

RURAL LIBRARY AS COMMUNITY INFORMATION CENTRE: A STUDY OF KARNATAKA STATE

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Abstract :

The paper focuses on the role of rural library as community information centre in the development of rural masses in various areas such as educational, cultural, socio-economic and political, and to know the present status of the public libraries in Karnataka state. Paper also highlights the services should be provided by the rural library as community information centre.

KEYWORDS :

Rural library, Community Information Centre, Rural Development, Public Library, Community Information Service

INTRODUCTION

In perception of Indian context, majority of Indian reside in rural areas and engaged in agriculture and small scale industry. Illiteracy is curse for a social, cultural, economical development of the country and it leads poverty. Therefore development of the country total depends on the improvements of the rural masses; hence development of the rural masses can be achieved by resolving the problems of the rural messes. Information is considered as an inevitable tool for the development of the any society. It is a fundamental resource for all intellectual activities, cultural, socio, economic and political development of the society.

In the development of rural areas rural libraries has a pivotal role by offering information dissemination services based upon knowledge for various public groups, on social, political, economic, cultural and other matters. Rural libraries play very dominant role in the welfare of the rural masses. Rural library can act as community information centre to improve living condition and quality of life by fulfilling each and every information need, those which are assist individual for their day to day problem solving.

The UNESCO Public Library Manifesto (1994) declares that constructive participation and the development of democracy depends on satisfactory education as well as on free and unlimited access to knowledge, thought, culture and information. Ensuring access to citizens to all sorts of Community information services and facilitating the development of information and computer literacy skills have been included in the missions of the manifesto.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Kumar Sunil (2006) traces the rural library movement in India and discusses the major landmarks, which have made the history of rural library movement. And also states the present scenario of public library movement, efforts for development of rural libraries in context of library legislation, role of national and state level library associations and valuable contributions of Dr. S R Ranganathan and other devoted professionals to give impetus to public library moment at glass rot level in Indian states.

Vashishth (2007) Paper explores rural information system initiatives in endorsement of public library movement in small towns and villages through Raja Rammohun Roy Library Foundation (RRRLF), Rajiv Gandhi Foundation (RGF) and NGOs in setting up rural libraries to facilitate education, recreation and practical information at the door of rural communities.

Sharma Arvind K (2008) article deals with the barriers to the free flow of information in rural areas of Gwalior district of Madhya Pradesh. Total 667 dully filled questionnaires were received back from respondents. Major findings are 83.05% of respondents prefer to study reading material in Hindi language, money as well as lack of time is coming in the way of obtaining required information in rural areas, and only 4.34% respondents (29 of 667) are familiar with the internet in this IT age.

Gadagin (2009) and others study explores that, the community information services offered by the government and non-government agencies in bellary district by surveying 156 organizations. The results are of course revealing the current status of community information activities and the libraries are yet to form integral part of CICs. Majority of the agencies do not have library at all and is managed by non-professionals. The ICT initiatives have just begun and all these call for serious note among policy makers to strengthen community information activities of the region.

Zala (2009) this paper focuses on the role of an information centre or library in the uplift of rural people in various areas such as education, health, agriculture and employment. It also emphasize on the use of information communication technology (ICT) at the bottom of the pyramid to enable the rural citizenry to access the resource available at the rural information centre (RIC).

Sami (2008) this paper discusses some of the areas, where ICT could be applied to develop the rural people and make the rural masses enlightened.

Verma (2006) discusses the role of library and literacy centres (LLC) in achieving the goal of absolute literacy and development of the nation. Highlights how effective the various library and literacy programmes are being organized in the states by the government suggests participation of LLCs implementation of government's policies. Some suggestion have also beenmade for sustainable development of LLCs. Emphasizes the sense of social responsibility and affiliation to the nation as the need of the hour which can be better performed by the LLCs.

Kaula (2006) paper states that, the projection of the greatness of Indian culture and movement for the development of public library activities through the efforts of Iyyanki venkata rammanayya followed by the work of Dr S R Ranganathan involving rural india. Also mentions the launching of the National Adult Education Programme and the follow up the programme for the establishment of village libraries in several states through various agencies and the National policy and assistance of Raja Rammohun Roy Library Foundation. And further points out the enforcement of library legislation in some states and the thrust on setting up of rural libraries as information resource centre.

