

Rare Collections of Some Old Public Libraries in Kolkata: A Comparative Study

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Abstract:

Libraries do not only spread knowledge, they are the time capsules which conserve historical and rare pieces of literature and work and are actively involved in the conservation and enhancement of the heritage of humanity. Libraries also point people to wider cultural activities, objects, knowledge and sites, and encourage individuals to explore different cultural experiences and to create things themselves. For all the bibliophiles, out there, here is a list of 6 libraries in Kolkata with amazing collection to quench your thirst for reading.

Keywords:

Old and rare collections, Library services, Archives, Collections, Collection management, Manuscripts, History, Oriental Libraries

Introduction:

Public libraries, the local gateways to knowledge, provide basic conditions for lifelong learning, independent decision-making and cultural development of the individual and social groups. They are developed out of public funds and the use of these is not restricted to any class of persons in the community. These are the local centres of information, making all kinds of knowledge and information readily available to its users. According to UNESCO in Public Library Manifesto (1994), the missions of public libraries are:

- Creating and strengthening reading habits in children from an early age
- Supporting individual both formal education as well as self conducted education at all level
- Providing opportunities for personal creative development
- Stimulating the imagination and creativity of children and young people
- Promoting awareness of cultural heritage, appreciation of the arts, scientific achievements and innovations
- Ensuring access for citizens to all sorts of community information etc.

To fulfill these objectives, the two important aspects needed, are development of collection and its proper distribution i.e. library services to the users. This research work is concerned to study these two aspects in different century old public libraries in Kolkata.

The term 'collection' can be defined as — a number of books or other items on one subject, or of one kind, or collected by one person or organisation. 'Collection Development' is a process of planning a stock acquisition programme not simply to cater for immediate needs, but to build a coherent and reliable collection over a number of years, to meet the objectives of the service. The term demands a depth and quality of stock, and includes associated activity towards exploitation of the collection through publicity, staff training etc.

American Museum of Natural History defines 'rare books' as follows:

- 1) Volumes printed before 1850 in the Americas, and before 1775 in Europe and the other continents (these thresholds of rarity will be periodically advanced).
- 2) Items including a unique autograph or other unique manuscript elements (marginalia, annotations, etc.). Note that not all books signed by an author or illustrator are necessarily "rare". Discretion is used in evaluating signed copies. The following criteria are considered:
 - a. The book itself (or all of the authors' writings) is of special interest.
 - b. The book is an association copy, containing a signature, bookplate, or other evidence of ownership by a distinguished person, especially if the book itself or its owner is closely tied to the Museum.
- 3) Signed presentation copies of books written by a member of the Museum staff (whether on a subject of interest to the Museum or not).
- 4) Books known to be very scarce or known to be of especially high monetary value.

Whereas the National Library of India recognizes 'rare books' as:

The books published prior to 1860 are considered rare books, along with limited and first editions, books distinguished by their design, illustration or history, and a few other criteria.

Considering the above criteria of choosing rare books, books chiefly published in 19th century or before, with some exceptions, and journals published before Independence are taken as rare books or rare journals respectively.

Scope and Coverage:

The scope of this research work is stated below:

Type of the library – Non-sponsored Public library

Area – Calcutta Municipal Corporation area

Time – Public libraries established upto the year 1900 and still exist.

Limitations:

However, in this research work, six libraries have been taken for study. To study old & rare collection, originally it was started to collect detailed data starting from the year of establishment of the libraries. But, actually it has been observed that these libraries rarely preserve their old records. Again, some of these libraries surveyed, are sometimes closed due to their financial crisis, sometimes open irregularly, but still exist and thus considered as a sample of this survey.

Libraries studied:

The following six libraries have been studied for this purpose. These are:

- 1) The United Reading Rooms (1872)
- 2) Indian Association Library (1876)
- 3) Taltala Public Library (1882)
- 4) Chaitanya Library (1889)
- 5) Bharati Parishad (1890)
- 6) Asutosh Memorial Library (1891)

Methodology:

For the purpose of data collections various methods have been employed. Initially, a questionnaire has been prepared, on the basis of this, interviews of concerning persons have been taken. At the same time different libraries have been surveyed. Literatures concerning these libraries have been searched and if found suitable, photocopies have been made on permission of the authorities. Again, as these libraries contain many rare documents, photocopies of the title pages of some of the documents have been made.

