century AD on the Krishna).

Even there were some Muslim rulers in India in different period. Among them Jalaluddin Khilji (1290) Patronised imperial library in 1290. The post of librarian was traditionally considered a prize post and Amir Kushru, the eminent poet was offered the librarianship. Sultan Jalaluddin Khalzi honoured his librarian by offering the white robe, the highest honour from the King in recognition to talent.

All Mugal emperors patronized library. Babar brought back his ancestral collections to Delhi that were no material treasures but a number of manuscripts. Jahangir developed special passion for his lady love and his imperial library. Humayun was himself a Bibliophil. Akabar’s Fatepur Sikri Library was specially meant for the women at harem to spread education. Libraries for restricted use spread everywhere in medieval
India. From Babar to Aurangzeb, from Mysore Maharajas to the small King of Bhoza in Dhar founded their own libraries.

Even the Jesuits upon coming to Agra possessed a library in Agra during the sixteenth century. I do not want to increase the number of instances. This is just to give ideas those libraries had no connexion with the larger societies beyond the limit of the royal palace or private premises. But this will give enough evidence that the libraries were even integral part of Grown and the political power of the King. Who would depend equally on sword and books. Books are the need of all people for all seasons.

History shows us that with change of time and change of political power the social need for libraries remained constant. India lost her freedom in 1757 and the foreigners occupied the country, but despite library movement flourished in India keeping pace with the international trend. Thanks to the pro-library policy of the East India Company they rather patronised Indian library net work that helped flourished the Calcutta Public Library. The libraries were necessitated to keep up the Empire too.

Then on the other hand the need of the library was felt by the ruled class for different purposes. The business community was interested to get adequate business intelligence about trade and commerce. Besides, they needed more insight about the world through available books. The leading Kolkata citizens showed keen interest in having first public library in
Kolkata as they were inspired by this time the message spread by Raja Rammohun Roy that not to take anything for granted without rational thinking. Books could grow rational thinking. The Raja through his 'Atmiya Sabha’ discourses, or through his columns in Sambad Kaumadi or by his lecturers given to the 'Bramha Sabha’ encouraged people to pursue knowledge. That spirit worked. Educated people became interested in reading general books and involved themselves in the first public library in Calcutta.

**Public Library Movement in Bengal**

1836 saw the world’s first Public Library came into being in Kolkata with much public enthusiasm but it took another 15 to 20 years to spread public library movement in Bengal at the grass root level.

It is because the vernacular education did not spread much until Iswar Chandra Vidysagar took personal initiative to set up clusters of Bengali schools during the second half of the 19th century. There were no sufficient school text books in Bengali for the learners. Vidyasagar wrote books even for the beginners. Libraries are mainly for reading books and periodicals. There were sufficient number of periodicals but not many Bengali books came out for general reading before the 2nd half of the nineteen century. The second half saw the emergence of first Bengali novel by Payari Chand Mitra. Bankim Chandra emerged in literary scene. His Bangadarshan Magazine presented many powerful writers and poets.
By the eightees Rabindra Nath Tagore’s advent in the sky of Bengali literature was a phenomenon. The question how libraries can survive without sufficient number of vernacular books almost got solved.

Calcutta public library used to be fed up with mostly English books. A public library primarily thrives with sufficient number of books for the common people in their own language so that they can identify themselves with books they read, ideas they imbibe must conform to their local needs. So creating large number public libraries at the neighbourhood became necessary. Secondly building up a library needs infrastructural support that needs finance. Common people can not take that financial burden. Even England needed the help of Andrew Carnegie. At Baroda, Gujrat the Maharaja S.R. Gikoar-III set up 1500 public libraries alone. In Bengal there was no such generous Maharaja, who could single handedly advance library movement but Bengal found a number Rajas, Zaminders and some affluent book lovers among the public who donated liberally for public library build up as much as practicable for them.

It will be relevant to mention some names of those great people who made financial help to the cause or public library.

2) Maharaja Srischendra Roy – Krishnanagar.
3) Joykrishna Mukherjee, Raja of Uttarpara.
4) Maharaja Nripendra Navayan – Maha Raja of Coach Bihar.
5) Tulsi Charan Goswami – Srirampore Zaminder.
8) Maharajas of Kashimbazar, Darbhanga, Dinajpur and Subhabazar.
9) Palchowdhury Family of Ranaghat.
   Kundu family (zaminder of Mahiari)
10) Maharaja of Maurbhanj.
11) Kunja Behari Sen – Business People.
12) S.K. Barman – Business People.
13) Satyanarayan Mukherjee – Bansberia
14) Kumar Manindra D C Deb roy.
15) Dwijendra Nath Thakur.
16) Maharaja Manindra Chandra Nundy.
17) Raja Jogindra, Narayan Roy

Besides all intellectuals of Bengal including Rabindra Nath Tagore stood by the public libraries.

Those who were involved in library movement actively were as follows :
1) Rajnarayan Bose.
2) Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar.
3) Sir Ramesh Ch. Mitra
4) W.C. Banerjee.
5) Rash Behari Ghosh
6) Davi Ghosh
7) Gurudes Banerjee
8) Bhudeb Mukherjee
9) Surendra Nath Banerjee
10) Bhupendra Nath Dutta
11) Kazi Nazrul Islam.
12) Sailojanandra Mukhopadhya
13) Dwaraka Nath Vidyabhusan
14) Kedarnath Bandopadhya
15) Damodar Mukhopadhya
16) Ramgati Tarka Ratna
17) Dwijendra Nath Thakur
18) Girish Ch. Ghosh
19) Sisir K. Ghosh
20) Amritalal Bose
21) Dr. R. G. Kar
22) Debendra Nath Thakur
23) Bhupendra Nath Bose
24) Panchkari Bandopadhya
25) Ramananda Chattopadhya
26) Jaladhar Sen
27) Motilal Ghosh. *

The list shows that Bengals Public Library movement was not dispensed with public support but in course of time the movement got fractured. That is the crux of this thesis.

* There are other people from various walks of life involved in library movement. It is not possible to publish a full list.
The library for the Nation

Although the National Library of India is a fully Government library and has no link with the public libraries of the state but its historical origin cannot be isolated from its public library connection. The origin of National Library was the imperial library. The British Government set up imperial library in 1891. In 1903 the Government of India amalgamated imperial library with Calcutta public library. So National library has inheritance of the world’s first public library. He imperial library started with 4,675 volumes of books from the library of College of Fort William donated to the library by the then Government General Lord Metcalfe and other than that, a wide range of Indian and foreign language publications were purchased for the library. Donations of books in Gujarati, Marathi, Pali, Simhalese and Punjabi were regularly received from the Government of Bengal and North Western regions.

Unlike Calcutta Public Library, the use of Imperial Library was restricted to the superior level officers of the Government.

In 1903, the then Governor General of India Curzon realized the need to establish a public library for the countrymen to encourage free reading and education. He discovered that both the Calcutta Public Library and the Imperial Library were not utilized at their fullest due to lack of amenities provided to

* Website of National Library
the readers and limited access to its usage. Therefore, he decided to unite these two libraries into one establishment for optimum usage of its resources. As a result, in January 30, 1903 the new amalgamated library named the Imperial Library was inaugurated at the Metcalfe Hall, Kolkata which used to be the residence of the Governor Generals Wellington, Cornwallis and Warren Hastings in earlier days. On the library the Gazette of India published –

“It is intended that it should be a library of reference, a working place for students and a repository of material for the future historians of India, in which so far as possible, every work written about India, at any time, can be seen and read”.

**

The first librarian appointed for the Imperial Library was John Macfarlane, Assistant Librarian of the British Museum, London. When he passed away the celebrated scholar Harinath De was appointed in charge of the library.

** Emergence of National Library**

After Independence the Government of India changed the name of the Imperial Library to the National Library, with the enactment of the Imperial Library (Change of Name) Act, 1948, and the collection was shifted from the Esplanade.

The National Library was established under the Department of Culture, Ministry of Tourism & Culture, Government of India.

** Wimipedia.org.
It’s considered the largest library of the country as per its volume of books which is more than 2.2 million. It is also India’s library of public record. As the guidelines published by National Library, the library is “designated to collect, disseminate and preserve the printed material produced in the country” to encourage, maintain and strengthen the cultural, economical, intellectual and socio-political development of various Indian community, by serving their requirements.

The aims and objectives of National Library as published in their manifesto are as follows:

1) Acquisition and conservation of all significant national production of printed material, excluding ephemera.

2) Collection of printed material concerning the country, no matter where it is published, and as a corollary, the acquisition of photographic records of such material that is not available within the country.

3) Acquisition and conservation of foreign material required by the country.

4) Rendering of bibliographical and documents services of current and retrospective material, both general and specialized.

5) Acting as a referral centre purveying full and accurate knowledge.
Opening Public Access

On 1 February 1953, the National Library was opened to the public, inaugurated by then Union Minister of Education, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad. Mr. B.S. Kesavan was appointed the first Librarian of the National Library.

In course of time the National Library developed itself to the standard of world’s avant-garde national libraries. The task was not so easy for a multi-lingual country like India. The library has separate Indian language divisions for Assamese, Bengali, Gujarati, Hindi, Kannada, Kashmiri, Malayalam, Marathi, Oriya, Punjabi, Sanskrit, Sindhi, Tamil, Telugu and Urdu. Sanskrit language division also collects and processes Pali and Prakrit books. English books published in India are collected under D.B. Act.

Bengali Language Collection:

The library has 85,000 books in its Bengali collection. The collection contains very rare and valuable books as well as periodicals published from the last quarter of the 18th century. Early Bengali plays and novels are well represented. The collection has many rare items such as the manuscripts of Sarat Chandra Chattopadbyay, Bibhutibhusban Bandyopadbyay, Jibanananda Das and Bishnu Dey. 154 letters of Netaji Subbas Chandra Bose written to his nephew Sri Asok Nath Bose and letters to Sarat Chandra Bose are also available in the collection. The collection has the complete set of Rabindranath Tagore's works, except a few of his early
works. This includes 190 first editions of Tagore's works. Some of the rare and important works in this collection are: A Grammar of the Bengal Language (1778) by Nathaniel Brassey Halhed, which is the earliest printed book in Bengali, Henry Forster's A Vocabulary in Two parts, English and Bangalee (1799), William Carey's Dialogues, “Intended to Facilitate the Acquiring of the Bengali Language (1801)”, Ramram Basu's Raja Pratapaditya Charitra (1801), Mrityurjay Vidyalankar's Batris Simbansan (1802), Ramayana translated by Krittibas Oiba and published in live volumes, Mababbarat translated by Kasbiram Das (1802), Chandicharan Munshi's Tota Itihas (1805), Jayanarayan Ghosal's Sri Karunanidhanavilasa (1814), William Carey's Dictionary of the Bengali Language, 2 volumes (1815-1825). There are 400 titles of Bengali periodicals including many rare 19th century periodicals such as Digdarshun (1818) first Bengali monthly and the first issue of Samachar Darpan (1811) - the first Bengali weekly.

**Hindi Language Division**

The collection building of Hindi books has been continuing since the time of the Imperial Library, and a separate division was established in 1960. At present 80,000 Hindi books are in the library collection. The collection has rare works published during the last decades of the 18th Century. Many of the publications published by Luloo Lal, the first printer-publisher and writer of Kolkata, are represented in this collection. The following rare books published by Luloo Lal are in the library: Braja Bhasha Grammar (1811), Lataile
Hindi (1821) Rajaniti (1827) and Prem Sagur (1842). In addition the library has The Oriental Linguist with an Extensive Vocabulary English and Hindoostanee and Hindoostanee and English by John B. Gilchrist. A separate Kannada division was set up in 1963 in the National Library. In 1960, the library purchased the personal collection of H. Channakeshava Ayyangar. It consists 1300 books published between the last two decades of the 19th century and the first three decades of the 20th century. An important contribution toward building the collection was the efforts of G. P. Rajarathnam, a noted Kannada author. Immediately after the enactment of the D.B. Act, Rajaratnam toured the erstwhile Mysore state to create awareness among the publishers about the Act. He collected about 1500 books without any expense to the library. The Kannada collection in the library is particularly useful for the study of the cultural history of Karnataka. At present there are 32,000 Kannada books in the library.

**Other Language Collections are as follows:**

**According to information available:**

1) The Kashmiri division was formed in 1983. Currently the library has 500 Kashmiri books.

2) The Malayalam division was established as a separate division in 1963, with around 5000 books. Now the collection has 34,500 books. The earliest printed book, *Centum Adagia Malabarica*, a Latin translation of
Malayalam proverbs, dates back to 1791. The Latin translations are printed alongside the Malayalam originals. Rare and old books include Robert Drummond's Grammar of the Malabar Language (1799), Dr Gundart's Malayalam-English Dictionary (1872) Vartamanapustakam by Parammachkal Govarnnodoracchan, Appu Nedungadi's Kundalata and Oyyarathu Chandu Menon's Indulekha (1889) included the collection.

3) The Marathi division was established in 1963 with a collection of 8900 volumes. The division now has 37,000 books in its collection. In 1954 the National Library purchased the library of the Bengal Nagpur Railway Indian Institute, Kharagpur, which had a good number of Marathi books. Sir Jadunath Sarkar collection also has about 350 Marathi books, mostly on the history of the Marathas. The division has many rare and old Marathi publications. These include William Carey's A Grammar of the Mahratta Language (1805) and Dictionary of the Maharatta Language (1810), Simhasana Battisi (1814), Raghiji Bhonsaiyaci Vanshavali (1815), Vans Kennedy's A Dictionary of Maratta Language (1824), Nava Karar (1850), A Short Account of Railways by K. Bbatwadekar (1854), Charles Hutton's algebra as Bjaganit (1856), Tukaram's A bhangachi Gatha (1869) edited by Vishnu Parasburam Pandit and Shankar Pandurang Pandit, Itihasoprisiddha Purushanche va Striyanche Povade edited by H. A. Acworth (1891).
4) A separate Odia division was established in 1973. The Imperial Library had only 133 books; later the collection as increased to 425 books. Currently, the division has 19,500 books. The oldest publication available in the Oriya collection dates back to 1831. It is Rev. Amos Sutton's Introductory Grammar of Oriya Language. Some of the other rarities in the collection are Jayadeva's Gita Govinda, translated by Dharanidhara, Amos Sutton's An Oriya Dictionary, 3 volumes (1841-3), Dharmapustakara Adibbaya (1842-3), and Purnachandra Odia Bhashakosha (1931 – 40), a lexicon of the Oriya language compiled by Gopala Chandra Praharaj.

Sanskrit has a rich literature in many fields of knowledge. A separate division in the library collects and processes Sanskrit books. At present the division has over 20,000 Sanskrit books, printed in the Devanagari script. Almost all Indian language divisions possess Sanskrit works printed in their respective language scripts. The library also a rich collection of Sanskrit works edited or translated with original scripts, in English and many other foreign languages. The collection attracts scholars from India and abroad. Apart from Sanskrit, books in Pali and Prakrit languages are also collected and processed by this division. At present the library has about 500 books in Pali and a comparable collection of books in Prakrit.

5) Since 1957, the library has been building a collection of Sindhi books. At present the library has 2100 Sindhi
books. Shah Abdul Latil Bhittai's Shah Jo Risalo and Shah Jo Sher are the rare items in this collection.

6) The Tamil division was formed in 1963. The division currently has 57,000 books. Apart from this, the library has 1000 Tamil books and 300 Tamil manuscripts in the Vaiyapuri Pillai collection. There are many rare and old works among the Tamil titles. Early printed Tamil books in the library include the Tamil Bible (1723), Johann Phillip Fabricius's A Malabar and English Dictionary (1779), a Tamil translation of John Bunyan's The Pilgrim's Progress (1793), and Caldwell's Comparative Grammar of Dravidian languages (1850). The collection also includes standard editions of five great Sangam Classics.

7) The Telugu division was started in the National Library in 1963. The collection has a good number of old Telugu books published since the earlier decades of the 19th century.

8) Like Arabic and Persian, the Urdu collection was substantial since the days of Imperial Library. Special collections such as the Buhar Library, Hidayat Husain collection, Zakariya collection and Imambara collection have some Urdu books and manuscripts. In 1968 a separate Urdu division was set up in the library. At present it has more than 20,000 books. Some of the oldest are Uklakhi Hindee or Indian Ethics (1803), and Mir Muhamad Taki's Kulliat-e-Mir (1811).
9) The National Library has an invaluable collection of books in the English language, because of the systematic development by Calcutta Public Library and the Imperial Library. Way back in 1848, an attempt was made to acquire journals issued by the foreign learned institutions. Serious works were purchased in larger numbers than light literature. The same policy has been pursued in recent times. Although the library has English books but other reading materials are available in almost all subjects, the collection is especially rich in the humanities, British and Indian history and literature. The library has a rich foreign language collections. Books on Germanic - Romanic language, West Asian and African languages are library’s assets.

**Rare book**

The National Library has an impressive number of rare books and other reading materials. In 1973, a separate Rare Books division was established. At present the books published prior to 1860 are considered rare books, along with limited and first editions, books distinguished by their design, illustration or history, and a few other criteria. Along with rare books, manuscripts and microfilms of the library are also stacked in this division. The division also provides reading facilities to the users who wish to consult these items. At present the division has 4700 monographs, 3000 manuscripts and 1500 microfilms.
**Store house of documents**

There are other official documents preserved in the library. All the publications of Government of India, State Governments, Union Territories, Government Undertakings, Autonomous Bodies included them. A separate division for this purpose was established in 1972. The library owns a rich collection of Indian official documents from the days of the East India Company to the present. The collection also includes the documents published by the Government of Great Britain relating to India. A good collection of Myanmarese documents and Jew documents of Aden, Sri Lanka, Persian, Gulf Political Residency are also part of this collection. At present, the division holds around 490,000 documents.

**The U.N. Link**

The library is one of the repository libraries for United Nations Organization and its agencies. Thus all the publications of UN and its agencies are received by the library free of cost. These documents are processed and stacked separately. The library also receives publications of the governments of the United States of America, Great Britain, Canada, the Commonwealth nations, and the publications of the European Economic Community. Almost all the volumes of the sessional sets of British Parliamentary papers since the beginning of the 19th century are available. Apart from the depositary copies, the library acquires selected foreign publications through
purchase. At present the library has around 400,000 foreign official documents.

**Newspapers and periodicals**

All the newspapers and periodicals in Indian languages are received and processed in their respective language divisions. But English newspapers and periodicals, both the Indian and foreign, are acquired and processed separately. A separate Serials division is responsible for acquiring and processing of English newspapers and periodicals. The library has a rich collection of late 19th and early 20th century newspapers and periodicals, but almost all of them are incomplete sets. There are catalogues for periodicals, newspapers and gazettes available in the library up to 1953 (see author’s Comment).

**Other documents**

The library has an extensive collection of maps from the 17th century onwards. Indian topographical sheets of earlier days (at scale of one inch, half-inch and quarter-inch to a mile) and maps of natural resources, population, transport and communication systems, agricultural production, soil, vegetation and the geology of India form the major part of the collection. At present the library has 85,000 printed maps, 54 cartographic manuscripts, and 280 atlases.

The library has around 500 rolls of microfilms and 1000 microfiches. These are preserved in the Rare Books division.
The Census of India (1872-1951) is one of the most important and rare document available in the form of microfiches.

**Conservation activities**

One of the basic functions of the National Library is to conserve the printed heritage for future generations. For this purpose the library has separate divisions for physical, chemical, reprographic and digital conservation.

Another method of preservation that has been developed by the library is physical conservation. Reprographic conservation has been applied to most of the 19th century newspapers, Arabic, Persian and Sanskrit manuscripts have already been microfilmed 5000 rolls of microfilms are already produced so far by the Reprography division.

**Digitization**

The scanning and archiving of rare and brittle books and other documents on compact disc has started. English books and documents published before 1900 and Indian publications preceding 1920 are considered for digitization. 9140 selected books in Indian and English languages have already been scanned and stored—a total of over 3.2 million pages.

The Government of India has now set up another National Library in Delhi but for historical reasons has not shifted the original National library of the country from Kolkata. Thus, the National library of Kolkata keeps up the continuity of worlds first public library set up in Kolkata in 1836.
**Free for Public**

Although the National library caters to the need of all types of readers and access to library use is free for public, the library needs for further improvement of service to the readers and conservation of documents. Unlike public libraries national libraries mainly cater to the need of research scholars who need rare documents that are only available in the National library. Yet there are many documents that are scattered in different old public libraries in India specially in West Bengal heritage public libraries. All those valuable documents like rare books periodicals and hand written manuscripts sustain irreparable damage for want of space and conservation. Even the periodical sections of the NL is in a precarious condition. I quote a recent news paper report in this matter (see later part).

Secondly, to facilitate the researcher to get those documents under one roof, instead of rushing from one library to another there should be a central archives. At many libraries those rare documents are not open to the scholars and are preserved carelessly without any indexing or taking any protective measures from damage that aggravates their early decay. If microfilming of all those documents is not possible at least each document could be Xeroxed so that at least their contents could be saved for future research and they should be microfilmed in due course.

This is the area of National Library that may suggest to the Government to make a law that valuable documents important
for the nation are not preserved properly must be brought in under one roof for a careful custody and conservation.

Here I submit a list of some libraries where valuable rare documents are kept. The National Library is run by Ministry of Culture, Govt. of India and the State Public and sponsored Libraries are run by the State Government under a separate directorate. Both the Govts. Should work jointly to prepare a descriptive cataloguer of rare books and periodicals lying in different libraries in the country. They must be brought under the control of National Library and be kept at a national archives at the disposal of national library to serve the dual purpose. Firstly; to save those documents from decay and damage. Secondly they could be made available to the genuine researchers more conveniently.

A list of old Public Libraries in West Bengal are rich with rare books and old periodicals.

Please see the following list –

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of the library</th>
<th>Address</th>
<th>Year of Founder</th>
<th>Comment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Krishnanagar Public Library</td>
<td>Krishnanagar, Nadia</td>
<td>1856</td>
<td>No restoration work undertaken</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Konnagar Public Library &amp; Free Reading Room.</td>
<td>Konnagar, Hooghly</td>
<td>1858</td>
<td>- Do –</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No.</td>
<td>Library Name</td>
<td>Location</td>
<td>Year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----</td>
<td>------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------</td>
<td>------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Joykrishna Pathagar</td>
<td>Uttarpara, Hourah</td>
<td>1859</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Uttarbanga Rastiya Gramthagar</td>
<td>Coach Bihar</td>
<td>1870</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Ariadaha Association library</td>
<td>Ariadaha, North 24-Pgs.</td>
<td>1870</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Sriampore Public Library &amp; Mutual Improvement Association</td>
<td>Srirampore, Hooghly</td>
<td>1861</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>The United Reading Rooms</td>
<td>Nimtala Ghat Street, Kolkata</td>
<td>1891</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Chandannagar Pustagar</td>
<td>Chandannagar, Hooghly</td>
<td>1873</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Shibpur Public Library</td>
<td>Howrah</td>
<td>1874</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Baranagar Peoples' Library</td>
<td>Kulhighat, Baranagar</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Indian Association Library</td>
<td>62, B.B. Ganguly Street</td>
<td>1876</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Ranigange</td>
<td>Ranigange,</td>
<td>1876</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No.</td>
<td>Library Name</td>
<td>Location</td>
<td>Year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----</td>
<td>------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------</td>
<td>------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15.</td>
<td>Taltola Public Library</td>
<td>Taltola, Kolkata</td>
<td>1882</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16.</td>
<td>Bagbazar Reading Library</td>
<td>Bhupen Bose Avenue</td>
<td>1883</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17.</td>
<td>Batra Public Library</td>
<td>Batra, Howrah</td>
<td>1884</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18.</td>
<td>Ranaghat Public Library</td>
<td>Ranaghat</td>
<td>1864</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19.</td>
<td>Makardaha Saraswati Library</td>
<td>Makardaha</td>
<td>1885</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20.</td>
<td>Palli Bharati</td>
<td>Mia Kalyan,</td>
<td>1866</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Gramthagar</td>
<td>Howrah</td>
<td>Patra.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22.</td>
<td>Bharati Parishad</td>
<td>87, Bidhan Sarani, Kolkata</td>
<td>1890 Rare magazines like Dashi, Balak. Many 19th century books.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23.</td>
<td>Ashutosh Memorial Library</td>
<td>Ashutosh Mukherjee Road, Kolkata</td>
<td>1913 A number of rare books.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25.</td>
<td>Bangiya Sahitya Parishad</td>
<td>APC Street, Kolkata</td>
<td>1893 One of the richest collection of old rare periodicals. Copies of Gram Barta Prakashika are only available here. Bibidhartha Sangraha is another rare possession.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Calls for a new archives:**

One of the most valuable treasures of the national library is the huge collections of old magazines and newspapers since 1780. Some of them are placed in the main building but most of them are stored in the old building at the Esplanade East. 15000 newspaper files are dumped in the old building many
are in worn out condition for lacking in scientific preservation. At the moment the library has been able to transfer 7000 newspapers and journal electronically. According to Prof. Swapan Chakrabortee the library has prepared data base of almost all English books between 1475 and 1700. The electronic resource centre of the library now has been able to establish link with any national library in the world.

Though the main library building at the Belvedere Campus has expanded over the years and many new buildings have come up including the Bhasha Bhaban. Notwithstanding the Research scholars’ demand to relocate the old news paper unit from esplanade not complied with the section to Belvedere Campus in a safe and secured place under conservation has not been paid held for years.

**Esplanade Repository in bad shape**

The condition of the Esplanade old news papers section will shock the researchers who come there for research work. The old news paper racks are placed at the edge of the room in front of the toilet. The roof is leaking and during the monsoon dampens the files placed on the racks.*

A newspaper report alleges the racks are not regularly cleansed and allows gather dust causing damage to many files. *

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*Eye1 Somoy Feb. 1, 2013*
Shifting away old newspapers should be immediate taken on war footing. At the same time Govt. of India should make a law in the Parliament that all vintage newspapers and handwritten manuscripts can be acquired by the Ministry of Culture in the National Interest and be preserved in National Library Archives. Heritage public libraries failing to take proper care for preservation must hand over such vintage newspapers to the NL archives. The library should issue an appeal to the private people to deposit all such rare collections of newspapers to the archives. There are still huge stock of rare books magazines and newspapers in the private collections of old Zaminders and in the Rajas.

Unlike Public Libraries, readership of national libraries have not been affected as because the library is mainly for research scholars. Scholars come from different states to work here. Secondly the scope of research has gone up in India over the years as universities have proliferated. Ph.D.’s have been the requisite qualification for University teaching so it encourages many to take to research. National library and two other libraries are having required resources for their research. The other two research centres in Kolkata are Bangiyo Sahityo Parishad and Joykrishna Public Libraries. Those who work on humanities consult those libraries. National Library of course possesses maximum resources for all disciplines.
Chapter – V

West Bengal Library Act : A Turning Point

The year of 1979 was a milestone in the public library movement in West Bengal. When the West Bengal Public Library Act came into force. The act, for the first time, recognized the role of public library movement to promote mass education in the state and assured the libraries to provide necessary infrastructure, and trained staff to save the public libraries of the state from decay and to keep up their spirit alive. In Tripura, a bill was drafted but despite heavy demand from the library employees and the book readers, the Government in power still hasn’t taken any strong step for its enactment. The library department in Tripura is still under the higher education department. Demand has also been raised in Assam for a library Act where the directorate of library can operate independently and not under the control of any other department.

The main advantage of an independent library act is to get a higher budget and allocation privilege to have an independent policy on library matters. This also diminishes the tendency for siphoning money from library budgets to other departments. Although the public libraries always had its distinct culture and objectives under govt. sponsorship the library movement depended on both the quantity and quality of educational spread in a state. However, it’s undeniable
influence of nearly 200 year public library movement in West Bengal a new boost followed the 1979 Act.

Under the West Bengal Library Act of 1979, as many as 7 amendments were incorporated over the years. All libraries in this state weren’t taken under its command at the same time nor all libraries opted for the government sponsorship, Govt. also became selective in helping the libraries through grants and providing infrastructure. As part of this Act, 3 categories of libraries came into existence.

Mizoram and Manipur have library Act but Mizoram Govt. did not implement the law.

**The background :**

Prior to enactment of the West Bengal Public Libraries Act in 1979, the library activities were looked after by the Social Education Branch under the Directorate of Public Instruction under the then undivided Education Department. 762 libraries in all the categories started functioning during that period either as Govt. or Govt. Sponsored libraries.

On 12 September, 1979, the West Bengal Public Libraries Act came into force. Tamilnadu, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and Maharastra enacted Libraries Act prior to West Bengal.

In 1980, the Directorate of Library Services was set up under the undivided Education Department. In 1982, the West Bengal Public Libraries Act was amended. In 1985, further amendments were made to the said Act. In 1988, Mass
Education Extension Department was created with the Adult and Social Education Directorate of the erstwhile Education Department and with Directorate of Library Services and other functional wings like special Education for the Physically Handicapped and running of Social Welfare Home, were subsequently added. Thus the Mass Education Extension Department started to be the administrative department for two separate Directorates - one for Library Services and other for Mass Education Extension.

According to the Annual Report of the Mass Education Ext and L Directorate after enactment of the West Bengal Public Libraries Act in 1979, 1712 libraries in all categories started functioning either as Govt. or Govt. Sponsored libraries. Today there are 2481 Govt. and Govt. Sponsored Libraries apart, 7 (seven) other libraries run by the Non-Govt. Organisations have started to be aided by the Govt. under the Directorate of Library Services (source State Govt. report 2008).

Public Library system in the State at present comprises of 12 Govt. Libraries with State Central Library at the apex, 1462 Govt. Sponsored Libraries at different levels, and 7 Govt. Aided Libraries. There exist 3 tier Library system in districts namely, Rural / Primary Unit / Area Libraries, Town / Sub-Divisional Libraries, and District Libraries.

In 1993, 1994 and 1998, further amendments were made to the West Bengal Public Libraries Act, 1979. In 1999, the
concept of Community Library cum Information Centre came over with the principle to set up such centres in the Gram Panchayats having neither a Govt. nor a Govt. - Sponsored Library. 319 such centres have been set up upto 2008-09. In 2003, West Bengal Public Libraries Act was further amended.

Directorate of Library Services is headed by a director of library services who is assisted by a deputy director and an assistant director in the Head Office and District Library Officers and other staff members in the Districts. According to the Act a state level council was set up as the supreme policy making body for libraries.

**THE STATE LIBRARY COUNCIL (SLC)**

The Mass Education Extension Department through the Directorate of Library Services administers the West Bengal Public Libraries Act, 1979 with the rules framed under it.

For organising and administering Library Services there is the provision in the Act for constitution of the State Library Council (SLC) with the Hon'ble Minister-in-Charge of Library Services as its Chairman. The Council is to advise the State Govt. on the management of the State Central Library, on matters relating to policies and programmes for the development and management of Public Library System and on such matters as may be referred to it. This Council consists of 31 members representing diverse fields of interest viz. MLAs, persons representing the interest of education,
social work, culture, literary or artistic activity, library science, representatives of Bengal Library Association, Govt. officials like Secretary of the Mass Education Extension Department, Director of Public Instruction, Director, National Library, Kolkata, Director, Raja Rammohan Roy Library Foundation, representatives of the employees of Public Libraries, representatives from the members of the Local Library Authorities, the Librarian of the State Central Library and other officials. The Director of Library Services is the Ex-officio Member Secretary of the Council. The Council is the highest advisory body to the Govt. on policies and programmes concerning Library Services in the State. West Bengal was the 5th State in India to introduce the library Act.

**Three categories of Library**

**Category – 1 :**

**Government LIBRARIES (12)**

- State Level (1)
  - Kolkata (1) (State Central Library)

- District Level (7)
  - Kolkata (1)
  - Coochbehar (1)
  - North 24-Pgs (2)
  - Darjeeling (1)
  - North 24-Pgs (1)
  - Purba Medinipur (1)

- Sub-Divisional/Town Level (4)
  - Darjeeling (1)
  - Purulia (1)
  - Uttar Dinajpur (1)
  - Hooghly (1)(UJPL) [Special Status]

**Category – 2 :**

**Government SPONSORED LIBRARIES (1462)**

- District Level (19)
  - Sub-Divisional/Town Level (230)
  - Primary Unit Rural Library (2213)
Category – 3 :

**Government AIDED LIBRARIES run by Voluntary Organisations (7)**

All Sub-Divisional/Town Level
(for Govt. Grants only)

- Howrah (1)
- Kolkata (4)
- Nadia (1)

**COMMUNITY LIBRARY CUM INFORMATION CENTRES run by Community Based Organizations (CBOs) (319)**

(In the Gram Panchayats areas having no Govt. or Govt. sponsored Public Library)

**MANAGEMENT OF GOVT. SPONSORED PUBLIC LIBRARIES**

Govt. Sponsored Public Libraries are looked after by elected Managing Committees. The Committee comprises of representatives from the Corporation / Municipality / Notified Area Authority in urban areas and Panchayat Samities in case of rural areas. The Librarian of the concerned Library is the joint Secretary of the Committee. The Managing Committees of the Govt. Sponsored District Libraries are constituted with representatives from the concerned Zilla Parishad and Institutional members. Librarian of the District Library is the
Ex-officio Member Secretary. Staff members of the Govt. Sponsored libraries have been declared as Staff Members of the respective Local Library Authority (LLA). The assets of the sponsored libraries have also been declared as the assets of the concerned LLA under the Act.

**Constitution of the Managing Committee of Sponsored District Libraries**

i) Two persons to be nominated by the Local Library Authority.

ii) One person to be nominated by the Corporation / Municipality / Notified Area Authority Panchayat Samity, as the case may be.

iii) One person to be nominated by the Zilla Parishad.

iv) District Library Officer as ex-officio President.

v) Librarian of the District Library as ex-officio Member Secretary.

vi) One employee other than the Librarian of the District Library to be elected by the employees of the Library from amongst themselves.

vii) One person to be nominated by the Local Library Authority from amongst the managing Committees of the Institutional members.
viii) One life member of such District Library. If there are more than one such life members, one of them shall be a member on rotational basis. The selection of such member on rotation shall be made by the District Library Officer on the basis of seniority in membership and in case the seniority in membership is identical, the rotation shall be done on the basis of age of such members.

ix) Following no. of persons to be elected on the basis of strength of general members of the Library on the date of issue of the election notice:

a) 8 persons-upto 500 general members.

b) 10 persons-more than 500 but not exceeding 1000 general members

c) 12 persons - more than 1000 general members.

Taking over the Public Libraries in all practical purpose under the Government fold was not liked by many. After all public libraries in Bengal became a powerful institution for mobilization public opinion at grass root level. Losing autonomy of such powerful forum to Government seemed to be a dangerous trend in democracy. Even the British Government while introducing Public Library Act obliged civic authorities to arrange accommodation for public libraries but not the grant. Govt. apprehended Government grant even jeopardise library autonomy which is more valuable. Before enacting the library bill in 1979, the then Left Front Government who were keen to indoctrinated people with their
ideology at all levels wanted to bring all educational institutions under their fold. Library included their priority list, and the act was passed within two years of their coming into power.

However, West Bengal was the 5th State in India, passed the Act. The list of states passed library Act is given below. This list includes Mizoram, but the state passed the Act but not implemented – so far.

**Table No.**

**The states enacted Library Laws**  
Source RRRLF.

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1)</td>
<td>Tamil Nadu : 1969 (Madras State 1948)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2)</td>
<td>Andhra Pradesh : 1960 (Hyderabad 1955)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3)</td>
<td>Karnataka : 1973 (Mysore 1965)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4)</td>
<td>Maharashtra : 1967</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5)</td>
<td>West Bengal : 1979</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6)</td>
<td>Manipur : 1988</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7)</td>
<td>Haryana : 1989</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8)</td>
<td>Kerala : 1989</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9)</td>
<td>Goa : 1993</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10)</td>
<td>Mizoram * : 1993</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11)</td>
<td>Gujrat : 2000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12)</td>
<td>Orissa : 2001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13)</td>
<td>Uttara Chal : 2005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14)</td>
<td>Rajsthan : 2006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15)</td>
<td>Uttar Pradesh : 2006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16)</td>
<td>Bihar : 2008</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
All above states implemented library Act obliged state governments to undertake financial burden of sponsored and state libraries. This is no doubt a huge financial burden. Whatever West Bengal State Government spends annually under library head the bulk of the amount goes to establishment cost and only a portion of it is spent for library development and book purchase. Gradual drop out of library goers over the years cause frustration among the library staff with apprehension that this may result in further cut of library budget in coming years.

Under the present library Act all the libraries in the State, barring the non-sponsored and aided libraries, came under the strict bureaucratic control of the Government. However Government money pumping into the library system became effective to keep the institution of library alive. Government took over a large number of libraries, once located in rented and dilapidated houses, and provided them relocation at better places. Following the re-positioning, many libraries got their own building in prime locations with wider space and reading room facility, while district libraries were allotted modern gadgets like computers and other audio-visual materials along with some kind of preservation measures against worn-out books. On the other hand, public library users stopped taking much interest in the management of libraries and its upkeeping and promotions. People now think
that sponsored and Govt. Libraries are now public institutions and are exclusively a Government concern. The political system along with bureaucracy grappled with each other to take rein of the entire system. This is probably the curse of bringing public libraries under bureaucratic and Government control.

Even in Kolkata some sponsored libraries are sinking for want of regular maintenance, for want of new books and necessary infrastructure. I give a list of some sponsored libraries in Kolkata located in densely populated neighbourhood even cannot draw more than ten book lenders a day.

**Libraries in Kolkata where less than 10 books a day is issued daily.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl. No.</th>
<th>Name of the Library</th>
<th>Books issued daily (less than 10 books)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Agradut Sangha Granthagar, Kolkata : 700 067.</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Massruki Calcutta Library, Kolkata : 700 011.</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Shipra Bhowmick Smriti Pathagar, Kolkata : 700 025</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Sougata Smriti Granthagar, Kolkata : 700 010.</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Shakti Mandir Pathagar, Kolkata : 700 010</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Moulana Hali Academy, Kolkata : 700 039.</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Sahitya Samrat Bankim Chandra Smriti Pathagar, Kolkata : 700 012</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Adarsha Sangha Granthagar</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Location</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Utkal Yuvak Sangha, Kolkata : 700 043.</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Chirantani Pathagar, Kolkata : 700 053.</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Tollygunge Amar Sangha Library</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Kolkata : 700 033</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>T.F.A. Library, Kolkata : 700 002</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Madhusudan Dutta (Banshi) Smriti Pathagar, Kolkata : 700 006.</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Shahid Smriti Sangha Pathagar, Kolkata : 700 037</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Students Corner Library, Kolkata : 700 054.</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Utkal Yuvak Sangha Library</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Kolkata : 700 054</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Najrul Pathagar, Kolkata : 700 009</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Nabin Sangha Library</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Kolkata : 700 033</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Pragati Sangha Pathagar</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Kolkata : 700 045</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Bharati Sangha Pathagar</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Kolkata : 700 033</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>Sangrami Govt. Sponsored Primary Unit Library</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Kolkata : 700 054</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>Sukanta Pathagar</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Kolkata : 700 023</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>Second Battelian C.A.P. Public Library</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Kolkata : 700 002</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>Arabinda Nagar Club Library</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Kolkata : 700 032</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>United Friends Library</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Kolkata : 700 015</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>Young Men’s Association</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Kolkata : 700 025</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>North Entally Kamala Library</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Kolkata : 700 015</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28</td>
<td>Deepayan, Kolkata : 700 032</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Library Council

Now the library council the main policy making body is headed by the Minister in-charge of library service. The council was given the supreme power of management and control. The hon’ble Minister controls the system with the help of other political members mostly belonging to the party in power. Five members of the council, supposed to be the representative from the interest of social work, education, culture, literary/artistic activity, are chosen from among the people.

Besides five non-Government members the council, is overwhelmingly represented by the bureaucrats.
Under the West Bengal Library Law different libraries were constituted with their own distinctive patterns as directly Government owned or Government sponsored libraries. Directly Government libraries were only 12. The rest 2460 libraries were declared sponsored. The libraries under the act were put in the purview of different nomenclature and administrative binding, which in due course created much confusion among the people. Generally, under the 1993, 1994 and 1998 amendments to the act several types of libraries were created at different levels such as 12 government library with state central library at the apex, 2460 government sponsored libraries at different levels and 7 government aided libraries. A 3 tier library system is formed at the district level, namely rural, primary, unit, area library and town library, sub-divisional library and district library (see Chart). Each library is technically autonomous, having a managing committee elected amongst the reading members of the libraries concerned. All are headed by the directors of library services and even the district library has got no authority over any other rural or town library in the district. As a result, a community library at the grass-root level has to report to the district library officer (DLO who is a bureaucratic authority to look after all government and sponsored libraries in the districts. Sometimes it's not possible for one district officer to supervise all rural libraries under him. Moreover, government has set up 319 community libraries and information centres at different panchayat levels. But they
are neither government nor public sponsored libraries. So, under the public library system, some are government staffs, some are the staffs of autonomous libraries managing committees. There are discrepancies in their wage structure and annual release of their daily administrations. But government sponsored libraries are looked after by elected managing committees. Though they get salary from public exchequer.

The managing committee of the sponsored district library is constituted through election. The number of persons to be elected to the district library managing committees depends on the number of general members. It is revealed that the membership list in the libraries is generally artificially inflated. The membership goes up at the time of election and the enrolment in the membership is not a big deal. Anyone can enroll himself or herself just to contest the election or to vote. In each district library, not more than 30% of enrolled members are the users of the library. They are prone to misuse this provision for political purpose, only to contest the election. A number of librarians have alleged that the managing members after being elected hardly take interest in the day to day affairs of the library. It was hard time for the librarians to build another set of patrons for running the cultural activities that the libraries are supposed to carry out all through the year. Some libraries have setup 'friends of libraries' through their own initiative to keep up the regular cultural activities that libraries are supposed to hold but have
no specific fund. Most of the managing committee are Politically inclined and their main objective is to capture all democratic public forums and with winning over the election they go missing, leaving the onus of managing day to day activities to the library staffs. The politicization of library at different levels has agitated general people.

Before the promulgation of library act, when all public libraries used to run by people's initiative, organizing a club cum library was considered a social responsibility. Gradually the social setup and library were set apart. The similar phenomenon is evident in schools which once were founded and reared by the local people and now solely run by managing committees, which by and large are politicized. As a result of that welfare and development of schools are now left to the government. Just like schools, development activities of libraries are now solely dependent on the personal initiative of a librarian. A professional librarian with agility, dash, leadership can fulfil the purpose of a public library, while others can only serve the time.

Under this law, the directorate of library was created with specific purpose and duties to oversee the functioning of the council in power. Besides, each district was allocated to have a separate district authority, called the local library authority, where either district magistrate or his nominee, not below the rank of a SDO would be the Chairman and the district library officer, a full time government employee, will be the convenor.
A distinct category of library also took shape under the Act known as ‘sponsored public libraries’, which may also be entitled to function as district libraries, sub-divisional or town libraries rural areas and primary unit libraries. They are not categorized under direct government control, but aided by the authority as well as exclusively dependent on the government for the payment of salaries of employees and purchase of books. The grant of sponsorship of these libraries also depends chiefly on government ratification. Apart from the above mentioned libraries we have already discussed the existence of numerous libraries run by the NGOs and club. They are eligible under certain conditions to apply for the government grants.

**Ensured Security**

The library Act has ensured security for the above mentioned types of libraries beyond doubt, but at the same time, independent spirit once used to rule the library movement has now completely been taken out. The libraries are now subservient to political will of the government. During the Left rule, the libraries were obliged to purchase a sizeable number of books from authors committed to the political doctrine of the government in power. The non-government members of the councils were chosen from among the party supporters. The situation has not been changed under the changed political scenario. Newspapers, critical to the present government, have been removed from the library reading rooms although no written direction for the criteria in
selecting books and Journals has been issued so far. The librarians should be given choice in purchasing books from the market primarily on the basis of readers' demand. The managing committee should see the books selected are good reading socially useful.

**Book Selection**

The selection of books constitutes a very important part for libraries to keep up the readership. If the books aren't selected as per local needs and chosen at random or discreetly with political bias, it may not be acceptable by the readers. In some rural libraries we have seen lots of books are never read because they don't cater to the interest of local readers. There are 50 percent books remain unused. Proper selection of books is a necessary instrument for boosting up the readership.

**State Central Libraries at a glance:**

During the period of 2007-08 and 2008-09, the state central library in Kolkata had 38 sanctioned staff positions but worked with 29 existing staffs the library is open from Monday to Saturday, except the 2nd and 4th Saturdays, from 11 am to 8 pm, to be accessed by the readers. As many as 1,65,648 books and journals were available in 2007-08 and 1,73,782 in 2008-09. Each member is entitled to lend 2 books. In 2007-08 the library bought a total number of 20,449 books, 135 journals and periodicals and 16 newspapers but in 2008-09 the number of newly added books was reduced to
7956, while the number of periodicals remained nearly unchanged with 136. The number of newspapers remained the same at 16. As further revealed from the annual report of state central library, the total number of registered members was 1444 in 2007-08 which further increased to 1537 in 2008-09, but the number of newly enrolled members in library dipped to 93 in 2008-09 against 167 decrease in 2007-08. In 2007-08 a total of 10,586 books were borrowed for reading by the library users, while the number again reduced in the following year to 10289. However the number of readers using the library reading room increased during that period from 30991 reading room users in 2007-08 to 31012 in 2008-09. The lending section of the state central library does not maintain cataloguing cabinet since the library is having open rack system. The reader has no other way to know the position of a particular book nor a Library Staff come to help the reader to trace a particular book. The library is solely dependent on books transferred to the library by the Registrar of books at free of cost. It takes at least three years for a new book to came for reader’s use.

Launched as an organ for mass education and development, the state central library charged nothing for library membership. The readers are only required to pay `250 as caution deposit and `500 for getting lending facility of the books.
Libraries under the Directorate of Mass Education Extension and Library Services:

The state at present has 12 government libraries - with State Central Library at the apex and a state level library named Uttarpara Jaykrishna Public Library formed in 1859, along with 6 district level State libraries namely:

(1) North Bengal State Library (Coochbehar),
(2) Deshbandhu Government District Library (Darjeeling)
(3) District Library, Uttar Dinaipur (Roygunge,
(4) Government Central Library (Darjeeling)
(5) Sidhu-Kanhu Birsa Government Town Library (Purulia) and
(6) Digha Government Town Library (Purba Medinipur).

There are 4 town and sub-divisional level State libraries i.e.
(1) Kolkata Metropolitan Library in Ballygang Kolkata,
(2) Taki Government District Library
(3) North 24-Parganas Government District Library, Barasat and Central Library, Khardah in North 24-Parganas district.

Each of these libraries, except Uttarpara Jaykrishna Public Library (that had a special stature for its special and rare collection of books and manuscripts since its formation) all libraries are run and controlled by designated Advisory Committees to oversee their regular operations. Even these
libraries aren’t outside the administrational ambit of the Advisory Committee. As once appointed, the librarians are also positioned as the Member Secretaries of these Advisory Committees. The Uttarpara Jaykrishna Public Library is administered by a ‘Working Committee’.

**Daily book lending comes down**

In the period of 2007-08 Uttarpara Jaykrishna Public Library and North Bengal State Library had the highest number of daily book lenders at 55, the next highest numbers of lenders were found at the State Central Library and Deshbandhu Government District Library at 40 on average. Daily book lending figures for other libraries are as follows: This is bit old figure, of Late they have further come down

(1) Taki Government District Library 26 lenders,
(2) Kolkata Metropolitan Library and North 24-Paraganas Government District Library 10 each.
(3) District Library, Uttar Dinajpur 8, Sidhu-Kanhu Birsa Government Town Library Bengal State Library.
(4) 65 Uttarpara Jaykrishna Public Library 55.
(5) State Central Library and Deshbandhu Government District Library 39 and 45
(6) Taki Government District Library 27
(7) Kolkata Metropolitan Library 11,
(8) North 24-Parganas Government District Library 13

(9) District Library, Uttar Dinaipur and Sidhu-Kanhu Birsa Government Town Library 3 and 7. It should be noted in this connection, that Government Central Library had no record of daily average lenders and the book lending facility wasn't available in Central Library and Digha Government Town Library.

Apart from the statistical information about daily book lenders, looking at the number of readers used reading room services during that period also enable us to understand the shift of priority for the users. The following table will show the status of sponsored libraries in West Bengal.

**Members of sponsored library**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl. No.</th>
<th>District</th>
<th>Total No. of Sponsored libraries</th>
<th>Total No. of Registered Members as on 31.03.09</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Bankura</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>1,49,718</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Birbhum</td>
<td>124</td>
<td>63,737</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Burdwan</td>
<td>212</td>
<td>1,36,381</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Cooch Bihar</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>47,676</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Dakshin Dinajpur</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>30,437</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Darjeeling (other than SMP)</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>20,160</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Hoogly</td>
<td>158</td>
<td>98,956</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Jpwraj</td>
<td>136</td>
<td>65,469</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Jalpaiguri</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>44,122</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Kolkata</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>22,585</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Maldah</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>94,481</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Name of Library</td>
<td>Readers used the reading room Facilities in one year</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Joykrishna Pathagar</td>
<td>42150</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Digha Govt. Town Public Libraries</td>
<td>338</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>State Central Library</td>
<td>3999</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Taki Govt. House Library</td>
<td>33909</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>District Library, Barasat</td>
<td>31186</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Metropolitan Library, Kolkata</td>
<td>22430</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>North Bengal State Library</td>
<td>19800</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Desbandhu Library</td>
<td>16266</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Uttar Dinajpur Central Library</td>
<td>15544</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>District Library Uttar Dinajpur</td>
<td>5985</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Govt. Central Library</td>
<td>3500</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Sidhu Kanu Birsa Library</td>
<td>1206</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Readers used Library reading room during 2008-09**

*Source: Directory Published by the Library Directorate.*

The West Bengal Library Act made provision for furtherance of Reading habit among the general people. All public libraries barring a few now marked normal to substantial decline in
book readership. We have delved deep into the cause of this decline from various points of view and have been discussed the issue separately. In the wake of the changing concept of library the West Bengal Library Act needs further amendment for making the public libraries more pro-active to reverse the trend. Libraries should ensure lending sufficient number of books for pleasure reading as well as to provide books for more information gain to keep pace for future digitilisation. More emphasis should now be given for training of future librarians in information technology not only for themselves but for transfer of technology to the readers. Anomalies by creating three categories of libraries should be done away with and all libraries should be brought under one umbrella and all librarians should be declared Govt. Staff and be guided by the same service rule.

The District Librarians should be taken into confidence in all policy making decisions concerning any subordinate unit under the district. The library officer’s office must be located in the District Library premises and their coordination in dealing with all libraries in the district must be intensified by specific rules. There should be sub-divisional library officers for regular supervision and monitoring of the units. There should be a research and evaluation unit in the library directorate.
Chapter – VI

Status of some heritage Libraries in West Bengal

The uniqueness of the public library movement in undivided Bengal centred round the concept that a library is the melting pot of culture-generation, a place for intellectual brain storming and a spring board for idea dissemination. That’s why all the eminent personalities of art and literature in Bengal during the 19th and 20th century were involved in public library movement. They used library as a free forum of pluralistic and liberal thoughts. This was an indirect approach to consolidate public opinion for the ultimate goal of the nation – the independence. Independence as they conceived was first to achieve intellectual freedom and then to arrive at a conscious validation of cohesive thoughts to be free from any sort of bondage prior to shoulder the responsibility of self rule. So library very soon turned into a forum of free exchange of ideas, to achieve liberty of thoughts before achieving the political liberty. Mr Arun Mukhopadhyya in his short history of century old library in Bengal has delved deep into the history of public libraries in Bengal. While analyzing the history of as many as 76 century old libraries, it was found that almost all of the then Bengal’s illustrious sons were involved in taking initiatives in founding libraries as socio cultural and Socio Political Institution.

The following celebrities were involved in library movements in Bengal.
1) **Prince Dwarakanath Tagore** became the first partner of the Library (established in 1835) by paying ` 300.

2) **Rajnarayan Basu** the famous socio religious leader and intellectual was associated with the foundation of Rajnarayan Bose Memorial Library at Midnapore.

3) **Maharaja Srish Chandra Roy** of Krishnanagar and other Zaminders of Nadia District jointly collaborated Krishnanagar Public Library in 1856.

4) **Shib Chandra Deb** (1811 – 1890) initiate Konnagar Public Library (1858). Shib Chandra was an active associate of ‘young, bengal’. A Dirozian and a colleague of Ram Gopal Ghosh, Dakshina Ranjan Mukherjee, Ramtaru Lahiri and others all students of Hindu College.

5) **Joykrishna Mukherjee** the benevolent and progressive Zamindar of Uttarpara founded Uttarpara Public Library in 1856. We are writing in detail about the library separately.

6) Sasipada Institute Library at Baranagar was founded by Sasipada Banerjee (1840 – 1925). Sasipada and his wife were both educationist and social reformers of that time.

7) Many Maharajas and Zaminders felt pride in founding schools and libraries. Maharaja Nripendra Narayan pf Coachbehbar was among those Maharajas who initiated Maharaja Library at Coach Bihar now converted to North Bengal District Library.
8) The famous Carey Library at Sriampore may trace back its history to a galaxy of eminent intellectuals of Bengal during the early nineteenth century like Mritunjoy Vidyalankar, John Narshman and others. They formed a welfare society that was converted to Srirampore Public Library in 1871. In the long run prominent citizens contributed to its growth. Tulsi Charan Goswami the Zaminder of Srirampore built a memorial hall at `50,000.

We have already mentioned about Rajnarayan Bose’s Contribution to Midnapore Public Library. Rajnarayan was born at Boral village in South 24-Pgs. He along with a local school teacher built Boral Priyanath Library in 1871 at his native village,

During the wee hours of Indian Political movement. The founding fathers of Indian Nationalism could not think a political organization without a library. So, Ananda Mohun Ghosh and Surendranath Banerjee, founded Indian Association in 1876 in Kolkata. The IA was the oldest Socio Political organization set up to spread political consciousness. At the same time the founders felt it great necessity to set up a library as an integral part of the India Association. The library now has 6000 books, many of them still bear the legacy of the last century.

**The days of storm**

Some libraries were used as a cover for carrying out terrorist activities. Book were considered as fire weapons. There were
proscribed books clandestinely in circulation like Anandamath, Pather Dabi. Raniganje Public library used to be such meeting ground of the revolutionaries eminent authors like Sailajananda Mukhopadhyya, Rebel Poet Najrul Islam, revolutionaries like Jyotish Ch Ghosh, Ganesh Mitra, Bhupenda Nath Dutta had remarkable contribution to the growth of many libraries Surendra Nath Bnerjee was connected with another library at Taltala known as Taltala Public Library founded in 1882. Surendranath was the first President of the library for the first 10 years between 1882 and 1891.

The library very soon became an intellectual hub of Kolkata. Kalighat Library (1886) was patronized by famous authors like Jaladhar Sen, Ramananda Chatterjee of Prabasi and Modern Review fame.

Even a Public Library at a tiny village namely Pallibharati Library in a remote villagers at Howrah (1888) became the centre of freedom of struggle. The library was raided by police many times. Sometimes police sealed the library and burned some objectional books on a number of occasion. Several native kings Nababs and eminent personalities used to feel honour to donate books or cash to a library. The Nawbab of Dhaka gave liberal aids to Bharati Parishad Library (1890). Bharati Parishad had active patronage from Binoy Krishna Deb, the Raja of Sobhabazar. Raja Parimohun Mukherjee Sir Gurudas Banerjee Dr. Mahandra Lal Sarkar were associated with the Bharati Parishad.
The divede and after

Gone are the days when the prominent intellectuals associated themselves with the public library movement. Now those libraries who accepted Government sponsorship however kept their existence with some dignity. But non sponsored, NGO run libraries inspite of some irreruglar Govt. grant are in complete doldrums. Many of those libraries are part of history and culture of the country. They still have a huge valuable documents and rare books but are in a shattered condition. There is no fund for restoration of those books and documents. The elite class and the neo-rich have turned their face from public library movement. The neo-rich of today shifted their interest from library to other areas. The result of this apathy leads those libraries in ruination.

We now highlight the present status of some heritage libraries in Kolkata where we have seen those libraries somehow keep up their activities without any support from the leaders in political and cultural field. There is no dearth of celebrities in different fields who are economically solvent and have influence over socio political life. But they seldom show interest in public library affairs. There are some reasons behind the growing people for apathy of taking social leadership. The entire society has been polarized now-a-days on the line of party politics. Unless a political heavy weight puts pressure no small voluntary organization could move forward with ease.
With this back drop we now present some case studies of a number of heritage libraries functioning in Kolkata and neighbourhood.

Here is a list of some century old libraries in Kolkata still functioning.

**Old libraries of Kolkata :**

**Who opted out Govt. sponsorship**

1. The United Reading Rooms (1872)
2. Mudiali Library (1876)
3. Indian Association Library (1876)
4. Sadharan Bramha Somaj Library (1879)
5. Taltala Public Library (1882)
6. Kumartuli Institute (1884)
7. Kalighat Library (1886)
8. Suburban Reading Club (1888)
9. Chaitanya Library (1889)
10. Bharati Parishad (1890)
11. Beniapukur Library and Reading Room (1891)
12. Ashutosh Memorial Library (1891)
13. Suhrid Library (1891)
14. Mahabodhi Society (1892)
15. Mirzapur Phinix Union Library (1892)
16. Bangiya Sahitya Parishad (1894)
17. Saraswati Institute (1898)
18. Beliaghata Sandhyo Samiti (1900)
19. Burabazar Library (1900)
Asiatic Society:

The Asiatic Society, the one of the richest non-Government library is facing financial problem.

There remains always a gap between income and expenditure. Rather if income increases, expenditure also goes up simultaneously always creating a big gap between income and expenditure money is not expended judiciously.

This is evident in case of Asiatic Society where Government assistance now amounts nearly 12 to 13 crore annually but India’s oldest institution the Asiatic Society still remains into the imbroglio of financial trouble. Indias oldest library the Asiatic Society Library, one of the best institutional libraries in India is no doubt still the best for the research scholars in history and social sciences. Before the society was declared an institution of National Importance, the economic crunch of the society stalled its academic activities. It was Ms Indira Gandhi who was convinced with the importance of the oldest institution of the country and had agreed to declare the society an institute of National Importance. now the society has a non plan budget of ` 13 crore for the year 2011 – 12 about 10 times higher than that of pre – 1984 era.

Once a member of the Asiatic Society I was one of the users of the library during seventies and found the library was useful for the scholars although society’s other academic activities came down to almost halt because of financial crunch. Pumping money no doubt had activated the society
but at the same time augmented political infighting to grab the power. The society since then became highly polarized, the employees union became more powerful, at times disputes went up to several court cases. Now power wielding management is alleged to have flouted financial norms and Government rules. The audit report stated that employees had been paid a much higher amount in salaries than what had been notified by the Ministry. The council as a populist measure raised salaries of the employees without centre’s sanction even so erratically that some grumbling employees went to the court. Once even with the limited financial support the society once published during 1906 – 31, 13 volume Memories a path breaking research on alchemy and tibetology. Research work of James Hornell was published by the society and so many other research projects were undertaken by the Asiatic Society before it became the institution of national importance.*

This is not to oppose the society getting public fund to keep up its tradition of research publication and modernizing the library. Barring National Library Calcutta, there is no other Research Library of this standard especially with collections of so much volumes of rare books on history.

The rectification of pay scale resulted in huge pay rise indiscriminately of the Asiatic Society Staff. Consequently the Govt. of India declined to meet the growing demand of grant

* The Times of India – June 18, 2013
in Aid. Its resultant effect now has become very disastrous, led to cancellations of declared academic programme.

The instance of Asiatic Society is relevant to give example that mere sanction of huge money may not raise the standard of service of an academic institution unless professionalism, ethics, and strong will bolstered by objectivity dominate the academic leadership. The society is now asking sanction of `13 crore budget – India’s oldest academic institution which 30 English men built 229 years ago towards taking India to the world. But the governments’ stand is clear. There is no point of increase in staff with high salaries by flouting all financial norms. Moreover, there is a tendency for all centrally aided institutions to incur unnecessary expenditures on travel, seminars and on other various accounts. Similarly the institutes must find out their own resources. The great institutions built up during the British rule in India were all built without Government support and ran well but now a days growing government support fails to yield expected result.

**Good Old Bengal Libraries**

Calcutta was the cradle of Bengal’s Socio – Cultural movement. So as many as 20 public libraries were launched in Kolkata between 1851 and 2000. All those libraries barring one (Swaraswati Institute) keep up their existence till today. Besides, 72 libraries were founded in West Bengal districts during the 19\(^{th}\) century. Out of 72, as many as 63 libraries are still rendering services to the publics in the districts. I
give a list of public libraries set up during the nineteenth century in Kolkata and West Bengal districts. Notwithstanding, most of the libraries that opted out Govt. sponsorship consequently faced ordeals. Chaitanya Library, one of the richest rare book public library in Kolkata now suffers very badly from financial crunch and cannot provide adequate service to the readers who constitute mostly research scholars. Inadequate Govt. aid and inability to secure necessary public support the library cannot afford even a full time librarian and open in the evening for few hours only. The huge treasures of old books and magazines in the library repository badly need restoration and retrieval from the dumps as they are not in a usable condition. We have seen the same condition of old periodicals at Rammohun Public Library, another heritage library of Kolkata. But the condition of Rammohun Library is not as worst as Chaitanya Library. Rammohun Library and Bangiya Sahitya Parishad are not sponsored libraries but Bangiya Sahitya Parishad now gets substantial financial support both from the State and the Central Government. Rammohun Library is provided library staff at Govt. expenses with some Government grant. Bangiya Sahitya Parishad is now able to rebuild its full infrastructure and the library now wears a professional look. So far Chaitanya Library is concerned. Its present condition is deplorable, simply because the library management declined to opt for sponsorship. When they were unable to maintain the status of the library, they should approach the Govt. for
its resurrection. But yet this is the discretion of the Chaitanya Library management.

The critics are of opinion that public libraries those who opted out from State sponsorship are being treated step motherly by the State Government. Govt. is oblivious of the glorious past of those libraries and making the nation loser from the valuable treasures the libraries possess. Those valuable specimens of rare books and copies of old newspapers and magazines rotting in those libraries are irreplaceable. In the wake of this issue West Bengal Library Act should immediately be amended to make provision to declare some selected unaided non-sponsored libraries as ‘special heritage’ library and Govt. should take full control of those libraries by appointing Administrator. If it was done in case of Joykrishna Public Library.

**Bangiya Sahitya Parishad**:

There is no denial of fact that the political lobby that is close to Govt. in power play a very important role for drawing Government attention to ameliorate, reform and restore an institution from near ruination. Bangiya Sahitya Parishad is its glaring example. Bangiya Sahitya Parishad once a vibrant institution of the Bengalee intellectuals were gradually losing its grip to manage the institute financially till seventies. There was no dirth of celebrity involvement in leadership at that period of time. but they failed to draw Government attention. Persons like Dr. Ramesh Chandra Majumdar,
Tarashankar Bandyopadhyay took the reins during the late sixties. But could not make much headway to salvage the Parishad from economic crunch. After 1977 when the new Government came to power in the State the Parishad leadership was changed hand and the new Government since then was found to take active interest in Sahitya Parishad affairs. At least the new Managing Committee was able to do that as they were having political clout. Funds under different heads were being pumped into the Parishad. The new Government had virtually sponsored the Bangiya Sahitya Parishad having taken interest in its all round development. A total revival plan including payment of salaries to the staff was taken care of by the Govt. The worn out old furnitures were replaced by new. Trained librarian with assistants were sponsored by the State. The reading room was modernized and the books and periodical collections were brought under the scheme of restoration. The building was repaired and the P.W.D. of West Bengal Government will very soon undertake repair work and the roof treatment will start very soon. As a modernization plan the library is going to introduce a website of international standard. Another website in collaboration with Jadavpur University on Rabindranath Tagore is near completion. All vacant posts are going to be filled up. Raja Rammohun Roy Library Foundation sanctioned a project for digitization. B.S.P. after a long slumber has now been awakened and is going in the right direction. As predominantly a research library there is no dirth of research
students and the reading room is always full. If Govt. so
desires can grant a number of Govt. projects to Parishad
relating to Bengali language and culture commensurate with
governmental requirement. This will keep Parishad’s hand
full. The Parishad has publications of some valuable books. If
the publications run professionally can be a good source of
income.

TABLE -

**Grant in aids released in favour of**

**Bangiyo Sahitya Parishad for 2012 – 2013**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl. No.</th>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Amount of Granting Aid</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Allocation Head</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Ministry of Culture, Govt. of India</td>
<td>`2,58,750/-</td>
<td>06.07.11</td>
<td>For celebration of Tagore’s 150 years birth anniversary.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Surendranath – Annapurna Bandyopadhyay Memorial Fund</td>
<td>`13,000/-</td>
<td>16.08.11</td>
<td>For helping poor authors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Higher Education Deptt. Govt. of West Bengal.</td>
<td>`60,000/-</td>
<td>26.08.11</td>
<td>Publication grant</td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Higher Education Deptt. Govt. of West Bengal.</td>
<td>`9,00,000/-</td>
<td>09.11.11</td>
<td>Salary for staff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Higher Education Deptt. Govt. of West Bengal.</td>
<td>`80,000/-</td>
<td>09.11.11</td>
<td>For Publication of Journal.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Higher Education Deptt. Govt. of West Bengal.</td>
<td>`50,000/-</td>
<td>09.12.11</td>
<td>For Seminar and exhibition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Library Deptt. Govt. of W.B.</td>
<td>`25,500/-</td>
<td>06.03.12</td>
<td>For book purchase.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Higher Education Deptt. Govt. of West Bengal.</td>
<td>`9,00,000/-</td>
<td>16.04.12</td>
<td>Staff Salary</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Source of Aid</td>
<td>Amount of granting Aid</td>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Allocation Head</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------</td>
<td>---------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Higher Education Deptt. Govt. of W.B.</td>
<td><code>22,50,000/-</code></td>
<td><code>7,50,000/-</code> (33%)</td>
<td>13.08.12</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><code>9,50,000/-</code></td>
<td></td>
<td>02.02.13</td>
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<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Higher Education Deptt. Govt. of W.B.</td>
<td><code>8,00,000/-</code></td>
<td><code>2,00,000/-</code> (25%)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><code>6,00,000/-</code></td>
<td></td>
<td>22.02.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Higher Education Deptt. Govt. of W.B.</td>
<td><code>50,000/-</code></td>
<td><code>50,000/-</code></td>
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<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Ministry of Culture, Govt. of India</td>
<td><code>7,50,000/-</code></td>
<td><code>3,75,000/-</code></td>
<td>01.02.13</td>
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<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Library Deptt. Govt. of W.B.</td>
<td><code>8,14,969/-</code></td>
<td><code>6,92,736/-</code></td>
<td>Different dates</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source : Report of the Secretary, BSP

**Ram Mohun Library : An Indepth view**

The ram Mohun Library is the saga of continuous neglect of the state and from the intelligentsia. The library needs a master plan to take care of several thousand rare books and magazines for preservation. This need trained staff, and more space for research scholars, an extended reading room facilities for the readers. Most of the books are placed at the
3rd and 4th floor of the library negotiable only through narrow stairs. It is difficult for the aged readers and researcher to climb up the stairs. Both the stack rooms and reading room need immediate air-conditioning and provision for the lift. The theatre hall downstairs need to be completely renovated. There is hardly any public library in Kolkata with a theatre hall with 200 seats in a Prime Location. All eminent personalities of Bengal of the by gone days like Rabindra Nath Tagore, Nazrul Islam, D.L. Roy, Jagadish Ch. Bose came to this historic hall for a number of times to participate in a function or to give talks.

