

# Public Libraries

## Institution of Mass Education

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### Abstract

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*The paper explicates the process of establishing public libraries in the remote villages of Uttar Pradesh as an attempt to strengthen the fundamental democratic institutions of rural India. Village library is relatively a newer public sphere where villagers could sit together, read, learn and discuss on various issues in a democratic environment. It is our empirical perception that standard books and literature are not available in remote villages. There is a huge gap between rural and urban educational infrastructure. Opening village library was an effort to bridge the aforesaid gap. It has been argued that opening village library would strengthen democratic processes and ensure empowerment of marginalised and deprived village dwellers. After seven decades of our Independence, it is a grim situation that villagers are not even familiar with the concept of library. This work of opening village libraries was initiated by a team of administrative officers who strongly believe in the concept of paying back to the society.*

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### INTRODUCTION

Public libraries exist to serve the need of the entire community from school children to elderly. It is a place where people from different backgrounds join together in reading and learning process irrespective of age, caste

and gender. Apart from its intended functioning, public libraries have the capacity to strengthen democratic spaces. The purpose of the public library is to provide for every person the education obtainable through book reading and many other activities involved in the learning.

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Inherent within the concept of public library is the access to knowledge field created at the mass level and aimed at the welfare of the social group as a whole. The integrative intent adds to its significance. Public libraries were established worldwide along with the growth of education, literacy and publication. In a flourishing democracy like India, public libraries work as an apparatus to enrich and strengthen the process of democratisation. The UNESCO public library manifesto defines “the public library is a practical demonstration of democracy’s faith in universal education as a continuing and lifelong process in the appreciation of the achievement of humanity in knowledge and culture. Public library is a real democratic social institution, which is by the people, for the people, and of the people, the purpose of which is to provide information, entertainment, and inspiration. It is *People’s University* and has a great role to play in formal and informal education, economic, cultural and social development” (Chaubey et al. 2011). Academic libraries are different from public libraries in the sense that they serve the objectives of formal educational institutions with up to date research and the availability of most technical information in certain fields. Whereas public library is open for free and equal use by all the members of the community, regardless of caste, class, creed, race, religion, age, sex, language, nationality and status or level of educational attainment. This idea of access to knowledge in

an uninhibited and uninterrupted manner is quite significant. Kumar (1985) has rightly pointed out that “public library is available for use to all who are capable to use it. This feature makes it different from other libraries. A public library can also be distinguished from other libraries because it provides liberal and comprehensive service performing a wide range of functions providing for information, education, recreation, entertainment and inspiration”.

### **PERSONAL JOURNEY TOWARDS THE LIBRARY MOVEMENT**

Realising the importance of public libraries as an institution of mass learning, an initiative was taken by a team of district administrators including the author. Therefore, the paper is partly a description of PAR (participatory action research) as well as ethnographic account of the whole process since its inception. Being a member of the team of public library movement, I was part of every step taken for this work. Imagination, improvisation, designing and preparation were done by the team. Book donation and monetary donation camps were organised by with the help of media and villagers. This whole process of preparation took around two months’ time till the inauguration of two village libraries. Further, the team members attended functions and activities organised at the libraries to facilitate its functioning. Activities were story reading, discussion on current

issues, counselling of aspirants for competitive exams, etc. Perceptions of participants about village libraries and activities were collected to understand the relevance of public libraries in the process of designing and launching this programme. We were part of every step in this movement of mass education, thus, facilitating an intensive engagement to understand the nuances of the system and its functioning. As a participant team member, I also got the opportunity to observe this work very closely. Data and description for this paper are the outcome of intense participation and observation.