1. THE UNITED READING ROOMS (1872)

67/1/2, Nimtola Ghat Street, Kolkata – 700 006

1.1 Old and rare collection:

This library has well become a part of north Kolkata's cultural heritage. It contains some important reading materials which are very rare and contain mines of information. Renovation work has recently been undertaken. For this, the old reading materials become scattered and many of them are still now within the packet. However, a list has been prepared scanning different documents thoroughly.

List of rare books:

| Sl. No | Author | Title | Year of Publication |
|--------|--------------------------------|---|---------------------|
| 1. | Balaram Das | Padabali | n.d. |
| 2. | Ketaka Das and Kshamananda Das | Manasar bhasan | 1292 B.S. |
| 3. | Ranimohan Mallick, <i>ed.</i> | Chandidas : bistrita jibani tika o samalochana samet | 1300 B.S. |
| 4. | Giridhar | Mahakabi Joydeber Geetgovinder Prakeet padyanubad | 1810 Shakabda |
| 5. | Jagadananda Thakur | Sri Jagadananda padabali | 1306 B.S. |
| 6. | Narottam Thakur and others | Prarthana | 1894 |
| 7. | Krittibas Ojha | Padyasangraha. 3 rd ed. | 1894 |
| 8. | Rameshwar Bhattacharya | Shibayan | 1293 B.S. |
| 9. | Ramprasad Sen | Bidyasundar | 1293 B.S. |
| 10. | Bidyapati | Bidyapati padabali. 2 nd ed. | 1285 B.S. |
| 11. | Ghanaram Chakraborty | Sri Dharmamangal | 1290 B.S. |
| 12. | Eugene W. Oates | The fauna of British India including Ceylon and Burma | 1889–1890 |
| 13. | – | The cabinet cyclopaedia | 1840 |
| 14. | – | Encyclopaedia Britannica. 9 th ed. | 1875–1889 |
| 15. | Richard Garnett, <i>ed.</i> | The international library of famous literature | 1900 |
| 16. | T. Lewis O Davis | Supplementary English glossary | 1881 |
| 17. | Edmund Venables | Life of John Bunyan | 1888 |

Besides, this library contains books gifted by Sir Gurudas Banerjee. Another important feature is that, it contains some of the first editions of Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar's writings.

2. INDIAN ASSOCIATION LIBRARY (1876)

62, B.B. Ganguli Street, Kolkata – 700 012

2.1 Old and rare collections:

This library contains some old and rare documents. These documents mainly belong to from two collections – a) Bose family library maintained by Smt. Nirode Mohini Bose and b) Gokhale library maintained by Sri Prithwish Chandra Roy. These materials are very helpful in conducting researches in many subjects such as, politics, economics, statistics, history etc. Besides these, it contains important old gazettes and government documents, as well as old periodicals. Some of them are given below:

List of rare books:

| Sl No | Author | Title | Year of Publication |
|--------------|---------------------------|---|----------------------------|
| 1. | John Dacosta | A scientific frontier or the danger of a Russian invasion of India | 1891 |
| 2. | H.B. Hanna | India's scientific frontier – where is it? what is it ? | 1895 |
| 3. | Major General Maurice | National defences | 1897 |
| 4. | Spencer Walpole | Foreign relations | 1882 |
| 5. | Edmund F. Ducane | Punishment and prevention of crime | 1885 |
| 6. | William Pitt | The speeches of right honourable William Pitt in House of Commons | 1806 |
| 7. | Herbert Spencer | The study of sociology | 1880 |
| 9. | Henry Craik | The state in relation to education | 1896 |
| 10. | W.W. Hunter | A statistical account of Bengal | 1876 |
| 11. | Arther Eliot | The state and the church | 1882 |
| 12. | – | Sketches of the Hindus | 1791 |
| 13. | Leopold von Orlich | Travels in India including Sinde and the Punjab | 1845 |
| 14. | John B. Seely | The wonders of Elora or the narrative of journey to the temples and dwellings | 1824 |
| 15. | Anthony George Shiell | A year in India | 1880 |
| 16. | John Splinter Stavorinus | Voyages to the East–Indies | 1798 |
| 17. | G.R. Gleig | Memoirs of the life right Hon. Warren Hastings, first governor general of Bengal | 1841 |
| 18. | William Tayler | Thirty–eight years in India | 1881 |
| 19. | Lionel James Trotter | Warren Hastings | 1878 |
| 20. | Montgomery Martin | The history of antiquities, topography and statistics of Eastern India | 1829 |
| 21. | Sir Walter Scott | The heart of Lothian | 1829 |
| 22. | – | Encyclopaedia britannica | 1876 |
| 23. | H.T. Prinsep | Note on the historical results : discoveries in Afghanistan | 1844 |
| 24. | J. Johnson | The oriental voyager or descriptive sketches and cursory remarks on a voyage to India and China | 1807 |
| 25. | M. Roller | The ancient history | 1839 |
| 26. | Mankumari | Kabyakushmanjali | 1893 |
| 27. | Cornel Tod | Rajasthan : Mebar | 1290 B.S. |
| 28. | Rajanikanta Gupta | Sepahi juddher itihās | 1292 B.S. |
| 29. | Madhusudan Mukhopadhyay | Sushilar upakhyān | 1890 |
| 30. | Bipradas Mukhopadhyay | Pak–prānālī | 1291 B.S. |
| 31. | Harimohan Mukhopadhyay | Kamala Debi | 1885 |
| 32. | Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar | Shakuntala | 1885 |
| 33. | Rabindranath Thakur | Goray galad | 1299 B.S. |