This hall if modernised by changing the sound system, sitting arrangement, installing air-conditioning machines can fetch a good amount of steady income to the library. But the library spokesman told me that they were not much interested in the project as once they had rented out the hall to some commercial theatre group, consequently the Corporation of Kolkata imposed heavy tax that was higher than their income.

Rammohun library is a glaring example of the changing mood of a middle class Bengali neighbourhood in Kolkata, once would take keen interest in cultural activities centring a public library. The neighbourhood now is gradually becoming aloof and unconcerned. The present generation may have transferred their interest and exuberance somewhere else but not on reading books or devoting time nurturing intellectual activities like hearing artists, authors and academitions. The authorities of Rammohun Libraries once rented their ground
floor hall to a theatre company for performing regular commercial play with Caberett dancing desperately to attract new age audience as well as to fetch more income to come over economic crisis. The project was withdrawn after a year. In the wake of public criticism and heavy taxation.

The Rammohun Roy Theatre Hall once used to be teeming with cultural activities like stimulating discussions, discourses and seminars. Many would believe those days could be brought back for healthy cultural regeneration. This will also fetch a permanent income. Now the Calcutta Corporation has declared the library building as heritage building posing a question that whether the onus to protect the building should rest with the civic authorities or not. Of course, the Corporation of Kolkata never provides any concession for such buildings.

Rammohun library’s locational position is unique as this neighbourhood is within the radius of Renascent movement and surrounded by the clusters of educated middle class population by generations. Yet the library hardly finds more than 10 lending members a day out of 700 (plus 400 life members) members. To attract readers, library has opened a text book section. The another feature of the library is providing a reading room for slum children who do not have any reading space at home. They use the specially allotted study room free of charge. As a general trend Rammohun Library is also losing readers for general books including fictions as demand for novels has gone down. The library
authorities have stopped buying novels very recently. At the Rammohun Library was founded at the dawn of the 20th century (in 1905) when the entire Bengal was reeling under the first phase of anti imperialist movement against partition of Bengal. The Pioneer of those movement Rabindra Nath Tagore was associated with the library. The name of Raja Rammohun Roy, the Great Messin of Bengal Renaissance was connected with the library.

Tagore Connection:

The library was first located at 101 Upper Circular Road. Within 8 years time a personality like Jagadish Chandra Bose was associated with the library as an elected President and it was relocated in its present building at A.P.C. Road. Very soon Rabindranath Tagore associated himself with the library. He was first felicitated after he had received Nobel prize in 1913. Tagore visited the library for a number of time. he donated books authored by him to the library and gave a number of orations. His interactive sessions with the readers known as ‘conversazione’ was the historical occasion as this was his first public meeting after winning the Nobel prize. Tagore spontaneously presented himself to give his own reactions on his being awarded the highest honour. His first reaction he gave out at Bolpur to an assembly of citizens who came to Santiniketan all the way from Kolkata. At that moment he did not accept the crowd sportingly rather gave them little bit of his mind. He said to them that their honour was not to an individual poet but more to ‘honour an honour’.
But at Rammohun Library function he was in a very pleasant mood. He said he would be glad if his countrymen would accept him as their own. The persons in the west who gave him the prize deserve the exclusive honour firstly. His countrymen must forget about what he had received from the west. Rather they should take him as their own. He would consider this as most precious reward for him. He apprehended that the day was not far off – when his every word would be forgotten by his countrymen. The poet thought that people pretended joy over his Nobel prize without rendering real appreciation for his works. ‘People who never had any friendly feelings towards me nor ever have read a line of my works are now loudest in their protestation of joy’ he reacted.

Tagore became member of Rammohun Library on 21st February 1911. He came to this library once again on 27th September 1915. He celebrated 82 death anniversary of Raja Rammohun Roy where he made his historical comment “No nation can be truly great except through spirituality. By gaining knowledge of material science in imitation of west we cannot achieve freedom of the soul until and unless we are freed in soul, the centre of life and power we can never be free”.

**Free Forum of Discourse:**

Rammohun Library very soon became a free forum of discourse on various topics presented by the doyens of
Bengal. The Swadeshi spirit, democratic temper, liberation of mind, free from prejudice, imbibed from renascent values were instilled in the mind of educated middle class Bengalees. The library arranged series of discussions by the personalities like Dr. Brojendra Nath Seal, Raja Yatindranath Chowdhury, Surendranath Mallick (10th December, 1915). Rammohun Library still today follows the tradition of regular discussions and discourses and the authorities claimed that about 70 – 80 people would attend each monthly discourse. The present authorities of the library are trying hard to keep up the tradition of those by gone days. But it is to be remembered that the mind set of the present society has undergone a sea change over the years. Now a day hardly scientists, poets and the rich industrialists would find time like P.C. Roy, Jagadish Chandra Bose, Rabindranath Tagore working actively for the cause of a public library movement where no commercial gain is involved.

Uttarpara Jaikrishna Public Library : A need for indepth Prospecting

I have already mentioned that the scope of West Bengal Public libraries Act is so limited that it cannot take any appropriate measures for the protection of heritage libraries in West Bengal especially those are on the verge of destruction. It is good of the then Government of West Bengal that it took initiative to take full administrative control of Uttarpara Joykrishna Library. Although the demand was legitimately raised to Govt. of India to declare the library as an institute of
National Importance in the line of Asiatic Society but that demand is yet to be met. But State Government’s intervention at least has given new lease of life to the library but again paucity of State Government fund slows the pace of progress. The UJPL has no parallel in the history of public library movement in undivided Bengal. It wrenched out a place even in the Encyclopaedia Britanica 11th Edn with his note.

“Uttarpara is famous for the public library founded and crowded and endowed by Jaikrissen * Mukherjee, which is specially rich in the books of local topography”. This library a ‘Free Public circulating library and the first of its kind in India was founded by the philanthropic Zamindar of Uttarpara as long as in 1859 only after two years of Sepoy Mutiny. The library started functioning even before the two years of its formal inauguration. Babu Jaikrishna not only gave a specious plot facing the river Hooghly but also built a magnificent palace to house 55 to 60 thousand books mostly from his personal collections. The library in later period was gradually enriched by donation of books from many other dignitaries. For instance Bhudeb Mukhopadhyya’s family donated all his personal collections to this library. Sir William Hunter stayed over three years in that library for the compilation of his statistical accounts of Bengal. The imperial Gazetteer of India described the library as a ‘Treasure House’ Prof. S.R. Ranganathan National Professor in library science paid a visit to the library in 1952 and remarked that the major
portion of the collection of this library could not be found even in the biggest country.* The library was either used or visited by a large number of scholars and dignitaries from Michael Madhusudan Dutta, Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar. Ms Marry Carpenter, Sir Edwin Arnold. Surendra Nath Banerjee to Swami Vivekananda and Keshab Chandra Sen and many others. Michael Dutta stayed here three months. This historical library suffered a lamentable set back for years. Firstly the huge two storyed building in course of time became inadequate to accommodate its huge collection of books and periodicals. The library used to get some small Govt. grant as an area library after 1958 when the Joykrishna Mukherjee Trust which looked after the management made over their responsibility to the State Government. At that time there was no library Act. Government of West Bengal was aware of the importance of the library and sanctioned grants from time to time for its bare existence. The library received Govt. grant following the library Act from 1985 – 86 to 1997 – 98 as approximately ` 12 lakh altogether this is for the first time in West Bengal that the legislative assembly took interest in affair of a public library and gave its due importance. this was possible again the pro-Government political lobby under the leadership of the local MLA and local intellectuals mobilized public opinion for state intervention. During 1994 – 96 a subject committee was formed by the West Bengal legislative Assembly under the Chairmanship of Partha De. The committee submitted its report on August 11, 1995. The
report gave out a detail suggestions for immediate resolution
of certain problems, the library was facing and sought a
programme of action on the library. This was a milestone in
the history of public library movement in India. Comparing
with other rare books libraries Joykrishna library is
undoubtedly better placed as a library of importance but the
money the library has received sofar from the Government is
only few drops in the ocean. the library has 55,000 rare
books need restoration out of its 1.20 lakh total book stock.
About 40,000 books need immediate lamination. Meanwhile
only 500 books were laminated lamination gives old books a
new lease of life and the most common way for restoration of
a book is to either micro filming or laminating. The library
authorities submitted a seven crore restoration project to the
Ministry of Culture. The project is yet to get sanction.
Meanwhile all historical documents, and old books of library
are going to be restored by phases. Meanwhile the
restoration work has taken off and work is in progress.

No doubt that a library of vintage books like Joykrishna library
should be endowed with a big fund to complete all restoration
works. The space of development is a continuous process but
must be a time bound programme with a fixed deadline. The
library has about 16,260 books of different subjects besides
40 thousand rare books. It has 140 books for neo-literates.
The library authorities have some specific plans for complete
restoration. The first demand is to declare the library as
National Importance. second demand comes concerning
preservation of books. The preservation works are in progress but unless intensified will prolong for years. The author is of the opinion that to make more space the lending section and the stock of books not older than 50 years must be removed from the present building and should be shifted to some newly built building somewhere else. There should not be any more new building at the present premises nor there should be built any more floor atop the present building for environmental reasons. The present building will be used only for rare books and periodicals and for the use of research scholars only. The entire building should be air-conditioned to protect the books from dust. Sufficient protective measures should be taken against flood as the library is located on the river bank. The library has 5000 lending members but daily borrowers of books do not exceed 30 to 35 on average. There are children section too but children cannot lend books. There are only 4 to 5 research scholars use the library. There is ample opportunities to attract more scholars. 

There is no point to keep lending section at the library. Nor the children section is justified rather the library must stress exclusive importance on research. Govt. of West Bengal should introduce some research scholarship to work through the Joykrishna Library. Research students from different universities must be encouraged to use Joykrishna Library. For this the library opening hours must be changed to suit the readers coming from outside Uttarpara. Many recommendations of the Assembly Subject Committee are yet
to be implemented though 18 years have already been passed. But there is no hope or little hope to fulfil W.B. Assembly recommendations unless the library is declared as a library of National Importance. The Govt. of India at least entrust the Raja Rammohun Roy Library Foundation to examine the feasibility of that proposal which has not been attempted as yet. Rammohun Foundation must rethink whether some tangible measures could be taken about all heritage libraries in West Bengal to protect their rare books and materials. A project for descriptive cataloguing of all rare collections preserved in different libraries should be taken up immediately. The recommendations of West Bengal Legislative Assembly Report of the subject committee on Joykrishna library is included in the annexure of my report.

Finally, the Ministry of Culture should reconsider the case of Uttarpara Joykrishna Library for which Mr. Jyoti Basu, the then Chief Minister of West Bengal had been continuously persuading the Govt. of India since 1984. He again wrote a letter to the Prime Minister of India in 1990. In which he wrote ‘in November 1984 the Government of India informed us about the formation of a committee to make on the spot study of the functioning of the library and its requirements. Thereafter we have not heard anything about any progress in the matter. Would you kindly have the matter examined a fresh and see that the demand which brooks no further delay in its fulfillment.

The demand of Mr. Jyoti Basu is yet to be met.
Chapter – VII

West Bengal Libraries: In search of Readers

There should not be any misconception that the spurt of libraries in every alternate village in West Bengal is the outcome of the 1979 Library Act. Rather it is quite contrary. About 90 percent public libraries were created long before the Act, came up. In Kolkata alone, out of 88 sponsored libraries only 19 came after 1979 and out of 10 town libraries only one was founded after 1979 Act.

In the districts hardly a library could be found that came after 1979 Library Act. The following table will show the number of sponsored public libraries in different districts.

Govt. Sponsored Libraries in West Bengal: Districtwise

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>District</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. North 24-Parganas</td>
<td>225</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. North Dinajpur</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Kolkata</td>
<td>101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Coachbehar</td>
<td>110</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Jalpaiguri</td>
<td>110</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. South 24-paraganas</td>
<td>157</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>South Dinajpur</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>----------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Darjeeling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Nadia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Pachim Medinipur</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Burdwan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Purulia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Purba Medinipur</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Bankura</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Birbhum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Malda</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Murshidabad</td>
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<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Hoogly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Howrah</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total No.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Break up of libraries**

1) Government Library : 12
2) District Libraries : 19
3) Town Library/Sub-Division Library : 232
4) Rural Library : 2209
5) Upgraded Sub-Divisional Library :
6) Janagranthagar and Information centre : 319

7) Non-Government non-sponsored libraries : 2426

As libraries were mostly built at random on Private initiatives; their growth and development continued to remain uneven. Even their distribution was erratic. When the Act came into being in 1979, there was no planning to bring parity in distribution of libraries area-wise.

At Barasat distance between the District library and another sponsored library is hardly 1 km., on the other hand average distance between two libraries is 10 to 15 km in some districts. It is fact that most of the sponsored libraries were once built by the NGOs and following the library Act all libraries were given options to take sponsorship or run independently. Government did not refuse any application for sponsorship. But over the time Government should have decided some rationals for library distribution on population basis. Amalgamation between two libraries existing in close proximity will save man power and unnecessary expenditure. Between two Dinajpurs, Uttar Dinajpur has only 55 libraries against 57 in Dakshin Dinajpur. A small district like Darjeeling has 158 sponsored libraries while Birbhum has only 105, Howrah, a small district has 159 libraries when Murshidabad got only 137. There is no balance in library distribution between North and South 24-Paraganas. The North has got 225 against South having 157 only. In some places there are two libraries within 2 km radius. My on field
studies to find out reasons behind the decline readership among the people at large. This decline cannot be attributed to one single reason. Nor we can conclude that man’s eternal knowledge hunt reaches a saturation. It is obvious that throughout the history new technology has overtaken the old. One new medium can change the old one. But media may change itself for convenience but not the message. Messages remain eternal. The eternal truth of messages that book disseminate can change format but not much the content. If people are detracted from libraries the fault lies with the managers of libraries not with the readers. Libraries must rise to the occasion by becoming more reader friendly. It is a great challenge of the day.

The 1979 Library Act has definitely kept libraries active. Had not government taken over the financial burden of those libraries many of those would have died their natural death. This is evident when we see the moribund condition of some popular non sponsored libraries now-a-days.

The Library Act undoubtedly provided oxygen to the library movement. Notwithstanding there is marked decadence in the movement. One reason may be peoples leisure time has either shrinked for various socio economic reasons, or their priority of media choice has shifted from traditional media to some new age media once book was the major new age media. Once book was the major entertainment medium besides a source of intellectual knowledge. Book reading habit the attraction for libraries have gone. Libraries used to
be before is no more an epicenter of cultural brain storming, a
place for social interaction. A public library is like any other
public office where newspapers are freely available to read. A
convenient place for jobseekers to get information and
relevant books on jobs. Some students get some reference
books on a particular subject important for his or her exam.
and find more convenient to get pages Xeroxed from a public
library. Gone are the days of serious readers. Even the
readers of pure literatures like novels, short stories have
gone down in some urban libraries. I have already mentioned
that one of the famous libraries in Kolkata has stopped buying
novels as demand for novels showed downward trends. As a
result of that a public library in 2013 is on a cross road.
Notwithstanding the challenges are more tough for the policy
makers to face the music of new age. Firstly we need to
understand the cultural shift a process of transformation from
an agrarian society to industrial society and ultimately fixing
societal goal towards an information society. We are now
between the two worlds, the other world still remains
nebulous to the majority of people. But aspiration of people
has already exceeded the capacity and result in social stir.
This could have been the best of the time to use library as a
goal setter according to the recommendations of knowledge
commission. The pious wish of the Raja Rammohun Roy
Foundation to bring about a cultural regeneration through the
restoration of moribund library movement is yet to take shape
amidst a number of practical problems. My visit to libraries at
the grass root levels was mainly to study people’s mood and attitude of the users and non-users of libraries both are significant to understand the short fall of the movement.

My library visit which I give out in detail has educated me to understand where the shoe pinches. Firstly take up the readership problem in nutshell (I discussed in detail separately).

1) There are a number of competitive media that are apparently seemed to be more attractive and remunerative to the readers than books.

2) The traditional users of Public Libraries – women and children are more constrained now-a-days for various socio economic reasons to shift to ‘pleasure reading’.

3) Hard core book lovers have not been extinct rather their number has gone up but they find more convenient buying books than going to library. The library timing may not suit them or they hate deadline of returning the book on a particular day. Public libraries must keep open on Sundays.

4) Public libraries are not equipped with proper man power to face challenges of present day information society nor they are prepared to undertake library promotion jobs vigorously. The library directorate has utterly failed to keep up the spirit of the Library Movement. The department gets low priority in budget allocation and is forced to keep many posts vacant deliberately harming the movement. All said and done the libraries both
sponsored and non-sponsored survive today due to the service of some dedicated library professionals. My field studies will confirm my above comments.

**Libraries in Malda District**

My library round up in West Bengal Districts commenced with visiting Malda and Dakshin Dinajpur Library.

In all districts district libraries get major focus of attention of the government and public and they are obvious reasons for their steady growth. Malda District Library was set up before 22 years of the West Bengal Libraries Act cam into being in 1979. The library is located in a vantage point of the town with 86054 books in stock. According to 2008-09 West Bengal Govt. report the stock was 68973. However shortfall of few books might have been due to loss, theft or damage. The library building is old and specious enough to hold more than present stock. Although average number of book issuance per day did not exceed 29 per day during 2013.

The membership register of the library show the children constitute the major segment of readers (About 56%) the rest are general members. The district libraries in West Bengal are moderately equipped with some valuable books in English and Bengali. Especially their stock of modern Bengali novels are envious. But the modern new age readers show little interest in pure literatures. Bengali reference books are in circulation for students in Bengali but for the job seekers general books have no values. Each library now has set up a
corner for job seekers where they can get career books at their disposal.

As per my request, the authorities of Malda District Library was to arrange an interactive meeting for me with their readers. But they could not find number of genuine readers at a time and at last took me to a number of job seeking youths at readers corner. They politely informed they would not read any general book except career books only which might be useful for their competitive examinations. They were wondering when I told them mere reading question-answers would be counter productive without going through general books available in the library. But their mind set was so deep rooted that anything contrary to their believe would not change their viewpoints.

The intrinsic value of book reading should have been developed at school.

My visit to several rural libraries in Malda will Reveev a how rural libraries are working and what impact they have been able to create in people’s mind.

**Rural Libraries in Malda District**

Birampore Kusum Smriti Gramin Pathagar has a story from rag to riches: This rural library was established in 1967 by the villagers in a thatched house and it became a sponsored library in 1979. Now the library is housed in its own building built in 2004 at the cost of ` 2.90 Lakh. This was further
extended in 2007 for which ` 6 Lakh was sanctioned by the Government. Now the library is housed in a 6 room, 2 storey building on a 2 cottaah land. But the prosperous library building with 514 members could not attract more than 10 lending members a day. The library has at present 5196 books. The book racks I glanced through comprised mostly fictions published by the middle ranking publishers like Kamini, Anamika, Rupa (Bengali), Delta Farma, Punascha, Sahityo Prakash etc.

The librarian Mr. Anil Ch. Saha said the reader of fictions were decreasing yet the demand for fictions would go up if the particular story was adapted in film. Mr. Saha commented.

There is a children section in the library. Rural children still issue Thakurmar Jhuli, the eternal fairy tales, Gopal Bhar like old classics.

The library has yet to get a Xerox and a Computer. According to the librarian even till late eightees rural students wood come to library regularly; at that time there was no direct link from the village to Malda Town. So the youths were less mobile and had time to read. Now a direct bus route had been introduced enabling the youths commute to Malda. Many students would go out in the morning for studies in different Malda colleges and would return late evening after tuition and had little time left to themselves to spare. With the introduction of several self help groups unmarried girls and housewives seemed to be very busy with their work so
village women had no spare time to come to the library. The librarian told me that to create awareness the library had organized a number of meetings of the readers. The cultural life of the village flows as quietly as it used to be. The community would organize Jatra and Gambhira during the Chaitra Sankranti day. Now-a-days the present generation sends their wards to schools and a large number of youths would commute regularly for college education to towns, but this had little effect on library readership. The librarian pointed out that the Rammohun Foundation had gifted Hindi and Urdu books worth `365 but there was not a single Hindi Reader in the library, those books were of no use and remained idle.

**Modern Club and Library Bamungram**:

This was another rural library I visited under Kaliachawk P.S., Malda. Bamungram is an educated village having one Higher Secondary School. There is a college at Kaliachawk not very far off and village students study there. Founded in 1973 the library has its own two storyed building with electric facilities. Started as a private library the library was brought under sponsorship scheme only in 2003. The library has three rooms on each floor with 5166 stock of books including 1024 books for children. The children members exceeded the adults (children 344, General 248) in this library. This is also another phenomenon how the adults are becoming disinterested in reading. Notwithstanding, the library issues 15 books a day on average not much a depressive figure but
again children constitute the majority lenders. The librarian Safiul Haque viewed behind the decline of readership there was influence T.V. T.V had taken villager’s spare time. school children too were hard pressed with tuition-centred study pressure. Many of villagers are so poor that their children usually drop out after primary stage to eke out living. There is no scheme to pursue those huge drop outs to library for non-formal teaching through extension methods. The library can re-educate or further school education for those who have inadequate or unfinished education. But are the rural libraries prepared to take up that challenge? There should be close cooperation between the Mass Education directorate and the library directorate to address those issue. The library should provide infrastructural support by providing books for the neo literates, audio visual equipments and space for those readers but they must be persuaded by the Mass Education Dept. staff under the functional literacy project. So far there is no link up between Mass Education and library department although they are sisters under one parent organization.

**Gayeshbari Young men’s Library and Club, Gouesbari, Kaliachwak:**

Gayesbari young men’s library is one of the well established rural libraries in Malda. The library was established in 1930 and many distinguished people visited the library on many occasions. Gayesbari is a hamlet with 16000 population 65% of them are literate. The young men’s Club founded the
library about 83 years ago as a part of rural regeneration. Now the library is separated from the club and works as a sponsored library. Situated in a two acre sprawling land, the club along with the library founded a primary school with a big playground. Poet Josimuddin visited the library on 21st June, 1939. The library is located in a big hall with a reading room facilities. But the number of books are limited to 6000 only. Old readers always demand for new additions which the library fail to supply. Frustrated readers cease membership on the other hand a library when fails to add shelves regularly would fail to attract new readers. Except research scholars old books have no value to the general readers. The number of researchers are few and far between in a rural library and the number of reference books are limited. Gayeshpur Young men’s Club has no dearth of enthusiastic members but the library readership is gradually declining. Now only 7 – 8 books are issued daily. Once the library had 1000 active members, at present the figure has comedown to 40 percent (316 general + 88 children) less. Another common predicament the rural libraries are facing is that a library is run by one staff only and in case the person is absent the library closes automatically. The unless any reliever joins. Gayesbari Youngmen’s Library is facing the staff problem. Notwithstanding the library keeps open daily and books are issued. The villagers are proud of their only village library. The young children when come to the club pay visit to the library to look at the newspapers at a glance but never show
any interest in books. Books are nearer to them yet they are the farthest from the books.

**Bishnupur Palli Mangal Samity Library** :

This rural library under Harish Chandrapur Block was founded in 1954 and became a sponsored rural library in 1960. The library has 3769 books. Mr. Subodh Kumar Mishra who was connected with the library regretted the declining trend of readership. He said till 1970 he had seen much enthusiasm about public library which had receded by the turn of the present century. He blamed the new age parents who had failed to arouse interest in book among their children.

**Abhijan Sangha Library, Old Malda** :

Library can involve local people in its activities especially can create enthusiasm through various cultural programme. The Abhijan Sangha Library has been able to create awareness. The librarian seemed to be very optimist about promoting reading habit among the children. The library organizes cultural competitions for children, organizes quiz competition for Class-IX-X students. The librarian said language training could only be achieved through book reading. Reading also begets mental development. The library publishes little magazine for the readers. The experiment met with grand success. Avijan Granthagar was set up in 1977 but became a sponsored library only in 1984. The library has 44190 books.
A model library

Out of five town and rural libraries inspected in Malda I found Abhijan Sangha only the one library systematically following modern library norms. This old Malda library that convert itself into a village information centre. The library has prepared various information chart of useful information such as list of universities and colleges with their telephone numbers. Even Train time tables are prominently displayed. The pictorial photographs of popular authors of yesterday and today are prominently displayed. To keep up the process with transparency, the progress of construction of new building and renovation work was photograph at every stage and displayed in public. The membership lists were typed out mentioning the year of entry and discontinuance of membership datewise it there was any was systematically classified to keep track with the grow the of the library. The general books especially classical novels are mostly read by the housewives and elderly people whereas the senior citizens prefer religious books. Children are the regular book borrowers but there is a tendency among the senior school children to discontinue library membership at the instance of their guardiance who are afraid of time loss of their wards by reading anything outside text books. A school child spend’s two hours on average for watching T.V. and another two hours on attending private tuition leaving lesser and lesser time for book reading the librarian observed.
**Libraries in Dakshin Dinajpur District:**

My visit to Balurghat, the H.Q. of South Dinajpur District started with an interactive meeting with the librarians of rural libraries at the district library hall. In West Bengal I was able to meet with the large group of librarians in two places. At Bolepur, and at Balurghat. Balurghat meeting was more significant that it turned into a seminar and the District Magistrate was present himself in the meeting to give his views.

The librarians one in all criticized the Raja Rammohun Roy Library Foundation for having donated Hindi and Urdu Books to the rural libraries in South Dinajpur. They would say there was no Hindi readers in South Dinajpur so Hindi and Urdu books would occupy unnecessary space and at the same time stalling Bengali books to come into the libraries.

The librarians suggested to the RRRLF to be ‘more discreet in book selection. Book selection for rural libraries are more challenging now-a-days as the reading habit is changing. Readers now have little time and would reject any book irrespective of authors that they consider not ‘nearer to life’ and language is not soothing and crisp to retain attention’. They opined. The majority of the present day readers are either job seeking youths or aspirants for making grades in examination. They come to library in greater number for books help to their studies. Libraries now demand more text books, text oriented reference books and books on careers.
There is another category of books on demand that are self help books, books on motivation, leadership and life skills. They have outnumbered the demand for novels and story books. The District of South Dinajpur stated in the meeting that he had seen a student obtained 95% marks in examination had not read any well reputed books in original. The reading habit among the young generations is decaying over the years he lamented. The librarians I met at Maldah and South Dinajpur informed that they would be obliged if at least 10 to 15 borrowers borrow books daily on average. In two districts I visited as many as 10 libraries during office hours but did not find any rush of readers. I was told they come in the afternoon. My meeting revealed with the librarians at Balurghat revealed that the readers of rural libraries were more keen to read anything about their local problems, local needs and even literature based on the life of their district. ‘Our readers would be interested to read more about a subject that is familiar to our own environment’. The regional authors, are taken by our readers with more seriousness now-a-days the librarians observed. My subsequent visits to some Rural libraries in South Dinajpur District gave me the same experience.

**Kumargange Block Central Rural Library**:

In South Dinajpur districts I selected the following rural libraries for my investigation. My first visit begun with Kumarjanj Central Rural Library. This was a well developed library in the heart of Kumargange village. Kumarganj block
has 8 rural libraries, 9 H.S. School, 6 Madhyamik Schools, 4 High Madrasa and 130 Primary Schools. The 266 SQKM Block with 118 Mouza’s have no college. The library is comparatively well arranged keeping some basic statistics handy. For instance the librarian has caste-wise divided all members of the library that may facilitate researcher to assess the library consciousness among the backward class community. The caste break up of library users is as follows:

- SC – 66
- ST – 13
- Muslim – 21
- Cast Hindu – 117
- Total members : 217

Kumargange village has a very advance literacy rate to the tune of 70 percent and the rate of daily issuance of books comparatively remained very high – 28 books on average. The elderly readers prefer books by Sarat Chandra and Bankim Chandra. Among the modern writers Sankar and Nimai Bhattacharjee are popular. The library was founded in 1981, an outcome of West Bengal Libraries Act 1979. As a block central library the library possessed only 6379 books. But the library had given equal priority to reference and informative books. Mr. Haridas Saha informed me that when he first joined the library in 1988, there were large number of people would read books and now the membership had
gradually come down. Reading habits among the local people is not growing. There are nearly 100 staff work under BDO office but among them only two persons are member of the library. Mr. Saha the librarian said that he would sincerely belief that whatever reading habit was formed had brought about a sustainable change in their behavior, attitude and spoken word. Previously the farmer readers were so enthusiastic that they would never miss the library during the harvesting season but now less and less farmers would read books. But even they would stop book transaction during the harvest season.

Mr. Saha claimed reading had brought out positive effect in the local society. There used to be illicit liquor business in the neighbourhood at rampant prior to the establishment of library but the illicit liquor business gradually came to stop following the introduction of public library. This was the Primary effect of literacy drive that helped raise consciousness and led one to read more. The readership subsequently brought forth social consciousness like the issue of women education. Women education made the village women more self reliant now. “Book reading has brought about a substantial change in oral language. Their language has new been more chaste. Observed Mr. Saha. Mr. Saha said when he first joined, common people would always use obscene slang (Khisti) all the time. Now slangs were heard no more”.

However, I do not agree fully with Mr. Saha’s opinion. The change in oral communication style, accent and usage may be
the direct outcome of TV, not the effect of book reading culture.

**Barahar Rural Library:**

Barahar Rural Library issue 7 to 8 books daily. The library had total 6199 books. This is a scheduled caste dominated village. The library is located besides a school so school children can avail themselves of library facilities.

**Monorama Palli Pathagar:**

This is one of the oldest Public Library in South Dinajpur having 8197 books. The library is attended by 44 persons on average but mostly are text book readers. The librarian said till 2007, members would issue fictions, now the love for reading general books had gone down bad to worse. The library has 166 total members but of them only 20 percent use the library. Mr. Satyabrata Deb Barman, Secretary of the library is a teacher by profession. He said the teachers now-a-days neither encourage their student to read general books nor they them selves come to the library. The school children come to library only for reading newspapers and browsing magazines. The librarians informed that the novels had less takers. There were three senior citizens who appeared to be ardent fiction readers. He found out some unemployed youths visit library regularly but were interested in books helpful for the job market. Another predicament of the library is facing a large number of members would not return their books at all inspite of repeated reminders. As many as 487 membership
was cancelled for this offence. The Secretary Mr. Deb Barman also informed that he was not happy with those books gifted by Rammohun Roy Library Foundation as the books were mostly ‘below standard’ and were not issued frequently by the members.

**Jukta Sangha Town Library:**

I visited one Town Library at Balurghat Town founded in 1968 and took sponsorship in 1981. In 1987 this was declared as Town Library. The library is very popular because of its club activities. Their collection of books are about 10167. Balurghat town is famous for its cultural activities. It was the only town in West Bengal having a good stage and a number of reputed theatrical Group. The library has almost all contemporary Bengali best sellers but out of 753 members, the library hardly get more than 20 book lenders on an average day. The children mostly like Ghost Stories and Fairy Tales. Gopal Bhar’s stories have good takes. Most of the readers are fond of fictions. But their stocks are too limited to fulfil popular demand. People often requisition books of their choice on requisition register but generally their demands are seldom met. Here is the case that the library fails to cope up with readers’ demand.

Mr. Bikash Ranjan Thakur who has been working as a librarian in this library since 1981 would remember the golden day when at least 125 to 150 readers would come daily to the library, of them 45% were women. Novels, and books on
religion would be preferred in those days. Of late few women readers were coming again (6 to 7 women every day) their preference for novels remained unchanged. The management of the library did not appear to be happy with the technological advancement unless the library was made functional. The librarian was of the view the library must be provided with additional fund to hold seminars talks, exhibitions to attract readers’ attentions. If schools and colleges are given funds for that why not library? he posed the question. If Library has to survive make it a centre of activities. Let the people come to the library; first let them see the books. Let them arouse their desire. Then they would be motivated to read. This was the view of the librarian expressed to me.

**Nadia District Library Krishnanagar**

Nadia District saw a number of Public Libraries to be founded as early as in the nineteenth century. Krishnanagar Public Library was set up in 1856. Ranaghat Public Library was born in 1804 52 years earlier. The launching year of Nabadwip Sadharan Pathagar dates back to 1907. Another famous Public Library Deshbandhu Public Library came up at Krishnanagar in 1926 that merged into Krishnanagar District Library at Ghurni in 1955. There are 10 Town / Sub-Divisional libraries, 9 Primary libraries and as many as 99 rural libraries in Nadia District. It is interesting enough to know all except 3 were set up before the W.B. Public Libraries Act came into
effect. As many as three libraries came in 1980, two of them at Ranaghat block and one at Haringhata Block.

Krishnanagar District Library can trace its origin to a Private Library namely Deshbandhu Library established by some followers of Deshbandhu Chittaranjan at the instance of Netaji Subash Ch. Bose in 1926. Deshbandhu Library was created out of Deshbandhu Memorial Fund. Kazi Nazrul Islam was one of the regular visitors of the library. Deshbandhu Public Library was housed at its own building constructed completely on public donation. Only in 1955 Ghurni Deshbandhu library was converted to a Govt. Sponsored District Library.

**Fall in membership:**

According to the official figure supplied by the librarian, District Library Nadia, there are 3893 members in library’s live register in 2013 against 4190 during 2008 – with a marginal fall of readership. The cause of fall in membership needs thorough scrutiny. From the following figures recent readership trend could be ascertained. This is the figure of monthly issuance of books (at the rate 22 working days a month).

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164
October : 96
November : 80
December 58

According to the libraries 80 members borrow books. There are allegations that libraries are not buying sufficient number of new books. Another allegations came up concerning Nadia District Library that a large number of new books were kept dumped for want of cataloguing. The librarian admitted that for shortage of staff cataloguing works were going at slow space. There is not adequate staff in the library either to rearrange books or to search a particular book as demanded by readers. Staff shortage has cast shadow over many libraries a gloomy KDL is no exception. Nadia District library has 10 sanctioned post. At present 4 posts are lying vacant. The existing staff are working hard and can manage barely only because there is not much crowd in the lending section now-a-days. Had even 30 percent of total members would have used library service, the library could not provide them due services with such inadequate staff strength. The district libraries are on the verge of collapse for staff shortage.

For want of fund libraries now are unable to buy sufficient number of books against demand from the readers. The shortage of staff has almost paralysed other essential services of the Nadia District library like accession and cataloguing. In all 110 libraries in the district as many as 51 libraries are run by only one staff. The post of librarian is vacant in two town libraries for the last 5 years. Like all other libraries Nadia
District Library has opened a test book cum career books section attended by average 12 readers daily. Among the book lenders students are the majority. Then come the housewives and retired persons. The service holders and technical professionals seldom lend books. According to the librarian Mausumi Chatterjee. There are three main reasons behind the decline in readership. The reasons are.

(1) People have little time to read books. (2) Validity of fictions have gone down over the years as no worthwhile novels are coming out as well as quality of serious readers have also gone down. (3) Last but not the least people spend more time on TV viewing.

Nadia District Library has a section for the blind with 47 brail books and 253 rare books and 34 Puthi (manuscripts). Those Puthis (manuscripts) are yet to be deciphered by scholars. Whatever reference books the library possess at the moment is adequate for the local scholars and essayist who come to the library to consult any reference. The library renders service to a dozen of regular such research scholars every month.

**Rural Libraries in Birbhum District**

In Birbhum District Raja Rammohun Roy Library Foundation has started a unique experiment with 35 rural libraries under Bolepur Sub-Division in collaboration with the Rural wing of the Viswabharati University.
This project is outside the purview of state sponsored libraries and exclusively run by the village voluntary organizations. The librarians are also local volunteers. Rammohun Foundation sanctions building and book grants directly to the libraries through the Pallisikha Niketan, the nodal Agency of the project. I visited that project for two days and visited some libraries and met with 30 librarians at Sriniketan in a specially arranged meeting.

The library volunteers I met appeared to me very optimistic about the future of the libraries provided the infrastructural support from governmental agencies like Raja Rammohun Roy Library Foundation were forthcoming. While the children and youths in urban and semi-urban areas are more and more educated people being distracted from reading books and showing more inclination to electronic media, video game playing and using social media to meet their exclusive demand the librarians still would not give up hopes. According to them ‘distractions’ were not wide spread. Rural libraries could still generate interest among rural children who visit libraries almost at regular intervals. The following statements emanates from my interaction with the librarians. The librarians would believe that the children have more potential to grow up as a voracious reader provided they are kept under continuous encouragement and motivation to read books, what the library volunteers are doing in 35 centres at Bolepur. They are encouraging children to read with reasons.
10 readers a day

Mr. Ashim Raha, a librarian of Bose Kadambapur Palli Seva Granthagar informs that their library consists of 2321 books under different categories. The library opens on Tuesdays and Thursdays twice a week. 8 to 10 readers on average attend daily. They are short of the books for children.

The children books are issued very frequently. There are about fifty books exclusively for senior citizens. Senior citizens prefer religious books like Brahma Baibarta Puran the Geeta, the Ramayana etc.

Children’s book in demand:

Susanta Pathak Librarian of Mohula Gramin Pathagar informed that his library also had children section for Class-II to IV students. Children prefer books by Sukumar Ray and some selected biographies of great people. He also informed that the tales from Gopal Bhar the legendary Court Gesture of 18th century Krishnanagar are very popular. The High School students prefer text books or books that help to their studies as well as books of quiz. Another interesting reading habit found among the book borrowers that detective books and thrillers are more liked by the adult readers than the youngers. The Mohula rural library has 35 members altogether.

Surul Anandamayee Library has about 150 memberships of them 120 readers come regularly to library. The total number
of books of the library has reached 3192. Library is open four days a week. Mr. Kripasundar Mukherjee, the librarian informed that they had a children wing with 25 members. The senior citizens obviously would read more religious books but they would at times issue novels too. The library established in 1975, was running a wall magazine.

**Slow membership growth:**

*Mirzapur Gobinda Chandra Sriti Pathgar* and *Vidyasagar Shishu Pathagar*, the children wings of the main library have 135 members. The total population of the village is about three thousand. It is the fact accompli that inspite of increasing literacy in West Bengal villagers over the years and considerable economic development, library membership has not increased substantially. Village libraries are having a very hard time to make libraries acceptable to the people. Mr. Kanchan Dey, the librarian informed that they held atleast two seminars for the villagers to know the reasons why more and more people were not coming to the library. He said unless reading habit was grown at the childhood was then it became very hard to develop it at late age especially when people had more alternatives to pay attention. So they emphasized more on children to catch them young. Some complained about the inconvenient opening and closing hour of the library. To concede to their demand their libraries are now kept open till 9 O-clock at night. So that the farmers can avail themselves of library facility after their return from the field. There is also demand from the illiterate farmers to organize read out
sessions for them. They would like to know more about necessary agricultural information. Those demands are still under consideration.

Miss Papiya Mondal, librarian of **Pally Unnayan Samiti**, is a student of B.A. Class. She expressed her full satisfaction with her involvement in rural library movement. She argued that constant motivation was the buzz word for harnessing the readership. She claimed that she was able to induce many readers read Tagore’s ‘Nouka Dubi’ and ‘Chokhher Bali’.

**Parul Danga Library**:

Parul Danga Library has registered as many as 50 members. It has a children’s corner too. Children mostly love books of fairy tales and rhymes, text books and large number of Tagore literatuerers. Another interesting phenomenon of this library is that as many as 7 house-wives are included in their member list, who prefer novels and specialised books for housekeeping.

Sahib Bhandari Librian of **Jadavpur Rammohun Pathagar** informs that his library has so far accessed 3150 books but gets only 25 borrowing members. The library undertakes a special coaching class for some week students from Class-I to VIII. As many as ten teachers give free coaching to the students. Teachers also try to develop reading habits among their students by way of reading out story books for them and by conducting informal interactive, sessions. He claimed that
children readership has shot up from 35 to 65 thanks to those initiatives.

Inspite of several initiatives made by dedicated librarians and volunteers, the overall picture of reading habit among the local educated people is not a very encouraging especially among the young generations. It becomes hard to harder to persuade village youths to be library bound and ultimately to make them read. The readers suggested libraries should have at least few daily news papers. There are about 500 schools and college children in the neighbourhood of Jadavpur but not more than 20% of them could be brought under the local library system. The librarians of all the libraries I met suggested to build up text book libraries as a wing of public library and subscribe newspaper and magazines regularly so that the habit of coming to the library develop among the youngsters.

**Mahula Village Library**

Mahula is a small prosperous hamlet about 15 kilometre east of Bolpur. A newly built one storied building is the address of Mahula Gramin Pathagar. The Granthagar is one of the sponsored libraries under Sriniketan Pally Unnayan project. The library is housed in a two storied building built on the grant of local Gram – Panchayat. As I entered the library for a visit, a group of youth and children assembled to greet me. They were supposed to be the readers of the library. I met also a number of senior readers who were book lovers.
Among them I found one Manik Tophadar (61) who was fond of religious books. He had already read the Geeta, the Ramayana, Mahabharata and Sri Ramkrishna Kathamrita. Even he went through Bankim Chanra’s’ ‘Krishna Charitra’. Mr Taphadar candidly informed that he had read all those books from this library and before its establishment he did not have much reading habit. Mr. Tapan Mukherjee (58), a farmer was now a voracious reader. He had already read ‘Meghnadbadh by Madhusudan, the Mahabharata, Kalitirtha Kalighat by Abadhut’s popular novel on Kalighat etc. He was always borrower of religious and spiritual books and would loathe novels. Even he could not remember the name of a single novel by Tarashankar Bandyapadhyaya who belonged to the same district. It was found that the village elders had not developed taste for reading novels but the youngsters do. One Partha Chatterjee an owner of a poultry farm claimed to have read all contemporary novels including Sarat Chandra and Tarashankar. Partha, 31 was a B.Sc. from Birbhum College, calls him an ‘Unemployed’. Although his poultry farm is full with 1500 birds. Not withstanding he was seeking a job. The village boys now-a-days prefer jobs in an organized sector in preference to independent business, chatterjee might be one of them. But it is nice of him that he had developed reading habit and would search for more books on motivation and self-help.

Chatterjee would love to read books of protest and dissention. If was his farm conviction that only book could bring about
attitude change. Religious books, spiritual books and books of new thoughts and ideals would usher in sea changes among the people. He suggested regular readers’-meet could answer many questions crept in readers’ mind.

Mr. Madhubir Banshi (32) an educated unemployed of this village was engaged in Poultry farming. He had a post-graduate degree in Bengali from Burdwan University, until now he kept up interest in reading books. He would still remember the name of past time writer Falguni Mukhopadhyaya but could not remember the name of any book of the author. He had so far read only one book from Tagore namely ‘Chaturanga’.

Another reader Mihir Ghosh (56) went through some works of Sarat Chandra and Bankim. He was also fond of religious books. Mihir owned fertilizer store at the local market. From the village survey it was evident that the joint endeavour of Pallysikhha Niketan of Viswabharati and the Raja Rammohun Roy Library Foundation had undoubtedly been able to reach out books to the people. Although the response so far remained not encouraging but was undoubtedly an appreciable stand to motivate some people to book reading when the general trend among the youths tended to keep themselves away from public libraries.

The New Age Rural Libraries have been able to increase some readers though at slow pace. It is very much needed that each library must organize motivational programmes like,
readers’ meet, discussion on books at regular intervals. Many people suggested that each library should have newspaper and magazines and must have a text book section to attract more readers. In that event a special care should be taken that the users of text book libraries are at the same time attracted to read beyond text books. In one library a suggestion came from the librarian, that village library could be linked with the local schools. Libraries could send bulk books to the school for lending to the students under teachers’ supervision. Some people hoped that making book reading mandatory would yield fruitful results. At the first place books may appear to be bitter pills but in the long run will give a lasting fruitful result. However there are needs for a therapeutic treatment to cure the epidemic called ‘Book apathy’ prevalent among the youngsters.

**District Library South 24-Parganas, Vidyanagar**

Vidyanagar about 25 km from the Rajbhaban, kolkata is now one of the developed villages. The two storey spacious District Library building is located at the centre of the village adjacent to local degree college and Higher Secondary Schools.

Notwithstanding, a district library should not be built far off from the district town. When Baruipur was developed as a district head-quarters, the District Library was to be shifted to Baruipur but the attempt fell apart because of the resistance from local people, more of a political pressure. The same
political clout of the founding fathers made possible to build a
district library in a village at the corner of the district which is
not directly linked to the state highway or having any rail link
nearby. The library suffers at every step from problems of
connectivity. Even for inviting a guest from Kolkata the
library has to incur huge expenditure. The proper place for
the South 24-Parganas District Library should have been
Baruipur, Amtola or Diamond Harbour.

However, South 24-Parganas District Library is one of the well
organized, well kept district libraries in West Bengal thanks to
the leadership of the librarian and his staff who have been
facing challenges against many odds specially the staff
shortage. Although the library live register of members is full
with a large number of defunct members (out of 800
registered members only 1400 transact books regularly), the
library has made successful drive to make active members.
They were able to book 159 new child members in addition to
513. As many as 84 women and 508 males were roped in
recent years as new members thus making a team of 1879
active members who use library regularly. They had a very
sad experience of non return of books from some members
amounting to 1100. I stayed overnight at the library to see
the staff were working till late night for finishing some
pending works mainly cataloguing with hired staff.

The library has been pioneer in many ways some instances
are given hereunder.
1) Senior citizen members need not come to the library for book transactions, instead, the library staff go to their door steps for book delivery and return. This facilities have been extended to 11 villages. This is in all probability has constituted the ‘Friend of library’ committee so that interested people who do not want to contest the Managing Committee election may render active help to the library through the body. The library out of their best initiative were able to retrieve 40% of books. The library caters to some subsidiary libraries by lending 20 books per library at one instalment.

2) The library has a special corner for all Tagore collections. A good number of books on Tagore are also available. In total 1200 books have been collected. Restoration proposals for worn out books have been sent to the directorate. The library is establishing close link with the neighbourhood schools. Schools are persuaded to provide slots to the library so that they reach books to the schools instead waiting for children come to the library. Although the library already has set children corner at the library premises.

**Very few children have reading habits**
The library was started in 1956 as an NGO run library with only 5000 books, now the library has 66000 books with 10 permanent staff. Hitherto the library is running under inadequate staff. There is neither a clerical post nor a post of
accountant which the librarian and two Asst. Librarians have to proxy. The library has introduced computer service.

At the initiative of the librarian Madhusudan Chowdhury I attended a workshop of the school children at the library. The children showed interest in group activities but whenever the issue of any cognitive intelligent test arose they mostly displayed dismal ignorance. They proved they were not familiar with outside books even written by famous authors. Their writing skill and communication ability in their mother tongue remain at a nascent stage. This is enough evidence how text book oriented school education is inadequate unless the school education is supplemented by vigorous reading habit. Inspite of the honest attempt of the library it is immensely becoming difficult to apprise both the children, parents and the teachers the futility of school education without reading beyond syllabus.

However, to my opinion Vidyanagar District Library could be made model for all other district libraries.

**Amtala Rural Library:**

Amtala Public Library has proved that if books are taken nearer to the children, they are readily accepted. Reading habit develops. Amtola Rural Library issues one hundred books to school children at every working day (a record figure in the whole state), only because the library is in front of a school gate. When I visited the library it was the time of school break and about a dozen of girl children were jostling
for return and issue of their books. The library had a counter and the children had to exchange books across the counter as they were not allowed to enter inside the library which was very congested and narrow. The children were also time bound and in hurry.

This is one of the sponsored rural libraries in South 24-Parganas having 5000 books. This is a general library once started at peoples initiative and was turned a sponsored library since 1981. The library has general members to whom 12 books are issued daily on average. The librarian informed that they had no text books. For the last 30 years they have been struggling hard to exist. As a sponsored library they were no doubt protected by the library Act. But for book purchase they had to depend on other source. For instance they got a special grant from the MP to the tune of `4 lakh that helped build their own small building. The library imposes `10 monthly subscriptions. The two staff small library purchased books worth 10 thousand last year. It is only satisfaction that, books are read, thanks to the locational advantage of the library. I strongly recommend to the concerning authorities to treat the library specially.

**North 24-Parganas District Library**

There are 221 sponsored libraries in North 24-Parganas. Besides there are other three libraries directly run by the Government. They are North 24-Parganas District Library at Barasat, Taki Government Library, Banipur Government
Library and North 24-Parganas located at Barasat Town. The District library has 647 permanent members in their register about 100 may be called active members. They took book regularly. The daily borrowers however do not exceed more than 40 on average. It must be mentioned that Barasat has comparatively good readers.

As centrally located and very close to local college and schools the most of the visitors to the library comprise of students. They are more than double of other visitors like teachers, service holders, the retired persons etc. However the retired persons are the second largest visitors of the library.

The authorities of the libraries informed that they extend all facilities to accommodate all student-readers. Books for all classes specially for the requirement of college students are stocked in readiness to meet the demand of the college students, especially those who need them urgently for competitive examinations. The spokesman of the library who showed me the stock of books, boastfully admitted that as many as 51% of the users of the library got jobs in Government and Public Sector organizations. Job seekers are the regular users of this section. Though the library has got adequate stock of general books, the students would mainly consult reference books, accordingly the library subscribes all career magazines in Bengali. The State government has blacklisted a number of largely circulated newspaper from the reading rooms. The library now subscribes three newspapers like Aajkal, Pratidin, and The Times of India, those are the
outside the Govt. ban. Barasat District Library receives a number of enquiries from the public 'Seeking various information. One of the library staff is assigned to answer to those enquiries. This is also the changing phenomenon of library service as well as the demand for extension service from the people. The public enquiry varies from Sundarban Tourist information to the nuances of copyright Act. The following list will give some impression of the changing utility of library not only limited to book lending but also acting as an information Office.

**Enquiries met during the 2011-12:**

1) Bhadu - A cultural and religious festival of some districts in West Bengal.
2) Sundarban Primarily the tourist information.
3) Astrology
4) Rural Health
5) About North 24-Parganas District Primarily about tourist interest.
6) Barasat - The profile of the district town and road directory.
7) Anganbari - The educational system of the Anganbari schools.
8) Copyright - A scope of the law.
9) Preetilota - Information regarding the biography of the revolutionary who took part in Chittoaging Armury case.
10) The 1st World War - The basic information about the 1st World War.
Last but not the least, some readers seek suggestions from the librarian to select a name for their babies.

**Libraries tend to be multipurpose**

It is evident that the 21st century Public library is gradually becoming multipurpose. To make library a multipurpose information centre very few libraries are prepared to face this challenge. The author visited many libraries in West Bengal and Tripura. Only two libraries have accepted that challenge of the day, one is at old Malda and another is North 24-Parganas District Library at Barasat. They have equipped their library to meet the challenges of the day. So far extension service is concerned the South 24-Parganas District Library must have shown the lead. The West Bengal Library Act remains silent about this new dimension.

**Howrah District : Libraries in Howrah District**

Though a small district, Howrah has a number of old libraries bearing the tradition of a reminisce culture. Though Howrah grew up haphazardly and early industrialization started only on the West Bank of Hooghly River Howrah soon became known as ‘Cooly hub’. But never before the industrialization Howrah was a settlement of many cultured and educated people. Many intellectuals and writers preferred to live in Howrah district because of easy livelihood and well connected railway and surface route network. A number of traditional library known as the hub of cultural centre, set up in Howrah and different parts of the district. But all libraries in Howrah
were autonomous till the West Bengal Library Act formulated and came into effect. Howrah district library was first established as a central library in Howrah in 1954 and it was taken over by the government in 1956 as a sponsored District Library.

Unlike the history of Howrah district itself, the origin of Howrah district library is not that old. The library was initiated in 1952 by Howrah district library Association and located in a single room of Howrah Deuk library, then its functioning as a storehouse of knowledge and education in the region. In 1954 the government of West Bengal allotted 10 katha land for the library near Howrah maidan area. Dr. Dhirendra Mohan Sen, Secretary of Education of the then West Bengal government, inaugurated the district library on 2nd October, 1956. In the same year Howrah district library came under the jurisdiction of West Bengal government.

Located in a congested downtown of Howrah, Howrah District Library looks like any other typical government building. And due to the scarcity of space, the library building had to provide room to other government offices as well. In the dean and bustle or cacophony from all sources of noises including thousands of traffics passing the G.T Road, the place isn't congenial for even pleasure reading, not to speak of research work. The total membership of the library is 5068 as per the record of March 2013. Of them, 586 are juvenile members and 1016 are students. They come for reading career oriented books. Being a district library, the members
have to pay Rs. 5 per month and make a deposit of ` 100 to borrow two books below Rs. 500. The daily lending varies between 50 to 60 and like all other libraries, the majority of members seldom show up. The librarian informs that the district library purchases books worth ` 50,000 every year besides they receive book gifts from Raja Mohan Roy Library Foundation and from direct purchase. Although, there is quite a good number of Hindi speaking population in the area and Raja Ram Mohan Roy Library Foundation pumps good number of Hindi books every year in the district library although there is hardly any taker of Hindi books. Till 2011-12, 9516 books have been donated by the Raja Ram Mohan Roy Library Foundation. In Howrah District there are 12 Town libraries and J123 rural libraries functioning at present.

**Salient library features:** In the children and young readers section, the Howrah District library has 5597 books, 6 children's magazines, a separate reading room to accommodate 15 young readers with computer usage facilities. For students who are looking for employment and preparing for various competitive examinations, the library subscribes 32 employment magazines for them in different languages that contain information about various jobs and competitive exams. The section has a reading room to accommodate 60 readers at a time and also offers the photocopy facility. Besides providing the study materials, the library also organizes professional counselling for the job seeking readers by faculties of various colleges and district
administration officials from time to time. Till date, a number of students have been benefitted by the service and able to secure jobs. Notwithstanding the space in the reading section need to be expanded in future to ensure more readers will access the benefit of regular information awareness activity. 7 daily newspapers are subscribed in this section, of which 5 in Bengali, 1 in English and 1 in Hindi. Total 82 weekly and monthly journal and magazines are subscribed in this section.

Other than the wide range of books and journals, the library also runs exhibition of still photographs that portray information about various celebrities, architectures and notable places of Howrah. To function in sync with the modern world the Howrah District library is soon to be upgraded into a computerized library system. 10 lakh has already been granted by the joint fund of Raja Rammohan Roy Library Foundation and Government of West Bengal for this purpose. The library has received quite a few Braille books from the government and planning to start a separate section for the blind and visually impaired readers, enriched with quality Braille books, in near future.

Private libraries in Howrah:

We have already mentioned that the district of Howrah and Hooghly have very old settlements of educated and middle class people and an old cultural tradition of libraries with the numbers stand at as many as 41 prominent public libraries. Many of them were founded as early as 100 years ago and
continue their existence without coming under government sponsorships. Such libraries are still maintaining themselves by the dint of voluntary actions and on average the number of book readers stand at 35 people daily. Many of such libraries haven't received any grant, either from the state government or from Raja Rammohan Roy Library Foundation. They don't open daily and suffer from improper infrastructure. For instance, Khanpur Village library at Tulsiberia, a remote village in Howrah, is a typical example of such private library. The library opens daily from 12 pm to 4 pm and has only 448 books. They have 64 members, out of them 16 books in average are used daily. The library has 1 kottha of land and hasn't been able to build its own house. Notwithstanding the library is rendering service by supplying required information on service and career to the people. Here we now provide the list of 31 private libraries in Howrah district with certain statistical data about their membership details and years of service. The average book collection of 13 such libraries vary from 1000 to 40,000. Its indeed that these libraries are rendering great services to the community exclusively by voluntary actions but that reveals a fact that people help those who help themselves. The sponsored libraries have managing committee elected by its members. But these members as I have gathered information, aren't always effective. People still consider sponsored libraries as government library and expect Government to take all responsibilities. And after seeing cold-shoulder in the helm of
affairs, where are the members of private libraries bear essence of belonging?

**How the non sponsored Private Libraries are running**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Library name</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Year of Establishment</th>
<th>Working Hour</th>
<th>Number of members</th>
<th>Number Of Books</th>
<th>Availability Of Computer</th>
<th>No. of Daily Lending Of books</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aam Bagan Karmasangha</td>
<td>Subakshak, Howrah</td>
<td>1987</td>
<td>7 am to 9 am 4 pm to 6 pm</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>243</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asutosh Library, Bally</td>
<td>Bally, Howrah</td>
<td>1956</td>
<td>7 pm to 9 pm (Tuesday) 8:30 am to 10:30 pm (Sunday)</td>
<td>262</td>
<td>10,553</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indira Gandhi Memorial Library and Cultural Society</td>
<td>Ashanda Village, Howrah</td>
<td>1993</td>
<td>3 pm to 6 pm (Sunday to Thursday)</td>
<td>308</td>
<td>4576</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Udang Pally Unnanyan Porishod Library</td>
<td>Udang Village, Howrah</td>
<td>1954</td>
<td>8 am to 10 am 5 pm to 8 pm</td>
<td>246</td>
<td>4978</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kishor Library</td>
<td>Panchla, Howrah</td>
<td>1945</td>
<td>3 pm to 7 pm</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>1200</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Khardah Vivekananda Library</td>
<td>Tulsibera, Howrah</td>
<td>2000</td>
<td>2 pm to 5:30 pm</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>342</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Khanpur Gramin Library</td>
<td>Tulsibera, Howrah</td>
<td>2004</td>
<td>12 pm to 4 pm</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>448</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>16</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gajipur Yuva</td>
<td>Amta,</td>
<td>1998</td>
<td>2 pm to</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>460</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No lending</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Library Name</td>
<td>Location</td>
<td>Year</td>
<td>Hours</td>
<td>Members</td>
<td>Phone No</td>
<td>Fee (Rs)</td>
<td>Days</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------</td>
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<td>Kalian Sanstha</td>
<td>Howrah</td>
<td>1997</td>
<td>6 pm</td>
<td>204</td>
<td>2500</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>10</td>
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<tr>
<td>Chandul Sadharan Ballabhpur, Howrah</td>
<td>1997</td>
<td>3 pm to 7 pm</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Jatiya Sangha Shibpur</td>
<td>Howrah</td>
<td>1945</td>
<td>6:30 pm to 8 pm</td>
<td>215</td>
<td>6336</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>20</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gyanasree Library and Sammilani</td>
<td>Howrah</td>
<td>1951</td>
<td>8 am to 11 am (Sunday) 5:30 pm To 8:30 pm (Weekdays)</td>
<td>184</td>
<td>5385</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>30</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tarun Sadhana Sanity</td>
<td>Shibpur, Howrah</td>
<td>1939</td>
<td>11 am to 12:30 pm 7 pm to 9 pm</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>5984</td>
<td>No</td>
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<tr>
<td>Taj Nagar Pragati Library</td>
<td>Amardah, Howrah</td>
<td>1994</td>
<td>8 am to 12 pm 4 pm to 8 pm</td>
<td>472</td>
<td>2400</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>30</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tajpur Sadharan Library</td>
<td>Amta, Howrah</td>
<td>1950</td>
<td>3 pm to 8 pm (except Thursday)</td>
<td>151</td>
<td>365</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>31</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dwipamalita Kisholaya Library</td>
<td>Birampur, Howrah</td>
<td>1965</td>
<td>11 am to 4 pm</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>1026</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>8</td>
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<tr>
<td>Naborunoday Sangha and Library</td>
<td>Shyampur, Howrah</td>
<td>1965</td>
<td>3 pm to 6 pm</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>510</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>15</td>
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<tr>
<td>Puila Pathachakra</td>
<td>Jagacha, Howrah</td>
<td>1950</td>
<td>9 am to 12 pm 5 pm to 8 pm</td>
<td>414</td>
<td>3128</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>35</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bargajipur</td>
<td>Amta, Howrah</td>
<td>1954</td>
<td>3 pm to</td>
<td>245</td>
<td>2900</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Library Name</td>
<td>Location</td>
<td>Address</td>
<td>Year</td>
<td>Opening Hours</td>
<td>User Capacity</td>
<td>Open to Public</td>
<td>Library Card</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Pragati Library</td>
<td>Howrah</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>8 pm</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Bargarchumuk Lenin Library</td>
<td>Shyampur, Howrah</td>
<td>1983</td>
<td></td>
<td>12 pm to 4 pm</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>4944</td>
<td>No</td>
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<tr>
<td>Vivekananda Gramin Library</td>
<td>Jagat Ballabhpur, Howrah</td>
<td>2002</td>
<td></td>
<td>8 am to 11 am 3:30 pm to 7 pm</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>1234</td>
<td>No</td>
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<tr>
<td>Biswa kalian Sangha Library</td>
<td>Howrah</td>
<td>1948</td>
<td></td>
<td>7 pm to 9 pm (Monday to Friday) 9 am to 11 am (Sunday)</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>10,760</td>
<td>No</td>
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<tr>
<td>Belur Public Library</td>
<td>Belur, Howrah</td>
<td>1895</td>
<td></td>
<td>6:30 pm to 8:30 pm (Monday to Friday) 4 pm to 6 pm (Saturday) 9 am to 11 am (Sunday)</td>
<td>765</td>
<td>30,559</td>
<td>No</td>
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<tr>
<td>Belur Subhash Sangha Library</td>
<td>Belur Math Howrah</td>
<td>1962</td>
<td></td>
<td>9 am to 11 am 4 pm to 8 pm</td>
<td>115</td>
<td>980</td>
<td>Yes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bodhodoy Library</td>
<td>Shyampur, Howrah</td>
<td>2002</td>
<td></td>
<td>4 pm to 8 pm (Wednesday, Friday &amp; Sunday)</td>
<td>280</td>
<td>1350</td>
<td>No</td>
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<tr>
<td>Byatra Public Library</td>
<td>Kadamatala, Howrah</td>
<td>1884</td>
<td></td>
<td>6:30 am to 8 am 6:30 pm to</td>
<td>1603</td>
<td>42,431</td>
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<tr>
<td>Library</td>
<td>Location</td>
<td>Year</td>
<td>Opening Times</td>
<td>Opening Hours</td>
<td>Subscript</td>
<td>Open?</td>
<td>Total No of Members</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bhaskur Anandamoyee Sadharan Library</td>
<td>Domjur, Howrah</td>
<td>1942</td>
<td>6:30 pm to 9:30 pm</td>
<td>141</td>
<td>3400</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>8</td>
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<tr>
<td>Modern club Library</td>
<td>Sankrail, Howrah</td>
<td>1958</td>
<td>4 pm to 8 pm</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>215</td>
<td>No</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mohisha Murti Pallymongal Samity</td>
<td>Anta, Howrah</td>
<td>1945</td>
<td>5 pm to 9 pm</td>
<td>367</td>
<td>517</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>NA</td>
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<tr>
<td>Madhav Smriti Library</td>
<td>Salkiya, Howrah</td>
<td>1917</td>
<td>7 am to 9 am, 7 pm to 9:30 pm</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>18,565</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>6</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mashila Suhrid Samsad Library</td>
<td>Sankrail, Howrah</td>
<td>1947</td>
<td>5 pm to 7 pm</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>3495</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>12</td>
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<tr>
<td>Muralibar Pollishri Library</td>
<td>Anta, Howrah</td>
<td>1974</td>
<td>7 pm to 9 pm, 10 am to 12:30 pm (Thursday And Sunday)</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>1939</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>15</td>
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<tr>
<td>Radhapur Pragati Library</td>
<td>Shyampur, Howrah</td>
<td>1985</td>
<td>10 am to 4 pm</td>
<td>205</td>
<td>400</td>
<td>No</td>
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<td>Radharani Library</td>
<td>Khosmora, Howrah</td>
<td>1992</td>
<td>2 pm to 6 pm</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>330</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>10</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ramkrishnapur Samsad</td>
<td>Howrah</td>
<td>1900</td>
<td>6:30 pm to 10 pm (Monday to Friday), 8 am to 11 am (Sunday)</td>
<td>248</td>
<td>17,587</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>30</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shantishree Library</td>
<td>Hirapur, Howrah</td>
<td>1972</td>
<td>6 pm to 8 pm</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>275</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>10</td>
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<tr>
<td>Library Name</td>
<td>Location</td>
<td>Year</td>
<td>Opening Hours</td>
<td>TIME(s)</td>
<td>Collections</td>
<td>Sponsored</td>
<td>Staff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------</td>
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<td>---------------------------------------------------</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shibpur Public Library</td>
<td>Shibpur</td>
<td>1874</td>
<td>6:30 pm to 8:30 pm (except Monday) 7 am to 9:30 am (Sunday)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Shibpur</td>
<td>610</td>
<td>37,837</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>40</td>
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<td>Shiyal Danga Public Library</td>
<td>Ichapur, Howrah</td>
<td>1973</td>
<td>7 am to 9 pm 4 pm to 9 pm</td>
<td>127</td>
<td>3818</td>
<td>No</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sadatpur Public Library</td>
<td>Bargachia, Howrah</td>
<td>1954</td>
<td>10 am to 12 am 4 pm to 8:30 pm</td>
<td>339</td>
<td>1535</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>25</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sahara Public Library And Club</td>
<td>Bagnan, Howrah</td>
<td>1940</td>
<td>10 am to 12 am 4 pm to 6 pm</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>1324</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>12</td>
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<tr>
<td>Howrah Assembly</td>
<td>Howrah</td>
<td>1933</td>
<td>6 pm to 9 pm (Monday to Friday) 9 am to 11 am (Sunday)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Howrah Assembly</td>
<td>467</td>
<td>5625</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>25</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hanidhara Satyashram Library</td>
<td>Thalia, Howrah</td>
<td>1953</td>
<td>3 pm to 6 pm</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>3332</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Source: Local Library office. Howrah, 2010 some facts about non sponsored libraries in Howrah District.

**Non Sponsored Libraries need fair treatment**
Non-sponsored libraries, which are run and managed privately, are operated by voluntary efforts like all libraries before 1979. Even many libraries in West Bengal including Howrah District were established after the 1979 Library Act was passed, by people's initiative knowing well that they might not get direct facilities from the Government at par with government sponsored libraries. Existence of such libraries is the evidence that quite a large section of people, especially in the villages, still hold the spirit of serving people through libraries. Thus libraries still manifest the desire of a community to enrich its members through book reading. Supports of this view may have been dwindled to less and less over the years for various reasons. There is no denying the fact that people hadn't given up their hopes on books. It's evident from the above Table that the number of daily book lenders is not very praiseworthy, but it has to be remembered at the same time that the sponsored public libraries, where everything is taken care of by the government, fail to attract more readers now-a-days. The readership of both sponsored and non-sponsored libraries don't vary much per se. Even some non-sponsored public libraries like Byatra public library has so far accessed more than 42,000 books and served 105 books everyday on average. There are as many as 3 heritage libraries in Howrah district which are still unsponsored. They are Belur public library (founded in 1895) which has nearly 31,000 books and transact 80 books per day, Shibpur public library was set up in 1874 and posses over 13,000 books
including daily transaction of 40 books and Bally library, but since it's a sponsored library we shall discuss about it separately. While we appreciate the people's initiative to take up library movement and many have opted for keeping them up till today, the government can't evade their responsibility for the well being of those Private Libraries serving the readers mostly. After all, they are serving the same objective as like the library directorate dwells on that is to keep up the reading habit by dint of their hard effort. Many non-sponsored libraries have already built up their own infrastructure that is their own house and adjacent land for extension. Raja Rammohan Roy Foundation raises their grants in case of books purchase and acquisition of furniture. For example, Shibpur public library received RRRL foundation's grant during 2001-02 for Rs. 44,000 and ` 1,20,000 to purchase books and furniture in 2009-10. Byatra public library received Raja Rammohan Roy Foundation grant of ` 7,00,000 for library construction during 1986-87. Similarly, some selected libraries bought some aides from the government of West Bengal from time to time. But these grants are quite irregular. Both government of West Bengal and government of India must decide upon a concrete policy about the non-sponsored libraries in West Bengal. There is no doubt that those libraries keep open their shutters by voluntary labours, who are mainly part-timers and many don't have any formal training in librarianship. Those libraries are open in staggering hours. Out of 41 non-sponsored libraries, 38
libraries don't even have computer facility. Government should come forward with some concrete planning of reorganization of such non-sponsored libraries, keeping their autonomy intact.

