

**A HISTORICAL STUDY OF CALCUTTA PUBLIC LIBRARY:
1835-1903**

*Dissertation Submitted to Jawaharlal Nehru University
in partial fulfilment of the requirements
for the award of the degree of*

MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY

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INDIA
2012**



25 JULY, 2012

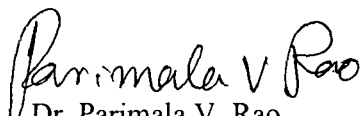
DECLARATION

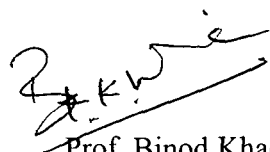
I, **Marim Joice**, declare that the dissertation titled “**A Historical Study of Calcutta Public Library: 1835-1903**” submitted by me in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the Degree of **MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY** of Jawaharlal Nehru University, is my bonafide work which is original to the best of my knowledge. I further declare that this work has not been submitted before, in part or in full, by me or anybody else for any degree of this University or any other University.


MARIM JOICE

CERTIFICATE

We recommend that this dissertation may be placed before the examiners for evaluation and award of M. Phil Degree of Jawaharlal Nehru University.


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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

At the outset, I would like to express my deepest gratitude to my supervisor Dr. Parimala V. Rao for her kind guidance, valuable advice and incredible help throughout my study. She was a constant source of inspiration to me who persistently boost my confidence when I was struggling with naive ideas and raw methodology. I am extremely thankful and grateful to her for her guidance and proper advice.

I am highly indebted to Prof. Deepak Kumar for his teaching and guidance during my course work. With all due respect, I am also truly thankful to Dr. S.S. Rao for his words of encouragement that implant a sense of self confidence in me.

My deepest respect and sincere regards to all the faculty members of Zakir Husain Centre for Educational Studies, JNU, for their good wishes and kind support during my course work.

I have nothing to give in return but only to remember with thanks the officials and staffs of National Library; Calcutta, Zakir Husain Centre for Educational Studies' Library; JNU, Hridayal Municipal Library; Delhi, Central Secretariat Library; New Delhi, NISCAIR; New Delhi, National Archives; New Delhi, West Bengal State Archives; Kolkata, JNU main Library, IGNOU Library; New Delhi, Nehru Memorial Library; New Delhi and NCERT Library; New Delhi for their immense help and cooperation.

I extend my heartfelt thanks to Mr Njianguang Gangmei for his hospitality. He was kind enough to allow me to stay at his residence without which it would have been really hard for me to find a place to stay in Kolkata during my field work. I am highly indebted to him for all the special favour that he has done for me. I am also thankful to Mr. Adiupou Gangmei for his loving company in locating Libraries in Kolkata as it was my first time to be there. I would be failing on my duty if I forget to thank Mr Chamgai Gangmei for helping me in typing during my field work in Kolkata.

I am grateful to my friends for their support and encouragement with which I could overcome many hurdles during my course work and other related field work. Here, I would like to specially thank my friend Miss Rajani Sharma for her valuable help in editing my dissertation despite her simultaneous engagement with her M. Phil dissertation work. I acknowledge her selfless support and express my sincere and heartfelt thanks to her.

I also want to extend my heartfelt thanks to Pou Mathiupuang Gonmei, Francis, Ms. Katonlu and Nana for always being there whenever I needed them. I am indeed grateful for their love and compassion which enable me to sustain myself and encourage me to complete my study.

My gratitude to my husband Gonmei Kaphunjok Henry, whose love and emotional support has been my pillar of strength during my study. Words are not enough to express my gratitude to him.

Last but not the least I want to thank all of my well- wishers for their priceless advice and valuable suggestions on this work.

MARIM JOICE

CHAPTER-1

INTRODUCTION

CHAPTER-1

Introduction

Libraries are the store house of knowledge. They contain human thoughts and ideas, facts and fables and all the wisdom of the ages, which are preserved in various forms to pass on to our succeeding generations. And this accumulated knowledge is made available through books, films, recordings and other Medias.¹ Today, library has become an integral part of the education system and a dynamic force for the development of the society. A library plays a significant role in the social and cultural context of a nation and it is an instrument in dissemination of information essential for the advancement of knowledge in particular and to the growth of society at large.² Libraries are especially important now when the whole idea of education is stressing more and more on independent learning and acting therefore, knowledge should be easily accessible to anyone who cares for it for improving their lives and national growth. All people must be able to find and use information. It is the key to raw materials but it become a meaningless resource, if there are no access points to it. Hence free access to knowledge should be for everyone.³ In fact, the freedoms and the growth of the nation are largely dependent on citizens' free access to the recorded history and information stored on the shelves of the public libraries. In that respect, the public library is a reflection of its community, indicating its commitment to education, culture and history preservation. To quote, W.W. Hunter in the Report of the Indian Education Commission (1882), 'No plan seems better fitted to encourage students to rely upon their own existence.'⁴ This quotation essentially points out the reliance on library by students.

¹ Hawthorne Daniel, *Public Libraries for Everyone: The growth and development of library services in the United States, especially since the passage of the library services Act*, Garden city New York, Doubleday and Company INC. 1971, p. 1.

² R.K. Bhatt, *History and Development of Libraries in India*, Mittal Publications, New Delhi, 1995, p. 2.

³ Mirja Ryyanen, *The role of libraries in modern society*, 7th Catalan Congress on Documentation, 5 November 1999, p. 1.

⁴ *Report of the Indian Education commission 1882*, Superintendent Government printing press, Calcutta, 1882, p. 116.

In the light of the important role it plays, it has become very important to trace the origin and development of public libraries in India in general and Calcutta Public Library in particular. Calcutta Public Library as an institution was far ahead of its times, it was a pioneer in terms of a modern system for libraries. Calcutta Public Library was a subscription library; therefore, lifeline was a voluntary subscription. The library was opened to all regardless of caste, colour, nationality or distinction for reference and consultation of some of the best books that were available at that point of time. The Calcutta Public Library paved way for a new system of libraries that was available to the general public and not just to the elite section of the society. This study therefore, gives due importance to the role of the library and looks at its development from 1835 to 1903 in terms of the administration, management, finance, location, readers and subscribers.

Objectives of the Study

The study is an attempt to give a detailed historical account of the establishment and development of the Calcutta Public Library and how this library introduced a new culture and thereby inculcates the habit of reading to the inhabitants of Calcutta. This study is an analysis of the function and growth of the Calcutta Public Library since its inception and to the amalgamation with the Imperial library in 1902. The main objectives of this study are:

1. To explore the origin and development of Calcutta Public Library from 1835-1903.
2. To study the function of Calcutta Public Library from 1835-1903.
3. To identify the factors facilitating or impeding the development of Calcutta Public Library.
4. To understand and determine the nature of development in terms of (a) books and (b) facilities.

Research Questions

1. How did the Calcutta Public Library come into being?
2. Who funded the library? Was it public contribution or Government?
3. What class of people constituted the users of the library?

4. Was the library open to all sections of the society?
5. Could this library accomplish its objective?

Rationale of the Study

One of the primary and pertinent reasons why a study on Calcutta Public Library may be taken up is because of its significant character of being the first public library established in India and later which goes on to become the National library of India after India's independence in 1948.

The rationale behind taking this time period 1835-1903 as the period of this proposed study is because this period is considered as the golden period in the history of public libraries in India since the establishment of Calcutta Public Library heralded the establishment of other similar libraries all over the country and the library which was hitherto enjoyed by the privileged few of the society was opened to all for the first time in 1903 by Lord Curzon.

The study attempts to trace the genesis and development of Calcutta Public Library and its contribution to the society of Calcutta. An attempt will also be made to evaluate how far this library fulfils the objectives and its effectiveness in the development of community life. Considering the historical significance of this library, the present study has been selected since no historical and comprehensive studies on the development and condition of Calcutta Public Library has been done so far.

Although some literature on the history of this library exists, it has many imbalances and gaps. The scholars are very dispersed in their interests and aspect of looking at the historical accounts of the Calcutta Public Library.

Limitation of the Study

The study limits itself to the origin and growth of library located in Calcutta called the Calcutta public library. It is limited to a particular time period that is from 1835 to 1903, the study focuses particularly on this time period in order to understand the growth and origin of the

library. The study does not cover the later period of the Calcutta Public Library. Also the study focuses primarily only on Calcutta Public Library and does not look at other public libraries. The access to primary resources was difficult due to the condition of the handwritten documents and other data related to the time period. Due to the humid weather as well as lack of proper preservation many documents were unreadable and many a time these documents were made inaccessible by the library administration.

Methodology

This study followed the historical method of analysing the documents. The data were collected from the National Library, Kolkata and West Bengal Archives, National Archives, New Delhi, Nehru Memorial Library and Central Secretariat library, New Delhi. Apart from these, some libraries in Delhi like Hardayal Municipal Library, Chandni Chowk, NCERT Library, Aurobindo Marg, IGNOU Library, Maidan Garhi, New Delhi, Delhi University Library, NIEPA Library, Aurobindo Marg, New Delhi and NISCAIR Library, Sangam Vihar, New Delhi have valuable and related data. As with any other studies, the used of secondary sources, like published books, articles and newspaper reports were incorporated in this study also.

Framework of the Study

This study has been divided into five chapters. The first chapter is an introductory chapter which primarily deals with objectives of the study, the research questions raised in the study, the rationale behind undertaking the study, the methodology to be followed. The origin of the libraries in India has been explained in detailed as a background to the establishment of the Calcutta Public Library.

The second chapter primarily deals with the establishment of the public library in Calcutta. It looks at establishment of public library in India as a whole for a background to the establishment of Calcutta Public Library. An attempt is made to analyse the founding members, rules of the library and its catalogue. Each of these has been dealt separately to give a clear

picture. The chapter deals with the trials and tribulations faced in the process of the establishment of the library. It looks at the transitions that the library went through in terms of rules, catalogues, location. The chapter uses a wide variety of data especially from reports, proceedings, journals and newspaper records.

The third chapter elaborately traces the development of the Calcutta Public Library in terms of its organization, resources such as collections, finance, readers, members and administration. The first phase of growth was basically self-financed; there was a rise in membership. The chapter basically deals with the above mentioned concerns. The library in this phase was expanding its collection, membership, finance and administration. There was also a concern about inclusion of all classes in terms of membership; the administration was handled by the council of curators. This chapter primarily focuses on the beginning phase of the Calcutta Public Library, challenges and the problems faced by it.

The fourth chapter systematically explains the reasons for the downfall of the Calcutta Public Library and its association initially with the Calcutta Corporation and finally its amalgamation with the Imperial library. Although the Calcutta Public Library had been self sufficient in terms of finance in the first decade of its establishment, the latter period is marked by a dire need for funds. Thereby begins the age when Calcutta Public Library was amalgamated with the Imperial library to form Imperial public library in order to save the dying institution. This was the brainchild of the new Governor-general Curzon. Basically this chapter deals with the financial aspect of Calcutta Public Library administration, the rescue made by the Government and its amalgamation with the Imperial public. This ushered in the golden age of the library and there was an increase in its subscribers and readers, these were mainly students from the neighbouring colleges.

The fifth and concluding chapter summarizes chapters-2, 3 and 4, and try to bring the arguments systematically.

Origin and Development of Libraries in India: An Overview

The history of libraries is closely related to that of learning, libraries came into existence for the proper organization and dissemination of recorded knowledge.⁵ Thus history of libraries is an important aspect in the history of educational development of the country. According to K.R. Rao, Buddhists were the first to established libraries in India. Buddhist Universities were known to have large libraries at Nalanda, Vikramasila. Unfortunately, Hindu tradition did not encourage the art of writing and therefore, instructions were transmitted orally. Texts were not written down due to the jealousy of the Brahmins, who feared to lose their monopoly of knowledge not only prohibited the non-Brahmins from reading the scriptures but also proclaimed that the sanctity of the scripture would be undermined if they were committed to writings.⁶ It was the dissenting heterodox tradition like Jainism and Buddhism which maintained written tradition. All the ancient universities like Nalanda, Odantapuri, and Vikramshilla were Buddhist universities. With the fall of Buddhism in the 8th century A.D. the literary tradition declined and the oral tradition once again becomes prominent. Added to this difficulty was that the manuscript in India were written on palm leaves which could not be lent or borrowed easily. The modern concept of free public library is something new to the Indian society; the idea is imported from the western culture. Interestingly, the basic idea between the libraries of ancient India and libraries of modern India does not show any significant difference except in the collections of materials. In the ancient period owing to the absence of printing, only hand written books or manuscripts comprised the library.

The modern libraries emerged with the advent of the Europeans educations and cultures in India. The British East India Company and the missionaries took the initiatives to start schools and colleges with libraries attached for the teachers as well as students, these small collections of books were the only sources for them. Since books were not available easily outside libraries especially the English books had to be imported from England. The importance of libraries in the schools and colleges had been highlighted in the *Hunter commission Report of 1882* as 'We cannot doubt that the more extensive the libraries to which the teachers has access the more the life-like minded and effective will be his teaching, nor should the benefits of a library to the

⁵G.L. Trehan, *Modern Public Library Movement and Services in India*, Library Literature House, Chandigarh, 1982.

⁶ K.R. Rao, *Library Development in India*, the Library Quarterly, Vol. 31, No. 2, April 1961, p. 137.

pupil themselves be altogether overlooked.⁷ The report further states that 'school cannot be regarded as properly equipped without a library.'⁸ It had been observed that since the establishments of libraries in the schools and colleges, a perceptible taste for general reading had sprung up among the students, therefore, the commission recommended that a small grant be made for the formation and maintenance of libraries in all the high schools.⁹ Therefore, following this recommendation there was an increased in the number of establishment of libraries in the educational institutions. But it was not so in the case of earlier universities in the three presidencies of Bombay, Calcutta and Madras which was established in 1857. Libraries of these universities came long after their establishment. Bombay University was the first to have library in 1872 followed by Calcutta University in 1879 and in Madras University has its library after a gap of 50 years in 1907.

One of the major obstacles to the development of university libraries was that the universities were established merely for holding examinations and awarding degrees as there was neither a provision for teaching nor for research under their direct control. The teaching work was done by the colleges which did not form an integral part of the universities. The poor state of libraries of the universities was observed by the Indian universities commission (1902), under the chairmanship of Sir Thomas Raleigh, which sought to recommend that 'good reference libraries should be provided in order that students may have an opportunity of forming the habit of independent and intelligent reading.'¹⁰ Later, universities were equipped with libraries in accordance with the Indian University Act of 1904. But, it was found that majority of the libraries does not have open access to their collections and books could not be borrowed for home use. Thus, the use of library service was limited. The public library in the true sense of the term came into existence only in 1903 with the arrival of Curzon as the Governor-General of India; the library which was hitherto enjoyed by a few classes in the society was opened for the first time to the public. This legacy of Curzon is still alive and expanding in every village, district and towns of India even today.

⁷ *Report of the Indian Education commission 1882*, Superintendent Government Printing, Calcutta, 1882, p. 230.

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ *Report of the Indian Education commission 1882*, p. 116.

¹⁰ R.K. Bhatt, *History and Development of Libraries in India*, Mittal Publications New Delhi, 1995, p. 58.

Some of the Historically Significant Libraries in India

Library of the Asiatic Society of Bengal

In 1784, Sir William Jones, a distinguished scholar and linguist founded the Asiatic Society in Calcutta, but its library was opened only in 1808 after the society moved into its own building. The objective of the Society was to 'enquire into the history and antiquities, arts sciences and literature of Asia', therefore, collections of the library comprised mainly of books, old and rare oriental manuscript, this makes the library unique and only one of its kinds in this country during that period. The first accession of any importance of the oriental books in this library was a gift from Seringapatam Prize committee, which includes among its collection many old and rare illuminated manuscript of Quran, Gulistan and Padshanama collected from the palace of Tipu Sultan. A large number of Sanskrit, Arabic, and Persian works mostly in manuscript which were transferred from Fort William college library were kept under the custody of the society. Besides, this library has in their collection several palm leaf manuscript of Burmese, Siamese, Javanese and Ceylonese. Chinese and Tibetan Xylographs are also in the possession of the society. These rich collections of Oriental works make this library a perfect place for scholars who are interested in the oriental studies.¹¹

Khuda Baksh Oriental Library

Khuda Baksh Oriental Public library is a world famous and the biggest library in India in Islamic learning. It was established in Patna in 1876 but opened for the public only in 1891. This library is one of the significant and premier libraries of the 19th century. The library has an excellent collection of Arabic and Persian manuscripts. In 1969, it was declared under the act as an Institution of National Importance.¹²

¹¹ Bimal Kumar Dutta, *Libraries and Librarianship of Ancient and Medieval India*, Atma Ram and Sons, 1970, p. 99.

¹² Jashu Patel and Krishna Kumar, *Libraries and Librarian in India*, Greenwood press, West Port, Connecticut, London, 2003, p. 80.

Connemara Public library

In realizing the importance of library, Lord Connemara, the then Governor-General of Madras decided to established a Public library. Therefore in 1890, the Governor laid the foundation for the library. The library was formally opened on 5 December 1896. The library so founded was named after him in recognition of his efforts.¹³ As per the Madras public library Act the library was declared as State Central Library in 1950 and become one of the four depository libraries in 1955.

Adyar Library

Adyar library was founded in 1886 with the aim of making a temple of all faith as its founder, Col. H.S. Olcott, intended to be, with collection of the texts and pictures of great religious teachers worshipped throughout the world. The library was opened on 28 December 1888 with a gift of his personal collection of about 200 books. The collections in archaeology, art, history, philosophy and religion are considered as veritable treasures in this library.¹⁴

Sarasvati Mahal Library, Thanjavur

It is one among the few medieval libraries existing in the world. This library was built by a successive dynasty of Nayaks and the Marathas of Thanjavur. It contains very rare and valuable collections of manuscripts, books, maps and paintings on all aspects of Arts, culture, and literature. Maharaja Serforji assisted the library with funds. The Encyclopaedias Britannica in its survey of the libraries of the world mentions this library as 'the most remarkable library in India'. In 1918 this library was made as a public library. The library receives fund from the Government of Tamil Nadu for its maintenance and is funded by the Government of India for

¹³Saheb Singh, *Library and Library movement for National Development*, Concept Publishing House, New Delhi, 2003, p. 50.

¹⁴ Jogesh Mishra, *History of Libraries and Librarianship in Modern India since 1850*, Atma Ram and Sons, Delhi, 1979, p. 38.

developmental activities. The library has the rich collections of manuscripts in Sanskrit, Tamil, Marathi, and Telugu.¹⁵

Calcutta Public Library

The study looks specifically at the Calcutta Public Library, from 1835-1903. The establishment of Calcutta Public Library was a landmark in the history of public libraries in India. It was in this year 1835 that the seed of first public library was sown in Calcutta, which was then an intellectual hub of the British Empire; it was evident from the fact that being the capital city of British India, Calcutta could not be left destitute of the public library for long. Thus, Calcutta Public Library was born out of the initiatives taken by J.H. Stocqueler, editor of the local daily 'Englishman'. He drafted a scheme for the establishment of a public library at Calcutta in 1835; both Indians and Europeans supported the scheme. Stocqueler writes in his memoir as, 'Receiving a good deal of countenance from the upper classes, my project was now submitted to a public meeting (Aug.1853)...and was so well received that subscription rapidly poured in and books were presented.'¹⁶ Accordingly a resolution was passed at the meeting which ran as 'that it is expedient and necessary to establish in Calcutta a public library of reference and circulations that shall be opened to all ranks and classes without distinction and sufficiently extensive to supply to the wants of the entire community in every department of literature.'¹⁷

In order to accomplish the objectives of the resolution, a 24 members committee was formed, out of which only two members were Indian, Baboo Rashik Krishna Malik, the editor of 'Jnamashan' and Baboo Rasamay Dutta, Secretary of Hindu College, rest of the members were Europeans.¹⁸ This library was initially housed at Esplanade; the apartment of Dr. Strong's in Calcutta. It was later shifted to Metcalf Hall in 1842, which was built in honour of Governor-

¹⁵Sahib Singh, *Library and Library movement for National Development*, Concept Publishing House, New Delhi, 2003, p. 51.

¹⁶ Stocqueler: the Memoirs of a Journalist, 1873, p. 707, as quoted in B.S. Kesavan, *India's National Library*, National Library Calcutta, 1997, p.1.

¹⁷ letter from W.P. Grant to G.A. Bushby, Secretary to the Government of Bengal, dated 23 September 1835, General proceedings, No. 35, p. 417

¹⁸ Ibid., p.1

General Metcalf. Thus, the library was opened to the public on 21st march 1836, with W. H. Stacy as Librarian and Peary Chand Mitra, the father of Bengali novel, as Sub- librarian.