Besides these, this library has some manuscripts e.g. letters of Surendranath Banerjee, old minutes book, other handwritten materials of the great personalities of the Association etc. But conditions of them are very bad. They become brittle on touch.

2.2 Rare periodicals:

Suravi (1289–1291 B.S.), Sahitya sanghita (1307–1318 B.S.), Probasi (1308–1356 B.S.), Bengali (1885–1890), Bina (1285 B.S.), Masik basumati (1340–1348 B.S.), Bharatbarsha (1321–1356 B.S.), Bangabani (1329–1334 B.S.), Manasi o marmmabani (1324–1336 B.S.), Bharati (1295–1327 B.S.), Bamabodhini patrika (1287–1329 B.S.), Sahitya (1297–1318 B.S.), Mouchak (1327–1346 B.S.), Sishusathi (1329–1357 B.S.), Adarini (1289 B.S.), Bangamahila (1283 B.S.) etc.

3. TALTALA PUBLIC LIBRARY, (1882)

12/B, Taltala Library Row, Kolkata – 700 014

The history of an institution covering more than hundred years which is pledged to fight back illiteracy and to impart education both moral and mental to the adults and the children alike is the record of the forward march towards the goal. It has earned the appreciations of the Central Government, the State Government, the Calcutta Municipal Corporation and other benevolent organizations as well as the people of the locality – for whom inspite of all the difficulties, the library service moves in the future.

3.1 Old and rare collections:

This library got some rare books and periodicals from the personal collection of Surendranath Banerjee and Girish Ghosh. Besides, it has a vast collection of almanac from 1926.

In its published catalogue there is a list of some rare documents. From there a list has been prepared which is as follows:

List of rare books:

| Sl No | Author | Title | Year of Publication |
|-------|--------|-------|---------------------|
|-------|--------|-------|---------------------|