The list of Private libraries in Howrah:

1. Aam Bagan Karmisangha
2. Asutosh Library, Bally
3. Indira Gandhi Memorial Library and Cultural Society
4. Udang Pally Unnanyan Porishod Library
5. Kishor Library
6. Khardah Vivekananda Library
7. Khanpur Gramin Library
8. Gajipur Yuva Kalyan Sanstha
9. Chandul Sadharan Library
10. jatiya Sangha, Shibpur
11. Gyanasree Library and Sammilani
12. Tarun Sadhana Samity
13. Taj Nagar Pragati Library
14. Tajpur Sadharan Library
15. Dwiparnalita Kisholaya Library
16. Naborunoday Sangha and Library
17. Puila Pathachakra
18. Bargajipur Pragati Library
19. Jhargarchumuk Lenin Library
20. Vivekananda Gramin Library
21. Biswa Kalyan Sangha
22. Belur Public Library
23. Belur Subhash Sangha Library
24. Bodhodoy Library
25. Byatra Public Library
26. Bhaskur Anandamoyee Sadharan Library
27. Modern Club Library  
28. Mohisha Muri Pallymongal Samity  
29. Madhav Smriti Library  
30. Mashila Suhrid Samsad Library  
31. Muralibar Pollishri Library  
32. Radhapur Pragati Library  
33. Radharani Library  
34. Ramkrishnapur Samsad  
35. Shantishree library  
36. Shibpur Public Library  
37. Shiyal Danga Public Library  
38. Sadatpur Public Library  
39. Sahara Public Library and Club  
40. Howrah Assembly  
41. Hanidhara Satyashram Library

**Heritage Libraries Completed 100 years**

**Table No. 1**

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Libraries established till 1910 i.e. completed 100 years of establishment - 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>They are:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>i.</td>
<td>Shibpur Public Library</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ii.</td>
<td>Baytra Public Library</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>iii.</td>
<td>The Belur Public Library</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>iv.</td>
<td>Ramkrishnapur Samsad</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table No. 2

2. **Libraries established in 1911**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year Range</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Libraries established between 1911 and 1920</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Libraries established between 1921 and 1930</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Libraries established between 1931 and 1940</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Libraries established between 1941 and 1950</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Libraries established between 1951 and 1960</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Libraries established between 1961 and 1970</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Libraries established between 1971 and 1980</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Libraries established between 1981 and 1990</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Libraries established between 1991 and 2000</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Libraries established between 2001 and 2010</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table No. 3

**The membership pattern:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Membership Range</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Libraries with 1 to 100 registered members</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Libraries with 101 to 200 registered members</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Libraries with 201 to 300 registered members</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Libraries with 301 to 400 registered members</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Libraries with 401 to 500 registered members</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Libraries with 501 to 600 registered members</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Libraries with 601 to 700 registered members</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Libraries with 701 to 800 registered members</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Libraries with more than 801 members</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This shown that slow membership growth in most of the Libraries.
Table No. 4

Comparative picture of books Stocks in libraries:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Libraries with book range</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Libraries with 1 - 1000 books</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Libraries with 1001 - 2000 books</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Libraries with 2001 - 3000 books</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Libraries with 3001 - 4000 books</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Libraries with 4001 - 5000 books</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Libraries with 5001 - 6000 books</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Libraries with 6001 - 7000 books</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Libraries with 7001 - 10,000 books</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Libraries with 10,001 - 15,000 books</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Libraries with 15,001 - 20,000 books</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Libraries with 20,001 - 30,000 books</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Libraries with 30,001 - 40,000 books</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Libraries with more than 40,001 books</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In a seminar conducted by Howrah Zilla Library in 2010 on the issue of library awareness and development in the region and nation at large, certain key points have been raised and discussed by the renowned Guests member at the discussion panel.

**The Panel made following recommendations:**

Organization of discussion programs, conferences in various Blocks from time to time to increase library awareness

1. Better prospect for the libraries to avail and purchase of necessary books from district book fairs.
2. Circulars from the School education department of the government should be sent to the district school authorities to enable regular association with the libraries.

3. Under the mission of Sarva Siksha Aviyan the school dropouts should be made more aware and informed about the usage of public libraries.

4. Regular invigilation for the libraries to be increased

5. Better infrastructure and manpower is highly needed in the public libraries.

6. More financial help should be provided to the libraries to develop the collection of books, journals and magazines.

7. Regular financial aid should be there to enable libraries implementing various modes of library development plans.

8. Help and assistance from Raja Rammohan Roy Library Foundation to be sought for rural libraries to increase their collection of books.

10. Employee training programs should be launched.

11. Information from different concerned departments of the governments should reach the library regularly.

12. The librarian should hold significant position in the regional schools decision making body, in the same way
the teachers' representative should be included in the library committee.

13. To increase the number of readers, advertisements and publicity materials should be sent to the local and popular media for publication.

There are a number of heritage Public Libraries in Howrah we have already given the list. Bally Public Library is one of the best run libraries in Howrah. I visited the library. He status report is as follows.

**Bally Public Library:**

Bally Public Library is now a sponsored library.

Locationwise Bally Public Library is situated in a most attractive surrounding on the river Hooghly, very close to Belur. It's a wonder for any visitor how such a building with entire marble flooring was built up as early as in 1885 entirely by public support. Thanks to the present library committee for good maintenance of its building and surrounding. The library contains 38,864 books, many of which are rare collections. On average 60 books are issued every day. That is quite a large number of issuance of books contrary to the general trend of present age book lending that is not more than 30 on average per day. The librarian told that Bally library once had one of the highest readership in Bengal even till '80s. The higher secondary students used to come in large number before but now the number has been diminished. The
women readers constituted quite a large number in those days. But now they don't come often and usually inquire about particular books which are either been filmed or showing as serial on television. The juvenile section is homed in another building. The building was donated to the library by a resident but not more than 6 students can use the library at a time per day. However this is the only library which remains open in Sundays as well.

The library contains as many as 700 rare books in English and about 1100 in Bengali. The asset of the library is as many as 259 manuscripts on various subjects.

**The story of origin** - In the year 1883 an anonymous small library was established in the house of Horidhon Goswami in Goswami Para. Nearly around the same time 'home library' was set up in the residence of Nibaran Chandra Pathak of Pathak Para. In the year 1885 these two libraries joined together and started functioning in the name of 'Boys Association' in the residence of Horidhon Goswami. In 1887 the library was shifted to 'Bims Charitable Dispensary' and the name was changed to 'Students Association'. In 1900-01 'The friends' union library' of Dingsai Para and the 'Boys reading club' of Goswami Para combined together and formed 'Friends reading room' at the residence of Bhagawati Charan Bandyopadhyay. On 30th October, 1903 'Students association' and 'Friends' reading room' joined together and formed 'Students association and friends' reading room'. It was then shifted to the Rivers Thomson School (now Shantiram
Vidyalaya) due to space shortage in the dispensary. On 21s, September, 1913 it was given the present name 'Bally Public Library' and it was registered under the society Registration Act in the year 1935. In the year 1981 the library was acknowledged as 'metropolitan library' by the government of West Bengal.

In the year 1912 the Bally municipality corporation donated the land on which the library is currently built and functioning. In 1913 the work on the ground floor of the building was commenced. On 14th April, 1924 the library was formally shifted to the new building from Rivers Thomson School. Work on the first floor was started in 1961 and finished in 1965. Further, the structure of second floor was made in 1984. In the year 2008 the modernization work of the library instigated.

A local resident children library Sukumar Bandopadhyay donated his house to the Bally Public Library in 1963, which after the demise of him and his wife came under the jurisdiction of the library committee in 1979. Children's section started in 1980 in that house and in the year 1993 'Sukumar reading room' started functioning in the same house specifically for newspaper reading. In 2005 the old sections of the house was restructured to expand the building of first floor to increase the library working space which finally completed in 2007. In 2008 Raja Rammohan Roy Library Foundation Children's Corner was established.
In the journal 'Prabashi' a write up was published on the library, excerpt of which is very significant to mention for this analysis:

"The building and thousands of books in this Bally public library wasn't made up with the contributions of one or two rich personalities. Its the accumulated contribution of many individuals' small amount of charity. The residents of Bally have not only donated money for the library, but also ample of their time and strength, to make it a shining reality."

**Future plan:**

For the purpose of comprehensive modernization of the library, already `13.5 lakh from the area development fund of Councillor Shri Swadesh Chakroborty has been utilized along with `3.87 lakh received from the library development department. To complete the process of modernization, the library still needs `5 lakh more. The library committee believes to complete the process of modernization successfully by receiving the financial support from the area and library development fund and partly from donations of some generous people, who are keen to strengthen the social development via library movement.

The library also receives financial assistance from some other agencies like National Archives of India, Victoria Memorial and West Bengal government library development department for developing the collection of rare books and contemporary journals. But a lot of work is still unfinished for which as per
the statement of the Bally public library officials, they need `25 lakh more.

The library also plans to launch a website very soon. Except for 2008-09, for past 5 years the library has received financial assistance from Victoria Memorial authorities to conduct various cultural and annual functions. The total number of books in the library stands at 40,000 at present, the number which is virtually increasing every so often. Since the year 2006, the detailed information of the books is saved electronically through computers. But the library needs more human resources to update the books information prior to 2006. The main problem the library faces for future development is their lack of manpower and poor financial set up. Only 4 government employee work in the Bally public library at present, the number of which has to be increased to provide better reading facility and services.

The library on media:

Now a days Media selcom reports library affairs. But previously all library activities used to find prominent coverage in Media. In the long glorious 125 years since the time of its establishment the Bally public library gained considerable media exposure. Since the introduction of Radio and TV Doordarshan and Radio have been giving wide coverage to the library events.

However, in the first 50 years of its functioning, the excerpts published in print media and the exposure gained on
electronic media haven't been preserved. In the year 1925 Smt. Sarala Debi Chaudhurani came as the chief guest in the library building inaugural programme and the speech she delivered that day was published in entirety in the 'Bharati' magazine. From 1936 to 1938 a number of literary and cultural programmes were organized by the library which got extensive exposure in popular media. In 1946 the invitation of the building establishment program was published in Amrita Bazar Patrika along with the detailed description of that day's event. The chief guest of that day's event was Khitish Chandra Mukhopadhyay.

On 20th April, 1936 Amrita Bazar Patrika published a report of a literary discussion taken place in the library. A Part of the report will give idea about the activities of Bally library in old days.

“......... The general conditions of the town of Bally may be largely improved by the regular flushing of Channels and other water communications by means of high tide water of the river Ganges ........ The local municipality is requested to consider this question and make a thorough investigation, taking such technical steps as may be necessary.”

The Patrika in 1936 published a report on public conference organized by the library in Rivers Thomson School on the issue of 'Spread of Hindu culture outside India' with the chief speaker Swami Satyananda Ji, the secretary of Hindu mission.
Bally Public Library has total 38864 books with 1200 members. About 60 books are issued daily but they include text books for which there is no dearth of readers. About 15 Readers come daily to read newspapers only. The librarian told me what you see today is a desolate look comparing with the vibrant past.

Even in 1981 every day 160 to 180 books were issued. At times it reached 200. There used to be a queue across the counter. The librarian Ms Bhabani Banerjee lamented, ‘where have those young school children gone who were the regular visitors of our library only for reading story books. Large number of women used to come everyday. Now they are engrossed in Mega serials and no more would visit library. So far reading pattern is concerned it is observed in case a novel is filmed there is a rush to issue the particular book’. According to the library staff the entertainment value of the book is lost. But is it lost forever? that is the million dollar question Ms Banerjee asked.

The children section of the library has been shifted to a separate building. There are 6 lenders on average. The children library is open in Sunday too, between 8 and 09:30 am. Raja Rammohun Roy Foundation has provided the infrastructure. Libraries in 24-Parganas.
Libries in 24-Parganas

There are 221 sponsored libraries in North 24-Parganas district. Barasat town alone has 20 to 25 sponsored libraries. Barasat Municipal Town library with about 14000 books is located within 1 km radius of the district library buildings. The Municipal Library is located in a stone, throw distance from the District Library. The small library even has 1396 members of them 350 members take books regularly. They read mostly fictions. This small library located on the 1st floor of the Municipal building have 9136 books at the moment. 10 to 13 people came daily to borrow books. The library will very soon be shifted to their new building for which the RRRF granted `15 Lakh. The library has a computer but not in working order the day I visited the library. This is, like any other Govt. department, a gadget once go out of order takes months to bring them back to order.

Rural libraries in Howrah, Hooghly and North 24-Parganas District are very old and are rich in collection of books. Once they had good readership. At that time they were run by NGO and many would not get Govt. aid. They were managed by voluntary labours. I was raised in one of such library-rich villages in North 24-Parganas. In my village, under Gobardanga Municipality (population during the pre partition day was 27000) had two big and many other miniscule satellite libraries built entirely on peoples initiatives. Those old small libraries folded up long ago for various reasons but the two big libraries at my time. Baradakanta Pathagar and
Kali Das Smriti Pathagar later opted for sponsorship and are now functioning in their own buildings. **Baradakanta Pathagar.** During the fifty’s Baradakanta Pathagar used to have atleast 20 daily borrowers of books. In 2013 the number of daily borrowers have come down to 6 on average. Meanwhile, the number of population of Gobardanga Municipal area has gone up 5 times. There was only one High School for boys two for Girls during the fifties. Now there are 4 boys schools and 3 girls High Schools. Yet the number of library readers have slumped down miserably.

But all said and done the sponsorship has somehow saved rural libraries from extinction. By and large peoples initiatives and support behind libraries are gone. Even a sponsored library election in every two years fail to raise much wave in village life comparing to a school election. Local politics guide both elections. But the local influentials do not take library election as a major political issue of their socio political life. I have seen at Vidyanagar (South 24-Parganas) the young boys and girls in couples would make the park adjacent to the District library as their rendezvous after the dusk, but they would never enter into the library building for browsing books or to read that are open till 8’O clock. It is a lame excuse to blame the study schedule or exam pressure for youths apathy of library. Rural children are more relaxed comparing to their town counter parts. Library facilities now have expanded over the years. The infrastructural facilities are now better. Yet present generation youth could not be made interested in
visiting public libraries. Many rural libraries have now shifted to their own concrete building. Many libraries used to have their own building from the beginning. The sponsorship now has ensured their daily opening schedule and in addition new stock of depository. In my young days village libraries used to work even in one room dingy rented house. There was no reading room facilities, no electricity. Notwithstanding the readers would eagerly wait for new arrivals. Because they were only interested in book only. Now books go on begging for readers. Thousands of books remain untouched could be ascertained from their blank issue – slip.

**Libraries on the fringes:**

Once the public library movement used to flow in veins of a of Bengali educated middle class youth. Wherever they would go, even for temporary employment or for permanent settlement would build up there a club cum library. Bengali libraries were set up in Bihar, U.P, Delhi, Mumbai wherever the previous generation Bengalee middle class had settled. I saw one of those such rich Bengali libraries Binapani Club Library crumbling down at Darbhanga town. Once a rich library at Bangalitola, the library closed down during the eighties with huge rare books and magazines. The books were being stolen or sold out as waste papers as the old generation died and the next generation was not simply interested in libraries. They had their education in English schools and could not read and write Bengali. The old Bengali medium schools had virtually turned into Hindi Medium
schools. The present generation resident Bengalees outside Bengal had no root into their own language and literature. They speak Bengali but are unable to read. I would like to give another instance. It is interesting from a sociological view points that once building a public library became integrated with Bengali mind-set as a part of culture. It became a religion to help a public library. In Kolkata, when the thousands of uprooted Bengali families from the then East Pakistan came for rehabilitation, a large group settled themselves in a vast stretch of forcibly occupied land in the Southern fringe of Calcutta. Within no time they set up schools for their wards and a club cum public library for their own young generation. In course of time their Jhupris turned into a beautiful satellite township with all amenities of modern life. The temporary huts gave way to beautiful urban houses. Their private libraries were sponsored by the government and turned into a full fledged public library, managed by the locals but other expenses were borne by the Government. The RRR Library Foundation also came forward to help those libraries. The Regent Estate Association Library is a typical example of such library housed in Associations building at the spacious ground floor. The library was built late – in 1971 and was sponsored in 1982. But Bapuji Nagar Public Library was set up in 1950 within 3 years of partition. Which has registered members of 218. The library is now attended by atleast 14 to 15 members including 7 – 8 children on every working day. The present library once was started in a temporary shed, at
that time the refugees used to live in hutm-ents but never forgot to allot 3 cottah land for the social club and library. The librarian now who is a Govt. Staff told me that in the past the library had 350 members of them 45% would take books. Now both membership and books borrowers have come down from 350 to 218 and only 15% of them would borrow books for reading at home. The Issue-Register of Bapuji Nagar Library showed the book transaction frequency for March 2013 as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Number of persons Issued books</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>01.03.2013</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>02.03.2013</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>06.03.2013</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>08.03.2013</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Books issued were mostly fictions. Out of 27 books. Issued on different dates the nature of books would reveal the test of the readers.

- Single Novel: 3
- Story collection: 4
- Collected Detective Stories: 2
- Ghost stories: 3
- Children’s book: 5
- Collection of Novels: 3
- Travelogue: 1
- Horror stories: 1
- Collection of all writings by Fictions by eminent authors: 5
In the above list only one book by Tagore was issued. That was GORA. Readers issued mostly the anthologies instead of one single thin book. The readers prefer tomes than single book. Children prefer detective stories and Ghost story collections. Only one travel book was issued that was on Rome by Sanku Maharaj.

**Regent Estate Association Library** located in an affluent neighbourhood would issue 12 books a day on average. Some times it reached 16. Rammohun Roy Library Foundation provided book racks. The library had 13000 books and magazines. Readers preferred to read novels, Travel books and some creative essays. With the change in socio cultural ambient, the English medium students want English Books. They are not comfortable with their mother tongue. But there is a practical problem to buy English books as for sponsored libraries their price is high and could not be met with their limited book purchase budget. So more the increase in English medium schools less the young readers more and more. This is going to be the order of the day especially for big cities where every year the parents are preferring English mediated education for their children.

**Kolkata Metropolitan Library: A lost paradise:**

A visit to Kolkata Metropolitan Library will reveal not only the cultural and intellectual poverty of the City of Kolkata but also utter bankruptcy of idea and failure to rise to the occasion.
The beautiful Town Library at 2, Ballygunge Park Road, at the most posh locality hardly gets 2 book borrowers a day and bears almost a desolate look. Occupying two spacious floors in a multistoried modern building the library has considerably a valuable collections of books. Most of the modern Bengali Books are available here (total books 42,102). There are a number of periodical collection. A good comfortable reading room. But only regrettable part is the lack of any planning to make the library known to the public. As the library is not on a main road and housed in a flat, general people are unaware of its existence. There is no reason why the South Calcuttan’s the most enlightened citizens showed apathy to a library. Even where two big public libraries Ballygunge Institute and Ramkrishna Mission Institute of Culture are functioning successfully. What makes the Metropolitan Library suffer so severely. The shoe definitely pinches somewhere. The spokesmen of the library blamed the neighbourhood which was cosmopolitan and having no reading culture. But a metropolitan library is not a neighbourhood library, it is a library for the entire City and locationwise it is centrally located. The population is cosmopolitan but there was a sizeable educated middle class Bengali population around. Moreover the library has a good English stock for cosmopolitan residents too.

**Silence is always not golden**

The real story is, the library since its shift from Darga Road had not been given publicity to people. Even people were not
kept informed of its existence. Had it been situated on the main Road and a big signboard could have aroused curiosity of millions of passers by. Logistically the library was missing public glare. Established in 1980 at Darga Road, Metropolitan Library is a full fledged Govt. Library, a substitute for a District library in Kolkata to present to the reading public a stock of wider choice of books, a comfortable ambience and reader - friendly library staff to work with the library. The Metropolitan library was shifted from its earlier premises at Darge Road to present address at Ballygunge. Which is hardly 3 km away. Moreover the present area is more spacious and well furnished. But the only disadvantage is that unlike Darga Road the present Metropolitan Library building is little off from the main road and is difficult to locate for the new comers. The authorities neither would put up a big sign board on the main road with direction, nor would give any publicity informing about resources and facilities of the libraries for people at large. There is no promotional campaign ever taken place for libraries. The Metropolitan Library at least could have held a number of press meets on appropriate occasions to inform people that at least there is a public library in a prime location open to public for reading 48000 books in Bengali, Hindi and English.

There is also a vicious circle created due to low attendance of readers. The directorate sets aside all development plans for the library. Out of 20 sanctioned post only 9 staff are working. There are only one library assistant. Thanks God, if
the reading room would be full there would have been no service providers. The library has no budget to buy latest editions of competitive examination books. Their demand for more appropriate student friendly books could not be made. As a result of that student readers were opting out. The library was not able to undertake indexing works. They could not take up binding work of old torn out books more than ` 8,000 per year. The library at present has not a single typist, nor the vacant posts of one UD, LD and Peon were filled up yet. From Balurghat to Ballygunge my quest to find out the causes behind the fall in readership as well as sharp decline in peoples interest could be accounted by the simple apathy of the higher authorities who are in-charge of running the show. This is fact accompli that public library’s in their present traditional form are trying hard to keep their existence. But how long they could sustain it out of 176 posts 64 posts are allowed to keep vacant for years. The 1979 library Act has undoubtedly kept the public libraries alive. Had not Government taken over the financial burden of sponsored libraries many of them would have died their premature deaths. But many sponsored libraries are kept alive artificially.

This is evident from the present state of moribund conditions both the sponsored and non sponsored libraries now suffer from. The library Act acted as live saving Drug in cases of sponsored library but mere existence is not life. Mere storage of books is not a library. A library is what library does. The
main purpose of library is to create readers among the masses. My visit to different types and categories would reveal that public libraries are no more epicenter of socio cultural attraction, their importance is not felt by the society.

### Present status of 8 District libraries 2013

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of the libraries</th>
<th>Total members</th>
<th>Monthly average borrowers of books per day</th>
<th>Total No. of books in library</th>
<th>Total grant in aid received</th>
<th>Nature of borrowing</th>
<th>Annual budget for book purchase</th>
<th>Average daily attendance in reading room</th>
<th>No. of beneficiaries from reading room</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1) Rama-krishna Mission Boy's Home District Library, North 24-Parganas</td>
<td>3,852</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>55,031</td>
<td>From State Gov. <code>78,375/- Central Gov.</code> 78,375 2012-13 (upto Feb'2013)</td>
<td>44.55% 55.45%</td>
<td>60,000</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>People get job=28 People got Ph.D.=04 People wrote books on the basis of the materials of library=10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2) District Library, Midnapur Paschim Medinipur</td>
<td>3985</td>
<td>40 – 60</td>
<td>65,481</td>
<td>From State Gov. ` 97,125/- (2012-13)</td>
<td>12% 68%</td>
<td>40,000/-</td>
<td>160</td>
<td>Research Scholars=15 People got job=85 People got Ph.D. = 5 people wrote books=50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3) District Library, Tamluk, Purba Medinipur</td>
<td>799</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>57,092</td>
<td>State Gov. <code>16,72,021/- Central Gov.</code> 49,900/- (2011-12)</td>
<td>40% 60%</td>
<td>52,000/-</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>Research Scholars-25 People got job-15 People wrote books-5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4) Birbhum District Library</td>
<td>8,520</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>66,565</td>
<td>State Gov. <code>2,07,300/- Central Gov.</code> 5,87,796/- RRRLF ` 2,29,311/-</td>
<td>50% 50%</td>
<td>Not mentioned</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>Not informed to the library</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

214
| 5) District Library, Purulia | 6.476 | 32 | 46,999 | State Govt. ` 65,25,134/- Central Govt. ` 1,50,000/- (from 2007-08 to 20011-12) | 60% | 40% | 60,000/- | 83 | People got Ph.D. – 2 People got jobs – 2 People wrote books on the basis of the materials of the library – 3 |
| 6) District Library, Jalpaiguri | 1500 | 70 | 61000 | State Govt. ` 4,63,350/- | 80% | 20% | 50,000/- | Not mentioned | People got Ph.D. – 3 People got jobs – 24 |
| 7) North Bengal State Library Cooch Behar | 12,420 | 69 | 90,000 | State Govt. ` 26,13,740/- (2012 – 13) | 30% | 70% | 1,10,000/- | 79 | People got Ph.D. – 30 People got jobs – 150 |
| 8) State Central Library, Itanagar, Arunachal Pradesh | 525 | 35 | 57,914 | State Govt. ` 83,69,000/- Central Govt. ` 12,00,000/- (2012 –13) | 10% | 90% | 5,00,000/- | 52 | Not informed to the library. |
The Status of West Bengal libraries.
Types of books issued to the readers
by Rammohun Library,
at Raja Rammohun Roy Road
During 2011. From May to August

**TABLE – 1**
2011 – MAY – AUGUST

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Novel &amp; fiction :</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Bengali literature :</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Biographical books :</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Religious books :</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Tagore literature :</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Political books :</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Travel books :</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Bengali Juvenile books :</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>English Juvenile books :</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Historical books:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Scientific books :</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Translated books :</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Durga Puja books :</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Drama :</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Poems :</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Philosophical books :</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>English fiction :</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Other English books :</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table No. 2

Who uses Public Libraries most

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mostly used by</th>
<th>Number of Public Libraries Surveyed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Students</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>House wives</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retired persons</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service holders</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professionals</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>24 libraries</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In 24 sponsored libraries surveyed in West Bengal I found the students are the maximum users of libraries. In 8 libraries, they topped the list. But they are not necessarily reader of general books. They are maximum readers of text books.

Housewives come into the next position. They are the highest readers in 7 libraries. They read mostly novels and would prefer to issue tome like collections, omnibus etc.

Retired persons top the list among readers in 5 libraries. They preferably take religious books and creative essays.

Table – 3

Preference of books of some authors are in demand by the borrowers. Given in order of priority.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Author</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

217
* This survey is based as many as 6 Birbhum Rural Libraries. Tagore’s readership position comes at last six. As a poet of their own district, the general library members would seldom issue a Tagore book.

**Table – 4**

Among the library users the presence of teachers and professionals like doctors, lawyers, engineers is minimum. In only one library professionals top the list.

Subjectwise demand of books in rural libraries. Librarywise preference is given below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of books</th>
<th>Preferred by a number of libraries</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Novels</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Short stories</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poetry</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Reference books : 1
Books on knowledge : 1

Popular Novels still have highest choice. Short stories (collection of best stories or anthology) come second. Poetry gets the highest demand in only one library. Reference books and Books of knowledge get preference in one library for each one.

Table – 5

Trend of daily issuance of books at Yuba Sangha Library – Sree Colony, Kolkata.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Number of books issued</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>11.03.2013</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.03.2013</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.03.2013</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14.03.2013</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

27 persons on average.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl. No.</th>
<th>District</th>
<th>Govt. sponsored libraries</th>
<th>Number of Libraries without Telephone</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>North 24-Parganas</td>
<td>225</td>
<td>110</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>South 24-Parganas</td>
<td>157</td>
<td>131</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>North Dinajpur</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>South Dinajpur</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Kolkata</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Coochbehar</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>103</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Jalpaiguri</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Darjeeling (Gorkha Hill Concil)</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Darjeeling (Siliguri Mohakuma Parishad)</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Nadia</td>
<td>111</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Paschim Medinipur</td>
<td>158</td>
<td>129</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Purba Medinipur</td>
<td>122</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Purulia</td>
<td>118</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Burdwan</td>
<td>212</td>
<td>187</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Bankura</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>118</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Birbhum</td>
<td>124</td>
<td>119</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Malda</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Murshidabad</td>
<td>159</td>
<td>134</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Howrah</td>
<td>137</td>
<td>129</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Hooghly</td>
<td>159</td>
<td>125</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chapter – VIII

Raja Ram Mohun Roy Library Foundation : A sentinel of the Movement.

Raja Rammohun Roy Library Foundation is a landmark in the history of Library Movement in India.

The launching of Raja Rammohun Roy Library Foundation (RRRLF) in 1972 on the occasion of the bicentenary of the harbinger of the Bengal Renaissance Movement is a phenomenon in Indian history. The object of the RRRLF was chiefly to fund the public libraries in India but the RRRLF is not a mere Funding Agency. Like other Central Govt. departments the Ministry of Culture could directly allocate grant-in-aids to the states to fulfil its statutory obligation. Why an autonomous organization was created to undertake a routine governmental duty, that is allocation and disbursement of fund. It had some philosophy behind. The idea behind associating the name of Raja Rammohun Roy with an exclusive Govt. organization was a well conceived thought to insulate a national sentiment as well as most appropriately to pay homage to a great soul of India Raja Rammohun Roy Library Foundation is apparently a funding Agency for Public Library in India but with a difference. The Ministry of Culture judiciously thought the Raja’s bicentenary should be commemorated in a different way. It would not be a time serving routine affair but to give a permanent nature to remain ever connected with India of today and tomorrow. So
the most vital aspect of nation building – the library development was linked to Raja’s memory that would remind the nation the contribution of the Raja for the nation we live today. He was the first man founded the plinth of a nation upon which we build up edifice of today. Rammohun engineered a liberal thought process based on rationality and logic. He argued strongly in favour of liberating the soul with reason and compassion. He was the harbinger of Renaissance India. Tagore was his ardent follower. Both Rammohun and Tagore pleaded for liberal education, when Tagore stepped into his shoes - Indian indigenous education system had taken a shape and he (Tagore) felt for the need of public library movement. Within four years of the demise of Raja Rammohun Roy in Bristol the first public library was started in Calcutta in 1836. Tagores grandfather Prince Dwaraka Nath Tagore was its first trustee. His grandson inherited his passion for public library. Rammohun also inspired Tagore’s father Debendra Nath to step into his religious philosophy. Debendranath founded the Bramha Samaj, the religious institution, on the basis of the Rajas Spiritual Philosophy.

The Role of Raja Rammohun Roy

Library Foundation

The growth and development of the public library movement in India is erratic and haphazard. Neither the Govt. of India nor any State Govt. has clearly de-marketed any specific policies on libraries. As education is under the concurrent list, the Govt. of India has never interfered with the day to day
administration of public libraries, except allotting funds for the
growth and development through the RRRLF. The Foundation
has definitely a clout over the library directorates of each
state. But has never put its weight on policy framing.

Nearly 50% Indian States are yet to enact library laws to
provide better infrastructure and a systematic growth of
public libraries. Enactment of library laws would have
provided to other libraries more autonomy to the library
administration and ensure uniformity and parity in pay scale
for the library staff. The libraries would have been brought
under better administrative control. Even the states enacted
library laws would vary in nature of improvement. Many
states are in different stages of implementation. The concept
of public library legislation gives credence to the principle that
a public library is an integral part of education and should be
looked upon with equal seriousness by the governments as
mainstream education. So that its benefit of library could be
diffused to the maximum number of people for the systematic
growth and development of public libraries. This pious
objective calls for a bound of committed library staff. At the
same time public libraries once built up at private initiative
either out of commitment or by sheer impulse must be
protected from decay. With the change of time the traditional
private patronage to the public library cause is rapidly
withering away at an alarming rate. Unless steady financial
support is ensured the huge infrastructure of the public
libraries once built up, by generous and committed people
would collapse like a pack of cards. Every state built a public library infrastructure from non-government resources. Notwithstanding most of them are already in a decadent stage. Enactment of library law would have taken care of the entire crumbing public library system to be run by States. Although some States have not enacted any suitable public library legislation but have introduced sponsored libraries and an other kind of library services like aided libraries run by voluntary organizations. In some States like Himachal Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, where the rural libraries are yet to take shape some kind of alternative agencies have been created to fill up the gap. Madhya Pradesh Rajiv Gandhi Sikhsha Mission is one of its examples that maintains a number of public library chain as a part of continuing education programme for their rural clientele. Govt. of India also comes in with resources for serving the rural youths through Nehru Yuvak Kendras. The RRRLF also extended assistance to all types of organization for public library. It is not possible for a Government of India agency like RRRLF to cope up with the challenges without State support. Raja Rammohun Roy, a crusader of social justice pleaded for gender equality and liberation of women and to ensure absolute freedom of thought. The RRRLF is now the only national nodal agency under Government of India for coordinating, monitoring and developing public libraries. It is a huge task to keep eye on 32,405 libraries in India. With the limited staff unless RRRLF is decentralized (atleast every
State should have an office of RRRLF). It is not possible to monitor the activities of the libraries in the states. Besides RRRLF has other additional charges as an agency of the Ministry of Culture to fund and supervise a number of cultural programmes in the states.

**Some Practical Difficulties**

Another constant problem the RRRLF is facing chronicle non-compliance of financial norms and others statutory obligations by some client State governments. The RRRLF is solely depended on State Govt. for speedy implementation of its programmes. It is not always smooth and easy to obtain the matching grant from the State Govts against RRRLF library development projects. According to 2011 – 12 report from the RRRLF as many as eight Indian States have not participated in the matching assistance programme pertaining to supply of books, furnitures and holding seminars. This recurrent reluctance of the States to share with RRRLF’s library development programmes ultimately tells upon the progress of the public library movement. Some states although are working in close cooperation and ultimately enriching themselves. There are many states who do not comply with the utilization certificates on time against expenditure of grant allocation. Grantee institutions at times would fail to acknowledge RRRLF book grants inspite of repeated reminders. I can cite at least one instance where some questionnaires on utilization of library by the readers were sent by the RRRLF on behalf of the Tagore researcher
project to all district libraries. Only 8 out of 18 district libraries replied. After having studied the growth and development of public libraries in India I am convinced that unless a central library Act is legislated by the parliament and ratified by the states, disparity and anomaly in growth and development of public libraries will continue to prevail. It will also ease the way of modernising public libraries at par with the global trend. The problems pose challenges to the growth of library today are manifold like apathy, reluctance, lack of seriousness, nonchalant bureaucratic attitude etc. They definitely deter the growth of public library movement in India. As we are more concerned with West Bengal and the north-east we focus on these region specially.

North-east has already carved out a special region in Indian map for its prolonged turmoil and insurgency and its great potential for holistic development in education, culture and economy.

So RRRLF sanctions a special grant of ` 219.12 Lacs during the first year of the 11th Five Year Plan in addition to the planned grant stepped up to ` 2419.12. North-eastern States received from various State Governments as much as ` 1212.37 Lac. In the 2nd year of 11th Five Year Plan the RRRLF received 3000 lac including special grant of 350 lac. Various State Govt’s contributions reached ` 1524.76 lac. In the 3rd year of 11th Plan RRRLF received from the Govt. of India a sum of ` 3500 lac including special grant to North-eastern States. Various State Govts also contributed ` 1650.89 lac. In the 4th year of
the 11th Plan equal amount was disbursed (Details of the North-eastern libraries, see separate chapters).

So far financial sanctions are concerned Govt. assistance to the public libraries has almost been double in last 40 years. For the genuine development of the library RRRLF has hardly turned down any State project. Rather a number of public libraries would not submit any project at all. I visited West Bengal, Assam, Mizoram and Tripura and noticed that many libraries were yet to submit their first development plan. We shall keep in mind that success of a library depends more on proper and larger utilization of services by the readers. Books are the major attraction of a library. The librarians, in all places I visited complained about not getting adequate number of books not only that readable books but new books. For instance West Bengal Central Library with a huge infrastructure is starving for want of new arrivals. Most of the books come to the library under Books Act which a publisher is obligated to submit to Registrar of Books under the law. The publishers take their own time to submit their publications and when those books are dispatched to central library they usually wait for another year for cataloguing ultimately when those books are ultimately placed in the shelves it has already passed three years. In Central Library Kolkata 30 people on average turn up daily to renew their books. In absence of new books members are to be satisfied with only old books. People are generally choosy in book selections. They are selective. For any current book an
ardent reader has to hop any private library or go to College Street market for purchase. Raja Rammohun Roy Foundation grant of books take also time to reach from lips to cup to lip and selected books dispatched to libraries may not suitable for readers’ tastes. Many complained to me during visits to libraries that a certain percentage of Hindi books are sent to the libraries where there is no Hindi knowing reader. There is a positive suggestion that book selection committee must be represented by user of libraries. Librarians are the experts who are familiar with readers taste. There is a system in many libraries to purchase books from readers’ suggested list. But the selection committee never include readers’. There are allegations that books are selected under so many considerations on the basis of influence of individual publishers. The authorities have always denied those allegations but the shelves of public libraries are full with a large number of unused books. They unnecessary occupy space. Many bestselling books do not get place in public library to prove Gresham’s law bad money drives away the good money.

It is no denying the fact that without the intervention of RRRLF, the public libraries of India would have been in worse economic condition. The Foundation has expended to the tune of ` 60,18,31,727/- during 2011 – 12 under different heads. As many as 35 states of India received ` 23,57,56,832.60 during that year States received matching grant under three schemes – 50:50, 40:60, 10:90. Under
10:90 scheme a State has to give only 10% the rest is taken care of by RRRLF. But it is more interesting to note that large number of states have not applied for this facility of matching grants. As many as 25 States even did not accept 90:10 grant. That means those States were not prepared to bear even mere 10% of the project share. Only 8 states joined under 50:50 schemes. 12 States entered 40:60 schemes and only 8 states participated in 10:90 matching grant scheme. The state of West Bengal joined 50:50 projects for which the state spent ` 2.26 crore during 2011-12.

**Contribution of Raja Rammohun Roy Library Foundation to the District Libraries:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of the District Libraries:</th>
<th>No. of Books received from RRRLF for the year 2011-12, 2012 – 13:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 1) Ramakrishna Mission Boy’s Home District Library. | local language – 38  
English – 16 |
| 2) District Library, Midnapore, Paschim Medinipur. | Total : 2630+500 non Access. |
| 3) District Library, Tamluk Purba Medinipur | 2011-12 2012-13  
Local Language  
Hindi : 761 202  
English : 362 213 |
| 4) Birbhum District Library | Local Language 108 34  
Hindi : 1040 218  
English : 440 337 |
5) District Library
Purulia
2011 – 12 : Total Books – 503
2012 – 13 : Total Books – 606

6) District Library
Jalpaiguri
Total Books – 2639

7) North Bengal State Library, Cooch Behar

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language</th>
<th>2011-12</th>
<th>2012-13</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bengali</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hindi</td>
<td>872</td>
<td>9986</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>324</td>
<td>339</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

8) State Central Library
Itanagar, Arunachal Pradesh.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language</th>
<th>2011-12</th>
<th>2012-13</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hindi</td>
<td>225</td>
<td>315</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>785</td>
<td>995</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Some Suggestions for Raja Rammohun Roy Library Foundation for rendering better service

1) Insulating as many as 32405 libraries from Kashmir to Kanyakumari, Sunderban to Surat with money materials and guidance is a huge gigantic task for one centralised Agency. It is wonder how the RRRLF is managing the task with a moderate workforce. During the 11th Five Year Plan (2007 – 12) the RRRLF spend about ` 2419.12. Besides Plan grant the RRRLF received additional ` 1650.89 lakh grants from the State Governments. This huge money the RRRLF has to judiciously disburse among the 35 States and Union Territories to accelerate the library movement. Had there not been the RRRLF many sponsored libraries would have been dispensed with infrastructural development.
2) For a Federal Country like India where the States and the Union Territories are not always in tandem and would differ sharply on the priorities and methods of development, the Central Funding Agencies cannot directly fund any state project. States are not equally receptive. As a result the matching assistants programs vary from States to State. Although the majority of the States / Union Territories participate in the assistance programme pertaining to supply of books, furniture and organization of seminars, the quantum of matching assistance varies from State to State, not keeping in conformity with population. Till few States opt out RRRLF assistance and allow to maintain statuesque keeping their library movement fractured. Public libraries are different from any physical or material development of a country that can be imposed by the state. Infrastructural development like road, bridge, transport, electricity could exclusively be initiated by government without much public involvement. But a library is not an infrastructure alone. Books are not to be kept stored, even catalogued scientifically in a beautiful building but with few readers. Book like money is what book does. Book must be read by readers for cognitive and intellectual development that motivates a reader to participate in a democratic process. With the slump of library movement, the debase culture is bound to overtake a society. So public library is a continuous movement to make people conscious and aware of the importance of library. A library is an extension of schooling system, an integral part of mass education. Rammohun
Library Foundation can play an unique role in this scenario by engineering a massive socio cultural movement in favour of public library. The Union Health Ministry and the Ministry of Social Justice are the glaring example of leading a successful communication programme pertaining to a massive Public Health and Family Welfare campaign. They have been able to sensitise individual about the need of Planned family, the positive aspect of reproductive health and the value of girl child. Rammohun Foundation should give top priority to such campaign programmes and create a socio cultural awareness about the value of public among the people.

Firstly motivate the NGOs at grass root level by organizing numerous small seminars and training workshops at grass root level. So that the message of library’s role in ‘man making’ (as Swami Vivekananda Conceived the Phrase as Mission of education) could be spread among every individual especially among the guardians of school going children who are gradually becoming stumbling block to their wards’ reading desire anything beyond text books. Unless there is a social pressure, the State Governments wont feel that library development should go in tandem with the school development.

**Library – Extension Education**

3) For the above purpose the RRRLF should set up a permanent training school to train up library extension education. The librarians must undergo some relevant
orientation programmes where they will be educated mainly how to harness reading habit in a community. If people do not come to library, library should be taken to the people by barefoot librarians or social workers. There should be a training programme on ‘Library Communication’. How local libraries can publish wall papers and small bulletins or bill boards to disseminate library activities. Names of prolific readers (who read maximum number of books in a year) will be declared for each library as – ‘Best reader of the year’. There may be competitions on writing about the extract of a famous book, to quote quotable quotes from the classics, some notes about the author and his/her book. If there is no sufficient fund some motivational messages pertaining to books could be written on a black board and could be displayed in full view of the readers. These are all possible propositions and I have seen being successfully operated in an old Malda sponsored library. The entire library has taken resemblance of an information centre centering literatures. There are list of popular authors, photographs, date of birth, all necessary information about the State, District and Town. Readers meet take place at regular intervals. The entire project is the exclusive innovation of the librarian who displayed initiative and creativity. This attempt so far remains, - unrewarded by the authorities, yet could be improved and extended if the RRRLF encourages such innovations in library promotions and arrange for awards. During my visit to different libraries in West Bengal and the N.
Eastern States, I have candidly discussed with the library staff about the problems the libraries are facing. Many librarians exuded ideas and professionalism and are keen to regenerate the library movement and wait for proper guidance. Many libraries are run by Library Assistants without adequate training as a stop gap arrangements due to the staff shortage. A sense of frustration about the entire library movement pervades the mind set of many library staff and act as demotivational force. The RRRLF can take up the reins of leadership and motivate the staff even not coming into the fore front of the stage. Motivation, Training and providing Media Communication come within the domain of an agency which is held responsible for the improvement of public library. If comes very much under its domain to see that the huge fund it releases is properly utilized or not. If utilized whether yields desired result.

4) The only grievance I have heard to have been raised against the Foundation by a large number of libraries with regard to book selection and distribution. The first objection I have already mentioned that the allocation of Hindi books to a number of libraries. The persons in-charge of book allocations may have wrong impression that Malda and South Dinajpur District have adequate number of takers of Hindi and Urdu books. Even a cosmopolitan district town Howrah has no Hindi reader. Hindi books distributed indiscriminately for West Bengal libraries are dumped unused while other Hindi speaking states may be starving for books. A number of
publishers complain that books submitted to the Foundation year after year by them have never been selected. It is my suggestions some librarians and even a representatives from the users of library by special invitation should be called to the committee to suggest the nature of books the readers would like.

Instead of submission of books directly, a descriptive catalogue of recent publications could be asked from the publishers at the primary stage. Then the committee should mark the books according to the priority. Similarly the district libraries should be invited to send their list. Books selected from the lists would be asked to send for trial selection. Book selection by the RRRLF must be complete by January to include books published during the last year calendar and all selected book lists must be dispatched to the beneficiary libraries to tick (✓) mark books within the sanctioned amount against the library. The libraries must have exclusive say in selecting books for their renders. The RRRLF should only be ensured that books are selected only from their approved list and within the sanctioned amount only then the RRRLF would dispatch books. It is upto the library to choose the face value and quality of books. The timing is also important that libraries are obliged to buy some books from the Book Fares. It was found that books were duplicated for being two sources of purchase. The RRRLF has no idea whether the same book allotted to a particular library has already been purchased from the Book Fare or from other resources. So books should
not be dispatched to a library unless they select books from the RRRLF selected list.

The RRRLF has its own library at its Central Office with a rich collection. But who are the users of the library? The library is scattered due to space problem. The society which is financing over 32405 libraries in India for their development has not been able to build its own model library. The library must be relocated under one roof with full digitization and connectivity. There should be sufficient number of e-books.

The library would not only be a model library for research in information science but would be used as a training library for existing librarians. This can be immediately converted to a National Training Centre for librarians and could be made more vibrant, more useful. At present the valuable collection of the libraries remain mostly unused awaiting for a research scholar. This precious facilities should be used in a more meaningful way.

5) The RRRLF is a huge national organization and its scope is likely to be extended further. Taking in view of its vast network and responsibility the number of regional offices must have State Field Officers for each State to monitor and assist the states to rejuvenate the public library movement. The Head Office in Kolkata badly needs a communication wing to keep liaison with the Media and the district libraries to motivate them develop different public awareness programmes. The should have a budget to make
documentaries, to educative short video films to encourage school children to grow reading habits, the communication department can organize quiz on book reading and essay competitions motivating youths read more books to participate in competitions to win attractive prizes, may introduce some merit scholarships. In a word Raja Rammohun Roy Library Foundation must fulfil the Rajas dream of a silent socio-cultural revolution through intellectual awakening. To serve the basic needs of the modern society library is the most suitable medium. Education, research, Information, aesthetic appreciation and recreation all could collectively be served by one single institution the public library.

As our modern society becomes more diverse and complex, more independent, autonomous and tends to encourage high expectation of mass and therein pays value to individual uplift, only public library can generate that modern value. The RRRLFs creation was to serve that Pious wish of Raja Rammohun Roy. No stone should be unturned to fulfil that wish. The Foundation has so far proved its mettle to discharge their complex and challenging duties but more challenges are ahead.
Chapter - IX

The public libraries and the public:

Experience with the North-East.

After centuries of oppression, deprivation & isolation from the rest of India, followed by a long spell of insurgency the northeastern states are now on the throes of restoration both politically and culturally. In this restoration process libraries have special role to play.

This region represented by as many as seven strategically important states of India: Arunachal, Assam, Tripura, Mizoram, Meghalaya, Nagaland and Sikkim (known as Seven Sisters) is the abode of 70 million people. Its untapped human and natural resources are immeasurable yet the vast land mass remained neglected from the time immemorial. The focus of attention to the under development of the NE states was first paid in 1971 with the enactment of the NE Council Act to address their multiple problems. Consequently a large number of government and non-government agencies were created to be engaged in every possible way to uplift this region. They are mostly involved in addressing the economic and industrial issues, while the police and military are engaged to combat the insurgents using bullets against bullets. Although anti-insurgency campaigns succeeded in Tripura, peace in Mizoram was brought only through an accord. In Manipur Army deployment created no solution and it continues to remain counter productive till to day. In other
turmoiled states like Meghalaya and Assan insurgency however is slowly dying its natural death.

Another state-Nagaland is maintaining a status quo where Govt. of India and the two warring groups of insurgents are buying time for the final resolution for a lasting peace.

In the North east neither in the peace process nor in the activities of development, the roles of book promotion and readership generation were given due importance. The library movement remained a routine departmental work of the government who hardly considered that libraries could take equal lead in socio economic and cultural change for the region.

Under these circumstances who will make the authorities realize that books have latent motivational component both for war and peace. We read books for inspiration, motivation and knowledge / consciousness. Books can inculcate values among their readers like rationality and wisdom. In our field studies many readers candidly admitted that books had made them more integrated, broad minded and objective in their outlook. Books made them self-reliant, helped in discovery of self and made one a more complete human being.

So the role of library for an emerging educated population in the NE is more significant to create informed and conscious citizenery. There is an old saying that opening up more and more libraries would reduce the number of prisons, police stations and courts of law. In a library oriented society books
would always replace bullets. Had the philosophy of library been taken in true spirit, the public libraries in the North-east would have been given equal weightage with the law and order system. So an effective library movement is the need of the hour in the NE.

In all north-eastern states the Govt. sponsored Public library network is working alongside the old NGO run library system. It is relevant to mention that only two of the seven states in the NE have enacted a library law. These two states are Manipur and Mizoram. Though Mizoram passed a law but is yet to enforce it. For want of institutional support the book industries in small states did not sufficiently grow to keep pace with other material developments. The state funds for library expansion were limited and all libraries in the NE are largely solely dependent on R.R.R.L.F. for major infrastructural support.

Restoration of book reading habit or providing more inputs to habitual readers tend to usher in a new social order. Conscious people feel the need for constant updating of their knowledge base and meet their regular enquiries through books. It helps them form rational and pragmatic mind sets, which is a pre-condition for generating democratic temperament.

Many book readers agreed that reading habit tends to inculcate a Power of rational judgement within and lead to forming a sense of unity. Books have taught them endurance.
and tolerance as well as capacity to appreciate peace and rule of law.

After a lapse of long time, the present decade of the N.E. is marked with mostly incident-free time and according to many is the apt time too for revamping the society. To achieve this spirit library movement must be given its due importance in this post insurgency socio cultural ambience. Never had there been such a congenial atmosphere for the promotion of book reading for the common people than the present period. If book reading habit does not reach its optimum peak today societies may be deprived of a golden opportunity for speedy social uplift.

**First hand experience**

The author has been visiting through the north-eastern states for the last five decades and saw the emergence of several states on the basis of ethnic aspirations. The statehood no doubt boosted up their economic uplift and individual moral and self esteem. The author also spent nearly 4 years in Assam at a stretch in connection with a university assignment. He further visited three states Assam, Mizoram and Tripura under the Tagore Fellowship Scheme to study library’s role to accelerate socio cultural change.

What is most unique for the north-eastern states is their incessant interest in achieving education. The N.E. states have so far very high literacy rates ranging from 64 percent to 83.49% therefore all the states are poised for a vibrant library
movement. All state capitals and big towns have good secondary schools. Shillong is already famous as a seat of learning. The North-east Hill University, one of the prestigious universities in the country turns out the best graduates every year. Another envious position the north-eastern states hold is to have central universities in each state. Assam has two of them besides having several state universities.

The university system provides more opportunities for in depth studies and research. Students are immensely benefited with its well equipped modern library system for which U.G.C. spends generously. The newly built central library within Aizwal University campus can comfortably match an international standard.

The central University system has been able to make the universities meeting ground between the cosmopolites and the localities giving more exposure to local students to the outer world. The universities keep the student community vibrant with cross cultural activities and keep the students abreast of the latest information of the outer world. Inspite of these huge infrastructure for liberal education to generate the spirit of enquiry, the system fails to promote the true spirit of University education. The onus may lie with the managers failing to operate the system or the inability of the recipients, not the system itself.

However the cultural boost up via University system tends to encourage students to read more books selectively with a
purpose either for gaining more exclusive knowledge or for brainstorming. Even compulsive reading for a University student may bear a positive effect. Unlike in one’s undergraduate days when the study could have been haphazard, erratic and examination oriented, the post graduate level studies tend to be analytical, exhaustive and research oriented. Even to score better marks a student needs to be a compulsive library user. Text books also combine many references. University education tends to nourish intellectual mind and provides adequate food for thought. Those who have not developed inclination to visit public Libraries, University system inculcates in him / her further reading urge and the public libraries then could be a complementary use for his or her complete intellectual pursuits. Reading no doubt generates values in a reader that integrates him / her with a bigger and broader system.

But a public library cannot be compared with the U.G.C. sponsored University Libraries. A very few percentage of population get the chance for university education and opportunities to use university libraries. A public library is the destination for the common man which caters to all kinds of people from a new literate to a research scholar. The public libraries cater to all kinds of tests and answers to divergent enquiries about all sorts of questions under the sun.

So in reality the public library truly serves the purpose of total regeneration of the masses. When common people under different pretext are reluctant to use a public library it
becomes an ominous sign for a society. The society must search for reason and should immediately plug the gap. In traditional states like Tripura and Assam once public library system had flourished but their glory is currently dwindling under some common reasons. The apathy towards library going hard cut library use but the role of the library authorities is more important. The authorities now-a-days fail to provide sufficient infrastructure for popularizing public libraries. A large number of public libraries do not have sufficient stock of books. Everywhere we were flooded with public complaints that many libraries are worn out, lacking in sufficient infrastructure such as reading room facilities and regular flow of new arrivals of important magazines and regular additions of books. There is dearth of adequate library staff. The special problem that the North-eastern states were facing massive loss of lives and damages of property. The irreparable loss was the insurgency destroyed reading habits. However some books are read under compulsion. Every library now finds regular users mostly in job seekers who come to read only job oriented books. Those who are readers by childhood habit come to libraries at regular intervals. Some children keep up their reading habits alive once developed at infancy through story telling by their elders. They use library up to a certain age. The presence of adult readers are few and far between. Before I describe my own experience of visiting three states of Assam, Tripura and Mizoram I must mention some salient issues regarding the intrinsic inseparability
between a library in a society and the bureaucratization of the system that undermines its importance.

**Intrinsic Yearning**

The intrinsic yearning of common people in the North-East is no doubt to live in lasting peace. But this aspiration can only be achieved by adopting some rational and human measures. It calls for proper leadership and building in all fields of life. The leadership must spring up in every individual by reforming their attitude and behaviour. The basic requirement calls for developing a sense of responsibility and the power of resilience that could only be achieved through objective knowledge. Some N-eastern states feel that they are deprived of their legitimate dues from the centre. The effect impedes their growth and development, but the term ‘development’ is taken in a limited sense. The challenges of the north-eastern states are manifold from socio economic development to restoration of lasting peace and amity. This is more a question of value building than a sheer economic gain. Economics may provide infrastructure, but only a sense of values among the users would accept those assets as national treasure and would pledge for its up keeping. Only a truly educated person can value a value.

Secondly no other ‘peaceful state’ in India could value peace more than Assam, Mizoram, Nagaland and Tripura. Even temporary peace came there at a huge cost of life. So ‘Peace’ is the most valuable word to them. Development is
understood by and large as economic development – more constructions, more food productions resulting in general affluence. The cultural aspect of development, - another correlated vital aspect of development is totally ignored.

**EMPHASIS ON HUMAN DEVELOPMENT**

For total development of any region the human development needs major emphasis. The development of reading habit among the citizenary to understand the cultural needs of human being is important to a region. The economic progress could only be sustainable if human beings are motivated to appreciate the difficulties, the individual and the society are facing or supposed to face in near future. A developed society can not survive without the support of the most educated, who are adequately aware of the interplay of culture with education. To achieve this end a massive library advocacy programme needs to be undertaken and as a follow up action. Library movement can only create a permanent socio-cultural space to improve the quality of human nature.

Restructuring of socio cultural base followed by reconstruction of economic and infrastructural needs calls for proper coordination. Otherwise the absence of basic amenities like electricity, road and basic medical facilities may prove the cultural development counter productive. A village school needs road and electricity as well as good teaching staff. As soon as literacy spreads it creates enormous space for further reading and information seeking. Information is a basic
ingredient for holistic development. Education generates awareness and consciousness for seeking further information to supplement the basic educational input to accelerate the change process. Even to upgrade the production structure and for optimum use of resource base the beneficiaries at the grass-root level must apply their mind to oversee the work of different work agencies. The Panchayati Raj itself is a unique human resource centre that is the only capable and competent authority to address socio cultural needs. So this democratic institution must appreciate the need for awareness for the sake of comprehensive development needs. The library is no doubt an extension of school and college education. It is such an important aspect in a society that if the library system works properly and can bring the educated and neo-literate mass under its fold it can immediately usher in a new era of cultural revolution in village life in a democratic way. It will be a unique silent revolution of changing human mind and thus aiming at a socio cultural changes in different tiers of the society.

**Revolution of Social Values**

A modern library provides enormous opportunities to involve its entire clientele to revolutionize the social values. Library can only change human mind by initiating its readers into the path of progress. With this back drop let me describe the status of library movement of 3 states – Mizoram, Tripura and Assam through the following chart.
## A Comparative Demographic and Physical Development Studies in North-East and West Bengal

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of states</th>
<th>Population male</th>
<th>Population female</th>
<th>Number of districts</th>
<th>Literacy</th>
<th>Major Language</th>
<th>Per capital / income NSDF in Rupees.</th>
<th>Area</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Assam</td>
<td>13,777,037</td>
<td>12878491 total – 2.66 crore</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>64.28% M:71.93 F:56.03</td>
<td>Assamese Bangla / Bode +3</td>
<td>23993</td>
<td>7.8,438</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arunachal</td>
<td>5,18,027</td>
<td>579941 Total 83,743</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>74.34 M:64% F:44.67</td>
<td>50 Dialects</td>
<td>33302</td>
<td>83,743</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manipur</td>
<td>Female 59.70</td>
<td></td>
<td>69</td>
<td>68.87 m-77.87 f-59.79</td>
<td>Maiti Manipuri</td>
<td>21062</td>
<td>22,327</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meghalaya</td>
<td>2,318822</td>
<td></td>
<td>07</td>
<td>63.31 M:66.14 F:60.41</td>
<td></td>
<td>21,062</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mizoram</td>
<td>891058</td>
<td>M/459109 F/429464</td>
<td>08</td>
<td>88.49%</td>
<td>Mzo</td>
<td>21,081</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nagaland</td>
<td>1,9888638 M/104714 942893</td>
<td>942895</td>
<td>08</td>
<td>67.11 Angami AO</td>
<td>16,589</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Bengal</td>
<td>80,176197 M 41, 465 985</td>
<td>38710212</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>69.22 Bengali</td>
<td>88,752</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Our next chapters will be devoted to a moderate estimation now three Northeastern states Assam, Tripura and Mizoram libraries are doing their rounds in regenerations of the cultural ethos of those stats.
Chapter - X

Library movement in Tripura:

In the history and culture of Tripura as well as in the Library movement in the state, Maharaja Birchandra Manikya had a great contribution. He is known as a great patron of Bengali language by making Bengali his Court language. During his time Bengali literature and culture struck its deep root in two north-eastern princely states- one in Tripura and another in Cachar now in Assam. With the patronage of the King of Tripura and Kachar. The King of Kachar brought some Bengali intellectuals from the mainland Bengal provided them coveted posts. The King also introduced Bengali as a state language. Similarly, under the patronage of Raja Bir Manikya, Bengali language was made the language of Darbar. The King would encourage Bengali literature to flourish in his own state. His patronage to Rabindra Nath Tagore is well known. Birchandra / State Central Library, located in downtown Agartala, is a symbol of Tripura central which is now declared as a state cultural library and also the office of the director library services of Government of Tripura. BirManikya established this library in 1896. It was a storehouse of knowledge with the personal collection of the Late Maharaja of several thousand books. Under the direct control of Government of Tripura, the Library has added another several thousand volumes over the years. A rich collection of modern books are mostly in Bengali and English. If we take an overview of the history of that glorious library, that will reveal the exhilarating earlier period of Tripura culture.
Therefore, in the interest of cultural history of Tripura, it will be quite relevant to speak about the origin and development of Tripura Birchandra Public Library.

**The beginning – Bir Chandra Public Library**

The commencement of public library system as an integral part of the library movement in India was initiated by the Princely state of Baroda by the then ruler Maharaja Sir Sayaji Rao Gaekowad III in the beginning of the 20th Century (1910) Maharaj Birendra Chandra Manikya (1839-1896) the contribution of to the Foundation of the first Public Library in 1896 will go down in the history of nationwide library movement in the later part of the 19th Century.

Maharaja Bir Chandra Manikya from the Manikya dynasty served as a ruler of the princely state of Tripura from 1862 to 1896, was a notable figure in the history of the state for his active role in initiating modernization in his land. Maharaja was known as an admirer of arts and aesthetics and supported the idea of library system for spreading education and knowledge. He set up a library in Comilla under his direct control, which soon gained a nationwide renowned position of a culturally illuminating centre in East Bengal. Comilla came under the administration of Tripura during the period of British rule, and the library was established in the name of Maharaja Bir Chandra Manikya, which was designated to open for general public at large. The library enclosed a wide range of selection of books encompassing nearly all areas of knowledge.
that catered to the informational and educational hunger of the inhabitants of the town of Comilla.

In this connection, the author A.C. Bhattacharjee writes on the contribution of Maharaja Bir Chandra Manikya in the library movement in Tripura as follows:

"Besides various other institutions of Public utility within his territory, the Bir Chandra Public Library at Comilla owes its foundation to the Maharaja’s munificence. The library is a living monument of the great Maharaja in the Heart of the British District of Tripura. Maharaja Bir Chandra Manikya died in 1896 in Calcutta. Before his death he established the Public Library at Comilla.

Even after the library was developed and started functioning, Maharaja maintained inspection of its operations and paid occasional visits whenever he went to Comilla.

**Palace Library of Agartala:**

History of Library movement depicts that majority of public libraries in England and in other European countries came into being after converting the libraries of Royal Houses open for public use for dissemination of knowledge and education. Like other princely states of that era, a number of cultural institutions were formed in Tripura under the patronage of its rulers. One of such major contribution was the formation of public library in Agartala.

Although the library of the Royal Palace wasn’t open for public use, but it contributed to the understanding of its rulers about the
necessity of library facility to initiate spreading of knowledge in the society. Thus, the Bir Chandra Library of Agartala was formed by Radha Kishore Manikya.

Bahadur (1896-1909) as a branch of Palace Library and then it became gradually a full feedged library.

Maharaja also established a well equipped library especially for the use of Royal family members during 1890s, according to the account of Sri N.K. Dev Verma, ex-librarian of the Palace Library and later, Bir Chandra Public Library, Agartala ‘the library was flourished in its full form and started functioning with more vigour under the authority of Maharaja Bir Manikya’s son Radhakishore Manikya, when he established Ujjayante Palace. The construction of the Palace began in 1898, after the devastating earthquake at Agartala on 12th June, 1897 and was completed in 1900. Radhakishore was also keen to expand and improve the existing collection of the library and tried to look for a proper source. It was then he heard of a European gentleman was eager to sell off his entire collection of thousands of books to a responsible person who would take care of the materials with proper attention and sincerity. Radhakishore hopped on the opportunity and purchased the whole collection from the man and recognized the Palace library in the new adobe Ujjayante Palace in 1901. The palace Library was only accessible to the direct family, folks and official members of the Maharaja of Tripura.

During this time an event of great significance took place when Radhakishore Manikya assigned the Editor of Weekly Hitabadi,
Pandit Chandroday Vidya Benod to re-edit the original piece of Rajmala’, which was finished in 1902 in four large volumes, exclusively to be kept in the Palace Library for Raj family.

Like his father, Radhakishore Manikya also had great interest in practicing and promoting various literal and cultural activities during his period of influence and was also involved with many such organizations. He had terms with renowned Calcutta elites like Tagore, Dr. J.C. Bose and others. He traveled extensively in India and abroad and was keenly eager to further develop the Palace library in Agartala with more enriching collections and facilities.

The palace library contained varied and wide collection of books ranging art, literature, geography to history, travelogue and many more, in Bengali and Sanskrit languages, One of the main attractions of the library was precious addition of Viashnava literarure and manuscripts in its collection.

Although the Palace Library enjoys a significant position in the library movement in Tripura, it was not meant for public use and thus can’t be termed as ‘public library’ in literal sense of the term. But its extensive collection of publication inspired the thirst of knowledge and education among the privileged readers and the Raj family recognized the need for further development in the establishment and support of library system.

In later period, the strict rules of the Palace Library united a little, and people with a valid official or social identity could access its reading room and collections.
**Birchandra State Central Library from Palace to People:**

With time, as the need for establishing a public library gained momentum and the eagerness for reading increased among the general public of Tripura, the collection of Palace Library was divided in two sections. The English language collection of publication remained in the Ujjayante Palace, exclusively for the members of royal family and the vernacular language section was shifted to another building to remain open for general public. This is now the Bir Chandra Library of Agartala was founded and began functioning.

Initially, the library was established as a division of the Palace Library but soon it became an independent centre of knowledge and reading. A brand new building for the library was allotted in 1923 by the then ruler Maharaja Brikram Kishore but the location was changed quite a few times, until when it was finally settled in the current place in the year of 1924 through a formal inaugural ceremony.

Like his predecessors, the last Maharaja of Manikya dynasty of Tripura, Maharaja Bir Bikram Kishore Manikya was also an enthusiast of art and culture, and contributed significantly in the development of library movement in his state. Although the English languages section of Palace library closed down with time but the Birchandra Library continues its existence with full vigour.

**Libraries in Making**
In the year 1949, the State of Tripura became a part of the Indian Union and in 1953, Education Department of Tripura obtained the control of Birchandra Library and renamed as Birchandra Public Library. The name changed again in 1977, as Birchandra Central Library. The modernization and access of more books followed state acquisition of Bir Chandra Library at the first phase. The then Government of Tripura allotted Rs.60,000 to purchase Bengali books and Rs.40,000 for English books collection. It was from that period, the library movement in Tripura entered a renewed phase. Soon after that, seven more State sponsored libraries were established from 1954 to 1966, namely – Udaypur library, Sonamura library, Amarpur library, Bilonia library, Kailashar library, Dharamnagar library and Sabrum library. These libraries are still actively functioning in disseminating the value of information and education in the region. They have immensely contributed to the growth and development of knowledge among the local people, most of whom were immigrants from the then East Pakistan. This population were the victim of partition and thus, they later had to leave their homeland where they struck their roots for generations. These people used to live in a self-contained rural society for ages. Partition uprooted them and made them homeless. These libraries, during that time, helped them immensely in clearing their thoughts and views and motivate them to become accustomed to a new social atmosphere in a new land. These libraries made them self sufficient and guided them to restart a new lease of life under a new system. Through the newspapers and magazines available in the library, a brave new
world flashed before them. The world of Knowledge and information to develop skills and practical know how opened before them. A number of people among them dispersed in different parts of the country for better opportunity to restart their life. And those who stayed back in Tripura realized need to spread education among the agrarian population who would not bother to pursue much formal education. They began realizing that they would gradually perish without education. Thus, they enrolled their children to schools and became member of neighbourhood libraries to access information about different sources of knowledge. Many of them developed reading habits and became acquainted with Bengali novels and other books that gave them a feeling of integration of being part of a greater Bengali community. Book reading made them politically conscious and socially aware. In a document published as a souvenir on the occasion of Bir Chandra Library centenary: how the library movement during 1954 -1966 enriched those newly built libraries resulting in awakening of knowledge and awareness, is given in that volume. We quote how these 7 libraries successfully increased their membership during that period. It wasn’t a mean achievement for an uprooted community with settled in a new ambience.

**Development of Public Library movement in Tripura over a decade.**

**Bir Chandra Public Library:**
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The problems of Public libraries in Tripura:

The seed of cultural and educational development in Tripura was planted by Maharaja Bir Chandra Manikya during his reign. After his demise his son Maharaja Radha Kishore Manikya and grandson Maharaja Bir Kishore Manikya took the reins of the Libraries. The Bir Chandra library flourished as prestigious Bir Chandra State Central Library and today 3 state libraries 4 District Libraries, 7 municipal libraries, 10 Sub –divisional libraries, 10 block libraries, 2 rural libraries and 1 children library operate under the umbrella of the nodal library. (see the table at the end of this chapter).

The enthusiasm of general public for equal level of access to education, knowledge and development played a significant role in the development of library system in the state. Further development of libraries in the state of Tripura was a result of its people’s great eagerness to represent their motherland in the nation at large. As a result of the contribution of Tripura public libraries in the overall Indian library movement. Rabindra Nath Tagore also visited the state to study its cultural and educational milieu.