Biradar (2008) study examines the issues related to information needs and services of Holehonur rural library. Study indicates that averages of 80% of rural community visits the library and utilizes the sources. Especially women and labour community visit the library for entertainment purpose and students for educational purpose and employees and farmers foe enjoying their leisure.

RURAL PUBLIC LIBRARIES

Public libraries are locally based service organizations established to meet the requirements of the local communities and to function within the context of the communities while contributing to the creation and maintenance of a well informed and democratic society. Public libraries help to authorize community in the improvement and development of their lives and that of the communities. Public libraries make available access to information, knowledge and works of the imagination through resources and services that are meant to be equally available to all members of the community irrespective of age, color, caste, creed, race, nationality, gender, language, religion, disability, economic and employment status and educational attainments.

Through the term "Rural Library" is not a separate, but it is a branch of public librarianship, there is a need to provide special attention to the rural library in the Indian context. In developing countries like India, rural areas need a special care. In Karnataka majority of population is residing in rural areas and facing several problems. To overcome the day to day problems the villages need effective rural libraries.

NEED FOR RURAL LIBRARIES

Like other basic need of the people, information is another basic requirement. But the people those who are living in rural areas they are far away from attain of basic information needs. To improve quality of life and potential of the rural people to participate in knowledge based society there is a need of rural library. Rural library plays a vital role for the spread of knowledge and information to the rural community. For the benefit of rural people and to support the rural activities, there is a need of rural libraries with all the required facilities. Rural libraries help to the rural community keeping fresh their knowledge by providing needed information of the rural community. Thus there is a need of rural library which are useful for uplift for rural community.

COMMUNITY INFORMATION CENTRE

Community Information is that which assist individual and groups with daily problem-solving and with participation in the democratic process. The services focuses on the needs of people those who do not have ready access to other sources of assistance and on the most important problems that people have to look, problems to do with their day to day activity, home, job opportunities and their rights. Hence community information service may be referred as a optimistic decision to concentrate on enabling people in overall development of the community, particularly those in inferior socio-economic group to act either individually or collectively on their problems in several respects such as housing, employment, family and personnel matter, agricultural, consumer affairs, house hold, transportation, civil rights etc.

DEFINING COMMUNITY INFORMATION CENTRE

A Community Information Centre is a place where members of a community can:

Locate Information about subjects of interest to them,
 Take Part in learning activities,
 Discussion and share knowledge, information and concerns with extension and other community workers, planners and administrators.
 Find Materials to help them retain their literacy and numeracy skills,
 Meet to organize and work together on community projects,
 Use equipment to produce their own information materials,
 Enjoy culture and leisure activities.

Importance of Community Information Centre

Provide information and activities which will help community members acquire the skill, knowledge and confidence to participate more fully in community affairs,
 Provide information and activities about health and agricultural techniques, business etc, to assist community to improve their economic situation,
 Provide a forum through which governments and other agency workers can be informed about concerns, problems and reactions of community members to their plans and programmes,
 Provide support to extension programmes and help extension workers to co-ordinate their work in the community,
 Strengthen a community's involvement in and appreciation of local and national culture,
 Serve as a focal point for communities activities and enhance a sense of belonging among community members.

Present Scenario of Rural Libraries in Karnataka

With a view to universalize the right of reading Karnataka Public Libraries Act has come into force in 1965 and enacted the same thereby laying a sound foundation for the growth of public libraries in this state. The then Mysore Library Association worked hard in the direction of bringing the Karnataka Public Library Act into force with the accelerated motivation of the popular opinion. The efforts made by the then education minister Sri S.R.Kanthi and Dr. S.R. Ranganathan proved successful in implementing the Library Act in this state. Today, as far as the development of public libraries is concerned it has achieved remarkable progress in the state. The Karnataka State is one of those few states in the forefront in view of the public library system in the country as a whole. The department of public library in Karnataka has rendered 48years of salutary service by installing a network of libraries throughout the state. The Department is, by way of offering library facilities striding fast from the capital towards the villages in the direction of evoking an intellectual revolution among the people by instilling in the common man an active interest for reading. As far as the acts of Public Libraries and establishment of Libraries is concerned, Karnataka is the 3rd state in the country to establish libraries. The Act facilitates establishment and maintenance of libraries in rural areas. Important feature of act fact is provides provision for collection of library cess through property tax.