### **PUBLIC LIBRARIES IN INDIA: A BRIEF HISTORY**

Every country has its own public library history with influential leaders and champions. Monarchs, wealthy people and philanthropists have made their contribution to the development of public libraries and India is no exception. "Libraries were established in ancient India mainly by the patronage extended by emperors, major capitalists and scholars. Indian king and emperors supported scholars and scholarship. In India well-equipped libraries with vast, choicest, collections of manuscripts and other materials of ancient wisdom attached to the internationally renowned Indian Universities like Takshila, Nalanda, Vikramsila, Valabhai, Benaras and Ranchi in ancient India were solely organised and functioned with a

view to advancing the traditional, philosophical, ecclesiastical and classical education for its own sake" (Wani, 2008). Well-known scholar on libraries, Khanna (1987) writes about the development of libraries in India "the libraries in Medieval and Mughal India were created of, by and for the elite. Public library system has not taken roots even in independent India. The Advisory Committee Report, 1958 is a great milestone in the history of library movement in India which recommended that every state should have a library legislation to ensure a perennial source of income. The Ministry followed this up by circulating model Public Library Bill to all the State Governments in 1962" (Khanna, 1987). To stimulate and support the Library Movement in India, the Department of Culture, Government of India, has set up the Raja Rammohun Roy Library Foundation (RRRLF) in Calcutta. The RRRLF has also been given the responsibility of resource mobilisation for modernisation of the State and district central libraries, the development of infrastructure and training of personnel (Goswami, 2011).

If we evaluate personal contribution in the development of public libraries in India we find that Sayaji Rao Gaekwad III, Maharaja of Baroda, was a great visionary. He pioneered the development of Public Library System in India as early as 1910. He carefully devised a compulsory programme of mass education in one district in 1893, and

extended it to the entire State by 1907, and also made elementary education compulsory for all boys and girls in the State. His Highness also realised that universal education required a network of free public libraries, which would keep literacy alive, and enable men and women in rural areas to have access to the source of knowledge not hitherto open to them.

The Maharaja insisted that “libraries should not limit their benefits to the few English knowing readers, but should see to it that their good work permeates through to the many”, and that “the vernacular libraries should be encouraged” so that every citizen of the State “may enrol himself as a pupil in the peoples’ university—the library” (Khanna, 1987). With this noble idea, he set up free public libraries in the State beginning in 1910. For this purpose, he established a separate Library Department with W.A. Borden as the first full-time Director of State Libraries. The next step was to establish a Central Library at Baroda with a nucleus collection of 88,764 volumes which included the Maharaja’s private collection of about 20,000 books. A full-time Curator of Libraries with staff strength of around 50 was appointed to manage it (Khanna, 1987).

It is very interesting to learn that even a century ago the Maharaja launched publication of a quarterly journal called *Library Miscellany* in English, Gujarati and Marathi with Shri J.S. Kodalkar as its first editor, started Library Associations from Taluk level, organised *Mitra Mandal* (friendly groups in the libraries)

in the town and village libraries and organised regular library conferences. Mobile library service was organised to cater to the book need at remote villages. The Maharaja also established an Oriental Institute and Library with 6,846 printed books and 1,420 manuscripts in Sanskrit, Gujarati and other languages. This was the first public library system in the country (Khanna, 1987).

The year 1972 is a significant year in the history of library movement in India. The country was celebrating the silver jubilee of Independence. It was the bicentenary year of the birth of Raja Rammohun Roy, a pioneer social reformer who had stressed the need for modern education for the progress of the nation. The year was also being celebrated as an International Book Year with the slogan ‘Books For All’. Emphasis was laid on promotion of reading habit among the masses for betterment of their lives. It was in this auspicious year that ‘Raja Rammohun Roy Library Foundation (RRRLF)’ was established in May, 1972 by the Department of Culture, Government of India, to spread the library services all over the country in cooperation with the State Governments, Union Territories’ Administration and organisations working in the field. Chaudhary (2011) has rightly pointed out the objectives of RRRLF in the following words: “the main objective behind RRRLF being to take the development of public library service and promotion of library movement not only to small towns and villages, but also to the remotest corner, in cooperation with the State Governments, Union

Territories' Administration and other organisations engaged in the promotion of library services and mass education for the progress of the nation". RRRLF is an autonomous organisation fully financed by the Ministry of Culture, Government of India. It is registered under the West Bengal Societies Registration Act, 1961. Here in this paper, we would like to focus on Gram Panchayat or village public libraries in the villages of Kheri district of Uttar Pradesh.