The public libraries of Tripura faced a number of issues and problems in the expansion and development in the form of
infrastructural and economic problem, lack of reader’s management, lowering number of library users, lack of competent library staffs, lack of proper books preservation etc. One of the major concerns in this connection can be described as the adverse effect of popular media on general reading habit of the masses. With increased penetration of audio-visual media in various parts of the nation, people, especially the youth, started shifting away from book reading habit and in due course, from library usage.

The public libraries under the control of Birchandra State central Library housed in the old Secretariat building shutters from space shortage and with lack of necessary facilities. The works of allotting autonomous buildings are going on, albeit on paper. Most of the public libraries functioning with low maintenance, employee shortage, lack of physical verification and supervision, difficulty in the implementation of action plan if any.

Despite being small in geography and economy, the cultural connotation of Tripura is acutely strong. Each and every of public library and those involved in its official body should work in association and with the same vision. A designated section of library laws should be introduced to bring parity and uniformity in the functioning of and for economic stability of public libraries. Library administration system should be reformed and decentralized, the amount of allotted money from Raja Rammohan Roy Library Foundation should be increased to strengthen the library system in Tripura and Grants should be allowed for the refurbishment of independent building facility for every working
library, to ensure smooth and strengthening voice of library movement in Tripura.

In view of the current age of information, the need of the hour is to motivate the young minds to read more and more books to enable the readers to become a part of the Global Village in reality.

**Indigenous Author Emerge:**

A public library movement would always require sufficient number of books in vernacular language to fall back upon. Tripura is a multilingual state. The official language of the state is Bengali. The local tribes are now encouraged to develop their own vernacular languages. It may take some more state years to grow their language and literature, art and culture. The state language of Tripura is Bengali and all educated Tripura citizen are dependent on Bengali books published from Kolkata. Tripura now can boast of their own authors with facile pen.

A new intellectual class of exclusive Tripura Bengali literatures have come up. Here is the list of 18 Tripura authors and intellectuals of the past and present. To fallen their suits there are ten hundred authors and poets have emerged in Tripura over the time.

1. **Banga Chandra Bhattacharya** – He emerged in the scene of literature in Tripura during the reign of Maharaja Bir Chandra Manikya and Radha Kishore Manikya. Banga Chandra was a reputed Sanskrit scholar with immense knowledge about Bengali literary background history. He was known as a sensitive person
and wrote several numbers of mythological and historical pieces in his heydays.

2. **Narendra Kishore Debbarma** – The son of Radha Kishore Manikya of royal family and a poet, Narendra Kishore had great admiration for Rabindra Nath Tagore, and started a publication named ‘Robi’ in Tripura to dedicate his respect to the world renowned author. Narendra Kishore served as the editor of ‘Robi’.

3. **Surendra Chandra bebbarma** – He was a lawyer in profession but was also associated with a literary publication, named ‘Bango Bhasha’.

4. **Bhupendra Chandra** – The principal of ‘Umakanta Academy’ and an admirer of Bengali language and literature, Bhupendra was a notable writer and had done a lot of research on Tagore literature and music.

5. **Kalachand Debbarma** – He was a reputed music expert and acting specialist of the time. He was involved in the publication of mythology and folklore. Kalachand was a contributing writer in ‘Robi’.

6. **Nibaran Chandra Ghosh** – He was a freedom fighter and an advocate by profession. Nibanran Chandra was a well-known face in the literary and cultural circle of Tripura and also served as a Secretary of Bangiya Sahitya Parishad, Tripura for a long time. A number of his writings have been published in many journals in and outside Tripura.
7. **Sashi Bhusan Chaudhury** – A freedom fighter, Sashi Bhusan ardently believed in Marxist philosophy, which later reflected in most of his writings.

8. **Sailesh Kumar Sen** – He served as a renowned teacher in Netaji Subhas Vidyaniketan and worked as a correspondent in Jugantar and Amrita Bazar Patrika.

9. **Mahendra Debbarma** – He was born on 25th October, 1917. Mahendra was a prominent lyricist, musician, writer, journalist and politician. He played active role in establishing the need for public education in Tripura and also, for the development of Kokorok language. He was elected as a member of Tripura Electorate Council. Mahendra wrote and published several books and wrote many songs in Bengali and Kokborok language.

10. **Tarit Mohan Dasgupta** – A freedom fighter and writer, Tarit Mohan was also involved actively in the National Congress.

11. **Dinesh Das** – He taught Bengali language and literature in Maharaja Bir Bikram College and published several literary pieces in reputed newspapers and journals.

12. **Achintya Kumar Roy** – He started working as a professor of Economics in Maharaja Bir Bikram College, Tripura, where he subsequently promoted to the post of Principal. Achintya Kumar was also selected as the Secretary of Madhya Shiksha Parishad, Tripura and performed each of his educational
responsibilities with dexterity and sincerity. He was known as a remarkable educationalist and writer of excellence.

13. **Ramaprasad Dutta** – He was born on 17th March, 1927 in Kunda village, Tripura and came to Agartala during his early youth, to pursue higher education. Ramaprasad was known as a notable researcher and writer of the region. He was involved with Bangiya Sahitya Parishad, Tripura and received Rabindra Purashkar in 1999. He wrote numerous excellent pieces of poems. Short stories and novels etc.

14. **Sobha Sen** – She was a significant name in promoting social education and basic schooling in Tripura. She authored a number of publications on literature and culture.

15. **Bijon Krishna Choudhury** – He was born in 1930 and completed his education fighting with dire poverty. He joined Guwahati Cotton College as lecture in 1959 and later in Maharaja Bir Bikram College in 1960. His contribution in the literary development of Tripura was significant. He wrote and published hundreds of books ranging on various subjects.

16. **Puranjan Prasad Chakraborty** – He was involved in writing and other literary activities since early youth. He joined education as a full time career, while continued to work on creative writings.

17. **Dr. Brajo Gopal Roy** - He was born on 30th June, 1937 in Comilla. After completing his degree from Hyderabad Central Institute of English he pursued Ph. D from Calcutta University.
Brajo Gopal began writing on various issues since his college days and published in various literary journals and newspapers in West Bengal and Assam.

18. **Mohadeb Chakraborty** – He was a distinguished researcher and professor in Tripura University. Mohadeb authored numerous good publications on Tripura’s culture and development.

All those above writers have inspired present generation Writers and poets of Tripura.

**Influence of Books to improve people’s mindset against superstitious practices in Tripura.**

Books are now being used in Tripura as medium to allay superstitions the tribal society had developed once.

Supersitions in the form of folk beliefs, social, political and religious customs have created racism, promoted unscientific practices, atrocities and became responsible for setback of progression in the society. Tradition of Dowry is one such unscrupulous practice implanted in the Indian Society. Thousands of women have so far been suffered and killed for not being able to endure the torture. From the short story Dena Paona written by Rabindra Nath Tagore and many other dignitaries, numerous articles, literary pieces, researches have been published so far detesting the custom, to change the mindset of people.

Child marriage is still rampant in rural areas where adolescent girls or sometimes, younger than that, are being trade off for
marrying men of double or thrice of their ages. Social customs taught the girls to bear every rules imposed on them silently and lowered head.

One of the rising concerns in the North East region is the barbaric practice of witch hunt, where heads of the community search for witches or practicing evidence of witchcraft and kill men and women in suspicion of black magic practice. In the rural North East region, especially in Assam people banish men and women for being branded as witches and sometimes, they go on to the extent of killing them as well. A number of social movements have been launched to eradicate such unlawful and brutal superstition, along with hundreds of publication on the subject to educate people with the ray of progression.

Apart from these, sound pollution in the name of kirtan or other religious conventions, pricey rules for performing rituals, practice of black magic even in urban areas, racial discrimination to impede national unity, communal narrowness slow down the process of development of a society at large.

Although mass media have only recently started playing an active role in eradicating the ill effects of such social unscrupulous practices, through cinema, television documentary or radio plays, books have been involved as a change agent for this purpose, since centuries. As an instrument of knowledge, education and vision, books taught men and women to rise over the hindrances of social ill practices and instead, involve in creative pursuits.
Notable figures of Indian literature and social struggle, have worked untiringly to motivate young generation to work for the benefit of the society with wide vision and profound confidence, against the deep rooted superstitions.

To bring tribal community in the forefront of national development, primary education has been made compulsory in the North East region to reform the society. In past few years hundreds of schools have been built throughout the country, teachers have been appointed, midday meal has become mandatory for all, campaigns have been launched in various remote areas to increase mass awareness for education and legal formalities have been announced for those who are still asleep with the eyes open.

However, despite of spending huge amount of money to make education accessible to all by the government, what holds back the horizontal and uniform acceptance of the development is social ills and narrow thinking of people. Especially, in the tribal community, where the tradition of superstition is much more deep rooted, Many of people still consider that Modern education will ruin their culture. Continuous social campaigns should be launched to eliminate such unscientific beliefs. In that struggle public libraries can play their role in a big way.

One of the major demands of the tribal communities (those who consider basic education should be implemented, albeit suspiciously) is the inclusion of their mother tongue in education and adivasi poetic culture in the text syllabus. Their apprehension
for accepting other language, owes its inception in the superstitious fear of the tribal community, to lose their communal integrity.

Apart from the language barrier, the tribal community is also worried about the modernizing effect of education, poverty and cultural invasion. The parents are unable to realize the need for schooling, thus the children in majority put no effort for studying with proper concentration and willpower. As a result, despite government efforts, the number of qualifying students is still very poor. This picture should be changed, as the families usually have not much resource to spend on education, most them live below poverty line, and when the children show no success in school exams, their parents become more apprehensive to enroll for the next session and it goes in vicious cycle.

Streamlined campaigns should be launched to aware the adivasis about how their course of life can take upturn with education and knowledge distribution. It is only through compulsory education, that the tribal community can take part in the national development process and come out of the constraints of traditions.

Bir Bikram Central Library is located at the Old Secretariat Building. Being a Prime location, the library premises is always crowded. It has got a very cosy seminar room where I met a dozen of local intellectuals to vindicate their opinions about the declining of reading habit A Speaker candidly held opinion that it is true that comparing to its earlier days the visitors to library at present had numerically gone down but it would not mean the
reading habit had declined. It meant that reading public were shifting their media habit from book to TV. Even T.V. Serials are adapted forms of many novels. Some are direct film versions of books. People had changed only the medium not the message.

The Birchandra Central Library has made a Special corner for the job seekers, that section is well attended every day.

But the next room, the reference section, where all available reference books are – donated by the RRRLF. The collection is no doubt envious for a Central Library. But these facilities have got less takers.

There is a children corner in the library. As the corner is open during the day time, some children from the neighbouring school would come during their tiffin hours to read books. But the principal of the neighbouring school stopped their students to go out during the tiffin hours.

The R.R.R. L.F has provided building grant for the District Library at Udaypur which I happened to visit. This is a magnificent building with adequate space. The librarian claimed that with the better infrastructure they were able to attract more readers.

But Udaypur is no doubt a show piece. Most of the Tripura Libraries are suffering from space shortage.

Libraries at Kanchanpur, Panisagar, Teliamora, Bisalgarh Bagata, Baikhora are located in rented buildings difficult to expand.

Birchandra Central Library has a good stock of books (1,84814 book strength), among them there are a large number of rare
books and periodicals maintained since the day of the Raj. Raja Ram Mohan Roy Foundation contributed to Tripura State a grant of Rs.1,2492035 against state expenditure of Rs.13880003 on account of library.

It is strange that the 1st Public Library was set up in 1896 in Tripura. After the 17 years of Independence, Tripura could set up only two District Public Libraries. Nazrul Granthagar was set up at Gomati District and Unakoti District public library come up at Unakoti. There are small NGO Libraries set up at people’s initiative but they are not in the registered list of the Library directorate.

Tripura Public Libraries are solely dependent on the RRRLF for infrastructural development of the Libraries as the State Government has limited budget under the Library sector.

Even a plot of land was allotted to build the Central Library’s new building but in last 14 years it did not see the light of the day.

The Book Fare could me made a melting pot for Library movement. [Agartala holds Book Fare every year with munch splendor]

Through the book Fare, People could be made aware of the utility of Library in individual and social life. Even membership drive could be undertaken to encourage people to become a member of the public Library system. The State Central Library should after a stall at the fare.

All said and done the Central Library is vibrant with activities. The lending Section issues nearly 30 books everyday on average. The
Reading room is always occupied by the job seeking youths. Come regularly to go through. Employment News, Career Digest and other employment related books.

But on the other hand the newly equipped reference Section enriched with precious tomes donated by Raja Ram Mohan Roy Foundation has few takers. I was lone reader there.

The state inspite of repeated demand had not enacted any library law. The library department functions under the Higher Educations department yet the department did not recognize public libraries important role as a part of Higher Education.

At the moment Tripura has only 25 Public Libraries population wise comes at the third lowest place in the North East so far the Public stet are concerned. The following table will determine Tripura’s place in Library Movement.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>Population</th>
<th>Total Libraries</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tripura</td>
<td>36.71 lakhs</td>
<td>25 total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manipur</td>
<td>27.21 lakhs</td>
<td>130 total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mizoram</td>
<td>10.91 lakhs</td>
<td>440 total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nagaland</td>
<td>19.80 lakhs</td>
<td>09Dist.libraries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sikkim</td>
<td>6.70 lakhs</td>
<td>04Dist.Libraries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arunachal</td>
<td>13.82 Lakhs</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Books and their readers in Tripura

There are nearly 7.5 lakh books in 25 Govt. Sponsored Libraries in Tripura as on 31.7.2012 against 43,884 registered readers of those Libraries. But it is now open secret number of members in library live register means nothing.

The actual lenders of books from Public Libraries in West Bengal Tripura, Assam are limited to 700 to 1000 per month per district Library. The rural libraries would be happy to receive at least 07 clients a day.

This average lending figure is even difficult to meet for same libraries. For a state with over 28 lakh literate population Library use could have been much better had the Government taken interest. We must not forget McLuhan’s famous argument. Medium is the message. Book as a medium cannot be replaced by any alternative medium and must be retained, promoted and safeguarded from decay or from any onslaught.

To protect books and libraries Govt. should give top priority to the enactment of library law without delay.

There should be a master plan for public library expansion.

The viable NGO libraries should be made sponsored and like West Bengal will take care of salaries and welfare of the library staff. The present libraries that are located in small rented houses should be housed in libraries own building with enough space not only to accommodate larger collections but also for a reading room.
cum seminar hall facilities where village people could come, participate and discuss anything under the sun that may stimulate their knowledge base.

The RRRLF had already come in a big way to develop library infrastructure but no adhocism will serve its purpose.

As the tribal’s are encouraged to learn Bengali, the Bengali population should be encouraged to learn alchiki and other tribal languages and libraries could be used as a centre for cultural integration. Let the peace be the way of life not a temporary truce keeping the simmering discontent of the people under the carpet.

Public libraries have various spectrums to deal with and let not be made only a place for job seekers and handful research scholars.

A library is a place for Socio cultural revolution. Unless Tripura expands library services to the grass root level the social change will be a far cry.

**STATUS OF TRIPURA LIBRARIES AT A GLANCE**

**AS ON 31.07.2012**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl No.</th>
<th>Name of Library &amp; Address</th>
<th>Year of establishment</th>
<th>Book strength</th>
<th>No. of membership (Regd. Borrowers)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Birchandra State Central Library</td>
<td>1896</td>
<td>184814</td>
<td>19192</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Nazrul Granthanagar, Gomati District</td>
<td>1954</td>
<td>65793</td>
<td>4396</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Unakoti District Public Library</td>
<td>1954</td>
<td>55266</td>
<td>3776</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Dhalai District Library</td>
<td>1973</td>
<td>25306</td>
<td>656</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>North Tripura District Library</td>
<td>1954</td>
<td>40375</td>
<td>3006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Kanchanpur Public Library</td>
<td>1989</td>
<td>12547</td>
<td>191</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Khowai District Public Library</td>
<td>1958</td>
<td>40008</td>
<td>1771</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Total No. of Public Libraries in Tripura Categorywise

**Total 705849**

#### State Central Library - 1
- **1. Birchandra State Central Library, Agartala**

#### District Level Library - 7 Nos.
- **1. Unakoti District Public Library**
- **2. North Tripura District Library, Dharmanagar**
- **3. Dhalai District Library, Ambassa**
- **4. Khowai District Public Library**
- **5. Khumulwng Public Library, Khumulwng**
- **6. South Tripura District Library, Belonia**
- **7. Nazrul Granthagar, Gomati District, Udaipur.**

#### Sub-Divisional Library - 8 nos.
- **1. Kanchanpur Public Library, Kanchanpur**
- **2. Panisagar Public Library, Panisagar**
- **3. Bimal Singha Smriti Granthagar, Kamalpur**
- **4. Telianagar Public Library, Telianagar.**

### Details of District Libraries

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Library Name</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Total No.</th>
<th>Visitors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>Sonamura Public Library</td>
<td>1956</td>
<td>33000</td>
<td>1488</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>South Tripura District Public Library</td>
<td>1955</td>
<td>13608</td>
<td>2241</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>Sabroom Public Library</td>
<td>1961</td>
<td>18552</td>
<td>741</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td>Amarpur Public Library</td>
<td>1960</td>
<td>27865</td>
<td>959</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.</td>
<td>Bogafa Public Library</td>
<td>1977</td>
<td>12089</td>
<td>417</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.</td>
<td>Teliamura Public Library</td>
<td>1974</td>
<td>12700</td>
<td>864</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15.</td>
<td>Panisagar Public Library</td>
<td>1977</td>
<td>13020</td>
<td>156</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17.</td>
<td>Melagarh Public Library</td>
<td>1967</td>
<td>24112</td>
<td>646</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18.</td>
<td>Kakraban Public Library</td>
<td>1977</td>
<td>15120</td>
<td>141</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19.</td>
<td>Rajnagar Public Library</td>
<td>1977</td>
<td>13464</td>
<td>219</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20.</td>
<td>Bishalgarh Public Library</td>
<td>1964</td>
<td>22864</td>
<td>1303</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22.</td>
<td>Paharmura Public Library</td>
<td>1989</td>
<td>7278</td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23.</td>
<td>Kathalia Public Library</td>
<td>15.06.2009</td>
<td>6311</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24.</td>
<td>Nazrul Pathagar, Boxanagar</td>
<td>02.11.2011</td>
<td>2200</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25.</td>
<td>Khumulwng Public Library</td>
<td>05.11.2011</td>
<td>3200</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### State Central Library - 1, District Library - 7
Sub-Divn. Library - 8, Block Level - 6
Town Library - 1, Rural Library - 2
5. Amarpur Public Library, Amarpur.
6. Bishalghar Public Library, Bishalghar
7. Sonamura Public Library, Sonamura
8. Sabroom Public Library, Sabroom

| Block Level Library | 1. Melaghar Public Library, Melaghar |
| Block Level Library | 2. Kakraban Public Library, Kakraban |
| Block Level Library | 3. Bagala Public Library, Shantirbazar |
| Block Level Library | 4. Rajnagar Public Library, Rajnagar |
| Block Level Library | 5. Kathalia Public Library, Kathalia |
| Block Level Library | 6. Nazrul Pathagar, Boxanagar |

| Town Library – | 1. Mohanpur Public Library, Ushabazar |
| Rural Library – | 1. Baikhora Public Library, Baikhora |
| Rural Library – | 2. Paharmura Public Library, Paharmura, Khowari |

NB: District Libraries are re-named as per Notification No. F.2936)-BCSCL/84(L)/264 dated 26.07.2012

**Reading habit among people on at Agartala, Tripura:**

We made a sample survey among 54 readers at Birchandra Library (Central Library) in Agartala. It was found that the majority of the library users are highly qualified. The users are mostly students and school teachers. The majority of them read books in English and Bengali. We found only one Hindi reader and one Kannada reader out of 54. The majority of the readers are between 18 and 30 years age group.

Quite contrary to the belief that more a person reads more he becomes resentful against the governments and suffers from sense of deprivation, it was found that only 6 persons out of 54
agreed that book reading had made them conscious about deprivation of the North east rather as many as 35 persons affirmed that they were more conscious about the duty of a peaceful citizen as an outcome of book reading. Those persons (22) admitted that their reading made them convinced to be integrated with mainstream India. Majority of the respondents (26) admitted reading made them more progressive. 24 respondents were indebted to their book reading as a source of inspiration to take challenges the life. Reading has given mental peace to 22 persons. As many as 21 persons had changed their personal attitude and old values by reading book.

However, as many as 32 readers changed their lifestyle as consequential influence of book reading. By reading books the ethnic readers have become more conscious about their ethnic identity. The respondents came up with various suggestions for promotion of reading habit. The most common was the book reading habit must begin in schools (27). 19 respondents suggested in all examination; questions should be put up on book reading. Tripura Govt. used to pay a subsidy to each buyer of books at the annual book fair in Agartala. In course of time this facilities were withdrawn. Now the readers demand for the restoration of that facilities to boost book sales.
With a present population of 31,169,272 Assam is the eldest among the Seven Sisters. Assam’s history and culture dates back to the age of the Ramayana and the Mahabharata when this part of India was known as ‘Pragjyotish’. According to Kalika Purana, a work of the 10th Century AD, Assam or Asom was referred as the source of Tantrik cult a form of Hinduism. Kamrupa was referred as God’s own country. The Kamakhya Temple is still regarded as one of the 51 Peethas (abode) of Sati, the consort of Shiva, and is considered pilgrimage of the mainstream Hindus. However, some group would deny Assam’s heritage with mainstream India and would fight for her separate ethnic identify. A separatist movement reeled the state for years and impeded her steady growth. But mostly Assam people who comprise of various ethnic groups are inclined to remain in mainstream India and are willing to share diverse pluralistic and multilingual culture with the rest of India. They like to be emotionally integrated into the meeting pot. The prime ethnic group of Assam, the Assamese are one of the culturally rich people in India. A big educated middle class has already emerged among them and they are poised to march ahead in the field of literature and culture. The present day Assamese people are the mixed race but

* A Cultural History of Assam. B.K. Baura – P.12
hitherto all imbibe Assamese culture. Even the several million Bengalee speaking population who were the victims of partition in 1947 took Assam as their home now greatly share Assamese culture and language. So the large number of other ethnic tribes living within Assamese geographical territory live in harmony although ethnic clashes at times were not unknown. But the major violence Assam has been facing for over two decades has now almost subsided and a time has now come for cultural and economic regeneration.

Assam has an old history of literature, dates back to 13th century. Even her history of printed publication is nearly 173 years old (First Printed Assamese book came in 1840). The printed book era begun in Assam in 1813 with the publication of first Assamese translation of Atmaram’s Bible. This was 65 years after the first Bengali type was innovated and used in Halhied’s Bengali Grammar. As soon as the Printing Press was brought in Assam small publication houses sprang up in the districts like Dibrugarh and Nalbari. But permanent commercial publication houses came in 1950s. Famous publishing houses like Bani Prakax Pvt. Ltd., Bani Mandir, Banalata Orient Book Company etc. came into being gradually. The book publishing trade shifted from Dibrugarh and other parts of Assam started concentrating in Guwahati. The proprietor of Shankar Deb Library used to sell books under banyan tree in Kachari Ghat even on the other day.

* Bhattacharya Press Dibrugarh was founded by Harendranath Bhattacharya. The Assamese Book and its Printed History. Gangapada Chowdhury.
Now it is one of the big publication houses in Guwahati. 1940’s first saw the age of new rising of Assamese publication. We have mentioned the humble beginning of Shankar Dev Library. In the same decade emerged some famous publishers like Sribhumi Publishing, Lawyears’ Book Stall, Bani Prakax, Bani Mandir, Banalata, Orient Book Company, Sankar Dev Library, Assam Book depot, Students Store. Assam Book depot published 400 titles by now. Arunchandra Guha Published Birendra Ch. Bhattacharjee’s ‘Mritunjoy’ (Academy Award Winner) and earned lot of prestige. The fifties saw the publication of the first Assamese novel ‘Alkaloi Sithi’ by Dr. Banimanta Kolita. It is interesting to note Assam’s book publication trade flourished as a commercial enterprise only after 1950s. now there are about 100 publishers contributing significantly to the growth of Assam’s book industry. Nine of them are prominent. Another interesting point to note is unlike Kolkata Assam’s book publication first started in the districts. When the Guwahati publication hub was developed the famous district publishers opened their branch at Guwahati keeping their headquarters at the place of origin intact. Now most of the districts have their own publishing houses even from Golaghat town a big publisher is still holding his fort for three generations. The publication met with so success that the old house owner got his MBA daughter resigned from a coveted job at Bangalore to look after his business at Golaghat. Assamese publication is so flourishing that a Gowahati based publisher of two
generations confided in me that his annual turnover amounts to ` 5 crore plus. Assam’s love and adoration for Assamese literature is so deep rooted into the society that Assam Sahitya Sabha, the sole literary organization has developed a tremendous clout over social and political life of people. The Sabha has branches in all cities and towns. Once the Sabha played a great role in the anti foreigner movement launched by AGP. Comparing to West Bengal scenario, although the Bengalees were one day foremost book lovers yet the all India Banga Saahitya Sammelan has neither any clout over the Government nor on the Society at large. The Bengalees as a race now display little emotional attachment with any literary movement. The ethnic Assamese are not very big linguistic group in India. But all other ethnic people living in Assam speak and read Assamese fluently. They had developed affinity with that language and would love to read Assamese newspapers and books. Most of the schools in Assam are having Assamese as a first language. Many Muslim minorities living in Assam are Bengalees by birth but declare themselves as Assamese speaking. Bodo is a growing language and many books are now published in Bodo but the bodos read Assamese. Even the previous generation of Assamese who would read Bengali books, their children no more read or speak Bengali and read only Assamese books. In all practical purpose the homogeneous Assamese readers are increasing in totality for some obvious reasons and this phenomenon is manifested in selling of Assamese books. That readership is
not always harnessed by the library directorate but the publishers have been able to identify their market. The Assamese publications are catering to people’s utilitarian and emotional needs through books. A Bengali author was telling me he gets more royalty from his Assamese translations than that of his original books in Bengali although the rate of royalty for his translated books is to be shared with his translators. It amounts that his Assamese translations make a sale almost double his original books in Bengali. Assam remains a multilingual state with a strong presence of minority community. Assamese-speaking population form the majority but there are other powerful linguistic population like the Bengalees and the Bodos. The cachar district (population 17,36,319 is mostly Bengali populated) so is Dhubri (Population 19,48,632) District like Karbi-along (population 12,17,002) is populated by Karbi people. Bodos are predominant in Bodo land autonomous region. There are mishing, Ramling and other tribal languages spoken by a sizeable number of people. But they speak fluent Assamese.

Amidst a number of dominating language groups the Assamese language, the most rich and old language of the ethnic Assamese is only comparable with the Bengalee. Assamese now has been able to establish itself as one of the strong Indian languages. The Assamese literature bagged a number of Academic Awards over a period. Assam has a strong intellectual group in the Brahmaputra Valley and has registered their glorious presence in different field’s of culture
and literature. The intrinsic love for their language and literature may be accounted for the high literacy rates in Brahmaputra Valley. There are at least two districts having over 80 percent literacy as Jorhat (82.76%) Kamrup (81.24%). There are other 8 districts with over 70 percent literacy rate. They are as follows.

Dibrugarh 79.58%, Lakhimpur 78.26%, Cachar 76.51%, Karimganj 73.87%, Nalbari 77.12% and Tinsukia 72.16%. But the paradox of high literacy lies in gender imbalance. Women lag far behind in literacy which is 56.03 on average against male literacy of 71.93% yet women are by nature more ardent users of library than their male counterpart. Assam’s literacy rate has no doubt marked improvement in 2011 comparing with 2001 census which was only 64.2. Now it is 73.27% a 9% increase. According to 2011 census the literacy rate of eight North-eastern states and West Bengal is given below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>Literacy Rate</th>
<th>Male %</th>
<th>Female %</th>
<th>Total Population In Lakhs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Assam</td>
<td>73.87%</td>
<td>78.8%</td>
<td>87.2%</td>
<td>311.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arunachal</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>73.59%</td>
<td>59.57%</td>
<td>13.82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manipur</td>
<td>79.85%</td>
<td>86.49%</td>
<td>73.17%</td>
<td>27.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mizoram</td>
<td>91.58%</td>
<td>93.72%</td>
<td>89.40%</td>
<td>10.91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nagaland</td>
<td>80.11%</td>
<td>83.29%</td>
<td>76.69%</td>
<td>19.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meghalaya</td>
<td>75.48%</td>
<td>77.17%</td>
<td>73.78%</td>
<td>29.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sikkim</td>
<td>N.A.</td>
<td>N.A.</td>
<td>N.A.</td>
<td>6.027</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tripura</td>
<td>87.75%</td>
<td>92.18%</td>
<td>83.15%</td>
<td>3.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West</td>
<td>77.08%</td>
<td>82.67%</td>
<td>71.18%</td>
<td>913.34</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
We find among all the states, West Bengal’s literacy rate comes to the lowest, yet West Bengal has the largest library net-work and a flourishing book market. It is only because the state has more homogeneous population that is Bengali and that language is spoken by about 80 pc population. Bengali is the 2\textsuperscript{nd} largest language in India (spoken by 83.369 369 people against 13,168,484 people speaking Assamese). Bengalees are more dispersed than that of North-Eastern people. Moreover, Bengalee is the first major language in Tripura and second in Assam. There is about 15 crore population in Bangladesh mostly speaking, Bengali. So, Bengali books published from West Bengal has wider market comparatively Assamese, Manipuri and Mizo or Khasi books have hardly any market outside the states. If we look into that way book market in Assam is not supposed to be very significant but on the contrary the market demonstrates very encouraging feature of reading culture of the Assamese people. Although the recent downward trend in the national readership of general books, is also reflected in Assam book market. This can be evidenced from the sales figure in 2013 Guwahati Book Fare. The book fare was arranged with sufficient professional care and was supplemented by a series of well attended programmes on literature and culture, but the book selling in 1913 had dropped by 2 crores against 6 crores in the previous year (2012).
However, the Assamese Publishers are still optimistic. I have got some personal experience of Assamese book market over the last 10 year or so. As many as 40 of my original Bengali books were translated in Assamese by an Assamese publisher. My translated books did not find difficulties in finding readers from among the Assamese people especially among the youths. Not only that not a single day has passed in last 10 years when I did not get a call from my Assamese readers. Assam has developed over the years a lasting love and passion for their literary heritage as a part of Assamese national pride. Educated Assamese tend to appreciate their own indigenous heritage. This dates back from the time of Sankar Dev, the great Assamese social and spiritual leader. Assamese literature has been inspiration to the readers all through. All the North-Eastern States including Assam has passed through a series of social stir like partition, infiltration, influx of illegal immigrants, deprivation, violent movement and a series of insurgency that ate into their vitals. All such social and political upheavals emanated from long time social isolation and resulted in narrow nationalistic bias a common phenomenon for all the North-eastern States. It is the reading habit that can only bring them back to the mainstream from the point of no return. To harness the present peaceful ambient could have produced an intellectually sound reading generation. Reading could generate progress, prosperity and finally lead to conflict resolution. The first step towards that achievement is to
enact the library law for Assam in the first place and to accelerate, the library movement with right earnest.

Public Libraries in Assam

Of all the North-Eastern States Assam has the most potential for development of Public Library movement. Mainly for following reasons, Assam has an age old tradition of strong literary movement. Despite being a smaller linguistic group (mostly concentrated in Brahmaputra Valley in Assam). We have already discussed that Assamese literature is one of the richest literatures in India being enriched with a number of powerful poets, novelists and essayists of them many bagged prestigious national awards. There is no dearth of powerful author in contemporary Assamese literature. There has always been a pro-national sentiment prevailed in every Assamese mind that is congenial for the growth and development of its art and literature if channelized through a creative way. Inspite of that Assamese book market is now expanding, the growth is not satisfactory for the lack of due government patronage.

Firstly, comparing with other North-Eastern States where average literacy rate is above 80%, Assam’s literacy is still below 80 percent. Female literacy is less than 68%. Second impediment to the growth of readership was tensed socio-political atmosphere since 1960. The third impediment which is a common factor for all states is the lack of political and bureaucratic initiative to boost library movement. The library
directorate as well as the Govt. Dept. have failed to prioritize the library movement as a part of education extension. For instance the allotted library grant to the tune of `1 crore from the State Govt. for the year 2012 – 2013 has not been released at the last moment due to paucity of fund. This shows the inept attitude of the state towards library.

**March of Public Libraries**

There are 41 District and Sub-divisional library in Assam. The library directorate claims officially that average daily reading response in 41 districts and sub-divisional libraries are between 20 and 1921. Although I have not visited personally District Library, Kokrajhar with 1921 daily readers as claimed but it is difficult to accept the figure without verification. There is no reason for a small District Library like Kokrajhar having 1921 daily readers. Even daily borrowers in the District Library, Guwahati do not exceed 67 people. The statistics of public library in Assam supplied by the library authorities is enclosed.

**STATISTICS ON PUBLIC LIBRARIES IN Assam**

2011 – 2011

Source : The Library directorate, Govt. of Assam.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl. No.</th>
<th>Name of Public Library</th>
<th>Nos. of Books up To 31.03.10</th>
<th>No. of New Books Added During April 2010 to 30.03.20 11</th>
<th>Average daily reading response (No. of percent)</th>
<th>No. of registered member up to 30.03.20 11</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>March 2011</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>------------</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Reference sect on. Directorate of Library Service, Assam</td>
<td>95000</td>
<td>100000</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Dispur Branch Library, Dispur, Guwahati-6</td>
<td>45215</td>
<td>321</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>3200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Bishnu Nirmah Children Library, Guwahati-I</td>
<td>6318</td>
<td>881</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>2817</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Nabin Chandra Bordoloi Library, Guwahati-I</td>
<td>12366</td>
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**Library for Handicapped**

Assam library directorate has set up a Resource Centre for the variously challenged people at the premises of the District Library. There are brail books for visually challenged persons and a wheel chair has been kept for the psychically handicapped to negotiate into the corner. Some reference books including various volumes of book of knowledge include their accession list. But what is missing in this new resource centre, unique in this state is users. I did not find a single user, the day I visited the library. I was told that the centre was new and to attract otherwise challenged persons needed a lot of media publicity. Which was lacking in this case. The project was sponsored by the Raja Rammohun Roy Library Foundation.

In this connection it may be mentioned that though the public library movement in India is more than 150 years old, the
concept of building library facilities for handicapped especially for those who are visually impaired has not been paid much heed till recent time. Most major libraries in the west have arrangements for the visually impaired. There are also special libraries for visually impaired persons in Europe and the U.S.A. There is Washtenaw Library for the blind and Physically Disabled, a free service provided by the Ann Arbor District Library in U.K. the Perth Library for the Disabled is well known. The National Library in India Kolkata Resource Centre for variously challenged came into being only in March 2013, a Pilot Project built with a central grant of ` 25 Lakh. An electronic resource centre of 2500 sq.ft. to Store Braille books are under way. There are several blind schools in Kolkata and its neighbourhood where the school authorities in their own initiatives translated some major Indian books into Braille and have revolutionised blind peoples education. Hundreds of visually impaired persons have been graduated from universities with adequate intellectual attainments. But there was no facilities for them to consult national library for further reading. The Resource Centre in National Library will facilitate those visually impaired persons to access documents and spreadsheets, suitable for those with dual sensory loss. Another success area of the Assam library directorate is the setting up of children corner for 10 district and 18 subdivision.

The list of children corners is given below:
A) Physically Challenged Corner established during 11 – 12 and expenditure incurred.

1) District Library Guwahati - ` 6,95,661/-
2) District Library Dhubri - ` 6,95,661/-

B) Establishment of children corner at Total Cost @ ` 1,50,000/-

The centres are located in following libraries.

1) Dist. Library Dhubri
2) Dist. Library Hailakandi
3) Dist. Library Silchar
4) Dist. Library Karimganj
5) Dist. Library Mangaldoi
6) Dist. Library Tinsukia
7) Dist. Library Dhemaji
8) Dist. Library Diphu
9) Dist. Library Kokrajhar
10) Dist. Library Jorhat
11) Sub-Divisional Library Sarupathar
12) Sub-Divisional Library Sadiya
13) Sub-Divisional Library Jonai
14) Sub-Divisional Library Saraideo
15) Sub-Divisional Library Majuli
16) Sub-Divisional Library Pragjyotishpur
17) Sub-Divisional Library Udalguri
18) Sub-Divisional Library Hojai
Visit to other libraries

Beside Kamrup District Library I visited a number of rural libraries within 30 km off Guwahati town.

I visited Maniari Siniyali Rural Public Library near Amingaon and found only one single reader was reading newspaper at the reading room in the evening. The library has total 7121 books including 320 books in Bengali and Hindi. There were some Railway stn. Staff who would take Bengali books. The librarian said out of total 320 members the library was attended by 50 to 60 members daily. But this figure appeared to me a tall claim. Most of the readers would come between 7 and 8 in the evening. There are 71 child members. About 1500 books are stored for them. I found no child member at the library at the time of my visit.

About 6 km from the library there is another NGO run library at Palash Bari. Palash Bari library charges only 5 a month for lending one book at a time. The library is run by an NGO Tiniali Sangh a socio cultural club which has also a social welfare and a sports activities. From the library register I found that only 5 to 8 people take books daily. For insantance on 16.10.12012 the following books were issued.

Date : 16/10
1) Asomo Charijan Mahapurush.
2) Mahabharat Biswas
3) Bissnoy 0 (wonder)
4) Bargeet (Devotional songs)
5) Nani Ghosha Madhurya (devotional and religious)  
6) Bramha Baiborta Puran  
7) Nirbachita Hasya Bangya  
8) Galpa Sankalan  

Date : 18.10.2012  
1) Iya Rangam.  
2) Maharathi  

Date : 19.10.2012  
1) Prab Basaita  
2) Nobel Bijoyee  
3) Tupi Mamar Hazu (short stories)  
4) Nitikatha  
5) Alij Layla Haju.  
The library subscribes 3 dailies.  

1) Prantik  
2) Dainik Asome  
3) The Assam Tribune.  

Palash Bari Library is sponsored by the Sanskrit Vikash Bhavan established in 1938. The library has 7500 books and is kept open through 6 days a week. There is only one honorary librarian. Palash Bari Sanskriti Parishad runs an art school and a music school. They have a good auditorium. The District Library of Kamrup gave them 200 books last year. 10 people take books an average per day.
Failed allotment quota

The State Government failed to disburse `1 crore for book purchase for the year 2012-13 before March 31 and caused the readers point of frustration. For want of money many infrastructural development project like buying furnitures was kept in abeyance.

The Director of Libraries informed that under the sponsorship of the RRRLF the Retro conversion (data entry and electro Lamination of books) for 3 district libraries (Guwahati, Mangal Doi and Telpur) were in progress.

Notwithstanding, Assam needs very badly a library Act and direct payment system for various projects not through the State Govt. but by the directorate itself. It was an old demand. The project of autonomous Rector Conversion work was on the half way and could not proceed as fund was not forthcoming.

Raja Rammohun Roy Foundation sanctioned a building project grant to establish a children’s library. The children library is open. The beautiful facilities for children would envy any adult visitor but at noon I found no children reader there. The librarian told me children would be forthcoming after school hours. The children section has very rich collection of 13285 books in English and Assamese but no Bengali books were found although Bengali is the 2nd largest linguistic group. The children corner has comics, story books, toys for infants computer and TV sets. The popular children books by Jyoti
Prasad Agarwalla, Harapriya Borgohai, Lakshineth Bezbarua, Dr. Bhupen Hazarika, Hemmen Borgohai, Ananda Chandra Bardoloi wirmal Prava Bardovli and Atul Chandra Hazarika are in good demands. But the library hours for children readers must be changed to enable the children use libraries.

Assam has yet to build up its Central Library. The Kamrup District Library at Guwahati is very close to Guwahati High Court. The Director of Library also sits in the building which has an auditorium at the ground floor.

The District Library has 82,438 books till date. About 20 to 40 readers issue books on an average day. The reading room and the text book library section is attended by 146.

**Allegations against book selections**

The Assam library directorate would purchase books worth `3 Crore each year for distribution to the libraries. There are allegations that books from one particular publishing farm were purchased in bulk arbiterily in defiance of the resolution of book selection committee of 22.02.2012. Govt. purchased books from one same publisher who published several books under different pseudo names of different publishers. The actual price of those books were fraudulently inflated by leveling false price tag compelled the Government buy a copy at `280 against the actual price of `135 only. The most revealing fact was that during 2011 – 12 the library department purchased from the same particular publishing company books worth of `1,20,000 out of the total book
purchase budget of `3,45,00,000. The one third of the total budget was paid to particular company for buying sub standard books supplied to the government fraudulently. A number publishers in Guwahati complained against the ‘corrupt practices’ of the library directorate regarding library book purchase. The All Assam Publishers and Book sellers Association demanded an enquiry into the book purchase for the last five years. One Guwahati news paper Agradut alleged the same story in its 2 March 2012 issue. The report said that the proprietor of a Publication House was also the member of the Book Selection Committee and influenced the directorate to select maximum number of books from his publications.

A memorandum signed by 34 publishers in this regard was submitted to the State Govt. on 14.05.13 by the Publishers Association.

**Books and Market in Assam :**

With 78.81% literacy Assam is very rapidly coming one of the leading book publishing state. I have already mentioned that the major limitation to the growth of publication industry in Assam is its multilingual demographic nature. Although the population of Assam is over 3 crore which is nearly one third of West Bengal there are as many as six major languages spoken by the people. The Assamese are spoken by the majority of the people. Next comes Bengali. But major publications in Assam are in Assamese and English. Notwithstanding Assamese literature has got a long tradition
over the last few centuries. However, the first printing press was set up in Assam in 1871 and from the press the first book publication in Assamese started in the same year. Titles like Rukmini Haran, Kirtan Gunabala - these two devotional books were published from the press and began a new era of book publishing. Prior to that Assamese books used to be published in Calcutta. The dependence on Calcutta for quality publication still exist today. But modern printing industry has also flourished in Assam nowadays and like College Street in Kolkata Guwahati had developed a publication hub at Panbazar and around.

Although the book publication trend in Assam is marking a slow but steady progress over the years, a number of Assamese books continue to get Academy awards for several consecutive years. Bestselling books are emerging in Assamese book market. Best books in other languages especially in Bengali and Hindi are published in Assamese-translation and are getting a good response. Visiting to a book fair in Guwahati and districts of Assam will bear the facts that Assamese books are rapidly making good, market in Assam. Even about three decades ago educated Assamese used to be bilingual and would prefer Bengali books to Assamese. Now the situation has gone a sea change. Modern Assamese youths are comfortable neither in English nor in Hindi or Berigalie either. They are solely dependent in Assamese. It is one of the reasons that Assamese books are read more and more now with the growth of education.
Notwithstanding the library movement in Assam is dependent on the state patronage. But in spite of all efforts, other North-eastern states are going far ahead of Assam in readership building. A recent survey conducted by the National Book Trust has revealed the fact that 43% youth living in eight North eastern states read other books in addition to their text against the all India rate of 25%. But Assam ranks only 39% against Mizoram 62%, Manipur 52%, Nagaland 47%. It is specially noted that Assam publishes more books every year than that of a single other north eastern states. Secondly, publishers of Assam are greater in numbers. There are a number of big publishers too and the publication industry is not limited to Guwahati alone, but has spread in the districts which is unlike West Bengal. We are giving below the number of books published in the recent past by some foremost publishers in Guwahati. It is Unthinkable for other states in the North-east to have so many titles. Although they may have surpassed Assam in reading habits. Had the govt. of Assam taken keen interest in library movement Assamese book market could have flourished by leaps and bounds.

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* However this is not the complete list.

**The role of All Assam Book Publishers**

Assam has a very strong publishers forum called All Assam Publishers and Book Sellers Association.

The most commendable work of the association is holding North-East Book Fair for the last 14 years. However, the book fair was split few years ago and a dissident group emerged and has been holding a separate book fair thus making inroad on the book promotion. A number of publishers absented themselves from the association sponsored book fair which I attended. I was invited to give a talk on book which was largely attended and well covered in the Asamese Press. The Assamese press is very sensitive to Asamese publication industry. So Guwahati Book Fair is not an isolated event. I was told the sale of books had dropped 40% than the last year which amounted this time to 4 crore. The reason for the drop could be accounted for the economic down turn. But the enthusiasm among the educated middle class people was not lessened. The intellectual people of Asom and Guwahati based avant-garde writers and artists displayed no lesser interest in Book Fair. Almost all daily newspapers and television channels gave daily coverage which reminds Kolkata.
Book Fair scenario. But unfortunately the State Government failed to cash on this euphoria of the reading public. The spokesman of the book Fair told me that Govt. did not sanction any grant for this book fair.

Comparing with Kolkata Book Fare, Guwahati Book Fare appeared to be small but all book stalls were always crowded. All types of books were sold and it was evident besides novel Assamese Publishers are now keen to promote a large number of non fictions. Another unique attempt by Assamese book lovers has attracted me is the foundation of a forum to guide the book lovers to new arrivals of titles in English and Assamese. ‘Grantha Bandhab’ a catalogue of such books is published by the Ruchira Arts Foundation, a Guwahati based NGO is on sale for the Book reading public.

The 2007 – 08 annual issue of Grantha Bandhab was handed over to me for review would evince how people’s initiative in book promotion can go a long way. This publication is not a high-brow intellectual exercise meant for a handful pseudo intellectuals but aimed at common readers. The catalogue reviewed all kinds of books. For instance the book reviews included utilitarian books like Mitobyaita Aru Sanchoy (a book on savings) by Gautam Prasad Barua, Bivinna Rayero Sadhu (The Sadhus from different states) by Chandra Kanta Jha. The collection includes English books like Revenge of Sakuni – re reading of the epic texts and so other.
According to the statistics published in Grantha Parichiti there is a moderate estimate of about 289 books of different types published during 2007 – 2008 in Assam. But to my estimate the yearly publication of Assamese books alone would exceed 300. Not only that Assamese Publications are no longer lagging behind of any other Indian language publishers. There is children Book Trust for Publishing Children Books and as many as 19 low priced children books in Assamese were published by them. Varieties of subjects are dealt by the publishers some examples are given below:

2) Sangeet Darpan : Renu Nayak
   Mahabharat : Faith and wonder by Chandra Prasad Saika.
3) The Pioneers of builders of Assam : Rajen Gagoi
4) Assamese Dictionary or Biography : Sibnath Barman.
5) The Historical Basis of Marxism and Socialism : Tarak Chandra Goswami.
6) The universe, the Creation and Existence : Benoy Mohun Saikiya.
7) The Folk Festival and Folk Cultural of Assam : Jitu Kumar Lekharo

In choosing subjects the Assamese publishers left no stone unturned and sometimes did not consider the commercial value of the book from the selling point and took risk, in the interest of widening the horizon of publication industry. The
Assamese literature is getting richer day by day with the publications of books on varieties of subjects making readers information-rich. But this shift from tradition is not done at the cost of creative literatures like novels and poetries. The market of novels is kept intact. It may be mentioned Assamese authors once were greatly influence by Sankar Dev, the great exponent of the Vaisnabism in Assam during the 15th Century. The Pioneer of Modern Assamese Literature Lakshikanta Bej Barua rediscovered Sankar Dev as a renascent man and called him the ‘Guru of the Universe’. He described him as great exponent of art, poetry, lyrics and culture. At present contemporary Assamese authors addressed many sensitive questions of some socio political issues like sovereignty of India, the concept of Federation and the burning question of integration. The integration question is very tricky because there remains still some unsolved questions between the Assamese speaking people and the minority people. Dr. Dilip Barua’s book ‘Samaj, Sahityo Aru Sanhati’ (The society literature and integration) delved deep into this problem but with appreciable restraint. The author advocated for greater Assamese nationalism to be developed with the liberal growth of all languages and literatures of the various tribal people living in Assam. Unless every linguistic group feels secured, the integration could not be a unifying force Dr. Bara argued. The sense of unity and cohesion not the narrow regionalism is the pre-condition for integration with the outer world is now the intrinsic spirit of Assamese
literature today. The manifestation of that feelings is quite explicit in Assamese literature. If the library department fail to harness that feeling through vigorous promotion of books, the messages of new age writers will not reach the grass root level. The library net work has that reach but the library directorate fails to reap the harvest.

It is my suggestions; library budget should immediately be redeemed and the directorate must ensure that books in all ethnic languages are equally represented in libraries.

The love and respect of the Assamese people for their language must be given due honour. Books are the only medium that can carry out messages of change to the people in a more effective and lasting manner.

The selection of books for library must be well balanced, impartial and transparent and must be left to the committee of authors and intellectuals and librarians. Books are to be treated at par with any essential commodity and deny the reading public from supply of books or resorting to any fraudulent practices in the name of book supply tentamounts to a crime against the nation. The Government of Assam must handle those corruption adroitly. Books have no substitute and no nation can prosper at the cost of books and public libraries.
Chapter – XII

Sun rises early in Mizoram

Since after independence of India all North-eastern States became boiling cauldrons one after another either for autonomy or for complete separation from the Union of India. The armed conflict first started in Nagaland. After some years of war between the Indian army and the rebel Naga outfits a truce was signed between the rebels and the Union Government to give Peace a chance at last for the time being. The cease fire agreement was signed giving some leeway for both the rebels and the Govt. authorities. However, the permanent truce is yet to be achieved subject to finalise an accord. But since after the cease fire, no fresh incident was reported and like ‘undeclared war’, undeclared Peace is prevailing in Nagaland since after. Meanwhile, Nagaland was upgraded to a full statehood by Government of India in 1963. People participated in suffrage in great numbers, and cent percent Govt. of India grant for various development projects goes off very smoothly. So in all practical purpose Nagaland is now a peaceful state and is poised for both social and economic development. Insurgency was at the height in Assam by the last decade of the twentieth century. Now the disturbance is almost nil following a vigorous Army Campaigns. Although the vestiges of violence sprung up till today from time to time. Meghalaya saw insurgency in some
of its pockets although has not gone to an intolerable limit. Among Seven North-Eastern States Manipur reached almost to the point of Civil War. The State although reported no untoward incident in 2012 – 13. However the state is kept under strict military vigilance.

There are two Havens of Peace – Mizoram and Arunachal. Of them Arunachal never saw any insurgency though the state is reeling under the invasion threat from bordering china. Only history can tell how serious it is. Of all these states, the position of Mizoram is unique in a sense that from a totally insurgent State, Mizoram is now an Island of Peace. During the last 13 years I visited Mizoram thrice and I found the State as stable in 2012 and I found her during my previous visit in 2000. In same peaceful status I visited the State in November, 2012 to collect data about libraries in Mizoram and met a number of concerned persons, from the Director of Culture to the V.C. of the newly built Mizoram University. Then I met the librarians of different libraries and the Secretary of the Mozo Writers Association and visited some libraries at Aizwal to study the Public Library movements in Mizoram.

Before I present a review of the present status of the libraries in Mizoram, I need to present the socio cultural background of the State to understand more about their public library movement.
Transformation of Mizo Society : A brief history

The uniqueness of Mizoram lies not in her beautiful lush green mountains and the meandering crystal clear river like Tawng (Dhaleshwoari) and Chhimtupui, (Kolodyne) and extensive vast Pasture to soothe visitors' eye, but for its spectacular growth of language and literature within a span of one hundred and fifty years or so. The Mizo vernacular language now a lingua franca for as many as five major clans such as Hamar, Lai, Lusei, Mara, Paite, Ralte and many sub clans also have found their common language in Mizo. The language tremendously developed over the years and produced nearly 200 books so far every year. The list of publications include novels, drama, poetry, and short stories besides a number of reference books of knowledge, biography, juvenile books and journals. Mizo language and literature is now taught in all undergraduate colleges and the Mizo University at Aizawl has opened Mizo Literature dept. which publishes a bilingual academic journal.

The growth of language

It is no doubt a matter of painstaking research to know how a language spoken by merely one million population in that hill-locked State could produce such a good number of publications in vernacular language within such a short period in spite of limited infrastructural support. Mizos are voracious readers of Mizo newspaper and magazines. A public library system has developed over the years and more interesting to note that a large number of community libraries (called as
Private N.G.O. Libraries) are widespread in eight districts of Mizoram. Without much state support those libraries at grass root level help Mizo people keep to sustain their growing aspiration.

**The Geo-physical location : Beyond the Blue Mountain**

Mizoram is a hill-locked State where as many as 21 major hills run through the length and breadth of the State with some intermittent valleys here and there. Some eastern hills rise to 1300 meter. Though the highest peak is situated in the South-eastern part namely as 'Blue Mountain' living in extreme isolation of mainstream India. The Isolation provided the Mizo people a sense of Mizo nationalism and independent spirit. Anthropologically the Mizos identify themselves with a clan called 'Chhinlung'. However the origin of the Chhinlung is yet to be discovered. It is now only merged into the cultural heritage of the Mizo people. Mr. B. Lalthangliana, a lecturer of history of a Govt. college in Aizawl and a former student of Mandalay University wrote in his book 'Culture and Folklore of Mizoram' quoted a research on Mizo clan claiming Chhinlungs are the descendents of the 'Tibeto chinese' group. A branch of the group known as the Assam-Burman group consisting of the Nagas, the Burmese, the Kachies and the Mizos. They have similarity in their languages and speech. The legend goes that the conglomeration of Tibeto-Burmese families settled in the North-West of China, migrated to the west along the borders of Tibet, then further moved down
South into Myanmar approximately during the year 1800 onwards. From the north of Myanmar they moved down the banks of Chindwin river settled in the Kabaw valley and spread out in the vicinity of the present Tahan-Kabaw valley. The majority of them lived in an around Khampat. However the strange tribe the shans who outnumbered the Mizos when the shans entered the Kabaw valley. The Mizos were unable to protect them so left the Kabah valley in the year 1300 AD. From then they continued to live separately in various hills of China. After a number of sojourns following fighting hostility and bloodshed between the clans and villages they settled on the lent-land hills and on the banks of the Mizo ancestors set up different villages but all became separated from one another world locked by high hills. Here they found some respite from their early nomadic life but their life was disrupted by fighting hostility and bloodshed between 1300 and 1700 AD. Their life on the hills and on the banks of the Run and Tiau rivers, was recorded in many folktales and songs in memory of their elders. That was the era of the beginning of Mizo oral culture.

The Mizos entered the present geographical region of Mizoram at different stages of time and period following 1700 AD. They established villages on the tops of various hills, during that period.

So since after the migration and settlement in 1000 Mizoram villages between 1700 to 1930, the Mizos were already culturally rich. Their villages were populated with full of
activities and devote their leisure in rice bear drinking and performing Chai songs and dance. But raids by the stronger upon the weaker were common. They would extort and collect taxes. That would result in further war. All those raids and wars between the intra or inter-types war were recorded in Mizo folk-lores and Mizo songs.

**Foreign Occupation**

The Mizoram was annexed partly by the British in the year 1885. By that time the British have already entered Myanmar, Manipur, Assam, Tripura and Chittagong. By 1853 they reached Cachar and brought the North-east under their fold. Mizoram during 1870 were under different chiftans each one ruled vast areas under their commands. During 1837 to 1854 the Mizos raided the villages in the plains of India 19 times and killed many people. In retaliation the British for the first time raided Mizo territory. On 8th October 1871 the British soldiers headed by General Brownlow marched towards Mizoram from Chittagong and forced their way through some Mizo villages. They were known as the 'Right column.

After a protracted sporadic battle the Mizos built up strong resistance to the British force. Some of the heroes of that battle are still remembered as Mizo national hero. But ultimately the Mizos had to submit to the invaders who had more gun power. A truth came out promising Mizo people to give some sort of autonomy but British administration ultimately ruled the country.
Social reform by the Missionaries:

Like the entire North-east the Christian missionaries had a significant role in Mizoram to usher in a modern era. We shall discuss the individual contribution to introduce a number of socio-cultural reform still remains the part of the history. The first missionary Reverend Williams arrived in Aizawl from Khasi hill in the year 1891, almost the same time the Baptist missionaries came to Srirampur, West Bengal. By that time Aizawl was growing from a traditional village to a district town under British administration. However Rev. Williams could not stay long and had to live Mizoram because of a shootout started to curbe down some militancy led by a group of Mizos on British officers. Rev. William was advised to leave Mizoram soon for the sake of safety. On 12th January 1894 two foreign missionaries J.H. Lorrain and F.W. Savidge entered Mizoram via Silchar. At the outset the British administration would not permit any missionary activities in Mizoram because the local Mizos were still hostile towards the administration and the skirmishes did not subside. The local authorities also did not think it to be prudent to allow missionary activities that might aggravate fresh disturbance. Being unable to get permit to enter Mizoram the Missionary had to take an arduous trek. They had to climb up 15 miles up hill by carrying tent and ration by them as no coolly agreed to accompany them. However they arrived at Aizawl in December 1897 and marked beginning of 'renascent Mizoram'. This is very identical with Mr. William Carrey and later J. Marshman's families' reaching
Srirampur. In both cases the British administration did not allow them to preach in India. The both groups came with a same purpose to propagate gospel in the interest of ‘salvation and social change’. For this purpose they wanted to spread education. The first step was published books and periodicals. However, comparing with Bengali, Bengal by then had about 800 years old literary tradition and the Mizos did not have their own alphabets. Missionaries introduced Roman letters A A w B in the year 1894. The first book in Mizo vernacular language was 'Mizo Zir Tir Bu' in 1896. The first social change in Mizoram under the missionaries was the transformation of existing folk society into a pre-industrial society under the influence of the Christian Church. It was something remarkable that with almost cent percent Christian, Mizoram now tops the highly literate States in India.

**A fully literate State :**

Though full credit for literacy in Mizoram does not go to the missionaries, but it is no denial of fact that every Church in Mizoram established a modern education system and it was the missionaries who reached education at the door step of common people even in the remotest area. The very foundation stone of education was set up by the zealous and dedicated group of missionaries. It was the book that usher in a neo-literate society through the Bible in 1899 translated in Mizo vernacular language. The first printed book was the 'Gospel' by ‘Luke’. The first mission was established in Mizoram, called Arthington Mission. Other missions were
followed such as Welsh Mission, Baptist Mission, Maraland Baptist Church, the Salvation Army. All of them contributed to publication and education. It appears from various documents that the missionaries were accepted by the Mizo people as their benefactor instead of foe. The people by and large held positive views of them. It was the friendly, attitude of the Mizos help to convert entire Mizo people into Christian faith. Before the advent of Christian missionaries the Mizos used to live a life in isolation because of their geographical position and sociological settings. They hardly would move out from their villages. They preferred to lead a recluse life detached from the outside world barring the traders, from even Assam and Chittagong who Would visit Mizoram. However the British imported some essential officers and Babus from the mainland. But they would treat the Mizo as a native. Even though the missionaries set up school but for college education Mizos had to go either to Shilong or Guwahati. However primary and secondary schools at villages inspired aspirations for better life and the higher-middle class Mizos would send their wards to the outer world. Those people coming back to their native State would act as change agent.

**In Search of self through the Vernacular Language**

The written vernacular language made possible within a short period to create awareness for change. The Christian churches are not only a place for worship but also act as a center for socialization and interpersonal communication. The
church would arrange interactive discussions on some burning issues and how to address them apolitically. That’s why politics is yet to strike root in individual mind and its adverse effect does not cut through Mizo social life. The vernacular language enables Mizo people to read more. The vernacular Mizo newspaper have good readers in Mizoram and Mizo vernacular fictions and non-fictions both are potential to go to the masses more and more depending upon speedy library movement. In one word the Mizo vernacular language has already been the synonymous with Mizo aspirations and cultural regeneration. I shall show in this chapter how far the library movement can cope up with the Burgeoning Mizo aspiration. The Christianity in absence of indigenous social reformers acted as apostle of social change in the then Mizo society afflicted with superstitious belief in ghost and used to keep them under a spell of self pity and guilty consciousness. According to the director of culture, Govt. of Mizoram, the missionaries allayed those fears and argued with them that the evil force, the ‘Satan’ would always be defeated, in the hands of Mr. ‘Right’ and Mr. Virtuous. The basic message of the gospel ‘Loved and be loved’ to be accepted as the ultimate truth*.

Social change ushered in

The missionaries brought about a sea change in Mizo tribal social system including in the institution of marriage. The early Mizos would drink on every occasion. Even the mourning celebrations sometimes were shabby and indecent.

*The interview with the author at Mizoram in November 2012.
Even in bereavement the mourners gathered at the house of the bereaved, it was obligatory, to serve Zu (rice bear). Prof. Lalthangliana wrote in his book ‘Culture and Folklore of Mizoram’, "It became more of drunken rivalry than the consolation of the bereaved family. After they became Christians all these things changed. Everything is done in an orderly manner and religious services are held in the bereaved houses. The celebration, the behavior, and the way of doing things have changed for the better". The author claims that alcoholism by way of drinking Zu has been rampant in Mizo society at every occasion. On social occasion weeping or joy or a party without Zu session was unthinkable. That customs was abolished gradually.

**Religion: The Leveler**

Christianity became the leveller between the rich and poor and helped form a casteless society. The earlier Mizo society was hostile to a stranger. Every new comer in a village was being looked upon under suspicion. It was closed society that would count an obligation for a Mizo to keep watch on another clan as enemy. However Christianity founded the base for an integrated Mizo society. On the other hand many Mizo intellectuals of modern days would not ignore some adverse effect of Christianity. The first complaint is too much westernization has impaired traditional Mizo culture. Mizos are now all wear western dress. The reaction of tribal dress in totality and discarded Mizo national costume. Christianity has replaced their national custom for European dress. Mizos now
despise their customary national feast 'Chapter cut'. However after the first 'cultural shock' the Mizos especially who live in towns have accepted modern dress code and food habit. But still they are reluctant to give up own traditional culture system, the tone and temper of their songs, music and dance. The Churches made out few adjustments and made compatible Christian culture with indigenous Mizo tradition. However the present generation of the Mizo people now seek a cultural revival through sports, songs, dances and folklores. A number of Mizo literatures are coming out every year on biographies of Mizo heroes, Mizo histories and Mizo folklores. Research is going on in the department of Mizo in Mizoram University. 'Mizo Studies' a quarterly research journal is published by the department of Mizo, Mizoram University. The journal brought many valuable articles concerning Mizo literature and Mizo society. The contents of the first volume will depict how the scholarly writing pertaining to Mizo language and culture is being given serious attention by the Mizo scholars. A publication of such scholarly journals on Mizo language and literature is no mean achievement for a nascent department. I reproduce the editorial of this journal (Volume-I, Number-1, July to September 2012) which will give some idea about the purpose of such journal.

"It a great privilege to produce historic journal on the study of Mizo language and literature, extending to socio-cultural studies.
This volume is divided into three sections. The first section is reserved for writings in Mizo, and the last is dedicated to creative writing poems, short stories etc. Subsequent volumes will follow this pattern.

Some of the writers who contribute to this volume are well known literary personalities of Mizoram, whereas some are scholars pursuing research on Mizo literature. As a first venture there is bound to be rough edges, but I hope that this Volume brings to you valuable fresh insight into Mizo, the literature is particular”.

**Mizo Scripts:**

It is wonderful to note that within 160 years of scripts innovation Mizo language is now all poised to stand on its own leg and it is capable of taking challenges to contribute significantly to the Indian literature. Every language has its specific morphology, syntax, stress, accentuation and a style of writing it. Mizo language as told by Mr. R. Thangavunga argues that Mizo language has a rich variety of sounds to denote and distinguish meaning between words having similar phonetic structure and spelling. The modern Mizo language and the language which was used in the first translation of the Bible in Mizo language published in 1896 bear a remarkable difference between the old and the new. The present Mizo prose being more lucid and down to earth has direct influence of Mizo novels that has built a tradition of simplifying the tone and temper of the language to make novels comprehensible.
and lucid to the Mizo readers. When the Mizo scripts were prepared by the foreigners who did not have proper acquaintance with language, it was difficult for them to catch up the mood of the people who speak it. The syntax stress and accentuation of any language goes through metaphormosis over the ages with various uses and experimentations. The present day scholars of Mizo phonetics are researching the rearrangement of pitch and tone and create audio graph of Mizo language and calls for comparative studies of Mizo with other languages of the North-east.

However serious academic discussions on Mizo vernacular language and literature is now widespread among the Mizo scholars. It will help create more space for research and development on Mizo vernacular language and Mizo culture. However the beginning of that process is praiseworthy. I can undoubtedly say from my visit to Mizoram University in 2012 that the beginning has already started and Mizo books are no more in search of dedicated readership. Unless and until readership of any language justifies commercial return private publication enterprises will continue to limp. However this problem to some extent is taken care of by the Govt. patronage. The Mizoram Government is helping authors financially publish Mizo books. On the other hand authors also make self financing to publish their own books. But self financed publication cannot go beyond a limit. The major difficulty in Mizo book publication is the States' small population. If the population is only one million, the reading
population will not be more than four lakh. At least one percent of this four lakh people tend to buy general books. At least four to five thousand libraries need to be created with adequate fund resource to buy at least 200 copies of various books published annually. The Mizo Publication industry cannot sustain for a long by undertaking the responsibility of book publishing with limited market. Boosting up of reading habit among the new generation is the only answer.

**The era of literature Begins**

The first Mizo novel "Hawiz Pari", a romantic tragedy came out in 1936. The first short story called "Lali' hit the shelve next year. The novel won the first prize in a short story writing competition.

Chhing Puii the Mizo novel by Kaphelia came out in 1963. The book was completed 24 years ago and kept unpublished. It may be because of author's protracted illness, down with tuberculosis. He was admitted to the Church Hospital at Durtlong on September 17, 1937 where he breathed his last. Hawilopari, Lali and Chhingpuii those three novels by two authors were written before 1940 and published posthumously.

The novels authored by two early birds paved the way for junior writers to carry their mantle. More and more Mizo novelists emerged in the field of Mizo literature and many won the heart of the reading public.
During the year from 2001 to 2010 there was more than 90 novels published in Mizo language, of these, seven, viz., 'Damlai Thlipui' and 'Chun Chawi Loh' by Lalhriata, "Runlum Nuhai' by Capt. L. Z. Sailo, 'Zorinpari' by H. Lalngurlian.i, 'Pasalthate Ni Huuh nung' by C. Lalunchanga, 'Rintei Zunleng' by Lalrammawia and "Beiseina Mittui' by Samson Thanruma were selected Book of the year for consecutive years by the Mizo Academy of Letters.

Those Mizo books prove the bulwarks of Mizo people for growing a wide spread readership. The readership is more in villages primarily for the attraction of Mizo novels which are a very good story-teller set on realistic and humanistic backdrop. The first Mizo novel 'Hawilopari' deals with the love affair and contains many dramatic element. The modern Mizo novels though trudged a long way from their founding father are all about the fact of contemporary life. They represent a 'conscious, considered criticism of life'. The author H.P. Lalremtluanga's book depicts Mizo society from his neutral and critical view point. Modern Mizo novelists like Dr. H. Lallung Muana and Zikpuii Pa are regarded as "psychological novelists' with spiritual overtone. Unlike the first generation, modern Mizo novelists are not plot centered and give all kinds of jolts and jerks to the expectation of their readers. They appear to be less obsessive about sex. However they are all set, reinforce the Mizo values of harmony and peace in family life. The stream of consciousness has also to be experimented in modern Mizo
novel like 'Chun Chawi Loh' by Lalhriata. In this novel the unwedded mothers' remorse and agony became the central point. The author realized that sensation and emotion that filled the human' mind cannot be recreated with the ordinary resources of prose. Therefore in order to enrich his language he also, uses the language of poetry in some paragraphs. So the modern Mizo novels like all mainstream literature experimented with various forms of literature. They did not hesitate to condemn deviant behaviors of modern Mizo society like alcoholism, drug abuse, sexual abuse and the accumulation of wealth that creates social distinction.