| | | | |
|-----|----------------------------------|--|-----------|
| 1. | – | Encyclopaedia britannica | n.a. |
| 2. | – | The book of knowledge (The children encyclopaedia) | n.a. |
| 3. | – | Thakers Calcutta directory and environs | 1939–1940 |
| 4. | Pattabhi Sitaramayya | The history of the Indian National Congress | n.a. |
| 5. | R.A. Walker | The best of Beardsley | n.a. |
| 6. | Bijoy Ratna Majumder, <i>ed.</i> | Radhakrishna | n.a. |
| 7. | Joseph S.C. Abbott | The life of Nepolean Bonaparte | n.a. |
| 8. | O.C. Ganguly | Indian architecture | n.a. |
| 9. | Madhusudan Dutta | Hectar badh | 1871 |
| 10. | Harisadhan Mukhopadhyay | Kalikata sekaler o ekaler | n.a. |
| 11. | Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay | Krishnacharit. 4 th ed. | 1901 |
| 12. | Satish Chandra Mitra | Jasohar Khulnar itihās | n.a. |
| 13. | Dinesh Chandra Sen | Maimansingha gitika | n.a. |
| 14. | Narendranath Gupta | Bidyapati Thakurer padabali | 1316 B.S. |
| 15. | Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay | Rajsingha | 1288 B.S. |
| 16. | –Do– | Bijjan rahasya | 1875 |
| 17. | –Do– | Kabita pustak | 1878 |
| 18. | –Do– | Rajani | 1284 B.S. |
| 19. | –Do– | Loke rahasya | 1284 B.S. |
| 20. | –Do– | Upakatha | 1877 |
| 21. | –Do– | Samya | 1879 |
| 22. | –Do– | Durgeshnandini | n.a. |
| 23. | –Do– | Bibidha samalochana | 1875 |
| 24. | –Do– | Indira | 1897 |
| 25. | Chandicharan Bandyopadhyay | Vidyasagar | 1302 B.S. |
| 26. | Beharilal Sarkar | –Do– | 1329 B.S. |
| 27. | Jogesh Chandra Sen | Bangla bhasa | 1320 B.S. |
| 28. | Rajendralal Gangopadhyay | Snehalata | 1320 B.S. |
| 29. | Dinesh Chandra Sen | Behula | 1315 B.S. |
| 30. | Madhusadan Dutta | Krishnakumari natak | 1883 |
| 31. | – Do – | Who's who yearbook | 1909 |
| 32. | J. Russell | The comet of 1556 | 1857 |
| 33. | Girish Ghosh | Sasti ki sasti? | 1315 B.S. |

3.2 Rare periodicals:

Aryadarshan (1289 B.S.), Pradip (1306–1311 B.S.), Probasi (1316–1361 B.S.), Bangadarshan (1280 B.S., 1308–1310 B.S.), Basumati (1329–1361 B.S.), Bharati (1308–1330 B.S.), Bharatbarsha (1320–1361 B.S.), Manasi o marmmabani (1322–1336 B.S.), Malancha (1321–1326 B.S.), Jamuna (1319–1323 B.S.), Sanibarar chithi (1335–1361 B.S.), Sahitya (1303–1316 B.S.) etc.

4. CHAITANYA LIBRARY, (1889)

4/1, Dani Ghosh Sarani, Kolkata – 700 006

4.1 Old and rare collections:

This library has a good collection of old and rare documents. It contains rare books, rare periodicals and moreover very important legal documents, committee reports and also reference books. But due to the closed access system, these documents could not be accessed easily.

List of rare books:

| Sl No | Author | Title | Year of Publication |
|-------|----------------------------|--------------------------------------|---------------------|
| 1. | Haraprasad Sastri | Bharat mahila. 2 nd ed. | 1289 B.S. |
| 2. | Purnachandra Basu | Kabyasundari | 1287 B.S. |
| 3. | Chandranath Basu | Garhasthya path. 2 nd ed. | 1294 B.S. |
| 4. | –Do– | Shakuntala tatwa | 1288 B.S. |
| 5. | Anonymous | Priya prasanga ba Harano pronoy | 1884 |
| 6. | Damodar Mukhopadhyay | Prem parinam | 1297 B.S. |
| 7. | Debiprasanna Roy Chaudhury | Bibekbani | 1291 B.S. |
| 8. | –Do– | Jyotikana | 1293 B.S. |
| 9. | Mahendranath Roy | Nabaprabandhasar | 1874 |
| 10. | T.N. Mukherjee | Art manufactures in India | 1888 |

4.2 Rare periodicals:

4.2.1 Rare periodicals (Bengali):

Kushdaha (1320–1328 B.S.), Krishak (1309–1329 B.S.), Galpalahari (1322–1348 B.S.), Janmabhumi (1297–1338 B.S.), Tatwabodhini patrika (1815 Shakabda – 1339 B.S.), Nabyabharat (1297–1331 B.S.), Nirmalya (1307–1318 B.S.), Pradip (1304/5–1312 B.S.), Probasi (1308–1367 B.S.), Prayas (1899–1900), Bharatbarsha (1320–1376 B.S.), Bharati (1284–1333 B.S.), Masik basumati (1329–1379 B.S.), Mukul (1304–1320 B.S.), Yamuna (1310–1323 B.S.), Yogisakha (1312–1339 B.S.), Bangadarshan (1279–1319 B.S.), Bani (1312–1317), Bamabodhini patrika (1300–1324 B.S.), Bichitra (1334–1346 B.S.), Brahmabidya (1319–1341 B.S.), Sanibarar chithi (1339–1375 B.S.), Sabujpatra (1321–1327 B.S.), Sadhana (1298/99 – 1338 B.S.), Sahitya (1298–1329 B.S.), Sahitya kalpadrum (1297–1299 B.S.), Sahitya sanghita (1308–1326 B.S.), Sasthya (1306–1346 B.S.) etc.