### **Public Libraries in Uttar Pradesh**

The present State of Uttar Pradesh was formed in 1956. Its capital is Lucknow and it has 75 districts with an area of 2,94,411 sq km. Uttar Pradesh is famous for its manuscript libraries. Manuscripts were collected and housed in the Rampur Library. Beyond that many libraries were established here and few of them are—The Allahabad Public Library was established in 1864, Carmicheal Library, Benaras, was set up in 1872, the Lyall Library and Reading Room were founded in Meerut in 1866. A good number of public libraries were started and maintained by voluntary organisations. The Uttar Pradesh Library Association was founded in 1949. A Hospital Library service is being run at Lucknow and Kanpur under the auspices of the Association ([www.nmlindia.nic.in](http://www.nmlindia.nic.in)). "Dr. S.R. Ranganathan drafted the Uttar Pradesh Public Libraries Bill in 1949 and published it in the form of a book. He was an Indian Pioneer

of library and information system (LIS). Dr. Ranganathan advocated for the development of effective public library systems to reach India's masses. Inspired by the ethics of spreading knowledge and providing 'books for all' he had a vision based on his five laws of library science, to spread knowledge far and wide through India's public libraries" (Pyati, 2009, p. 2, Kumar, 1985, pp. 10–15). Further Dr. Sampurnanand, wrote the introduction for this book titled *Library Development Plan* with a draft Library Bill for the United Province. The Bill was submitted to the Government and circulated to all the members of the legislative assembly. Despite the Education Minister's keenness in putting the Public Libraries Act into the statute book, his efforts did not materialise. Ultimately, the State Government issued an ordinance in 2006 for Library Legislation. However, no further development took place after the formation of public library ordinance. Reasons may be lack of willpower or priority of government to this work. Consequently, neither separate department nor directorate was established by the State Government to expand public libraries at the grassroots level. Lack of vision, priority and willpower are basic hindrance in the development of public libraries (Shah and Sonkar, 2010).

### **Village Libraries in Kheri Lakhimpur**

Kheri is the largest district of Uttar Pradesh and it comprises 995 village

panchayats and 10 urban bodies. Kheri is predominantly rural in nature. As per the Census of 2011, only 11.46 per cent population live in urban areas, rest 88.54 per cent population live in 995 villages. Dudhwa Tiger Reserve and Kishanpur Bird Sanctuary with rich diversity of flora and fauna provide an important status to Kheri district at the national level. Sharda and Ghaghra are two important rivers of this district. Sharda-Ghaghra link canal and its branches irrigate thousands of acres of Kheri and its neighbouring district. They also bring flood during monsoon period every year and millions of people get displaced and lose their agricultural land. The economy of the district is dependent on the sugar industry, and therefore it is known as the sugar bowl of Uttar Pradesh. Eight sugar mills and many small Khandsari units produce maximum quintals of sugar here. Because of dependence on agriculture, pace of life is slow and people are less mobile. Awadhi, the dialect of Hindi language, is spoken in the region.

As per the Census of 2011, literacy rate of Kheri is 60.56 per cent (male–69.57 per cent and female–50.42 per cent) while the national literacy rate is 74.04 per cent. The sex ratio is 894 against 940 of the national ratio. These facts prove that Kheri is a backward district with poor developmental parameters performance, as shown in Table 1. Education is the basic element to enhance the knowledge of the people

about different aspects of life and world. The literacy rate of the district is lower than the national average. It is also lagging behind on other parameters. To provide quality books and awareness about education and knowledge, a movement was initiated *Gram Panchayat Pustakalaya*, with a hope that it would bring positive change in the life of villagers. It would help them to come out of their backwardness.

Accepting the importance of village public libraries, eminent sociologist, Desai (1969) writes, “the library adequately equipped with books scientifically dealing with varied subjects; with newspapers and magazines of local, national, and even international significance; and with charts and maps; can be a rich reservoir of variegated knowledge, social, political, technical, economic and cultural. It can also enable the village to follow decisive national and international happenings. The library when properly made use of, will help him to broaden his outlook, enlarge his vision extend the frontiers of his knowledge and to visualise local developments as an integral part of, one single organic world development. He will thereby steadily build up a national and even international consciousness”. Data of district Kheri given in Table 1 helps to develop an understanding about this region.