**Mizo novelists’ role as conscience keepers**

Mizo novels are indeed mirror of Mizo society. The Mizo society has tradition of being close-knit, homogenous and classless. There is no caste system. But the money power in the hands of few has divided the society that hiatus is creating social evils and corruption. The Mizo novelists in various ways are pointing to that emerging pernicious effect and calls for the remedy through programs of political and social education. In no way the Mizo novelists will compromise with their moral and social obligation. Their books are whole heartedly aimed at socio-cultural change. Most of the Mizo novelists concentrate their theme in Mizo social setting. The Mizo social structure and custom of a particular region of Mizoram highlights the aspiration of that particular region. But the human appeals of their characters go beyond the region and ultimately merges in the ocean of
humanity. This is also the uniqueness of Mizo novelists as well as their limitations too. The characters of the Mizo novels are predominantly regional, they seldom move out in the main stream of Indian life. So the world beyond Mizoram hardly flashes in the minds of Mizo readers. So Mizo novels are very popular among the village people those who adhere to their traditional values and they get reflection of their values in Mizo novels.

I was told as a number of Mizo novels are limited. The village people who are good readers of book go to the rural libraries in search of new novels of their favourite writers very soon exhaust all stocks of library and starve for more.

**The reading Public of Mizoram**

It is interesting to note that the people of Mizoram the highest literate state in the North-east has kept up their interest ever alive for books. The prolonged turmoil for over a period of 38 years including a long spell of insurgency could not hamper their education system, nor the prolonged geopolitical isolation made any inroad into their yearning for knowledge. Although the love for book is mostly kept alive by the village people.

The Mizo accord was signed in 1986 to follow the settlement of dispute and since then Mizoram has remained the sole island of peace when some other North-eastern states suffered from periodic troubles.
Thanks to the Christian Missionaries 88.8% Mizo. Population is now literate and continue to remain as one of the enlightened states in India. This is evident from the presence of widespread chain of rural libraries dispersed at various villages and small towns in Mizoram. Those libraries are the sources of knowledge dissemination. They supplement further knowledge to Mizo people who are exposed to vastly organised school net work once designed by the Christian missionaries.

Mizoram is the 23rd state of Indian Union and one of the seven sisters of the North Eastern states. The state was elevated from a union territory to a full statehood in 1987 following the Mizo Accord in 1986. Prior to getting a ‘separate union territory status’, Mizoram was part of Assam state since independence till 1972.

**A Strategic State**

The 21,081 Km. territory strategically important for its common border with Myanmar in south and Bangladesh on the west, the state of Mizoram has now as many as 8 districts, 3 autonomous district councils, 23 civil sub-divisions. There are as many as 424 recognised libraries in Mizoram. They are all run by N.G.O.s and other societies. Out of 424 libraries 380 are run by the YMA, Young Man's Mizo Association, a powerful Mizo Youth Organisations with over 3 lakes 50 thousand members.
Libraries and Books in Mizoram contributed significantly to the growth and development of Mizo culture. Mizo Tribes are now fully integrated. Educated Mizos are now dispersed in different parts of the country. They are holding key positions in different places of life. The newly built Mizoram University provides more opportunities for today's Mizo youths to further their knowledge and acquire scholarship in various disciplines.

**The role of library**

Library movement in Mizoram provided unique opportunities to the Mizo people to compete and excel. Libraries provided them with helpful literatures to earn life skill and self help and at the same time a competitive spirit and a healthy trend to grow a democratic temper. Libraries brought unique opportunities for the rural community living in far away places to overcome their sense of isolation. With 23 rural development Blocks, 23 towns and 707 villages, the total population in Mizoram now comes to 4,47,567. Of them about 3 lakh 40 thousand people can read and write. It is not a mean achievement for a nascent state.

**Present Status of Library in Mizoram**

The Govt. of Mizoram passed the Library Act in 1980. The Act is yet to be enforced. The library system in Mizoram is now under the department of Art and Culture which was set up in 1972. At that time it was under the directorate of Art and Culture was carved out from the Dept. of Education and

* The State Government runs one Central and 5 District Libraries. Other libraries at grass root levels are run by the YoungMizo Associations, N.G.O.'s and the Churches. They are aided by the Government. There are 459 rural libraries run by Govt.
Human Resource in 1989. The Dept. of library is looked after by one deputy Director, under the Art and Culture directorate.

Until 1974 there was no Central Library in Mizoram though the first district library at Aizwal was founded in 1969 as a sub-divisional library in a private rented building at Aizwal, with one librarian and one counter attendant.

The Sub-Divisional Library was upgraded to a District library in the eighties. Other sub-divisional libraries came into operation subsequently were (1) Kolasib Sub-Divisional Library, (2) Champhal Sub-Divisional Library in 1980, (3) Lunglei District Library in 1975, (4) Saiha District Library in 1978 and (5) Mara District Library in 1993.

As on November 2011, there are as many as 5 district libraries in following districts:

1) Aizwal
2) Lunglei
3) Saiha
4) Champhai
5) Kolasib

There are 459 regional Govt. Rural Libraries in Mizoram. Beside there are an equal number of Rural Libraries run by the N.G.O.'s. They get small aid from the State Government.

**AIZWAL District Library**

I visited the District library at Aizwal in November, 2012. The library is centrally located in an old rented building in down
town Aizwal. The condition of the basement floor, where most of the books are stored is precarious. As it is housed in a private building, it is not becoming possible to undertake necessary repair works and the entire building appears to be in ramshackle condition. The librarian also regretted the decline in reading habit among the Urban Youths in recent years and confessed that the urban people had lesser time now to come to the library. She said that the bulk of the library goers were students. Even they would come to the library for mostly reading newspapers.

The district library hardly issues 8 books a day to its lending members. The membership is almost free, `20 for life time. Members can borrow maximum two books at a time for 10 days. A sum of `100 is a caution money against each book.

The tendency of competing the job market is evident from among the educated unemployed throughout the country. They form the bulk of library users now-a-days. Each library has been instructed to provide space and provisions for them. Another type of library users have emerged everywhere. They are teachers of Private Coaching Institutes or Professional Private tutor group who come to library for consulting books and magazines as resource material whereas the employed teachers from both the secondary schools and under-graduate colleges seldom use public libraries.
Among the district library readers, the readers mostly prefer thrillers

We find from the issue slip that only English romances & thrillers of Danielle Steele, Joseph Jackson, Dan Brown are in great demand. All Danielle Steele’s books for instance Crossings, Joseph Jackson’s All Hero and Stephen King’s. ‘The Eyes of the Dragon’ were issued 8 to 10 times whereas The Return of the Natives by Thomas Hardy was issued only once. Other much issued books were UFOS from Behind by the iron curtain by Julian Weaver Berce and Deception Point by Dan Brown. Mizos have got good newspaper reading habits. There are about one dozen – English and over a dozen Mizo vernacular dailies that are published from Aizwal. One Silchar based publication, ‘Mizoram Post’ is printed at Silchar and all printed copies are sent by Van to reach Aizwal at 4 am in morning after taking a 4 hour arduous trek.

The status of Aizwal District library, located at the heart of the city.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of books</th>
<th>3449</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Children members</td>
<td>610</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Daily Newspapers**

- In Mizo : 07
- English : 04
- Magazines Mizo : 07
- English : 07

Total Books in the Library : 41,229
In October 2012 about : 782
Profile of the Readers

Like other Indian students, Mizo students regularly sit for All India examinations and leave Mizoram for better opportunities elsewhere in India. They use public libraries mainly to read newspapers, magazines and help books for their studies. Barring specific research scholars (whose number is few and far between) general readers seldom show up in the lending section of the library. Those who continue to borrow books regularly the majority read novels. Even the novel readers mostly choose thrillers and suspense, especially thick English suspense novels have comparatively larger takers.

The Aizwal District library offers membership at a very liberal term. It is `20 for life membership and as many as 3449 people have enrolled themselves as members but the majority of them seldom show up. The deposit against each book is `100 and two books at a time can be borrowed for 10 days duration.

The library has 41,279 books in total. The library register shows that as many as 782 members attended the library in October but 70 percent of them came to read newspapers and journals only.

The Fate of Library Act

Before we go for an in depth study of Mizo reading habit, let us have a look at the library net-work in Mizoram. Although a
Library Act was passed in Mizo Assembly, the Act has not been given effect as yet due to reasons best known to the Government. The Mizoram Library Association felt that the delay in implementing the Act impeded the speedy growth of library movement in the state. They demanded its immediate introduction.

Mr Ngurbiaka, director of Art and culture, Govt. of Mizoram however showed some reservation to certain clauses of the Act. He told me that unless some provisions of the Act were amended, it would not help the library movement and would make the directorate another bureaucratic organizations.

So long the Act kept dormant, a separate Library Directorate still remains a far cry. The library department is still under the department of Art and Culture.

**The Problems of the N.G.O. Libraries**

There are about 600 libraries in Mizoram run by the N.G.O.s. About 459 of them get government assistance. The non-aided libraries open once or twice a week by voluntary librarians. They realise a small subscription from their users. For instance an N.G.O. library I visited at Aizwal is run by a secular youth organisation that charge ` 10 per months as membership fee. They have about 60 members in their register. The library is housed in their own building in a middle class locality. It has a children’s corner. Children come and use the library especially the children of the adjacent school come in groups when the library is open.
Another library run by YMA Bethelhem Vengthlang Branch of a church is a community library. It appears to be very well organised and well arranged and fully computerised. The library was adjudged the best N.G.O. library for 2003 by the Mizoram Library Association and got `10,000 cash award as 1st Prize. In 2005, it bagged another prestigious prize of `25,000 as the best library below district level. This library has a stock of a good number of Mizo books. They have good demand from the local readers. The library preserves all Mizo books including translation of English classics in Mizo. Raja Ram Mohun Roy Library Foundation has come in a big way to help the public library movement in Mizoram. All the district library buildings in 4 districts are funded by the RRRLF including the Central Library. The beautiful new Central Library building complex came up in 2011 in a picturesque surrounding about 4 km away from Aizwal down town with the matching assistance from the Raja Ram Mohun Roy Library Foundation. It is one of the most modern Central Library in North-East with 73,283 books.

As many as 65 Rural library buildings in Mizoram were constructed under RRRLF, matching grant. Another 14 Rural libraries are awaiting the matching grant for the year 2012-13.

Rural Libraries

I attended an interactive session with the members of the Mizoram Library Association specially arranged for me by the
librarian of the central Library. The Association members expressed dissatisfaction with the location of the Central Library which is far away from the City Centre. The Central Library is attended by very few readers, hence it should be re-located at the heart of the city preferably near the secretariat building, they demanded. The library is on the highway housed in a spacious building against a serene landscape. The bus service is infrequent and buses almost disappear in the afternoon. I had to wait for one hour to get a city bound taxi, in the evening. At last a taxi had to be called from taxi stand one km away. The taxi rate at Mizoram is very high for instance a 5 km taxi run will fetch `250. The only solution to the problem is to introduce regular public bus services from the City Centre to the Central Library point.

However, the meeting highlighted the problem of the N.G.O. libraries. Spread by the length and breadth in all eight districts of Mizoram the N.G.O. libraries are starving for more books. Their stock is limited and all books are already read by the rural readers in no time. To keep up their reading spree the authorities must replenish the book stocks for the N.G.O. libraries. Many N.G.O. libraries have poor infrastructure – some are located in mud houses with a stock of only 200 books or so.

They must get a building grant to relocate their present worn out houses and get good books to be supplied at regular intervals. But the problem lies in limited stock of books in
Mizo language which is not adequate to meet the growing demand.

The meeting pointed attention to the RRRLF about 60 cases of rural libraries where buildings under construction remained half finished due to paucity of fund.

The meeting further suggested the following:

1. Banks make unnecessary delays in processing.
2. Seminar proposals of library Association are stalled for want of fund.
3. As many as 10 rural libraries are not provided with required software for computerization.
4. One Mobile Library set up by the Foundation remains defunct.

One representative from a Rural Library informed that Rural Libraries are open twice a week in the morning and in the evening. Every time he gets 50 to 60 readers a day. But as the number of Mizo books are limited many readers had exhausted the stock of all Mizo books in two – three months time. He suggested the flow of Mizo book publication must continue uninterrupted. ‘Let there be sufficient number of books in Mizo when they are so popular’ the librarian demanded.

The following library experts were present.

1) Dr. C.L. Awamzuala, Professional Assistant Central Library, Mizoram University (MZU), Vice-President, Mizoram Library Association.
The meeting took place on November 23, 2012 at 02:30 pm.

**Authors’ Handicap**

In Mizoram no worthwhile publication industry has come up yet consequitely creative writers publish their own works by themselves. There are some lucky authors who get individual patronage, some even may get Govt. Book Development Fund grant. Some even manage, institutional funding. But those self published books are not necessarily popular fictions, or short stories. Mizo novels have come of age. They have now imbibed most modern thoughts, experimenting with the contemporary contents, yet it is hard for the authors to get fund as Government fund is inadequate and selective.

If we address the problem in depth we see that only 200 Mizo books are published every year. Among them the number of
novels do not exceed more than 10 - 12 every year. On the other hand the demand for novels is more to the library users and the demand can not cope up with present rate of publications. Why more novels are not published? There are as many as 100 active authors in Mizoram who are members of the Mizo Writers Association. They are prepared to contribute more and more to Mizo literature. But there is hardly any publisher to undertake publication of non-text non reference books. The publishers apprehend that general books will not sell in market. Again there is no retail outlet for books to sell, published by the Mizo creative writers. Many established-authors are found push selling and hawking their works like budding authors and poets all over the world.

Against all these Oolds Mizo self book publication is not at declining. Rather more and more young writers and poets are emerging in the book market with renewed interest and zeal. A list handed over to me by the Mizo Academy of letters will show that as many as 110 Mizo books were published in 2006 alone. The number jumped to 183, in 2012 almost double in 5 years.

The following table will give an idea of the steady growth of Mizo Book Publication.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Number of books published</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>110</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>133</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>N.A.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>162</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year</td>
<td>Number</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------</td>
<td>--------</td>
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<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>170</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>162</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>183</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is seen from the publication list that they are all general books including novels, short stories, poetries essays politics and history.

There are some special books included in the list like Mizo Bible Encyclopedia, Mizoram General knowledge, some versions of Bible (Bible change Zawnqwlna), book on Cancer (Cancer Dam Leh Kani) Dictionary of Theological Term, Mizo – Hindi - English translation etc. The books listed above also include annual souvenirs' and evangical books.

Creative literatures comprises about 40 percent of the list. A library Association Spokesman told me at Aizwal that the rural libraries are starving for books. The reading habit does not die hard at Mizo villages. Rural libraries run by N.G.O.s open once or twice a week, & have on average 200 to 300 books in their shelves and people exhaust full shelves in a year and demand for more. Even all books published in Mizo hardly reach all rural libraries.

However this rate of readership growth is not found in district or central libraries. The seenerio is different in Aizwal. Of course there are certain infrastructural limitations and lack of initiatives from the government. Notwithstanding, we cannot dismiss the decline of readership as a general social
phenomenon without introspection of the state's and civil societies role in reading habit promotion.

We must look into the social Phenomenon in Mizoram 2012 as a 'Peace Haven' in the North-East, although an author can thrive both in war and in peace. Yet Peace is more congenial for creation. We have seen the Czarist Russa could produce authors like Tolostoy, Gorkey and Dostoyvosky and even under a Red Czar like Stalin emerged' powerful writers like Soizhenitsyn. Even the best Bengali authors Rabindranath Tagore, Sarat Chandra Chattopadhya and Hindi novelist and short story writer Premchand thrived during the repression of British rule, but over and above literature is a product of a peaceful social ambience. For general people reading is also the outcome of Peace that enables a person to crave for more knowledge seeking and desire for more sublime pleasure. Book is a cultural product that needs empathetic cultured mind to appreciate. Readers must have modern outlook and craving for mental refinement. The Mizo society used to be a tribal society segmented under numerous clans under one Chieftan for each clan, used to be at the loggerheads with another. They were isolated from the main stream of life and hardly aware of the ethos of a Nation State. Their societies were autonomous, living their own life adhering to certain tribal values that were unique in nature. When the British invaded Mizoram, the Mizos fought against them not necessarily they were inspired by the same spirit of India’s patriotic movement, but in the fear of being uprooted
culturally by the aliens who threatened their autonomy. All
north-eastern tribes had similar feelings of losing their
identity and autonomy in the hands of invaders. They were
warriors by their inherent nature who would not even tolerate
subordination of other clans. Fighting so many battles to
maintain their autonomy was part of their history. The Mizo
heroes who fought the British are still the source of inspiration
of modern Mizo generation. It is my view that our national
leaders did not appreciate the spirit of the North-eastern
Tribes, their cultural back ground and their long isolation
made them alienated from main stream India. The Tribal
Research Institute of Mizoram has published lives of 24 Mizo
Heroes. Their lives are the embodiment of Mizo spirit.

Inspite of many odds there are some best selling authors have
emerged in Mizo contemporary literature. For instance
‘Nghilh Lon Man’ a book by Lalhmer Liani Fanai sold 1000
copies and is most in demand book for libraries, ‘Ka Phaallo’,
short story by C Laizanna was awarded best book of the year.
Laizanna’s another work ‘Tahtul Lehtin’, a novel runs 3rd
also got the book of the year award. Kumtluangpar’s another
novel Lalhmacchvana Zofa published in 2010 sold 1000
copies. The book was published by the Publication Board.
There are a number of popular women writers. C. Zoiampari
is one of them, Her novel ‘Beiseing’ is very popular. However
from the issue register of the Aizwal district library I find
some frequently issued books are not Mizo novels. Probably
novels are mere popular in villages. The name of the best issued authors are given below:

**Children books**

1) C. Laugawna - Fables, Folk Tales.
2) Lalhma Chhuana - Folk Tales.

**General Books**

3) Paubo Coelho - Translation
4) P.C. Biaksiama - Religion.
5) Venneihtlunga - Religion
6) PL Landinga - Religion
7) L Keivom - Religion Politics and Sociology

The absence of sufficient number of publishers for general books many budding writers feel frustrated. On the other hand there are demand for more books for public libraries. The one solution to the problem is to release more government fund to boost publications of Mizo books as the Govt. is doing now via Publication Board. But independent minded authors are reluctant to apply for government fund as they apprehend it may affect writers’ freedom. There is one suggestion that government should make a bulk purchase of Mizo books published by the authors themselves.

**Book hungry villagers**

Prof. Sailo, the President of Mizo Academy of letters in his interview with the author said that the Government grant to authors no doubt had boosted the author’s spirit and kept them going. As there is hardly any well organized distribution
The Mizo authors are solely dependent on small and medium retail bookshops by paying them 25 to 30 percent commission on net sale. Churches have their own book counters and church published books are selling well.

**Books as integrating force**

Books, Media and Indian Federalism are new gradually making young Mizos close to the centre of Indian Nationhood. Previously their contact with the outer world was only through the foreign missionaries. None from mainstream India came and lived with tribals in NE to share their woes and agonies and tried to change their mind set. It was the Christian Missionaries who first brought about changes in Mizo society. They taught them how to lead a community life peace fully in cooperation with others. They suggested how to eschew violence and avoid frequent clannish battle of bloodshed. They gave them lesson on health and hygiene like taking regular bath, use of modern soap to remain clean. This was significant as for the first time they learned to lead a healthy life and to think locally and act globally.

**The wind of change**

The first cultural change ushered in Mizo life was their urge for education. A new script was innovated for them. Before that they used Bengali alphabets for Mizo writing. It was Roman alphabets that made their language more acceptable cross cutting the inter tribal barriers and advanced them towards Mizo integration.
The Missionaries in Mizoram never tried to break down the Mizo ethnic spirit. So inspite of church activism in Mizo social life, the Mizos fought for their freedom against the British. The church either played a neutral role or never interfered with their fighting spirit even against the Christian invaders. Therefore, the Mizo nationalism never remained ever fortified.

**The unmeasured Mizo spirit**

The national aspiration of the Mizos was not properly estimated or assessed by Delhi in 1947. Had there been any proper evaluation of that aspiration in the backdrop of history, the Mizos the Nagas and the Khasis, the main tribes of the North-east would not be kept under Assam state for so long. Assam too was inflicted with so many problems especially following the partition of India. The Mizos are basically peace loving people. According to Prof. Sailo, about 80 percent Mizos consider themselves Indians. They are now holding important positions in Central Government, corporate industries, and in other professions. They are contributing to the growth and development of the nation.

Mizo vernacular language brought the once disintegrated Mizos closer. Mizos living outside Mizoram have formed their own Mizo Associations. Mizo Books and magazines established link among the dispersed Mizo population with their birth place Mizoram. Mizo books have a sizeable readership among them. A positive Mizo nationalism thus was able to appreciate Indian ethos-unity in diversity.
The message of social changes through Mizo Literature

In every literature songs and Lyrics have tremendous influences upon people. The Mizos were basically a folk society and the basic social formation has undergone little change over the years as no industrial society replaced their fundamental social fabric.

However being exclusively an agricultural state Mizoram does not offer much employment opportunity. With the setting up of a huge Central University and several undergraduate colleges chances for going abroad and seeking jobs in national open job market have become wide open. The Mizo youths now-a-days do not need to go Shillong, Silchar, Guwahati or Kolkata for higher studies. Nevertheless it is creating another problem of brain drain. Graduates are now leaving Mizoram, especially the bright students are migrating to big cities in India for employment and professional studies. Because a small state without industrialisation can hardly afford to keep all her highly educated population in its own territory so the new generation of intellectuals are obviously leaving the state for better opportunities. So the product of Mizoram universities may not stay in Mizoram and the number of intellectual people may not proliferate in the State for future. This may create vaccum in cultural leadership in future. However social structure remaining the same, the village folks will continue to be the bulk readers of Mizo novels and other vernacular books. I have seen in Aizwal libraries that serious books are hardly issue. There are numerous classical books
wanting for readers. Without substantial number of intellectual population, serious readership could not be sustained. However with the establishment of Mizoram University a new intellectual class tends to emerge but this class may not be attracted to public libraries. The university library has a rich collection and quite competent to meet their requirements. The University must see along with producing thousands of graduates they must emphasis on turning out a new generation of young men with intellectual attainment. A University librarian who hails from Orissa told me except West Bengal and Kerala general library readership is declaining in all Indian states. Yet it may not be conclusively true with Mizoram. The reading public may not have used public libraries as expected but somehow they have kept up their reading habit.

The readership distraction as evidenced among the Mizo Youths stemmed from their modern life style notwithstanding has not touched the Mizo rural Society. So the rural people keep touch with the rural libraries regularly. It is an unique opportunities for the Mizoram Government to harness the energy of the village folk and use the rural libraries as vibrant village centres of activities. Unlike any Indian village, Mizo villages have not been urbanised to that extent that people are to be distanced from one another at the point of self alienation. The village society is still well knit and value based. Mr. Vanlarlruata Rangsi, argued that Mizo Rural Society; remains firmly integrated and provides opportunity
for community learning. This community based learning could change life of entire society provided the entire village forms a unit to express social will for change. For change at every level it is imperative to take the village chiefs into confidence in its stride towards a possible change in socio – cultural domain of the village Folks. Chiefs can ask the villagers to be more informative via library system. In many villages electricity is yet to reach but books can reach faster and can serve human purpose at any field. Mizos are no more a hunter society. Agriculture has provided them some amount of security as a regular source of food and strength. Now surplus produce established present generation Mizo people a closer ties and bonds with the society. The missionaries provided them basic vernacular education, that endow them with a sense of rationality allaying fear of ghosts and spirit, motivate them to look beyond their walls of hills and mountains. The long spell of Peace in Mizo history that provided them enough space to look at themselves is indeed a unique opportunity to inculcate more reading habits especially by Mizo rural Folk. The Government of India should focus more need of a library and more books to produce in vernacular language to utilize Mizo rural folk by revamping the Rural Library Movement. Let the right to education be metamorphosed to the right to read more books. This silent revolution may take off from the sleeping hamlets across the Blue Mountain. Books only can replace bullets forever.
In the next page I enclose a report on Public Library promotion activities initiated by the Raja Ram Mohun Roy Foundation for the entire North East and West Bengal.

Table – 1

For NE states, the states own contribution to RRRLF funded projects are given below incurred during 2011 – 12 (10:90 scheme)

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<th>Name of the States</th>
<th>Books</th>
<th>Storage</th>
<th>VCP</th>
<th>Seminar</th>
<th>Building</th>
<th>Mobile</th>
<th>Total Exp.</th>
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<td>X</td>
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<td>X</td>
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<td>X</td>
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</tbody>
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Chapter – XIII

Where all those readers are gone:
An analysis of Reading habit

Books are for reading as a cake is for eating.
A library can collect millions of books and like any other consumer goods can make them available to the readers. A publisher can publish a book and place them for sale in a book kiosk but ultimately it must go to a reader. Readers are not always buyers of books. Buyers are not always necessarily a reader. There is a famous Nineteenth Century Bengali Poem saying ‘The rich buys a book and only a wise would read it. Some books sell quickly and run editions. In a library some books are fast moving some moves at Snail Pace or never moves at all have to wait for ages to find out a reader. Books if not sell well, like medicine expire on a date. The publisher never gives further run and let it die its natural death. A book though is endowed with long longevity comparing with other print media like newspapers and magazines but all books are not immortals. They become out of circulation one day and some copies are kept with care in a public library who knows the price of a rare book is much more than that of any book now available in the market. During the pre-printing days, travellers would have trekked through arduous ways to find a script in an ancient library, temple or monastery. Even today the research scholars would take the some of amount of
trouble in search of a rare copy that is only kept in a particular public library. A library preserves such books for centuries, awaiting a reader to come any day. All books are not read by all or for all time. Some books are read for some time. Like a volcano some books may erupt for some time and then sleep for the eternity.

Some books may not get readers for the present time but cannot be said will not get readers in future. Unlike any other mundane product there are books without any expiry date. The responsibility of a librarian is to keep such books alive. To protect them from wear and tear, preserve them from decay and destruction, restore them from damage, not only for today but for tomorrow and day after tomorrow. A neighbourhood library works with limited objectives. With a prime concern to involve the community in public library movement, to motivate people to read to make them aware, informed and educated. Their motto is to spread the dictum: ‘Read and grow rich’. Books make readers prosperous, self reliant and resilient. Information is power. Books empower their readers put them in new mosaic of thought and action. Books bring about material, spiritual and aesthetic prosperity in a reader. Every book has a purpose.

When a commercial publisher publishes a book it is monetary investment for him with expectation of return. A librarian when hands out a book to a reader he or she expects in terms of emotional change in the reader. Information may change life of the reader. Information is considered as a catalyst for
socio cultural changes round the world. Library is more and more getting into conceptual changes. That’s why a librarian is no more a passive issuing clerk of books rather acts as a motivator, a change agent to utilize his or her job in a meaningful way. In that sense a librarian is a teacher-communicator. People need to come to the library to make himself or herself updated and should be ever ready for sustainable change. The pre condition for socio cultural change of a society depends on individual reading habit and proper use of public library. Reading habit grows in a family. It is primarily a parental concern then it is nurtured in school and in a neighbourhood public library. Our survey has shown that our 50 percent school and college students have somehow developed a reading habit and mostly they were inspired by their parents. Reading habit once grow die hard. Our survey among the general people further shows that our reading public once formed reading habit keeps it all through, irrespective of professions they take to in future. On the other hand a very small percentage of our literate population use public library although public libraries are free or charge is very nominal.

Those who once grew reading habit if not use public library for various reasons buy books even borrow from their friends. Also all books bought out of impulse from the Book Fairs are not alwaysread by the buyers. On the other hand books borrowed from public libraries against fixed deadline of return are mostly read. Reading, strengthens power of vocabulary,
communication skill and ultimately help those attributes develop one’s self. A total personality could be achieved through book reading.

**The text book readers**

I interviewed a group of college students at Malda District Library who came to library for consulting reference books to prepare themselves for competitive examinations. Many of them confessed they never had read a single book outside their text. Some of them might have read some books but none was a regular borrower of library books. I told my young friends that I was examiner for Civil Service examination for many years and while correcting their answer scripts found that many students lacked in originality and had reproduced simple notes notwithstanding some had displayed creativity and superb communication ability. Ultimately those people who were able to hit the bull’s eye were voracious readers of books. So reading books at random does not harm one’s school study programme rather intensify them. This is not the place to criticize our education system. No system is completely perfect but either leaves some snags or develops certain gaps. The supplementary education received from various social and cultural media bridge those gaps and make a complete human being. I have interviewed about 13 intellectuals of Bengal and they all in one word said that unless they had developed reading habit from their school days they could not have been made what they are today. Many schools ignore this aspect. The government sanctioned
a post of librarian for each aided school in West Bengal. But many schools would not utilize them professionally sometimes instead of taking library class they are engaged in general subject teaching against particular vacant post. School libraries are not allowed to develop properly. Many school schools have no proper library room. Reading library books have not been made part of class routine. Unless this is done and book reading is included as a compulsory paper in school examinations the reading habit would hardly improve. Even the subject teachers in schools had miserably failed to impart the students some relevant supplementary information pertaining to the subject. Charts, slides and films are hardly used. The Newspaper education what is being imparted in different schools in the U.S.A. met with great success. This is unheard of in our schools. There are plenty of general books on all subjects written for the children. They are readily available in English and Bengali. The subject teachers atleast could display some famous books to the students or could have read out excerpts from them to arouse their interests. They would definitely add more dimension to teaching and arouse interest in both for the subject and the book.

**Creativity degenerates**

I have had experiences of holding few dozens workshops for school children in different schools in different districts in West Bengal and the programme of workshops included tests of children’s creative writing skills. So far I have examined the scripts of few hundred secondary school students. They
are the dismal illustrations of our students poor language and literature skill. Many higher class students when asked to write independently about some common subjects they failed to express correctly in their own mother tongue. Even they failed to spell out common words. In our survey when we asked to mention the students to write names of their favourite books a big number of students named some single piece from some famous writers collected from school texts and claimed to have read the original books. They have not even seen the original book, only have read the particular excerpts from the book in school text books. They do not feel comfortable to write anything independently and even in their bid to fill up the questionnaire see each others copy.

During the British Period our entire education system designed by Macaulay to produce clerks. In independent India our education system too prepares clerk but only unemployable clerks. An official record has already indicated that our 25 percent techies are only employable. Most of them are unable to use school education in job market. Our graduates are taking up group ‘D’ jobs and accept other jobs for mechanical duty like police constable, security guards, call centre operators etc.

With the fall of general readership its impact is felt in every area of life. To distract people’s attention from the abysmal fall in teaching standard the various education Boards are now artificially raising marks. Once English Social Historian George Macaulay Trevelyan said that ‘education had produced
a vast population able to read but unable to distinguish what is worth reading’. Our children are taught that only the class notes sure success and key notes are worth reading even a similar survey among the post graduate literature students would bear out Macaulay’s remark as many of them had not read the original drama of George Barnard Shaw or Shakespeare not to speak of any novel by Galsworthy or Jane Austen. How many students of M.A. Bengali have read all works of Bankim Chandra or Rabindra Nath. Without reading original books none can improve reading and writing skills. American Society was concerned about the decline in SAT Score and traced the origin of the problem.

I quote from Wilson – Anderson and Fieldings’ article namely

**Children’s Book-Reading Habits:**
**A New Criterion for Literacy**

Here is the excerpts.

‘Throughout history, concern about reading and writing skills has ebbed and flowed. In this country, particularly over the last 30 years or so, the tide in reading has been on the upsurge. Years of seeming decline in Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) scores, a growing awareness of adult illiteracy, outcries about phonics, and management-by-objectives schemes are all symptoms of the persisting interest in reading. The current emphasis in school instruction, however, has been on the component skills of reading rather than on reading itself.
According to data in the Reading Report Card, one might imagine that American schools are doing an effective job of teaching reading skills (National Assessment of Educational Progress, 1985). The decline in SAT scores has leveled off. More minority children seem to be learning to read. Progress is still needed in teaching the intermediate and advanced level skills, but the picture is generally positive: achievement test scores are rising.

But questions remain. Are test scores the only standard by which to evaluate the efficacy of school reading programs? Should we not be concerned about the kinds of reading Americans are doing? From our own research, it appears that Trevelyan's observation about British education may well be true in the United States today.

Test scores are an indicator of how well students use some reading skills taught in school. But they are by no means a sufficient predictor of whether students actually read. Our research over the last five years shows only that those who can read may. Many don't.

Why shouldn't school reading programs be evaluated on the basis of their out of school outcomes — in terms of how much reading students do, how many books, magazines, newspapers, even comic books they read in a year? Why shouldn't the level of literacy in America today be measured not only by test scores, but by the amount of reading Americans actually do?
Youth reading habit:  
A national Scenario

The National Survey report on Reading shows reading habits among the youths in India that in urban area 32.4 percent and in rural areas 21.3 percent educated youths read books. I have made an independent survey among 481 schools and college students in West Bengal to assess their reading habit (please see the survey result in the concluding part of this chapter). West Bengal youths are comparatively in advantageous position in book reading. About 50 percent children and youths in West Bengal read books about 30 percent of them regularly. The non reading children’s problem is getting enormous day by day as their habitual reluctance to reading making him or her a non achiever of life too. Coming into a detail analysis on the causes of non reading, it will be quite relevant here to have glimpse over the NYR 2009, a national Survey of Youth Readership. Firstly look at the some salient features of the outcome of the survey.

NYRS 2009: Some Revelations

- The total youth population in India (13-35 years) is 459 million (2009) constituting about 38 per cent of the total population and is expected to reach 574 million by 2020.
- NYRS-2009 covers the population of the Literate youth (the core target group in this study) in India consisting of 333 millions in 2009, which is 73 per cent of total youth population and 27.4 per cent of the total population of India.
- 62 per cent of the Literate youth reside in rural areas while the rest 38 per cent reside in urban areas.
• Of the Literate youth population, 56 per cent are male and 44 per cent are female.

• Among literate youth, 25 per cent could be classified as readers the ones preferring to read beyond their curriculum for knowledge enhancement', 'pleasure or relaxation', broadly referred to as 'leisure reading'.

• In urban areas, 32.4 per cent of the literate youth are 'readers', while in the rural areas the share is 21.3 per cent.

• Of the total male Literate youth, 24 per cent are readers, whereas of the total female Literate youth 27 per cent are readers.

• Readership is directly linked to the level of education of literate youth. Higher the level of educational attainment, greater the proportional share of readers from these segments. While only 9 per cent primary literate youth are readers and it goes up to 53 per cent in the case of graduate youth.

• While 41.7 per cent of the readers showed preference for fiction books. 22.8 per cent were inclined towards non-fiction and 34.5 per cent were comfortable with both genres.

• Among non-fiction books, 31.4 per cent readers prefer religious books, 30.3 per cent biographies/auto-biographies, 12 per cent current affairs, 9 per cent philosophy, 8.6 per cent self-help books and 4.3 per cent liked travel books.

• 46.4 per cent of the readers gave 'knowledge enhancement' as the first reason for reading leisure books and 24.4 per cent gave it the second reason.

• Among youth readers, Hindi is the language if first preference for reading books among 33 per cent followed by Marathi (13.2%) and Bengali (7.7%).

• English is the second preferred language for reading books among 43.2 per cent of youth readers, followed by Hindi 131.2%) and Bengali 15.3%).

• 40.7 per cent youth readers are aware of the bookshops in their Locality and 35.7 per cent know of a library in their locality.

• 39 per cent of the youth readers have visited the book promotion events at least once; however, only
15 per cent of the total youth population have visited the book promotion events.

- The first preferred source of information about books for literate youth are in this order: Friends / family (138%), bookshops (19.8%), Libraries (13.7%), teachers (11.8%), newspaper / magazines (6.6%), television (4.7%), book exhibitions/fairs (7.5%), radio (1.0%).

- Three first preferred factors kept in mind while buying books by the literate youth are price (29.2%), subject (28.5%) and authors profile (25.9%).

- 74.5 per cent of the Literate youth believe that reading is more important than watching television or surfing Internet.

- 40 per cent of the respondents feel that publishing houses have a very important role to play in the society, while 28 per cent feel that the role was somewhat important.

There are some more details about youth reading habits as follows:

- Amongst the literate youth, the highest proportion (41%) belongs to the age group 25-35 years, which is the primary work force of the country.

- Level of education among the youth is directly related to their parents' education. Nearly 54 per cent of the professional degree holders, 38 per cent of postgraduates and 30 percent graduates have parents with 'above matric' qualification. Most thinly educated youth come from parents who have not completed their school education.

- The educational achievement of literate youth is also closely linked to the major source of household income. The majority of the 'graduate and above' youths belong to regular salary/wage-dependent households. The youth with meager education belong to families engaged as labour (42%).

- The occupation of parents does influence the education level of the youth. About 71 per cent of youth with professional degrees and 59 per cent of the post-graduates have salaried parents or those self-employed in non-agriculture, while the proportion of the highly-educated with Labourer-parents is very small [9-13%].

- Of all the Literate youth, about 10 per
About 59 per cent of the youth with graduate degrees and 69 per cent with post-graduate degrees reside in towns and cities. The share is as high as 86 per cent when the youth have professional degrees.

About 32 per cent of the Literate youth are students and 20 per cent are engaged in 'unpaid housework'; only 12 per cent are salaried employees.

Of the total literate youth in the country, the major portion (177.8 million) comes from the south Indian states constituting about 23 per cent, while another 21 per cent come from central Indian states.

Youths’ Exposure to Mass Media : NYR Survey.

About 77 per cent of the literate youth population is interested in music & films, 72 per cent in news & current affairs, 59 per cent in religious and spiritual topics, 35 per cent in science and technology and 34 percent in environmental pollution. More males than females are interested in news and politics, but the reverse is the case with fashion and religious and spiritual topics.

Television remains the most popular source of information for the youth followed by newspapers. However, while 54 percent of the youth view television for entertainment and 22 per cent for news and current affairs, about 63 percent read newspapers to gather news and information on current event and only 10 per cent reading for entertainment.

Watching TV is the most preferred Leisure activity, followed by newspaper reading. In fact, a Literate youth spends on an average 98 minutes daily viewing TV, 32 minutes on newspaper reading, 44 minutes reading magazines, 70 minutes surfing the net, and 61 minutes per day listening to the radio.

About 24 per cent of households have newspaper subscription [15% rural, 39% urban] and 8 percent [5% rural, 12% urban] magazine subscription. Four out of every seven households of 'graduate and above' youth and three out of every eight urban households have newspaper subscription.

Two out of every eight households of 'graduate and above' youth, one out of every eight households of ‘higher secondary’ passed, and one out of every 15 households of 'primary' passed have magazine subscription.

More girls than boys show interest in reading books during Leisure time but more boys than girls read newspapers. Readership of books, newspapers and magazines also
increases with rising Level of education but decreases with increasing age. The proportion of those reading books during Leisure time declines with increasing age groups.

- Hindi, with 38.5 per cent followed by Marathi (10.5%) and Tamil 19%) have emerged as the three most preferred Languages for newspaper readers.

- The literate youth had a higher level of confidence in newspapers than TV. However, about 75 per cent of Internet users expressed confidence in the Internet.

- Almost 65 percent of the youth households in India own TV, 54 per cent own mobile phones, 27 percent own radio and 5 percent have own computers at home. About 86 per cent of the urban households own TV as against 52 per cent in the case of rural households.

- The internet is accessed by 3.7 per cent of the youth 17.7% urban, 1.3% rural), for e-mails and chatting in more than half of the cases. It is used for entertainment in 14 per cent of the time, for reading books online in 4 per cent of the cases and also to search for new book titles in 1.2 per cent of the cases. It is accessed at Internet cafes in 46 per cent of the cases, at home in 23 per cent, and at the workplace in 13 per cent.

**Youth Readers : Their Reading Habits and Attitudes :**

- Of the 83 million total youth readers 125% of the youth population), about 39 million (471/6) are urban and 44 million (53%) are rural; 53 per cent of the literate youth are mates; frequency of readers amongst mates and females is 24 and 27 per cent respectively; frequency of readers in rural and urban segments is 21 and 31 percent respectively.

- With 58 per cent of the readers, the Level of education attained is matriculation or below, only 42 per cent are above matriculation.

- The southern region has 24 per cent youth readers, followed by the eastern and western regions, both having nearly 22 per cent readers, the central region(12%), the northern region(13%) and the north-eastern belt having the least share of youth readers(7%).

- About 43 per cent of Christian and 25 per cent of Hindu youth read Leisure books. Readership among the Sikh youth is 13 per cent. 'The Hindu readers constitute about 82 per cent of the total readers as against 12 per cent share of Muslims.

- Youth belonging to joint families and even those staying in hostels or other places of accommodation read more than those staying in nuclear families.

- Readership is closely liked to parents ‘Level of education’. While 49 per cent of youth with 'graduate and
above' parents and 39 per cent with 'higher secondary' parents read leisure books, it is only 17 per cent among youth with illiterate parents. However, youth with 'graduate and above' parents form only 12 per cent of the total readers as against 47 per cent in case of youth with primary passed or illiterate parents.

- Readership is also significantly higher among youth with salaried (30%, retired [39%] parents compared to youth with agriculturist or labourer parents (22%).
- While 40 percent of readers have salaried parents, only 32 per cent have agriculturist or labourer parents.
- About 25 percent of literate youth read books for pleasure, relaxation and knowledge enhancement; more females (12/6) read leisure books than mates (24%).
- The reading habit is more among the younger generation compared to elder youth since many youth in higher age groups are likely to be involved with other activities to sustain their families. Readership also declines towards lower Levels of education.
- Hindi is the most preferred language for leisure reading (33.4%) followed by Marathi (13.2%), Bengali (17.7%) and English (5.3%).
- Youth readers prefer to read leisure books mostly on holidays (36%) while only about 4 per cent read on working days; 75 per cent read books 'at least once a week', while 26.4 percent read 'daily'; about 88 percent read at 'home', only a miniscule reading in their schools/colleges or libraries.
- There was a clear association between books possessed by a youth and her or his being a reader or non-reader.
- Fiction is the most preferred genre among the youth (142%) followed by non-fiction (124%). Three most preferred genres of fiction books are fantasy, comics and classics and the least preferred are romance and graphic novels. Most preferred non-fiction books are religious books and biographies / autobiographies.
- About 39 per cent youth are members of public libraries, 46.2 per cent of school/college Libraries, and 14.7 per cent of other libraries, which include private institutions as well.
- Surprisingly, only 3 per cent of literate youth visited book promotion events 'every year'; a staggering 85 per cent have never visited these events. There was a clear positive association between readership status and visits to book promotion events.
- The four most important reasons for not reading enough are 'lack of interest in reading', 'lack of time to read', 'advent of new channels of information' and 'lack
of availability of books at affordable prices'.

- Asked how they got information about books, 38 per cent of the youth said that they obtained it from friends/family while 20 per cent said that they got the information from bookshops, and 14 per cent relied on Libraries.

- About the modes of procurement of books, 56 per cent talked of buying books and 19 per cent youth liked to borrow from friends.

- White buying leisure books price, subject, and author profile are the three most important factors taken into consideration by youth readers.

- Asked to indicate the purpose of reading from a list given, 46 per cent chose 'knowledge enhancement' and 19-20 per cent each said that they read for 'pleasure' and 'relaxation'.

- To the query, 'Do you think that you read enough' 51 per cent of the youth readers replied in the affirmative, 35 per cent said they did not read enough but would like to read more.

Luring the Youth Into Reading:

- Schools have emerged as the hotbed of readership development. About 59 per cent of the youth who had a reading habit said they were initiated into reading in their school, while about 20 per cent teamed it from their parents.

- Asked whether their teachers encouraged them to read, 50 per cent of the readers and 19 per cent of the non-readers answered in the affirmative as against the overall percentage of teacher encouragement (27%).

- Almost 83 per cent of the youth with a reading habit found the reading hour in their schools interesting, while 65 per cent of the non-readers found it interesting.

- In the case of readers, parents' reading interest and involvement was comparatively more than that in the case of non-readers.

- About 28 per cent of the youth tend Leisure books to friends and family members, 12 per cent have presented gifts to others while another 12 per cent received gifts.

- Peer influence on the reading habit was clearly visible when 74 per cent of the readers reported that their peers had interest in reading, while only 34 per cent of the non-readers did so.

- The majority of the youth agreed that students who read books beyond their syllabus become more knowledgeable and successful. About 75 per cent agreed that reading is more important than watching TV or surfing the net. Nearly 77 percent also agreed that books were the most suitable medium
for knowledge transmission.

- About half the respondent youth shared the perception that the reading habit was declining. Almost 48 per cent found the advent of the Internet and electronic media as the most important reason for the declining trend in reading.

- Three suggestions for promoting reading habit that found the maximum support of the youth are motivation and encouragement, compulsory leisure reading in schools, and easy access to libraries, with motivation and encouragement being supported by the maximum number of youth.

**General Awareness and Perception of Indian Youth:**

- Although a larger proportion (61%) of the Literate youth are satisfied with their overall achievement, the percentage of those not satisfied (34%) is still too large to merit closer observation. There was a distinct difference in the satisfaction Levels of those who had the reading habit (70%) and non-readers [58%].

- Financial difficulties, household responsibilities, and parents/husband not permitting emerged as the paramount reasons for the youth not pursuing higher education.

- More youth were aware about NREGA and SSA — two programmes directly linked to livelihood and education, while awareness about RTI was very low.

- Newspapers / magazines and television emerged as the main sources of information about the development programmes.

- About 67 per cent of the Literate youth agreed with reservation for women in the Parliament and local government.

- While an overwhelming proportion (76%) of the Literate youth said they were religious, almost 48 per cent believed that good luck is more important than hard work for success with an equal percentage in urban and rural areas.

- About 75 per cent Literate youth evinced some amount of interest in science-25 per cent being very much interested in science and 50 per cent being fairly interested.

- The majority of the urban youth and more mates agreed that global warming, biodiversity and environmental pollution were serious issues.

- About 40% of the literate youth felt that publishing houses have a 'very important' role to play in society, and as such an almost equal percent (139%) of them also perceived a 'very important' role for the editors in these publishing houses.
The readership fall: West Bengal perspective

In this perspective let us find out the causes behind the decline in readership among West Bengal Youths.

People generally tend to blame the TV and Video games as most distractive force for reading. It may be to some extent true with college and University students especially for the Urban affluent children. But our survey taken from the districts will hardly hold TV and Video responsible for readership fall. In the districts majority of school children have no computer at home and many children cannot afford the luxury of visiting Cyber Café. Almost all children told that if story books are made handy to them they would positively love to read. So this is the problem of reach and motivation.

There is not a single normal infant in any country who is not attracted to any colourful book, not excited with fairy tales told at bed time by mother or grand mother. A child learns reading by listening bed time stories. Do new age mothers have got time and patience to read out books to their children? How many parents encourage children to read story books? Many parents buy books for them when they are very young but would discontinue their patronage when grow up and discourage them to ‘waste time’ with ‘an unnecessary reading’. Only those who become compulsive readers would not give up reading habit and would read clandestinely. But each grown up child is frightened about their career prospect and fix up prority accordingly. Parents may approve some
other idle activities like playing indoor games, playing outdoors, some parents get their wards admitted to swimming class, dance class. Music class even I came across parents getting their ward admitted to cricket coaching and karate classes, but I came across only one mother at Malda district library escorting her twelve year old to the district library every day to distract her child from TV addiction. Very few guardians would encourage or motivate their child to read books. Public libraries must first motivate parents through seminars where experts would spell out that books never spoil one rather who do not read books, are more prone to spoil themselves.

A detail National Survey (NYRS 2009) was made once on the reading habits of the youths. Though in our limited survey we have seen that in this present Socio - Political condition in West Bengal about 50 percent students keep up their reading habits on and would love to be involved in pleasure reading. The more advanced students are always readers of general books or story books. In our survey of some meritorious students we have found 50 percent of them would read atleast one book a month for pleasure. But it is not that there is no exception. We have found there are non readers or poor readers among the students who made brilliant results in Secondary Board Examination. Public library no doubt meets all hunger for books but inspite of strong urge for reading many people cannot read for varieties of valid reasons. A
British researcher has assigned such reasons among British readers.

‘It would seem quite likely that one of the reasons why some people generally do read books and some do not is quite simply that some people find it easier than others to get access to books.

‘What most people read is determined largely by the publications within their reach. People do not read publications they cannot get, and they are not directly affected by publications they do not read. What people would read if they could and what they actually do read are not the same’. *

People get access to books in the following ways: they buy them; they receive them as gifts; they borrow them from other people; they encounter them in libraries. There are, of course, subtle variations – the book that is read over a neighbour’s shoulder in the train, the book that is borrowed from a friend. Public library no doubt meets all hunger for books but in spite of strong urge for reading many people cannot read for varieties of valid reasons.

* Donald Waples, Bernard Berelson and Frank R Bradshaw What reading does to people: a summary of evidence on the social effects of reading and a statement of problems for research University of Chicago Press, 1940) p-44.
Readership in Social setting

Literacy is no doubt one of the 4 pre-conditions of reading habit development. But literacy alone is not enough to develop readership habit. The increase in literacy has increased in reading habit in Mizoram villages but the same is not true in Tripura.

So literacy alone does not make a reader, it only makes a potential reader. The growth of the reading public in our country during the freedom movement time among the literate people was much more comparing to the present days. In those days every educated person would feel reading was his/her Pious duty. Now a highly educated Person is free from such inhibition. Even professionals like Teachers, Journalists, Lawyers, Doctors, Engineers may feel complacence with their limited knowledge about general subjects like, history, literature, philosophy. Even the traditional sources of folk communication have dried up at grass root level, the women and village neo literates have now-a-days no alternative but to surrender themselves to Television and Cinema which contentwise offer very little knowledge gain beyond high entertainment appeals. In Great Britain Raymond Williams calculated that one third of adult population are non readers. In India the rate will be two third.

With the passage of time our environmental conditions are no more congenial for reading. For instance once I used to see many daily passengers reading library books on train while
commuting. Now-a-days local trains are so crowded that it is impossible to get a room into it and more difficult to open pages. But why long distance passengers in reserved seats wont read during journey time is a legitimate question. A Bengali publisher once introduced Bengali paper backs for long distance train passengers but failed as the Bengalee readers did not accept that facility. On the other hand Hindi paper back still make roaring business. It proves the new culture of buying Bangla paper back during journey have not been popular as yet. Some Bengalee readers would rather prefer English – educated Bengali reading public for reasons abhors reading Bangla books publicly. However Magazines are most acceptable than books as travel companion. There are certain cultural barriers in book reading. Many rural homes still do not have electricity. Many homes cannot afford space for peaceful reading. Many urban homes need minimum lighting facilities. In town a public libraries provide reading room facilities but in villages many libraries lack in reading space. A modern working person is so strained in the face of 9-6 pm working hours that he or she never feels to read any more. Gone are the days when the public office clerks were the most voracious readers for not having much work pressure. Many Govt. clerks having placed their spectacles on their office desk would have disappeared after signing the office attendance register to do his or her own chores or some woman scribe could feel comfortable knitting or reading a novel during her office hours for very little to
work in office. But now-a-days increased office pressures has altered their easy going work culture. So book reading became the first casualty yet other leisure activities not. But history will tell us the working hours in work place during the 18th and 19th century England was much longer than today. Even today the Babus working in public and private sectors do not work more than 10 hrs. a day but 5 days a week. With one month paid holiday which is unheard of in many countries. In western_countries several studies have been made on leisure alone or how to wrench out leisure time amidst busy casual of a working man.

Many people skip lunch, eat fast food, sleep less to fight against on rushing time but on the other hand has any of our entertainment industry gone out of business except book reading? Indian Cinema, Spectator Sports, Television, group theatres, social media, holidaying have any of them confronted a battle that posed to determine their life and death question? The daily time span has not exceeded 24 hrs. and every entertainment industry even the famous ‘Adda’ of the Bengalees have not died down if lessoned and time adjusted. But why book reading is considered as wastage of time if not money or no time for reading.

**A British researcher observes:**

Many would raise the basic question when to read? Addison and Dryden could at least choose the time of day when it suited them to do their reading and writing. For most
people, time to read has to be found in the hours that are left after the demands of work have been met. In the past, these demands have been prodigious. The average working day in the Manchester mills in 1825 was between twelve and a half and fourteen hours. There are also reports of children working fifteen hours a day in cotton mills and eighteen hour a day in the mines.

Of course our present day Babus do not put so much labour as nineteenth century miners. But there is a growing tendency among the educated working class to find out a slightest pretext to avoid reading a book. Because of our faulty education system that compelled us develop hatred and inertia to read books. We did neither get minimum training for book reading nor we have been taught the purpose of reading. The school text books appeared to the most of the students as the most necessary evils that spoiled their all youthful pleasures. He or she has been taught that books are the instruments only to score highest marks in examinations and their utility ends as degrees are delivered. So after having finished school-college education very few are inclined to read no further. Unless we motivate our children love to read it is not possible to grow reading habit among the larger sections of educated people. Now-a-days working time has expanded but also the growth of leisure too. But the growth of leisure has been accompanied by the growth of a thousand and one ways of spending leisure.
Karl Mannhein in his The Sociology of Knowledge argued. “Literacy, access, environment and time are the four necessary conditions for reading. They are necessary, but they are not sufficient: there are people who learned to read at school, who live in comfortable houses within easy reach of libraries and bookshops, who work fewer than eight hours a day, and yet choose to spend their free time on occupations other than reading. And there are engineers, scientists, designers, who in the course of their work prefer to get their information from informal and oral sources rather than published ones. The hard core reader is the person who satisfies the four necessary conditions and, in addition, is motivated to read”.

‘Motivation’ is the buzz word in reading habit formation. The reader must feel why one should read. If one reads for pleasure or for gaining knowledge the purpose of reading must be imbibed by heart to make the impulse inseparable from one’s intellect. Reading itself is fathomless resource for learning. A great work is not only read it settles down in our hearts and mind.

In our study to define a person a reader we sought to assess the three criteria such as:

1) Whether the respondent is still reading a book or just having finished one.
2) Whether the people use library.
3) Whether the respondent’s house contains at least 20 books.

People who are not a user of a library may be a good reader if he or she is in habit of buying books. Sometimes for a busy employed person it is not possible to visit library due to erratic business schedule. But book stalls at the Airports and busy Railway Stations cater to the need of such book lovers.

Most reading situations are reached by the following four access routes; purchase; gift; interpersonal borrowing; library encounter (The term ‘encounter’ is used here in preference to ‘borrowing’ because there is a need to bring together under one heading all the reading situations where the library is the point of access, regardless of whether the actual reading takes place in the library or out of it.

What are the barriers that prevent potential readers from getting access to books? First, distance of the reader from the access point. People living over a mile away from a public library are much less likely to be members than those who live within a mile of it.

However, the British researchers come to a point that, inconvenient sitting (as distinct from distant sitting). If distance were the only barrier, its removal would in all conscience be difficult enough; but, even if it were possible to set up library service-points on a one mile grid throughout populated areas, they would remain unvisited if their locations turned out to be in the kinds of place that are not frequently
visited, e.g. residential or industrial areas, or areas badly served by public transport.

In fact, of course, the first barrier — distance — is modified by the second — the character of the library’s location. A special journey to a library half a mile away in a ‘civic centre’ is half a mile farther than a one mile journey to the shops where one always goes to do the week’s shopping. And both are in turn modified by something that we are to consider later; the motivation of the reader. In my school day I used to walk down 3 to 4 km every week to reach my public library to borrow books. Even for one year I used to commute every month to reach another library by train.

As far as bookshops are concerned, Peter Mann has made a sketchy beginning in Chapter 3 of *Books, buyers and borrowers*, where he attempts to map the geographical distribution of bookshops in the UK. The basis of his map is the number of thousands of people per bookshop for all the counties in England, Scotland and Wales and a selection of 157 towns in England and Wales. This basis would seem to be not only crude but precarious: the opening or closure of one bookshop in Poole would bring about a dramatic change in its ratio of 24,000 per bookshop.

What is true with British readers is true with our readers. For instance the librarian of West Bengal State Central Library was arguing as the location of the library is not inside the neighbourhood, the rate of daily users fall. The Calcutta
Metropolitan Library was shifted from exclusive Bengali Middle Class neighbourhood to Posh Cosmopolitan neighborhood, the membership was affected to a large extent.

So far the village libraries are concerned the population ratio per library was not taken into consideration although this is not very strong argument, but we are not ruling out the British argument as one of the causes for decline of readership.

In this background let us analyse different segments of profile of readers I came across in 3 states, Assam, Mizoram and West Bengal. About Tripura I have already mentioned in previous chapters.
Reading habit Study
Part - I

1) Reading habit among the working women in Kolkata:

Do the working women work and read?

The answer is simple ‘yes’, contrary to popular hunch our survey of 80 working women in Kolkata staying at working women hostel at Gole Park reveals that 65% of working women read books regularly of them 31.25% are library members.

The following chart will give an exhaustive idea:

1) The survey gives out the library use pattern.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Used one library each</th>
<th>Uses more than two libraries</th>
<th>Uses 4 libraries at a time.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
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</table>

Number of books read in a month persons

1 : 7
2 : 4
2+ : 33

Maximum number of habitual readers would read more than 2 books a month (33 persons)
Most of the working women develop reading habit at school (51), 4 persons developed the habit from college and of late developed reading habit is only 4.

24 persons get books from library. 16 library users buy books. 10 persons loan books from friends. As many as 27 persons who are not members of a library would borrow books from friends. Books are very seldom given as a gift. Only one woman admits she gets books as gift. Of 35 women who buy books regularly are 16 library members and 19 are not library users. 42 persons have their personal library with some collection of books ranging from few books to 200. At least 5 persons have 50 book personal library each, only one woman collected 200 books. 16 persons have less than 50 collections.

Working girls interviewed have following qualifications.

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<th>Qualification</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Post-graduate</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>LLB degree holders</td>
<td>01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduate</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HS and Madhyamik</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2) Married Women in Villages:

We have interviewed 13 married women living in different villages in West Bengal including 6 housewives, 6 working women and 1 retired person. They are all educated. The rate of literacy is so widespread now, that even we find as many
as 5 post-graduates among 13. There are 3 graduates, 1 H.S. and 4 matriculates, their husbands are working (5), retired Teacher (1), Professional (2) and two women are widow. This is interesting to note that out of 13 women, 12 have reading habits. Only one answered bluntly that she abhors reading.

Among those habitual readers as many as 10 women informed that they read more than one book a month.

The subject choice among them is as follows:

- Novel: 5
- Short stories: 6
- Poetry: 6
- Essays: 4
- Books in need: 3
- Religion: 2
- Cooking: 2
- Jevanbadi (positive life) books: 2
- Detective: 1
- Politics: 1
- Science: 1
- Others: 1

The popular belief that religion and politics are most favourite subjects to the Bengalees do not cut any dent in their subject choice. Women still favour novels and short stories in the list of priorities. Contradicting the most of the publishers’
argument that short stories do not sell, the most of the readers in all segments place short stories as one of their favourities.

3. **Reading habit among village Women**:

Reading habit has brought about revolutionary changes in the outlook of our village women.

**Total Sample - 13**

As many as 8 women support free mixing and only 5 would not. None was found to support castism. Most of the women opined (7) that women would decide for themselves. What type of dress code they would choose. Only 3 women do not agree, that women should be guided by any dress code. 10 women out of 13 agree that our society is male dominated and women are not totally independent. But according to three women women are more liberated now-a-days.

All said and done 12 women are in favour of complete ‘women’s lib. 10 women agree that women must choose their life partners themselves but 3 of them preferred arranged marriage partners themselves but three of them differ. Notwithstanding their liberal views as many as 11 women strongly opine that marriage should be the sole destination of womanhood. Because it is not possible for a woman to remain single throughout the life.

All 13 women interviewed agreed that book reading has changed their life. Without reading their life would have been
incomplete. 11 of them have grown reading habit to their children. Only two women could not succeed to impart reading habit among their children. 8 of them accompany their children to Kolkata Book Fare every year. 12 of them (except one) allow their children to read and never prevent them from reading on the plea that it would disturb their studies.

**Reading habit in two North-Eastern States. A survey among the general people at Guwahati Book Fair, held in January, 2013.**

To ascertain the book reading habit among the cross section of Assamese readers who attended 14th North East Book Fair held in January, 2013 at Guwahati, the author took a random survey at the Guwahati Book Fair. The survey revealed that the majority age group attended the fair was between 18 and 30. They represented about 36.6% of the total respondents. The other age groups were as follows:

- 30 to 40 = 8 (19.5%)
- 40 to 50 = 8 (19.5%)
- Above 60 = 4 (9.75%)
- Below 18 = 3 (7.31%)
- Total : 23

1) It was found that among the respondents the majority was graduates (48%). There were 24.47% Post-Graduates. Minimum qualification was H.S. that was only 7.31% we found as many as 8 respondents admitted that they would not read book for various reasons, such as 2 persons had no interest, 5 persons had no spare time. 5 persons said that books were
not readily available to them: otherwise they had no aversion to reading.

It was found that among the regular book readers as many as 16 persons (39%) were the members of library. 2) Most readers buy books, i.e., 31 persons (75.6%) would borrow books from others to read. 3) Notwithstanding all respondents would not buy books at book fair. They came as on looker. Their number was found to be 12 (29.3%). 4) 8 of the respondents (19.5%) admitted that their annual book buying was budget was `2,000/- and this segment the majority book buyers. One person claimed that he had purchased books worth `10,000/-. Similarly another person declared his annual purchase of books amounted to `6,000/-. 4 persons would spend `5,000/- annually each for books. However this was the claim of the respondents that we took in good faith. Book reading acts upon different people differently. 5) Maximum number of readers (20) admitted books give them mental peace, 19 respondents would derive inspiration from books to meet the challenges of life. Books had brought about change in attitude and values to 16 persons. 5 persons argued that book had freed them from prejudices. 13 persons admitted that books made them refined.

**Reading habits**

6) Among the respondent 56.09% read more than 10 books a year (23 persons). 26.8% respondents had read 5 to 10
books a year (11 persons) I came across as many as 3 persons who had read at least 4 books a year, i.e., one book in every three months and only one person informed that he could read more than two books a year. The reading had a lasting effect and indelible imprint in readers' minds. This was evident from the following statement of the respondents.

**Influence of book on individual life:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Change effects</th>
<th>No. of respondent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a) Book reading made me more committed to my political views.</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b) Book reading made me conscious of my authenticity.</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c) Book reading changed my lifestyle.</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There were multiple choices. Maximum respondents chose No. C.

It must be noted that even 20 years ago Assamese reading public used to be connoisseurs of original Bengali literature and all Bengali books brought to the Guwahati Book Fairs by the famous Bengali publishers would all be sold out. The present generation, Assamese readers are not comfortable with Bengali and Hindi. So Bengali books are bought mostly by Bengalees. With the spurt of English medium schools in Assam younger generations prefer English books to Assamese. This has been reflected in our survey. As many as 65.8% respondents informed that their only comfortable language
was Assamese. Next choice was English. As many as 24 respondents would prefer to read only English books. So the choice of Bengali books come down to 7 only (17.07%). Only one person preferred Hindi.

Books’ role in Indian unity

Although Assamese book publication developed significantly over the years. But at least 20 respondents (48.8%) feel that there was dearth of adequate number of books in Assamese. On the other hand 13 respondents did not agree to this view. The most of the respondents agreed that books had not instigated ‘them to join the separatists against ‘deprivation of Assamese people’. Only 24.4% (10 persons) agreed to this leading question ‘I felt disturbed about centres’ step motherly attitude towards the North East. 20 respondents (48.8%) did not agree with the statement at all. There were 32 respondents (78%) were ‘conscious about the duty as a peaceful Indian citizen’. So far the books influence on adverse attitude formation was concerned 78 percent agreed that books had not created any negative effect among them. As many as 24 respondents would support the move for emotional integration of Assam with mainstream India despite insurgency. But at least six persons disagreed with the ‘integration issue’. They sided with the separatist view. There was one categorical questions for the respondents whether books had made any adverse effect in their mind on certain issues that made Assam once on the verge of disintegration. My study ensured that at least books had not
made rebel to the majority of Assamese readers. The question categorically was asked to the respondents “Do you agree book reading ultimately make you rebel?” Only 8 respondents agreed to the statement, and admitted books made them rebels but 19 categorically disagreed and said no book had so far influenced them to take the side with the separatists. Books had less influence on their political thought as media and inter personal contacts do.

6) Reading habit at Aizwal:

During my stay at Aizwal I took a sample survey among 17 respondent at random. I find that reading habit among the Mizos is so common that nine of those interviewees had read 10 books each during the last year.

The books read per year per head were as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Books read</th>
<th>Persons</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 → 2</td>
<td>2 persons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>1 person</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>4 persons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>1 person</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than 10 books</td>
<td>9 persons</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

50% of the respondents come out with some positive suggestions on book promotion they are:

1) Book reading should be made compulsory in all schools – (told by 8 persons)
2) Questions related to books must be made compulsory in all competitive examinations – (told by 8 persons)

3) Libraries must organise vigorous campaign for book reading – (told by 8 persons)

4) Book – subsidy should be provided for the book – buyers at Book Fares – (told by 6 persons).

5) Govt. should bear a part of publicity cost for book promotion – (told by 5 persons)

6) Govt. should provide subsidy for good books to the publishers – (told by 5 persons).

Book reading habit is so common in Mizoram that none but only one respondent would give excuse for not reading books for the paucity of time. All 16 respondents would somehow manage time to read books.

Using library was the Chief source of getting books among the book readers in Aizawl... 13 out of 17 were the members of a library. However, as many as 6 persons bought books from book stores. 5 managed to read books by borrowing from friends. Gifting book was uncommon and only one admitted that he used to get books as gift and presentation.

The Mizo readers would spend generously for book buying we have found at-least one person who claimed to have bought books worth `10,000/- to `15,000/- a year regularly. We have found another one whose annual book buying budget exceeded to `7,500/-. 3 persons said that their annual expenditure on buying books would range between `1,000/- and `1,500/-.

The lowest budget on book buying was found
to be `400/-.

Only one person belongs to that category. This small survey would show some trend in Mizo reading habit. Mizo vernacular language is getting popular medium for book lovers. 13 persons out of 17 would prefer books in Mizo language because they would feel comfortable in Mizo. One out of 17 would read only English books.

Mizo being one of the youngest languages in India now produce about 200 titles a year but 10 out of 17 interviewees felt there were not adequate number of books for reading available in Mizo and they were not satisfied with them. Only 7 respondents admitted there were not enough books in Mizo. Contrary to the popular belief in India that a well-read person might express dissentions against Indian Union and turn separatists, 12 out of 17 Mizo readers admitted that book reading had not instigated them to hold any separatist feeling. Only 5 person out of 17 would feel that book reading had made them dissentful. But they are negligible part.

Books and libraries rather made the modern educated well-read Mizo generation conscious about their duty as a peaceful citizen of India.

As many as 9 persons out of 17 agreed that more they read books more they feel integrated with the mainstream life of India. Books have some innate capacities to transform a person into a new order of life. Most of the Mizo reading people would like to be integrated with the mainstream India and they categorically admit that reading books have brought about changes in them.
### Break up of Respondents

**Total Respondents – 17**

3) **Age:**
   - 11 yrs. → 16 yrs = 8
   - 20 yrs → 29 yrs = 3
   - 30 + = 1
   - 40 + = 3
   - 50 + = 2

**Education:**
- School students (Class – V → X) = 8
  - BA = (2), B.Com = (1), M.A. = (2), M.Sc. = (1)
  - MLISc = (2), Ph.D. = (1)

4) **Occupation:**
   - Student = 8
   - NGO = 3, Govt. Job = 2, Ext. Job = 1
   - not answered = 3 persons.

