

Issues and Challenges of Rural Public Libraries in Karnataka: A critical Analysis

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Abstract: Rural libraries are often lifelines for their communities, offering a wide array of services that cater to people of all ages and backgrounds. They are not just repositories of books but also hubs of learning, connection and cultural enrichment. However, the libraries in rural areas, as observed from earlier studies, are traditional in nature and not well equipped to effectively cater to the information needs of the rural people. Non-existence of library legislation in various states of India is one of the factors which adversely affected the development of a library system. This present study examines the status of rural libraries in four states of India, the information needs of the people in the study area, and their information seeking behavior. The study also examines the role of the latest IT techniques in improving the present status of rural libraries. According to the American Library Association (ALA), over 77% of rural public libraries are the only source of free public access to computers and the internet in their communities. In an era where online access is crucial for education and employment, rural libraries bridge the digital divide. Rural libraries host cultural events, book clubs and reading programs, enriching the lives of their patrons. In 2020, libraries across the United States organized approximately 143,000 programs for adults, including author talks and workshops. This study concludes that the libraries existing presently in rural areas are in a poor state of affairs. Lack of adequate resources, financial and human, is identified as the major reason for the present status of rural libraries.

Keywords: *Rural library, Cultural enrichment, Employment Opportunities, Education, Health*

INTRODUCTION

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. Libraries are often considered an essential part of having an educated and literate population. Information is an important resource which is essential for the progress of any individual and that of a nation, so access to right or relevantly updated information to its users is required at the right time for any literate society. 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, economic 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. Any information society requires information at every step. 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. Public libraries help to empower people in the enrichment, orientation and development of the citizens towards inculcating national pride and right sense of national culture. The public library can act as an important force for local community development and empowerment and can play a significant role in social and cultural development of a community. In this context, the public library can be viewed as a social and cultural institution that offers an ever changing range of cultural resources for the community. This can be particularly important in rural and disadvantaged communities. This role for public libraries often remains unrecognized and the major challenge is how to capitalize on the public libraries potential contribution to development and empowerment of

community. Moreover, public libraries are facing fundamental changes internationally caused by fundamental changes of society, especially the information technology development and digitizing, the growth of multiculturalism and fragmenting of local communities and, not least, the continuous economic pressure on the public sector. Impact of public libraries on socio-cultural development particularly is discussed in this paper to aware the importance of public library services for the community. The study is based on the literature survey. 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. 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.

NEED FOR RURAL LIBRARIES

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. 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.

PRESENT SCENARIO OF RURAL LIBRARIES IN KARNATAKA

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 providing provision for collection of library cess through property tax. The present situation of the public libraries in Karnataka are 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. 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.

RURAL LIBRARIES AS 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 focus 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.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To know the career opportunities available to the Rural Youth.
2. To understand the role of panchayats in allocation of funds.

3. To identify the role of NGOs for the Rural Libraries.
4. To pinpoint the problems faced by the Librarians in the rural areas.
5. To comprehend the Financial Problems faced by the Rural Libraries.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

The research paper is based on both Primary and Secondary Data. The research on Rural Libraries conducted in the month of October 2023 in Uttar Kannada District. The researcher visited Kumta, Baada, Bhatkal and Manki Rural Libraries. Researcher used Interview Schedule Method and collected primary information from the Librarians. Secondary data method is used after visiting the Public Libraries of Honnavar, data also collected from the Internet, books and journals.

SIGNIFICANCE OF RURAL PUBLIC LIBRARIES

1. Rural Public Libraries Provide information and activities which will help community members acquire the skill, knowledge and confidence to participate more fully in community affairs,
2. Rural Public Libraries Provide information and activities about health and agricultural techniques, business etc, to assist community to improve their economic situation,
3. Rural Public Libraries 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 programs,
4. Rural Public Libraries Provide support to extension programmers and help extension workers to co-ordinate their work in the community,
5. Rural Public Libraries 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.