Efforts to decentralise the power, authority and resources are continuous process in a diversified democracy like India where major and minor differences create many types of discrimination. The caste

**Table 1**  
**Census Data of 2001 and 2011 of Kheri District**

<b>S. No.</b>	<b>Census data</b>	<b>2011</b>	<b>2001</b>
1.	Actual Population	40,21,243	32,07,232
2.	Male	21,23,187	17,13,908
3.	Female	18,98,056	14,93,324
4.	Population Growth	25.38%	32.57%
5.	Area (Sq. Km)	7,674	7,674
6.	Density/km <sup>2</sup>	524	418
7.	Proportion to Uttar Pradesh Population	2.01%	1.93%
8.	Sex Ratio (Per 1,000)	894	871
9.	Child Sex Ratio (0-6 Age)	921	943
10.	Average Literacy	60.56	48.39
11.	Male Literacy	69.57	59.50
12.	Female Literacy	50.42	35.38
13.	Total Child Population (0-6 Years)	6,62,296	6,36,038
14.	Male Population (0-6 Years)	3,44,806	3,27,349
15.	Female Population (0-6 Years)	3,17,490	3,08,689
16.	Literates	20,34,044	12,44,189
17.	Male Literates	12,37,157	8,25,048
18.	Female Literates	7,96,887	4,19,141
19.	Child Proportion (0-6 Years)	16.47%	19.83%
20.	Boys Proportion (0-6 Years)	16.24%	19.10%
21.	Girls Proportion (0-6 Years)	16.73%	20.67%

*(Census 2001 and 2011, www.censusindia.gov.in)*

and regional imbalances necessitate efforts to mobilise the grassroots level structures. To fill the gap and eliminate caste class and regional imbalances, a lot of work has yet to be done. When the Union Government of India introduced the 73rd and 74th

amendments in Article 243 of the Constitution to empower local bodies (urban and rural) in 1993, along with other issues there was a provision of public libraries. Purpose behind that provision was to lessen the gap between rural and urban education

scenarios and to provide villagers quality books to enhance their stock of knowledge in their own locality. Gram Panchayats and urban local bodies like Nagar Panchayats, Nagar Palikas and Nagar Nigams could establish public libraries. Article 15 (20) of U.P. Panchayat Raj Act directs the village representatives to establish public libraries in their Gram Panchayats. However, neither the concerned officers nor the Gram Pradhans took any initiative to set up public libraries. On 22 August 2014, two Gram Panchayat libraries were inaugurated by the Chief Development Officer (CDO) of the Kheri district. Idea and inspiration came from the CDO, and he started working with two team members including Sub Divisional Magistrate (SDM) and Block Development officer (BDO). This team of three Officers took resolution to begin two model libraries in defunct Gram Sachivalaya (village secretariat) buildings, which are located inside the villages, and are easily accessible for village dwellers.

Once we discussed and decided to open village libraries, we started working on different aspects of a library, for instance, fund, furniture, maintenance of buildings, selection and purchase of books and magazines. To acquire monetary support, participation of villagers and to generate awareness among them, we organised membership and book donation camp with the help of local media. Textbooks, storybooks, novels and religious books were donated by concerned villagers. Staff of block and Tehsil Mitauli extended

their support to these activities. Rules, regulations, and mechanism of functioning of the libraries were designed and prepared during pre-determined period. Subsequently, on 22 August 2014, when in the presence of village headmen, villagers, print and electronic media two libraries in Mitauli and Kasta villages were inaugurated by the CDO with great fanfare. After the successful initiatives of opening two village libraries in Mitauli and Kasta, around 23 libraries were also opened in Kheri district. One basic element, which is the most important feature of this movement, is that these libraries were not imposed like other government schemes. Rural development officers worked as a catalyst and guide, steering the programme from its inception. We lead the whole movement by providing necessary suggestions, technical support and coordination to the community.