5) I don’t read books because I have no spare time → 1

6) I read books regularly = 16

**Sources of book:** (From where I get book for reading)
- a) Library - 13
- b) Buy books - 6
- c) Borrow books - 5
- d) Presented by others - 1

7) How much spend annually on books?
   - `400/- = (1)
   - `1,000 → `1,500 = (3)
   - `7,500 = (1)
   - `10,000 to `15000 + (1)

8) a) Books made me free from prejudices → (7)
   b) Books made me more refine → (7)
   c) Books give me mental peace → (6)
   d) Books gave me inspiration to take challenges of life → (13)
e) Books have changed my personal attitude and values → (10)

9) How many books read in a year?

Books read regularly

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of books</th>
<th>Persons</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 → 2</td>
<td>(2) persons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>(1) persons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>(4) persons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>(1) persons</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

More than 10 read books = (9) persons

10) a) made me more committed to my political views → (5)

b) made me conscious of my identity → (8)

c) books have changed my life style → (8)
   I now wear better cloths → (3)
   I eat balanced diets → (3)
   I feel better intellectually → (3)

Suggestions:

11) a) book reading should be made compulsory in schools → (8)

   b) Questions related to books must be included in all competitive
      exam → (8)

   c) Libraries must lead vigorous campaign for book reading → (8)

   d) Book subsidy should be provided at book fares → (6)

   e) Govt. should bear publicity cost for book promotions → (5)

   f) Govt. should provide subsidy for good books to the publishers → (5)

12) Which language you feel comfortable for reading?
English → 9
Mizo language → 13
No Answer → 2

13) Do you have adequate books in ethnic languages:
   Yes → 10
   No → 7

14) More I read more I feel disturbed about deprivation of north East.
   Agree → (5) Disagree → (12)
   a) More I read more I become conscious about our duty as a peaceful citizen:
      Agree → (11) Disagree → (12)
   b) More I read more I am integrated with mainstream India.
      Agree → (9) Disagree → (7)
   c) Book reading may ultimately make me rebel.
      Agree → (2) Disagree → (3)

15) Among Six Persons:
    Book → 4
    Media → 5
    Film → 3
    Political – movement → 3
    Education → 3
    One person did not give answer.
Chapter – XIV

Who uses Public Library?

Reading habit study – Part -II

Notwithstanding the general decline in book reading habit the overall West Bengal scenario has not gone to a point of no return. We have taken a sample survey among 657 people under 8 segments and it reveals that till today 46.2% of respondents are still regularly using library and keeping their reading habit. Among the school children regular library goers are not more than 30%. But at college level the figure is as much as 52.17%. The habit of library going is much higher in the districts than Kolkata. Our survey shows that among 60 IT professionals living in Kolkata the percentage of library use is only 21.7%. A survey among 300 urban people attending Kolkata Book Fair in 2013 admitted that only 35.7% of them are active members of library while a survey taken among 143 educated people living in South Dinajpur, Malda, Birbhum, Bankura, Burdwan, Howrah, Hooghly, Purba Medinipur, Paschim Medinipur, North 24-paraganas, South 24-Parganas will reveal that 65.03% of them are library users. But this survey is not representative but can give some inkling about the library culture.

The detail break up of library users are given in the following table:
### Library Users

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Segment</th>
<th>Percentage of Public Library Users</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1) IT Professionals (Total – 60%)</td>
<td>21.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2) Attendants of Kolkata Book Fair (Total – 300)</td>
<td>35.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3) Married Women of Kolkata (Total-42)</td>
<td>17.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4) Small time writers in Kolkata (Total – 14)</td>
<td>64.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5) General people of Different Districts (Total – 143)</td>
<td>65.03%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6) Working Women in Kolkata (Total – 80)</td>
<td>31.25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7) Married Women of Districts (Total-13)</td>
<td>53.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8) Districts Journalists Balurghat (Total-5)</td>
<td>46.2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Total – 657**

Our sample is based on the statement volunteered by individuals at random. But my visit to six district libraries (Malda, South Dinajpur, Nadia, North 24-Parganas, South 24-Parganas and Howrah) along with the State Central Library and Metropolitan Library in Kolkata revealed that on average 30 readers come to
library daily for lending books. This means 720 books a month (24 working days). This is only 30% to 40% of total members in library register. It may be the total membership of a sponsored library in official Register may be inflated for some reasons. But the actual library users comparing to the total educated population (in urban area a minimum matriculate population and in rural area a minimum Class-VIII passed population in the neighbourhoods) does not justify the net library using population. They even don’t come into a percentage. Inspite of various limitations, our Public Libraries are keeping up their business, it is fact accompli that our a public libraries are minimum used by our literate population. This minimum library users may help the public libraries to keep up their minimum services but fail to create minimum habitual readers. A habitual reader is one who forms of regular habit of daily reading something of everything, one such reader will read by beg borrow and steal and will read while going on a journey or while staying at home. Book reading is his / her passion. Such a reader will by first chance use a library. Because only a library can offer him or her wider choice of book selection at minimum cost.

When we use the term ‘decline’ in reading habit, we must try to delve deep into this issue. The book reading habit is being replaced by so many alternatives like playing indoor games or watching spectator sports or spending more hours at office involuntarily or vontarily. Those who are compulsive readers must read amidst their busiest schedule. How Abraham Lingcan who was a prolific readers managed time to read. Present
President Barak Obama still keeps up reading. The habit is the second nature and die hard, once a habitual reader is always reader. It becomes the onus of the reader how to find out time. In course or time a busy man may have to cut his reading time one under pressure but not that he or she would renounce reading for ever. At present in the western market e-books have taken 15 percent of total book sales. Many readers feel e-books are easier to carry and more attractive for reading purpose for a busemen to read on journey so they prefer e-books. Some may not feel e-books as comfortable as printed books. Both are right. One medium may change another medium with the change of time. But content remains the same. Even many people argue a TV serial or a feature film is an extension of book. An aversive reader would love to see the film version of a book. In India a film is termed as a ‘book’ because many people would like to read a book on a screen big or small. Seeing a story in film is more interesting and absorbing than a book reading. But in ultimate analysis we may find those who are preferring alternative media like video, cinema, social media, have never been themselves ardent book readers. A book is a book. It can not be replaced or altered. Who will use a public library depends on the individual mind set or the attracting power of a public library itself, collection of good books, reader friendly ambience and proximity of the library are definitely pull factors of a public library but a person who develops an intrinsic taste of reading can hardly escape the lure of library. What we term ‘decline’ is either the Person’s Superfluous reading habit that has been easily diluted at
the slightest influence of some glamor centric alternative media. A freakle minded person having less mental power may easily be allured to switch over to other alluring medium very easily. Book reading habit is a home grown instinct of a person. It is not sufficiently increasing as because our new age parents are not properly caring for the values of book reading. Neither our opinion leaders who act as our social guardians, like teachers, political social and cultural icons never address our society the intrinsic values of book reading which is primarily irreplaceable. Many parents discourage their wards reading anything outside their syllabus. Teacher seldom motivate them. Last but not the least our public libraries mostly extend routine services to keep up their jobs and the State Governments never put the libraries in priority list as a vehicle of social education.

59% of our children have read some books

In spite of this negative conditions prevailing in West Bengal we have seen from our survey that out of 151 school children we surveyed in different districts of West Bengal 59% children read at least few books outside their school books and out of 92 college students in the districts 60.80% claimed to have read general books outside college texts. Most of our young readers were found not organized or systematic readers but somehow manage to keep on reading. They further admitted they were inspired to read by their parents at their childhood. Book reading habits seldom grow at later stage of life. Many adult students use public libraries for their utilitarian values especially for getting reading materials for competitive examinations or for research purpose to
obtain a degree. Libraries are new used as information centre and not as an exclusive store house of literatures or knowledge for exclusive philosophical attainment. Even knowledge gain is purposive, not knowledge for knowledge sake. Knowledge pursuance is selective as par with some material requirements like passing the examinations. But a habitual reader reads not for any mundane purpose but for intellectual attainment and aesthetic pleasure. Unlike nineteenth or twentieth century libraries modern public libraries are being designed to inform mainly, supplying more data to their clients. The concept of public library has undergone a sea change over the years. In India no state has delineated her library policy clearly. Their public libraries are growing on their own in a routine way. As a result of that libraries now-a-days cease to be a movement and somehow are keeping their existence as a public utility service without thinking seriously for public. It is more true with the eastern region states I surveyed. In this circumstances there is still fair chance for development of our Book Reading habit if we take the present indications of market in a positive way. Indian book industry still remains mostly unaffected for so many reasons. Digitalization and on line piracy are eating into global book sales. But they have not yet affected Indian Book industry as Indians are still accustomed to read books in printed forms and our readers are not much comfortable with e-books. The Indian books especially Indian language books are low priced and seemingly affordable to middle class. But e-commerce is expanding in India at such a space that some segments of our reading public may very soon be
comfortable with the new-technology. We cannot say about the future of traditional books. But can say our books will continue to be attractive to common readers for more generations to come.

There are public libraries in India and all State Governments and Central Government agencies purchase books regularly for public libraries. Most of the public libraries have their own budget of book buying. Individual people now buy more books than that of a decade ago. But many individuals have started buying e-books. Although there is no denying the fact that computer surfing had taken away much of reading time. Even domestic airports provide facilities for laptops in use for waiting passengers that take away reading time. But comparing with other countries damages are less in India. Simply for books are cheaper and not many people are computer savvy. Especially computer literacy is very less in the districts. Books still remain in its own position in India. While book sales have plummeted worldwide at the rate or 3 to 10 percent, sale of books have grown from 20 to 37% in 1912. The following data will evince the present status of Indian book market.
In Book publishing market Indian titles tops the selling. The American titles sell only 3 percent, British titles sell 31%, whereas Indian titles sell 66%. In India print media industry (newspapers) has grown from 22.4% in 2012 to 24%. About 8.7% growth has recorded. The growth of India’s language book industry is uneven but uninterrupted. Any English book store in Europe will envy Deys publishing a leading publisher of Bengali books in Kolkata to see the endless crowd of buyers from 10 am to 8 pm everyday. An avant garde Assamese publisher claims to have turn over `5 crore. Every year Kolkata Book Fare Sells books worth `10 crore and Assam` 05 crores. Even district book fares in West Bengal total turn over amounts to `25 crore plus. An Indian Author Vikram Seeth has been paid `10 crore as an advance against his
manuscript yet to be submitted. His publisher the Penguines estimated revenue is 4 billion today.

There are about a dozen of English writers in India who are heart throbs among the youngsters. Now-a-days all famous Bengali author’s children books are being translated in English and are selling well among the children. An elite book store in Kolkata like crossword or Oxford children corners are full every afternoon. Then what’s the special reasons the public libraries find children members so scarce.

**English Translations Sale**

A spokesman of Kolkata’s famous book store crossword confirms an increase in sales of translations, while the sales of translated fantasy books and world of magic have been spike in their sales. The statement is dittoed by the Oxford book store in 2013.

Now look at the children’s reading habit for those children studying in Bengali schools. A large number of Indian kids are now reading in English Medium schools. They do not read their language but their love for their own mother tongue remains ever alive and they are keen to retrace their ethnicity through folk loves and fantasies in translations. So ‘they (kids) just don’t want to read any more’ this common refrain among many self denied parents are not tenable even for the English medium kids. I have seen mothers bringing their kids to the British council library where there is a good collections of children’s book. Why over public libraries fail to attract children inspite of some good children libraries have been developed over the years under the
sponsored library system. Is it parents’ refrain are only responsible or the failure of the library managements?

**Book reading habits among the School Children in West Bengal**

To undertake a survey of reading habits among the school children I have made an exhaustive survey amongst 627 students under 12 segments from Malda to South 24-Parganas. The segments are as follows:

**No. of Samples**

1) Malda Town School children : 13  
2) South Dinajpur Schools Children : 23  
3) One Hooghly School : 48  
4) East Midnapur School (Haldia) : 30  
5) Kankalitola Panchyet Schools (Birbhum) : 26  
6) Birbhum Bolepur Sub-division schools : 32  
7) Diamond Harbour Schools : 31  
8) Diamond Harbour Schools for Girls : 17  
9) Mixed School Children from Kolkata/Howrah/North 24-Parganas/Bankura, Burdwan : 28  
10) Children of Media People, Kolkata : 09  
11) Vidyanagar Schools Children’s Workshops : 190  
12) Meritorious students : 34

Barring one Sheoraphooli school in Hooghly all segments comprise of assorted children from various of neighbourhood schools. That
makes the survey more meaningful and representative. I held altogether three workshops to get groups of mixed students from different schools. One under Kankalitola Panchayet (Birbhum), Diamond Harbou school workshop another two at Vidyanagar, South 24-Parganas. Vidyanagar workshops were sponsored by the South 24-Parganas District Library. As many as 5 Secondary Schools were represented.

There are also two experimental segments one is a survey of Media Peoples’ children in Kolkata who are supposedly get more exposures. We have seen that media people’s children are generally better placed in life by and large. Another experiment we made out of a segment of meritorious students who passed out their H.S. examination in 2012 and many of them made grades in joint entrance examinations. They all are scholarship holders. So their reading habits will prove that reading of good number of books outside school texts does not dispense any student with good marks.

Now see the table followed by analysis:

**Segment A:**

1) **Sub : Reading habit among the School Children of Malda Town**:

   Total Number : 13
   Boys : 10
   Girls : 03

2) **Spent daily time for school work** :

   4 students 2 hrs. only
   2 students 3 hrs.
1 students 4 hrs.
3 students 5 hrs.
2 students 6 hrs.

3) Regularly read outside books:
   Besides school books - 10
   Don’t read outside books - 03

Type of books read:
Humorous stories: 3 students
Popular Science: 3
Ghost Stories: 1
Detective: 2
Short Stories: 1
Sports: 1
Rhyme / Poems, Essays:
Total: 2
   13

4. Books of Sarat Chandra respondents liked most:
   a) Sarat Chandra (c) Mahesh (3)
   b) Mejldidi - (d) Srikanta (3)
   f) Griha Daha (No part particularly mentioned)

5) 5 students out of 7 don’t read any newspapers. None reads any magazine. 12 students said that they read books to increase knowledge, only one reads books to get fun out of it.

   Out of 13 respondents 6 collect book from a library, one gets book from friends. Parent provide story books to 6 children.

6) TV Influence: Only 2 children do not watch TV. But 3 children must watch TV for one hour, 7 watch more than 2 hrs. 11 children informed they have no computer at home, only one
possesses a computer. He surfs computer more than two hrs. everyday. As many as 7 children do not like to read any story book. They are not even casual readers.

Segment – B
Dakshin Dinajpur Schools

Class-XI – 11, students. Class-XII 12 students.

Higher Secondary students devote more time in study. Daily study hrs.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Students number</th>
<th>Hour of study</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>3 – 4 hrs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>05 hrs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>6 – 7 hrs.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

14 students do not read any book outside school texts. Only 7 students read story books of them 3 students would read one book a month. Only two students read more than one book a month. One Child does not read as his parents would discourage them. Four Children do not read at all allegedly under school pressure or they do not manage time.

If books are given to them from any source most children said they must read only 2 children were not sure that they would read even books were handed out to them. 17 students read newspapers and only 3 do not read neither books nor newspapers.

Newspaper readers among the students are as follows :

Anandabazar : 12
Ekdin : 02
Sakalbela (now closed) : 02
Uttarbanga Sambad : 01

Total : 17
Magazine Readers:
Anandamela : 07
Parashona : 05
Kishore Jyan Bigyan : 03
Sananda : (Adult Magazine) 02
Desh : -do- 01
Anandalok : (Adult Magazine) 01

Total : 19

Why the students read books. Mostly read to enhance knowledge (17) another 6 would get fun and entertainment by reading. Most of the respondents get books from public libraries (22). Only one would borrow books from friends. 13 respondents were inspired to read books by parents. 2 others were inspired by friends, 3 by their teachers, 4 students were self induced to read by visiting book fares.

14 students watch TV daily for one hour. 5 respondents would watch TV more than 2 hrs. 3 students would never watch TV. As many as 14 students do not have computer at home. 6 students would surf computer one hour a day and 2 would work on computer more than two hrs. daily.

One student admitted frankly that he could not find time for reading story books. As many as 7 would admit that due to work pressure for studies they were refrained from reading anything outside school books.

Some favourite Books read by the students are as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Books</th>
<th>Favourity by</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mahesh : Sarat Chandra</td>
<td>13 students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Srikanta : &quot;</td>
<td>11 students</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

401
Pandit Masai : “” 10 students
Debdas : “” 07 students
Datta : “” 07 students
Narir Mulya : “” 01 student
Ramer Sumati : “” 01 student
Prafulla : Bankim Chandra 12 student
Debi Chowdhurani : “” 08 students
Kapal Kundala : “” 08 students
Krishna Kanter WILL :“” 06 students
Durgesh Nandini : “” 06 students

It is not known why Sarat Chandra and Bankim Chandra are exclusively popular by district students in preference to modern children books.

Some students confused a poem of a famous poet with his favourite book. For instance 13 students mentioned ‘Sagar Sangome Nabakumar’ as a complete novel, Biral by Bankim Chandra as a full book. All claims to have read Sarat Chandra and Bankim Chandra may not be true in all cases. It is also strange their reading list does not include a single juvenile book. My hunch is they are either confused or have pretended reading the original which in reality not true. They got references of those books from their class text books.

Segment – C
Seraphuli High School, Hooghly

Total Segments : 48
Male : 45
Female : 03

Among the 48 school children as many as 25 admitted they do not read outside books at all.
Reading Habit Status

1) Regular Readers : 13
2) Casual Readers : 10
3) Subject Choice by Regular readers :
   Detective books : 06
   Short stories : 04
   Science Fiction : 03
   Rhyme / poems : 03
   Sports : 01
   Humour : 01
   Comics : 01
   Novel : 01
   Ghost stories : 02

Casual readers would prefer Ghost stories (4), Science Fiction (2), Comics (2), Sports (2), Novels (1), Short stories (1).

4) Only 11 students out of 48 had read Rabindra Nath Tagore 37 students have not read any book by Tagore. As many as 41 students have not read a single book by Sarat Chandra. A maximum read Tagore book by the students is ‘Galpa Gucha’ (it is includes in the text books) (5), Sarat Chandra’s Srikanta was read by maximum students. Again a piece from Srikanta is included in the text.

5) In this school 38 out of 48 students do not read any magazine only 10 read magazines. The following magazines are read.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of magazines</th>
<th>Read Regularly</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Suktara</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anandamela</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unish Kuri</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chand Mama : 2
Another Juvenile Magazine : 1

6) TV viewing hours daily:
  1 hr.  29 students
  More than 16 students
  One hour

36 students have no computer at home. One hour surfing is done by 10 computer user. More than two hour computer use is done by only 2 students.

Segment – D

A number of East Midnapur schools at Haldia.

Total respondents – 30
1) Male students - 15
   Female students - 15
   All from class-vi to class-ix.

2) Daily study hours
   2 hrs. - 06
   3 hrs. - 03
   4 hrs. - 12
   5 hrs. - 04
   6 hrs. - 05
   Total : 30

   About 50 percent of them read at least 2 books a month.
   3 respondents are casual readers.
   12 students do not read at all.
Humours stories are read by maximum. (5) Detective, Ghost stories come next 4, Detective stories take equal position (3) Novels are read by 2 and sports books are liked by 2.

Favourite Authors

As many as 20 students have not read a single book by Tagore only 4 have read Tagore books. Sarat Chandra is popular among them. As many as five respondents have read Sarat Chandra’s Pather Dabi (2), Debdas (2), Srikanta (1), Palli Samaj (1), Mejdidi (1), Bindur Chele (1), Bamuner Meya (1), Pandit Mashai (1). 2 have read Bankims, Kopal Kundala, Rajsingha (2), 28 studetns have not read Bankim Chandra.

Those who don’t read story books assign various reasons behind their non-reading. They gave following reasons. Books do not make me excited (7) I do not like book reading at all (10). 2 students are so hard pressed with work pressure that they cannot get time to read any book.

Segment – D

Birbhum School Children

Birbhum school children of 8 schools attended at a workshop sponsored by Kankalitola Panchyaet Samity, near Bolepur, Birbhum, 2012.

Boys – 26
Girls - 32

2) Regular Newspaper Readers:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Boys</th>
<th>Girls</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>13</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Why read story books.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reasons</th>
<th>Boys</th>
<th>Girls</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>For enhancement</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Of Knowledge 18</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>for Fun Sake – 08</td>
<td>08</td>
<td>7.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Newspaper reader – 13 | 13   | 10    |
| Library Member – 12   | 12   | 12    |

TV viewing everyday –

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Boys</th>
<th>Girls</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 hr.</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>more than 2 hrs.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Never watch TV:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Boys</th>
<th>Girls</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

I have no computer:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Boys</th>
<th>Girls</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>23</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

I don’t read story book as I have no time.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Boys</th>
<th>Girls</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

List of benefits book reading

Maximum boys stated Book have grown them

Self confidence – 15 number.

Maximum Girls stated. We have increased our knowledge.

There are 2 boys and one girl hate reading.

What type of book you read?

Maximum boys read: Detective Stories (7).

Maximum Girls read Ghost stories – 17
Girls are more serious readers than boys. Maximum Girls have read more books of Sarat Chandra than boys. 4 girls read Gora by Tagore but only one boy has read Gora. Girls read more books of Sarat Chandra and Bankim than Boys. None of the boys read Debi Chowdhurani, Anandamath and Durgesh Nandini but 2 Girls read Debi Chowdhurani and other works of Bankim. At least one Girl read Gora and Chokher Bali, but none found among the boys who have read these two books. Among the village school children, girl children are supposed to do household works, so they may not get time to read. But inspite of that girls have surpassed boys in reading. Girls would read more books than their male counter parts.

**Segment – E**

**Assorted School Children in Kolkata, Howrah, North 24-Parganas, Bankura and Burdwan**

Total sample 28

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Children devoted time to school studies at home everyday.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of students</th>
<th>Hrs. devoted</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>2 hr.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>2 hr.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>4 hr</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>4 hr</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>4 hr</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>6 hr</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>1 hr.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
12 1 hr.

2) 7 students out of 28 do not read any book at all.

3) Regular Reader of
   Story Books : 14 out of 28
   Casual readers 07
   Non Readers 07

Types of books children read out of 21

Subject : Number :
Ghost stories : 06
Short stories : 05
Detective stories : 04
Humorous : 04
Comics : 03
Sports : 03
Poetry : 02
Science fiction : 03
Psychological : 01
Novel : 03

5) Books of Tagore read by Children.

   The students read following book of Tagore : Names of books selected on the statement that at least one student has read one book from the list.

   Sesher Kabita
   Katha O Kahim
   Sisu Bholanath
   Gitanjali
   Chokher Bali
   Char Adhya
   Jogayog
Sonar Tari  
Jivan Smriti  
Galpa Gucha  
Palataka  
Malancha.

The most well read book of Tagore is *Seser Kabita*, read by 3. Jiban Smriti, Katha O Kahini read by 2.

6) 12 students read Sarat Chandra. The most read books are Pandit Mashai, Srikanta, Debdas read by 4 persons each. Other books read are, Ramer Sumati, Bindur Chele, Mejdidi, Parinita, Biraj Bau.

Bankim Chandra is equally read. 6 students have read Bankim. Most read of Bankim is Debi Chowdhurani (4).

7) As many as nine (9) students (about one third) do not read newspapers. Maximum students read Ananda Bazar (9) 4 students read Telegraph and 1 read The Statesman. 16 students out of 28 (over 50%) read magazines. Maximum students read Ananda Mela (11), Suktara is read by 7.

8) Maximum students read books for knowledge gain (11). As many as 7 students read for fun.

9) In maximum cases Parents inspired reading habit. Teachers come next only 3 respondents gave credit to teachers.

10) Maximum students (7) do not watch TV. 7 watch TV more than 2 hrs. 10 students watch TV only for an hour.
11) As many as 18 students do not have computers at home. 4 students surf computer one hour a day and 3 work on it more than two hrs.

Segment – F

Reading habit among the school children at Bidyanagar, a prosperous village in South 24-Parganas about 35 km from Kolkata:

Bidyanagar.

With a view to assessing reading habit among the school children in the village schools we have chosen three South 24-Parganas school namely Bidyanagar Multipurpose School, Bidyanagar Balika Vidyalaya, Egaro Gram Sikshaniketan High School located in Bidyanagar and its adjacent locality. We brought all 190 students at the District Library hall on March 22–23, 2013 by courtesy of South 24-Parganas District Library authorities in a motivational workshop. A set of questionnaires were handed out to each participants to assess their reading habit, computer skills, personal behavior, use of cell phone, dependence on private tutors etc. Boys and Girls were allotted separate sessions but the same questions were asked to both of them. Following questions were asked on different aspects.

1. Reading habit:
   1) Whether you regularly read story books?
   2) If you do not read story books what are the reasons?
   3) Are you member of any neighborhood library?
   4) Respondents were asked to mention some of their favorite books they have read?
2. **Personal habits:**

1) How many of you have your personal mobile phone?
2) If you do not have any cell phone how many of you use others phone?
3) How many of you have private tutors?
4) How many of you know computer?
5) How many of you are skilled with particular computer languages?
6) How many of you undergo daily physical exercises?
7) How many of you play outdoor games everyday?
8) What type of game you play?

Purpose of the study was firstly to ascertain the reading habit among them. The District Library which is enriched with volumes of collections specially for the juveniles was not able to attract the young readers of the neighborhood in a greater number. Many youngsters have a tight schedule of class routine dominated by compulsory private tuitions. We considered it a deterrent for the young children for freely going to the library for pleasure reading.

3. **Some Revealing Facts:**

The most of the youngsters admitted that they did not have any spare time to read anything outside their syllabus. As many as 94 students (about 50%) out of 190 school children admitted that they would not get any spare time to read story books. In that case boys and girls held different views. More boys than girls would hold the view that they would not get time to read story books. While 46% girls told that they had time-constraints to read story books. As many as 57% boys admitted that they did
not get time to read story books. 6 boys and 10 girls confessed that reading story books did not appeal at all. It was found that library membership was very meagre among the school children although the District Library had a very good collection of children books. The lure of attractive books at free of cost would not attract them. Out of 190 participants only 27 boys and girls (20 girls and 7 boys) were the members of any library. Among the library goers 15 boys and girls read only text books and there are only 12 library goers who read only story books or general books.

4. **Dependence on private tuition:**

It is very rare to find out a school child without having any private tutor. Only two boys candidly declared that they did not have any private tutor. Otherwise all the 188 school children interviewed claimed to have varying degree of private tuitions. Maximum number of children had at least two private tutors.

We have found out 3 girls having 8 tutors and 2 girls had 5 tutors. 20 girls had 4 tutors, 24 girls had 3 tutors, 50 girls had 2 tutors. Among the boys number of tutor per student was less. But we found out 5 boys were having 3 tutors each and at least one boy had 4 tutors. There were as many as 24 boys and girls who had not disclosed the number of tutors they were having.

5. **Computer literacy trend:**

Barring 73 boys and girls as many as 117 were undergoing computer training. But many of them were in rudimentary stage and even could not learn any language. However 31 boys and
girls had some basic idea about computer. The following figure would show the trend of computer learning among the village school children.

MS Word - 23 students
Excel - 6 students
Power Point - 2 students

6. **Personal lifestyle:**

Only 23 boys and girls informed that they practiced regular physical exercises. Strangely enough more girls undertake physical exercise than boys (15 girls against 8 boys). 141 children would take up exercises in-frequently. Only 26 hate exercise. Regarding the outdoor games all 58 boys would participate in outdoor games. Cricket became their most favorite than football. Only 14 would play football while 44 prefer to play cricket. The girl children showed inclination to gender friendly soft games like badminton (13), basketball (4), but majority of them were involved in indigenous games like kho kho, kabaddi, bou-basanta, kanamachhi, hide and seek, skipping etc.

So far reading habits are concerned we cannot rule out some external reasons that, hinder children's reading habit to develop in this particular case. We can neither blame social media nor the computer addiction that may prevent distract children from going to library which is very close to their access. Their reading habit has neither been encouraged by the schools nor nurtured at home. At least two children admitted that their parents would prevent them from reading any outside books. By conventional belief
some parents would still consider that reading anything outside the school syllabus may jeopardize their wards' career prospect. Notwithstanding there is also a positive side of the story. 54 school children out of 190 admitted to have read some books besides their texts. **They are only 28.4% of the total boys and girls, a poor minority, but not to be ignored and can be said that the glass is half full.** Those children read out of their own impulse and their reading habit had not been impeded against any negative factor. The list of books they have read would give enough indication that they could have read more books had there be any social encouragement. The reading habit among the school children need to be boosted up by special efforts. Libraries must have to work some extra miles to identify young bibliophiles and to catch them young. Guardians should be re-educated with the ideas that reading general books outside the school syllabus would extend the horizon of their knowledge and inculcate analytical and decisive power right from their childhood and in the long run pay dividend. What is only requirement is to choose books discreetly so that their valuable spare time is not wasted and may not turn counterproductive.

7. **Cell Phone not much in use:**

It was found that at school level 60% guardians would not like their wards have own mobile phones only 14 out of 190 possessed exclusive cell phones. Notwithstanding 114 students out of 190 informed they would use their family cell phone when required. As many as 76 children did not possess any family cell phone. It is
interesting to see that 40% of school children in villages not living far from Kolkata were not using any cell phone as their families somehow do not subscribe any.

**Segment – G**

**READING HABITS AMONG MERITORIOUS STUDENTS**

Our survey of this segment testifies that brilliant students do not concentrate exclusively on text books, rather most of them have developed aptitude for reading varieties of popular fictions and non fictions available in the market. We have made the survey among 34 students among Kolkata and districts. They have two things in common, one they come of very poor families but made scores in their last final examination brilliantly for which they were recognized, felicitated and got scholarships. They were studying mostly Science, Medicine and engineering, of them 21 were students of class eleven and twelve and 13 were female. The first question was asked how many books they had read in last 3 months. The answers were as follows : 7 students read only one book, other 7 students read 2 books and 2 students read only 3 books. Only one student has not read a single book in the last 3 months. At the same time 17 students (50%) read more than 3 books in last 3 months, i.e., one book a month on average.

**Bengali novels top the list**

1) It was found that Bengali novels and books on science topped their favorite list. As many as 15 students like novels and science related books. Then came the detective books liked by 13
students, poetry was the cup of tea for 5 students only. Ghost stories found their place among the 4 students. English novels had only 3 takers. 5 students had interest in other subjects. Quite contrary to the popular belief that all brilliant students were not necessarily found studious. Maximum number of students (15) read more than 4 hours a day for their text book studies. TV viewing was rampant at least 44.11% of them (15) watch television from 5 to 7 hours a week while 8 of them 23.52% (8) glued to the idiot box between 2 and 4 hours a week. 2 of them admitted that they would spend 15 hours a week watching TV, although the segment we interviewed mostly belonged to weaker sections. Majority of them refrain from video games. 2 students spend 3 hours a week and 1 would play video 4 hours a week.

2) It is interesting to know that only 47% students were involved in cultural activities (extra-curricular) like music, dance, drama etc. Those who were involved in cultural activities would not spend time more than 3 to 7 hours a week. Only 38.23% of students who make dates with friends and would spend long hours with them. 6 students would date one hour a day on average. Another 6 would spend only 2 to 4 hours a week. One has admitted that he would spend 20 hours a week and another one would spend 14 hours a week with their friends. Those who were having reading habit would spend reading general books for minimum 2 to 3 hours a week. As many as 7 admitted that they could not afford more than 2 to 3 hours a week to reading general books. 6 admitted that they spend 5 to 7 hours a week for general books. Another 6 students would devote to 10 hours reading.
There were voracious types of readers, but their number was very small, only 3 students would spend 24 to 30 hours a week on reading story books. At least 2 students claimed that they would spend 6 hours a day to reading books outside his text.

The variety of books they were reading at the time of interview mentioned here would suggest that what type of books the advanced students tend to read beside their text and reference books. Their own statements are enough evidence that at least advanced students were not at all devoid of book reading. They themselves have admitted that reading habit had made them more aware that stood them in a good stead in accumulating wider knowledge. We quote some of their comments how books had shaped their mind set.

3. Respondents' remarks on book reading:

"An authors' thinking is mainly reflected in his novels, poems or short stories. I come to know authors views on a particular matter. It also helps me develop my power of expression."

"I have read about 6 books in last 3 months. By reading those books I have achieved a great experience. I have known about some famous writers and their activities, their contributions to the society."

"Books on great men have inspired me to follow the path of success and I have made them my idol. Books on sociology have made me aware about various social issues like education for all, child labor, and violence on women etc."
"I have read not only story books but books on history and culture and at the end of the day one thing is clear in my mind that only text books alone never can make me a good person. Books on many ideas can make my mind, and heart prosperous and provide me a good character."

"I know now about humanity, moral character, good behavior and more about for my life skill development. Books made me a good human being in life. These are all outcome of book reading.'

"Books fill my mind and heart with a great pleasure. It helps me to acquire more and more knowledge. Books are bliss of solitude."

"Books fill my heart and it helps to tell for the poor and shelterless people who are struggling hard to earn their livelihoods. I have taken my oath to help those people in near future."

"I read mainly science books and novels. These books are very interesting and I believe that books can build my career. Book is a way to knowledge. Books encourage me. So book is essential to know everything."

"Books provide me encouragement to go ahead in my life."

"Book is my best friend. I know many things about various countries, their life styles. I want to be a doctor in future. In that biology books help me."

"Books have helped me to find the truth in the world."

"I like to read Bengali novels by Bibhutibhushan Bandopadhya and Saratchandra Chattopadhya. Most of the Bengali novels describe
the real picture of nature and society. Those novels help us to familiar me with the unknown world of society. From those novels I learn to help poor."

"Book is my life."

"Books teach me to cultivate humanism in me. Books teach me to become a proper citizen rather than a wealthy man."

"Life is full of struggle. If I want to survive I have to struggle against stigmas, vices and calamities hovering like a mist round the earth. For that purpose I have to master my mind keep it under control through deep contemplation and meditation. I believe in ancient Indian philosophy and think it is the only way open before us to lead a life with vigor and only way to demolish the evil from society. Books convey that message to me."

4. The books students were reading at the time of taking interview are mentioned below: Sanchayita, Golpoguchchha (Tagore), Shesher Kobita, Gora, Kopalkundala, Debi Chowdhurani, Debdas, Srikanta, Parineeta, Pather Panchali, Chander Pahar, Subarnalata, Pagla Dashu, David Copperfield, Satyajit Roy Uponnyas Somogro, Sera Satyajit, Feluda Somogra, Professor Sankur Diary, Jujonayak Vivekananda, Ami Vivekananda Bolchhi, Bartoman Bharat, Shorodindu Omonibas, Kakababu Somogro, Kishore Sahitya Somogro by Nabaneeta Debsen, Akti Lai Lanka by Sunil Gangopadhyya, Discovery of India, Einstein's Universe, Many books of Chetan Bhagat, Anandamela PuJSASONKHYA.

Books of Satyajit Roy and Chetan Bhagat are common for many.
This will give some insight of present days advanced students mind set with regard to their book selection.

5. It is also evident from those written interviews that their reading habit and their brilliant result in examinations did not tally with their language skill and their power of expression. A serious reader too ought to have developed a considerable power of vocabulary building. However book reading habit was immensely contributing to develop a sense of confidence, self development and courage to face the music of life.

**Segment - H**

6. **Reading habit of Young India : A reading habit study in All India Perspective**

To make a comparative study of readership habit I also carried out a small survey in Maharashtra by courtesy of one of my former students living in Mumbai. On the basis of my questionnaire, Ms. Sanhita Debray talked to some young readers - both male and female, living in Mumbai. They vary in their language and religion but had one thing in common, that in spite of their hectic work schedule they keep on reading books and are mostly readers of English books but still haven't given up reading books in their mother language. The revealing facts came from the survey are as follows:

7. The respondents: I
4. Paromita Sharma - Age - 34. Sex - Female. Mother Tongue - Bengali.
8. Moumita Dey Choudhury - Age-30- Sex - Female. Mother Tongue - Bengali.
10. Sonali Choudhury - Age - 32 Sex - Female. Mother Tongue - Bengali.
When asked whether they read books every respondent except one, answered 'yes', of whom 50% were Bengali and others native language include Hindi, Tamil, Malayalam, Sylethi, Telegu and Bihari. The age group of the respondents varies between 25 - 35. 65% of them revealed to read books every day, whenever they get time, even for an hour and book reading is a habit for them that they have grown since a long time, while the rest of the respondents said they aren't very prone to reading, mainly because they hardly get any time. Apart from two, for whom book reading has been an interest in childhood and later developed into a passionate habit, the rest of the respondents almost unanimously said they read books to gain information about varied field of interest such as technology, philosophy, economics and world affairs as it help them to widen their perspective, improve knowledge and also offer positive refreshment for relaxing. However, majority of them regard book reading more of a mode of
entertainment and 'pass-time' than of an instrument of knowledge and education.

8. When asked about their choice of subjects. About 45% of the respondents said they don't have any particular favourite and they any pick any book if the subject attracts. For the rest of the respondents the choice varies between non-fiction for the most part and comics, graphic novels, biographies and romantic novels.

9. To understand their taste of reading, when it was asked whether the respondents are fond of reading classics, 80% said they read classics but not regularly. They revealed to have developed the habit of reading them in early youth but lost the connection with time. The rest of respondents found classic writings boring with tepid languages and therefore, would not like reading them.

**Books for information gain**

As a very clear choice of opinion 75% people considered book reading stimulates information and offer entertainment at the same time, while the rest 25% prefer to read majorly for entertainment purpose, especially when they are travelling or need to soothe their mind.

10. 90% of the respondents don't consider themselves to be an author specific reader and more than their liking for any particular author what moves them the most towards any particular book, is the subject it deals with. The rest handful of 10% respondents to a large extent is guided by the fondness on the author of their
choice while buying books. Some of them revealed to be among the first buyers to rush in to stores when a book of their favourite writer is launched.

When asked about their average time of reading in a week the answers varied from as low as 3 hours to even 28 hours. Their reading time include newspaper and magazine reading and blogging. A very few respondents were unable to mention any particular time in general as they find it quite difficult to maintain fixed reading time considering their work pressure. Along with that, on the question of their favourite author, a wide ranging list came up in revelation that includes John Grisham, Sirshendu Mukhopadhyya, Samaresh Majumdar, Satyajit Ray, Ruskin Bond, Sarat Chandra, Paulo Coelho, Chetan Bhagat, J.R.R Tolkien, RX Narayan, Oscar Wild, Sunil Ganguly, Arundhuti Roy, R.N Tagore, Nicholas Sparks and V.S Naipaul. However, 35% of the respondents didn't provide any particular author name as they revealed to not have any particular favourite writer of their choice.

In the conclusion, 60% respondents said they read mostly in English and a mere percentage of books (varied from 10% to 30%) in Hindi or any vernacular language, while 40% respondents revealed they read 'only' English writings and no other language. This small survey reveals in brief a man and woman can keep up reading habits against all odds. Those habituated to read in their vernacular language would never give up in cosmopolitan atmosphere. A person can read English and vernacular literature both at the same time.
Individual Reading habit at national level:
A specimen of

READING HABITS OF YOUNG INDIA

1) Sarmistha Sengupta
   Name Sarmistha Sengupta
   Age 28
   Sex - female
   Mother Tongue - Bengali

   1) Do you read books? yes
   2) How often do you read books? An hour a day
   3) Why do you read books? That's my interest which have turned in to a habit
   4) What sort of books do you read? I read anything n everything
   5) Do you read classics? Yes I do
   6) Do you read for information or entertainment? Mostly for entertainment
   7) Are you an author-specific reader? No

   glasses
   Who is your favourite writer? john grisham, Shirshedu Chottopadhay, samaresh majumdar, satyajit ray, Ruskin bond, sarat chandra

   9) How many hours do you read in a week (average)? 6 to 7 hrs
   10) Do you read English, Hindi or Vernacular books? English and Bengali
   Percentage of English, Hindi and Vernacular (approximate). ei ne pathalaam.

2) Amrita Choudhury
   Questionnaire
   Name - Amrita Choudhury
   Age - 30 yrs
   Sex - F
   Mother Tongue – Bengali
1) Do you read books? - Yes
2) How often do you read books? - Regularly, almost every day
3) Why do you read books? - for info and entertainment
4) What sort of books do you read? - whatever is interesting
5) Do you read classics? - sometime
6) Do you read for information or entertainment? - both
7) Are you an author-specific reader? - Nope glasses Who is your favourite writer? - Many, difficult to name one
9) How many hours do you read in a week (average) - 6-7 hrs
10) Do you read English, Hindi or Vernacular books? - Mostly english and vernac and hindi occasionally

Percentage of English, Hindi and Vernacular (approximate)

3) **Abbishek Gupta**
   Name Abhishek Gupta
   Age 31
   Sex Male
   Mother Tongue Hindi

1) Do you read books? Yes
2) How often do you read books? 4-6 books a year or more
3) Why do you read books? I read books to gain perspective on philosophical topics, on law, on economics and on any interesting topic which deals with world affairs
4) What sort of books do you read? I mostly prefer Non Fiction
5) Do you read classics? Rarely but i do read some of the books by authors who have won literary awards such as Booker, Pulitzer
6) Do you read for information or entertainment? Both
7) Are you an author-specific reader? No. But I do favour books which are written by authors who conduct extensive research to produce something of interest
8) How many hours do you read in a week (average)? 15 hrs (this includes magazines, newspapers and blogs). So, if I am reading a book at a particular time, I tend to spend 80% of the time on the book and the remaining for other.

9) Do you read English, Hindi or Vernacular books?  English Mostly

Percentage of English, Hindi and Vernacular (approximate).
90% English, 10% Hindi

4) **Paromita Sharma**
Age 34
Female
Bengali

1) Do you read books? Yes
2) How often do you read books? Whenever I get time apart from my day’s work.
3) Why do you read books? To console my hungry mind
4) What sort of books do you read? Mainly philosophical, novel, history and politics, Ecological
5) Do you read classics? rarely
6) Do you read for information or entertainment? Both
7) Are you an author-specific reader? Yes, at times I develop fondness toward some authors. So be the first to buy their publishing.
Who is your favourite writer? Many... but the one who changed my life ... and so became my fav. is Paulo Coelho

9) How many hours do you read in a week (average)? It depends on work pressure... minimum 3 hours

10) Do you read English, Hindi or Vernacular books? English, for Vernacular, I read Bengali authors at times... we are so rich in terms of literature!

Percentage of English, Hindi and Vernacular (approximate).
95% English, 5% Bengali

5) **Manikanda Prabhu**
Name: Manikanda Prabhu
Age: 26  
Sex: Male  
Mother Tongue: Tamil  

1) Do you read books? Yes  
2) How often do you read books? Everyday  
3) Why do you read books? to relax  
4) What sort of books do you read? Fiction, biographies  
5) Do you read classics? Yes  
6) Do you read for information or entertainment? both  
7) Are you an author-specific reader? No  
   Glasses Who is your favourite writer? J R R Tolkien  
8) How many hours do you read in a week (average) 5 hrs.  
9) Do you read English, Hindi or Vernacular books? English and Tamil  
   Percentage of English, Hindi and Vernacular (approx) 70:0:30  

6) **Mk Sreeprasad**  
Name - Sreeprasad  
Age - 27  
Sex - Male  
Mother Tongue - Malayalam  

1) Do you read books? Yes  
2) How often do you read books? Everyday  
3) Why do you read books? - Information/Pass time  
4) What sort of books do you read? - Fiction, Graphic novels, Comics  
5) Do you read classics? Yes  
6) Do you read for information or entertainment? Both  
7) Are you an author-specific reader? No..  
8) Who is your favourite writer? RK Narayan/Oscar Wilde  
9) How many hours do you read in a week (average)? 10  
10) Do you read English, Hindi or Vernacular books? Mostly English and Vernacular (Malayalam)
7) **Nimesh, Bhattacharjee**  
Name Nimesh Bhattacharjee  
Age 35  
Sex Male  
Mother Tongue Sylethi  
1) Do you read books? Yes  
2) How often do you read books? Every day  
3) Why do you read books? Because my profession is teaching  
4) What sort of books do you read? No specification  
5) Do you read classics? Not very much  
6) Do you read for information or entertainment? Both  
7) Are you an author-specific reader? No  
8) Who is your favourite writer?  
9) How many hours do you read in a week (average)? 28 Hrs  
10) Do you read English, Hindi or Vernacular books? English, Bengali  

Percentage of English, Hindi and Vernacular (approximate).  
English 90% Bengali 10%  

1-yes, 2- yes, 3- love reading, 4 – any good book, 5- yes i do,  
6- both, 7- yes i am i love sunil ganguli the most, 8 ? 9- 3 -4  
hrs a day n 10- i read english n bengali ......

9) **Ramkumar Krishnamoorthy**  
Name: Ramkumar  
Age:29  
Sex: Male  
Mother Tongue : Tamil  
1) Do you read books? Yes  
2) How often do you read books? At least one book a month.  
3) Why do you read books? To learn new stuff  
5) Do you read classics? Have read a lot of classics in the past. Not now.  
6) Do you read for information or entertainment? Both

8) Who is your favourite writer? No one in particular.

9) How many hours do you read in a week (average)? 2-3

10) Do you read English, Hindi or Vernacular books? Only English

Percentage of English, Hindi and Vernacular (approximate). 100%, 0%, 0%

10) **Sonali Choudhury**
Name: Sonali Choudhury  
Age - 32  
Sex - Female  
Mother Tongue - Bengali

1) Do you read books? - No, very rare

2) How often do you read books? Very rare

3) Why do you read books? N/A

4) What sort of books do you read? Anything which is interesting, nothing specific.

5) Do you read classics? - No

6) Do you read for information or entertainment? Both

7) Are you an author-specific reader? No


9) How many hours do you read in a week (average)? Only newspapers - 1-2 hours max.

10) Do you read English, Hindi or Vernacular books? - English.

11) Percentage of English, Hindi and Vernacular (approximate), 100% English only.

11) **Rimlee Biswas**
Name: Rimlee Kar  
Age - 29  
Sex - F  
Mother Tongue - Bengali
1) Do you read books? - Yes
2) How often do you read books? - Everyday
3) Why do you read books? - Reading books is my passion ... and its my fav timepass. I read books for knowledge and entertainment both. Reading books is refreshing.
4) What sort of books do you read? Mostly i read romantic novels.
5) Do you read classics? Yes
6) Do you read for information or entertainment? Both
7) Are you an author-specific reader? No
8) Who is your favourite writer? Nicholas Sparks (one of the many)
9) How many hours do you read in a week (average)? 14 hrs or so
10) Do you read English, Hindi or Vernacular books? English books
11) Percentage of English, Hindi and Vernacular (approximate). English - 100%

12) Sanhita Nag
Age - 33
Sex- Female
Mother Tongue- Bengali
1) Do you read books? - Yes
2) How often do you read books? Almost everyday
3) Why do you read books? To widen my perspective
4) What sort of books do you read? Fiction, Classic, Psychology
5) Do you read classics? - Yes
6) Do you read for information or entertainment? It is a mix of both.
7) Are you an author-specific reader? No
8) Who is your favourite writer? There are many.
9) How many hours do you read in a week (average)? 10 to 15 hours

10) Do you read English, Hindi or Vernacular books? - Mostly English and Bengali. Also read Hindi at times.

11) Percentage of English, Hindi and Vernacular (approximate).- English - 70%, Bengali - 20%, Hindi - 10%.

13) **Ashima Chakravarty**
   Age - 29
   Sex- Female
   Mother Tongue- Bengali

   1) Do you read books? - Yes
   2) How often do you read books? Not very often, depends on time
   3) Why do you read books? Fun
   4) What sort of books do you read? No specific choice
   5) Do you read classics? - At times
   6) Do you read for information or entertainment? Entertainment
   7) Are you an author-specific reader? No
   8) Who is your favourite writer? Chetan Bhagat
   9) How many hours do you read in a week (average)? Not that regular
   10) Do you read English, Hindi or Vernacular books? - English and Bengali
   11) Percentage of English, Hindi and Vernacular (approximate).- English - 80%, Bengali -20%

14) **Kunnal Haseeb**
   Age - 30
   Sex- Male
   Mother Tongue- Hindi

   1) Do you read books? - Yes
   2) How often do you read books? Everyday
3) Why do you read books? For gaining knowledge and knowing the world.
4) What sort of books do you read? Anything
5) Do you read classics? - Yes
6) Do you read for information or entertainment? Both
7) Are you an author-specific reader? No
8) Who is your favourite writer? There is not favourites for me.
9) How many hours do you read in a week (average)? Close to 14 hours.
10) Do you read English, Hindi or Vernacular books? - English and Hindi.
11) Percentage of English, Hindi and Vernacular (approximate).- 60 Eng, 40 Hindi

15) Ratul Das
Age - 25
Sex- Male
Mother Tongue- Bengali

1) Do you read books? - Yes
2) How often do you read books? Not everyday
3) Why do you read books? Enjoyment and for passing time
4) What sort of books do you read? All
5) Do you read classics? - No, I find them boring and the language is difficult to understand.
6) Do you read for information or entertainment? You can say entertainment.
7) Are you an author-specific reader? No
8) Who is your favourite writer? Many.
9) How many hours do you read in a week (average)? Not fixed, it depends.
10) Do you read English, Hindi or Vernacular books? - English.
11) Percentage of English, Hindi and Vernacular (approximate).- Only English.
16) **Sharada Menon**  
Age - 37  
Sex- Female  
Mother Tongue- Malayalam

1) Do you read books? - Yes  
2) How often do you read books? Almost everyday  
3) Why do you read books? Just like that.  
5) Do you read classics? - Not really  
6) Do you read for information or entertainment? I read to pass time while travelling in local trains.  
7) Are you an author-specific reader? No  
8) Who is your favourite writer? Chetan Bhagat  
9) How many hours do you read in a week (average)? 14 hours  
10) Do you read English, Hindi or Vernacular books? - English  
11) Percentage of English, Hindi and Vernacular (approximate).

17) **Supriya Santhanam**  
Age - 30  
Sex- Female  
Mother Tongue- Tamil

1) Do you read books? - Yes  
2) How often do you read books? Everyday  
3) Why do you read books? Because I am habituated to read  
4) What sort of books do you read? Any book  
5) Do you read classics? - Yes  
6) Do you read for information or entertainment? Both.  
7) Are you an author-specific reader? No  
8) Who is your favourite writer?  
9) How many hours do you read in a week (average)? 9 to 10 hours  
10) Do you read English, Hindi or Vernacular books? - English.
11) Percentage of English, Hindi and Vernacular (approximate).- English - 100%

18) **Sahiyya Yeramreddy**
   Age - 27
   Sex- Female
   Mother Tongue- Telugu

1) Do you read books? - Yes
2) How often do you read books? Always
3) Why do you read books? Knowledge
4) What sort of books do you read? All
5) Do you read classics? - Yes
6) Do you read for information or entertainment? Both
7) Are you an author-specific reader? No
8) Who is your favourite writer? V.S.Naipaul
9) How many hours do you read in a week (average)? 8 hours
10) Do you read English, Hindi or Vernacular books? - English
11) Percentage of English, Hindi and Vernacular (approximate).

19) **Shweta Singh**
   Age - 30
   Sex- Female
   Mother Tongue- Bihari

1) Do you read books? - Yes
2) How often do you read books? Rarely
3) Why do you read books? Timepass
4) What sort of books do you read? Anything, mostly magazines
5) Do you read classics? - No
6) Do you read for information or entertainment? Entertainment
7) Are you an author-specific reader? No
8) Who is your favourite writer? No one specific.
9) How many hours do you read in a week (average)? I am not a regular reader.
10) Do you read English, Hindi or Vernacular books? - English
11) Percentage of English, Hindi and Vernacular (approximate).

   - English

20) **Samhita Purkayastha**
   
   Age - 31
   
   Sex- Female
   
   Mother Tongue- Bengali

1) Do you read books? - Yes
2) How often do you read books? Everyday
3) Why do you read books? Knowledge
4) What sort of books do you read? IT Journals, Short stories, Novels etc.
5) Do you read classics? - Yes
6) Do you read for information or entertainment? Both.
7) Are you an author-specific reader? No
8) Who is your favourite writer? Arundhati Roy
9) How many hours do you read in a week (average)? Nothing fixed, but at least 10 hours in a week.
10) Do you read English, Hindi or Vernacular books? - Mosylt

   English, read Bengali books but that is very rare.
11) Percentage of English, Hindi and Vernacular (approximate).

   - English - 90%, Bengali -10%.

**Book reading views of some eminent intellectuals and authors in West Bengal:**

We sent a set of questionnaires to 54 selected authors in West Bengal who write novels, essays and juvenile literatures and poems. Of them, 15 sent their views. All those people agreed that they developed book reading habit from their childhood which eventually immensely developed their urge for writing. Their views are given below as it is.
The persons who gave their are:

Amitabh Chaudhury – A veteran Journalist, well recognized research scholar on Tagore and composer of Bengali rhymes.

Bani Basu - One of the foremost writers in Bengali literature.

Tarun Sanyal - A senior poet and educationalist.

Dr. Pabitra Sarkar - A senior educationalist, essayist and writer in juvenile literature.

Harsha Dutta – Novelist and editor of 'Desh', a foremost Bengali weekly.

Nargis Sattar - A senior poet and a former journalist.

Nitish Biswas – Former joint registrar of Calcutta University and essayist,

Dr. Deepak Chandra – Author.

Chitra Deb - A noted scholar and author.

Anuradha Mahapatra - Poet.

Trinanjan Gangopadhyay - Novelist and short story writer.

Kinnar Roy - Noted novelist

Tapan Bandopadhyay - Novelist.

**The questionnaire and the views:**

- Question – Since when you have acquired the habit of book reading?
Amitabh Chaudhury - From the age of 4

Bani Basu - When I was 5 or 6 years old

Tarun Sanyal - Since the age of 7

Dr. Pabitra Sarkar - I was probably 6 or 7 years old when it all began. But the village in Dhaka, where we used to stay, didn't have ample supply of books that time. So, frequently we had to borrow senior class text books from cousins.

Harsha Dutta - From the age of 4 or 5

Nargis Sattar - I was 5 or 6 years old

Nitish Biswas - When I was 6 years old

Dr. Deepak Chandra - I developed the book reading habit from the age of 12 or 13

Chitra Deb - Can't remember

Anuradha Mahapatra - When I was 10 years of age

Trinanian Gangopadhyay - I started reading books outside the school text-book syllabus when I was 10 or 11 years old

Kinnar Roy - From 5 or 6 years of age

Tapan Bandopadhyay - I was probably around 3 years of age. ‘Bornoporichoy’ and ‘Dharapat’ were the first two books I read. From 5 or 6 years I started reading other kinds of books.
**Question - Name the first book to make an impact on you.**

AC - 'Sahoj Path' by Rabindra Nath Tagore

BB - 'Rajkahini by Abanindra Nath Tagore

TS - 'by Bankim Chandra

PS - It wasn't any fiction book. I read the first part of 'Gyan Bigyan er Modhubhando' written by Moumachi.

HD - usi Khusi' by Jogindra Nath Sarkar

NS - 'Sahoj Path'

NB - 'Boro Didi' by Sarat Chandra Chattopadhyay

DC - Children's story collection by Deb Sahitya Kutir and similar literatures still hold a significant place in my memory.

CD - As a child. 'Hasi Rashi' by Jogindra Nath Sarkar made me really happy,

AM - Mahabharat. I Used to read it out to grandma. Each chapter. character and narration used to amaze and inspire me. It still does.

TG - Books such as Jibon Smriti' by Rabindra Nath Tagore, 'Pather Panchali' by Bibhuti Bhusan Bandyopadhyay, 'Robinson Crusoe' (translation) by Daniel Defoc. Kheror Khata' by Leela Majumdar and 'Kheer er Putul' by Abanindra Nath Tagore left a major impression oil me in the childhood.
KR - It was certainly the juvenile fiction edition of 'Durgeshnandini' by Bakim Chandra Chattopadhyay. After that, I finished reading the main edition as if like almost a 'forbidden book'. hidden from the elders' notice at home. That was some experience!

TB - I enjoyed reading 'Abol Tabol' by Sukuram Roy. Another interesting book was 'Sishu' by Rabindra Nath Tagore. When I was in class 5, around 9 years old, I sill remember reading 'OgoBodhu Sundori' by Manoj Basu.

- Question - Do you think the book reading habit helped You to become a writer?   

AC - It certainly did and continues to do so till now.

BB - Nearly hundred percent.

TS - Definitely, to some extent. But from the early adolescence time till my entire youth the art architecture and nature of the West Bengal and some parts of Bangladesh, helped a lot to grow me as a writer.

PS - I don’t think it’s possible to become a writer without reading books. Even the writer who has seen a lot in life needs to read books to understand the correct expressions to describe that experience of life.

HD - I don't know whether I really have been able to become a writer or not. But certainly, without reading books it’s not possible to grow one’s intellect and understanding. It’s necessary to read books to become a good writer.
NS - To a large extent. In times of reading those books I used to think, Perhaps someday I too would become a writer”!

NB - Completely.

DC - Book reading initiated my essay writing habit. Various thoughts and curiosity about life inspired me to writer. In some way, my novel writing in tile later part of life is all outcome of my book reading habit.

CD - Greatly. Books introduced me to the philosophies of famous intellectuals and different styles of writing.

AM - Very much. I read most of Jibonanando Das's poems, 'Gitabitan' of Rabindra Nath Tagore, poems of 'Najrul, Amio Chakraborty, writings of Buddhadeb Basu, Bishnu De, Sudhinandra Nath Dutta, Bankim Chandra, Manik Bandyopadhyay, Bibhuti Bhusan, Tarashankar and many others when I was 12 or 13 years old.

TG - I don't think one can become a novelist or poet by reading books, except for essay writing. Even in that case the person needs to have indigenous ideology. But, one who is associated with writing must have book reading habit. It’s important to know the literature of contemporary time and what has been done in the past.

KR - I don't know whether I have been able to become a writer or not. That's for the readers to tell. But as a contributor of Bengali literature I can say that books helped
tile a great deal to become word admirer. I'm not selective about books. I read everything.

TB - For every book I read, I used to think I could write that way if I want to. Thanks to my early habit of reading books outside school text books. Thus, I wrote tile first poem when I was in class 2. I wrote that as a rhyme though. Later, I started writing poems when in class 5 or 6. Book my eternal love. I bought 'Sanchayi' in class 10. I used to fall asleep holding it only to wake up next morning with revived inspiration for poem writing.

• Question - Mass media or books which one had bigger role in the cultural and philosophical development of the Bengalis?

AC - I think its books.

BB - Definitely books. Mass media is for news and information. To a certain point developed our philosophical and majorly, political awareness. But it fettered our cultural and social growth by giving in to advertising.

TS - Definitely books. Krittibash, Mangal Kabya, Puthi Sahitya, Sharat Chandra, Tara Shankar and others played a major role in the cultural and philosophical development in rural Bengal.

PS - I don't think- It’s fair to compare between books and mass media. Both helped develop our knowledge and outlook.

HD - Mass media inspire public at large. Media plays a key role in our daily life. From a comprehensive view mass media
is more useful to ignite the 'rising' of our culture and philosophy. While contribution of books is limited to the educated people only.

NS - Certainly books. Because, even the mass media also depend on books. A number of TV serials and telefilms are made on books.

NB - Mainly, books. But in present times it's definitely TV and newspaper.

DC - For cultural and philosophical rising books played the key role. Because, from print and electronics media we can know about an idea only in parts. It creates awareness Out can not provide comprehensive knowledge. In view of better understanding and reusability, books are more important for our proper rising.

CD - Undoubtedly its books. Not text books, 'but literature. Literature teaches us how to think. Mass media help a lot as well, but they have various limitations.

AM - Definitely book reading. Modem mass media is still very new. Although radio play and theatre inspired me to a certain extent, but books inspired me the most.

TG - I don't think I’m capable of making this comparative decision. But according to me books played a bigger role in our cultural and philosophical rising in comparison to mass media, not only in West Bengal, but in the whole India.
KR - There is no alternative for books. But yes, mass media is immensely powerful indeed. In the current scenario it's nearly impossible to do without mass media, especially the electronics media. Therefore the writing professionals should start using the media judiciously.

TB - Definitely books. Those who are involved with media received their primary knowledge and understanding on a particular concept from books.

- **Question** - **Books have impact on those who read it. But how can we bring transformation in the outlook of those who don't read books at all?**

AC - I believe, it’s not possible to become a writer without book reading. Book reading leaves a great impact on the cultural behavioural pattern of the families and society at large.

BB - The transformation is not possible by reading only thriller fiction. The readers of such literature can hardly face any positive transformation. Those who are not found of reading can even watch cinematic representation of literature.

TS - With changes in the education system, modernisation of text book syllabus, changes in lifestyle. industrialization and development of creative sector can bring about the much needed transformation.

PS - I hold a different opinion here. I don't think it's more important to transform the psyche of the illiteraic people. I
also don't believe the educated people are superior in terms of honest understanding and intentions than the illiterates. Those who demolished Babri Mosque were not all illiterates. There is a difference between the uneducated and illiterates.

This is also not wholly correct that only books can bring changes in our psyche. Our outlook can be changed by observing some event, through audio-visual media or even by paintings.

HD - Newspaper, radio, magazine and television play key role in bringing that transformation. Public speech is also noteworthy.

NS - Street play, theatre, cinema, literacy programs and community interaction play crucial role in changing our outlook.

NB - According to me gifting books, literary festivals and fairs, easy accessibility 4 books and discussion programs on Ramayana and Mahabharata can be useful.

DC - A major part of people aren't fond of reading. Instead, they watch television in leisure time. Attitude of one person is different from others, and that too depends on his or her personal choice, education and culture. Book reading can only foster that attitude but it's not possible to install the habit compellingly. In that case, programs on electronics media and other cultural events can inspire our intellectual growth.
CD - Book doesn't change everyone's outlook. Its impact is limited to the educated lot, psychological set up of the uneducated people can't easily changed.

AM - Books can make one curious. By adopting various means the book reading habit could be developed. Simultaneously book reading could be promoted among the general people by organizing continuous campaign among the general people living in cities and villages to join public library bookmates more and more. Even they should be persuaded through constant informal interpersonal conversation as well as through formal debates, discussions and seminars.

TG - I believe, book reading is a habit that grows with time. Therefore it's important to develop the book reading habit right from the childhood days. However, it can't happen forcefully.

KR - Authors, publishers, critics and media all should come together to develop interest for book reading among those who are not fond of it. It requires social, literacy and library revolution.

TB - Mass media plays a crucial role to those who don't read books. Music, plays, cinema, folksong and folk theatre are also effective for bringing a social transformation.

- **Question** - Being an intellectual and a writer, do you think the authors have an active role to play in the
process of social change? If yes, then how this could bring about transformation?

AC - Yes, the authors have an active role. Taste, sophistication and culture can help the process of social change.

BB - Definitely authors have a role in the social change process, but I'm not sure if that's active.

TS - Certainly authors have an active role. The social change can be brought about by the social recognition of education, library revolution, discussion on creative literature etc.

PS - Authors play active role in the process of social transformation in two ways. Firstly, an author can take direct participation in social change by getting involved with social or political works along the lines of Mahasweta Devi's initiative for lifestyle development of hunters or building of Pratichi Trust by Amartya Sen. And secondly, an author can depict through the writing how this social change can be introduced for the wider audience and also inspire his readers to take active part in the same. He can use the platform of public speech to interact with audiences directly or he can explain about the social change process through writing.

HD - Why should an author be involved in transforming the society? That's a job of social activists! Bankim Chandra wanted to change perspective of the society through writing - an aspiration, still longed for.
NS - Authors certainly have active participation if it is concerning the society.

NB - By initiating revolution against consumerism and capitalism, developing a taste for beauty and infusing emotions to the society.

DC - An author definitely has certain social responsibilities. But the writers are confused today. Instead of motivating the readers with constructive messages they are more interested in the depiction of the reality of social deformation. Social change is not possible without strengthening the economic and political structure.

CD - The authors definitely have an active role. A writer should try to reach as many readers as he can. It's necessary for a writer to be honest in his or her approach. An honest writing can reflect the society.

AM - Authors definitely have an active role. But that should be based on his other attitude and outlook.

TG - I find the term 'writer' ambiguous in this context. Someone who writes manifestos is also a writer, just like someone who writes novels. An author can never take active role to transform a society, but I expect his writings to play an indirect role for social development. There should be a difference between a social worker and an author.

KR - Authors certainly have a role in social change. An author or intellectual is an integral part of the society. But one
should make sure to stay outside the ambit of political sleaze. An author or poet should teach people to dream, and nothing else.

TB - Authors have an important role but it's not necessary to be active in all cases. Most writers put forward their messages through writing. But some authors play direct participation to show revolt. Such active remonstration motives people to great degree.

- **Question** - **Do you think the book reading habit is gradually declining at an alarming rate?** If yes, then how can we revive it? **We seek your valuable suggestions on this matter which we will deliver to the authorities concerned.**

**AC** - Today 'television' is the enemy of books. People aren't prone to reading anymore. They want to see everything right in-front, keeping no place left for visualization. That's natural, but books are still irreplaceable.

**BB** - The load of text syllabus at school level should be decreased. The practice of library using should be religiously developed. Book designing should get modernized. Like film marketing importance should be given to book marketing as well.

The book reading habit is decreasing obviously, but the habit of reading substandard books are rising. Publishers are bringing out such books for commercial profit.
TS - As I mentioned earlier, there should be library revolution, transformation in the existing educational system and development of balanced perspective among the people to inspire better reading habits.

PS - I don't think the reading habit is decreasing. Today books certainly have several enemies like computer and television. But I think these new machines are only a new medium for our information. Moving and still pictures make words attractive on computers. Television is audio-visual, apt for both information and entertainment. Naturally the book reading time is compromised.

But book reading habit hasn't been decreased in developed countries like America, Germany, Japan, China etc. In case of India, everyone is not even literate here. Not everyone has access to television or computer at home. Still today, in rural India people always turn to the books first, once they are introduced to words.

My suggestion: small, colourful, well written and affordable books on every topic should be made available to all. The periphery of work of National Book Trust, Children's Book Trust should be wider. The books can be sold in audio CD format for the urban readers. And to achieve all these we should ensure literacy for all in the first place.

HD - Book reading habit has been reduced to zero. It's easily discernible from the treasure-house look alike empty libraries in the city. It's hard to say how the book reading habit can be
returned or revived. The book reading time will be decreased further, with the increasing struggle for survival. We should look for ways to bring back that 'time'.

NS - The number of libraries should be increased. The concept of mobile library should be made popular in the rural area. Price of books should be reduced, It should be noted that, those who have grown the habit of book reading with time, they will continue to read no matter what.

NB - The respect for our mother tongue should be increased, more importance should be given on administrative functions and the books should be made easy available. Writings of great Indian literary personalities likes Rabindra Nath Tagore should be published in all Indian languages with affordable price. Government subsidy should be allowed in book publishing and marketing.

DC - There is no need to be frightened for the diminishing habit of book reading. Those who like reading will continue to nurture the habit despite of all hectic schedules. The number of such readers has always been low. According to me, the number is rather increasing today. Apart from them a huge number of readers were the women and the aged persons. Their number has always been higher. With the coming of television, this section of people has turned to the audio-visual medium for entertainment. It takes less effort on the part of the receiver for television watching and that I think might be reason for lowering habit of book reading.
Currently some publishers have come forward to revive the practice and culture of book reading. Instead of the run-of-the-mill stories of book fairs, these new age publishers are bringing out well-researched books for the readers. These publishers are trying to re-print classic literatures and also giving opportunities to the modern unpublished authors a fair chance. Administrative cooperation and motivation now should be attached to this effort to ensure wider effect.

CD - Yes the book reading habit is decreasing. I heard in Sri Lanka, parents take their children to public parks once they reach age 3, to teach them to love and respect the nature. I believe, in a similar way, along with educating the kids we should introduce them with good books at a very early age, to ensure they learn to inculcate the habit in future.