The present situation of the public libraries in Karnataka are - 1 State Central Library, 1 Indira Priyadarshini Children's Library, 1 Public Technical Library, 27 District Central Library, 19 City Central Library, 14 Mobile Libraries, 490 Branch Libraries, 107 Service Stations, 31 Reading Rooms, 5766 Gram Panchayat Libraries, 21 Aided Libraries, 200 Slum Libraries and 600 Reading Rooms in Slum Areas.

There are 5766 numbers of gram panchayat libraries working in the state. As against 5766 number of gram panchayat, gram panchayat libraries have been established in 5766 gram panchayats. Besides the manpower to manage the gram panchayat library, it is the responsibility of the department to provide infrastructure facilities like buildings, furniture, water, light and such others.

Rural Library as a Community Information Centre

Rural library itself is a community information centre and it has the obligation to provide community information those which assist individual for their day to day problems. Public library has always been viewed as an important entity in a local community development and empowerment process, particularly in a rural and disadvantaged community. It has been established as a crucial element in the life of community members, as it provides information that is essential for the community progress.

Services of rural libraries as community information centre

- To provide basic needs, such as food, shelter, clothing, health, drinking water etc.
- To fulfill economic, educational, social and cultural information needs of the local people;
- To eradicate illiteracy by providing audiovisual and illustrated reading materials;
- To provide government information, such as government schemes, welfare schemes for below poverty lines, voter lists etc.
- To provide agricultural information such as crops, fertilizers, pesticides, seeds, weather forecasts, credit societies,

- agricultural equipments, soil testing, water supply and irrigation.
- To provide information about animal husbandry, dairying and fisheries.
 - To provide information about funding agencies for housing, commerce, agriculture and industries,
 - To provide information to the gram panchayat members about schemes available from each and every sectors,
 - To provide information on career opportunities for the students
 - Guiding, counseling, directing on all matters relating to public such as hygiene, family planning, legal matters, etc;
 - Local professionals, such as doctors, lawyers, engineers, educationists, artisans, ect.
 - Census information, which includes population, literacy percentage, male, female ratio etc,
 - To provide needed information to the rural women. There should be a system in the rural areas where women can access, acquire needed information without any hesitation.
 - To provide information to the labourers, such as wage rates, welfare organizations, welfare funds, education for their children, housing schemes, social security, insurance, medical facilities, the prevention of diseases, labour laws etc.
 - To analyze the village community and its basic component groups with their characteristic features and behavior;
 - Addresses of important persons, institutions and organizations
 - Local places of tourists attraction and facilities
 - To provide information to the senior citizen, such as social security, legal actions for protection against harassments by adult children, national policies on older people, old age homes etc.
 - General information on state and the country
 - Addresses of important persons, institutions and organizations,
 - To identify the discrepancy between the services provided and the real needs of the users, etc;
 - Court case information
 - Immunization programmes
 - Astrology
 - Meetings fair and festivals
 - Yellow pages
 - Vocational education programmes
 - Arranging exhibitions, book displays, etc
 - Births, deaths and marriages
 - Welfare rights
 - Legal aids
 - Adult literacy classes
 - Children's immunization programmes
 - Festival celebrations and other events
 - Cooperate with NGOs
 - Rights of disadvantaged
 - Folk stories
 - Reports from the panchayat leaders about their functioning policy decisions, etc.

CONCLUSION

The status of public library system as the community information centre in rural community is the new role and it is good chance for public librarians to work in such a challenge context. Public librarians should have more keen interest and cooperation with communities to find the discrepancy between services provided and real needs of the community people. In Karnataka rural society the personal relationship is still important and people are still friendly and optimist. Public librarians must get this good point to be a chance to encourage library services to grassroots level.

Community information centre is one that is established, maintained and fostered for the overall development of the entire community. It is meant not only to facilitate information needs of the community, but act as a torch bearer to the progress of the entire society. Hence is the need for public libraries to reconsider their objectives and role as community information centre and come forward to act as centres for the hub of community development activities. This calls public libraries to make maximum use of the advantages of information and communication technologies to develop digital resources, to facilitate access to world wide information to reach the unreached in addition to strengthening their existing resources and services. This further establishes greater need for inter library co-operation and resources sharing through networking.

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