Review of Related Literatures

The study seeks to explore the prevalent literature on the development of public libraries in India in general and Calcutta Public Library in particular. It analyses the relevant studies that have looked at development of Calcutta Public Library. For it is necessary for us to look into texts, reports and proceedings to draw a clear picture of or understanding of the issue. The work is based on the Historical studies of the Calcutta Public Library and its development has been critically analyzed and placed in this study.

The study uses the work of various scholars especially concentrated on the origin and development of libraries in India and Calcutta Public Library in particular. In this context, Mookerjee in his book *Development of Libraries and Library Science in India*, have explored the history of the evolution of libraries from ancient times to the present modern libraries. The background of the study is provided not only with India being an important centre of learning but against the backdrop of educational development in contemporary India. He discussed how the establishment of libraries in India was influenced by the introduction of western education in India. Further the work analyzes the role played by the so called public libraries in socio-political fields in the 19th and early part of 20th century.¹⁹

In his book *History of Libraries and Librarianship in Modern India since 1850*, Jogesh Mishra looks at the contribution made by the British in the establishment of libraries in India and their policies behind the establishment. He remarks that the credit for introducing libraries goes to the Christian missionaries and the British. According to him, it was the evangelical fervour of the missionaries which prompted learning, introduce printing presses and established libraries and the Public library in particular is a legacy of the British. They brought with them the ideas to

¹⁹Subodh Kumar Mookerjee, *Development of Libraries and Library Science in India*, the World Press Private Limited, Calcutta, 1969.

which they have been attached in England and which they could not get rid off after coming to India, as a result the concept of Public library was born in India.²⁰

R. K. Bhatt examined the rapid spread of libraries of all kinds and argued that the spread of western education gave a big boost to the development of literature and literacy movement which became the basis to lead in the revival of interests in the ancient culture of India. He argued that the translations of many of the Sanskrit work revived a rich cultural heritage which proved to be great factors to the establishment of public libraries in India. Bhatt indicates that along with the growth of literature of all kinds, the need for the special libraries also felt and consequently sporadic growth of special libraries for special client was seen during this period. However, with regard to the establishment of public libraries, Bhatt argued that 'they were actually subscription libraries, established mainly for the benefits of the British residents and the few enlightened Indians favoured by them.'²¹

A. K. Ohdedar argues like Bhatt that following the introduction of English education there was conspicuous development in the country which paved the way for the establishment of public libraries in different part of the country and the establishment of Calcutta Public Library was one of the first fruits of that renaissance brought about by the modern educations.²²

Jashu Patel and Krishna Kumar argued that though several public libraries have come up during this period the irony of the situations is that there was no effective public library which provides service to the masses. The services were primarily oriented to serving the thin layers of the society. They further argued that the libraries established during these period cannot be regarded as free public libraries in the true sense as they loaned books for home readings only to their members, who paid subscription fees and also deposited money as a security against loss of books. In fact, the membership was confined to the upper classes of the society only and they also points out that the modern concept of library being a service institution was also missing. The admission and services for the common people have to wait till the 20th century, the arrival of the scholarly viceroy Curzon.

²⁰ Jogesh Mishra, *History of Libraries and Librarianship in Modern India since 1850*, Atma Ram and Sons, Delhi, 1979.

²¹ R.K. Bhatt, *History and Development of Libraries in India*, Mittal Publications, New Delhi, 1995, p.6.

²² A.K. Ohdedar, *The Growth of Library in Modern India*, Calcutta World Press Private Ltd., Calcutta, 1966

Here the authors do not take into account of the fact that majority of the Indian populations was illiterate. Therefore the problem with the assumption is that the masses were literate and the libraries did not provide access to them. Also great majority of those who used the library were poor but educated section of the society. But the fact is Indian society was extremely limited and confined to a few upper caste men only so complaining that masses had no access does not hold good.²³

P.N. Kaula viewed the opening of the Imperial library as the most significant date in the history of public library movement in India. According to him, it signals the dedications of the Government in preserving the country's cultural and literary heritage, by providing its citizen an access to the storehouse of knowledge in the pursuit of knowledge and information.²⁴

B.S. Kesavan study the role played by Curzon in turning the Calcutta Public Library into a real cultural centre for everyone. The library which was hitherto enjoyed by the privileged few was opened for all for the first time in 1903. Curzon rechristened it as Imperial library and it was so designed that it became a working place for students and a repository of materials for future use.²⁵

According to Ashim Kumar Dutta the establishment of Calcutta Public Library gave a great thrust for the establishment of similar libraries throughout the country especially where English education spread first. It becomes an agent to promote the reading habit among the people. Dutta argued that one of the most potent impacts it has on the society was that it invoked the growth of nationalism. Most of the collections which were in the library were Bengali translation of books about the great freedom fighters in the world and literatures of nationalist leaders, these books were mostly proscribed by the Government. These books were instrumental in fostering the growth of nationalism in India.²⁶

²³ Jashu Patel and Krishna Kumar, *Libraries and Librarian in India*, Greenwood press, West Port, Connecticut, London, 2003.

²⁴ P.N. Kaula, *Library Movement in India*, (ed.), Kaula for the discussion at the first library conference, Delhi Library Association, Delhi, 1958.

²⁵ B.S. Kesavan, *India's National Library*, National Library, Belvedere, Calcutta, 1961.

²⁶ Ashim Kumar Dutta, *The public movement in India*, (ed.), K.M. George in *India Libraries: Trend and Perspectives*, Orient Longman Ltd., Calcutta, 1985.

However Dutta's view does not give complete picture. It was the radical European literatures like the Age of Reason by Thomas Paine, and such other works particularly the ones on French revolution which were found in libraries that contributed the growing national consciousness. Bipin Chandra Pal prominent nationalist was the librarian of this library.

The studies show that a historical study of libraries in India and the Calcutta Public Library in particular has neither been studied in details nor written upon. Therefore, a historiographical writing on the topic is limited. Though there has been some work in this direction but this time period has never been focused.

CHAPTER-2

THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE CALCUTTA PUBLIC LIBRARY

CHAPTER-2

The Establishment of the Calcutta Public Library

Library of the Asiatic Society of Bengal

The first library to be opened in India was the library of the Asiatic Society library in Calcutta. In 1784, Sir William Jones, a distinguished Sanskrit scholar and linguist founded the Asiatic Society at Calcutta, but its library was opened only in 1808 after the society moved into its own building. The objective of the Society was to enquire into the history and antiquities, arts sciences and literature of Asia, therefore, collections of the library comprised mainly of books, old and rare oriental manuscript, this made the library unique and only one of its kinds in this country during that period. The first accession of any importance of the oriental books in this library was a gift from Seringapatam Prize Committee, which include among its collection many old and rare illuminated manuscript of Quran, Gulistan and Padshanama taken from the palace of Tipu Sultan. A large number of Sanskrit, Arabic, and Persian works mostly in manuscript which were transferred from Fort William college library were kept under the custody of the society. Besides, this library has in their collection several palm leaf manuscript of Burmese, Siamese, Javanese and Ceylonese. Chinese and Tibetan Xylographs are also in the possession of the society. These rich collections of Oriental works make this library a perfect place for scholars who are interested in the oriental studies.²⁷

Fort William College Library

Indian witnessed a cultural revolution which took place as a result of an interaction between east and west. One of the most important centres of this interaction was Fort William College which was established by Governor-General Wellesley in 1800. Wellesley promulgated the regulation for establishing Fort William College in July 1800.

²⁷ Bimal Kumar Dutta, *Libraries and Librarianship of Ancient and Medieval India*, Atma Ram and Sons, Delhi, 1970, p. 99.

The regulations clearly spelled out the purpose and objectives of the College and contained a note on the provision of facilities and required premises. These regulations include the following two points:

I. 'A college is hereby founded at Fort William in Bengal for the better instruction of the junior civil servants of the Company, in such branch of literature, science and knowledge, as may be deemed necessary to qualify them.

II. A suitable building shall be erected for the college, containing apartments for the superior officers, for the students, for a library and for such other purposes as may be found necessary.'²⁸

Those who came as junior civil servants were boys mostly in the age group of 13-16 and were at a very impressionable age, therefore, soon arriving in India they very often 'embarked upon a way of living which in some cases led to dissipation and physical decline.'²⁹ Hence in order to train them in the knowledge and culture of the natives, a course consisted of six vernacular languages, besides Arabic, Persian and Sanskrit was taught. Some of the important English laws were also taught to the students.

Upon establishing the College at Fort William, Wellesley also contemplated to establish a well-stocked and valuable library for the institution. To form the nucleus of this library, he decided to acquire Tipu Sultan's collections, which had a valuable royal library in Seringapatam. At the defeat of Tipu Sultan, the British acquired this library's collections. Hence, the Governor-General decided that in the interest of the Company and for pursuance of knowledge and literature, the collection would serve the purpose better if it were located in the College,³⁰

Gradually this library expanded. In a speech in 1806, George Hilario Barlow, then Governor-General at Fort William, 'expressed his satisfaction that so extensive and valuable a collection enriched the College library. He said that preservation and augmentation of Eastern manuscripts afforded the only means to arrest the destruction of oriental learning.'³¹

²⁸ Abulfazal M. Fazle Kabir, *English Libraries in Eighteenth-Century Bengal*, the Journal of Library History (1974-1987), Vol. 14, No. 4 (Fall, 1979), University of Texas Press, pp. 449-450.

²⁹ David, Kopf, *British Orientalism and Bengal Renaissance: The Dynamic of Indian Modernization: 1773-1835*; University of California Press; Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1969, p. 47.

³⁰ Abulfazal M. Fazle Kabir, *English Libraries in Eighteenth-Century Bengal*, p. 450.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 451.

The college later on emerged not only as centre for all literary related activities but also a centre for printing and publications. Since there was a focus on printing and publication the college's collection of books, manuscripts grew by leaps and bounds. In order to house these collections for the use of the students as well as for college faculty, a need for a library was felt and consequently the 'first institutional library of oriental books and manuscripts in India was founded at the college of Fort William in 1801-1802.'³²

In 1805, William Hunter was made college librarian. Upon assuming his duty as a librarian, he immediately set out to reorganise the library. Therefore the role of library was as important as any other educational institution in imparting and disseminating European culture in India as well as restoring Indian vernacular languages. The college library was benefited not only by students and faculty but a large number of enterprising Indians in Calcutta were also borrowing books from the library³³ which were otherwise was not within the reach of the common people in those days.

The college of Fort William library continued to cater to the literary needs of the people of Calcutta and this task was made easier for the common people when the private holdings of the college were made available to the general public. On October 23, 1818, a historic landmark was created when the first public library opened its door.³⁴ Unfortunately the life of this library was cut short with the arrival of Governor-General Bentick as the Governor-General of India; this occurred due to a financial shortage, finance has always been a problem for most public libraries especially in their establishment phase.³⁵ Governor-general Bentick dissolved the college council on March 1, 1831, and with the dissolution of this council, the library also soon dispersed. Fortunately, the collections of the library found a new home in the Asiatic Society's library as 'most of the valuable college-library collections were gradually absorbed into the Asiatic Society's library.'³⁶ Later with the establishment of Calcutta Public Library in 1835, most of the European collection of the library of the college of Fort William was transferred to

³² David, Kopf, *British Orientalism and Bengal Renaissance: The Dynamic of Indian Modernization: 1773-1835*; University of California Press; Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1969, p. 118.

³³ *Ibid.*

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 189.

³⁵ This can also be seen in the establishment and later phases of the Calcutta Public Library.

³⁶ David, Kopf, *British Orientalism and Bengal Renaissance: The Dynamic of Indian Modernization: 1773-1835*, p. 233.

the new public library which later formed the nucleus of the that library. The college of fort William was officially and completely dissolved by the Governor-General Dalhousie on January 24, 1854.³⁷

Establishment of the Calcutta Public Library

With the dissolution of the library of the college of Fort William, the citizens of Calcutta were left without any kind of library where they could satisfy their intellectual thirst. It was at this juncture that Stocqueler, editor of the local daily '*Englishman*', who had experimented in Bombay in establishing a public library proposed that a public library be established in Calcutta as well. As a result in the general meeting of the inhabitants of Calcutta organized on 20 August 1835, to take into consideration the best mode of testifying the public satisfactions at the emancipation of press. It was proposed that 'a public building should be erected and appropriated for the reception of public library.'³⁸ In the same meeting, Stocqueler's appealed for support to the establishment of a public library in the metropolis, was carried by 'The Englishman' which read as,

a considerable inconveniences is sustained by almost all classes of the community of Calcutta, owing to the absence of anything like General Library, combining the advantage of Reference and Resort with those of Circulating Library, it is proposed to take measures of immediately establishing such institution, upon scale commensurate with the interest and wants of the reading population.³⁹

He continued to appeal that in order 'to render a public library permanent, and every way worthy of the name it adopts, is of the last importance that the spirit of exclusiveness be renounced and

³⁷ Ibid., p. 135.

³⁸ Ibid., p. 147.

³⁹ P.T. Nair, *Origin of National Library: Days of the Calcutta Public Library*; National Library of India; Belvedere, Kolkata, 2004, pp. 8-9.

repudiated by all who may desire its formation.⁴⁰ In order to decide the fate of the proposed public library; it was therefore necessary to know the population who supported the scheme. Therefore, 'it is requested that those who are favourable to the plan now submitted for consideration will sign their names below; and as soon as a sufficient number shall appear upon the list, a meeting will be called to arrange the details and all necessary preliminaries.'⁴¹ With sufficient number of people consented on the plan, a public meeting took place on Monday the 31st August, ten o'clock, to elect a committee and arrange all such matters as may be necessary to give existence and effect to the proposed public library.⁴² The resolution thus purposed was unanimously accepted, consequently, the library came into existence by the resolution taken at a general meeting on 31st August 1835, referring to the need of public library in Calcutta, J.P. Grant who chaired the meeting said:

I believed this is the only society of the same extent which has not a single library of some description: at the cape, at Bombay they are better provided, and Madras has its literary society; but here, in Calcutta we are without the means of readings except by purchasing books, this I think is a very great inconvenience...⁴³

Therefore, taking into consideration of the view expressed in the meeting, it was resolved, 'that it is expedient and necessary to establish in Calcutta a public library of reference and circulation that shall be opened to all ranks and classes without distinction and sufficiently extensive to supply the wants of the entire community in every department of literature.'⁴⁴ And it was also suggested in keeping in mind the kind of people who was to availed the library service that a library should be,

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² *The Englishman* reprinted in *Calcutta Monthly Journal, Asiatic News*, October 1835, p. 277.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Letter from W.P. Grant, curator of the Calcutta public library to G.A. Bushby, Secretary to the Government, dated 23 September 1835, *General proceedings*, No. 35, p. 417.

a library not of book for reference only, but of books for circulation also since in Calcutta where almost every man is engaged in business, to make the library one for reference only, would be circumscribing its utility; indeed it would rendered it almost useless, for under those circumstances the books are the most required for perusal at home.⁴⁵

Therefore, with the above resolution passed the public library was established by a general meeting held at the town hall on the 31 August 1835. 'Commodious premises forming the lower apartment of Dr. Strong House in Esplanade row have been selected for the present reception of all works that may be purchase or presented.'⁴⁶ In spite of assigning a room to the library in the Town Hall by the committee, Dr. Strong's apartment which he has kindly consented to appropriate for the use of the library induced the committee to recommend that his offer be accepted and thus selected as home of the Calcutta Public Library until a permanent site was not procured.⁴⁷ In the same meeting it was also discussed ways to procured books for the use of the library and suggested-

that in consequence of the Government having resolve to discontinue the keeping up of the Fort William college, there is a probability that the library belonging to that institution will be disposed off, and we ventured to ask of the Government to allow, under such rules as it may approve of the subscribers to the projected library to enjoy the use of such books of the college library which come within the description of those which we are disputed to enquire into the means of procuring.⁴⁸

Therefore, on the basis of the information available from the printed catalogue of the books of the Fort William college which contained a list of 1,912 works, out of these 190, may be deemed

⁴⁵ *The Englishman reprinted in Calcutta Monthly Journal, Asiatic News, October, 1835, p. 278.*

⁴⁶ *General proceedings, 25 November 1835, p. 313.*

⁴⁷ *The Bengal Hurkaru reprinted in Calcutta Monthly Journal, December, 1835, p. 335.*

⁴⁸ Letter from W.P. Grant, curator of the Calcutta public library, to G.A. Bushby, Secretary to the Government, Proceedings No. 35, *General proceedings, 23 September 1835, p. 417*

to have come under the description of those which the society were desirous of procuring leaving 1,772 works of which the subscribers of the Calcutta Public Library are likely to enjoy the use.⁴⁹

Besides books, the Calcutta Public Library also applied for the permission to use the book cases of the late library of Fort William College to the Government. W.P. Grant on behalf of the curators requested the Government to favour them by allowing the use of the book cases belonging to Fort William college for a few weeks until their own were made for which they have already given orders.⁵⁰ Without much delay, a prompt action was taken which ordered that a copy of the letter be transmitted to the secretary to the college of Fort William with directions to allow Mr Grant the use of the book cases belonging to the college for so long a period as may lapse before those belonging to the Calcutta Public Library can be prepared.

The support rendered by the Governor-General to the library was acknowledged by the proprietors and subscribers and consequently their gratitude was forwarded by J.H. Stocqueler, Honorary Secretary to the Public Library 'the thanks of the proprietors and the subscribers and friends of the public library to his honour the governor for the assistance afforded to the institution in its infancy and to assure his honour that the conditions which he may be pleased to attached to the transfer of the college books shall be strictly adhered to.'⁵¹

It was a good fortune for the Calcutta Public Library to have a support not only from the public but also secured the Government backing behind its establishment which rendered all possible support that it can extent in making this library a store house of knowledge for the subscribers and readers of this public library and it was also a very good turn of events for the Calcutta public library that the Government has liberally agreed to transfer to it the works in the Europeans languages belonging to the library of college of Fort William.⁵² Hence with the support of the members present there in the meeting and most importantly with the support of the natives the Calcutta Public Library came into existence,

⁴⁹ *The Bengal Hurkaru*, reprinted in *Calcutta Monthly Journal*, December 1835, p. 335.

⁵⁰ Letter from W.P. Grant, for the curators of the Calcutta public library, to H.J. Prinsep, Secretary to the Government of Bengal, *General proceedings*, No. 37, 22 January 1836, p. 336.

⁵¹ Letter from J.H. Stocqueler, Honorary Secretary to the Public Library to H.J. Prinsep, Secretary to the Government of Bengal, *General Proceedings*, No. 32, 25 November 1835, p. 313.

⁵² *Calcutta Monthly Journal*, Miscellaneous News, November 1835, p. 328.

While the question of establishing public lending libraries is being agitated in England, it must be a source of pride to the inhabitants of this metropolis to know that they already possess one which, in point of liberality and subservience to public benefit, may challenge comparison with any European Institution.⁵³

During this time public library did not exist even in England, it came into existence only after it was well established here. It is therefore, Calcutta Public Library could be considered as a pioneer in the history of library in India as well the British Empire.

Transfer of the Calcutta Public Library to Metcalf Hall

The Calcutta Public Library was temporarily housed in the apartment of Dr. Strong who was kind and generous enough to offer his commodious apartment gratuitously for the use of the library till a permanent place could be arranged. An eight member sub-committee was set up on 31 August, 1835, in order to select a site which was to be the permanent home for the Calcutta Public Library. The proposed site for the permanent home of the library was on the Tank Square. Soon the necessary permission for its establishment was communicated to the Government by the Curators of the library and acknowledgement regarding the matter was thus received from the H.J. Prinsep, Secretary to the Government which stated that the Government of Bengal acknowledged the receipt of your letter relating to the piece of ground on the north side of Tank Square to be appropriated for the erection of a public library.⁵⁴

The Agriculture and Horticulture society also expressed the desire to acquire the proposed site jointly with the Calcutta Public Library. The two societies in a letter of proposal explained the advantages of this joint venture in terms of the coming together of these bodies under one roof. This letter was sent to Peary Chand Mitra, Secretary Calcutta Public Library-

⁵³ P.T. Nair, *Origin of National Library: Days of the Calcutta Public Library*; National Library of India; Belvedere, Kolkata, 2004, p. 69.