AM - More and more national and international books should be included in mainstream education. Reach of literacy and modern view should be wider. The State and Central government should give more importance to spread education. The poets and authors should concentrate more bringing out creative literature and encourage readers.

TG - Book reading habit is decreasing. The trend of gifting books for occasions is also lowering. The number of libraries is on all time low, By organizing book reading discussions with literary personalities as well as simple book lovers, can revive the book reading habit again.
KR - The number of readers for serious and acclaimed books have always been low. But the number of book readers hasn't been increased on a par with the increase in education, because television serials have consumed more time of people today. But the culture of book reading will be back again.

TB - Undoubtedly the book reading habit is decreasing. Television is now the key mode of entertainment for evening and especially for the women. The number of readers however, can be increased in few ways,

a) Well written books should be made available.

b) The habit of going to libraries' should be made popular. Mobile libraries in this case can be effective.

c) Publicity and marketing of books should get more importance. Television advertisements or street hoardings can be useful, but quite expensive.

d) Organizing reading sessions can create enthusiasm about the book among readers. This aspect is quite overlooked in case of Bengali books.

e) Books should be available to the children. The habit of reading should be infused in them from a very young age, only then they will be able to grow it in future. Workshops can be organized for the parents to make them understand the necessity of book reading for proper growth of imagination and attitude of their children.
Summing up of the views expressed by eminent authors, intellectuals and academicians:

On the basis of individual views expressed to me by the authors, educationalists and intellectuals, this can be summed up that all the respondents agreed that qualitatively the value of books could hardly be changed or replaced in the teeth of growing invasion of alternative media. All of them candidly agreed that book reading habit once grown in the childhood could only be sustained by continuous reinforcement of the impulse. Taking into consideration the changing cultural environment, there is a need for vigorous campaigning in favour of reading. This calls for infrastructural development of libraries to the doorsteps of common people and in this process, voluntary action has a great role to play.

Their views are summed up as follows:

Books Strengthens Power of imagination

1: All 13 respondents of the questionnaire started their companionship with books and literature at a very early period of life and they agreed that this alliance further helped them immensely to grow passion for writing and education. Books helped them to know the world outside the fence of their household and in the formation of their attitude, opinion, knowledge of world history by strengthening their power of imagination and broadening their outlook.
2: Instead of confining its value as a mere childhood activity, book reading has multitude of effects on an adolescent's mind if one can develop the reading habit at an early age, as the respondents agreed. In contrast to radio or television, books not only serve as a mode of education and entertainment for the user, but also motivate the reader to become a part of the medium. A habit of book reading thus, not only enables a person to develop progressive view, but also build-up an inclination towards writing. When other popular media, such as internet and television, create a web of preoccupation for the viewers, books divulge a world of imagination with ample opportunity of developing independent opinion and view.

However, according to some of the respondents, book reading as a prolonged activity, solely, is not sufficient to help develop somebody into a writer. One needs to have the required quantity of zeal and strong ideology to transform that in written words. But book reading habit, if cultivated for a long period, ideally from childhood, can help lay the basis of motivation for writing for a person.

3: Since a long period Bengal has enjoyed the privilege of being the centre of print movement in India, not only for books production but also in case of literary development in terms of experimentation-based approach and global accolade for writing. Books and literature have been the integral part of developing the cultural and philosophical base of a society, but in a close competition with the mass media. While the respondents agreed that books and literature have extensive impact on our intellectual
base, they also couldn't disagree to the fact that the popular media or mass media work on a broader level by targeting a wider group of audience and by producing contents comprehensible for all. Book has been an ideal instrument to impart deep understanding and philosophical guidance to its reader, but there has to be a fair scope of liberation movement in a society to be able to identify the faults and work on it to ensure a consistent development of culture and philosophy. And to instigate such 'liberation movement' mass media has a more effective role to play than the books. Television or radio, is the medium for transmitting information and news to create a political and social awareness among its audiences, which in due course can take the form of a 'movement'. But for individual and collective development on the surface information from mass media is not adequate and one needs to refer to books for the in-depth background on the issue to develop an appropriate understanding and only then can one be able to choose the correct measure for development.

Most respondents unanimously agreed that books are the major and strongest drive for cultural and philosophical development in comparison to mass media while not ignoring the rising popularity, reach and impact of mass media on general audience. At one side, while the access of books is largely restricted to the educated people, on the other, hand, the base of mass media depends on the background information they derive from literature. Books and mass media, are different in view of their principle and values, yet
they are complementary medium either to instigate liberation movement or to predicate the course of development.

**Books are the basis of all art**

4: The direct impact of book reading can be witnessed on those who have grown the habit of book reading since long. But while majority of the population are still not drawn towards book reading, it's necessary to find ways to generate awareness among them. The respondents stated that modernizing the education system, transforming the lifestyle, increasing the accessibility of books, arranging community based creative programs, organizing interactive programs, opening of more public libraries and adoption of literature on television and cinema can be effective to inspire people to read and bring in desirable transformation in their attitude. Also, book reading certainly brings a change in the outlook of its readers, but that doesn't hold true for everyone, as it can be the result of a number of events experienced, barring the impact of the literature.

Music, dance, drama, folk culture can also articulate literature to the general mass in a livelier and more attention grabbing format. On this view, it is important to note, the major advantage of books lying in the aspect that, the literature can be adapted by any medium to transmit the ideology to a wider audience.

5: As a major driving force of sociological and psychological transformation, it is agreed by most of the respondents that authors have a vital role in the process of social change. By depicting the ways a society can be transformed for better or
infusing values and emotions, an author can use his pen to transmit a sense of propinquity into the readers and instigate action from the receiver's end. However, difference between a writer and social activist is almost palpable. While through writing it is possible to communicate about ideas and concepts, authors should only be concerned of passing the messages to its readers. Carrying out the activism concerning society and psychology must not be the prime task of a writer.

6: Due to the aggressive competition from electronics media, book reading habit on the whole, is on substantial decline in West Bengal. Although the book publishing propensity has been improved, but the new released books are primarily categorized as substandard production. However, increased rate of literacy and developing book reading habit from the childhood are the major parameters, but mobile library, reduced price of books, translation of renowned literature, Government subsidy for book marketing and promotion and book reading sessions are the key steps need to be taken to ensure increasing degree of book reading.

7: Despite of the struggle with alternative media, the value and appeal of books are still unaffected. All the authors and intellectuals unanimously agreed, movement in any part of the world would have been incomplete without literature. Even though the new age mass media are consuming the time previously allotted for book reading, it could hardly ever be turn out as the replacement of literature.
To conclude, it can be stated that convincing the parents to develop reading habit among the children from an early age, wide-spread literacy programs, adaptation of literature in popular media, extensive library movement, better promotion of books and experimentation with exclusive ideas can be the key to restore deteriorating book reading habit in West Bengal.

**How books shaped their young mind**:

Mr. **Tarun Sanyal** is a reputed Bengali poet and known for his independent, candid opinion on various social issues. Given account is on his childhood in the '30s on how the social ambience in those days was favourable for the children in a middle class family and congenial for book reading. Books became integrated with Bengali middle class social values. Mr. Sanyal in his personal letter to me wrote the following;

**Dear Dr. Partha Chattopadhyay,**

*I received your letter sent on 15.09.2012 in today evening, on 05.10.2012. To begin with, let me thank you for your interest. I am really old now; you might find it difficult to comprehend the handwriting. I was born on 29th October, 1932 in Pabna, Bangladesh. I have developed the habit of reading at a very early age and the introduction was made by my wonderful home tutor, my mother. I memorized everything from Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar to 'Sahoj Path' of Rabindra Nath Tagore, but wasn't been able to read by then. 'I could turn the pages and locate different marks on the pages to memorize flawlessly. I was around 7 when I learnt to read 'Sahoj Path' by my own. I learnt the first phonetics from 'Kumorpara-r gori-r gaari' etc.*
Gradually I started reading Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar, Madan Mohan and 'Hasi Khusi' and got introduced to the world of words. The first book I read entirely was children literature 'Rakhal Raja' and then 'Asia-r chele meye' by Bhima Pada Ghosh. I continued exploring the world of literature with the writings of Bankim Chandra, Sarat Chandra and Troilokyo Nath, published by 'Bosumoti'. I read a collection of Rabindra Nath Tagore's stories. I read 'Gitanjali' at the age of 9 or 10, thanks to one of my elder sisters. I received from my father 'Mahapurush' by Vivekananda and completed 'Bou thakurani-r haat' and 'Pather panchali' by the age of 12. by reading 'Golpo guchho, I got introduced to my own village - its beauty and greenery, in a new and never-seen before way. I was attracted to Ayesha of 'Durgesh nandini' and Bijoya of 'Dutta' as an adolescent. Suddenly I got hold of 'Parom Trishna' (a translation of The Great Hunger) and was introduced to the protagonist Per Holms, which helped me to develop a better understanding of the world. I read Tolstoy and Shakespeare.

Tolstoy's Anna Karenina and War and Peace blew my mind, before I passed class 10 in 1949. After Ayesha of Bankim Chandra's creation, I got attracted to Natalia Rostova. During that time I read 'West land' by Eliot. However, I already completed reading a number of poems by Rabindra Nath Tagore, Michael Madhusudan Dutta, Vidyapati, Kalidash and Chandidash.

This reading habit encompassing my childhood, days of growing up and early youth, helped me develop a positive perspective about life and nature. I wished to become a farmer like Levin in 'Anna Karenina' someday.
We had no radio at home that time. I developed the world outlook from books only. But during the time of Second World War, as a result of some interaction with one of my elder brothers, I developed respect for Soviet Union. But then I read ‘Grapes of wrath’ and 'The pearl' of John Steinbeck. During the time of war American government made books written by renowned writers made easily available under Army edition. We could get these books right from the streets! I read 'Bishad sindhu' by Mir Mosharraf Hossain at a young age and to a great extent this books helped me to develop a communal outlook.

The trend of going to English medium schools is apparent among my grand-daughters now. I have found their interest for reading English classics. The political experimentation with the Bengali medium school students didn't yield any positive result, as it turned out. During my days of lectureship in a missionary college I observed those coming from Britain to teach in India, were eager to create public interest for Indian classical music. People were still interested to read Bibhuti Bhusan and Jibanananda and students used to read Bengali classics. When I retired in 1995 students were no more even interested in reading the school textbooks. Gradually the trend of home tutors increased. Cinematic production of Bengali classic literature was one of the major reasons of the youth's lack of interest. Now the latest inclusion of television amazes the whole generation. Even the housemaids discuss with the mistress about any missed episode of TV serials.

Selling of books has definitely increased. Such as thriller collection stories of Satyajit Ray or writings of Sasthi Charan still amaze the adolescents. Some writers distort the creative life of Rabindra Nath
Tagore with incorrect presentation and the young readers tend to believe it in that way. Disturbing political and communal views along with unnecessary sensual representation of woman body in literature often leave harmful effect on the psyche of the young readers. Students are no more been able to develop an interest for world of creativity and literature.

I’m not certain if the above discussed analysis is correct. With age the vision gets weaker and blurry as well. Age may also crumbles down the ability of social investigation as well. On top of it, bad handwriting makes it harder to express one self properly. However, I tried to describe the current scenario according to my view as best as I could.

Best wishes,

Tarun Sanyal

Mr. Nitish Biswas, joint registrar or Calcutta University, also sent a note. This is as follows;

Books for social change in West Bengal

The term 'West Bengal' is created by partition. Partition left Bengalis empty and smeared with blood. Rabindra Nath Tagore obstructed partition but in 1947- his followers couldn't stop our country from the dividing wall. Because persecuted Bengali couldn't embrace everyone with common brotherhood. Thus, they categorized mother-tongue Bengali for the lower castes and underprivileged ones whereas the English educated traditional Hindus created a higher stature for
themselves. The one wrong decision has deteriorated the respect, of Bengali language.

These Bengalis are now unable to read anything except for the text books. I respect these detained Bengalis. They can read moderate Bengalis but can't read any Bengali literature. On the other hand, its the sun down time of Bengali book reading in West Bengal.

Upper middle class or middle class aged people still read Bengali books but 90% of the youth don't know proper Bengali. Those who can, not interested to read. Bengalis from lower income group read Bengali, but that's because they hardly have any choice.

After partition, people used to read Bengali books till the first 40 years. The social revolutionists translated English books to Bengali and infused Western political ideologies in Bengal. Globalization, SEZ, international invasion at one side gulping down the entire nation and our 50 dailies and 28 TV channels are persuading us as their spokes persons. Thus book reading is becoming an impossible task for this generation. Especially the books written by Tagore researchers no more can find 100 or 200 readers like it used to be before. Hardly I or 2 enthusiasts can be interested today.

Another veteran poet Nargis Sattar very lucidly narrated her experience with books. It is her opinion that popularity of a particular book doesn't establish its social importance. In her own words;

**Book reading habit and cultural change**

A person asks his friend, "Are you free this evening? I can go to your place then". The friend said, "No, I go for a dip in the Ganga that time
"Bathe in the Ganga in evening?"

The friend replied, "Yes, I go to the library, read books and come back with a pure mind.

Bonoful wrote this in his story "Gangasnan There is no need for further explanation.

I still have the reading habit. I wasn't affected with the arrival of Doordarshan and even till

Now, I don't give more importance to the idiot box than my books. I try to motivate others to read those books as well. Educationalist Dr. Prabal Hazra never bought a television for himself Books were his for ever friend and source of amusement.

There are many who inherited the culture of reading from their grandparents and continues till today. Cultural changes can never be made possible without literature. Reading books from internet cannot be satisfactory. Reading habit can never be mechanical.

"How many copies were sold of that book?"

"50 thousands"

"And Gitanjali ?"

"Only 10"

In next year - "How many copies were sold of the best seller?"

"25 thousands"

"And Gitanjali ?"
"Only 10"

In the year after that - not a single copy of best seller was sold, but 'Gitanjali' still had 10 buyers. There is no need for further explanation. Not every book can be of stupendous quality. But the number of good books is ample and instead of following the trend, people should try to read sufficient good books. "Some books are to be digested".

People still read Bankim Chandra, Rabindra Nath and Sarat Chandra. The new fashion of 'remake' is my concern though. Debdas, Do bighaa zameen' and 'Biraj bou' were produced for big screen in Hindi. Satyajit Ray directed 'Ghore bdire' of Rabindra Nath. Film versions of 'Debi choudhrani' of Bankim Chandra and 'Ram-er sumoti' of Sarat Chandra are still very popular. The dramas on Akashvani or the serials, on Doordarshan, all focused on books and literature. Literacy of knowledge is never possible without reading books. The culture of education begins with 'Barno porichoy' and never got lost amidst numerous children literature. 'Jol pore pata nore' tickled our poetic inclination and 'Neel dorpon' made us agitated. It's never possible to know about the history - and anthropology of our civilization. There are books for everything – starting from law, and medicine to even how to read books online via internet! To know about activity centred education we need passive reading at first instead of activity.

The writers like Rabindra Nath and Sarat Chandra also had extensive reading habit. "Constant outpouring needs constant in pouring". Rabihdra Nath borrowed 'Amiel's Journal' for reading. He wrote "Sahitya-r gourab' with inspiration from 'Eyes like sea', a translation of 'The Jew' by a Hungarian writer. Books are ought to inspire writers.
The kids still practice the culture of reading. They read 'Harry potter' now. Dinosaurs aren't here anymore, but the ants are! The book 'Survival of the fittest' is still as popular as it used to be.

Books has always instigated many revolutions and influenced the people and society and it will continue to do so. Book is a goldmine of knowledge and its appeal is forever.

Prof. Manabendra Mukhopadhyay a professor of Bengali in Visva Bharati University made a special study about the reading habit of students in his department. He wrote to me that his department has been able to offer a progressive environment free from all kinds of biases, so that the students can imbibe the liberal philosophy of Tagore. This mental bearing is congenial for reading all kinds of books. His observation could be accepted as an objective analysis of the trend of the students towards books. His observation is as follows;

Let me start with my personal view. I was born in a remote village in Murshidabad. I never had much scope of reading during my early youth days. Although, the appetite for more was there all-through. I used to read every book that I could find available. Some of the books of that time and the old friend are remembered till today.

Now, I am virtually wedded to books. Some books have become eternal friends as they helped my outlook and perspective to grow with time.

Meanwhile e-books came into picture and I welcomed this new-age trend with open heart. A number of rare foreign and indigenous books now can be found online.
'Can be found' is however not true in literal sense. Virtual world is pleasant to the eye, but not personal. And I think, this is where our conventional book reading wins. With touch, smell and printed words books relate to our every senses,

Dr. Milan Kanti Biswas from the Bengali Department - Visva- Bharati University wrote me the following;

Subject - reading habit and cultural changes

Let me describe my views developed from the departmental seminar organized on the topic of reading habit and cultural changes’

Firstly, Students with different background from West Bengal and outside the state (such as Tripura, Assam, Bangladesh etc) come to Visva- Bharati for study. Thus, they bring together their diverse culture, habit, sociological pattern in the common university environment. The students eradicate their pre-conceived conventionalism and restriction in Me university and develop a common religion of humanity. It's possible through Rabindra Nath’s literature and by taking part in various cultural activities.

teachers in classrooms help develop the students their way of thinking. However, this is not true for every student, but for some, it is effective.

Thirdly, the difference of Visva-Bharati with other educational institute is that, our education is not merely confined to the syllabus structure. The students take active participation in various cultural activities. Thus, the students not only grow capable of independent thinking through
extensive reading habit, they also develop the right vision for 'Kala bhavan' and right listening habit for the 'Sangeet bhavan'. It's not wholly true that only reading habit brings cultural change, transformation is a result of a combination of reading habit with other cultural practices.

Dr. Milan Kanti Biswas

Bengali Department, Viswabharati Central University.

Visva- Bharati University
In search of readers:

Of late the amount of concern the Bengalis displayed over a recent Bengali film 'Future of the Ghost, not a slightest part of that concern was spent on the future of books. It's may be because there are only few who would be involved in book reading in the age of internet and TV and hard pressed under the burden of heavy syllabus and private tuitions and so many excited moments like one-day cricket matches, surfing on social media sites and last but not the least, to manage 12 hours office routines. Against all those odds only the fools would take up the extra burden of general book reading. Till the other day the homemakers had carefully nurtured the culture of book reading. But many of them now have secured jobs rushing to their workplaces after having the quick meals. If some of them aren't working, they have to manage some other outdoor duties like reaching their kids to schools and spending idle hours in front of the school gates for gossiping with others. Most of them are spending their leisure in watching popular serials on TV in the evenings.

One book means one tree

Once paper-back was launched for the busy readers that was easy to carry. Now a convenient instrument called e-book has been launched in the market. It's even a lighter instrument than the previous one. A device that can store a lot. Roughly a mobile library can fit into your pocket. The machine can load thousands of electronic versions of books and rightfully considered as a mobile
library that fit into the pocket of readers. The entire book and individual pages can be read and seen on the screen, which not only saves valuable time, but also saves paper. That means the forest will be saved. One book, one tree. And one tree, one life. But in spite of saving the tree, will that be able to save books as well? Will this e-book be accepted by the general readers?

A race that is more cultural, prone to more book reading than the group who are lagging behind in cultural development. From that view, Japan is leading in the book reading culture in the whole Asia, along with other European countries. Three decades ago, during my visit to Russia I have seen enthusiastic readers queued up in the streets of Moscow to purchase a book on the very first day of its launch.

**Have books lost popularity?**

Now-a-days Books have lost such popularity except for few particular best sellers. The publishers around the world are researching and assessing on how to recapture the attraction of book readers on the world of literature. For the giant publishers, book is an industry and each copy is a product, thousands of which have to be sold to bring good business for both the author and publisher. Years back, a prolific author from the neighbouring country Bangladesh, bought an entire island from the profit he made from writing. Such exceptionally talented writers have always been there in every nation, and will be forever.

**Reading culture disperses**
Books, that are focused on popular trend, titillating subject or give primary importance on media publicity for marketing, can never be considered as the correct benchmark of a races inclination towards book reading. In last one year, travelling in and around four states to get the correct picture of modern book reading trend I have discovered that in the fad of book fairs and shiny book stalls, the book reading culture is fast dispersing. While this is largely because of the, changing lifestyle of the readers, the faults and failings of the publishers cannot be overlooked. Firstly, not all popular authors are able to win over the readers' falling apart attraction over reading; secondly, the standard of modern Bengali literature is also deteriorating on a disappointing degree; thirdly, experimentation with new subject and research is not there anymore; fourthly, book presentation, editing and printing haven't been developed with time. Most authors are still not getting paid well.

When I visited Mizoram for the research on book reading I found that despite of their nearly 90% literacy and wide interest for book reading, the people don't get enough books to read, as the literary production in Mizo language is very low. Due to the negligible number of non-government publishers and lack of proper infrastructure for book production, the authors in the state, still have to publish books with self-sponsorship.

**Villages are more receptive to books**

On the other hand, in Assam I have discovered the village dwellers are more prone to book reading than the urban population.
Faraway from Guwahati, in a district town called Saralghat, Goswami family is running a book publication business since three generations. The present owner has recently called up his grand-daughter, an MBA working in Bangalore, to take over the family business.

Book publishing industry in Bengal is older and bigger than many other states of India. But with time, the industry has become Calcutta centric with no sign of decentralization. Moreover, although publishing has now turned into a full-fledged industry, attitude of the publishers in Bengal still haven't changed, unlike English publication. With changing time the demand and attitude of consumers of every product alters and competition increases. Book publishing industry has witnessed this competition intensely mainly coming from the popular and dominant media. It should be remembered that books are still considered as the choice of only a handful few men and women, as in reality the major part of Indian literates are surviving without the habit of book reading and they will continue to do so. They have lost the connection with book reading after completing school and college education and more so because, after the arrival of television, book is no more even considered as the means of entertainment. Not only in case of book reading, television has left its effect on newspapers and magazines as well. Gradually magazine tried to replace book reading, while the popularity of social media is becoming a threat to the survival of newspapers.

20 is today's average age group
Modern publishers are still not aware that the average age group of today's dominant literal Indians is 20 something and readers of this age group are not interested to read any ordinary novel. But their interest in reading can be brought back by giving them literary pieces that inspire and ignite emotions in them. However, it's not solely the publishers' responsibility to augment book reading habit, but the equal amount liability also be dispersed on the government and the general masses. This is not a mere topic to only think about for the intellectuals, but also a set of actions should be taken to make others think about it as well. Read or perish, this is the time for general public to understand the significance of this old saying.

Since the time books were developed the authors, government and sometimes a third party were always eager to develop tactics to catch the attention of readers. Long before Jesus Christ was born, during the time of, ancient Babylon civilization people used to engrave writings on bricks and stones and searched for readers who would value their creations. Libraries were created, albeit temporary and without any proper settings for preservations, to encourage more readers to develop the habit of book reading. Years later, after the arrival of printing technology the formation of libraries became easier and books became an integral part of daily lives. Such fast popularity and acceptance of books weren't even expected by the creator of printing technology! Johannes Gutenberg, when introduced printing technology, was only eager to make Bible available to general masses, outside the clout of the Church. But soon the books turned into a mass medium and a
wide range of readers were created. Following such huge demand of the populace book trading was started in England, which within a very short period initiated business of books in other parts of the world as well. Printed books were gradually turning into an industry that invited publishers from different regions to present books for public usage. But the future and growth of book industry was still left under questions mark that time since the rate of public literacy wasn't very high and the fact that acceptance of books was depended on the spread of education made publishers worried about the rising industry. Moreover, the restriction on book printing from government also added to the uncertainty. Eventually the spat between the government and publishers of England became apparent. But despite of the resistance from authority, majority of the publishers didn't stop printing books. In the mean time basic education was made compulsory in England and that increased interest of the general masses on book reading. In the mean time, it was during that period industrial revolution ushered in England which not only infused money among the working people, but also initiated popular journalism in the country that gradually added up to the reading habit of masses. Although the competition from popular mass media was intense, the newly found reading awareness had benefitted the book industry. However, the role of writers and authors to increase readers' interest on book reading played perhaps the most significant role. It can be rightly said that it was the fire of contemplation that was transfused into the readers by writers that motivated them to delve into book reading. Inspiration of
nationalism and exploration of economic liberation were the fruits of book reading and not just a mere entertainment mode, books instigated youth emancipation and modern ideology as well. ‘A Vindication of the Rights of Woman: With Strictures on Political and Moral Subjects' written by Mary Wollstonecraft in 1792 inspired women's movement in England and their rights to vote, while 'Cartagena Manifesto' written by Simon De Bolivar in Latin America set off the democratic movement. Although the anti-slavery movement in America was led by Abraham Lincoln, but the anti-slavery outlook was formed many years back by Ralph Waldo Emerson through his book named 'Nature' that guided the readers to form a mindset with logic and reasoning. Similarly, the book 'Civil Disobedience' written by Henry David Thoreau in 1849 created a stir in the world of intellectual growth and awakening. Nearly 100 years later the same book inspired Gandhi in nationalist movement. Before the year 1896 when the book 'Uncle Tom's Cabin' was published, the people of North America used to believe the slaves have no distinguished existence in the nation, but the book acted as the agent of transformation.

Essentially, certain books tend to create their readers by their own virtue and exclusivity of literary value. Not merely a set of readers opting to reading for entertainment, but books of high value create active readers, who riot only read through the ideology of the author, but also interpret the underlying meaning and transform the society and their own attitude accordingly. The revolution conceived by Karl, Marx was also a result of the infusion of revolutionary ideology through writing and not through
gun. The critical analysis piece named 'Das Kapital' he wrote not a Merry road like 'Alice in Wonderland' but a bitter truth of reality published in 1867 that stimulated Made mass reaction. There is no need to analyse the relevance of ‘Das Kapital’ today in view of modern world, but the above mentioned examples are adequate to explain that the biggest of all revolution formed, diffused and inspired the masses through writing and literature.

However, books that are still relevant and widely read in many countries, are now only been confined to the school syllabus in our country and not read widely by general public at large. Not only in foreign nations, books also played a significant role in the national movement in India. Bhagavad Gita, Pather Parichali or Anandamath - the books that stimulated nationalist movement, were not only motivated the patriotic leaders, but also left a significant mark on the social and intellectual growth of the nation. It's the written words that makes one alive and enable him or her to shape a distinctive identity. Not only politics, everything that makes life rhythmic, let one immerse in humanity and arouse deep hidden heartfelt emotion, originate from books. Be it poetry or song, everything creates from words. But words that are born through literature enter the heart through ears. One can also live a life without books, but that life would turn into a wasteland. That survival is not a real survival - that's only keeping one's life alive. But unfortunately, books no more have the same position of high regard in our lives as more and more people have preferred to opt for the 'substitutes' of books and literature viz. cinema, television and newspaper.
Films and books treated equally

There was a time when cinema and books were treated equally. Even the film directors were faithful to the authors. There was a time when even the newspapers were dependent on books as well. News and literature became synonymous at a time. But with time their essence has changed form and people are more drawn towards the audio-visual media as it don't compel them to think a lot and leave almost no room for rational exercise. Readers have realized that they don't need to pay such undivided attention and concentration to watch and hear as with reading. One can chat with friends or romance with the girlfriend while watching television or do household chores while listening to radio, but for reading it's imperative to provide complete attention. Book is a very possessive medium as it not only requires the concentration of your eyes but also your mind and heart and therefore due to the fast paced life and mechanical lifestyle the people today aren't prone to devote such undivided interest and attention to reading.

Who will save the kids?

There is a word in English 'superfluous', which means not going too deep and treating a matter on the surface level. Often parents come up to me worryingly to discuss about the concentration issues of their children. Kids today are becoming more addicted to television and video games than to spend times on playgrounds or among relatives, leave aside the book reading habit. The friends outside their home and hang out in shopping malls or game parlours are new trend of the generation. The main reason for
this, as I believe, is the losing value of cogitation in our surrounding.

We often say it's a fast pacing world today. But the world has always been like this, because that's the nature of time. The 'best of time and the worst of time' walk side by side on the same walkway, and so the truth is, one technology is ought to replace another one. But book is not a technology in theory and practice. It can only be produced mechanically, but there is always a writer or a creator that speaks directly to the reader about the world, its rules and future. The author is a foreseer, depicter of the reality and analyst of the past. He empowers a person for understanding and wisdom. A book is not a mere instrument for entertainment; we have many such options everywhere else. But a book aims to transform a person's attitude and perspective. The author disperses intellect, opinion, values, ideologies and cultural values that the reader imbibes according to his or her own understanding and rationality. The basic aim of book reading is to transform and revolutionalize attitude of an individual and the society at large. Like the relation between a child and his parents, books too have a committed bond with its readers. Through the fountain of words, values and emotions writers have motivated readers since ages, and thus, one after another readers' society have been created throughout the world. Not only towards his creations, an author also has obligation towards his own society and his all readers. The success of a writer can be determined not by the profit he makes, but by his ability to transfuse his ideologies among the readers for the betterment of their individual lives and for the
society in general. A writer is bound to portray the reality of a society and the nature of the world, show the truth and only the truth, guide the readers towards an honest life and infuse the sense of rationality among masses. Not as occasional disciplinary scolding of an Uncle, but with the compassion of a Mother, but for that both the author and reader have to be obliged to each other. Like the way a child is bound for the commitment towards his mother, in literature the attachment of commitment between the readers and authors is essential as well. Since long, the authors can create certain readers' society where the admirers enhance the author's obligation towards the society. The authors who have been able to transfuse their thoughts among their readers have been able to sustain the duty of literature. In simple words, books should be able to bring an intellectual revolution. And books in this connection don't only mean novels. Books mean every literary written word - from poetry, critical analysis, non-fictions, essays etc. Miriam Raftery has produced a list of too most influential books in the world, which contains only 31 novels. Therefore, those readers who only read novels and fictions are missing out a lot of intellectual stimulation and knowledge and unable to experience proper literary development. A true reader reads every kind of literature, because he holds no detestation towards any form and wants to learn everything, like a thirst bird which looks up to the sky for drops of water.

**Book industry limping today?**

Book industry is going through intense financial losses since past few years. When I visited Assam Book Fair recently, I came to
know that approximately books worth 3 crores have been sold in the fair this year, which was nearly 50% less than the last year. Population and literacy rate is rising in our nation, but book reading rate is going consistently low. Moreover, the majority of books sold last year were school text and reference books. Also, the libraries in Assam, Mizoram and Tripura have most subscriptions for text books than that of general books.

During the exam season and for competitive tests, students are visiting libraries to swot up but once the exam is over they aren't bothered to visit again for individual development. However, government is taking adequate initiative to strengthen the library system and allocate more funds for better collection and preservations, and also hiring better equipped library staffs, in most libraries the subscriptions have also made free or nominal to attract more public, but despite the long list of readers in those libraries, hardly a good quantity of readers visit the building in reality.

**No taker for library Fund**

However, the central government has so far launched numerous proposals and projects for the betterment of the libraries to impart mass education and development. In 2009-10 the central government allocated nearly 22.5 crores and 14 crores from the state funds for library developments. In India Raja Rammohan Roy Foundation has been entrusted to inspect the growth and development of libraries, along with the time to time assessment of infrastructural issues. Central government allocates the exact
matching amount of money as paid by the state government for
general and infrastructural development of public libraries. But
most states neither take the fund from central government nor do
they spend the amount of money they are supposed to pay for
library development purpose. For instance, 26 states haven't used
the money allotted for organizing seminars to increase awareness
for book reading and library usage and 5 states haven't used the
money designated for purchasing books. Only 7 states - Gujarat,
Karnataka, Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, Uttar Pradesh and West
Bengal have so far allotted fund of 1 crore for the development of
libraries, among which Karnataka takes the most active stand.
Karnataka allots 3 crores 30 lakh rupees annually for the
betterment of library services. Tamil Nadu plays the next active,
role and West Bengal is in the third position. However, West
Bengal still has a separate library law, which newly 50 percent
Indian states have not been able to pass yet. In our neighbouring
state Tripura the proposal for library law is still on hold in the
department of Higher Education. If a separate law for libraries is
granted by the government, the system will be able to garner
enough resources and scopes to flourish properly and be able to
take independent decisions. But the Higher Education department
is still reluctant to do so. As a result, the condition of the state
libraries is consistently declining due to lack of infrastructural
development and readers' enthusiasm. Most readers visit* the
library to read newspapers or for examination purposes. Due to
the initiative taken by Raja Rammohan Roy Foundation, a number
of new buildings for libraries are been established and allotted, but the number of readers is still not satisfactory enough.

**Tomorrows Public Library**

Therefore, to attract new readers, libraries are developing into a full-fledged information centre to be able to offer readers more than just books. But as I found, the only library that has implemented the decision in West Bengal, is one sponsored library at old, Malda. The reading rooms display information about renowned authors along with the historical introduction about the region. When I visited the city of Izwal in Mizoram I found this beautiful central library built by Raja Rammohan Roy Foundation, not visited by many readers as it's not situated in the central position of the city. However, we have a many example of libraries built in the hub of the city, but still not visited by quality readers. The building itself is falling down and under its ruins the greatest literary creations of all time are lamenting for readers. In my survey a number of men and women have replied that they prefer to borrow books from their friends and relatives instead of going to libraries. Borrowing a book and never returning them is an admirable practice. Even if it returns to the original holder, it comes crumbled. Once a person asked Mark Twain, "Why have you scattered so many books on the floor, mister? Can't you get a book shelf?" Twain answered, "What to do my dear, books are open for lending, but a book shelf is not!"
Libraries should extend closing hours

Visiting a library is now unnecessarily time-consuming for the working people. Moreover, the public libraries close down in the evening, around 7 pm in general plus, no service on weekends and public holidays. But if the libraries are considered as public utility service, then the libraries are ought to remain open till late evenings and definitely on Sundays. Also, the reading rooms should have bigger and more comfortable sitting arrangements. Along with that, the newly released books in both fiction and non-fiction should be included in the book list of these libraries. But more often than not, the political colour or preference of the author is considered as the determining factor, instead of the readers' demand to include new books in the library shelves. Many authors and even newspapers are thus, have been eliminated from the library collections. However, there are readers who have developed the habit of book reading since childhood and became addicted to it. Despite their busy schedule, they still read books and its for them, the books are still written, the words are still created. Taste of books is like the taste of blood to a wild tiger. These readers still read books even after maintaining office work and family time. Its for them, the system of library is still working actively in the society and books are still being published, despite the exodus of the trend of gifting books on weddings. Once these gifted books on weddings created a substantial amount of readers. If you buy 10 copies of 'Bharat Prem Katha' for a wedding purpose, you can use 4 copies of them for household work, 1 copy to place on a showcase as a decorative piece; and still you have 5
copies left which can be donated to the local library. Atleast this way quite a few readers will be able to read the book. Can't we do the same even now? With the gift of a saree or pressure cooker we can still attach one book. It will find atleast one reader, or else, if somebody sell it off to a second hand book store, some reader will come and buy it.

**No time for book reading**

Now I will conclude my speech through discussing the result of the survey in brief. As I have discovered, the continuous exposure to television and internet are snatching away the tradition of book reading, by making the process of research easier and diminishing the amount of time one needed to dedicate on reading earlier. While visiting schools I found that the majority of students never read Bankim Chandra and more than 60% of students couldn't write a single name of book written by Rabindra Nath Tagore or Sarat Chandra Chatterjee. The Bankim Chandra literature is obsolete even for the university students. The detective stories or ghost tales are now comparatively more popular among young readers. The parents urge the kids for book reading till class 7, beyond that point the burden of private tuition classes are instilled on them. Books, along with their childhood have now gone missing to chip in the rat race of success.

**Where are those book loving kids gone?**

The children's library built by Raja Rammohan Roy foundation in Guwahati, is wonderfully placed with adequate materials, but the librarian is still waiting kid bookworms to arrive. Book reading,
like any bad or good habit, needs to be instilled in early childhood, only then the youth can be drawn back to reading. This undoubtedly is a challenge for today because in our youth, we didn’t have such distractions as of today. We had no other source of wisdom other than books. Many parents used to think those days, a novel would spoil a kid. However, as we can see today, children get spoiled for not reading novels! The 17 years old boy who is accused of brutally raping the young girl in a moving bus in Delhi he surely hasn't read any book ever. A many options are available everywhere today for spoiling a young mind. Only a book can now ensure to keep a child healthy and fit. But not all the books - selected few of them. But who will create that list? Even the teachers are from the current generation and they too believe in the culture of 'use and throw away'. A teacher was modestly asked in a quiz competition "Can you name the author of Jagari?" He couldn't answer. My final word is, don't get too excited with the web of crowd at book fair. Lakhs of people come to a fair but not everyone of them buys things. Don't even get excited with the amount of book selling. Ask the person beside you if he reads regularly. If he does, ask him if his thinking or outlook have been influenced. Ask him whether it has made him more decent, more secular, and kinder. If he says yes only then his book reading has been successful. Just like a marriage gives proper meaning to love, a book is successful only when it prospers a person's philosophical and spiritual understanding. Its pointless to take pride in having a book in your home, just like that reader. Its a joke nonetheless, but has a moral implication. A young man took
his female friend to a shopping mall to buy her a gift. Whatever he finds suitable for her, she says she has got it already. At first, he wanted to go for a diamond earring. The girl said, she has an earring just like the same. Then he took her to buy a digital TV. She said, she has just the same set at home. The boy showed her some lipsticks. She said, she has just the same. He thought may be the girl has no interest for any materialistic thing. So he took her to a book store and bought a book for her. The girl replied, without even seeing the book, "Oh a book? I too have a book already". Not one, you can have an almirah full of books, but if you don't read them, they worth no more than a stack of rotten potato. That won't make you or the society any better. Books, as Jesus Christ said, are like talent, useless if doesn't applied properly. Book and money have also close similarity. Money is what money does and likely, book is what a book does. Or else, its just a piece of paper.
Reading habit – Part – II

Reading habit survey among the college and University students and general people in West Bengal.

Segment – A

Viswabharati University

Male Students only

1) How many books read in 3 months.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Book</th>
<th>Students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>01</td>
<td>01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>02</td>
<td>02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>03</td>
<td>03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>03+</td>
<td>05</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total: 11

2) The categories of books.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Book</th>
<th>COUNT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bengali Novel</td>
<td>07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Detective stories</td>
<td>04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Modern poetry</td>
<td>02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Humanities</td>
<td>02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>History</td>
<td>01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sociology</td>
<td>01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>03</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3) Computer surfing in a day.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>COUNT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 - 2 hrs.</td>
<td>6 student</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 - 4 hrs.</td>
<td>1 student</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 - 0 hrs.</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4) Reading hrs. for text book per day.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>COUNT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 - 2 hrs.</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 - 4 hrs.</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 + hrs.</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1 student did not mention.
5) (a) How many hrs. spent in a week TV viewing:
1 hrs.  7
2 hrs.  2
4 hrs.  1
7 hrs.  8

(b) Playing Video Game – None.

(c) Cultural activities weekly.
1 – 2 hrs.  4
6 hrs.  1
Other 6 students are not involved in cultural activities.

7) Dating time weekly
1 – 2 hrs.  4
3 – 4 hrs.  3
7 – 8 hrs.  2
2 students did not mention.

Reading General books – weekly.
2 hrs.  2
3 hrs.  2
4 hrs.  2
5 – 6 hrs.  2
14 hrs.  1
2 students did not mention.

8) What books they are reading at the time of interview.
1) Sahitya Chotogalpa
   Narayan Gangopadhyya
2) Rabindra Jibankatha
   Prabhat K. Mukhopadhyya.
3) Dhanya Loka – AnandaBardhan.
4) Sonar Kella – Satyajit Roy.
5) Krishna Charitra – Bankim Chattopadhyya.
6) Galpa Gucha – Tagore.
7) A Novel by Saradindu Banerjee
8) Poetry by Sankha Ghosh and Binoy Mazumder.

* Reference books.

**Segment – B**

**Female Students of Viswabharati**

**Sample – 8**

1) How many general books you have read in last 3 months.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No. of books</th>
<th>Student</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3+</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2) What type of books the students is reading at the present moment.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Books</th>
<th>Hrs.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bengali Detective story</td>
<td>01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ghost story</td>
<td>01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Humanities</td>
<td>03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>02</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3) Computer surfing a day.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hrs.</th>
<th>Student</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 – 2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 – 4</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3 students do not use computer.

4) Reading text books a day:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hrs.</th>
<th>Student</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 - 2</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 – 4</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4+ hrs.</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1 did not mention.

5) How many hrs. spend in a week.
a) TV viewing:
   Hrs.   Student
   4      1
   5      3
   7      4

b) Video game Played by only one student 30 mt. a day.

6) Cultural activities:
   1 hrs.  1
   3 hrs.  1
   4 hrs.  1
   5 hrs.  1
   7 hrs.  1
   3 did not respond.

7) Dating with friends weekly:
   1 hr.    2 girls
   3 hrs.   3 girls
   10 hrs.  1 girl
   2 girls did not mention.

8) Reading general books:
   2 hrs.   2
   4 hrs.   2
   12 hrs.  1
   3 students did not mention.

9) What books they are reading at the time of interview:
   1) Life on Nivedita.
   2) Auto biography of Gandhiji.
   3) Rabindra Parichay by Uma Dasgupta.
   4) Text books only by six girl students.

Segment – C
Dhupguri College, Jalpaiguri

Sample – 86

Male – 63
Female – 23
Reader of General books : 28
Reader of exclusively Text books : 41
Not reading at all : 17

Students Category :
1st year : 79
2nd year : 80
3rd year : 17

1) Books read in last 3 months Book student out of 28
   None - 5
   1  2
   2  4
   3  5
   3+1 12

2) Type of books read
   Bengali novels : 22
   Detective : 07
   Modern Poetry : 02
   English Thriller : 02
   English Novel : 01
   Ghost Story : 01
   Science : 01
   Humanities : 02
   Others : 02

3) Computer surfing a day out of 86
   Hrs.    Students
   1 – 2  38
   3 – 4  10
   More than 4  04
   35 students do not use computer.

4) Reading text book a day. Out of 86 students :
   Reading hrs.    Student
   1 -2  30
   3 -4  30
   4 hrs. +  20
   Not mentioned  06

5) How much time you spend in a week on TV viewing :
   Hrs.    Student
   1 – 2  28

491
6) **Video Game activity:**

- 1 hr: 17 students
- 2 hr: 09 “
- 3 hr: 06 “
- 4 hr: 03 “
- 10 hr: 01 “

50 students do not play video game.

7) **Cultural activities involvement:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hr.</th>
<th>Students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>01</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

35 students not involved in any cultural activities.

8) **Dating hrs. with friends in a week:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hrs.</th>
<th>Students dating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28</td>
<td>01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35</td>
<td>01</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
10 students do not have either boy or girl friend.

9) Reading general books (out of 28) weekly read.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Books</th>
<th>Student</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2 students not mentioned.

10) List of books they are reading at the time of interview

(Out of 28)

1. Chokher Bali 3 students
2. Jogajoga 1 “
3. Dena Paona 1 “
4. Debdas 2 “
5. Pather Dabi 1 “
6. Palli Samaj 1 “
7. Dhatri Debate 2 “
8. Rajani 1 “
9. Jagari 1 “
10. Aranyak 1 “
11. Padma Nadir Mejhi 1 “
12. Debi Chowdhurani 3 “
13. Bisbriksha 3 “
14. Durgesh Nandini 1 “
15. Kalo Bhramar 2 “
16. Prashna Chinha 1 “
17. Juga Prabartak Vivekananda 1 “
18. Revolution 20:20 by
Chetan Bhagat
19. The Al Chemist
20. Revolution 2020
21. One Sky Two Stars
22. Twelfth Night
23. Sonnet of Shakespeare

Segment – D
Malda Gour Banga College:

Male - 12
Female - 08
Total : 20

How many books read by individual respondent in last 3 months :

1) Books read          Number of students
   01                08 books
   02                05 books
   03                03 books
   More than 3      04 books
   Total 20 books
All 20 respondents read books.

2) Nature of books they read :

What type of books the students read most.

   1. Other than fictions or store books : 08
   2. Modern Poetry : 04
   3. Bengali Novels :
      Ghost Stories : 02
      Humanities : 01
   4. Politics : 01
   5. Sociology : 01

3) Time spent on Computer a day :

   1 – 2 hrs. 06 students

494
4) **Study hrs. daily spent for Test Book reading**:

- 2 hrs. spent: 11 students
- 3 – 4 hrs.: 06 students

---

**Segment – E**  
*Balurghat Students, South Dinajpur*

**Total Respondents**: 10  
**Male**: 08  
**Female**: 02

1) **How many students read how many books in last 3 months**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Students</th>
<th>Number of books</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>02</td>
<td>02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>01</td>
<td>03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>05</td>
<td>03 +</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>02</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Only 2 students out of 10 do not read at all.

2) **Nature of books read by them**:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nature of books</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>English book</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bengali Novels</td>
<td>02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Detective books</td>
<td>01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Humanities</td>
<td>03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>History</td>
<td>01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>01</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

None has read any Poetry, Ghost Stories or on Science.

3) **How many hrs. a day spent on Computer**:
4) **Per day study time on college text books :**

1 - 2 hrs. 08 students
3 - 4 hrs. 01 students
More than 4 hrs. 03

5) **How much time spent in a week on TV viewing :**

1 hrs. 01 student
7 hrs. 04 student
14 hrs. 04 student
30 hrs. 01 student
Total: 10 students

6) **Video Game Playing :**

2 hrs. 1 student
3 hrs. 1 student
None spend time on video 8 student

7) **Cultural activities, like Music, Dance, Theatre :**

2 hrs. 01
3 hrs. 01, 8 students have no cultural activities.

8) **Dating with friends (boy or girl)**

07 hrs. 05 students
10 hrs. 01 students
14 hrs. 02 students
35 hrs. 01 students
01 student did not mention.

9) **Reading time spent a week for outside college text books (general books)**

07 hrs. 05
12 hrs. 02
27 hrs. 01
02 students did not mention.

10) **Students reading following books at the time of interview:**
1. Palli samaj
2. Del carneige Rachana Samagrs
3. Auto biography of Mahatma Gandhi

Only 4 students answered this column, presumably 6 students were not reading anything.

**Segment – F**

**Students of diploma in social work – Jadavpur University Campus**

Sample : 87
Male - 51
Female - 30

**Student Categories :**
Pure Students : 55
Service holders : 21
Business : 07
Artist : 02
Doctor : 01
Lawyer : 01

1) **FINDINGS** : 31 students out of 87 (35.6%) are the library members. Rest of them are not members of any library (84.4%). Those who are library members 23 are the members of one library. 5 are members of 2 libraries. 3 are members of more than 2 libraries.

2) **Respondents personal collection of books at home :**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No. of collections</th>
<th>No. of Respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5 – 25</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30 – 70</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>100 – 200</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>500 – 1000</td>
<td>08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1500 – 2000</td>
<td>03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total :</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
10 respondents admitted they have not any collection of books.

28 respondents avoided the question.

We can assume the majority of respondents have some collection of books at home. 28 respondents are assumed not to have any personal collection.

3) From where they developed Reading habit or who inspired them to read.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>From School</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>From College</td>
<td>04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recently acquired</td>
<td>03</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

What type of books attract you:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Short stories</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Novels</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poetry</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Essays</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political books</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Science</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Travel</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religion</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plays</td>
<td>08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4) Accounting for reasons behind decline in reading habit. Personal view of the respondents.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>Opinion given by respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Influence of TV</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Influence of Computer</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People have less time</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Increase in book price : 14
Influence of news paper : 03
There are number of reasons many assigned.

5) **How many respondents read Tagore books** :

None has read any book of Tagore : 17
Cannot remember any book of Tagore : 02
Avoided the question : 03
1 book of Tagore read : 09
2-3 books of Tagore read by : 05
4-5 books : 05
8-10 books : 06
Some books but : 11
Could not remember the number of books read.
Read only some : 12

Short Stories
Most of the books read : 05

Respondents have not read any
Book of Tagore : 17

6) **Name of best books, the respondents have read**

1) Chander Pahar : Bibhu Bushan 7 persons
2) Srikanta : Sarat Chandra 6 "
3) Sarat Rachanabali : 5 "
4) Pather Panchali : 4 "
5) Aranyak : 3 "
6) Gita : 3 "
7) Kathamritra : 2 "
8) Gitanjali : Rabindra Nath 2 "
9) Pather Dabi : 2 ‘
10) Golpo Guchchha : 2 "
11) Shesher Kobita : 2 "
12) Chokher Bali : 2 “
The following books read by most of the respondents:

- Pally Samaj, Devdas, Bordidi, Charulata, Jibansmriti, Shishushilpi, Gora, Noukadubi, Chandalika, Chhinnapatra, Sandhyaraag, Lalkuthi, Kothay Pabo Tare, Prem Nei, Kolbela, Sei Somoi, Byomkesh Boksi, Dahan, Neelghurni, Abaar Jodi Ichchha Koro, Kobi, Pagla DAshu, Dracula Somogro, Ho-jo-bo-ro-lo, Chhutir Hawa, Chacha Chowdhury, Barmuda Triangle, Man vs Wild, 2 cups of Tea, Anna Karanina, Zorba the Greek, Books on Swamiji, Dushchintahin Notun Jibon, Quaran.

This is another evidence that old Bengali books are still read and remembered by the college students. It includes some English books too.

**General observation**

A) It was seen from the survey that those who are members of the library tend to purchase more books than that of the persons not members of the library.

B) 14 Library members purchase books regularly. Mostly one to 5 books a year (8 persons).

Profile of readers among the general people
The following tables based on our questioners will speak for themselves to understand book reading pattern among the general people in West Bengal districts. This survey has been made on 92 samples at random. It was found that majority of book readers in the districts are public library members. In our survey we find that out of 92 respondents 56 are library members. One third of library members read more than two books a month, the library goers buy more books than non library goers. Their personal collection of books is also greater than the non library users. It attitude formation books have made greater impact on library users than non library users.

Comparatively library goers read much more than the non library users. We have made a list of favourite authors by those 92 respondents, a valuable documentary evidence of ordinary people’s choice of books. The common people choose books by subjects and authors both. We are presenting few surveys from the following segments.

**Table – 1**

Book reading habit among the general people of different districts in West Bengal (South Dinajpur, Burdwan, Bankura, Purba Medinipur, Howrah, Hooghly, N 24-Parganas, S 24-Parganas)

A random survey from 92 samples:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Library members</th>
<th>Non-library members</th>
<th>Total respondent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1) Are you member of a public library?</td>
<td>Yes – 56</td>
<td>No – 36</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2) How many books</td>
<td>None – 2</td>
<td>None = 10</td>
<td>None = 12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-----</td>
<td>-----</td>
<td>-----</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>You read a month?</strong></td>
<td>1 = 9</td>
<td>2 Books = 13</td>
<td>2 = 8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Do you buy books?</strong></td>
<td>Yes = 22</td>
<td>No = 34</td>
<td>Yes = 16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>How many books do you buy a year?</strong></td>
<td>8/10 books = 4</td>
<td>20 → 30 books = 2</td>
<td>½ books = 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>How many books do you have in your personal collection?</strong></td>
<td>Below 10 books = 10</td>
<td>20 – 30 books = 9</td>
<td>50 – 75 books = 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>For how long have you been reading?</strong></td>
<td>From school – 46</td>
<td>From college – 08</td>
<td>Recently – 02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>What is the source of your reading?</strong></td>
<td>Library - 48</td>
<td>Buying – 22</td>
<td>Lending – 8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Has book changed your outlook?</strong></td>
<td>Yes = 55</td>
<td>No = 1</td>
<td>Yes = 34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>i I have become more liberal</td>
<td>Liberal – 29</td>
<td>- 17</td>
<td>- 46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ii Books inspired me travelling</td>
<td>Travelling – 23</td>
<td>- 12</td>
<td>- 35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>iii I have become more progressive</td>
<td>- 38</td>
<td>- 17</td>
<td>- 55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>iv I have been able to know the world</td>
<td>- 35</td>
<td>- 25</td>
<td>- 60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>v I have been benefited in my service/business</td>
<td>- 21</td>
<td>- 15</td>
<td>- 36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>vi I have been able to rise above caste and religion</td>
<td>- 31</td>
<td>- 21</td>
<td>- 52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>vii Ideal medium for</td>
<td>- 1</td>
<td>- 1</td>
<td>- 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Passing time :</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------</td>
<td>---------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>viii</td>
<td>I have been social Reformer</td>
<td>- 1</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lx</td>
<td>I have been able to Know myself</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>- 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9)</td>
<td>Would you have lost Many many things Without reading books?</td>
<td>Yes - 55</td>
<td>Yes - 30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>No - 1</td>
<td>No - 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10)</td>
<td>Do you foresee reading will decrease in future?</td>
<td>Yes – 52</td>
<td>Yes - 35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>No - 4</td>
<td>No - 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Short story – 81</td>
<td>Short story – 17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Poetry – 18</td>
<td>Poetry – 8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Science – 16</td>
<td>Science – 14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Essays – 16</td>
<td>Essays – 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Sociology – 15</td>
<td>Sociology – 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Political – 9</td>
<td>Political – 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Others – 19</td>
<td>Others – 11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12)</td>
<td>What are the books by Tagore you have gone through?</td>
<td>A few – 4</td>
<td>A few – 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Very few – 15</td>
<td>Very few – 8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4/5 books – 10</td>
<td>Short stories – 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>7/8 books – 2</td>
<td>4/5 books – 8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>20/25 books-5</td>
<td>Most of all – 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Short stories and Drama – 1</td>
<td>Short stories and Drama – 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Short stories &amp; Novel – 1</td>
<td>Short stories &amp; Novel – 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Most of all – 10</td>
<td>Most of all – 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13)</td>
<td>Are you reading now?</td>
<td>Yes – 33</td>
<td>Yes – 23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>No – 22</td>
<td>No – 13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**What books are you reading now?**

The respondents name following books they are reading.

Upanishad, Gita, Books of Rabindranath Tagore, Novels of Bhibhutibhushan Bandayapadhyay, Bankim Chandra, Sarat Chandra, Tarashankar, Saradindu, Buddhadev Guha, Sankar, Hemanga Biswas, Shirshendu, Samaresh Majumdar.
Short stories of Upendra Kishore Roy Chowdhuri, Sukumar Ray, Prem Chand Munsi, Travelogues Umaprasad Mukhapadhyay and others.

English novels by Nicolas Spark, Daniella Steel, Paulo Coelho, Amitava Ghosh.

Many books of Partha Chattopadhyya. Beside this, science related books, religious, political, job related books and Sharadiya Puja Sankha.

**Favourite Authors:**

Sarat Chandra (25), Rabindranath (22), Partha Chattopadhyya (8), Bhibhutibhushan (7), Bankim Chandra (5), Sunil Gangopadhyya (4), Saradindu (3), Sankar (3), Manik (2), Shirshendu (2), Ashapurna Devi (2), Satyajit (2), Samaresh Majumdar (2), Bimal Mitra (1), Tarashankar (1), Shibram (1), Narayan Sanyal (1), Syed Muytaba Ali (1), Buddhadev Guha(1), Sukanta Bhatacharyya, Amarendra Chakraborty (1), Tapan Kumar Basu (1), Sharlock Homes, syman De Boverer, Arthur Canan Doyle, Daniella Steel, Sydney Sheldom, Charles Dickens.

**Best books I have read in my life:**

Hotash Hoben Naa (7), Pather Panchali (5), Devdas (4), Shesher Kobita (3), Aranyak (3), Ramayana (2), Mahabharat (2), Gita (2), Letters of Swami (2), Bankim Rochonaboli (2), Devi Chowdhurani (1), Ananda Math (1), Rajasingha (1), Sarat Samagro (1), Pally Samaj (3), Pather Dabi (2), Grihodaho (1), Sreekanta (1), Ramer Sumoti (1), Rabindra Rachonabali (2), Golpoguchha (2), Ghore –
How to increase Reading habits?

25 suggestions made out by 91 respondents of my randoms survey among the people in the districts.

1. Vigorous campaign against computer games and restraint on TV viewing.

2. To motivate youngsters from their childhood to read books. To motivate children read more books. To give children book gifts at the first opportunity.

3. To discuss among the children about good books to rouse interest.


5. There should not be restrictions on any book. Books could by read at random, indiscriminately to rouse interest in book.
6. Every readers must enroll themselves with 9 public library to have wider book choice and compulsive reading.


8. Book shops must provide spacious floor to enable readers choose books by themselves.

9. All books must be advertised.

10. Develop reading habit by reading instantaneously.

11. To make people convince about the utility of books.

12. The environment of a public library must be people friendly.

13. The authors should write in more interesting reader friendly manner.

14. There should be campaign for people to read more books and less TV watching.

15. To persuade people to allot a specific hour a day to read books exclusively.


17. Parents should suggest their wards love books.

18. Convince readers to read books of all categories. There must be balance of reading between fictions and non fictions.


22. Campaign for giving books to dearer and nearer as gift or presentation.

**Table – 2**

Reading habits among the people of Birbhum and West Medinipur Districts

Total Sample size = 25

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age group</th>
<th>Sample Size</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Below 16 – 16-23</td>
<td>07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30 – 50</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50 boys – 02</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. Whether member of a public library:
- Member: 16
- Non member: 6

- Member of one library: 15
- Member of two libraries: 01
- Total: 16

2. Read only one book a month: 06
- do two books: 03
- More than three: 07
- Total: 16

Those who donot read books: 05
- Total: 25

3. 21 persons developed reading habit
- Habit from school: Total: 23
- 2 developed reading habit from College
- of them only 2 person gave up reading habit.
- 2 persons did not mention.
- Personal collection of books.

4. Personal collection of books and number of books for each one’s collection.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of books</th>
<th>Persons</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>200</td>
<td>01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50</td>
<td>01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 to 25</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>02</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5. Books collected from outside sources:
- From Library: 11
- From buying: 07
- Loan from friends: 07

Subject wise readership:
- Novels: 13
- Poems: 02
- Short stories: 13
- Essays: 04
- Religion: 06
- Sociology: 04
- Politics: 05

6) Best books according to them they have read.
1) Kathamrita
   Ramkrishna
2) Mahabharta
3) Pather Panchali
4) Nilkantha Pakhir
5) Khoje by Atin Bandopadhya.
   Aloukik Jolojan
6) by same author
   Iswarer Bagan
7) Tagore
   Galpa Gucha
List of favorite authors of the respondents:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mentioned by</th>
<th>Name of author</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1) Rabindra Nath</td>
<td>07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2) Sarat Chandra</td>
<td>07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3) Bibhuti Bushan</td>
<td>02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4) Mamata Banerjee</td>
<td>01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5) Ashpurna Devi</td>
<td>01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6) Buddhadev Guha</td>
<td>01</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table – 3
Reading habit in Malda District
Total Sample – 26

1) Age Group :
- 16 – 23 : 05
- 24 – 30 : 07
- 30 – 50 : 06
- 50 – 60 : 03
- Above 60 : 05
Total : 26

2) Education :
- Matriculate : 04
- Graduate : 13
- PG : 08
- Ph.D. : 01
Total : 26

3) Occupational Variables :
- Service : 01
- Teacher : 07
Business : 02
Retd. : 01
Unemployed : 12 (16 – 24 age group)
Journalist : 01
Not mentioned : 02
Total : 26

4) Of 26 respondents 21 are members of a library 5 persons are not members of any library 1 person is a member of more than two libraries. 06 Persons members of 2 libraries, 7 members of one library.

5) Sources of books :
   From library - 17
   Buy books - 15

6) What books the respondents are reading at the time or interview.
   Modern Novel : 02
   Rabindra Nath : 03
   On Vivekananda : 01
   Bankim Chandra
   Kapal Kundala : 02
   Bisbriksha
   Biography : 04
   Sunil Gangopadhyya : 01
   Sankar : 01
   Religious books : 01
   Mamata Banerjee : 01
   Tara Sankar : 01
   Books on jobs : 04
   On journalism : 01
Not Reading : 01

7) Reading habit developed :
From School : 20
From College : 03
Very recently : 01
Not mentioned : 02

8) Personal Collection of books :
1000 books : 01
500 : 01
400 : 01
275 : 01
200 : 02
100 : 04
30 – 60 : 07
04 – 15 : 05
No personal book Collection : 04
Total : 26

9) How many of them :
Buy books : 11
Yearly purchase of books.
1 to 3 books : 07
5 to 6 books : 02
8 to 10 books : 02
Total : 11 persons.
15 persons out of 26 do not purchase a single book a year.

Little Magazines : 01
Several causes behind the decline of readership:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Persons</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>People have no spare time new</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>For TV pressure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Computer influence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increase in book</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Price</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Most of the respondents held Television responsible for decline in readership.

Professional Segment: I.T. Professionals in Kolkata

In the event of decline and fall of book reading habit among the busy IT professionals as many as 41.7% still read books regularly notwithstanding their busy schedule. Though majority of them buy books as many as 21.7% of them still borrow books from public library. The overall decline of reading habit among the IT professionals does not mean that all did not have reading habit from their childhood. Almost 91% of 60 professionals interviewed admitted once they were prolific readers but now due to pressure of work did not get time to read. Those persons would still remember their favourite Bengali authors, they were fond of in their student days. But still among a sizeable number of professionals to-day the reading habit die hard. About 41.7% of them still read books amidst the same busy work schedule as their colleagues. It proves that an adroit time management and ardent passion for reading could keep up reading habit against distractions. Our sample was drawn from among 60 DCPL employees in Kolkata all
having either degree or diploma in software engineering. They were all from middle class educated Bengali families where book reading used to be treated as a cultural tradition in a family.

It is evident from our study that not one single factor is responsible for the decline of reading habit. There are multiple factors responsible for this decline. Mainly long working hours and little leisure lead to fatigue among the new generation employees especially in the IT sector where people have to stay long hours on a boring and strenuous job. At the days end a burnt out employee expires all energies to read.

However it is praiseworthy for those who still keep up their passion for reading.

We have also marked that use of library has gone down among the working people especially in corporate sectors as because their office hours do not tally with library hours. So many ardent book lovers mostly buy books, many collect books from annual book fair and read them through the year. It is evident from our study in IT sector. We have seen that out of 60 IT employees only 13 persons (21.7%) informed that they were using libraries. The library goers appeared to be hardcore book readers. They also buy books too. Atleast 9 out of 13 library goers buy books regularly.

The young IT professionals who still kept their reading habit alive were asked to identify authors they liked most. The respondents intimated variety of their choices. Starting from Tagore to Chetan Bhagat, as many as 22 authors figured in their favourite list. Tagore was chosen by as many as 18 respondents. He topped the list among individual choices. Sarat Chandra came close second (15), other names figured
out as follows in order of choice preference. Ashutosh Mukhopadhyya (12), Samaresh Majumdar (6), Ashapurna Debi (5), Suchitra Bhattacharyya (4), Buddhadev Guha (4), Satyajit Roy (3), Sunil Gangopadhyya (2), Taapraday Roy, Bhubutibhushan Bandopadhyya, Munsi Premchand, Gajendra Kumar Mitra, Niharmanjan Gupta, Syed Mujtapha Siraj, Maitrayee Debi, Poet Sukanta Bhattacharyya, Shankar and Chetan Bhagat, each of those author were read atleast once.

It is found that those who do not use library yet would keep up their reading habit by buying books. Book buying trend is more among the library users in addition to borrowing from the library they supplement their thirst for books from market. Percentagewise library users buy more books than non users of library. Out of 47 non users of public library only 21 persons buy books exclusively to keep up their reading habit alive while 15 persons of them do not buy books at all and depend on exclusive borrowing from their friends. As many as 7 persons confessed that they would get books for reading from both the sources buying and borrowing from friends.

Among the respondents those who are still reading books regularly and those who read casually both indicated their preference of subjects. Though novels top the list books on other subjects are found to have takers. Subject preference can be arranged in following orders : novels (71.4%) short stories (59%), essays (21.4%) popular science (21.4%) religious books (12.5%). Only 9% indicated their choice would lie in political books. Comparingly 12.5% read sociology. All respondents agreed in one that book reading by and large would come down further in coming days and assigned reasons as follows :
59 respondents out of 60 believed that in coming days the number of book readers would come down because of following reasons given below,

1) People will have lesser and lesser time at their disposal. They are by now hard pressed which will be augmented by increasing pressure of work.

2) TV has already started taking away leisure time used to be allotted previously to exclusive book reading.

3) Computer addiction has made inroad on spare time. Many now find more pleasure in surfing and chatting on social media like facebook enabling one to Vindicate one’s Opinion. That is more than passive reading. Facebook encourages establish direct communication with others and offers new exciting experience.

4) As many as 12 respondents were of opinion that increase in book price keeping the book lovers away. At the same time all respondents agreed book reading could be altered by newspaper reading habit. When we are interviewing the respondents that was the Puja time of 2012 and most of the popular Puja numbers were on the book stalls, but surprisingly we found only 7 persons (11.66%) were engaged in reading those Puja issues. People read newspapers more for information while book tends to offer knowledge. People prefer information for survival.

It is found that the demand for fictions, popular books and sensational books are more. Most respondents do not like serious books or
reference books even religious books or books by younger authors are less in demand.

All said and done all respondents barring only two admitted books had changed their outlook.

The interviewees were all graduates and trained in computer applications mostly between 30 and 50 age group. There are also 3 post graduates. 90% respondents had developed their reading habits from schools, (54 out of 60). Only 4 people were the exceptions. They picked up reading at later period.

Books brought about divergent changes in mind. As many as 30.3 persons admitted books had made them liberal in out look. 34% said book reading had inculcated in them their travelling spirit. They were inspired to travel. 46.4% say books had made them more progressive in thought. The majority of people said books helped them know the world at large. 16 percent were indebted to books as they had helped them find out jobs. 48 percent confessed books had liberated them from the bondage of casteism religious taboo and racial narrowness.

**Kolkata Book Fair 2013**

Our survey on book reading and book purchasing habit among the people who attended 37 International Kolkata Book Fair will provide some trend about the current book reading habit of the people in the West Bengal especially in Kolkata. Kolkata Book Fair 2013 claimed to have been attended by a million audiences from Kolkata and neighborhood districts. The fair, started off in 1976, is probably the largest book fair in the country. Once started in Kolkata Maidan, the
fair is now shifted to East Kolkata in a permanent exhibition ground and yet has not lost the attention of the crowd and continues to be city's mega event. There is a belief among a section of people that only a minor segment of the crowd would buy books from Kolkata Book Fair. Most of the people come for a pleasure trip. To meet the divergent demand of the crowd the fair provides adequate provision for varieties of other programmes. A number of television channels organize reality shows. There are presence of a large number of food stalls, artifacts are sold various programs related and unrelated to books are the part of the Fair.

Notwithstanding, sale of books in this legendary book fair amounts around ₹10 crores a year on average according to Book Fair authority, it is no mean achievement. To justify the claim of record book selling, we have taken a small sample survey of 300 respondents selected at random on the Mela ground in 2013 and the survey result came out with certain interesting revelation. Firstly it shows that among the visitors of the book fair only 35.7% are the members of any public library system. It shows that the majority of the visitors are not associated with any public library. So there are large number of book lovers outside the public library system. Thus, it is not true that only in the public libraries create readers. The majority of the book lovers do not keep in touch with the public library for various reasons. It is also proved that more and more people are reading books through individual purchase. The book market in West Bengal over the years have registered a flourishing trade. Our interviews with some prominent book sellers evince that general book market (outside text book market) has registered the growth of nearly 60% to 70% in last 20
years both in volumes and money. Though the price of books has almost doubled during the period. We have separately dealt at length the economy of the Bengali book market in Kolkata.