4.22 Rare periodicals (English) including newspapers:

Bengal magazine (1872–1876), Bengalee (1906–1913), Black and White (1895–1908), Journal and text of the Buddhist Society of India (1893–1894), Calcutta University magazine (1894–1899), Century illustrated magazine (1883–1889), Chaitanya Library Journal (1893), Cornhill magazine (1861–1886), English illustrated magazine (1905–1908), Friend of India (1896), Graphic (1895), Harmsworth magazine (1900–1901), Harper's monthly magazine (1898–1899), Illustrated bits (1901), Illustrated London news (1893), India (1893–1897), Indian homeopathic review (1882), Indian review (1908–1948), Indian world (1905–1911), Industrial India (1906–1909), Knowledge (1891), Lady's realm (1905–1907), Leisure hour (1899), London magazine (1901–1915), Madras Christian College magazine (1885–1886), Medical reporter (1892–1894), Modern review (1909–1948), Monist (1894), National magazine (1890–1893), Nineteenth century (1880–1892), Pall Mall magazine (1895–1908), Pearson's weekly (1901), Penny magazine (1834), Progrss (1886–1910), Review of reviews (1891–1919), Royal magazine (1901–1919), Scientific American (1898), Statesman (1890–1918), Strand magazine (1898–1948), Wide world magazine (1899–1919), Windsor magazine (1898–1908), Women at home (1894), Calcutta review (1892–1948), Hindu patriot (1912–1920), Calcutta Municipal gazette (1924–1947), Edinburgh review (1803–1808).

4.3 Legal documents:

Ajmer Code (1905, 1916), Assam Code (1897, 1915), Baluchistan Code (1900, 1914), Bengal Code (1905, 1913–1915), Bombay Code (1861–1922), Burma Code (1899, 1910), Calcutta Municipal Act (1899), Calcutta Municipal Consolidation Act (1888) etc.

4.4 Government documents, committee reports etc.:

Administration of Bengal (1893–1918), Agricultural Ledger (1892–1908), Report of the Indian National Congress (1st–12th) etc.

4.5 Reference books:

Calcutta University calendar (1883–1910), Calcutta University minutes (1889–1890), Encyclopaedia britannica, 9th ed. (1875–1889), Hazell's annual (1892–1907), Thaker's Indian directory (1885–1910) etc.

4.6 Lectures:

Chaitanya library is an integral part of the literary/cultural movement of north Kolkata. Many great persons associated with this library. This library kept its commitment within its fold by providing all sorts of available literature, political or otherwise, to its members. Even the writings of extremist elements of the then Bengal like Aurobindo Ghosh, Barin Ghosh, Upendra Nath Dutta, Nalinikishore Guha, Ullaskar Dutta, Sarala Devi, Swami Vivekananda, Brahmabandav Upadhyay were kept in the library for public consumption. Moreover, this library contains letters of Rabindranath Tagore, Dwijendranath Tagore and others. Together with these the writings of different competitions organised by this library are also kept there.

Besides, some important lectures were delivered in this library at that time. Though presently these programmes are not continued but those are kept, are the treasure of the library some of them are:

Important lectures delivered from 1890

| Subject | Lecturer | Chairman |
|---|-------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Literature and Calcutta University | Sri Ashutosh Chaudhuri | Justice J.F. Norris |
| Diary of an Indian tourist in Europe | Rabindra Nath Tagore | Guru Das Banerjee |
| Avenues of employment for Indian Young Men | Rev. Alex. Tomory, | Raja Peary Mohan Mukherjee |
| Ideal of life—oriental and occidental | Dwijendra Nath Tagore | Rai Kunja Lal Banerji Bahadur |
| A Review of Indian Pantheism | —Do— | Guru Das Banerjee |
| Fruitless attempts at univeraity reform | Ramendra Sundar Tribedi | R.C. Dutt |
| Modern magnetics illustrated by experiments and lantern studies | C.V. Raman | Rev. W.S. Usquhart |
| Our industries | T.N. Mukherji | R.D. Mehta |
| The relation between European and Indians | Rabindra Nath Tagore | Bankim Chandra Chatterjee |
| Life of Bankim Chandra Chatterji | —Do— | Guru Das Banerji |

