

Tagore's thought of Library Education and its Services: An Overview

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***Abstract** - Knowledge resource considered as the construction behind human mankind and Library is the only source to collect, preserve and present those according to the demand of user. The great poet and philosopher Rabindranath Tagore known as pioneer for rural reconstruction by way of village education among rural people at Santiniketan. In his opinion a society may not progress without education especially in village areas and library considered as the prime source of information. Therefore, the importance of library and functions of a librarian as per thoughts of Gurudev was the basis behind the preparation of the study. Initiation and progress of mobile library, planning towards library at Santiniketan and Viswabharati become key areas of this study. Based on secondary information the study is an attempt to get insight about the Tagore's idea on library education and its services in Santiniketan.*

Key words: Knowledge resource, rural reconstruction, library services, library education

Introduction

Information is the source of human knowledge and library recognised as the source of information since the early years of civilization and library act as backbone towards development of education and intellect. Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1941) popularly known as poet was also a dramatist, writer of short stories, novelist, philosopher, composer and singer, innovator in education and rural development, actor, director, painter, cultural ambassador of India to the world. Thoughts of Rabindranath Tagore regarding development of library remain equally applicable in recent time also. According to him best use of library depends on explicit display of books for the readers and on the other hand access of transport system should be comfortable so that users of library reach there with no time lag. According to Rabindranath "The extent of use to which the reading material of a library is put, should determine its importance rather than the staggering number of volumes." (Ramaiah & Taher, 1995, p. 359). In 1908 Rabindranath was published an article on library and the associated functions of it that define the modern concept of library and its uses. His specific opinion on this issue utmost relevant now these days also. According to him functions of a good library mostly depends on the performance of a librarian. He is not only responsible for preservation, classification and protection of library resources but also has sound knowledge of those resources and facilitates services to the users. Equilibrium between these two qualities determines the skill of a librarian. The objective behind establishment of Bramho Vidyalaya at Santiniketan was an example to observe the importance of library in overall education system. Rathindranath Tagore, the elder son of Rabindranath Tagore stated that "on 23rd December, 1901 as per the recommendations of the then king, Brambhacharya Ashram was established and a small library was created in a small room inside the Ashram building".

Rabindranath Tagore was donated his personal collections and in this way journey of Santiniketan Library began.

Review of Literature

(Sinha) investigated the idea of rural reconstruction programme initiated by Rabindranath Tagore with the help of knowledge resources provided by library movement in India. Both introduction and wide popularity of Chalantinka (mobile library) to promote literacy among village women and other household members were an important part of the study. Selected parameters were adopted to express several issues of Department of Lifelong and Extension, Sriniketan, Viswabharati. (Dutta) made an attempt to focus on thoughts of Tagore towards library and the work of a librarian. The objective of the study based on the relation between old age libraries and modern libraries as per point of view of Rabindranath Tagore. Various aspects of library functions such as collection of resources, staff and their services, library premises readers were the major areas of the study. (Gurey) in his study pointed out the concern and activity for village upliftment under rural reconstruction programme. Social development using several using different model of rural reconstruction was the key areas of the study. Youth organizations and rural library services including mobile library catalyze community development and this idea elaborately discussed in the study. (Saha & Sinha 2012) highlighted on the thoughts of Rabindranath Tagore towards rural libraries in support with rural reconstruction. Growth and services, features, functions and varieties of book collection of mobile library as 'Chalantika' were clearly discussed. The idea of self-reliant and self-respectfulness of the rural villagers under rural reconstruction programme motivated the study. Present reality of rural libraries in the context of educational upliftment was clearly indicated. (Mondal) examined the various kinds of social hazards that disturb the social sustainability especially in Tagore's education system at Santiniketan. Philosophy behind Tagore's education system and the process of doing so, significance of Gurudev's educational system as prevention tool to overcome social hazards were analysed with the help of primary data, photographs of Visva-Bharati.

Objective of the study

The study was conducted with some objectives such as,

- To get insight about the Tagore's idea on library education and its services.
- To have an idea on Gurudev's initiatives towards women education in rural areas of Santiniketan.

Research Methodology

Rabindranath Tagore's view on library and Viswabharati was so realistic in today's modern world also and the users become the major part of social development. In this context ideas of Gurudev and implementation of those ideas are the motivation to prepare this study. This study based on secondary data. Required information collected from books, journals, websites etc.

Discussion

The concept of Rabindranath regarding library and its functions was collected from his book "Library and functions of library". Except the uses of computers in a modern library, every

other angle of library activities were clearly articulated in detail. As a summery few key area was extracted as follows;

- Librarian act as a storekeeper of books.
- The requirement of information resources for human being a small library at Bramcharya Ashram began the establishment of Viswabharati later on.
- Library was dressed up with precious books donated by many renowned academician and other personalities from their own collections.