As a part of bureaucracy and the opportunity to steering the movement the success of any programme requires empathy towards the social cause, as well as, the approach to work together with the community. Joint efforts have the possibility to remain durable and sustained without much governmental interference. With our combined effort and to convert our dream into reality we have made 23 public libraries functional till 30 September 2014. Each library has a collection of 500 books on various subjects, including Panchayati Raj, environmental awareness, stories and novels on village life, poems and *shayari*, textbooks, *Employment News*, weekly and monthly magazines, etc.



Some of the details of public libraries is given below.

Inspired by our library movement, six secondary schools and community organisations like Patel Sansthan, Gola have started libraries at their campus in Kheri. Details of those colleges and institutions that started libraries at their campuses are given in Table 3.

We created an environment and the media disseminated the message to the whole district about the village libraries. Managers, principals and other people started approaching us

to open libraries in their institutions. It was very positive and encouraging experience for us. We provided them list of books and suggestions and also attended inauguration ceremony to inspire them. These institutional libraries brought accession and issuing registers and started issuing books to their students and members. Manager of Kanhaiya Lal Inter College, Behajm informed that students of his college are very interested in new books and they are issuing books regularly which will possibly promote the reading habit among them. The same thing happened

**Table 2**  
**Name of Villages, Blocks and Tehsils where Village Libraries were Opened**

S. No.	Name of the Village	Name of the Block	Tehsil
1.	Mitauli	Mitauli	Mitauli
2.	Kasta	Kasta	Kasta
3.	Paila	Behajm	Mitauli
4.	Tharia	Behajm	Mitauli
5.	Ibrahimpur Grant	Mohamdi	Mohamdi
6.	Sahjana	Mohamdi	Mohamdi
7.	Karaunda	Mohamdi	Mohamdi
8.	Aliganj	Bankeganj	Gola
9.	Kakori	Bankeganj	Gola
10.	Ajan	Gola	Gola
11.	Marua Paschim	Palia	Palia
12.	Ludhauri	Nighasan	Nighasan
13.	Chhauchh	Lakhimpur	Lakhimpur
14.	Pahadapur	Lakhimpur	Lakhimpur
15.	Rajapur	Lakhimpur	Lakhimpur
16.	Fattepur Saidri	Lakhimpur	Lakhimpur

in Zila Panchayat Inter College, Kasta, where I addressed a gathering of students to convey them about the importance of books and library.

When we were campaigning for library movement, we came to know about the existence of library books in every government primary and junior high school of Kheri district. Books were bought under the non-recurring funds of ₹5,000 provided to each school by the government. The core purpose of providing books facility to every school seemed to be non-functional as most of these books were lying redundant or locked in the book shelves/boxes. It was very shocking and disappointing that books were not being read neither by teachers nor by

students. We directed head masters and Block Education Officers to encourage the children to read books. Besides opening village libraries, we tried to connect fragmented moorings among isolated institutions. Developing reading habit and visiting libraries, organising regular activities and ensuring participation of students and villagers at the libraries to avail the benefits is must for continuance of the institution of library in future.

Village libraries could be dynamic centres of knowledge and information for 68.84 per cent Indian population residing in rural areas. Establishing village library could also promote public sphere for children, students, for job seeker aspirants, farmers and

**Table 3**  
**List of Institutions where Libraries were Established**  
**Following the Movement**

S. No.	Institution	Place	Tehsil
1.	Raja Lone Singh Inter College	Mitauli	Mitauli
2.	Zila Panchayt Inter College	Kasta	Mitauli
3.	Kanhaiya Lal Inter College	Behajm	Mitauli
4.	Adarsh Janta Inter College	Devkali	Lakhimpur
5.	Dr. Kaushal Kishore Ucchta Madhyamik Vidyalay	Atkohna	Lakhimpur
6.	Krishak Samaj Inter College	Fattepur	Lakhimpur
7.	Vilobi Memorial Library	Lakhimpur	Lakhimpur
8.	Nagar Panchayat Building Oya	Lakhimpur	Lakhimpur
9.	Gandhi Balodyan Junior High School	Lakhimpur	Lakhimpur
10.	Patel Sanstahn	Gola	Gola