⁵⁴ Letter from Prinsep, Secretary to the Government to E.D. Bardwell, Advocate Supreme Court, *General Proceedings*, No. 349, March 1837, p. 341.

having been mention at a Meeting of our General Committee that it is in contemplation to erect a building for the use of a Public library and that the committee of the Horticulture Society is similarly disposed was suggested and concurred in by a considerable majority of the members that as our institution had come to a light resolution, and union of the three societies might enable each to effect its object much more economically and at the same time obtain for all more advantages than could be accomplished by anyone separately. This being followed by a resolution instructing me to open a communication with you and the Secretary of the Horticulture Society regarding it. I, in compliance therewith beg leave to address you soliciting your opinion on the subject.

It certainly appears to me that among other objects obtainable by such a union, one of some weight is that it would obtain the expense of each institution having to erect separate road for its public meetings and committees, reducing the cost.⁵⁵

Besides reducing the cost and expenditure, it was also suggested that the frequent meetings of the members of three such important institution under one roof would doubtlessly also increase the attraction and popularity of each to a degree advantageous to all. It was further argued that there were a good number of mutual benefits that could be accrued from this union of these societies, both the parties would invariably benefit, the library hence would be a common source of knowledge and database for all three societies.⁵⁶

Regarding the above mentioned proposal, Curators of the Calcutta Public Library found it favourable and it was reported that the union of the library with other institutions under the same roof, continued to be a favourable project. Furthermore, it was decided that a plan would be submitted to the Government for its approval for erecting a large building in a suitable site.⁵⁷ It was thus unanimously agreed in the meeting of the Curators of the Calcutta Public Library on January 13, 1839:

⁵⁵ *The Bengal Hurkaru*, Samuel Smith and Co., Hare Street, tank square, Calcutta, July 13, 1839, p. 68.

⁵⁶ *Ibid*

⁵⁷ *The Englishman*, 2 March 1840, reprinted in *Calcutta Monthly Journal*, March 1840, p. 178.

That as it appears to the Curators there is nothing in the constitution of the public library to prevent its establishing itself in the Metcalf building and that in their opinion that it would be great benefit to the institution to have the use of such building upon the terms contain in the resolution communicated by Mr Carr.⁵⁸

At a meeting of the committee, it was resolved that W. Languiville Clark be requested to act as the secretary of the joint committee of the above society and it was resolved in the same meeting that a letter be addressed to the society of the general department soliciting the Government to grant a piece of ground at the north east corners of Tank Square measuring 160 feet east and west and 180 feet north and south to be conveyed to trustees in prospectively for the purpose of erecting a building with suitable departments of the Agricultural society and which can contain the books of the Calcutta Public Library.

But the communication came from the Government revealed that there was an objection raised with respect to the particular site by E.D. Barwell, Advocate of the Supreme Court.

understanding that application has been made to Government for the assignment of a piece of ground within the enclosure of the north side of the Tank Square to be appropriated to the erection of a public library ... Should such a measure be contemplated I would humbly request permission to bring to its notice the circumstances which I trust would induced the Government not to grant the assignment in question.⁵⁹

The Government assured E.D. Barwell that the committee appointed to carry into effect the resolution of the inhabitants of Calcutta for the erection of a building will be made acquainted with the nature of the objection and claim preferred by him.⁶⁰ After this the proposed non-

⁵⁸*The Bengal Hurkaru*, 5 February 1839, reprinted in *Calcutta Monthly Journal*, January 13, 1839, p. 90.

⁵⁹Letter from E.D. Barwell, Advocate Supreme Court to H.J. Prinsep, Secretary to Government, General Proceedings, No. 49, , 1 March 1837, p. 282.

⁶⁰ Letter from H.J. Prinsep, Secretary to Government to E.D. Barwell, Advocate supreme court, General Proceedings, No. 410, 8 March 1837, p. 380

controversial site which the committee wished to acquire was brought to the knowledge of the Government for its consideration by the committee in the following letter:

The committee wish to suggest most respectfully to his Lordship, that after much enquiry, it appears to them, the most desirable and the least objectionable spot for the building is the south east corner of Tank Square. It is most unlikely that this ground can ever be required for public purposes; it will be in no way interfered with the occupants of the property in the vicinity.⁶¹

The committee also specified the size of land necessary to erect a building which can accommodate various departments of the Agricultural society and also a commodious room to hold the collections of the Calcutta Public Library. The area required was 180 feet north and south, and 160 east and west.

Unfortunately this proposed site could not be accepted by the Government and that legal opinion, which was taken, to the effect that the terms of the Act xxi of 1860 preclude this, as a result it was informed to the concerned committee accordingly. It stated that,

the right hon'ble the Governor is unable to comply with the application in your letter for a portion of the ground at the south east corner of the enclosure of Tank Square as he is of opinion that those spaces of the town which are of appropriated to light and ventilation ought not to be given out for purpose of building.⁶²

The Government, however, was willing to accept the other proposed site that was at the south west corner of Hare Street and the north west corner of Coilah Ghat street,

⁶¹ Letter from L. Clark, Secretary to the committee to Henry Torrens, Officiating Secretary to the Government, *General proceedings*, No. 557, 27 May 1840, p. 410.

⁶² Letter from G.A. Bushby, Secretary to Government to L. Clark, Secretary to Joint committee, *General proceedings*, No. 553, 27 May 1840, p. 353.

His lordship is willing to make over to the official trustees and thereby successor of the societies, represented by your committee the piece of ground at the south west corner of Hare Street upon which there is a present standing rapidly falling into decay which has been temporarily appropriated to the seller's home.⁶³

This proposition was granted with the following condition;

The only condition which the Government desire to meet with regard to this grant was;

That the edifice to be erected shall be ornamented and substantial and that on failure of its being maintained in repairing the ground shall revert to the Government or at least that the building shall not without the consent of the Government be alienable to other purpose than those set forth in the present correspondence.⁶⁴

It was then intimated to the societies that the occupiers of the building have been requested to vacate the building as early as possible in order that the necessary works could be carried out.

With the Governor-General of India in council gave his consent for the ground in Hare Street where the seller's home previously stand to the society. Consequently, it was then intimated to the societies that the occupiers of the building had been requested to vacate the building as early as possible. The special building committee appointed a Finance Committee to carry out necessary formalities. Thus on December 19, 1840 foundation stone of the Metcalf Hall was laid by Dr. James Grant and assisted by Dr. James Burnes, which was to become the future home of the Calcutta Public Library from 1844-1902.⁶⁵ Consequently, in the general meeting of Agriculture-Horticulture society on 10 June 1840, the name 'Metcalf Hall' was sanctioned. It was built on the land lent by the Government to the Library committee and to the Agri-Horticulture society with which public subscribed the sum required to build the hall as a

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ P.T. Nair, *Origin of National Library: Days of the Calcutta Public Library*; National Library of India; Belvedere, Kolkata, 2004, p. 53.

memorial to Metcalf. The Calcutta Public Library committee occupied the upper portion of the Metcalf Hall since 1841 and this property was vested in the body under Act xxi of 1860.⁶⁶

Founding Members of the Library

The nature of a library to a vast extent depends on its founding members; these are the people who conceptualised the idea of the establishment of a library, in this case in Calcutta. The founding members who established what we now know as the Calcutta Public Library constituted of people from both European as well as the Indian community. There was a positive reaction to the establishment of a library in Calcutta from the educated Indians. It was also contemplated that the establishment of the 'institution of this library will benefit not only so far as the community of the Calcutta are concern but as a society it is likely to benefit the natives of this country generally.'⁶⁷

In the words of J.H. Stocquel, 'receiving a good deal of countenance from the upper classes, my project is now submitted to a public meeting (August 1835).'⁶⁸ It was very encouraging to get the overwhelming response from the people regarding the proposed plan. An interesting report to that respect had been informed that people were already drawn towards the project of establishment of Calcutta Public Library and it was evident from the fact that 'the number of subscribers of Rs. 330 each who have already come forward is fifty five, and about Rs 500 more has been subscribed in donations, making in all a capital of Rs 1700.'⁶⁹ The total number of subscribers to the Calcutta Public Library as reported in the first Annual report of the library was also very impressive and the most interesting fact was that many intelligent and educated natives belonging to a high class family were enrolled as subscribers of the library.

The number of subscribers according to the Report of the Calcutta Public Library for 1847-1848 was 126 including two female subscribers by the name Mrs. W.P. Sims and Mrs. W.P. Grant. Out of these 126 subscribers, 13 were Indians, the names which was present in the

⁶⁶ Demi-official from A.H.L. Fraser, Officiating Secretary to the Government of India, Home Department to Mr. E.N. Baker, Officiating Secretary to the Government of Bengal, Municipal Department, No. 96-D, Dated the 28 February, 1899, *Home Department*, Branch Public-A, Nos. 231-302, November 1901, p. 1.

⁶⁷ Calcutta Monthly Journal, Asiatic News, October 1835, p. 278.

⁶⁸ Stocqueler: the Memoirs of a Journalist, 1873, p. 707, as quoted in B.S. Kesavan, *India's National Library*, National Library Calcutta, 1997, pp. 1.

⁶⁹ *Calcutta monthly journal*, December, 1835, p. 336.

list were of some of the most well known names of the community of that time, they were, Baboo Ramanauth Tagore, Baboo Bimolachurn Dey, Baboo Debendranath Tagore, Baboo Ramgopaul Ghose, Baboo Hemnath Roy, Khettro Mohun Chatterjee, Baboo Peary Mohun Chowdry, Baboo Muttylool Seal, The Rajah Sattuchurn Ghosal Bahadur, The Rajah Pertaubchunder Sing, Baboo Ashutosh Dey, Baboo Prosono Coomar Tagore, Baboo Radha Madhub Banerjee, and Baboo Brojonauth Dhur.⁷⁰ The number of subscribers was found to be steadily increasing as the time went by from both the communities. It was found that according to the report of the committee appointed in 1889 to formulate scheme for the administration of the library, there were 149 subscribers, of whom 12 were first class subscribers, 61 of second class and 76 of the third class subscribers. But, of the 149 subscribers, 123 were Europeans and only 26 were Indians.⁷¹

In the history of Calcutta Public Library, one name deserved to be written in the golden book of records is W.P. Grant, for the services he rendered in moulding up the library since its infancy stage as one of the founders and curators from 31 October, 1835 till 23 August 1848.⁷²

The council of the library took every effort to make this library a fruitful one, by keeping a watch over the people coming in and leaving the city, if there was any new person arriving in the city, without losing time, the council of the library approached the new incumbent to be part of the library in any capacity he wished to be. One such occasion was when the office of the official Patron of the library became vacant; the council submitted an application to Governor-General Canning. Canning accepted it.⁷³

In a public meeting which took place on 31 August 1835, it was resolved that the following gentlemen be appointed as Curators of Calcutta Public Library until the first general meeting. They were: Sir Edward Ryan, Charles Cameron, W.P. Grant, J.C. Marshman, H.M.

⁷⁰ *Annual Report of the Calcutta Public Library for 1847 & 1848*, printed by Sanders Cones & Co., 1848, pp. 18-19.

⁷¹ Demi-official from A.H.L. Fraser, Officiating Secretary to the Government of India, Home Department to E.N. Baker, officiating Secretary to the Government of Bengal, Municipal Department. No. 96.D, Dated 28 February 1899, *Home Department, Public-A*, November 1901, p. 9.

⁷² B.S. Kesavan, *India's National Library*, National Library Calcutta, 1997, p. 4.

⁷³ *Annual Report on the Calcutta public library for 1856*, P.S. D'Rozario & Co., Calcutta, 1857, p. 5.

Parker and J.R. Colvin.⁷⁴ The next resolution was to request J.H. Stocqueler to act as an honorary secretary to the institution.⁷⁵ It was also resolved to form the provisional committee to look into the affairs of different sections of the library. For that purpose 24 members were selected out of which only two were native members, they are, Russeekrishen Mullick and Russomoy Dutt. The latter name was included as it was strongly favoured by Turton to have more natives in the committee members on the following ground he as asserts:

Was it nothing that there should be on a committee who were to draw up rules and regulations, persons who are acquainted with the habits and taste of a large portion of that community for whose benefits this institution was intended? It has been said that committee were to be the literary representatives of the community, how can this community be represented by person who have no knowledge of their wants?

Therefore according to him as there was but one native on the committee, if he had a coadjutor it would greatly increase his efficiency. Thus he proposed that Baboo Russomoy Dutt be added in the committee.⁷⁶

Further in 1877 an important event in the history of Calcutta Public Library took place when Raja Narendra Krishna became the First Indian President of the council of the library, with Dr. Mahendralal Sircar as the vice-president. This council replaced the board of Curators in 1873, and took over the running of the library with duties including that of financial management and overall functioning of the library.⁷⁷ This was a very significant event in the history due to the fact that an Indian occupied the post of the president this brought about a change in the way the library was run.

⁷⁴ *Calcutta Monthly Journal*, December, 1835, p. 337.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

⁷⁶ *Calcutta Monthly Journal*, October 1835, pp. 278-279.

⁷⁷ Bimal Kumar Dutta, *Libraries and Librarianship of Ancient and Medieval India*, Atma Ram and Sons, Delhi, 1970, p. 102.

Rules of the Calcutta Public Library⁷⁸

The following are the Fundamental Rules of the Library and Bye-Laws passed by the Curators of the Library-

1. The library is a public library of reference and circulation, open to all ranks and classes of community.
2. The property of the library is vested in trustee, for the benefit of the proprietors.
3. The use of the library is available to subscribers as well as shareholders, under rules hereinafter specified.
4. The management of the library is entrusted to a committee of three Curators chosen yearly by the proprietors and subscribers of all classes, and each Curators by virtue of his office is entitled to a vote a pecuniary question and question relating to proprietary rights, whether he himself is a proprietor or not.
5. No resolution of the Curators, disposing of any funds of the society, in exceeding in amount 1000 Rs, shall be carried into effect until the accounts have been on the table of the library for the space of one week, nor, if a special meeting is required for considering any such resolution, until it is confirmed by the meeting.
6. All proceedings, of the Curators shall be entered in a book, which shall always be on the table of the library, for the inspection of the proprietors and the subscribers.
7. All account shall be audited and approved by the Curators and submitted to the yearly meeting of proprietors and subscribers.
8. Upon all pecuniary questions, and questions related to proprietary rights, each proprietor is entitled to one vote for each share held by him. Upon all question which are not pecuniary or relating to proprietary rights, each subscribers of the first class and one year standing has one vote.
9. The Curators have power to issue tickets to poor students and others ticket of admission to the library for such periods as may be thought advisable; each ticket not to be transferable.
10. It is opened to the Curators to a special meeting at any time they think fit, giving not less than seven day's notice thereof, and they are bound to call such meeting, to be held within one month

⁷⁸ *Annual Report of the Calcutta Public Library for 1847 & 1848*, printed by Sanders Cones & Co., 1848, Appendix-B, pp. ii-iii & Vii.

from the receipt of a requisitioner's desire for such meeting. If notice of such meeting shall not be given by such Curators, within one fortnight of the receipt of such requisition, any three proprietors may call the same, giving not less than seven day's notice thereof.

11. The above rules are the fundamental rules of the institution, and can be altered only at the general meeting or at a special meeting called for that purpose by public advertisement, in some one or more of the daily newspapers in Calcutta, with not less than seven day's notice, and in which shall be expressed the object of the proposed alterations.
12. There shall be a monthly meeting of proprietors and subscribers on the first Saturday of every month, at 4 o'clock pm at which the Curators are expected to attend and report the progress of the institution, and receive such suggestion and propositions as may be made by any proprietor or subscriber, provided the same shall not be contrary to the Rules of the library.

Bye-Laws Passed By the Curators⁷⁹

The following rules are the fundamental rules of the institution, and can be altered only at the general meeting or at a special meeting called for that purpose by public advertisement, in some one or more of the daily newspapers in Calcutta, with not less than seven day's notice, and in which shall be expressed the object of the proposed alterations.

1. The Library shall be kept opened from sunrise to sunset.
2. The circulation of books shall begin at 9 o'clock am; members coming before that hour and wishing to have books out are requested to leave a note of a work selected by them, and they will be supplied as soon as the Sub-Librarian will be in attendance.
3. Newspapers of seven dates, say for seven days from the day of circulation, shall not be allowed to be circulated.
4. No proprietors or subscribers should have more than *one set of new books and one new periodical at a time.*

⁷⁹ *Annual Report of the Calcutta Public Library for 1847 & 1848*, printed by Sanders Cones & Co., 1848, Appendix-B, pp. Vii-Viii.

5. No proprietors or subscribers should be allowed to take away any books or periodicals, if he does not return after the second request, those which are due by him, or which form the quantity over and above what he is entitled to, at a time, unless satisfactory cause can be shown.
6. No new books or periodicals should be sent out to any member, unless he leaves a standing order with the librarian.
7. Books urgently required should be stated so in the order, which otherwise will be considered as of ordinary nature, and the parties possessing the books in question will be allowed a reasonable time for perusal.
8. Although the name of a member may be down for a number of new books or periodicals, but it is not necessary that every one of these books or periodicals should be sent to him first, if he has already got a set in his possession, unless special intimation is made by him that on the supplying of any sets, which he may be particularly anxious to see, the one in his possession may be immediately returned-the object of a member's name being down for a number of books is, that they should be supplied to him one after another.
9. In order to prevent disappointment, large order sent with a view to guide the librarian in the selection of books are not to be registered in the privilege book, unless they are accompanied with a request to that effect.
10. Books are sent as far as Hoogly.
11. The smoking of cigars is not allowed in the Library Rooms.

Rules for the Circulations of Books of the Calcutta Public Library among Proprietors and Subscribers-

The following are the proposed rules with regards to the circulation of books of the Calcutta Public Library among proprietors and subscribers. This was proposed at the General Meeting of the proprietors and subscribers held at the library Rooms, on 8 March 1836 and which was subsequently adopted. The Rules are as follows:-

Rule 1:- None of the books belonging to Fort William College Library shall be allowed to circulate without special leave obtained from the Curators.

Rule 2:- The Curators shall have the power to withdraw from circulation, and also to prohibit without special leave obtained from them, the circulation of any book, at their discretion.

Rule 3:- All other books in the library shall be allowed to circulate among proprietors and subscribers.

Rule 4:- No book shall be allowed to circulate until it shall have remained in the library one week from the date of receipt, except novels, Tales, and periodicals, intended for circulation. These may be put into circulation after two days from the date of receipt.

Rule 5: - No person shall be entitled to take books out of the library who have not deposited the following sum, viz. Proprietors and 1st class subscribers 20 Rs., and 2nd class subscribers 10 Rs., such sum is to be applicable to the discharge of all claims against them on behalf of the library.

Rule 6: - No person shall be entitled to take any books out of the library until he shall have discharged all claims against him on behalf of the library.

Rule7: - No deposit shall be returnable except under an order in writing of the Curators.

Rule 8:- The library shall be daily open (Sundays and the space of seven days immediately preceding the Annual Meeting of proprietors and subscribers in each year only accepted) from sunrise till sunset from am to pm .

Rule 9:-Any proprietor or subscriber shall be entitled to have delivered to him or to his written orders, books from the Library, if he provides a suitable bag or box for the secure conveyance of such books.

Rule10:- No proprietor or subscriber should be entitled to have out of the library at any one time more than two sets of works and one periodicals, nor any 2nd class subscriber more than two sets of work and one periodical, nor any 3rd class subscriber more than one set of books other than new publication or periodicals, without special leaves of the Curators.

Rule 11:- Any work comprised in one volume, and in general the works of any one author or set of authors published together, shall be accounted a set of works; provided in voluminous works the Curators shall have powers in their discretion to limit the number of volumes which shall be taken out at one time.

Rule 12:- All works as received shall be entered in the Library Catalogue, and the title thereof shall be conspicuously notified in the Public Room.

Rule 13:- All new works, also, as received, shall be entered in a book to be entitled a privilege book, and such works shall be issuable to proprietors and subscribers, who put their names under the respective entries. According to the order they put down their respective names, provided that proprietors and 1st class subscribers, who put down their names within a month of the date of the receipt of such new works, shall be allowed to take out such new works before any second class subscribers.

Rule 14: - The person next in succession for such new works, who does not apply for it one day it has been returned to the Library, shall considered having lost his turn, the first applicant on the list after shall than be entitled to take out such work.

Rule 15:- Any person taking out books shall be entitled to keep them for the following period, exclusive of the day of delivery:-

Periodicals	Monthly	2 days
	Quarterly	4 days
New Works	Volume, 8vo,	2 days
	Volume, 4to,	1 week
	Volume, folio,	2 weeks

Source: Calcutta Monthly Journal, March 1836, p.100.

Any person shall be entitled to keep other works for double the above times, or until one day after he has received notice on the part of the Curators to return them.

Rule 16:- Any proprietor or subscriber taking away books without giving notice to the librarian shall pay a fine of 5 Rupee for each volume so taken.