5. BHARATI PARISHAD, (1890)

6, R.G. Kar Road, Kolkata – 700 004

5.1 Old and rare collections:

There is no list of rare books or manuscripts (if available) maintained in this library. But there is a comprehensive list of periodicals possessed by the library. Some important rare books and periodicals are given below:

List of rare books:

| Sl. No. | Author | Title | Year of Publication |
|---------|-----------------------------|---------------------------------------|---------------------|
| 1. | Radhaprasad Kar | Banger bartaman bibaha pranali | n.a. |
| 2. | Kaliprasanna Ghosh | Narijati bishayak prastab | n.a. |
| 3. | Mrityunjoy Bidyalankar | Probodh chandrika | n.a. |
| 4. | Prasad Kumar Mukhopadhyay | Prachin Kolikata | n.a. |
| 5. | Kedarnath Majumder | Moymonsingher itihās | n.a. |
| 6. | Bipinbehari Mitra | Nabakrishna Deb Bahadurer jibancharit | n.a. |
| 7. | Mahendralal Sarkar | Bisuchika chikitsa prakaran | n.a. |
| 8. | Suryanarayan Ghosh | Baiggnik dampatya pranali | n.a. |
| 9. | Rama Chattopadhyay | Pulish o lokerakshya | n.a. |
| 10. | Mukundalal Chaudhury | Manipurer itihās | n.a. |
| 11. | Kalachand Basu | Kayastha | n.a. |
| 12. | –Do– | Kultatwa | n.a. |
| 13. | Sikhar Kumar Basu | Sishu chikitsa | n.a. |
| 14. | Taraknath Biswas | Victoria charit | n.a. |
| 15. | Nalinibala Bhanja | Rush–Japaner itihās | n.a. |
| 16. | Annadaprasad Bhattacharya | Strijati o bibaha | n.a. |
| 17. | Umesh Chandra Bhattacharya | Ayurvediya saral jwar chikitsa | n.a. |
| 18. | Pratap Chandra Majumder | Chikitsa prakaran | n.a. |
| 19. | –Do– | Stricharitra sangathan | n.a. |
| 20. | Dinanath Sen | Bangladesher bibaran | n.a. |
| 21. | Mahendranath Roy Bidyanidhi | Prachin Arya ramaniganer itibritta | n.a. |
| 22. | – | Encyclopaedia Britannica#* | n.a. |

#* Donated by the Maharaja of Coach Bihar

5.2 Rare periodicals:

Anusandhan (1296 B.S.), Arghya (1322 B.S.), Archana (1312–1327 B.S.), Aryadarshan (1283–1291 B.S.), Aryabarta (1317–1321 B.S.), Utsaha (1305 B.S.), Upasana (1319–1339 B.S.), Kalak (1292 B.S.), Uttara (1337–1343 B.S.), Kalpana (1296 B.S.), Karnadhar (1295–1296 B.S.), Bangadarshan (1280–1315 B.S.), Madhyastha (1281 B.S.), Bandhab (1282 B.S.), Gyanankur o pratibimba (1282–1283 B.S.), Bharati (1284–1332 B.S.), Nalini (1288 B.S.), Sakha (1884–1886), Nabajiban (1290–1295 B.S.), Nabyabharat (1293–1306 B.S.), Biva (1294–1295 B.S.), Pratima (1297 B.S.), Subodhini (1297 B.S.), Janmabhumi (1298–1310 B.S.), Grihastha (1334 B.S.), Tattwabodhini (1840–1852 Shakabda), Dasi (1897), Bamabodhini (1304–1306 B.S.), Sahitya (1300–1329 B.S.), Binapani (1301–1303 B.S.), Mukul (1305–1309 B.S.), Pradip (1306–1310 B.S.), Swastha (1308–1339 B.S.), Probasi (1311–1366 B.S.), Jamuna

(1319–1327 B.S.), Manasi (1320–1322 B.S.), Manasi o marmmabani (1322–1336 B.S.), Malancha (1321–1327 B.S.), Sabujpatra (1321–1334 B.S.), Bharatbarsha (1320–1372 B.S.), Masik basumati (1329–1379 B.S.), Bangabani (1329–1334 B.S.), Bichitra (1334–1346 B.S.), Parichay (1338–1350 B.S.), Sanibarar chithi (1338–1368 B.S.) etc.