Our survey shows that visiting book fair has become a habit among the majority of the attendance. Among the visitors attended in 2013 Fair only 16% were the first time attendance. The majority of the visitors visited the fair last year too. It is true that a sizeable number of people among the crowd would not buy books. But 62.33% respondents admitted that they had purchased books from the last year fair. Barring 3.7% all claimed to have read those books or at least would remember the titles of those books. Only 13.33% confessed that they did not purchase any book from the last year fair. Purchasing books does not necessarily mean reading books. Many purchased books out of impulse or as a fashion. Some considered books has snob value. Returning from book fair with book packets in hand may seem to be a status symbol for many. But it is also true that as many 31% of those who purchased books last year at least have read some. 26.7% would claim to have gone through all books they purchased. Only 4.7% admitted that the book purchased in last year would not be read at all. Some distinctive features regarding correlation between the books purchased and books read was revealed from this survey. In 2013 Book Fair 11% visitors admitted that they won't purchase any book and came to the Mela ground as an onlooker. However 69.7% people come to the fair with predetermination to purchase books only of their favorite writers. 30.33% people have no fascination for any particular writer. They have kept their options open and will choose books after several book stall hopping.
It is a matter of great hope for Bengali authors and publishers that bulk of the book buyers from the fair purchase only Bengali books (74.7%). Only 10% purchase English books. The buyers of Hindi and Urdu books are few and far between only 1.33% and 0.66%.

The Kolkata Book Fair ground has become a popular rendezvous for young couples who are either husband wife or friends. Among the visitors as many 57% are couples or groups of young people. 6.33% are husband and wife. 20.33% visit book fair in a family. Brothers and sisters coming together comprise 5.33%.

Quite contrary to the popular belief, short stories came as the highest choice for the book buyers. Detective stories (about 30%) came second. Thirdly came the novels (constituting 29%). Then came the general books (about 25%) like religious, travelogue, essays, historical, political, subject related, informative, nature & wildlife etc. About 21.33% read motivational books. Again contrary to the popular belief only 14.33% choose utility books popularly known as non-books. About 10% visitors buy English general books. English novels ranked 9% and only 8% will choose children books.

About 69% of people purchased books from the book fair are likely to present some books to their near and dear ones. 60% of them have admitted that they encouraged their children read books. But only 6% discourage their wards, book reading as they feel reading outside textbooks will affect their result in exam. About 43.7% people have increased their book buying budget this year for reasons the price of books have gone up or they want to buy more books.
In Kolkata Book Fair and all subsidiary book fairs in West Bengal, Tripura, and Assam Book Fairs are they only forum to provide people access to book. It may not always boost book sell and small publishers complain not to have even realized their operational cost even from Book Fairs. But the fair has brought the total effect to create awareness among the people of existence of books though the attendances do not justify the total Sale. Notwithstanding publishers and book-sellers must get a forum for face to face interaction with the readers of is undeniable fact that browsing of books are able to create awareness and boost impulse buying. Although books purchased are not always read immediately but it has to be kept in mind that like fish book is not a perishable commodity and can wait long for a reader. Even books purchased by one can be read by others. Books handed down to the posterity. However there are other socio-political factors may be responsible for non-reading. Book fair is the only forum that reach book to the common people and make the people feel for the need of a book. Even in the interest of public library movement book fair can play its role instilling in felt need for book in an individual’s life, public library can encourage a reader to explore book fair for further reading or book fare can provide opportunities to expose a reader to new arrivals which a reader can pot on demand for library purchase.

**Buyers choice of books during 2013 Kolkata Book Fair (Male-212), School children - 5 (9 to 18 years)**

The following books were purchased by the visitors during Kolkata Book – Fair. Those books have been purchased by 217 visitors only.

- Chhota Vim
- The curse of Dyomiyon
- Stories of Premchand
- Math book
- Connected the D.Ts
- Journey to the Centre of the Earth
  - Sharlock Homes
  - Dracula

- Poysa bachle
- The complete guide of Anatomy
- Essay & Letter books
- Grammar books

Male candidate- 119 (19 years to 30 years)

- Deception Point
- Moosolman kosh
- Psychology related
- To the Young India
- Many books about Swamiji
- Seuli - Sanjib Chottopadhyay
- Chokro - Shirshenclu
- Alchemist - Paulo Coelho
- Upanishad
- Encyclopedia
- Football Yearbook
- Some spiritual books
- Bharoter Sadhok-Sadhika
- Anondomoyi Maa
- Kriya jog
- Kalpurush
- Midnight's Children
- Fifty Shades of Grey
- Doshti Upanyas by (10 novels)
- Suchitra Bhattacharyya
- Rochona somogro
- Tarashankar

- Hosto rekha dekhar boi
- Books of Jokes
- Batul the Great (2)
- Chacha Chowdhury
- Hada-Bhoda Somogro
- Rannar boi- Bela De
- Oxford Dictionary
- Atlas World Map
- Feluda Series-2
- Harry Potter
- Life of Pie
- Subarnalata
- Arts Sketch
- 50 ti Naa
- Somoy choliya jay-4
- Anne Frank
- Bohu chakurir boi
- Marxbad ki abong Keno?
- Comedysomogro-Shakespeare
- Golpoguchha
- Che - Daily life
- Marketing Management (2)
- Snow-Pamuk
- Aami o Bonobihari
- Books of Ravinder Singh
- Study related (B.Tech)
- Rabindra Rochonaboli
- Kobita Somogro - Sunil
- Najrul Chinta
- Bharotey Sonbadpotro
- Jolobayu bigyan
- Jonobosoti Bhugol
- The Infinite Light
- Wildlife books
- About Egypt
- Computer related books-5
- Photography related
- Srikanta
- Koran- Bangla onubaad-2
- Rabindranath Golposomogro
- Khhanika Kabyagrontha
- Dr. Jakir Nayek Boktobyo somogro
- Jonom Jonom - Humayun Ahmed
- Darkaker sonsar kimba majhe majhe tobo dekha pai
- Gobhir nil ondhokar
- Teyish ghonta Shat minit
- Motor Cycle Diary
- Cholte Che
- Rambo
- Romio & Juliet
- Agniputra - Sunil
- Autobiography- Stephen Hawkins
- Autobiography Einstien
- Ja Patro Satro Dorshon
- Bangla- Nirman-Binirman
- Sufi Dorshon
- Kobita Somogro- Sunil
- Din aani din khai- Tarapacla Roy
- Talgachher Donga- Amarendra Chakraborty
- Tales from India.
- English conversation practice
- Jader Biye hobe
- Jader Biye Holo
- Ki kore English Sikhben
- Sankho GhoshShrestha Kobita
- Successful Parenting
- The Secrets of mind power
- Meteria Medica
- Chiro shresthorgorom niswas
- Warrior Prince
- Medical related books
- Turning Point- Abdul Kalam
- Indira - Bankimchandra
- Hotash Hoben Naa (2)
- Apni o Apnar Byaktitwo 4
- Aksho Bhuter Bakso
- Antorjatik Somporker Ruprekha
- Rajneeti o somaj
- Bharoter samajik andolon
- Somajtotwo
- Sandesh Patrika
- Digital Phtography
- Sharlock Homes
- Satyajit Ray
- Islamic Books
- Pandov Goyencla (2)
- Akei bole Shooting
- Ibis Trilogy - 2 books
- Beep you Beep Hole
- Spanish made easy
- Uttam Kumarer Jiboni
- Any book of -
- Bhibutibhashan, Sarat,
- Sunil Gangopadhyay
- 23 Ghonta 60 minit
- Books on Swamiji

- Homer Somogro
- Ghost stories
- Amrit aur Bish

- Hemendra Kumar Roy - Rochonaboli
- Orthoniti- Bhobotosh Dutta
- Toylarse of the Sea- Victor Hugo
- Child Psychology Development
- Satyajit Roy Somogro
- Sada Mamata, Kalo Mamata
- Bhromon Song
- Asia Mahadesher Pakhi
- Alponar Boi
- Cinematography
- Cholochitrer Kothokera
- Gobordhon Aash
- Ramkinkar
- Great invention of our time
- Water colour Techniques
- Shakespeare Somogro
- Books of Astronomy
- Khoyabnama
- Dhormobigyan
- Shoktir Rabindranath
- Little magazines
- Pachti uponyas - Shirshendu
- Kolpobigyan somogro - Premendra Mitra
- Madhushala- Hari BanshaRaiBachchan
- Children books
- Great invention of our time
- Water colour Techniques
- Shakespeare Somogro
- Books of Astronomy

Male - 76 (30 years to 60,years)

- Aami Noren - Moni Bhowmick (2)
- Safolyo - Swami someshwarananda (2)
- Maayer samne snan korte lojia nei
- Mone chhobi ase - Amitava Chowdhury
- Bagortha Koutuki - Jyotibhushan Chaki
- Nijeke Bodlan Nijei -(4)
- Prothom Aalo
- Painting, Photography related
- Prachyer Itihas
- A Lovers’ Discourse
- Uponyas Somogro -
- Sandipan Chattopa
• Somaj o Aayin
• Sociology interaction
• Himu Somogro
• Manush merechhi aami

• Kakababu Somogro
• Himu Somogro
• Pablo Golpo Somogro
• Dostoy voski
• Somoy Choliya jay-(5)
• Hyaa (4)
• Naa (2)
• Counseling Korben kibhabe
• Health related books
• Any book of Shirshendu, Syed Mujtoba Siraj
• Somaj gobeshona poddhoti
• Books of Mamata Banerjee
• Bonedi Kolkatar Ghor-bari

• Books of Sunil Gangopadhyay (3), Bimal Mitra, Syed Mustafa Siraj, Mati Nandi, Bimal Kar, Shirshendu Mukhopadhyay(2), Debesh Roy, Atin Bandopadhyay, Buddhadev Guha, Satyajit Roy
• Bhibutubhushan Rochona somogro -1, 2
• Contemporary’Indian Short Stories - Series 1 to 4
• Rajnoitik Somajtotwa
• Shilpo o somaj jibon

• Aesthetic of Cinema
• The book of movie photography
• Theory of Acting
• Sikkha Dorshon
• Poriborto Sikhya
• Somajtotwa -Panna Rani Roy
• Dictionary of Sociology
• Research methodology
• Economic & Political Weekly
• Global order in Developing Countries
• Globalization- a short encyclopedia

• Feluda Somogro
• Oxford Dictionary-3
• Accounts related Books
• Chhota Vim
• Children books
• Mahabharat
• J.M. Cotzee Foe
• Sketching light
• School essays
• Naya Pension Prokolpo

525
Male - 12 (60 years to 76 years)

- 17 last years of Jesus
- Buddhism
- Tantra English
- Kashmir o Tibbat-a Sri Avenananda
- Books on Tibet
- Hotash Hoben Naa
We have surveyed reading habit among 14 small time writers, who authored more than one book each. 14 of such writers, 9 are, members of library. They are mostly readers of novels, short stories, poetry and essays. Those who are users of library, have started the reading habit in school (8). The users of library mostly read more than two books a month. Two of them are members of two libraries and only one of them member of more than two libraries. Among the writers the majority are
teachers. 5 persons out of 14 are not member of any library. But they procure books mostly by buying (4). Only one person neither purchase books nor borrow from library~ He reads on begging,. However the pattern of reading books subject wise is same. Non users of library too prefer novels, poetry, short stories, essays. The takers of books on sociology, science and essay comprise only one under each category.

The remarkable difference between the users and non users of library is between the choice of best books. According to library users following books were considered by them. They are as follows:

Bhanusingher Padabali, Dakghar, Abon Nodir Banke, Gitanjali, Shesher Kobita, Bordidi, Gonodebota, Gita. Their favorite writers are Tagore chosen by the majority (6). Saratchandra, Tarashankar were chosen as favorite writers for each. One respondents considered Balmiki as favorite. On the other hand, the non library users considered Prothom Aalo, Phirey Eso Chaka, Anandamath, Ghore-Baire, Porom Purush Sri Sri Ramkrishna as their best books. The non library users gave a place to Bankimchandra and Satyajit Roy after Tagore, as their favorite author. While the library users mentioned Saratchandra and Tarashankar after Rabindranath. It is found that all authors keep a library at their house with a collection ranging from 78 to 2000. However, three persons declared to have book collection nearly 500. Only one claimed to have 2000 books. Those who are not users of library are having almost similar number of collections ranging from 50 to 1200.
Books reading has undoubtedly held them become authors. Over and above book reading has changed their outlook. The details are given in the table:

**Segment**: Small time authors who have authored at least two books (Poems, short stories, novels) in Bengali and living in Kolkata and neighbourhood.

Total sample - 14  
Members of at least one Public library - 7,  
Not a library member - 5

1) **AGE**:
   - 30 to 50 years – 9  
   - 50 to 60 years – 1  
   - Above 60 years - 4

2) **EDUCATION**:
   - BA-7  
   - MA-4  
   - PhD-1

3) **JOB**:
   - Teacher- 9  
   - Service – 2  
   - Business – 2  
   - Not Working – 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Library members:</th>
<th>Users of library</th>
<th>Non users of library</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>9 Persons</td>
<td>5 Persons</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How many books read in a month?</th>
<th>Users of library</th>
<th>Non users of library</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 book – one persons</td>
<td>Above 2 books – 3 persons</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What changes reading habit brought to you?</td>
<td>Above 2 books – 8 persons</td>
<td>Can't say - 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------</td>
<td>--------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a) Books made me liberal</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b) Created travel spirit</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c) Made me progressive</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d) Inspired to see the world</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e) Helped getting jobs</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f) Made free from prejudice</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Sources of procurement of books:**

| a) Library                              | 6 42.85%                   |
| b) Buying books                         | 6                          |
| c) Borrowing books                      | 3                          |

**What books of Tagore you have read?**

| Most of all - 5                          |
| 20 to 25 books                          |
| 10 books – 1                            |

| Most of all - 3                          |
| 10 to 12 books – 2                      |

**What are you reading at present?**


**Suggestions for enhancing reading habit:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Users of library</th>
<th>Non users of library</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Must grow reading habit from childhood.</td>
<td>Parents would encourage their wards to read.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Read at least one page of a book daily.</td>
<td>Develop sense attraction towards books.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Habit to read newspaper regularly.</td>
<td>To develop a habit to read on the basis of authors.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Books to be gifted to the book</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
lovers regularly.  
To create more books with high literary value.  
Cheap books should reach the readers.

**Readership pattern in eight rural libraries sponsored by Raja Rarnohun Roy Library Foundation under the Palli Seva Kendra of Biswabharati as visited in August 2012**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of libraries</th>
<th>Number of members on register</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>165</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Membership strength varies from library to library. Total membership does not mean they are all regular users of the library.

2) Persons attending reading room regularly.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of libraries</th>
<th>Status of readers at the reading room</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>None attended</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>3 to 4 persons only</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>5 persons only</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>10 persons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>50 persons</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3) Number of persons borrow books regularly.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of libraries</th>
<th>Number of persons</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>4 to 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>6 to 8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4) Type of books most in demand by the borrowers.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of libraries</th>
<th>Type of subjects</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Novel's</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Short Stories</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Poetry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Reference books</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Books pertaining to knowledge</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Subjects on second highest demand**

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Text books</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Short stories</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Novels</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Poetry</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

We got one library where poetry book had highest demand.

5) Users of library segment wise positions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Segment</th>
<th>Number of libraries</th>
<th>Percentage wise positions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Students</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>87.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Housewives</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>62.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Retired Persons</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>37.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Service holders</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Students still occupy the largest position among the library users. But they mostly read Text books.

6) Readers preference of favorite authors in 8 libraries.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Most favorite authors preferred by the members of No. of</th>
<th>Name of authors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

532
libraries.

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Rabindranath Taore</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Buddhadev Guha</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Sunil Gangopadhyay</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Sukumar Roy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Saratchandra Chattopadhyay</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Satyajit Roy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Upendre Kishore Roychowdhury</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Ashapurna Devi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Syed Mustafa Siraj</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Samaresh Basu</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It shows that Tagore is the top favourite among 7 library members, where the second top favourite is Buddhadev Guha.

7) Reasons assigned by the librarians behind the fall of readership. Each library assigned one of the four reasons given below:

8) Libraries having modern facilities,

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reasons assigned</th>
<th>Number of librarians gave the reasons</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 TV watching taking away reading time</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Social networking taking away reading time</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 People have otherwise very little time now for pleasure reading.</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Serious reading for various reasons have become out of fashion.</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Lack of interesting books to</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Most of the librarians hold TV responsible for taking away reading time.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Facilities</th>
<th>Libraries</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Computer</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Own building</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daily newspaper</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

How libraries fulfilled social obligations and contributed to social upliftment in their neighborhood could be ascertained from the assessment of the library authorities. Their comments are as follows:

**Mahuya Gramin Pathagar:**
Our library users have learned social skills, agriculture, fish culture, poultry etc. They have been able to change their economic condition with their skills. Library has been able to infuse reading habit among a small segment of readers. They regularly use our reading room.

**1) Jadabpur Ram Mohun Pathagar:**
We have found from our experiences that our readers have developed a sense of moral duties in them. They have freed themselves from all sorts of superstitions. They have developed cultural consciousness.

**2) Srichandrapur Library:**
Our library users specially the farmers have been immensely benefitted by books on agriculture which they applied on the field. This has changed them lot.

**3) Kamarpara Dharmaraj Granthagar:**
Our books on agriculture and health have directly brought about changed in their mind-set. The poorer students have been benefitted by our text and reference books which they would not have been purchase.

**4) Jana Ojana Granthagar:**
Our library is an information centre. We maintain train and bus time, address of hospitals and doctors, weather forecast, other necessary information required by the villagers in daily life.

5) **Mirjapur Gobindachandra Smriti Pathagar:**
Our objectives are to bring people to the library as much as possible. We also supply doctor names and addresses, telephone number of govt. offices to the people. Besides we impart training in dramatics and recitation.

6) **Paruldanga Kalyannagar Srnriti Pathagar:**
We hold cultural functions for the people to create interest in culture and book reading.

7) **Anandamayee Granthagar:**
The students, housewives and elderly people have been immensely benefitted from our library.

Table shows different variables the library users responded to our questionnaire. The total respondents were 53.

1) **Varying age groups of the respondents:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Group</th>
<th>Respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Below 18 years</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18 to 30 years</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30 to 40 years</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40 to 50 years</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50 to 60 years</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Above 60 years</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>53</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2) **Qualification:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Qualification</th>
<th>Respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Class - X</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class - XII</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Higher Secondary</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BA / BSc. / BCom</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BUS</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3) **Job:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Status</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Student</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teach</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MSINS</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Govt. job</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ext. job</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other job</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NGO</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Media</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private tuition</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retired</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4) **Book reading habit: source of getting books**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Don't read books because books are not available</td>
<td>1 person</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Read books regularly</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>From library</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buying books</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presented books by others</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5) **To what extent book reading has helped you?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Benefit</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Books made me more progressive</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Books made me more refine</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Books gave me mental peace</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Books gave me inspiration to take challenges in life</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Changed my personal attitude and values</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6) **How many books read in a year?**
### Do you have adequate books in your ethnic language?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Books</th>
<th>Readers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I to 2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 to 10</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Above 10</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50 to 60</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

7) **Do you have adequate books in your ethnic language?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YES</th>
<th>38</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NO</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Reading habit among the married women in Kolkata.**

**Objectives:** Women comparing with their male counterparts are habitual readers. There is a general belief that books as merchandise find assured market among women. Women prefer the type of books and mass media those are having high entertainment value. To target women exclusively quiet a number of ‘women only’ magazines have positioned themselves in media market. Novels and short stories with high human interest and written lucidly find sizeable takers among women. That’s why Sarat Chandra and Bankim Chandra are still popular among the women readers.

We take up this segment in our study to ascertain how much those myths about women as habitual readers are true in the present perspective. Gone are the days when it was customary for a house wife to read a novel borrowed from the neighbourhood public library while retiring in a bed after lunch before her routine...
nap. The late noon was the only leisure time for a housewife when her children were in school and husband was at office. The intelligent woman must finish some pages before her children come back from school. Every librarian of the neighbourhood library was aware of the individual reading habits of their women members. Many of them would prefer tome or collected works of their favourite authors.

Women readers would prefer romance with dramatic flavor written in simple language against some exotic backdrop or a simple family saga, the intrigues of one’s daily life. Since the inception of the neighbourhood public libraries, patronization of women readers gave them boost additions of books at regular intervals to satisfy demand of women readers at the first place.

It was the public library movement that helped educate our women who did not have much formal education but reading famous avant garde authors made them mature emotionally and intellectually. They became much informed, progressive in outlook and would keep themselves abreast of contemporary socio-political issues. Women’s mass education permeated our society only after independence but self educated women folk proved their talent in various fields of life by courtesy public libraries that imparted them non formal social education.

I have seen a number of village women including my mother who was a voracious reader of Bengali books. My mother preferred fiction and non fictions both but must be written in lucid language. Mother had only elementary education but reading books made
her quite knowledgable at par with others and endowed her enough emotional intelligence to guide me unto the right path.

Those days have undergone a sea change over the years. Modern urban women are now by and large more educated thanks to establishments of hundreds of girls schools and colleges. But the spurt in women education does not tally with reading habit among the women at large.

We have narrowed down our study to a married women segment because the house wives are traditionally good readers. Again un-married women especially the students now-a-days do not read much, as they are hard pressed under the burden of school or college syllabus. Even modern house wives prefer to watch TV serials at night after having finished household chores. They find more relaxation in simple watching action drama that is more stimulating than books.

But when we interview as many as 42 married women in a housing in South Kolkata we get a reverse story that most of our respondents still keep up their reading habit amidst usual distractions. Before we analyse the survey result we give out the details of that survey.

**Survey result:**

We interviewed 42 women in the middle class neighbourhood in South Kolkata. Their age group was –

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Group</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

539
18 – 30  3
40 – 50  22
30 – 40  7
50 – 60  7
Above 60  03

**Total Sample**

Working women :  12
Housewives :  30
Total :  42

**Educational Standard**:

Madhyamik :  01
Higher Secondary :  03
Graduate :  18
Post-graduate :  18
M.D. :  02
Total :  42

**Husband’s Occupation**:

Number of Women

Teacher :  1
Service :  23
Professional :  09
Business :  06
Not mentioned :  02
User of Library :  07
Not a member of any Library :  35

**Reading habit**:

Read books regularly :  40
Who do not read books at all :  02

**Frequency of reading books** :
Monthly one book : 7 Women
More than 1 a month : 31 “
More than 2 a month : 2 “

**What type of books are liked most :**

Novels : 29
Short story : 27
Poetry : 10
Religion : 07
Travel : 13
Detective : 27
Essay : 07
Politics : 03
Science : 09
Motivational Books : 04
Useful book : 06
Sociology : 01

**The largest number of women read novels**

The study reveals Women married or unmarried still keep up their tradition of reading. Only two out of 42 confessed they do not read at all and majority of them (31 out of 40) read more than one book a month.

The another phenomenon of the present day urban house wives is they use library less and less only 17.5 women (07 women out of 40) visit library for book borrowing. The rest 35 women read books from other sources.

It is found out that reading mothers care more for encouraging their children read books. As many as 26 (62%) mothers buy
books for their children regularly. 11 mothers buy books to their children only 5 women admitted they do not buy books for their wards.

As a result of that as many as 32 (76.2%) mothers revealed their children inherited reading habits from their childhood. But 5 women confessed they could not inculcate reading habit in their children. As many as 25 woman (more than 60%) read out story books to their kids. 5 women confessed they did not get time to do that and 5 women bluntly said they do not do that at all.

Unlike the women of the past modern housewives have to wrest out time for reading from their busy work schedule. Many would abandon the luxury of mid day napping rather would go to children’s school to escort them home after lunch. Even, their afternoons would be spent to escort their children to tutors or dancing schools or to an art teacher. But the most hard core readers would however manage time in between to read books they love to read. Most of them 27.5% or 11 responsecne would find some convenient time to read during the post lunch hours as they donot have any assignment after lunch. Most of the reading women had no fixed hour for reading but would catch hold of any spare time any day to read, some would wait for Sundays and holidays. Some would take books as the most faithful companions on holiday tours. Many would miss some of their favourite serials.

It is not certain that all bibliophile women would take their children religiously to Book Fairs every year. However 18 (42.8%) out 42 women would do that but 5 women had ever taken their
children to a Book Fair although 11 (26%) women had taken children to Book Fairs infrequently.

Mothers encourage their kids to read story books but as they grow up the same mother would discourage them reading beyond school books. Mothers now-a-days are more concerned about their ward’s high marks in examination than their inclusive development. Even an average mothers would dissuade their grown up children to waste time on ‘outside books’ that might impede their exam preparations.

But most interestingly most of our respondents (34 (81%) out of 42) candidly admitted that as they were habitual readers they wont prevent their wards from reading outside text books at any age rather would encourage them to read more. Because they knew how reading literatures would shape their future career.

Reading books have made the respondents more articulate and helped them form opinions on socio political issues. They have acquired more self esteem and a sense of dissent when required and as well as would make them more empowered in the teeth of opposition. For instance 39 (92.8%) out 42 women un univocally said they were in favour of complete women’s liberation (39 out of 42).

36 (85.7%) of them (out of 42) do not support caste system. And 34 (81%) of them (out of 42) were of opinion that the society had nothing to do with the individual choice of dress of a woman. Society has no authority to decide the dress code of a woman. 36 out 42 would say that our society was patriarchal and women were
not totally free. The same number of women opined that the women must be given their exclusive right to chose their life partners without any interference. They all condemned the dowry system although 4 women supported dowry for dowry system making marriage more at ease otherwise it would have been difficult for some women to get proper match. All 41 women barring one agreed that marriage should not be the sole purpose of womanhood rather woman’s main aim should have been earning self reliance in life.

Barring one respondent the rest of the women became unanimous that book reading had developed their mind and widened their outlook. Coming to the choice of books women would still prefer to their age old choice for novels. As many as 29 women (out of 42) admitted that read novels only. Short stories have same amount of taker. Poetry was read by 7 persons. Women continue to hold their preference for cooking. So 9.5% prefer cooking books, essays are read by the similar number of women. Politics is cup of tea for only 7.14% (3 persons). Choise of motivational books was registered by only 4 (9.5%). Women seldom read science books though many women take to science education and come out with brilliant result, by when choice of popular science books come 1 only 22.5% women (3) informed they read science related books.

**Reading habit among Married Women in small towns and villages:**
Women used to be the avid readers of Bengali books. From the early days of women education in Bengal even moderately educated women took profound interest in reading books. They were the great patrons of public libraries especially in small towns and rural areas. It was found that housewives used to show keen interest in reading books as their lives were dull and boring as they are engaged in monotonous and indoor jobs like cooking and household chores. Whatever leisure time they would get would spend reading a novel for pleasure. Many of those housewives would not go to a library in person but would send their errand to fetch books for them. They would order for popular Bengali novels preferably a tome that could be consumed for few weeks. They would keep their eyes on new arrivals and would pester the librarian for ordering new books from popular writers.

Those legendary days are gone. The women of today of course are more educated and emancipated. But they are now more and more working in offices having little time to go to a public library. A working woman does two shifts. Her 50% of working day is spent on commuting and doing office jobs. The rest is spent for household work keeping a little time for their own. This space is used by watching television. Sometimes she emotionally needs an entertainment medium. Television medium has successfully been able to produce soap operas depicting social problems and intricacies of life which after sometime spells narcotic effect on viewers in general not to speak of those who are credulous.

**Refinement of mind**
Book reading calls for some refined test and concentrated efforts. For reading a book one must apply body and mind whereas television viewing merely needs conscious effort. The eye catching dramatic sequences stimulates the entire nervous system and makes the viewer captive to the episode. Books cannot create such captivity unless the plot is very absorbing and woven dramatically. But the main purpose of book is different. A novel predominantly deals with characters on a socio-psychological set up interspersed with author's analysis. A book with a literary flavour needs some efforts from the readers to understand the book, both emotionally and intellectually. Unless a habit is grown from the childhood and there is space created discreetly by the reader for book reading, book cannot stand in competition with any aggressive entertainment medium like television and cinema.

Though the hard core women readers of the past age are disappearing gradually, the new age women, working or homemaking contribute immensely to present day's reading club. Comparing with men, women traditionally read more books especially novels and even in village married women do not lag behind in book reading.

During my tour of three districts South Dinajpur, MaIda and Hoogly, we made our first survey on married women readers. We interviewed 13 women: 6 working women and 6 housewives and one retired woman and incidentally found that barring two as many as eleven of them read books regularly. They do not have fixed time for reading books. They read whenever they get little time (10). Only 3 of them follow the traditional ideal time of
reading books for the housewives that is during the late noon. Why they keep up that habit of reading book, the answer is universal: 'Our life would have been incomplete without book reading.' Do the married women readers, purchase books for their children? It is found as many as 7 housewives out of 13 buy books for their children and 3 of them buy from time to time.

It is now fact-accompli that reading habit grows at childhood and transmitted from mother to child. As many as 8 of them take their children regularly to the book-fairs. Almost all mothers (12) do not believe that reading outside text books affect studies. So they never prevent their children from reading story books. The women respondents to our questionnaire have variety of favourite list of writers. Rabindranath Tagore topped the list (7), next came Sarat Chandra and Ashapurna Debi (3 each). Following that there are other modern writers of different hues like Premendranath Mitra, Bibhutibhushan, Mahasweta Debi, Taslima Nasrin, Partha Chattopadhya, Nimai Bhattachariya and Dipak Chanda etc. They are read by them. Of the total respondents as many as 5 claimed Ito be feminist, 4 of them never have given a thought to that question and 2 bluntly said no.

Out of 13 women readers 7 are regular library goers and 6 do not. As many as 10 respondents read books more than one, in a month. It is a myth that women especially those live in villages read only novels. Our respondents declared that as many as 5 of them only were novel readers. It is little less than 50%. Women now-a-days read all sorts of books. According to our respondents 5 read short stories, 6 read poetry, 4 read essays, 3 read self-help
books, religion 2, cooking - 2, Profile - 2, travel - 1, detective - 1, politics - 1, Science - I and others - 1. Book reading have brought out a positive effect on their attitude. All 13 respondents do not support castes. They are more into feminism than that of other average women in their outlook. As many as 53.84% of them agree that the society has nothing to do regarding a dress code of women. Women are free to choose their own attire. Only 3 persons out of 13 agree that women dress must conform to social will. As many as 10 women, i.e., 77% agree that our society is patriarchal and women are not free. Only 3 of them do not agree. Almost all women barring one were in favour of women's lib. As many as 10 of them opined that women must be free to select their own life partners. Only 3 out of 13 did not agree. As many as 10 women, i.e., 77% did not agree that the dowry system was making marriages easier for a number of unmarried girls.

Only 2 agreed to the positive side of the dowry system and wanted to retain it as many as 11 of them agreed that marriage should not be sole aim of a woman. Instead self-reliance should be.

The women participants in this interview were all educated. Their qualifications were as follows: Madhyamik-4, H.S.-I, Graduates-3, and Post Graclutes-5. Their age group was as follows: 18 to 30 years=1 woman, 30 to 40 years=6 women, 40 to 50 years=1 woman, 50 to 60 years=3 women, above 60 years=2 women. The respondents belonged to following places in West Bengal: (1) Patriam S.Dinajpur (2) Tapan - S.Dinajpur (3) Balurg-hat - S. Dinajpur (4) Hili - S. Dinajpur (5) Chandpara, Gaighata - N.24 Parganas (6) Khanakul - Hoogly (7) Birampur Malda (8) jhaljhalia -
Our reading habit surveys include the following segments excluding the children sector. That was dealt separately.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sample size</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>Reading habit of general people among the library users</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>Rural library users in Birbhum And Medenipur district</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>Readership profile among the Library users in Malda sample</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60</td>
<td>IT professionals in Kolkata sample</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>300</td>
<td>Kolkata book Fair Book buying Habit - sample</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Reading habit among small Time writers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>08</td>
<td>Profile of eight rural libraries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>reading habit among married women In Kolkata</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>180</td>
<td>Reading habit among working Girls in Kolkata - sample</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>05</td>
<td>District Journalists at Barlurghat, Readership profile</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Married women in villagers, readership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Cast wise profile of library users In a Malda village library</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>Reading habit of Assamese people attending Guwahati Book Fair</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Reading habit among the Mizos</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Books and Indian youths: Interview</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| 16          | Interview of intellectuals in Kolkata on
I believe the above list is quite exhaustive. We could have expanded the scope of survey but my empirical studies, informal discussions with about 1000 people dispersed in different parts of West Bengal, Assam, Tripura and Mizoram gave me the similar impression that the readership it not declined is stagnating in comparing with literacy growth and the growth of other media.

At the same time a section of people is still maintaining that habit against odds as they developed the habit at childhood.

So childhood is the only time to develop reading habit that can be reinforced by a strong library movement.
### Chapter – XV

**Conclusion and Recommendations**

1) **Summing up:**

Alvin Toffler in his book Future Shock once argued that, the illiterate of the twenty first century will not be those who cannot read and write but those who cannot learn, unlearn and relearn.

It is true in every letter and spirit in twenty first century when ‘unlearn’ is the pre condition for ‘relearn’. Every chapter of human history is being rewritten to commensurate with the digital age. Knowledge is no more exclusive rather is shared by every citizen of global society, with the universalisation of knowledge that is solely digital now every man has to be ‘knowledge fittest’ for survival. Prosper we learn, perish we remain statusquissist is the buzz word of the Information age

Never had the public library been so important in our life as to day. A public library is a life boat in the turbulent ocean of knowledge in the event of ship-wreck. If we want to live we must float. How the moribund public library will play the role of vanguard – if they are not resurrected and allowed to live vigourously when the people of the new age are more aware, conscious and resourceful than ever. Public libraries in India must be reformed keeping in pace with changing world. There in still time to upturn, correcting faulty measures, and for proper positioning of public library in our society. Library is no more a place for only pleasure reading for a few people. A
public library is a centre for mass learning that imparts universal education to make every citizen information rich. But on the other hand instant availability of information technology like social media, internet that can quench the thirst for more information for a common people with a clique of a mouse tends to make a person more averse to public library where for the same information. One has to read a number of book for hours in the reading room. The new technology diminishes time and labour for information seeking and will feed every one the same fast food with a same readymade spoon. But at what cost. The new media takes away thinking ability, writing skill and ultimately the power of realization and critical understanding. We must have a power of judgement whether the instant information obtained with a clique of a mouse makes us information-rich in one hand but on the other hands us to word intellectual bankruptcy. So long we shall distance ourselves from books and be more dependent on digital readymade information this will have disastrous effect upon the intellectual world.

2) **Indian book reading Scenario : This is about time to take a U turn :**

Digitization and online piracy are eating into global book sales. But while sales are plummeting elsewhere they are rising in India. So the hue and cry that has been raised about book industry in doldrums may be some base on vested interest groups death wish about books in their business interest. After having surveyed the public libraries and their
present status I can safely say there is no overall decline in Indian book industry. We can call it a slow growth. If any decline is noticed that is visible in library movement. Public libraries in West Bengal, Tripura and Assam are now a ‘sick industry’, sick due to want of proper servicing by the Government and Society as a whole. Any enterprise can not live longer without timely intervention by appropriate authorities.

If public library movement declines in West Bengal, Tripura, Assam and Mizoram the existing readers or potential readers alone cannot be held solely responsible. This is the cumulative effect of national apathy. It is because governments are not treating libraries at par with the other establishments under the education sector. A grass root library is not given equal status of a primary school. Government has taken for granted that they are fulfilling their obligation to the people by offering a free library to the people that once had to close down for bad financial condition. All library member registers are replete with inflated members, five to 10 times longer than the actual users of library. The library authorities seldom take stock of actual usage of library, seldom consults the real users and even has not set up any enquiry committee why the actual users are plummeting. Only few libraries tend to act as information centre, to meet queries of people, make the libraries have a changed look both qualitatively and quantitatively. Quality change can only be brought out by providing trained and
motivated staff to work in the field, doing some extra rounds of extension work by motivating people especially the youths to use library more and more. Next step is to tie up libraries with local institutions like schools colleges or any cultural organizations. Libraries can organize training / education classes, vocational classes, language classes and so on. Non Government public libraries worked in tandem with a club which mobilized multi purpose activities. The members of the club developed sense or belonging to the library. That sense is lost since sponsored libraries were separated from the club and started functioning independently. The clubs since then disowned their libraries that were supposed to run under government sponsorship under a separate committee. Reading habit building and regeneration of public library movement are two interdependent issues but at the same time are two inseparable issues. In to-days world reading habit can also be enhanced by personal reading being independent of public libraries. The boom in book market never dependent on public library. Some English authors make world records in their book sales, for instance The Penguin, the worlds’ largest Book Publisher still earns estimated revenue of $ 4 billion. The company has paid `10 crore as an advance for a book to the author Vikram Seth even without having received the manuscript. The book was supposed to be published by the end of 2013 if the manuscript is ready by then.
Had there not been potential buyers for the works of some best selling authors like Vikram Sheth and others Penguin would not have paid such an astronomical sum to a single author as advance.

Had there been no taker of books Kolkata Book Fair could not sell books worth `10 crores in 10 days. Inspite of fall in sale Guwahati Book Fair sold books `3 Crore books mostly in Assamese in 2013. Sale of book plummeted worldwide at the rate of 3 to 10 percent but in India Sale of Books grew between 26 and 37 percent in 1912.

3) Literacy should match with Public Library use:

Though many Indian states have achieved between 80 and 90 percent literacy level and this upward trend seems to be conducive to book reading albeit, the picture is not so rosy as it appears. Illiteracy no doubt has stood as a major obstacle to the development of print-mediated communication. But mere increase in literacy in quantitative volume may not make book lovers. Unlike readers of newspapers reading books out of love and pleasure is a subjective choice of an individual while reading newspapers stems from bare necessities of a modern man. He has to update himself with some information of everyday around the world for one’s commercial and material need. A newspaper reader may not necessarily be induced to read single book. Even newspaper can be read through one’s Laptop or could be glance through the computer or TV screen.
Book reading demands more quality time from a reader and a book like newspaper cannot be hurriedly glanced through. A newspaper may be thrown out into a bin after quick reading. Moreover a single volume of book is more expensive, more time consuming and calls for more in-depth reading with attention. Books are not for throwing away after use.

Again book reading especially reading literatures calls for some specialized skills, a propensity and higher comprehensive ability than that of newspaper and magazine reading. For neo literates and illiterate masses the media practitioners acquire a special skill for mass education, that skill is seldom evident among authors. Those who have mastered that acumen for mass communication have no doubt succeeded as best sellers. But very few authors have mastered that skill. Authors I usually follow their own style without thinking of their target audience. Some authors retain their snob values and would write only for the high brow people.

A developing country like India where a circulation of news media in a regional language could not touch even one third of the literate population. The individual authors can not deny they have not been able to touch a tip of the iceberg.

4) **DEPNET connectivity must be intensified**

The main problem of any library. Public or Institutional is to meet the growing demand for specialised books and documents. Not to speak of the small district libraries, central
libraries or libraries of big Institutions that cannot cope up with the diverse demands from their readers. The users of specialized institutional libraries even failed to supply all books and particular documents as knowledge proliferates over the years and books and research papers continue to overflow the field of studies. It is not humanly possible either for individual or by the institutions to grasp the vast universe of knowledge. So a modern man no know more and more about less and less. Thus knowledge remains concentrated like wealth among the few and creates a great divide between the knowledge rich and knowledge poor. Research scholars either have to go round across the country for a document they need for scrutiny for a particular research failing which either they wind up the project or workout without it. In that case the research result remains inconclusive and not updated.

Throughout the ages, the great scholars hovered around the world at great risk of life in search of scriptures known as valuable document of any discipline. Imagine what would happen if Hu-en-Tung the great Chinese Traveller and scholar would not dare taking the arduous trek to India across china in those days. He would have missed many valuable points in his pursuit and his scholarship would not be complete without his direct access to Indian scriptures.

For modern day’s knowledge seekers DELNET would supply his all required texts at one clique of a mouse from a Billing Library Staff. The knowledge Commission has recommended
phases of interlibrary connectivity. The Government has to see the connectivity is not delayed.

5) **Declining Reading Habit: Suggestions how to face the music:**

Notwithstanding, we should not be complacent with our little growth of book industry. We must keep in mind that the decline of book reading habit may affect Indian book market anytime especially the future of language book market may dwindle any time as the new generation urban Indians are more and more choosing English as medium of instruction and every year more and more guardians send their wards to English medium schools. Those students remain ignorant of their mother tongue and the vernacular books tend to face a serious threat to lose a big market. In the meantime lot of Indian language books are being translated in English for those vernacular – illiterate readers.

International experts have assigned twenty reasons for decline in reading habit we refer to those reasons as follows.

6) **Twenty reasons for decline in reading habit:**

1) People think that reading books consumes more time than referring in the computers. Computers seem to be more attractive to them than books.

2) The question of **spending money** on books is over-ruled by the thought that everything is available in a computer. People prefer to spend money on something else than spending on books.
3) The programs in internet and TV are more attractive than sitting in a corner and reading a book.

4) With the modern life style visiting places and other recreations or hobbies occupy most of our time.

5) There are a thousand reasons today for avoiding reading books or literatures. Some even say that her new ‘nail extensions’ have made it too difficult to turn pages!

6) There are risks of losing books while carrying them. Moreover, why to carry a burden unnecessarily when there is a laptop available?

7) Now people are more worried about earning money and spending every second in finding ways to find sources of income.

8) A sense of escapism is spreading saying, "Along with giving up coffee, alcohol, strenuous exercise which may affect my family life I would like to give up reading also."

9) Some say that there is too much sex in books these days and so they want to avoid it.

10) Many complain that in this fast life where to find time to read. Everything has become instant and people are losing their patience to spend time in reading and learning things.

11) Years ago people used to discuss about what they had read which induced others to read. But today TV programs and other things occupy their discussion.
12) Some allergic conditions restrain people from handling books as they may have fungi or virus.

13) Nowadays we find most of the people wearing spectacles. Their eyes are easily strained. They find it easier to spend time in something else than in reading books.

14) The attracting images in the internet along with information in changeable fonts are easier and more practical than reading books.

15) Change in lifestyle is another reason for this decline. Decades back there were a lot of magazines and books kept on the table in houses for the use of parents as well as kids. They had time and there was no other time passing. But today the situation is different.

16) Parents themselves should be exemplary to foster up the habit of reading. When they do not show any interest in reading how can we expect the children to read? But where is time for them for reading in their pursuit of life struggle?

17) The tough and intense competition in the job-seeking system of education (in the Indian context) has further deepened the insecurity among the middle class families discouraging the habit of reading books other than the school books.

18) In the present money-oriented life kids have to spend all their time in homework, tuitions and extra classes. From the very starting of education (say LKG) this is the condition in India. How can we expect them to develop a reading habit?
19) Indian parents think that reading books will divert the attention of their children from their serious tasks and goals of achieving high marks in examinations. Only high marks decide the future of their children. They have to work seriously on their school text books to get high marks. For them reading books is a waste of time!

20) Another reason the publishers say about the reading habit is the book market. Consumerism is their only scale that decides publication of books. Moreover deforestation and scarcity of printing materials have increased the prices of the books which affect the reading habit seriously.

Although people are not reading books as they used to, their thirst for information seems to be limitless. The habit of reading will come back again after sometime. "Media is not a zero sum game," says Paul Saffo, a director of the Institute For Future in Menlo Park, California, "Just because a new medium arrives doesn't mean an old medium dies out." He hopes for a resurrection of the habit of reading books!

Now we must discreetly analyse all those negative factors that hinder readership growth and suggest measures in Indian regional context their solutions.

**Book has no alternative**

7) For making vigorous counter campaigns the library movement should gear up. The first thing should be highlighted that a book has no alternative. A computer is meant
for fact finding and raw information seeking. Besides a computer can be used for entertainment purpose. Social media can develop personal contacts. But none can substitute a book. Samerset Maugnam once said ‘To acquire the habit of reading is to construct for yourself a refuge from almost all miseries of life. Books impart mental relief with sublimity. Its an idle tears, a pleasure beyond mundane and material need. Books give one joy and ecstasy which no other medium can give. Campaign for books must not be limited to superfluous walk for Books, it must be a lasting movement of strong conscience building. To save books is a ‘life and death question’ for human civilization.

‘e’ books cannot be the alternatives

Reading printed books in your own time and own posture can not be replaced by ‘e’ books on computer screen. Modern e-books no doubt is more handy than a tome and may have more portability but cannot give you same comfort and pleasure of reading. Books are not like other documents or a mere reference materials. A book establishes a direct link between the author and the reader and generates a rapport between the author and the reader, it is an emotional relationship that computer can not create.

8) It is true that to-days people from morning to night are rushing after money. We don’t blame people as the days are hard. But in a rat race at the end of the day a rat remains a rat, if he wins he till remains a rat. Our life style with full of stress and strain results in various deadly psychosomatic
diseases. Other media intensify that stress, only books can deliver peace and tranquility. Those messages are to be spread through series of campaigns.

9) There are wide choice of books from the rack of a public library. So some books may be soft pornography, or sex and scandals of a famous man like Tagore and Gandhi or simply of fictitious characters. Human mind also tends to attract bad books. A bad book always sides a good book. A good reader – avoids that type of books. That’s why ‘Readers Guidance’ is necessary. What books one should read must be directed or suggested by the parent, Teachers or librarians. For that ‘judges’ should primarily be well-read.

10) The Parents must create examples by reading themselves. The home where parents are readers and well-read persons, their children automatically develop reading habit. Indian parents must allay some wrong notion that book reading impedes school studies. What distracts school work is TV addiction, computer addiction, cell phone addiction, child depression and insipid school environment. The present tuition centric examination oriented education system is the stumbling block for advancement of knowledge. The education and library dept must go in tandem and should made complementary to each other. Library must be made a part of school curriculum and in library class students should be motivated to read books and at first to know what are books to be read as a first priority. The job of a librarian should be mentoring to the children.
11) Public libraries must convene parents meeting periodically to impart lessons on parenting by experts where the necessity of children’s reading habit and the role of parents will be discussed at length and be directed accordingly.

I further suggest that the Govt. of India, Ministry of Human Resources and the Ministry of Culture will jointly devise a national post literacy and continuing education plan for the country in favour of public library. Raja Rammohun Roy Library Foundation may be given the task to prepare action plan to achieve this end.

12) Selection of books for public libraries must be based mostly or readers demand but at least 50% books must be selected by genuine book lovers. This selection committee should be decentralized and will be chaired by the librarian of District library, District library officer will be the convener or vice-versa. Members will be selected from among the teachers, authors and cultural workers of the district who must not be attached to any political party. They select so percent books for the libraries for their districts besides the list made by the library users. The list must include books that would motivate, build characters of readers, books pregnant with high historical, sociological, or literary value that will enrich readers mind must not escape readers eye. Those books may not have immediate popular demand but popular books are not always good books. Sex, crime and personal scandals often are enlisted among best sellers but public libraries should be guided by a philosophy of only
spreading positive constructive messages for the betterment of life. Political books and religious books will be included in the selection list but must be seen that all political thoughts and religious philosophies are equally represented. Local libraries must keep books of local authors irrespective of political affiliations and it must be made mandatory to buy all local news papers and magazines and preserve them for posterity. Many libraries have no proper cataloguing and there are catalogues that are incomplete. As a member of West Bengal Central Library I have experienced that though issuance of books are computerized but the Assistant Librarians are so reluctant to meet the readers’ enquiry whether a particular book is in the stock and if it is in the accession list where the book is placed will be anybody’s guess. From central library to any district library no where the cover jackets of new arrivals are displayed to attract the readers. Even the state central library never circulates the new arrival list. Books unless 3 -4 year old may not find place in the rack. This practice is counter productive.

13) Knowledge Commission recommendations must be implemented:

Having looked into the broad spectrum of the important role of the library the knowledge commission recommended to create a National Institute for advance Training (R and D in LIS).

The proposed Institute would have two major functions:
a. To offer training programs in relevant areas and to conduct continuing education programmes (including training of trainers) for the library and information professionals.

b. To identify, sponsor and conduct R&D programmes in the field of Library and Information Science, including newly emerging research areas. Among the areas needing immediate R&D, the following were identified by the Working Group:

- User needs for different groups
- Reading habits
- Organisation of community information and development of appropriate standards
- Standardisation of Indian names
- Vocabulary control over Indian subjects developed in terms of multilingual thesaurus and subject heading lists
- Development of open source software
- Development of Digital Libraries, both in English and Indian languages
- Technical standards for Indian scripts, Optical Character Recognition (OCR) for Indian scripts, and search engines which can implement stemming algorithms for Indian languages.
- Cross Language Information Retrieval with an emphasis on information in Indian Languages

The Institute's scientists will basically concentrate and carry out research in major areas contributing to Libraries and Information
Science. In addition, they can undertake externally funded projects and provide consultancy to other organizations.

The Institute will also undertake activities to disseminate the research findings such as printed and online publications, seminars and conferences, web portal, etc.

**Proposed Organizational Structure**:

Advisory Board

Director (Administrative Head)

Research groups for different activities

Other supporting staff

**Aegis**

The Institute (suggested name: Indian Institute of Library and Information Science) would logically function under Ministry of Culture as major libraries of India including The National Library are already under its purview, but should come into force as a statutory body as early as possible. But pending that effort the present author is emphasizing much stress on building reading habit without delay. The campaign for Reading habit building immediately can be undertaken by the Ministry of Culture. The initial campaign be programme may be initiated by the DAVP.

14) Raja Rammohun Roy Library Foundation has a fund allotment for reading habit building. The Foundation immediately can undertake some workshops for parents Teachers and librarians to discuss the following agenda.
1. To convince the parents to encourage their wards to read story books in the interest of studies.

2. How libraries can adjust their working hours to enable school children to come.

3. Whether libraries are well equipped to supply all necessary books for children. If not how they can gear up their infrastructure.

4. How Book Fairs can give more emphasis on children’s reading habit building to take the event more child friendly.

Reorientation for the librarians. All librarians especially the librarians of public libraries must be re oriented with the changing concept of library. Though each library must evolve their own charter of service, they must agree upon the following principles evolved out in the meeting of the working group of the knowledge commission. It is known as library charter and for the first time delineates the Philosophy of the new age libraries. The charter is given below.

15) **Dissemination of knowledge as widely as possible.**

- Serve as a major vehicle to facilitate creation of new knowledge.

- Facilitate optimal use of knowledge by all sectors, such as government, industry, rural sector and civil society,
• Ensure that people from all sectors and all parts of the country have easy access to knowledge relevant to their needs, in their own language.

*The library must undertake: the following*

- Serve as the local centre of information and a gateway to national and global knowledge providing fair access to knowledge and information to as many users as possible
- Offer an inviting and attractive physical space with clean drinking water and toilet facilities
- Offer proactive services to its user communities
- Ensure that users are treated with courtesy and respect by library staff
- Pay attention to the needs of children, women senior citizens and the physically challenged
- Optimize its potential to provide access to information and knowledge to all
- Help users develop information skills to make optimum use of resources
- Improve its collections and services on a continuing basis in consultation with users
- To work more effectively and efficiently by undertaking every activity in a professional manner
- To bridge the gap between the information poor and the information rich

*Let the readers’ choice a credence*

16) All public libraries must be given priorities in keeping at least two language and one English newspaper and at least 5
magazines, one of them must be a English weekly. In choosing the journals the readers choice must be the final. Government in no way give directives to purchase particular books, journal and newspapers for a public libraries. A public library is for the public and by the public. Public means the users of the library. The Managing Committee may form a small selection committee from among the old members of the library to select books and magazines. In this connection I refer to knowledge commission’s recommendations that a public library must contain the following:

- General books
- Reference Books
- Text Books
- Magazines
- Newspapers
- Audio material
- Video material
- Multimedia
- Locally digitalized Materials
- Community information

17) my suggestion is Collection of digital materials may take some time, what is immediately required is to organize community information for each library. I have added some more suggestions on the basis of my field studies.
The information Package must contain.

a) History of the district, sub-division and villages with places of interests. There should be photographs of archeological interests, tourist interests. Brief history of the district, maps, history of heritage buildings and places of interests.

b) List of hotels, rest houses, tourist lodges and Duck Bunglow. Available map at the the micro level. Towns, Mauzas.

c) An exhaustive Telephone directory with cell phone numbers, e-mails, web-site of the Govt. Offices, educational institution, public libraries, hospitals, police stations.

A directory of important persons of the locality, land use pattern, Crop pattern, Wet lands, crime pattern, Mortality rate with sex wise population. Literacy rates including the statistics of educated population.

If a library is to be made a real information centre, it has to be made indispensible to any people for a source of demographic, sociological, cultural and agricultural data. Including vital records essential for farmers, researchers job seekers, teachers and students. People will then be compelled to go to public library for information.
Working hours should be flexible

18) I have received several complaints from the library users that the working hours for the public libraries are not suitable for working public. The libraries are closed on Sundays again an arbitrary decision. The working hour of each library must be staggering. The rural libraries must be kept open from 3 pm to 9 pm and Sunday must be open. The State Central Library in Kolkata also follow the same working hours. Instead of Sunday the library may close on any week day. The first and last Saturday closure system must be done away with. Instead the library staff may take compensatory leave for working on holidays. Office may be closed on Sundays and holidays but the lending section and reading rooms must remain open on Sundays and holidays with skeleton staff.

There should be competitions among the libraries and each year the best library for each district may be given prizes by the RRRLF as a part of the library promotion campaign.

19) **A New – Age Public Library is expected to provide**

i) Lending of books / CD / Magazines for home use - however this will not apply to special libraries or special collections in libraries. The National Library should distinguish between its statutory functions as a national repository and its historical obligations as a public library. In course of time it should develop ways and means of segregating these functions.

ii) Reading facilities on premises - need to be attractive, bright and comfortable. Opening hours should be at the convenience
of readers. Libraries should be closed only on major. Festival days, Independence Day and Republic Days only.

iii) Reference service: Providing qualified and willing staff (knowledge workers) for acting as intermediaries between the users and the collection

iv) Providing Internet access to link the local library to national and global information

The above four basic services should be free to users at point of use.

All the Central and District Libraries can implement those suggestions within their present infrastructure.

The following services may be made available (against payment wherever appropriate), depending on the size of the library and the needs of the user community.

v) Inter-library loan

vi) Photocopying

vii) Document delivery, including Electronic Document Delivery (EDD)

viii) Extension services in public and academic libraries for women, children, senior citizens and physically challenged persons

ix) Community information services

x) OPAC (Online Public Access Catalogue)

xi) Electronic/AV resources, workstations and appropriate infrastructure for use and delivery

xii) Training users in information literacy
xiii) Institutional repositories of research articles, reports, institutional publications and Electronic Theses and Dissertations (ETD)

xiv) Websites, portals, subject gateways, etc (especially in case of special libraries)

xv) Digitization of rare resources (before any digitization programme, one must consider what is to be digitized and whether any other libraries have undertaken similar exercises)

xvi) Identify non-users and promote the use of libraries among them.

xvii) A periodical review to determine the needs of users and effectiveness of services should be conducted by libraries.

* For Clause-XIII institutional depository each District Library can immediately start repositories of clipping services.

1) Consortia of libraries / institutions with a common membership should be instituted, facilitated and encouraged.

2)* Besides offering routine library services, libraries should initiate new and imaginative services in consultation with the local community, such as:

- Discussion centering around books
- Lectures and discussions on subjects that affect the local citizens
- Celebration of important events and occasions
- Support to students’ homework and projects
- Help to prepare for competitive examinations
- Introducing young children to books and reading
IT training at different levels.

Public libraries must be Transparent

20) I have already given emphasis to become every library proactive to organize events all through the year. I gave several suggestions to the State central Library Kolkata to organize a meeting with the readers to facilitate me to assess their need as users. Even I sought an interview with the library Minister Mr. Abdul Karim Chowdhury to discuss problems but my appeal fell flat. The only District Administration Cooperated with my enquiry was the D.M. of South Dinajpur – district.

The public libraries must be transparent in every activity. Each library must store all following information into computer and should renew their data annually for circulation among the readers. All data will contain –

1. Percentage of registered users to population.
2. Percentage of collection on loan on any given day.
3. Number of books lent during a started period.
4. Average books issued per user per unit time.
5. Number of books (including journals, documents, etc.) consulted in house per member per unit time.
6. Number of reference queries answered per unit time.
7. Number of registered users.
8. Number of recommendations received for purchase of books per year.
9. Number of library publications produced by the library per year.

10. Number of books withdrawn from collection per year.

11. Number of photocopies made per unit time.

12. Number of hours that the reading room is open per week.

13. Number of books lost, damaged, rebound and retrieved.

14. Number of books requested for accession and number of books actually purchased.

15. The total working days during the year.

16. The total number of books issued and returned during the year.

**Readers’ Motivation**

21) The library may felicitate the best reader and can award him or her prize one for general members and one for children members.

The library must arrange periodical quizzes on books for the members and all winners must be given prizes at the annual functions of the library which can be made attractive cultural events.

**Implementation of NKC’s suggestions**

22) Among other suggestions of the NKC the following suggestions can be immediately implemented for public libraries.

1. **Collection organization and integrated access**
   
i. Access to every document (print and electronic) in a library should be possible through a proper system of cataloguing and classification.
ii. To help all libraries accomplish this task easily and without delay, and to ensure optimal utilization of expertise and resources, it is essential to develop bibliographic utilities which permit downloading of records (catalogue entries) and uploading information by all libraries.

iii. Libraries having collections of print and electronic resources should provide integrated access using latest ICT.

23) All rare books and rare documents must be acquired and sent to a Central repository for each State:

I have already mentioned that as the archaeological depart acquire all important ancient heritage monuments and undertake the responsibility of their protections, there should be an immediate Central Act for preservation of printed documents and rare manuscripts also. Thousands of rare books magazines, newspapers and manuscripts are being allowed to be damaged in many heritage libraries. The Government must acquire those documents and make arrangements for their preservation.

The national committee on private collection already recommended the following:

**Statewise Survey of Personal Collections**

1) To survey and assess the national situation with regard to identification, documentation and preservation of private collections.

a) Identification of existing collections in the country.

b) Identification of nodal repositories across the country.
c) To carry out a survey at two levels -

- a survey at a national and state level to identify the existing institutions and private/personal collections, and

- a survey of private and institutional collections at the micro-level.

d) The survey should be undertaken keeping in mind the following guidelines:

Categorization of private collections (heritage and contemporary)

*Type of Collections*

1. Personal and private collections of historical and cultural value

2. Institutional collections

*Type of Materials*

1. Manuscripts

2. Old and rare printed materials and historical documents

3. Letters and diaries

4. Contemporary documents of historical and cultural relevance

5. Audio visual material

6. Other materials such as awards, medals, citations, etc.
2. To suggest a decentralization model for identifying, documenting and preserving private collections and creating an institutional network at the national and state level.

3. To develop institutional networks to make available inventories or catalogues of private collections, with a view to disseminate information regarding the availability of these collections as well as to create awareness.

4. To evolve effective measures and schemes for conservation and preservation, documentation and sharing of information on private collections.

a) Conservation and Preservation

i. A directory of conservation and preservation experts and institutions should be compiled.

ii. Survey and documentation of existing methodologies of preservation, both indigenous and international, should be carried out and kept updated to include new state-of-the-art technologies.

iii. New technologies for preservation should be introduced at all levels.

iv. Standards and benchmarks for conservation of different materials should be prepared.

v. Archives for digital documents should be established in each State / Union Territory.

b) Documentation

i. Descriptive cataloguing of personal and private collections should be introduced.
ii. International standards should be maintained in the cataloguing.

iii. Nodal agencies at the state and national level may be entrusted with the responsibility of conducting the surveys mentioned earlier, and cataloguing the private collections. Necessary financial support should be extended to these agencies.

C Dissemination

i. The catalogues of private collections created at the national and state level should be accessible through the web.

ii. Private records and collections of importance should be digitized into full text form with proper indexing facilities and should be made available to users against payment where appropriate.

iii. Archives of digital documents should also be made accessible through the web.

Needed Advocacy Strategy

5. To outline suitable advocacy and outreach strategies for this purpose.

a) Sensitize individuals and institutions / business houses about the value and significance of private collections as national property, cultural heritage and historical sources.

b) Use audio-visual and electronic media for creating greater awareness about such collections among different sections of society.
c) Have information about private collections reach all levels of society including administrators, scholars, students and the general public.

d) Have extension activities organized through different media, by the concerned institutions, to generate awareness about the merits, use and importance of private collections.

6. To formulate necessary approaches for human resource development and creation of infrastructure.

a) A system of training may be established in areas such as cataloguing, conservation and preservation, digitization, digital archiving, archival management, rare languages and scripts.

b) Existing institutions which have the capacity to undertake the management, digitization, documentation, etc, of private collections, should be suitably supported for this purpose.

*Infrastructure*

a) Existing nodal agencies and their network of associated institutions should be provided suitable infrastructural facilities such as computers, printers, internet access, multilingual software, manpower, in accordance with certain minimum standards laid down by the Committee.

7. To evaluate the adequacy of existing policy and legal framework and suggest suitable measures to ensure that:

a) Valuable personal collections are not destroyed or sold/smuggled out of India.
b) Everyone has a right to access the contents of those private and personal collections that are supported by the government, except those excluded by mutual agreement.

c) Owners of private and personal collections provide access to their collections by:

- Voluntary permission - Access/ use fee
- On the basis of mutually agreed terms

d) Institutions supported by government that maintain archival materials be strengthened to archive documents and disseminate these materials for use to the public. The institutions must create a user-friendly environment for providing this access. Access guidelines should be formulated and made available to the users. Enabling legal provisions for access need to be formulated with the help of legal experts, and made available to all concerned.

8. To develop guidelines for owners of private collections.

The National Committee may formulate the detailed guidelines, keeping in view the following:

a) Copyright issues and the application of Right to Information Act

b) Proprietary rights

c) Government support for individuals having private collections, especially for conservation and publication

d) Training facilities for individuals having private collections

e) Terms and conditions for the acquisition, donation or loan of private collections
f) Terms of reference under which collections could be digitized for wider dissemination

g) Any other issue emanating from local situations.

There should be down to earth policy

24) There are 54000 public libraries in India and to train them the entire staff to enable them earn library and information handling skill is a gigantic task. ICT knowledge skill communication and training skill, Marketing and presentation skills, understanding of cultural diversity, and knowledge mapping skills is a huge task. It needs lot of money. The entire digitization project of public library net work may need few thousand crores. The knowledge commission has specified services of different categories of public libraries. Firstly all categories of libraries must be aware of their specific responsibilities as defined by the KC. They are as follows:

i. State Central Library: Information service, e-learning, knowledge management, knowledge centre activities, content creation and management, subject gateways, content analysis, collaborative publishing, e-governance, training.

ii. District Library: Information service, e-governance, content development, co-ordination of rural knowledge centres.

iii. Sub-Divisional Town Library: Lending of books, reference services, inter-library loan, web-based services such as e-learning, banking and insurance,
community information, content and database creation.

iv. Rural Knowledge Centrel Community Information Centre: Lending of books, web-based services such as e-learning, banking and insurance, panchayat-level information, e-governance, community information, content and database creation.

There should be proper co-ordination of activities between the different levels of Libraries, specially in respect of those activities which will be of common interest, e.g. training, sharing of databases and contents, problem solving, transaction analysis, gathering of information towards developing uniform standards and modeling of inspection of need, access and dissemination, and inspection of progress of knowledge based activities, and identifying weaknesses in the system, if any.

Keeping in view the above categorization, the following staff structure is recommended.

i. Managerial (Group A)

ii. Professional/ Technical Staff (Group B)

iii. Para-professional/ Support Staff (Group Q)

5. The Head of the Library at each level may be designated as State Librarian, District Librarian and Town Librarian. It is also suggested that the following routine jobs may be
outsourced: Stack management, library binding, stock verification, retro conversion, bar coding, borrowers registration, digitization, library security and upkeep, physical infrastructure and maintenance, computer network and maintenance. Work of administrative staff such as Night Watchman, Cleaner, Mali, Driver, Book Binder and Sweeper may also be outsourced.

State Central Library
(Category III Library)

i. Managerial Staff (Group A)
   a. State Librarian
   b. Deputy Library Director
   c. Assistant Library Director (presently designated as Information Officer)

ii. Professional/ Technical Staff (Group B)
   a. Information Assistant
   b. Junior Information Assistant
   c. Data Entry Operator

iii. Para-professional Support Staff (Group Q)
    a. Library Attendant

iv. Administrative Staff
    a. Administrative Officer
    b. Stenographer
    c. Cashier
    d. Administrative Support Staff
    e. Night Watchman, Cleaner, Mali, Driver, Book Binder, Sweeper, etc, to be outsourced
District Library
(Category 11 Library)

i. Managerial Staff (Group A)
   a. District Librarian

ii. Professional/Technical Staff (Group B)
   a. Information Assistant
   b. Data Entry Operator

iii. Para-professional Support Staff (Group Q)
   a. Library Attendant

iv. Administrative Staff
   a. Night Watchman, Cleaner, Mali, Driver, Book Binder, Sweeper, etc, to be outsourced

Sub-divisional/Town Library
(Category I Library)

i. Managerial Staff (Group A)
   a. Town Librarian

ii. Professional/Technical Staff (Group B)
   a. Data Entry Operator

iii. Para-professional Support Staff (Group Q)
   a. Library Attendant

iv. Administrative Staff
   a. Night Watchman, Cleaner, Mali, Driver, Book Binder, Sweeper, etc, to be outsourced

Rural Knowledge Centre/Community Information Centre
(Block Level)

i. Professional Technical Staff (Group B)
a. Information Assistant

ii. Para-professional Support Staff (Group Q)
   a. Library Attendant

iii. Administrative Staff
   a. Village Level Volunteers

6. An Information Officer is needed to look after and co-ordinate the activities of clusters of four to six District Libraries and their Knowledge Centres

25) In all practical purposes it is not possible for the State governments to bear the one third cost of this reformation. Even many states did not accept even 10 percent share of the RRRLF matching grant. So far West Bengal is concerned the staff pattern has come down to a disastrous level. Small libraries are either closing down or are opening every alternate day for want of staff. I have clearly indicated in my report that how libraries are given low priorities in state development project. The State governments are willfully allowing the public libraries die.

Needs for LGC

26) If the libraries are to be revamped in accordance with the KC recommendations a UGC type Library Grant Commission (LGC) needs to be set up as an apex body at the centre with full financial support from the centre. Or the RRRLF should be made the apex body to supervise the entire network. The Foundation activities should be re-reorganized. It is better to choose the later because the RRRLF has already learned expertise in handling public libraries in the country and
handled adroitly the issue. Whatever progress the library sector has achieved the major credit must go to the organization silently. But the Foundation’s major task should be to develop the reading habit which is under threat for various reasons.

If this is not done, the knowledge commissions recommendations will remain a utopia.

27) Notwithstanding all the above recommendations my view is to all the State Governments must enact library Act within a deadline. The Present Acts have not included objectives of a public library. The objectives must be clearly specified and must give admittance people’s right to read, right to be knowledge and right to be informed.

28) Government never obliges citizens by establishing public library facilities but only fulfilling fundamental duties of the state. There should be library commission like Indian Press Commission to enquire into the status of public libraries.

29) Let me conclude my study with my final observation that twenty first century public libraries are yet to be the meeting ground between the people and opinion leaders using the public libraries as a spring board for socio-cultural change. Still some people are routinely coming to the library issuing books routinely, there has been little change in reading pattern over the years, the number of users have come down. Now text books are in more demand than general books.
Some libraries have extended electronic facilities but the society at large needs to be electrified yet.

Many public libraries in the developed world have closed down for want of state support and due to public apathy. But in the developed world another set of ‘e’ readers have emerged, solely dependent on digitized reading. India must not surrender blindly to this culture. Indian rural folk can not afford ‘e’ learning at personal level and we should not or ought not expect that printed wisdom is gone forever. We must not make over all our national wisdom to the internet mediated reading culture. We must retain printed books, must accelerate public library movement keeping pace with modern latest technology but must ensure that books are read. Because books are for reading. That pleasure of reading must not be diluted.