Rule 17:- Any person not returning any book within the time limit of the Library rules, shall pay a fine to be determined by the Curators not exceeding one rupee per volume for each day of such undue detention

Rule 18:- Any book found, on return to the library, to be damaged shall be withdrawn from circulation until examined by the Curators and the particular imperfection shall be notified in a conspicuous part and the book before it is issuable; the person in whose custody the book was when such damage occurred, shall be answerable to the Curators for the sum they may determine to be necessary to repair or replace the same.

Rule 19:- when any fine has been incurred by any person who has taken out books, notice thereof shall be given to him by the librarian, and no more books are to be issued to him until it is paid. The fine shall be deducted from the deposit, and no books issued to him until his deposit be completed.⁸⁰

In the same meeting some amendments were made with regard to printed Rules which read as follows:-

Rule 5:- No person shall be allow to take books out of the library who have not deposited the following sums, viz. Proprietors and 1st class subscribers 20 Rs., 2nd class subscribers 10 Rs. such sums to be applicable to the discharge of all claims against him on behalf of the library.

Rule 8:- The library shall be daily open (Sundays and the space of seven days immediately preceding the Annual Meeting of proprietors and subscribers in each year only accepted) from sunrise till sunset from 9am till 6 pm .

Rule 10:- no proprietors or first class subscribers shall be entitled to have out of the library at any time more than two sets of works and one periodical, or any second class subscribers more than one set of works and one periodical, without special leave of the Curators.

Rule 15:- Any person taking out books shall be entitled to keep them for the following period, exclusive of the day of delivery:

⁸⁰ *Calcutta Monthly Journal*, March 1836, pp. 99-100.

Periodicals	Monthly	2 days
	Quarterly	4days
New Works	Volume,8vo,	2days
	Volume,4to,	1 week
	Volume, folio,	2weeks

Source: Calcutta Monthly Journal, March 1836, p.100.

Rule 16:- Any proprietor or subscriber taking away books without giving notice to the librarian shall pay a fine of 10 Rupee for each volume so taken.

After which the new rule was added:-

Rule 20:- That the printed catalogue be sold to proprietors and subscribers, and others, at the price of one rupee per copy.⁸¹

Preparation and Printing of Catalogue of the Calcutta Public Library

The Calcutta Public Library having received books from the Fort William College and from other individuals who donated for the use of this library was advised by the Curators of the Calcutta Public Library to prepare a catalogue in order to present its holding to the readers and subscribers. It was thus said that 'it became necessary to arrange the books of which your Library consist, and this is not only in such a catalogue as it might be of easy and useful reference, but also to arrange the books themselves in a manner consistent with convenience and economy both of space and funds.'⁸² Therefore printing of catalogue became a matter of utmost importance, without which it would not be possible for the Calcutta Public Library to display its collections and also it would be easier for the library to ascertain and address the deficiencies in its collection.

It was also interesting that Rule number 12 of the library, required that all works that were received by the library should be entered in the library catalogue, and the titles should be

⁸¹Ibid., pp. 100-101.

⁸²Calcutta Monthly Journal, March 1836, p. 99.

conspicuously notified in the public library room, for the circulation of books among proprietors and subscribers.⁸³ It was not however an easy task to undertake such a laborious process in preparing catalogue with limited fund at their disposal. This necessity compelled the Curators of the library to actually try to prepare a catalogue of all the works in the library.⁸⁴ The merit of having a printed catalogue outweighed the framing of rules for collecting books, in the meeting of the proprietors and subscribers held on 8 March 1836 in the library room for

they have thought it more useful to the institution to prepare a catalogue raisonne of all the works at present comprised in the library, by reference to the different departments of which the deficiencies of the collection can accurately be known, the Curators having undertaken to prepare useful work in those department of knowledge with which they have respectively some acquaintance from those list compared with the present catalogue when printed, a general list may easily be made by reference to which advantage may be taken of all opportunities for acquiring books.⁸⁵

In yet another meeting of the Curators the discussion for the preparation of catalogue was still pursued and the proposal regarding this matter was moved by W.P. Grant and seconded by Dr. Marshman which immediately instructs that the catalogue prepared by Curators be printed forthwith.⁸⁶ Due to this effort, the Calcutta Public Library was opened on March 21, 1836 with its complete printed catalogue. The importance of having catalogue was made mandatory by the Rule 12 of the Library which stated that 'all works as received shall be entered in the library catalogue, and the titles thereof shall be conspicuously notified in the public library room.'⁸⁷ Thus, it became imperative to possess a printed catalogue as all the works had to be entered in the catalogue first. Same as the Rule 12 of the Library, the Rule 4 in the bye law of the Calcutta

⁸³ *Annual Report of the Calcutta public Library for 1847 & 1848*, Appendix-B printed by Sanders, Cones & Co., 1848, p. VI.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

⁸⁵ *ibid*

⁸⁶ *Calcutta Monthly Journal*, March 1836, p. 100

⁸⁷ *Annual Report of the Calcutta public Library for 1847 & 1848*, Appendix-B, printed by sanders Cones & Co., 1848, p. VI.

Public Library Rules for the year 1855 also reads as, 'all works as received shall be entered in the library catalogue and shall not be sent out of the library until so entered. Therefore, it became necessary to be ready before the opening of the library so that when the library opens its door it could also be able to present its holdings to the readers. But keeping in mind the financial difficulties of the institution the framers of the Rules of the Calcutta Public Library amended a rule to sell the printed catalogue in order to recoup the expenditure incurred in its printing. The Rule 20 for the circulation of books of the Calcutta Public Library among the proprietors and subscribers reads 'that the printed catalogue be sold to the proprietors, subscribers and others at the price of one rupee per copy.'⁸⁸

J.E.D. Bethune while giving suggestions regarding the arrangements of books in the library advised to adopt the press marking system in the catalogue, a press mark it meant a reference to the place of book in the library. It consisted of two numbers and a letter, the library was further advised to adopt the rule as practiced in the great libraries of Paris and London that a catalogue should lie on the table and anyone wishing for a particular work should enter his name annexed on a slip of paper, which should also lie on the table for this purpose.⁸⁹ As a result of the above suggestions it was soon reported 'that a complete classified catalogue is nearly ready for the purpose of being referred to in the library and it will be of use to those who have had stitched with their catalogue the monthly list of books. When the new arrangement of books was completed the catalogue in question will be pressed marked and printed.'⁹⁰

A consolidated catalogue of the book acquired in 1835 to 1845 was issued in 1846 with a short history of the library and it was reviewed in the same year by the Calcutta Review, in the Miscellaneous Notices, it reports that 'the incorporation of a portion of the library of Fort William College renders the Public library of Calcutta very much superior to most similar institutions.'⁹¹

The catalogue that was brought forward by the Calcutta Public Library generated a number of complaints, primary amongst these was the complaint that all the books of the library

⁸⁸ *Calcutta Monthly Journal*, March 1836, p. 101.

⁸⁹ *Annual Report of the Calcutta public Library for 1847 & 1848*, Appendix-B, printed by Sanders, Cones & Co., Calcutta, 1848, Appendix-E, p. xxii-xxiii

⁹⁰ *Annual Report of the Calcutta Public Library for 1850*, Sanders, Cones & Co., Calcutta, p. 20

⁹¹ P.T. Nair, *Origin of the National Library of India: Days of the Calcutta public library*, National Library of India, Belvedere, Kolkata, 2004, p. 90.

were not present in the catalogue given by the library. Due to this factor supervision by the Government would also be problematic. Classification was another major area of dissatisfaction. A number of suggestions were given by the concerned individuals and institutions, all agreed to the fact that the catalogue needed major improvements, and these problems were highlighted in the letters of individuals to library one of them reads as follows, 'it is a matter of deep regret that the library does not possess a complete printed catalogue of all the books it contains.'⁹² It was however, informed that the manuscript catalogue is still in progress, but a separate establishment under a competent librarian is needed for the proper cataloguing of the books, which, in consequence of the books not being in all cases properly classified.⁹³

But the inconveniences caused to the library due to improper catalogue was soon done away with the innovative suggestions rendered by Beveridge as reported that 'an improved system of cataloguing was on the suggestion of Beveridge, adopted with the sanction of the book committee. A general list of books alphabetically arranged according to author's name with copious detail cross references under the subject heading, making what is known as dictionary catalogue is under preparation.'⁹⁴

Therefore the Curators of the library took into consideration the imperfections in their catalogue system and endeavoured to better it with the preparation of a dictionary catalogue. The preparation of the catalogue was a very tedious and lengthy process and this involved a heavy expenditure. It was hence decided by the Curators of the Calcutta Public Library that this expenditure would be charged as extraordinary expenses along with other cost of the establishment.

According to the decision taken by the Curators a catalogue was prepared in 1855, this catalogue had two supplements which were published in the years 1860 and 1867. Although the catalogues were published by the library none of the proprietors and subscribers possessed a complete catalogue of the books in the library. It was then argued that without such a catalogue it was hopeless to expect any accession of subscribers from among residents in the mofussil

⁹² *Annual Report of the Calcutta public Library for 1888*, P.S.D. Rozario & Co., Calcutta, 1889, p. 7.

⁹³ *Ibid.*

⁹⁴ *Annual Report of the Calcutta public library for 1891 to 1892*, printed by P.S. D'rozario & Co., Calcutta, 1892, p. 2.

notwithstanding the facilities afforded then by the railway for drawing supply of books from the library.⁹⁵

A complete catalogue of the Calcutta Public Library was printed in 1855 by Sanders, Cones & Co., Cossitallah, Calcutta. The catalogue comprised of 640 pages with an appendix which runs to 56 pages. The appendix contained the catalogue of the vernacular literature committee's library compiled by J. Long. This catalogue is available in the National Library of India; it gives us a broad idea of the contents of the library, the kinds of books that were purchased on the basis of their classification. The catalogue allows us to look into the changes that were brought about in the later catalogues and how the catalogue has been an improvement of the previous version.

The catalogue contained works that were classified on the basis of discipline: Theology, Philosophy, Jurisprudence, History, Biography and Memoirs. Antiquities, Sub-division of Antiquities, Heraldry and Genealogy, Topography, and Mythology, East Indies including China, Voyages and Travels, Mathematics, Pure and Mixed, Sub-division of Mathematics, Astronomy, Physics and under physics there was natural and experimental physics, Philosophy, Mechanics, Hydrodynamics, Acoustic, Optics, Electricity and Galvanism, Light and Heat, Metrology, Practical Science, Natural History, Medicine, Fine Arts-sub-division, Painting, Architecture, sculpture, Music, Poetry and Drama, Prose work of Grammar, Philosophy, Sub-division, Grammar, Belles, Letters and Criticism. Miscellaneous-Literature, Cyclopaedia Works, Bibliography and Printing, Periodical, Greek and Latin, French Work, Italian Work, Spanish and Portuguese Work, Northern Literature, Hebrew and Oriental Work, Subdivision, Hebrew, Sanskrit, Bengali, Arabic, Persian and Hindustani, Hindi, Marhatta and Guzrattee, Telegoo, Ceylons, Burmese, Punjabi and other languages. The Catalogue also has 56 pages appendix of vernacular literature, which was compiled by J. Long.

The first catalogue as discussed in the paper was revised due to the inadequacies that were present; a revised catalogue was published by the Calcutta Public Library in January 1894, it was published and printed by Sanyal & Co., Bharat Mihir Press in Calcutta. There was a major

⁹⁵*Finances of the Calcutta Public Library, Report of the Sub-Committee Appointed on the 10 February, 1873, Office of Superintendent of Government Printing, Calcutta, 1873, p. 24.*

change in the catalogue, the new catalogue followed the dictionary system and thereby entries in the catalogue followed the alphabetical order and were arranged by author's name as well as title entries. Another interesting change and improvement was that the year of publication of the book was given against the book although the place of publication was not printed.

The most elaborate and comprehensive catalogue of the Calcutta Public Library was the catalogue published in 1898 with a supplement that was revised up to December 1898, this was printed by Sanyal & Co., Bharat Mihir Press, Calcutta. It followed both author as well as subject entries alphabetically.

The establishment of the Calcutta Public Library points out to the interesting changes that were taking place at that point of time. The process of the establishment of library beginning with the contributions of Fort William College, the role of founding members, the coming together of three societies under one roof of the Metcalf Hall points out to an effort by both Europeans and Indians. The cataloguing of books, the changes that were made are the factors which point to us that the library along with its administration was not only a storehouse of knowledge but also accepted change in its stride towards growth and development.

CHAPTER-3

GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE CALCUTTA PUBLIC LIBRARY

CHAPTER-3

Growth and Development of the Calcutta Public Library

In the history of Calcutta Public Library, the first phase, i.e., 1835-1850, of its establishment has been considered as a flourishing phase which was characterised by the growth in terms of number of members added, expansion of collections and improvement in the financial condition of the library. From the very start the library was a great success, it brought into its fold intellectuals from both the European and Indian communities. There was growth not just of the library but growth in terms of ideas as well during that period.

The growth of the Calcutta Public Library could be seen in the steady expansion in every branch of department and the improving condition of each and every aspect since its inception. This growth could be attributed mainly to the effort of its proprietors and subscribers who did not leave any stone unturned for its growth and prosperity. As a result of all their efforts, very soon the popularity of this library spread far and wide and its increasing utility to the society was also felt among the inhabitants and realized the usefulness of the establishment of this library. The growth of this library could be witnessed from its expansion in every aspect such as increased in the number of subscribers and a good number of books added to its collections and the swelling up of the financial contributions. This was creditable to the exertions and perseverance of the pioneers of this library and their collective efforts and determination that help to reach to this stage.

The flourishing condition of this library was reported as early as March 1836 just after its establishment which stated that the affair of the institution was going on very satisfactorily.⁹⁶ The growth of the library was largely dependent upon the people who constituted as patrons of the library; it was therefore given the nature of people who associated themselves as patrons of the library, perceived to be a huge success from its inception. In the case of Calcutta Public Library, it was fortunate to have the Governor-General and Viceroys of India as the patrons and

⁹⁶ *Calcutta Monthly Journal*, March, 1836, Miscellaneous News, p. 92.

proprietors from 1835 to 1902⁹⁷ and the active participation of the native rulers made as one of the rarest occurrences for an institution like this one to get a collective support from both the community of Europeans and the natives. Soon the fame of the Calcutta Public Library was spread far and wide beyond the national boundary. A testimony to this effect was thus written by the commissioner of the United States patent office 'the flourishing condition of your institution, as shown in its last Annual Report, is a sufficient guarantee of its usefulness and of the liberality and intelligence with which it is managed.'⁹⁸

Not only this letter substantiate the prosperity of the library but the growth of this library also shows in the steady expansion of its collection and the increased number of subscribers adding to the library each day was significant enough. It was reported in June 1836 that 'the number of subscribers in all the classes were 14 first class subscribers, 5 subscribers of the second class, and 2 of the third class.'⁹⁹ Just as there was an increased in the number of subscribers, there was a report for the same with respect to the number of proprietors as well, it was informed that 'the number of proprietors of the library is also rapidly increasing.'¹⁰⁰ The addition of new member in the library was reported in every meeting 'since the last meeting fifteen new subscribers have joint the institution and two 3rd class subscribers have transferred their names to 2nd class,'¹⁰¹ as a result the Calcutta Public Library had its subscription list recently augmented.'¹⁰² Another report furnished a matter of congratulation that there has been an increased circulation of books and an accession of subscribers the former having amounted to upwards surge of twenty thousands and volumes in one year and the latter numbering , with the proprietors two hundred and nine.¹⁰³

The library administration took certain interesting and much needed measures in order to increase the number of readers. The first measure was the extension in the library timing. Such consideration was given in order to draw more readers in the library and to give maximum time to spend in the library, therefore, the library hour had been extended and it was to be opened

⁹⁷ P.T. Nair, *Origin of the National Library of India: Days of the Calcutta Public Library*, Belvidere, Kolkata, 2004, p. 69.

⁹⁸ *Annual Report of the Calcutta Public Library for 1850*, printed by Sanders Cones &Co., p. 17.

⁹⁹ *Calcutta Monthly Journal*, June, 1836, p. 242.

¹⁰⁰ *Calcutta Monthly Journal*, December, 1835, p. 335.

¹⁰¹ *Calcutta Monthly Journal*, December 1836, p. 571

¹⁰² *Calcutta Monthly Journal*, Miscellaneous News, 1836 volume.2, p. 54.

¹⁰³ *The Englishman*, March 2, 1840.

from sunrise to sunset everyday and the same to be followed in future as well but Sundays are exempted.¹⁰⁴ Similar steps were also taken to encompass all classes of society to extend the benefits of this library, one such resolution relating to the above matter was that of resolution moved by Sutherland and seconded by Russicklall Mullick 'that the Annual committee be at a liberty to issue tickets to poor students and others for temporary admission to the library.'¹⁰⁵

There was always an addition or alteration in the rules of the library, in order to meet the requirements and to see the conveniences for its readers; sometimes it was required to make changes in the rule from time to time to draw people towards the library. Due to the valiant effort put up by the curators of the library, the library continued to grow and expand. The fruit of their effort was recognized by the report which was reported in the Annual Meeting of the members of the Calcutta Public Library, held on 28 February 1840. The report which addressed to W.P. Grant, H.M. Parker, and W. Carr Curators of the Calcutta Public Library, was as follows-

the addition of another year to the age of the institution has tended in no small degree to the augmentation of its popularity, and the extension of its usefulness it is a source of simple congratulation to observed that alike in respect to the accession of subscribers, to the receipt of monthly contribution, and to the circulation of books, it has made considerable progress, a circumstances which gratifying as it was to those who are interested in its prosperity, this can only be attributable to the increasing appreciation of its utility. The library now comprises eighty proprietors, nine of whom have died, and there are one hundred and thirty eight subscribers.¹⁰⁶

There was one area in which the curators felt dissatisfaction, in spite of having good number of members now, the Curators of the library thought that library was not well represented by all the classes of the community. Therefore, the Curators devised a plan which would encourage a business community which was hitherto not been a part of the library and also who has not contributed so far for the welfare of the library. Thus, accordingly a resolution was passed unanimously at a meeting of the proprietors and subscribers held on 4 March, 1837. It was

¹⁰⁴ *Calcutta Monthly Journal*, Miscellaneous News, June, 1836, p. 242.

¹⁰⁵ *Calcutta Monthly Journal*, October 1835, p. 281

¹⁰⁶ The Englishman, as reprinted by *Calcutta Monthly Journal*, 13 March 1840, pp. 178-179.

proposed by Bell and seconded by Dr. Jackson, that with respect to the few opportunities enjoyed by men in business to bring it to the notice of this community a brief outline of the proceedings of this infant institution, 'for the successful establishment of which upon a sound foundation all must be anxiously interested, that a copy of the rates and rules of admission as proprietors and subscribers be circulated with subscription books as well for the contribution to the vested fund for the admission of new proprietors and subscribers among such members of the community as the curator may deemed expedient,'¹⁰⁷ the note to be circulated to the members of the business community was as follows:-

To A.B. Esq.,

Sir, Upwards of months has now elapsed since the formation of this library, without having the benefit of your name on its list of proprietors or subscribers.

Feeling assured that the claims of such an institution to public support need only be brought permanently to engage your attention; we beg to submit a copy of our rules and rates of admission.

In doing this we earnestly entreat you to consider that although your time may not allow you either to take, at present an any active part in its operation or draw largely upon the literary resources you can render a most important service by contributing towards a solid establishment and future support, and we confidently hope that you will at least afford this testimony of the interest you feel in the prosperity of a public depository of knowledge and recreation which to every individual at some time or other must prove useful.

We are, & C. Curators.¹⁰⁸

Thus, one could see the extent up to which the Curators may go to make this library as accessible as possible for all category of the society and which opens to all the ranks and rendered intelligence available to all.

¹⁰⁷ *The Bengal Hurkaru*, 6 March 1837, as reprinted in *Calcutta Monthly Journal*, March, 1837, p. 198.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*

Library Collections

The collections of the Calcutta Public Library constituted from various donations but a large number of books were transferred from the College of Fort William Library which formed the nucleus of the library collections. The library was thrown open with a varied collections, a satisfactory remarked was made regarding its small yet valuable collections of the library which formed its nucleus by the committee in giving result of their investigation of the books available as a nucleus of a Public library, the committee expressed their opinion that few collection of the same extent would be found to contain so many useful books.¹⁰⁹ It had been reported of the addition of books in the library 'the Curators of the public library have received from the college of Fort William the whole of the books of 5,000 volumes, granted by the Government for the use of the library,'¹¹⁰ subsequently upon receiving the volumes, the Curators informed the proprietors and subscribers of the Calcutta Public Library, that the use of the Fort William college books had been made over to them by the Governor of Bengal under the following conditions,

1: that the society shall provide a place and establishment fitting for the reception, care and preservation of the books shall lent them by Government, and if at any time for wants of funds or any other cause the society shall neglect or be unable to do so, that they will redelivers the books to any person whom the Governor of Bengal may depute to receive them.