Source: Data collected from fieldwork

village women where they could study, learn and share their views and ideas among their fellow, library visitors. Our experience informs the possibility of establishing gram panchayat libraries with the combined effort of officers, political representatives, members of different organisations and villagers themselves. Though we accept that electronic media like television channels, CD, DVD, android mobile phones have curtailed the possibilities of sustenance of all kind of public spheres including libraries. Although a village library could be a possible mechanism of empowering the villages, it has not been tested yet in the Indian scenario. Developing habits of regularly visiting village library and reading habits among villagers is a serious challenge for the founders of such libraries. We have a plan to develop these libraries as 'Multiple Activity Centre' where staff and officers of different departments like agriculture, veterinary, health, soil conservation, development, panchayati raj, social welfare, revenue, primary and secondary education, etc., visit and make the villagers aware about their schemes at definite interval. Published literature of these departments would also be put there so that people can read and get information for their knowledge upgradation. A direction letter has been issued in this regard to the concerned departments from the Chief Development Officer.

### **DECENTRALISATION OF KNOWLEDGE**

Decentralisation is an ecological process in which business, industry,

and other service agencies tend to move away from the centre of a city when land and costs become too high and congestion becomes too evident. The movement is towards secondary centres or sub-centres, located in outlying areas where there is more space and costs are generally lower (Scott, 2005). From this definition it becomes very clear that opening a village library is a process to divert centre of knowledge from cities to rural areas, or from the centre to the periphery. As we have mentioned in the beginning that public library is a practical demonstration of democracy, when we open public libraries in remote villages, we put forward a step to decentralise the power of knowledge along with decentralising political power through Panchayati Raj, and both these issues are introduced and incorporated in the Indian Constitution by the 73rd and 74th Amendments. We are quite sure that both these processes of decentralisation will strengthen our young democracy. As we know knowledge is power and we get it from books and libraries. Establishing village libraries as centres of knowledge by Gram Panchayats is a positive move for strengthening power of knowledge through political power.

### **CONSTRUCTION OF KNOWLEDGE SOCIETY**

In his inaugural speech for the National Knowledge Commission (NKC) in August 2005, the then Prime Minister Manmohan Singh

acknowledged that public libraries are an “extremely important element of the foundation of a knowledge economy” (Chitralkha, 2014). Knowledge is power and powerful people change the discourse of the time. To acquire the power of knowledge, books and libraries are basic prerequisites. Establishing public libraries in the villages is an effort to construct a society which is up to date with knowledge and current information. Providing city-centric amenities like public library in the remote villages will eliminate relative deprivation among villagers and will provide them a chance to get high standard knowledge with quality books. Even today, a majority of Indian villages are far from basic infrastructure to live a quality life, therefore the rate of rural to urban migration is very high. Due to lack of basic amenities, students are forced to move to cities for higher education and employment. Gram-Panchayat libraries would reduce relative deprivation and exploitation of the village dwellers to some extent, which is the main purpose of this movement.

There is a huge difference between rural and urban amenities in our country. Many efforts are being made by the States and the Union Government to bridge the gap between rural and urban centres. Availability of high standard basic amenities is characteristic of cities (though it is not the reality of our cities) and expansion of such amenities in rural areas is

the expected goal of the governments through various schemes. Beyond these efforts the grassroots picture is not satisfactory. People are aware about the physical and infrastructural development like roads, drainage, etc., but unaware of the human and social development. To bridge the gap, there should be a feeling of relative deprivation among villagers and simultaneously a strong thirst for knowledge and other amenities of rural India. We hope slowly village libraries will create reading habit and regular attendance at libraries. Social and inclusive development and improvement of skills and knowledge among villagers is the motive of this movement. If villagers learn to use the libraries and benefits, we can ensure the success of the movement. The thought behind the initiation of village libraries was to provide village students standard literature for higher education as well as for competitive exams, because sustenance in big cities, persuasion of higher education and preparation for competitive exams for many years is not affordable for a common villager therefore establishing a public library with all necessary items will help aspirants definitely.