Gurudev wrote two articles in Bengali named as ‘Gronthagar’ and ‘Gronthagariker Mukhyo Kartavya’ in 1908 and 1928 respectively. The overall concept of library and duties of a librarian on those days were elaborately analysed. All these concept is equally appropriate and applicable now these days. In his opinion library is a warehouse of books and it should be organized in a proper manner. Good or bad library depends on the Work efficiency of a librarian. In his opinion "The worth of a librarian should be gauged by his power of attracting and looking after such circles by acting as the intermediary of an intimacy of relationship between reader and the library." (Ramaiah & Taher, 1995,p. 359). The role of librarian not only depends on the collection and conservation of information but also the knowledge of that information. Librarian should invite users to read the books and inform about new books, subjects etc. Selection of books must be taken by the librarians as per recent requisitions of user. According to him librarian must possess a sound knowledge of recent publications in different fields of subjects. Contributions of library in overall education system generated the idea to start the establishment of library at Bramha Vidyalaya at Santiniketan.

Library at Santiniketan

Establishment of Brambhacharya Ashram expedited the progress of library at Santiniketan. As per annual reports of 1993, published in ,’Tatwabodhini Patrika’, library equipped with books of various subjects but the number of books remain inadequate on the context with user demand. New books were purchased every year. There were almost four thousand seven hundred eighty eight books were listed at that time. Rabindranath Tagore himself a book lover of all time and he donated several precious books from his personal collection to meet the reading demands of teachers and other readers of the society. Many quotations he wrote on different places of books and in recent time those most valuable quotations are kept at Rabindrabhavan of Uttarayan at Santiniketan.

Planning of Rabindranath and Viswabharati

Several books were received as donation from India and other foreign countries after the establishment of library at Viswabharati. Acceleration of donation had been increased on a regular basis because of popularity of both Rabindranath and Viswabharati. Following were the planning of Rabindranath towards Viswabharati Library.

Prabhat Kumar Mukhopadhyay was the first full time librarian recruited at Viswabharati. Rabindranath called him ‘Boibahik’ that mean carrier of books. All the books of the library of Santiniketan classified as per Dewey Decimal Classification of Dr. Dewei. He suggested preparation of catalogue card should be done as per title, title, subject, editor series etc. Several subject books such as Sanskrit, Pali and Prakrit were kept, books on Islamic literature, Chinese and Tibetan literature, different languages and linguistic books were precious resources of the library. A large number of magazine, periodicals and oriental journals were shared their places with sixteen thousand books.

The Central library of Viswabharati has many departments like Child library, Manuscript department, Periodicals department, Reference department etc. so that readers can find out their required department easily. A special feature of this library is a school inside its premises. Books on much foreign language like English, French, German, Italian, Persian and Arabic were collected in this library. Especially books on Sanskrit among Indian languages were kept here including several ancient valuable manuscripts.

Idea of mobile library and women education

“The villages in the country must be built up to be completely self-sufficient and able to supply all their own needs. The villagers must be educated, assisted and encouraged to establish primary schools, centers of training in arts and crafts, centers for religious activities, co-operative stores and banks. Our salvation lies in thus making our villages self-reliant and knit together by the ties of co-operative life” (Tagore, 1963, p. 19). Rabindranath was felt traditional library failed to attend rural villagers to promote education. In this context he invented the concept of mobile library popularly known as Chalantika Library with an aim to develop village education. It started its journey from 1925. The key objective of such library was to educate village women and help them to lend books at their home and read including other family members. He organized village development centers with a committee of volunteers for child development projects, Bratibalak teams of youths for physical fitness, development in cottage industries, dairy, animal husbandry, agriculture and campaign against illiteracy, superstition, awareness programmes for women education, health and co-operative systems. Secretary of the committee of each village development centre was empowered to perform the role of librarian of Chalantika for the villagers (Saha & Sinha, 2012). Chalantika library served almost fifteen villages around Santiniketan. With the collection of 200 (two hundred) books Chalantika library made its first move in 1925. The numbers of books increased up to 1504 (one thousand five hundred four) in the year 1940. The villagers were issued books according to their choice, interest and demand for a certain period (Gurey, 2017). Chalantika Library has become a burning example of mobile library services in India for building up a new society with quality of life for rural people...the librarian or bearer had to carry the books from the main collection of Chalantika at Sriniketan on foot or by bi-cycle or bullock cart to their respective villages (Dutta).

Conclusion

The role of library is an integrated part of rural education system and community development as a whole. On his rural education philosophy based on freedom of mind, freedom of heart and freedom of will, the introduction of mobile library made a strong impact on rural reconstruction programme at Santiniketan. Service of Viswa-Bharati gradually increased as per suggestions of Rabindranath. Introduction of digital information support to promote the library services all these libraries equipped in addition with recommendation regarding functions of library and librarian by Rabindranath. This is necessary to fulfill the objectives of education as “the highest education is that which does not give us information but makes our life in harmony with all existence” (Tagore, 1972). It is observed from the study that main thrusts of both the great minds are to maximize use library collection. Rabindranath himself believed that a society cannot develop properly until and unless it educated properly and library act as store of those information and also librarian is a person who bridge the information gap between readers and available resources.

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