2: that the assignments shall be subject to the approbation of the Hon'ble the court of Directors, and the books were reclaimable by the Government, and if this approbation be disapproved by that authority.

3: that they shall at all times be opened to the examination of any person the Governor of Bengal may depute to examine them, in order to see that the books are preserved with due care. Upon signing these conditions the Curators got permission to take away the books.¹¹¹

¹⁰⁹ *Calcutta Monthly Journal*, December, 1835, p. 335.

¹¹⁰ *Calcutta Monthly Journal*, 1836, p. 92.

¹¹¹ *Calcutta Monthly Journal*, March, 1836, p. 99.

With regard to the second and third proposed conditions the Curators of the Calcutta Public Library accepted gladly without any qualms but a request was made for an alteration with respect to the first condition,

The Curators do not feel that it would be justifiable in them to bind the members of the society beyond the amount of their perspective subscriptions and the permanency of the society and future maintenance of an establishment for the accommodation and care of the college books, depends on circumstances beyond the control of the present Curators.¹¹²

The Curators therefore requested to suggest that the first conditions be altered as follows –

That the society shall provide a place and establishment fitting for the reception, care and preservation of the books lent to them ‘by Government and if at any time, for want of funds or any other cause, the society shall neglect or be unable to do so, that they will redeliver the books to any person whom the Governor of Bengal may depute to receive them.’¹¹³

The proposal was accepted by the Government who informed them that ‘the Governor of Bengal sees no objection to the alteration propose by the Curators in the first of the three conditions upon which it was proposed to transfer the European books of the college library to the Curators of the public library.’¹¹⁴ Therefore, due to generous Government’s support, the Calcutta Public Library was greatly enriched in its collection of various European literatures and not only the European literatures, it was also evident that addition have been made from time to time to the oriental department for the benefit of native members and readers, whose numerical strength has

¹¹² Letter from W.P. Grant on the part of the curators Calcutta Public Library to I.W. Ouseley, Secretary Fort William College, No.18, *General Proceedings*, 21 December 1835, pp. 442-443.

¹¹³ Letter from W.P. Grant, curator of the Calcutta public library to Secretary of college, dated 17 December, 1835, *General proceedings*, No.18, p. 279.

¹¹⁴ Letter from H.J. Prinsep, Secretary to government, to I.W. Ouseley, Secretary College of Fort William, Dated 23 December, 1835, *General proceedings*, No. 1232, p. 245.

been increasing gradually to 188, as a result it was reported that since 'the collection of vernacular books has also increased, and the library is therefore useful also to those who are not English Scholars.'¹¹⁵ By 1850 several works for the acquisitions of the Gujarati and Mahratta dialects have been procured from Bombay, the Curators were indebted to Sir. H.M. Eliot for the Punjabi book received besides these books, to make another addition to the library an application for Tamil and Telooگو works have been made to the Government of Madras.¹¹⁶

The effort exerted by different individuals in this area was quite astounding and encouraging in bringing to the notice of the library from different sources. Some of the important works which the Curators thought important were recommended to be procured. Some of the important recommendations are incorporated here. C.B. Trevor recommended for 'the purchase of Frederick Schlojel's works and Augustin Schlegel's lectures on dramatic literature together with such of his writings as have been translated into the English language and it was therefore resolved in the same meeting that the above books are purchased and add to the collection of the library.'¹¹⁷ In the like manner Capt. G.T. Marshall also recommended to purchase Adeling's historical sketch of Sanskrit literature, Vaus Kennedy's origin and affinity of language and 'all good treatises on the Sanskrit literature owing to the late abolition of Persian as the language of public business, which will make the requirement of Sanskrit popular' this recommendation was accepted and consequently agreed to be procured from England in case they could not be obtained here.¹¹⁸ The Calcutta Public Library under the signature of the W.P. Grant, Secretary to the Calcutta Public Library also approached the West Bengal Government to send any works at their disposal to be added to the collections of books in the Calcutta Public Library¹¹⁹ Colonial Dunlop on behalf of the Curators of the Calcutta Public Library also wrote to the Government of Bengal the desire to be supplied the index compiled of all the maps and charts belonging to the three presidency and also a copy of the new series of the Government gazette together for the

¹¹⁵ *Annual Report of the Calcutta Public Library* for 1850, printed by Sanders Cones & Co., 1851, p. 7.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 12-13.

¹¹⁷ *The Bengal Hurkaru*, Vol. XXIV. No. 33, new series, Calcutta, Wednesday, 7 August, 1839, p. 140.

¹¹⁸ Letter from George Grant, Secretary to the Mechanics Institute, to Baboo Peary Chand Mitra, Secretary Calcutta Public Library, *The Bengal Hurkaru*, July 13, 1839, p. 68.

¹¹⁹ Letter from W.P. Grant, curator of the Calcutta Public Library, to G.A. Bushby, Secretary to the Government of Bengal 15 July 1840, *General proceedings* No. 3, p. 255.

use of the natives who frequent the public library¹²⁰ there was yet another important request made to the Government of Bengal by the Curators of the Calcutta public under the signature of Captain G.J. Marshall asking for the collection of works relating to the country viz., complete copy of the regulation and acts of the Government, complete list of the circulation of orders of the Sudder Diwani Adaulat and complete list of the Sudder Board. 'We need fiercely said that we have been emboldened in making this request owing to the fostering care and the kind attention which the Government has invariably bestowed on the welfare of this institution and the friendly feeling which it shall cherish towards.'¹²¹

It was no doubt that Calcutta Public Library had evoked a desire to the natives for the books of superior works and keen to taste for the varied literature which were not available in India and above that whose means did allow to procure such books. Therefore, in order that those books be made available for them as well in India, some of the native proprietors of the Calcutta Public Library wrote to the Curators as follows:-

Being desirous that the Calcutta Public Library should contain as complete a collection as possible of the Transactions, Journal and Proceedings of the different learned societies of Great Britain, we beg you will do us a favour to forward to some of them as you may think fit a copy of this application.'¹²²

The natives were of the opinion that since most of the good literatures were not available in India, library was the only window through which the natives can view Europeans literatures in the country. The curators further argued that one of the great objects of formation of this institution was the disseminations of Europeans literature and science in this country. It was therefore, requested to make available those books published in England by different societies for them as well in this library.

¹²⁰ Letter from W.P. Grant, curator of the Calcutta Public Library to G.A. Bushby, Secretary to the Government of Bengal library 5 August 1840, *General proceedings* No. 27, p. 362.

¹²¹ Letter from G.J. Marshall, Curator Calcutta public to G.A. Bushby, Secretary to the Government of Bengal library 29 March, 1843, *General proceeding* No. 27, p. 404.

¹²² *Annual Report of the Calcutta Public Library for 1847 & 1848*, printed by Sanders Cones & Co., 1848, Appendix-G, pp. xxv-xxvi.

As the promotion of the real interests of India, and we may add the happiness of the inhabitants; mainly depend upon the successful prosecution of the efforts which have been made for some years past to foster a taste for the elegant literature and sound knowledge of the west.¹²³

In response to the native proprietors' request, literatures were rapidly pouring in the library as majority of them has conceded to their request. From the Royal Asiatic Society received a very gratifying communication as 'the society will have much pleasure in forwarding copies of their publications as far as the state of their store will allow to be placed in the library and to continue to forward future members of their journal as they are published.'¹²⁴ In the same manner Geological Society of London has also come to the resolution of sending a copy of their journal to the library but the warmest thanks of the members of the Library is due to the 'Peninsular and Oriental Steam Navigation Company for their kindness and liberality and facilities given for enriching the collection of the institution.'¹²⁵ Besides receiving books as a donation from different societies, different individuals also donated their personal collection for the use of the library like Dyce Sombre who had presented to the library some valuable books, in addition to this, it was also reported that two cases of books had arrived from England for the Calcutta Public Library.¹²⁶

One admirable tradition that the library practice was giving away of duplicate books as donation to new libraries set up in Calcutta and its suburbs by voluntary effort. The practice of giving away duplicates books as donation had been practiced in the Calcutta Public Library since earlier days. The committee of curators decided that instead of encumbering the library with duplicates books, periodicals and journals, 'the proper course and one best calculated to further the objects of the Institution would be to present them to Societies established for public benefit. They have therefore, presented a few such periodical to the Howrah Institute and the Sailors' Home' in 1850.'¹²⁷ Calcutta Public Library also presented books and periodicals to the houses of

¹²³ Ibid.

¹²⁴ *Annual Report of the Calcutta Public Library for 1850*, printed by Sanders Cones & Co., 1851, pp. 17-18.

¹²⁵ Ibid., p. 178.

¹²⁶ *The Englishman*, 15 August 1837, p. 1517, at a meeting of proprietors and subscribers to the Calcutta public.

¹²⁷ *Annual Report of the Calcutta Public Library for 1850*, printed by Sanders Cones & Co., p. 18.

Refuge, European troop stationed at Dum Dum & C. and the wounded soldier undergoing treatment at the presidency General Hospital and Fever Hospital besides to the inmates of the Alms' House and the Leper Asylum.'¹²⁸

This practice was continued even after it merged with the Imperial Library. It had been decided that since the 'Metcalf hall contains a number of important standard books the majority of these were also in the Imperial Library. The duplicates and mass of light literature which now encumbers the shelves of the Metcalf hall might form the nucleus of a good circulating library in the northern or native quarter of the town.'¹²⁹ Besides the books from Metcalf Hall, it was suggested that work not required for Imperial Library, which will be mainly work of fictions, should be made over with present book shelves to council who desire to start a circulating library of their own elsewhere, as easiest way of settling matter quickly. However, the donation of these books was on the terms that books should not be sold but used for purposes described.¹³⁰

Thus, the best thanks of the library was due and greatly indebted to the Government of Bengal and different societies and individuals for the presentations and their effort in making this library as extensive as possible thereby truly enriching in its collection. This library also had considerable influence on the growing populace in Calcutta. This impact was reflected in the attempts that were made to established smaller libraries there in later years. The Calcutta Public Library became truly store house of knowledge for the natives as well as people living in the land. These collections later on become a corner stone for the National Library of India as most of its collection formed the nucleus of this library.

¹²⁸ P.T. Nair, *Origin of the National Library of India: Days of the Calcutta Public Library*, Belvidere, Kolkata, 2004, p. 204.

¹²⁹ Demi-official from A.H.L. Fraser, Officiating Secretary to the Government of India, Home Department to E.N. Baker, officiating Secretary to the Government of Bengal, Municipal Department. No. 96.D, Dated 28 February, 1899, Public-A, *Proceeding*, November, 901, p. 5.

¹³⁰ Telegram from the Secretary of State, *Proceeding* No. 250, dated 12 December 1900, Public-A, Home Department, November, 1901, p. 41.

Finance of the Calcutta Public Library

The institution was solely supported by private subscription. The income of the Calcutta Public Library was derived from the membership and subscription's fees and donations which were received time to time from the philanthropies. But the life vein being the subscription of the individual could not guaranteed its survival, eventually it became weak when Europeans members were obliged to withdraw their support to the library following the Indian war of independence in 1857, since then European members started viewing their Indian counterpart with suspicion which ultimately led them to depart from the library . Though library started with a humble amount collected from the members but soon it has been reported that there was considerable increased in the number of subscribers according to the report 'the number of subscribers of Rs.330 each who have already come forward is 55, and about Rs 500 more has been subscribed in donations, making in all a capital of Rs 1700.'¹³¹ The report of the Calcutta Public Library for the year 1847-1848 to 1850 gave a gratifying report regarding the increased in the number of subscribers and subscriptions in the following manner:

There was a phenomenal increased in the number of subscribers averaging about 203 subscribers and the average subscription received was Rs. 910 which was greater than that of any other period. But from December 1847, there was a considerable decreased in the number of subscribers which was in great measure attributable to commercial disaster which oblige several members to withdraw their membership from the library.

But after a long gap of ten years, the report was of congratulation to those who had genuine concern in the library, it was thus reported that number of monthly subscribers has considerably increased in 1857, the average number being 405. The average amount of subscription realized per month was Rs. 1, 026.¹³²

The following table presents a clear picture of the average numbers of subscribers and subscriptions respectively commencing from 1847 to 1872, for the period of 13 years.

¹³¹ *Calcutta Monthly Journal*, December, 1835, p. 336.

¹³² B.S. Kesavan, *India's National Library*, National Library Calcutta, 1997, p. 6.

* From 1850 to 1857 there was steady increased of subscribers in the 4th class and as almost progressive decreased in other classes.

The number of subscribers in the several grades and their averages monthly subscription are given in the table below:

TABLE

Year	Monthly average no. of subscribers							Monthly amount of subscription		
	1 st class	2 nd class	Total	3 rd class	Total	4 th class	Grand total	1 st & 2 nd class (Rs)	4 th class (Rs)	Total
1848	-	-	-	-	211	-	-	902	-	902
1849	63	62	125	106	231	34	265	944	34	978
1850	59	93	152	114	266	94	360	911	144	1,055
*										
1857	52	104	146	82	228	178	406	840	187	1,027
*										
1858	39	85	124	52	176	132	308	840	173	1,013
1862	29	81	110	44	154	142	296	751	169	920
1864	39	106	145	54	199	161	360	819	170	989
1865	29	93	122	50	172	138	310	675	146	821
1867	29	93	122	113	235	-	235	802	-	802
1869	35	88	123	97	220	-	220	800	-	800
1870	35	97	132	101	233	-	233	838	-	838
1871	28	87	115	78	193	-	193	741	-	741
1872	27	87	114	63	177	-	177	177	685	685

Source: Finances of the Calcutta Public Library, Report of the Sub-committee appointed on the 10 February, 1873, Office of Superintendent of Government printing Calcutta, p. 14.

With the same down spiral trend continued even in the following years, the financial position was causing anxiety among the members of the council and to find out ways and means for the improvement of the deteriorating financial position, a sub-committee was formed on 10 February 1873 to look into the matter and submit a report for its remedies.

The financial position of the library could not be restored into its old position with all the means they have in their disposal. Therefore, in 1880 Maharaja Narendra Krishna, president of the Calcutta Public Library approached the Government to extend some financial aid from the public funds for the support and maintenance of the institution, thereby a request for a grant of Rs. 200 a month in aid of the funds of the Calcutta Public Library was put up before the Government.¹³³ But considering the nature of the library which was not purely public, Government failed to comply with the request.

According to the Report of the committee appointed in 1889 to formulate scheme for the administration of the library, there were in 1888, 47 proprietors holding transferable shares in addition to 15 transferable shares in abeyance under Rule XXI, the remaining transferable shares (50 in number) having reverted to library under the rule. There were also 14 non-transferable shares held by proprietors for life. At the end of 1888 there were 149 subscribers, of whom 12 of the first class paid Rs. 6, 61 of second class Rs. 4 and 76 of the third class pay Rs. 2, and subscribers of the third class have no voice in the management of the library but any subscribers may become a life proprietors by making up his subscription to Rs. 500 with interest.¹³⁴

The committee appointed in 1889 to formulate scheme for the administration of the library,

admit that there is much that might be, and ought to be improved in the administration, but in the presence of financial difficulties they are powerless to make such improvements, even when they are mostly called for, and they cannot hoped, without the aid of the

¹³³ Letter from Narendra Krishna, President Calcutta public library, to H.H. Stanfield, private secretary to Lieutenant Governor of Bengal, *Report of the Calcutta Public Library for 1888*, Appendix-H, P.S. D'Rozario & Co., Calcutta, 1889, p. 1.

¹³⁴ Demi-official from A.H.L. Fraser, Officiating Secretary to the Government of India, *Home Department* to E.N. Baker, officiating Secretary to the government of Bengal, Municipal Department, No. 96-D, Dated 28 February, 1899, Public-A, November 1901, p. 9.

Government, to make the institution worthy of its position in the Calcutta Public Library, because they cannot be devoted to increasing its public usefulness apart from the lighter and more entertaining department to which current subscribers necessarily look.¹³⁵

Library Subscribers

The subscribers of the library were initially divided into three classes, first class, second class and the third class who enjoyed different privileges according to the class they belonged but the subscribers of the third class have no voice in the management of the library but any subscribers may become a life proprietors by making up his subscription to Rs. 500 with interest.¹³⁶

There were different entrance rates for different category of classes. At a public meeting on 31 August 1835, a criteria for the eligibility to be either a proprietor or a subscriber of the library was laid down thus resolved that to be a :

Proprietor: every person subscribing 300 rupees in one payment, or in three payments of 100 rupees each 100 rupees being paid down, and the remaining installments at interval of six and twelve months, to be considered proprietor.

The shares of original proprietors subscribing within the period of one twelve month, to be transferable on such fine or conditions as the provisional committee shall determine. The question of transfer of future shares to be left opened to the committee.

Subscriber: the subscription to the Library to be followed:¹³⁷

First Class: - Entrance 20 rupees and 6 rupees per mensem, for every month subsequent to the first. Such a subscriber of two years standing upwards, to be entitled to become share holders, by an additional payment of 200 rupees.

¹³⁵ *Annual Report of the Calcutta Public Library for 1847 & 1848*, printed by Sanders Cones & Co., 1848, p. 7.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*

¹³⁷ *Calcutta Monthly Journal*, October 1835, p. 280

Second Class: - Entrance 16 rupees, and per mensem, for every month subsequent to the first. The Subscribers of this class of 4 years standing to be entitled to become share holder by an additional payment of 200 rupees.

Third Class subscribers: - No entrance fee. A subscription of 2 rupees per mensem payable from the commencement of the first month.

Therefore, on the basis of the above criteria laid down, different classes of readers were created according to the payments made by the individuals and accordingly they could avail the service depending on the type of class they belong. Different classes enjoy different privileges according to the payment made by them. Prince Dwarkanath Tagore became the first proprietor of this library by subscribing Rs.300/- in onetime payment’.

One of the important resolutions taken besides others was ‘that the property of the library be vested in Trustees for the benefits of the shareholders, and that every person subscribing within the period of one twelve month from the 31 August last, to the amount of three hundred rupees each, one hundred rupees being paid down, and the remaining installments at intervals of six and twelve month, be considered a shareholder.’¹³⁸

But there were some trifling opposition with regards to the conditions on which the proprietors and subscribers were admitted in the Calcutta Public Library and suggested that some of the rules be altered in order to avoid injurious consequences ensuing from this.

The objections were found in the letter to Peary Chand Mitra, Librarian, Calcutta Public Library from T. Smith, Dated 9 September 1848, Dum Dum. This letter reads as follows:

I have carefully read the Rules of the Calcutta Public Library, and now proceeds to note down such remarks upon them as occur to me. The body of proprietors seem to me have privileges assigned to them to which they are no means entitled by the sum they pay to the library. It appears that of Sicca Rupees 400, a man entitled himself and his heir and representatives, forever to the use of the library, that is to say he redeems a perpetual annuity of Rs.75 a year, (the subscription of a first class subscriber) by a payment of

¹³⁸ *Calcutta Monthly Journal*, October 1835, p. 282.

Rs.426, or less than six years' purchase, I do not know indeed whether 100 Rs. are not required to be paid when a share holder dies, and his son enters on the possession of the shares, but I rather think this is not the case, as the 3rd regulation respecting proprietors seems to have reference only to the transfers of share by purchase, but even if it be otherwise I think it cannot be questioned that the price paid is out of all reasonable proportion to the value acquired.¹³⁹

Smith suggested that no new entrant should be allowed to enjoy the privileges that his predecessor were entitled. He argued on the following ground:-

If the question were as to the constitution of a new library, I should certainly and very strongly object to the calling into existence at all of such a class as such proprietors. But, as they exist, they are entitled to the protection of their rights which they acquired would certainly recommend however, that no new proprietors admitted on the present footing. Let a man if he will, be permitted to commute his monthly subscription into a fairly equivalent single payment, and let him be called a life subscriber; but let not his interest in the Library be transferable, and let it cease at his death.¹⁴⁰

Therefore, on the recommendation of this letter some Rules were amended accordingly as proposed.

In order to extent of its utility and to make it as the real public library, a 4th class of subscribers was created in 1849 to accommodate many people as possible by opening its door for people from all sections of the society, but the formation of this class had adverse effect on the third class of subscribers.