### **COMPOSITION OF BOOKS**

The kind of efforts we made to revamp and promote public libraries includes the selection and procurement of reading material to be provided to the villagers. This task we found little tricky but the active support of the villagers made it easy. We prepared the list of books while considering

the age-group, interest and need of library visitors. Each village library has stock of 400 to 500 books. The collection of books comprises textbooks from NCERT and U.P. government syllabus. Hindi literature books, storybooks, novels, poems, literature for children, from National Book Trust (NBT) and Children Book Trust (CBT) are also included. Books on life and works of great personalities of India and the world were included to enrich the domain of knowledge of villagers. Atlas, weekly and monthly magazines, English to Hindi and Hindi to English dictionaries, Employment News, and India yearbooks like India 2014, etc., are purchased for each library. Monthly magazines for competitive exams and weekly magazines to update current events are also managed at each library centres. Unique collection of such books was made available keeping in consideration the interests of students from Classes I–XII, graduation and above for competitive examinations. The reason to select such a diverse composition of books was to provide all necessary literature to remote village students which are otherwise only available in college and universities situated in big cities.

### **MECHANISM OF FUNCTIONING OF VILLAGE LIBRARIES**

To sustain the proper functioning of the village libraries as a resource centre, a detailed module was prepared in consultation with the villagers. The guidelines were

prepared in such a style that it could live long and help to improve the knowledge the villagers. To achieve the expected goals, it was proposed that primary and junior high schools, Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya (KGBV), secondary schools and degree college teachers and students visit and organise weekly, fortnightly and monthly activities and programmes. These activities may include story reading and writing, debate and discussion on current issues, lectures and speech on different subjects to help aspirants. Since it is a self-sufficient institution, therefore a graduate student or a retired teacher or any serviceman who loves reading books should be appointed as the honorary librarian (retired government staff) by the Gram Pradhan to maintain all these activities at the village libraries. It would be the duty of the in-charge librarian to prescribe details of the organised programmes and preserve books and all such documentary records. To maintain the stock of books, accession register could be used in the libraries. Membership register, issuing register and visitors' diary are the other important registers which need to be kept in all the village libraries. Gram panchayat are the main agency to provide funds for the smooth functioning of the village library. Membership fees, donation from people, visitors and dignitaries are other monetary resource to help the library.

Different government departments like agriculture, veterinary, child and

women health and welfare, banking, revenue and police and other envisages to organise their programmes at these libraries to create awareness among the villagers about various government-driven policies and programmes. These departments would also display their magazines, booklets, pamphlets and newsletters at these libraries which could help the students and farmers. Combined efforts of villagers and government officials make libraries vibrant, lively and relevant. There is well established district library at each district headquarters of Uttar Pradesh; further we would open libraries at Tehsil and Block Headquarter to support village libraries. District library would work as, nodal agency to govern and administer all public libraries. Trained librarians posted at each library from village to district level. Categorized books on different subjects could be circulated from one library to another from village to district and vice versa. Interdependence and interconnectedness help in better functioning of the village libraries. CDO Kheri met and presented a booklet to the Chief Secretary Uttar Pradesh and requested him to extend his support to cover all villages of the State with public libraries.

### **Impact on Rural People**

As political institutions become more formal, primary and informal relations among villagers are decreasing day by day, consequently traditional gathering places like *Chaupals* have withered away. Panchayat Ghars constructed by the government agencies neither attract traditional

*Panch-Parmeshwar* nor common villagers, therefore are left abandoned and defunct. Establishing public libraries in such unused Panchayat Ghars is an effort to create modern *Chaupal*, a new public sphere where village dwellers of all age-groups come together to learn to share and to get something in favour of their common concern. Conversation with books and their fellow villagers may enrich their stock of knowledge and will enhance interaction which will also strengthen mutual relationships among them.