SERVICES OF RURAL LIBRARIES AS COMMUNITY INFORMATION CENTRE

Rural Libraries provide basic needs, such as food,

shelter, clothing, health, drinking water etc. At the same time, it fulfills economic, educational, social and cultural information needs of the local people; Subsequently it tries to eradicate illiteracy by providing audiovisual and illustrated reading materials; Information about funding agencies for housing, commerce, agriculture and industries,

- a. To provide information to the gram panchayat members about schemes available from each and every sectors,
- b. To provide information on career opportunities for the students
- c. Guiding, counseling, directing on all matters relating to public such as hygiene, family planning, legal matters, etc;
- d. Local professionals, such as doctors, lawyers, engineers, educationists, artisans, etc.
- e. Census information, which includes population, literacy percentage, male, female ratio etc,
- f. 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.

CHALLENGES FOR RURAL LIBRARIES

Challenge Motivation to Participate:

Properly motivated people can take interest in the development of libraries. Library is a social institution; if the society as such does not take interest, government machinery cannot develop rural libraries.

Problem of Lack of Knowledge:

In the rural areas, people do not know the benefit of libraries and information centers, hence due to lack of knowledge, the progress of libraries suffers as well. In the rural areas the literacy rate is very low and, due to lack of knowledge, people cannot take decisions and act accordingly.

Low Trust:

Trust is a very relative subjective term. During the research it has been found that people have low trust on various schemes, and due to low trust, libraries are suffering accordingly.

Problem of High Costs of Knowledge:

Today, due to ICT, information and knowledge

have become universal. But the cost of equipment's is high and rural libraries are not able to meet the expanses in this regard.

Challenge Geographical Factors:

The geographical aspect is an important factor, coming in the way of free flow of information. Particularly in rural areas, distance has become a big problem. Most of the people are not aware of the facilities and schemes of the government for their development because all government offices or Zila panchayats or Town Municipalities are established at district or tehsil level.

Lack of Library and Information Centers:

A number of villages lack rural libraries. Adult literates and neo-literates do not have a proper source of information due to the lack of good public/rural library.

Lack of Self-interest:

There is a lack of self-interest. Rural people do not take interest in rural library establishment and development, because they are unaware of the benefits of library. It is observed in rural areas that people are not interested in academic activities.

Problem of Physical Distance:

Rural libraries are established at main places and rural people reside at distant places. Hence they cannot take the benefit of the library. The solution of this hurdle is to take initiation in the direction of e-governance.

Problem of Language:

For smooth flow of information, a common language should be used between the source and the user. The information should be given in simple language. If given in local language, it is best for them to understand.

Financial Limitations:

In rural community the majority of people is poor and backward. They have lack of resources to purchase newspapers, magazines, books, television etc. So they are not able to cope with latest developments in their own field.

Suggestions to improve the conditions of the Rural

Areas

Some suggestions are made on the basis of the empirical background of present study.

1. Non-government organizations, other public and private sectors should also get involved for the betterment of rural libraries.
2. Donation tendency of individuals should be encouraged at rural library for strengthening infrastructure and resources.
3. Local cooperation of rural public should be availed and utilized in the development of rural library.
4. Rural library should act as cultural and social centers for rural community and guide them for overall personality development.
5. Demand of rural information should be assessed by different techniques and be fulfilled for the welfare of rural society.
6. Rural library should acquire and collect the information about local and other agriculture resources, climatic resources, geographical resources etc for their proper exploitation, for the progress of rural society.
7. Development of rural libraries is lacking due to poor infrastructure. So the government should take immediate initiatives to improve the poor infrastructure of rural areas.
8. Basic physical facilities such as: drinking water, electricity, all weather roads, and communication facilities should be available in rural areas, since it will help in creating an environment for the free flow of information in rural areas.

CONCLUSION

According to the present investigation it is felt that the status, resources activities, services rendering towards users, etc. are much limited due to fulfillment and dependent on its parent institutions motives. The basic objectives, activities and services towards its users are yet to be achieved. In this direction, planners, policy makers, administrators and concerned professionals should come forward so that it could strengthen for a proper functioning in the right direction for the rural society. In Panchayati Raj governance should also be able to cover and do the needful action within

possible approach and local resources. In such way at local level, rural library activities and services should be organized and managed for rural society. For the socio-economic development of every citizen of the rural areas, it is necessary to provide required information at a right time. 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. This further establishes greater need for inter library co-operation and resources sharing through networking.

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