¹³⁹ *Annual Report of the Calcutta Public Library for 1847 & 1848*, printed by Sanders Cones & Co., 1848, Appendix, pp. xv-xvi

¹⁴⁰ *ibid.*

Until 1849, the third class subscribers were entitled to only one set of books for Rs 2 a month. On the formation of the fourth class at Rs. 1 a month, and a number of persons who were content to receive one set of book at a time, transferred their subscription from the third to the fourth class. So that, while in 1849, there had been 106 third class subscribers in 1865, there were only 50, but in the following year in 1866, when the first class was abolished, the number in the third class at once rose to 120, and it was again gone down to 101 in 1870.¹⁴¹

Therefore 'the opening of the fourth class entitled to have books at their own houses at one rupee per month has diminished the number of readers in the country.'¹⁴²

The council of the library also took consideration not only for the permanent citizens but also for those who were in the city for a brief sojourn, Calcutta being the city of arrival and departure for the Europeans during those days, needed a rule to deal with these types of readers, therefore, a resolution with that respect was proposed in a meeting of proprietors and subscribers in 1836. It was thus,

Proposed by Mr. W.P. Grant seconded by Mr. Dunlop, that with the view of accommodating strangers or temporary resident who wish to avail themselves of the library, first class subscribers be allowed to be 8 Rs. a month and no entrance fee and second class subscribers 6 Rs. and no entrance fee or pay the present rate with entrance fee with their option.¹⁴³

It was evident from the fact presented in the table below that the library was started with members of just five subscribers in 1836, but steadily the number rose to hundred subscribers within a span of three years. Considering its humble beginning it was considered a very impressive milestone to have ever achieved. Given below is a statement of receipts and disbursement from 11 February 1838 to January 1839, presented in the annual meeting of the subscribers and the Curators held on 4 march 1839, which 'states that with respect to the occasion of subscribers the circulation of books and the collection made in every month, the

¹⁴¹ Finances of the Calcutta Public Library, *Report of the Sub-committee Appointed on the 10 February, 1873*, Office of Superintendent of Government printing Calcutta, p. 15.

¹⁴² *Annual Report of the Calcutta Public Library for 1850*, printed by Sanders Cones & Co., 1850, p. 8

¹⁴³ The Bengal Hurkaru, Vol-XVIII, No. 34 (new series) Vol. LXX No.658 (old series) 6 August 1836, p. 36.

operation of the last year, exhibit a decided superiority, and cannot but be gratifying to those who are interested in the prosperity of the institution. In order to establish the correctness of this remark, the following tabular statement collected from the reports furnished at the different annual meetings had been sub joint.

TABLE

1836	There were subscribers	5	And the amount receive per month	Rs.22	0	0
1837	Ditto	38	Ditto	Rs.200	0	0
1838	Ditto	59	Ditto	Rs.310	0	0
1839	There were	100	Ditto	Rs.498	0	0

Amount of subscription collected from:-

September 1835 to February 1839	Rs.	0	0
	2193		
From 19 February 1837 to 10 February 1838	Rs.	0	0
	3325		
From 11 February 1838 to 31 January 1839	Rs.	0	0
	5211		
The average monthly collection of the			
Last year was about	C.Rs.	2	1
	453		
And that of the year before last	Rs.277	1	1
Showing an increased monthly collection of	Rs.176	1	0

The circulation of books from February 1837 to January 1838 was	8700
volumes	
Periodicals	1127
Total	9827
Ditto from February 1838 to January 1839 volumes	14995
Periodicals	1721
Total	16716

Source: Calcutta Monthly Journal, March 1839, p.142.

The tabular statement shows a matter of encouragement. It was signed that people started to appreciate the advantages resulting from this library.¹⁴⁴ Even though the library was intended for one and all, however with regard to admission to the library there was some reservation as ‘the curators are of the opinion that some restriction should be put on the admission of persons who may be known to be of questionable character, and likewise on the re-admission of parties whose previous conduct to the library may warrant their exclusion.’¹⁴⁵ The curators further asserts that, ‘the curators shall be at liberty not to enroll the name of any person as a subscriber whose known public character or past conduct toward the library may warrant his non Admission.’¹⁴⁶

Administration of the Calcutta Public Library

From the very beginning the European and natives were involved in the administration. Initially Europeans outnumbered natives but by 1860s natives began to outnumber Europeans. Unlike other institutions, Calcutta public had a privilege to have the patronage of both the communities of Europeans as well as the natives. With the Calcutta Public Library all set, the need for the custodian to take care of the books and other necessary duties calls for the appointment of the librarian and thus observed that:

¹⁴⁴ *Calcutta Monthly Journal*, March 1839, p. 142.

¹⁴⁵ *Annual Report on the Calcutta public library for 1856*, printed by P.S. D’Rozario & Co., Calcutta, p. 9.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

the subject of the Establishment necessary for doing the duties and taking charge of the books and other things.. , has engaged the particular attention of the committee, and they recommend that a Librarian be appointed on such a salary as will secure the continual and exclusive of a competent person: and they have ascertained by enquiry that such a person would cheerfully undertake these duties for a salary of Rs 200 by the month.¹⁴⁷

With the number of subscriber on the rise by the day, the appointment of a librarian took precedence over other matter as a result the appointment of a temporary librarian has been decided and thus reported that since ‘the number of proprietors of the library is rapidly increasing Hough has been appointed as temporary librarian, and permanent one will be appointed as soon as circumstances justify such an application of the funds.’¹⁴⁸ The committee further recommend that, ‘for the purpose of insuring attendance at the library from the early hour in the morning until a late hour at night, two under-librarians be appointed one from East Indian and other a Hindoo.’¹⁴⁹

After a year of its establishment with Hough as it temporary librarian, a permanent posts of the Librarian and Sub-Librarian have been decided by the curators ‘after a careful consideration of the merits of the different candidates, who presented themselves, have appointed Stacy to the office of Librarian. They also appointed Peery Chund Mitter to the office of Sub-Librarian.’¹⁵⁰ It was contemplated that for the post of librarian a salary of 200 rupees per month would be ideal, however, ‘Stacy’s liberal offer to do gratuitously all the laborious work, preparatory to opening the library, they were glad to be able to secure his services, for this purpose at 100 rupees per month, or half the price it had been thought right to affix to the situation he holds.’¹⁵¹ The appointment of Peary Chund Mitter to the post of Assistant Librarian was reported early December 1835, to this effect, the ‘Englishman’ on 9 December, carried as, ‘Pereechund, an intelligent Hindu youth, educated at the Hindu college has been appointed

¹⁴⁷ *Calcutta Monthly Journal*, December, 1835, p. 335.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 371.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 335.

¹⁵⁰ *Calcutta Monthly Journal*, March, 1836, p. 99.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*

Assistant Librarian.¹⁵² After the resignation of Stacy in 1848, Peary Chund Mitter was promoted to the office of Librarian and he faithfully remained in the office till 1866. After his resignation as Secretary and Librarian, Gopee Kissen Mitra was appointed as Deputy Secretary and Librarian on 1 June 1867.

The duties of the Librarian and Deputy Secretary¹⁵³ as enumerated are given below in the following manner:-

1. Exercising in a general supervision and entering over the establishment.
2. Carrying on communication with the committee of the Curators.
3. Receiving invoices of new books, periodicals and newspapers from the book agent.
4. Obtaining delivering order and sending for the case of books & c. from custom house bi-monthly.
5. Entering the books & c. in the minute book of the committee of selection as per invoices.
6. Calling the meeting of the committee and attending them.
7. Returning the books rejected and entering those written in book kept for the purpose and classifying press marking and cataloguing the same.
8. Receiving English newspaper by its trail and keeping an entry of the same.
9. Receiving presentation of books & c. entering the due in a book and in some cases acknowledging them.
10. Applying for presentation to the Government and private individual.
11. Carrying on correspondence with the book agents, booksellers in England, proprietors, subscribers & c.
12. Having all account for payment as well as those of subscribers wishing to become proprietors, made out and examine.
13. Seeing all payments made.
14. Drawing interest on Government securities or signature.
15. Drawing cheques and getting them signed.

¹⁵² P.T. Nair, *Origin of the National Library of India: Days of the Calcutta public library*, National Library of India, Belvedere, Kolkata, 2004, p. 183.

¹⁵³ Finances of the Calcutta Public Library, *Report of the Sub-committee Appointed on the 10 February, 1873*, Office of Superintendent of Government printing Calcutta, pp. 42-43.

16. Reviewing sales and answering references.
17. Doing some of the duties of assistance when the later is absent.
18. Examining the books and periodicals requiring binding, rebinding or repairing, keeping entries of the same in a book, delivering them to the binder and noting their return.
19. Drawing up the annual report, submitting it to the committee of Curators and passing through the press.
20. Calling the general meetings and keeping a record of their proceedings.
21. Advertising new books and getting steps of the same.
22. Keeping the attendance book.
23. Preparing and submitting for approval from time to time list of novels and other works for the sale and sending them to the Curators.
24. Selling all magazines, newspapers and packing cases.
25. Binding up the interleaf catalogue.
26. Looking after the collection.
27. Instituting suits in the small case court when necessary.
28. Looking after the adjustment of the account of books outstanding.
29. Looking after the state of the buildings and furniture.

The following are the proposed Rules for the management submitted for consideration:

1. The management of the library is entrusted to a committee of three Curators chosen yearly by the proprietors and subscribers of all classes,
2. All accounts are to be audited and approved by the Curators and submitted to the yearly meeting of the proprietors and subscribers.
3. All proceedings of the Curators shall be entered in a book, which shall always be on the table of the library, for the inspection of the proprietors and the subscribers.
4. No resolution of the Curators, disposing of any funds of the society, in exceeding in amount 1000 Rs, shall be carried into effect until the accounts have been on the table of the library for the space of one week, nor, if a special meeting is required for considering any such resolution, until it is confirmed by the meeting.

5. The Curators have the power of suspending from his privileges any proprietors or subscribers, for gross misbehaviour or breach of the rules or byelaws. In every such case, the Curators shall forth with call on a special meeting, to which the case must be reported.

6. The Curators have the power of making such byelaws, for the management of the library consistent with the rules, as they may consider necessary, we shall be binding on the proprietors and subscribers and all persons using the library. The Curators also have the power of altering or rescinding any such byelaws. All such byelaws or alteration are to be reported to the next general meetings.¹⁵⁴

Some changes were made with respect to the first rule of the management of the Library, on the suggestion of Smith, who observed that:

it cannot be for the good of the library that the whole management is entrusted to the proprietors and first class subscribers: so as I can understand these two classes alone are entitle to vote on any question whatsoever regarding the affairs of the Library .Now it does appears to me, that both justice and expediency dictate that all subscribers should have some voice in the regulation of the library affairs.¹⁵⁵

Therefore, following this suggestion, it was later changed from only first class subscribers to all the subscribers of all classes. Besides the above committee, sub-committees were also formed in order to divide the work among the members.

A sub-committee was appointed who would be responsible for the reception for the library; for the purchased of books shelves and furniture of every necessary description. The following persons constituted in this sub-committee were: Sir J.P. Grant, Captain Thomson, R. Scott Thomson, C.W. Smith, Russomoy Dutt and Wale Byrn.¹⁵⁶

¹⁵⁴ *Annual Report of the Calcutta Public Library for 1847 & 1848*, printed by Sanders Cones & Co., 1848, Appendix, pp. viii-ix.

¹⁵⁵ *Annual Report of the Calcutta Public Library for 1847 & 1848*, printed by Sanders Cones & CO., 1848, Appendix, p.xvi

¹⁵⁶ *Calcutta Monthly Journal, Asiatic News*, October, 1835, p. 282.

Another sub-committee was formed to consider and report on the description of books, necessary in the first instance to be procured and the expenses to be incurred upon those books including periodicals. The following persons were included in this committee. They were:

Sir Edward Ryan, Rev. James Charles, James Prinsep, Woollaston, Captain D.L. Richardson, T. Dickens, W.P. Grant, Rev. Dr. St. Ledger.¹⁵⁷

‘The librarian was the *Ex-officio* secretary to all the committees and he also acted as the collector of subscription from the members.’¹⁵⁸

With the finances of the library got deteriorated, the members were anxious, in order to revive it, it was resolved to set up a council which was to be composed of proprietors and subscribers at a meeting of the members of the Calcutta Public Library held on the 12 May, 1873. And this council would be entrusted with the general management of the institution. Subsequently, the committee of Curators elected from the proprietors was abolished and it was replaced by a 14 member’s council in 1873. Among the native members, Raja Ramanath Tagore was elected as a vice-president, Jogananda Mookherjee, Jay Gopal Sen and Jadunath Ghose were other Indians in the council. In the history of Calcutta Public Library, a landmark was created when Maharaja Narendra became the first Indian president of the council in 1877 and Mahendralal Sarkar as the vice-president of the year.¹⁵⁹

The newly constituted committee recommended some significant changes in the constitution of the library, ‘the management of the council is entrusted to the council consisting of 12 members, of whom 8 shall be proprietors and 4 shall be either first or second class subscribers of not less than one year’s standing.’¹⁶⁰

The growth of library was characterized not only in the increased in the number of readers and members but also in the collection of books. Its collections have been continually expanded through various sources. The Library had a remarkable progressed in the first phase of

¹⁵⁷ *Calcutta Monthly Journal*, Asiatic News, October, 1835, p. 282.

¹⁵⁸ B.S. Kesavan, *India’s National Library*, National Library Calcutta, 1997, p. 5.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

its establishment, i.e. 1835 to 1857. Various new policies and plans have been initiated and implemented with great success to run this library on modern lines. There was massive involvement of natives in the administration of the library in the later stage of the Calcutta Public Library. However, the later phase of the Calcutta Public Library was marred by financial problems which consequently led to its decline and finally amalgamated to the Imperial Library. In spite of the valiant effort put up by the newly formed committee, there was no significant improvement in the financial condition of the library. As a result it was best contemplated to amalgamate to the Imperial Library.

CHAPTER-4

AMALGAMATION OF CALCUTTA PUBLIC LIBRARY TO THE IMPERIAL LIBRARY

CHAPTER-4

Amalgamation of Calcutta Public Library to the Imperial Library

The Calcutta Public Library from its inception in 1835 till 1850 expanded to a great extent and flourished over the decades. During this period, the number of library collections and subscribers increased substantially. But, due to lack of participation and widespread involvement of the local population and most importantly lack of financial support from the Government, this library remained largely exclusive in nature and therefore could not sustain for long. This exclusiveness, among other reasons, was perhaps a major factor in the failure of the library in terms of sustaining itself. Another factor which is believed to have contributed in accelerating the process of its decline was the establishment of other small public libraries in many parts of the city and consequently its significance as the only public library in Calcutta was to a great extent minimized.¹⁶¹ Immensely valuable experience, however, was gained with the failure of this library. It was realized that without adequate participation of people at all levels and most importantly in the absence of Government support, a public library could not sustain for long. Therefore, finally it was inevitable to take grant in aid from the Government in order to save this library from dying.

In order to find ways and remedies for the deteriorating financial condition of the library, a Finance Committee was appointed on February 10, 1873. The committee suggested several changes and one of the admirable remedies suggested among others was a reduction of expenditure without curtailing the supply of books.¹⁶² Unfortunately, nothing short of a curtailment of privileges could remove the existing ever worsening financial condition of the library. It was thus, reported that 'the council regret that they are unable to report any improvement in the financial position of the library and unless its income is increased or received substantial aids from the Government it will be impossible to maintain the library

¹⁶¹ B.S. Kesavan, *India's National Library*, Calcutta, 1961, p. 9.

¹⁶² *Finance of the Calcutta Public Library*, Report of the Sub-committee appointed on the 10 February, 1873, office of Superintendent of Government Printing, Calcutta, Appendix, p. 5.

efficiently for any length of time.’¹⁶³The council of the Calcutta Public Library was not left with many options but to turn to the Government to enable the Library to overcome its financial difficulties. As a result, on 9 March 1880, Maharaja Narendra Krishna, president of Calcutta Public Library approached the Government for the financial aid by quoting the following reasons:-

in most civilized countries, public libraries are subsidized if not wholly supported by the Government or municipal bodies of the towns of those countries. In this presidency, however, no such support is given to the only institution of its kind. A large portion of the present proprietors consist of natives, and the library affords the only means by which the majority of natives can peruse or study standard European works not procurable anywhere else in the country.¹⁶⁴

In this report placing it on the same footing with the Agricultural and Horticultural Society of India, he also requested the Government ‘to make a liberal monthly pecuniary grant to the library, that the council will be enabled to render help to the institution and become more useful to the public at large so that it may become worthy of the capital of this great buyer.’¹⁶⁵

But considering the nature of the library which was not purely public, Government failed to comply with the request, subsequently, the council of the Calcutta Public Library was also intimated regarding the Government’s inability to accept their appeal for the Government grant in aid. A. Mackenzie, Secretary to the Government explained the position of the Government by citing the following reasons,

in view of the unsatisfactory features in the management of the library..... the Lieutenant Governor does not think that the

¹⁶³ *Annual Report of the Calcutta Public Library for 1888*, Appendix-H, P.S. D’Rozario & Co., Calcutta, 1889, p. 9.

¹⁶⁴ Letter from Narendra Krishna president Calcutta Public Library to H.H. Stanfield, private secretary to Governor of Bengal, *Annual Report of the Calcutta Public Library for 1888*, Appendix-H, P.S. D’Rozario & Co., Calcutta, 1889, p. 1.

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

Government would be warranted in giving aid to the institution from public funds while it continues on its present footings. He could only consent to do so if the whole management of the library were thoroughly reform and Government were given a potential voice in its administration.¹⁶⁶

Nonetheless, the Government was willing in giving aid on the condition that,

if the proprietors and subscribers were willing to place the management in the hands of a small board, consisting of the director of public institution as president with two members nominated by Government, two by the proprietors and one by the subscribers, and the lieutenant governor would be willing to give substantial aid, and assist the board in placing the institution on a proper basis, and making it useful to all classes of the community.¹⁶⁷

Interestingly, the council of the Calcutta Public Library was not willing to accept the terms proposed to it especially regarding management and thus informed the Government and withdrew their applications for the Government grants.¹⁶⁸

On the other hand, the pecuniary position of the library further deteriorated and the affairs of the library could no longer be carried out satisfactorily without the support of the Government. Therefore, the appeal for the grant was renewed once again after five years. But the response from the Government was rather cold and they advised the council to approach the Calcutta Corporation. The council of the library was not lucky this time either, the Corporation

¹⁶⁶ Letter from A. Mackenzie, Secretary to the Governor of Bengal, General and Revenue Department to Gopee Kissan Mitter, Secretary and Librarian Calcutta Public Library, *Annual Report of the Calcutta Public Library for 1888*, Appendix-H, P.S. D'Rozario & Co., Calcutta, 1889, p. 4.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid.

¹⁶⁸ Letter from Gopee Kissan Mitter, Secretary and Librarian, Calcutta Public Library to A. Mackenzie, Secretary to the Government of Bengal, General and Reserve Department, Dated 27 October 1889, *Annual Report of the Calcutta Public Library for 1888*, Appendix-H, P.S. D'Rozario & Co., Calcutta, 1889, p. 6.

in a letter on 22 March, 1887 informed the council of the library their inability on the ground that 'the population which uses free public libraries in Europe was scarcely existing in Calcutta, it will hardly be justifiable in supporting a free library which will be used almost exclusively by wealthier members of the country who now subscribed to it and will probably cease to do so.'¹⁶⁹

Therefore in order to qualify for the Government grant, A. Mackenzie, Secretary to the Government on December 15, 1885 submitted a plan for the re-organization of the library. However, under the reorganization, proprietors could practically retain all valuable privileges which they at present possessed. The proposals are as follows:

1. The library and all its appurtenances to be made over to the Municipality of Calcutta, to be maintained by it in perpetuity as a Free Library for the towns and subscribers, to which all respectable citizens shall be admitted for purposes of reading and study on the premises, all invested fund so transferred to be subject to any trust or charge now existing.

2. This free library to be supplemented by a "lending department" or open only to subscribers and to the holders of "share" in the old (present) public library.

3. The management of the Library, in all departments to be vested in a council composed as follows:-

(1) Six nominees of the Municipality.

(2) Four elected representatives of the proprietors of the old (present) Library.

(3) Two nominees of the Bengal Government (their task was to look after the interests of the Government in the library especially in terms of library collection and to see to the due appropriation of grants).

¹⁶⁹ Subodh Kumar Mookerjee, *Development of Libraries and Library Science in India*, the World Press Private Limited, Calcutta, 1969, p. 25.