### **Challenges before Village Libraries**

Neither opening nor functioning of village libraries properly is an easy task. To develop the reading habit and motivation among villagers to visit the libraries is a serious challenge. For instance, after opening first library in village Mitauli, the author was engaged in opening of another library at Kasta village for nearly one week. During that period, nobody went to open and function the first village library. When I enquired from the village headman, he called a third-year student and appointed him as the caretaker on a stipend of ₹ 500 per month. He discharged his duties very responsibly. I used to visit and attend the activities at that library regularly until I got transferred to another Tehsil. I was satisfied with the functioning of my first village library. But in the case of other libraries my experience remained unsatisfactory because of various reasons which are discussed next.

Generally, villagers like to spend their leisure time playing cards, listening to the radio, watching television and likewise for amusement after completing their daily work. Diverting to libraries and developing an interest in books is a challenge. Therefore, mushrooming interest of reading and visiting library regularly is a tough job. That was in our consideration before inaugurating the libraries.

Management of funds and using them for the betterment of the libraries by future leadership and concerned villagers is also matter of concern. If residents visit and extend their care to libraries, they will become everlasting institutions and slowly enriched also, otherwise they would see slow demise like other government institutions. Combined efforts of villagers and officers are necessary for the sustainability of the village libraries. We need to change the public perception that libraries are 'nice to have' to the perception that 'libraries are essential for learning and essential for life'. No institution could survive in isolation and village library is no exception. Its interrelation with other libraries, schools, colleges and experts is unavoidable. And maintaining cooperation and coordination among institutions instantly is another big challenge.

## **CONCLUSION**

Ethnographic writing is an experience-driven work in which writers seek to draw directly from their fieldwork in the cultural space of their studied universe. As we were outsiders

(government officers) and insiders (beginners of the movement), we got the chance to observe the needs of library in the village and seek the response of the villagers. This paper is an outcome of the amalgamation of various events, challenges, restrictions and responses. Overambitious politicians, jealous and incompetent senior colleagues, their combined discouraging efforts and comments gave us mixed experiences which we have mentioned above.

The present status of the public libraries in India is not good enough. All the States and UTs have their own public library systems, structure and pattern of funding and administration. Only 12 States have enacted library legislation which shows ignorance towards this important institution. In Uttar Pradesh, the scenario of public libraries is unsatisfactory. In such circumstances, opening public libraries in interior villages is really a visionary and futuristic effort.

In this paper, we mentioned a brief history of the library movement in India and the status of public libraries in the State of Uttar Pradesh. Further, we discussed about the library movement in the villages of Kheri district. Preparation for opening, selecting and composition of books and management of funds have been discussed in detail in this paper. We have also analysed the impacts of book on villagers. Along with opening village libraries, we were instantly concerned about the challenges of village libraries, and future prospects were also explained in detail.

There is a desire to acquire knowledge among villagers and especially students who were very keen to visit and study at the library. Villagers donated books, provided monetary support and sent their children to libraries. They took it very positively. I am regularly in touch with our libraries and a few of them are functioning very well and we are hopeful that these institutions will live long.

The initiative of library movement in the villages of Kheri district was introduced and led by us (administrative officers) keeping in mind the very concept of 'pay back to the society'. The facilities that we have in premier institutions like Birla Institute of Technology (BIT), Pilani and Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU), New Delhi, we want to generate such facilities in remote villages of our locale of posting. Being part of the district administration, we had the privilege to initiate and carry forward

this movement. We hope that most deprived and marginalised village dwellers could gain their due access to standard knowledge through these libraries.

Last but not the least, we would like to say that if people keep the library updated and carry forward this institution carefully, their forthcoming generation would become more educated about worldly knowledge. We would also suggest that governments should plan and manage a well-designed library building; sufficient furniture and trained library staff for each village library to develop them as full-fledged institution. A separate directorate at the state level is also required for the successful functioning of public libraries. Interconnected and interdependent system of libraries from the capital city to remote villages would definitely become a medium of mass education. This is an unexplored aspect of our democratic nation which could make remarkable difference in the life of our villagers.

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