4. Transferable shares of proprietors of the old (present) library to continue to be transferable, but, without registration fee or fine of transfer, the holders to have in Lending Department all the privileges of first subscribers.
5. The Free Library to be opened from 6am to 10pm daily; the cost of the books, papers, and periodicals establishment and lightning to be borne by the Municipality.
6. The lending Department to be opened between the hours of 10am and 5pm on all week days; the cost of books, etc. and all establishments to meet from subscription and the proceeds of any invested funds made over to from Municipality by the old (present) Library which were not subject to any specific trust.
7. The Municipality to be empowered to levy a Library rate, not exceeding one pie in the rupee of the town assessment, for the maintenance of the Free Library and repair of the building, etc.
8. The Bengal Government to be invited to contribute towards the establishment of the Free Library by providing suitable accommodation for the Agricultural and Horticultural Society, either in connection with the economic Museum or elsewhere as may but meet the wishes of that society. Failing this the Municipality to be empowered to expropriate by purchase the society's share in the Metcalf Hall.'

The maintenance of the Free Library, in the opinion of A. Mackenzie was the responsibility of the Municipality and therefore the expenditure towards its maintenance should be borne by this body. However, it was believed that the Government of Bengal, if approached, would not hesitate to lend its help and support to the Library which would greatly help to reduce the burden on the public and thereby burden on Town would be infinitesimal. It was estimated that the maintenance cost of the library would be Rs. 20, 000 per year. A. Mackenzie suggested that Municipality should be empowered to levy a library cess not exceeding one pie. A one pie

on the present assessment would realize about Rs. 69, 000. It would probably suffice to levy it only one in two years.¹⁷⁰

Calcutta Public Library under Calcutta Municipality

The proposals put up by A. Mackenzie was found favourable to the proprietors and subscribers of the Calcutta Public Library and therefore it was resolved unanimously to accept the scheme proposed by the committee in their report dated 15 March 1889, for a joint management of the Calcutta Public Library, but the acceptance was upon certain conditions as follows,

any alteration of, an addition to, the present rules of the library which may be needed to give effect to the scheme be subject to the approval of the proprietors and subscribers, the council would suggest the following modifications of the proposed allocation of charges:-

- a. That the cost of the establishment, repairs and tax of the building, keeping of catalogue, stationary, printing, lighting and all ordinary expenses of the library be charged in equal proportion to the sum in aid granted by the Government or municipality, and to the income of the library as derived from all other sources.
- b. The cost of the two proposed departments in new book cases, furniture and fittings of the reading room, gas fitting, new building of all the books requiring it, and the expense of preparing a proper general catalogue, to be charged as extraordinary expenses to the sum of Rs. 10,000 which the report states will be required to meet the initial outlay necessary to bring the scheme to working order.¹⁷¹

¹⁷⁰ Letter from A. Mackenzie, proprietor of Calcutta Public Library, to the president of the council Calcutta Public Library, Dated 15 December 1885, *Annual Report of the Calcutta Public Library for 1888*, Appendix-H, P.S. D'Rozario & Co., Calcutta, 1889, p. 19.

¹⁷¹ Letter from Narendra Krishna, President Calcutta Public Library to under secretary, Governor of Bengal, Dated 11 July 1889, *Annual Report of the Calcutta Public Library for 1890*, p. 10

With the acceptance of these conditions, the Library was formally transferred to the Calcutta Municipality on the 20 April, 1890. Under the new arrangement, the management of the library was under the commissioners of the Municipal Corporation. The corporation had certain conditions on the basis of which they agreed to undertake the future management of the Library.

The Government in a step towards recognition of the newly constituted library gave a grant of Rs. 5000 for the first year as an initial outlay. With respect to this sanction, it was reported that 'as regard to the initial expenditure of Rs.10,000 lieutenant Governor is willing to sanction a grant of Rs. 5000 during the year 1890-91, and to undertake thereafter to add a further sum equal to the total of any private contribution not exceeding Rs. 5000, which may have been calculated within that year towards the objects referred to by the chairman of Corporation.'¹⁷² Besides this, it was also reported that the council of the library could be able to raise the sum of Rs. 3,488 from the public,¹⁷³ and grant from the Municipality was Rs. 8, 000 for the annual purchase of books under this new settlement.¹⁷⁴ The Government of Bengal desired that the books available in their custody be placed in the care of the Calcutta Public Library in order to make available to the public as a result it was advice that 'the book received by the Government under Act XXV of 1867 and now deposited in the library attached to the secretariat, but they are not practically available to the public. It is contemplated by Section II of the Act that this book should be deposited in a public library and it has been decided that they should be kept in the Calcutta Public Library as the best way to make them available to the public at large'¹⁷⁵ and accordingly a request was also made to the Calcutta Public Library 'that the necessary arrangement may be made for placing the books in the custody of the library. It must be

¹⁷² Letter from P. Nolan, Secretary to the Government of Bengal to president Calcutta Public Library, *Annual Report of the Calcutta Public Library for 1890*, General Department, Miscellaneous, No. 351, Dated 19 February 1890, p. 12.

¹⁷³ Letter from H. Lee, President Calcutta Public Library to the Government of Bengal, Dated 2 May 1891, *Annual Report of the Calcutta Public Library for 1891*, Appendix-D, P.S. D'Rozario & Co., Calcutta, 1892, p. viii.

¹⁷⁴ Subodh Kumar Mookerjee, *Development of Libraries and Library Science in India*, the World Press Private Limited, Calcutta, 1969, p. 25.

¹⁷⁵ Letter from Maude, Officiating under Secretary to the Government of Bengal to the president Calcutta public library, *General Department*, dated 26 June 1890, p. xliii.

understood however that the managing committee of the library should not allow this books, when placed in their custody to be removed or lent out on any consideration.’¹⁷⁶

Under the re-organization of the library, the management of the library was in the hands of the new council consisting of six members representing the Calcutta Corporation and six representing the proprietors and subscribers. President and vice-president were also chosen from the two categories.¹⁷⁷ Lee from the Calcutta Corporation and Raja Narendra Krishna from the Calcutta Public Library were selected as the first president and Vice-president respectively.¹⁷⁸ Dr. Mahendra Lal Sarkar and Maulavi Seraj-ul-Islam were two among the six nominees from the Calcutta Municipality.¹⁷⁹

Regarding the constitution of the newly formed committee, it was hinted that even though the Government of Bengal has large stake in the library, it was not represented in the newly formed committee, therefore it was ‘recommended that Babu Hara Prasad Sastri as a fit person to be added to the committee to represent the interest of the Government.’¹⁸⁰

This decision was communicated to the council for their consideration and opinion regarding whether the recommendation of Babu Hara Prasad Sastri, as the Government representative in the council was acceptable or not. Therefore the council was requested to state as soon as possible for the information of the Lieutenant-Governor whether there was any objection on the part of the council of the Calcutta Public Library to the appointment of Babu Hara Prasad Sastri, Librarian, Bengal Library, as the Government representative in the council.’¹⁸¹

¹⁷⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷⁷ *Annual Report of the Calcutta public library for 1891 to 1892*, P.S. D’Rozario & Co., Calcutta, 1892, p. 2.

¹⁷⁸ Subodh Kumar Mookerjee, *Development of Libraries and Library Science in India*, the World Press Private Limited, Calcutta, 1969, p. 25.

¹⁷⁹ P.T. Nair, *Origin of the National Library of India: Days of the Calcutta Public Library, Belvidere*, Kolkata, 2004, p. 196.

¹⁸⁰ Letter from D.A. Croft, Director of Public Instruction, Bengal to the Secretary to Government of Bengal, *General Department*, No. 2537, Dated 30 April 1891, Calcutta, p. x.

¹⁸¹ Letter from W. Moude, Under Secretary to the Government of Bengal to the president, Calcutta public library, *General Department*, Miscellaneous No.894, dated 24 July 1891, Calcutta, p. xiii.

The Government repeatedly inquired in this matter, it was an important step for the Government as it would ensure that their interests were represented in the library considering the fact that they were a big stakeholder in this. The Government also wanted acceptance of its representative by all members of the committee to ensure that there was no conflict. Unfortunately, the acceptance could not be confirmed earlier as desired by the Government due to the inability to convene the meeting of proprietors and subscribers. However, the council assured the Government that when the meeting took place the question will be reconsidered and Maharajah Sir Narendra Krishna Bahadur, the vice president of the council guaranteed that he will ensure the unconditional acceptance of the nomination of Babu Hara Prasad Sastri as the Government representative in the council of the library.¹⁸²

It was soon informed the Government that the council has finally accepted the nomination of Babu Hara Prasad Sastri, Librarian, Bengal library as the Government representative on the council of the Calcutta Public Library at a special meeting of the proprietors and subscribers of the Library, the nomination of Babu Hara Prasad Sastri, Librarian, Bengal library as the Government representative on the council of the Calcutta Public Library was accepted, subject to the proviso, that while, Pandit Sastri's¹⁸³ counsel and co-operation would be thankfully received in all matters concerning the management of the library, in cases of any material differences of opinion among the members, his vote should only be counted when the subject of discussion be such as relate in any way to the Bengal Library to be replaced, in the custody of the council the Calcutta Public Library, for the benefit of the public.'¹⁸⁴

The council of the Calcutta Public Library further assured the Government that since the other body agreed to accept Babu Hara Prasad Sastri's nomination, they will also gladly follow suit. It was thus assured that, 'The Calcutta Corporation, the other half of the managing body of the library, having also agreed to accept Pandit

¹⁸² Letter from Bipin Chandra Pal, Secretary, Calcutta public library to under secretary to the Government of Bengal, *General Department*, Miscellaneous Branch, Dated 26 January 1892, P.S. D'Rozario & Co., Calcutta, 1892 p. xvii.

¹⁸³ Hara Prasad Sastri is also referred to as Pandit Sastri in the *proceedings*.

¹⁸⁴ Letter from H. Lee, president Calcutta public Library to the Officiating Secretary to the Government of Bengal. General Department, Miscellaneous No. 894, Dated 13 August 1891, *Annual Report of the Calcutta Public Library*, 1891, P.S. D'Rozario & Co., Calcutta, 1892 appendix-D, p. xiii.

Sastri's as a member of the council of the Calcutta Public Library, his nomination will be gladly accepted by the present council as soon as it is duly notified.¹⁸⁵

The conditions put forward by the council of the Calcutta Public Library was not acceptable to the Government which informed that,

the Lieutenant Governor is unable to accept the conditions of which the proprietors and subscribers of the Calcutta Public Library have expressed their willingness to accept Babu Hara Prasad Sastri, Librarian, Bengal Library, as the Government representatives on the council and that unless the Babu is admitted unconditionally to the council, he cannot be appointed at all.¹⁸⁶

The Government refused the conditions made by the council, as the Government representative would have no power as such in the daily decision making process of the library. Since the Government had a large hand in the resurrection of the library, they were able to make the council agreeable to their point of view. Hence after prolonged negotiations with the library council, Babu Hari Prasad Sastri was finally co-opted on the council as the Government representative.

Under the new arrangement the library had to maintain a free reading room for the use of the public which was supplemented by public new room which was largely used by visitors from all classes. The number of users was growing steadily it was double than that of the last year, thus clearly proving the growing usefulness of their department.¹⁸⁷ A big room belonging to the Agri-Horticulture society was acquired on payment of Rs. 800 per year for the purpose of Reading Room, which was opened to the public in July 1890 and this soon became so popular that number of readers visiting the library was considerably increased. As a result in March 1891

¹⁸⁵ Ibid.

¹⁸⁶ Letter from W. Moude, Under Secretary to the Government of Bengal to the president, Calcutta public library, General Department, Miscellaneous Branch, No.240T/G, Dated 24 september1891, *Annual Report of the Calcutta Public Library*, 1891, P.S. D'Rozario & Co., Calcutta, p. xiv.

¹⁸⁷ *Annual Report of the Calcutta Public Library for 1891 to 1892* .P.S. D'rozario & Co., Calcutta, 1892, p. 2.

the average number of readers attending the reading room per day was 80.7. Interestingly, separate records of the European and Indian readers were maintained. In March 1891, 1,465 Europeans and 958 Indians attended the library but surprisingly the position was reversed in the following year.¹⁸⁸

The area where incredible improvement was found in the increased of the number of subscribers which stood in the average number of subscribers during the year was 117 paying Rs. 392, against 109 paying Rs. 355 of the previous year, showing an increase both in number and earnings.¹⁸⁹ This made the library not only public goods but also a very profitable venture. By opening reading rooms to the public, the library was able to increase the number of subscribers as well as its own rich and fame.

The first and the foremost task undertaken by the committee after the re-organization of the library was the appointment of the librarian who could bring a new outlook and instil new life to the library. The committee wanted to introduce a new blood and a younger man to direct the management of the institution. Subsequently, the post of the librarian was advertised on the scale of 100-10-200 and there was an overwhelming response to the advertisement for the post which put the council in dilemma as to whom to choose among the different candidates who had applied for the post. This reaction was not due to the financial aspect of the position but rather this position allowed cultural growth as well as a chance to form acquaintances with the political, intellectual elite both European and Indians who were patrons of the library. After careful consideration of the merits of the different candidate the council selected Bipin Chandra Pal for the post and he joined the library as Librarian on 20th August, 1890.¹⁹⁰

Although Pal as such did not have references he was selected on the basis of a lecture that he had attached to the application. This impressed some members of the council especially Beveridge and one of the first jobs that Bipin Chandra Pal undertook after joining the library as a librarian was the compilation of library catalogue on the suggestion of Beveridge. A general list of books alphabetically arranged according to author's name with copious detailed cross references under the subject heading, was made and thus what is called a dictionary catalogue

¹⁸⁸ B.S. Kesavan, *India's National Library*, National Library Calcutta, 1961, p. 11.

¹⁸⁹ Ibid.

¹⁹⁰ Ibid.

was prepared for the Calcutta Public Library. This catalogue was later published in 1898. The cataloguing of books was an important step in the history of the library.

Unfortunately Bipin Chandra Pal did not stay long in the office due to differences of opinion with the management. He was serving twelve masters and there were a few who made life difficult for him by exerting their authority over him individually time and again. Although the individual members could not instruct him, a few of them treated him as their personal servant. He was also accused of 'misuse' of library funds. He resigned after one year and six month of service.¹⁹¹

Radha Raman Mitra was appointed as the next librarian; he was the nephew of Peary Chand Mitra. After him there were a number of other librarians who served for short terms. What is important is that the Calcutta Public Library was the first to introduce pensions and gratuities to their retiring employees in the private sector during the colonial days. This made the Calcutta Public Library a model employer and thus heralded a new era of employer-employee relation.

The condition of the library could not be revived even after the reorganization of the management. The condition of the library continued to decline gradually which was largely attributable to the lack of sympathy of the Municipal authorities. It failed entirely to shoulder its responsibility and besides that it also did not levy the library cess which was suggested by Mackenzie. A sum of Rs. 8, 000 which was granted per year by the Municipality towards the maintenance of the library was found to be inadequate considering the growing number of readers.¹⁹² Therefore, the best solution contemplated was the following,

the removal of the Metcalf Hall is no doubt fraught with many difficulties, but there is strong consensus of opinion that the present condition of the public library is grave scandal, and that it is impossible to remove the abuses without placing the institution under state control. The amalgamation of the libraries seems the best solution of the difficult problem. By a judicious expenditure of money and by proper administration the two libraries might be

¹⁹¹ Bimal Kumar Dutta, *Libraries and Librarianship of ancient and Medieval India*, Atma Ram & Sons, Delhi, 1970, p. 102

¹⁹² B.S. Kesavan, *India's National Library*, National Library Calcutta, 1961, p. 11.

converted into a great state library, worthy of the capital of an empire.¹⁹³

The Imperial Library

The condition of the Calcutta Public Library did not improve in spite of the support rendered by the Government and the Calcutta Municipality. The re-organization of the management also did not bring about any improvement in the deteriorating condition of the library.

Fortunately, the library found a saviour in Curzon who at the critical juncture came to India as the Governor General. On arriving Calcutta, one of the important jobs that he undertook was inspecting some of the Government offices and public buildings in and around the city. At this he came across two libraries which had rich and valuable collections that would be a real treasure for those scholars and students who were in dire need of it. These libraries were badly in need of funds, they were treasure house of knowledge for the public yet their condition was very pathetic.

One of the libraries he visited was Imperial library which was formed in 1891 by combining a number of secretariat libraries. This library was used by the superior officers in the Government but the facility of borrowing books was provided to all non-officials as well with prior permission from the head of any department of the Government.

The other Library visited by Curzon was the Calcutta Public Library which was immensely rich in its collections but needed urgent care. Curzon was disappointed to see the miserable condition of the books which was a treasure of the library. In order to preserve these valuable collections, it was suggested that the Imperial library and the Calcutta Public Library should be amalgamated, and the foundation of a library must be laid similar to the library of the British museum. The Calcutta Public Library which occupied the upper portion of the Metcalf Hall was in many aspects suitable for a state library, and if the whole building was taken over by

¹⁹³ *Home Department, Public-A, No. 231-302, November 1901, p. 6*

the Government.¹⁹⁴ Hence, it was considered an ideal place for the Imperial Library. Therefore, in order to put it into reality the aspiration of amalgamating and to infuse life to the dying institution, Curzon bought the shares of the proprietors in 1899. Consequently, Curzon in 1900 expressed the objective of establishing this institution in a letter to the Secretary of State for India, George Francis Hamilton,

The establishment of a Public Imperial library at Calcutta has been engaging our attention for some time. Our object is to found at Calcutta an institution which will be worthy of the name of Public Imperial library. The Imperial library in our Civil Secretariat Building was formed some years ago from the different Department libraries. The marked increase in recent years in the number of persons who avail themselves of the limited facilities for research afforded by this institutions, the steady growth in the number of books for which rooms has to be found, and the seat accommodation available, have made the question of another building a matter of pressing moment.

We intend 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 book written about India at any time can be seen and read.¹⁹⁵

The letter further explained the complexities of erecting a building in Calcutta where land is very expensive and would involve a considerable outlay of money. Thus, suggested that the best and feasible option would be the takeover of the Metcalf Hall which would save the Government from incurring heavy expenditure. As a result decided,

to enquire for the Public Imperial library Building Known as the Metcalf Hall, which is owned by the proprietors of the Calcutta Public Library and the Agri-Horticultural Society, into whose

¹⁹⁴Demi-official from A.H.L. Fraser, Officiating Secretary to the Government of India, *Home Department* to E.N. Baker, officiating Secretary to the Government of Bengal, Municipal Department. No. 96-D, dated 28 February, 1899, Public-A, November 1901, p. 5.

¹⁹⁵Government of India Finance and commerce Department, Salaries, Establishment, etc., Education, *Home-Public*, No. 267, 1900, p.

possession it came between the years 1840 and 1850. The financial position of both bodies is somewhat weak. Arrangements were some years ago proposed for the transfer of the former on certain terms to the Calcutta Corporation. The existence of the latter depends entirely upon an annual subsidy from Government of Bengal. We have arranged to purchase the rights of both bodies in the Metcalf Hall at a cost of Rs. 46, 000.¹⁹⁶

The advantages afforded by the Imperial library had been confirmed by the increased number of those who availed themselves to the facilities, which had been augmented every year for research purpose. Thus, this extension of its sphere of action and the steady increased in its acquisitions made the questions of its future accommodation a pressing matter. This situation necessitates looking for the suitable and commodious hall which can be modified and renovated without any legal interference. Accordingly it had been informed that,

there is an ample space in the Hall for public and private rooms; and, when those arrangements have been completed and the books of the Library in our civil Secretariat Building have been transferred to it, we intend to take in hand the equipment of the building. The hall is situated conveniently near to the offices of the departments of the Government of India we are advised that the building can be repaired, renovated and fitted up for the reception of the Imperial library at a comparatively small cost.¹⁹⁷

The worth of the library at that time was forty thousand volumes of books and journals. For which a sum of about Rs. 2, 50,900 was spent by the members since its foundation.¹⁹⁸

In order to come to term with the shareholders of the Calcutta Public Library for the amalgamation, the shares to be paid to the proprietors had been worked out and brought forward in the following manner:

¹⁹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁹⁸ B.S. Kesavan, *India's National Library*, National Library Calcutta, 1961, p. 13.

‘it was intimated that the proprietors of the Metcalf Library, 42 in number would sell their rights and interest in the building and books for Rs. 500 each, or a total sum of Rs. 21, 000. The Government of India offered the sum of Rs. 21, 000.’¹⁹⁹

However, it was reported after sometime that there was an increased in the number of shares holders,

the Government of Bengal intimated that some new claims had been brought forward that the number of shares amount to 57 and the local Government believes that the proprietors will agree to accept Rs. 500 each. This will bring the total up to Rs. 28, 000, which the Lieutenant-Governor asked to be authorized to offer.²⁰⁰

In spite of the intimation on the fresh claim in the increased number of proprietors who had a transferable shares in the Metcalf Library which amounted to fifty seven proprietors, without giving heed to this claim, ‘the Government of India told the secretary of state that arrangement had been made to purchase the rights of both bodies in the Metcalf Hall at a cost of Rs. 46,000, that is, proprietors of the library Rs. 21,000, Agri-Horticultural society Rs. 25,000.’²⁰¹

After initial misapprehension about the offer to pay to the proprietors of the library Rs. 21, 000, if proprietors were to give 500 each and there were 42 of the amount came to Rs. 21, 000. Now since it had been ascertained that there are 57 proprietors who has a share, it would be therefore, wise to adhere to the original ideas to give each proprietors Rs. 500, and raising the total amount to Rs. 28,500. Finally, the Lieutenant-Governor agreed to adhered to the original plan and as a result recommend the concern department to, ‘pay to the proposed purchased of the rights of the proprietors, Calcutta Public Library, in the Metcalf Hall at an increased cost of Rs. 28, 500 instead of 21,000 as formally estimated.’²⁰²

¹⁹⁹ *Home Department, Branch, Public-A, No. 1295, Dated 8 May 1900, 1901, p. 37.*

²⁰⁰ *Home Department, Branch, Public-A, No.267, Dated 8 August, 1900, 1901, p. 37.*

²⁰¹ *Ibid.*

²⁰² *Home Department, Branch, Public-A, No.267, dated 8 August, 1900, 1901, p. 37*

Thus, Curzon was successful in amalgamation of the Calcutta Public Library with the then Imperial library on the following terms:-

1. That the transfer be effected on the basis of payment of Rs. 500/- per existing share to be paid to the Calcutta Public Library for distribution to all existing proprietors, their legal representatives or assigns.
2. That existing proprietors of the Calcutta Public Library would be allowed facilities for the use of the Imperial.
3. That books not required by the Imperial library would be made over to the council of the Calcutta Public Library.²⁰³

However, In order to take possession of the Agri-Horticulture society premises, a proviso was laid down, on fulfilling this condition, the society agreed to vacate their accommodation in the Metcalf Hall, the condition was 'that a sum of Rs. 25, 000 in cash would be paid as compensation; and an annual grant of Rs. 6, 000 would be paid to the society henceforth.'²⁰⁴

With the completion of the necessary legal formalities, the Imperial library was prepared to receive books on October 1, 1891. Subsequently, the task of arranging them on the shelves and preparing a subject and normal catalogue was then commenced.²⁰⁵ It was therefore necessary to move the secretaries of different department to send in their books which they did not require in their department for reference purposes to the Imperial library by 15 September. Unless the different department sent in their books, it has to be rearranged two or three times before the work could be finally done. This would entail loss of time and money. It was also mentioned that on receiving the books, the arrangement on the shelves would start at once according to the following classifications:-

²⁰³ B.S. Kesavan, *India's National Library*, Belvedere, Kolkata, 1961, p. 13.

²⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁰⁵ *General proceedings*, No.34, Government of India, P.W.D. Dated 31 August 1901, Calcutta, p. 41.

Encyclopaedia, Gazettes, Hand Book to India, History, Geography, Guide Book, Chronology and Biography. It was further mentioned that when a book is placed on the shelf its number, name, title will be entered on a slip.²⁰⁶

When the process of transferring of books belonging to the then Imperial library to the Metcalf Hall was over and the books of the library was accordingly arranged and prepared to be formally opened to the general public. It took a full year for arranging the new library after paying off the proprietors in December 1901 and getting the necessary legislation passed through the council. The Calcutta Public Library contributes a great quantity of fiction, but the most valuable collections of the Calcutta Public Library were books on India.

‘The Imperial library was formally opened by Governor-General Curzon, on the afternoon of Friday, 30 January 1903, the leading residents of Calcutta to whom invitation cards had been issued, were present on the occasion.²⁰⁷ Sir Asutosh Mukhopadhyay, who was one of the distinguished guests graced the occasion by his presence.²⁰⁸ ‘These arrangements were confirmed and validated by the Imperial library Act, 1902 (I of 1902). The existing Imperial library will form the nucleus of the new institution, which will be provided with Reading Rooms, public, private, as at the British Museum and Bodleian Library.²⁰⁹ The council of the Imperial library consisted of president, vice-president and three members. Office of president was vacant, Maharaja Sir Narendra Krishna was elected as Vice president, the remaining three members councils were one European pensioner, a native attorney, and a native pleader.²¹⁰

On the successful amalgamation of the two libraries and with the opening of the Imperial library finally to the people, it was declared that:

The active resistance of prejudice and passive resistance of apathy has at last been overcome; and the books have been brought together under one roof, arranged and made available to all who

²⁰⁶ *General proceedings*, B, October, Nos. 366; 41, Government of India, P.W.D. 1891.

²⁰⁷ *Annual Reports of the Imperial Library for 1903*, Letter from J. Macfarlane, Librarian of the Imperial library to the Secretary to the Government of India, Home Department, No.27, Dated 3 February 1904.

²⁰⁸ B.S. Kesavan, *India's National Library*, National Library Calcutta, 1961, p. 13.

²⁰⁹ Bimal Kumar Dutta, *Libraries and Librarianship of Ancient and Medieval India*, Atma Ram & Sons, Delhi, 1970, p. 103.

²¹⁰ Telegram from the Secretary of State, Pro.No.250.Home Department, Public-A, Dated 12 December 1900, p.41.

wish to consult them. By the judicious expenditure of a small a sum of money and by wise selections of books, the Imperial library in course of time be worthy to rank with some of the libraries in Europe.²¹¹

In order to make this Library worthy of the Empire complete in its collections, 'the first aim is to increase the collection of books on commerce and literature of politics and political economy and social sciences in all their branches. The importance of rendering a complete in books relating to Indian history, biography and Indian affairs should also be kept steadily in view.'²¹²

It was desirable that this newly opened Imperial library be in the hands of the competent and capable Librarian, 'the man who is able to preserve, arrange and calendar muniments and administer a record department, must be endowed with some of these special gifts that make a good librarian.'²¹³

Some of the important qualities and qualifications preferred of the librarian had been described as below:

that a competent librarian should be appointed to the charge of the Library and we are desirous of obtaining with your Lordship's assistance, a gentleman from England to fill the post. We require as Librarian a man of but education, not with experience of cataloguing, arranging, binding and preserving books, but literary interests and taste. It would be desirous if possible, that he should possess some acquaintances with or at least a positive interest in oriental literature and history.²¹⁴

²¹¹ Demi-official from A.H.L. Fraser, Officiating Secretary to the Government of India, *Home Department* to E.N. Baker, officiating Secretary to the government of Bengal, Municipal Department, No. 96-D, Dated 28 February, 1899, Public-A, November 1901, p. 5.

²¹² Ibid.

²¹³ Ibid.

²¹⁴ Government of India Finance and commerce Department, Salaries, Establishment, etc., Education, *Home-Public*, No.267, 1900, p. 1

The post of the Librarian carried a salary of Rs.1, 000-50-1,250 a month for the first five years rising by increments to Rs.1, 500. Besides the salary, a librarian also received Rs.150 a month as house rent. The selected candidate will be bound by an agreement for five years. However, if his service was found satisfactory, he will be retained by Government in pensionable service after that date. Similar to the condition adopted as in the case of members of the Indian Educational service.²¹⁵ It had been suggested that in order to retain the librarian in the service for long the salary would have to be arranged on liberal and progressive scale.

The above described criteria for the Librarian of the Imperial library were found in John Macfarlane. Subsequently, it was reported that 'Macfarlane, of the British Museum, has been selected by him for the Librarianship of the Metcalf Hall Library.'²¹⁶ Under the direction of John Macfarlane the work of re-arrangement of books of the two libraries and re-cataloguing of their holding was done in 1902. Some of the important measures were also taken in order to increase its popularity and usefulness and thereby to attract people towards the library. They were:

1. Training of cataloguer in the Imperial library for works in other libraries.
2. Establishment of reciprocal borrowing system amongst different libraries; and
3. Compilation of subject indexes of the contents of other libraries.²¹⁷

Soon after the opening of the library, the Imperial library started issuing of Permanent Reader's Tickets to the public. 'From 31 January to December 1903, the number of ticket issued was 2,121. Besides the above, 166 tickets for the day only was issued and 109 tickets for period ranging between two days and one year were also issued, making up a total of 2,396 ticket.'²¹⁸ It was observed that the number of readers who visited the library was impressive considering its recent establishment. The number of readers was certain to rise with the rise of its popularity as an intellectual hotspot.

²¹⁵ Ibid.

²¹⁶ Telegram from the Secretary of State, *Proceeding* No.250, Home Department, Public-A, Dated 12 December 1900, p. 41.

²¹⁷ P.T. Nair, *Origin of the National Library of India: Days of the Calcutta Public Library*, Belvidere, Kolkata, 2004, p. 199.

²¹⁸ *Annual Reports of the Imperial Library for 1903*, letter from J. Macfarlane, Librarian of the Imperial Library to the Secretary to the Government of India, Home Department, No. 27, dated 3rd February, 1904, p.

One of the most important and urgent task required to be undertaken in order to increase its popularity and making it user friendly was the preparation of Reading Room Catalogue. Considering its importance to the library, effort had been made to prepare it as soon as the circumstances allowed them to undertake preparation. As a result the preparation of Reading Room Catalogue was at once started by Macfarlane as a result he could complete a reading room catalogue and index of the Imperial library in 1903. Two hundred copies of this catalogue were printed of which 156 were distributed among local libraries and institutions. The first volume of the General Author Catalogue from A to L was published in March 1904. Another attraction of the library was the occasional translation of passages from French and German Books relating to India for the benefit of students by the Librarian, following this, a demand has sprung up for instruction in those tongues. A select few Hindus, consisting chiefly of pundits and holders of Government Scholarship, meet for instruction in the Librarian's room.²¹⁹

The Imperial library was enriched with books lent out by different organizations for perusal in the Library. With regards to this, the Asiatic society also gave permission on 24 November, 1903 for books and manuscripts to be lent from their library for perusal in the Imperial Library. 'The Government of Bengal consented to make over any books which had been received in the Bengal library under the Act xxv of 1867 and might be required for the use of the library. Accordingly, some 300 works, including periodicals, were selected by the librarians and received from Bengal Library..... this will be of great service to the Imperial Library, as providing it with instructing but out-of-the way books which otherwise could only be procured with difficulty.'²²⁰

Effort also had been made to 'have in the Imperial library a complete series of the publications issued by the local and Imperial Governments bound like the Parliamentary Blue Books, and with this object slips have been prepared of all the Indian blue books in the library. Steps will now be taken to supply the deficiencies as far as practicable. An index of all parliamentary papers relating to India will also be formed.'²²¹

²¹⁹ *Annual Reports of the Imperial Library for 1903*, Letter from, J. Macfarlane, Librarian of the Imperial library to the Secretary to the Government of India, Home Department, No.27, Dated 3 February 1904.

²²⁰ *Ibid.*

²²¹ *Home Department, Public-A, No.231-302, November 1901, p. 4.*

With the completion of the arrangement of the Library, all of the Imperial library Rules had been drawn up in the following manner.

Imperial library Rules²²²

The following are the rules adopted in the Imperial Library:

1. The library will be open to any person who holds a reading ticket issued to him by the Librarian in accordance with such regulations as from time to time be made by the council.
2. Reading tickets will not be issued to any person under 18 years of age. They will remain in force until cancelled by the council and will not be transferable. Any person who infringes these rules or any regulation made by the council for the internal management of the Library will be liable to have his ticket suspended by the Library pending a reference to the council.
3. Subject to the provision of Rule IV, no book except with the permission of the librarian to be given in accordance with any general or special orders made by the council in his behalf.
4. Any of the proprietors of the former Calcutta Public Library shall be entitled when resident in Calcutta to take out books from among those transferred from the Library to the Imperial Library, subject to restriction that he shall not take out more than six works (up to a limit of 12 volumes) at a time.
5. Books and other documents that have been taken out are liable to recall at any time, but if not so recalled they may be kept for a space of one month, which may be extended by the Librarian at his discretion.
6. The Library will be open to the public from 10am to 7pm on working days as the council may determine.

The annual Report of the Imperial library for the year 1903 reported the nature of the Library's visitors. The visitors of the Imperial library were found to be heavily weighted by young, mostly students reading for examination, or persons who were required to look up casual

²²² B.S. Kesavan, *India's National Library*, Calcutta, 1961, p. 13.

references. Therefore, the attendance of the readers visiting the library was found fluctuating. It was reported that the readers were less especially during the time when the college classes were in session, as majority of the readers comprised mostly of students but again during vacation, numbers of readers using the library increases. It was also noticed that the attendance was found to be low particularly in the rainy or on the bad weather. The visitors on Sundays are relatively few, but among them are a number of earnest students unable to attend on any other day. However, one important thing to be borne in mind of the readers was that there was no consideration for the extension of the hour of timing of the library.²²³

The first three decades of the 20th century can be marked as the golden period of Indian library system. On 31 January 1902 the Imperial library Act was passed and Curzon transformed the Calcutta Public Library into Imperial library in 1903. This phase in history was important also for the increasing nature of Government involvement with institutions. All of these were brought under Government supervision. With the amalgamation of the two libraries, their financial condition bettered; there was a major increase in its readership with a new class of people increasingly visiting the library. This new group consisted of mainly students and those who needed casual references.

The rapid deteriorating financial condition of the Calcutta Public Library compelled the curators to bring the library under the Calcutta Municipality for the joint management. However, it turned out to be a complete failure. The amalgamation of the Calcutta Public Library to the Imperial library was considered the best solution in order to save the dying institution. Curzon infused life to the dying institution by merging it with the Imperial library by buying off the rights of the proprietors of the Calcutta Public Library. Thus, till today the legacy of the Calcutta Public Library is kept alive in the National Library of India. The Calcutta Public Library contributes a great quantity of work on fictions, but the most valuable collections of the Calcutta Public Library were books on India. The opening of this library in 1903 to all classes of the

²²³ *Annual Reports of the Imperial Library for 1903*, letter from, J. Macferlane, Librarian of the Imperial library to the Secretary to the Government of India, Home Department, No.27, Dated 3 February 1904.

society heralded a new system in the running of the libraries in India. This was a landmark in the history of libraries in India for it was opened for the first time to all the public.

CHAPTER-5

CONCLUSION

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Conclusion:

The establishment of the Calcutta Public Library was a very exciting phase in Indian history. It created an excellent system that has been persevered till date. The Calcutta Public Library was a brain child of H.J. Stocquler. After establishing General Library in Bombay he came to Calcutta and proposed that similar library be established in Calcutta. It was through the seed that was sown in 1835 that germinated and spread across the country. Today public libraries have been made available in every district and town in Indian states.

The Calcutta Public Library had a considerable influenced on the native citizens and it was subsequently reflected in the attempts that were made to establish many small libraries in the suburbs and distant moffusil town of Calcutta in later years. And therefore, many libraries came into existence very soon.²²⁴ Founding of public library become in vogue as founding of gymnasium for physical development likewise public libraries became a place where mental exercise was performed through the readings of available materials. Thus it was claimed that the spirit of nationalism received impetus through the readings of firebrand books which were kept in the library and 'which proved to be a great factor in the Indian awakening towards a deep sense of nationalism and the higher aspiration for independence.'²²⁵

Calcutta was not bereft of libraries at the time of establishment of Calcutta Public Library. There were already well known libraries, such as Asiatic Society Library, The Bar Library Club, the Calcutta Library Society and other similar libraries. However, these libraries were not meant for the ordinary people and the access was limited to their members only as a result, it was not at all open to the general public. The Asiatic society library was opened only to its members; while not a single native was a member in the Calcutta Library society and libraries attached to the colleges were meant for their students alone.²²⁶ Considering the number of native English educated populations and their keenness to read English literature avidly, the establishment of Calcutta Public Library was boon to the native many of whom have no other

²²⁴ A.K. Ohdedar, *The growth of Library in Modern India: 1498-1836*, Calcutta World Press private Limited: Calcutta, 1966, pp. 157-158.

²²⁵ R.K. Bhatt, *History and Development of Libraries in India*, Mittal Publications, New Delhi, 1995, p. 6.

²²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

means of becoming acquainted with European literatures than those afforded by the Calcutta Public Library.²²⁷ Therefore, considering the nature of the library and the services provided, one can safely say that the Calcutta Public Library had a unique position as the first public library in this part of the country. Such a well organized library was rare even in Europe during those days.²²⁸ The Calcutta Public Library also served itself as a model which was emulated by many libraries founded in later period. This library also gave impetus to small libraries by donating duplicate copies of books, periodicals and journals from time to time. The legacy of the Calcutta Public Library is still alive in today's National library as the collection of Calcutta Public Library is being preserved there. In the rare book section of the National Library, ninety nine percent of the collections were passed on from the Calcutta Public Library.

However, the glorious days of Calcutta Public Library was short lived and started to decline due to lack of fund. The library was supported solely by private subscriptions and occasional donations coming time to time from philanthropies. But the life vein being the subscription fee could not support when the Europeans subscribers withdrew their membership from the library due to Indian war of independence in 1857. Their withdrawal from membership had greatly affected in the management of the library thereby causing financial position to come down to its lowest ebb. The above circumstances necessitated Calcutta Public Library to find alternative for its sustenance. Thus, an appeal was made to the Calcutta Corporation for a joint management of the library.

However, the journey with the Calcutta Corporation was short lived and a complete fiasco. It was alleged that Calcutta Corporation neglected its responsibilities and did not levy cess as was contemplated earlier and as a result the condition of the library further deteriorated. It was fortunate that at this juncture Curzon came to India as Governor-General of India and amalgamated the Calcutta Public Library with the then Imperial library to form a new Imperial Public library in 1902, by buying off the shares of the proprietors of the Calcutta Public Library. The Imperial library was formally opened by the Viceroy Curzon, on the afternoon of Friday,

²²⁷ *Report of the Calcutta public library for 1847-1848*, Sanders Cones and Co., 1848, P. xxvii.
²²⁸

January 30, 1903;²²⁹ the leading residents of Calcutta like Sir Asutosh Mukhopadhyay²³⁰ extended their support.

As analysed from the above discussion, it can safely be concluded that the establishment of Calcutta Public Library was a blessing to the inhabitants of Calcutta, both for the Europeans as well as the natives. This library served as a centre for the encouragement and development of scholarship among the native students. Apart from schools and colleges, there were several scientific, literary and other institutions which were established in Calcutta mainly because of the literary awareness brought about by the library.

Through the impact of the Calcutta Public Library, Calcutta also became the centre of publishers and booksellers outside London where any book published in European or Oriental languages could be purchased.²³¹ Some of these booksellers and publishers were also supplied to Calcutta Public Library. For instance library purchased books from the local suppliers like Pittar Lattey & Co. (Government Place Library) and another local supplier to the library was Doyal Chund Dhur.²³² The influence of library was evidence from the flourishing condition of the booksellers and book publishers in Calcutta during that time.

The Calcutta Public Library fulfilled the objective of its founders by keeping it 'open to all ranks and classes without distinction and sufficiently extensive to supply the wants of the entire community in every department of literature.'²³³ The Calcutta Public Library has upheld its status as the first public library in India along with its egalitarian reputation.

Overall this study provides a historical account of the establishment of the Calcutta Public Library and the trials and tribulations it went through especially in terms of finance, location, administration and members. This study essentially documents the birth and growth of the Calcutta Public Library which laid the foundation for public library movement in India.

²²⁹ Letter from, J. Macferlane, Librarian of the Imperial library to the Secretary to the Government of India, Home Department, No.27, *Annual Reports of the Imperial Library for 1903*, Dated 3 February 1904.

²³⁰ Subodh Kumar Mookerjee, *Development of Libraries and Library Science in India*, the World Press Private Limited: Calcutta, 1969, p. 4.

²³¹ P.T. Nair, *Origin of National Library: Days of the Calcutta Public Library*; National Library of India; Belvedere, Kolkata, 2004, p. 6.

²³² P.T. Nair, *Origin of National Library: Days of the Calcutta Public Library*, p. 75.

²³³ Letter from W.P. Grant curator of the Calcutta public library to G.A. Bushby Secretary to the Government of Bengal, *General proceedings*, No.35, dated 23 September 1835, *General proceedings*, No.35, p. 417.

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