Besides, this library possesses a good collection of almanac, including Gupta Press panjika (1335 B.S. –), Bisuddha siddhanta panjika (1353 B.S. –) and Haricharan smrititirtha panjika. Again, as this library is located at the north Kolkata, for this it contains a good collection of Bengali drama performed at different theatre halls at this region.

6. ASUTOSH MEMORIAL LIBRARY, (1891)

92, S.P. Mukherjee Road, Kolkata – 700 026

6.1 Old and rare collections:

This library contains many old and rare reading materials. Some of them are given below.

List of rare books:

| Sl No | Author | Title | Year of Publication |
|-------|------------------------|---|---------------------|
| 1. | J.C. Brown | Indian infanticide | 1857 |
| 2. | E. Lothar Bridge | Modern English literature | 1874 |
| 3. | H. Martinear | Biographical sketches | 1888 |
| 4. | F.T. Polgred | The treasury of sacred song | 1889 |
| 5. | F.T. Margeal | Life of L. Gyambetta | 1890 |
| 6. | Ambika Charan Gupta | Bharat Lakshmi | n.a. |
| 7. | Soroshibala Dasi | Puspapunja | 1885 |
| 8. | Kalicharan Lahiri | Bibekdeepika | 1885 |
| 9. | Jaggeswar Mandal | Kohhom | 1897 |
| 10. | Fortune Du Boisgobey | The coral pin | 1887 |
| 11. | Rakhaldas Mukhopadhyay | Santishatakam | 1892 |
| 12. | Purna Chandra Ghosh | Dharma–chinta | 1296 B.S. |
| 13. | Louisa Stuart Costello | The Queen’s poisoner | 1841 |
| 14. | Akshay Kumar Datta | Bazhya bastur sahit manab prakitir sambandha bichar | 1265 B.S. |

6.2 Rare periodicals:

6.21 **Bengali:** Probasi, Bharatbarsha, Bamabodhini patrika, Amrita, Manasi o marmmabani, Sabujpatra, Sahitya, Masik basumati, Rangmashal, Bangabani, Parichay etc.

6.22 **English:** The times weekly, Indian review, Modern review, Review of reviews, Theosophy India, Times weekly.

A comparative study among, previous said six libraries is given below:

| Name and Location of the Library | 1. THE UNITED READING ROOMS (1872) 67/1/2, Nimitola Ghat Street, Kolkata – 700 006 | 2. INDIAN ASSOCIATION LIBRARY (1876) 62, B.B. Ganguli Street, Kolkata – 700 012 | 3. TALTALA PUBLIC LIBRARY, (1882) 12/B, Taltala Library Row, Kolkata – 700 014 | 4. CHAITANYA LIBRARY, (1889) 4/1, Dani Ghosh Sarani, Kolkata – 700 006 | 5. BHARATI PARISHAD, (1890) 6, R.G. Kar Road, Kolkata – 700 004 | 6. ASUTOSH MEMORIAL LIBRARY, (1891) 92, S.P. Mukherjee Road, Kolkata – 700 026 |
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| Type of Library | Non-sponsored public library | Non-sponsored public library | Non-sponsored public library | Non-sponsored public library | Non-sponsored public library | Non-sponsored public library |
| Periodicals procurement | Regularly procures different magazines namely, Sananda, Anandamela, Shuktara, Nabakallol, Chandmama, Saptahik bartaman and Desh. No English periodicals are procured | Previously some periodicals both in Bengali and English languages such as Desh, Kathasahitya, Chaturanga, India today etc. were procured. But now, periodicals procurement has been totally stopped. | Six periodicals in Bengali namely Shuktara, Anandamela, Kishore bharati, Sandesh, Desh and Nabakallol. | A very good collection of Bengali and English periodicals. It presently subscribes fourteen Bengali and five English periodicals | Ten Bengali periodicals are Granthagar, Desh, Sustha, Tathyakendra, Prasad Karmakshetra etc. English periodicals, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting of both National and State Government and different Embassies in India donate their publications on a regular basis | Presently four periodicals are being subscribed, all of them are in Bengali language. These are: Desh, Saptahik Bartaman, Sukhi Grihakone and Sustha |

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| Festival Publications procurement | | Every year 11/12 festival issues are procured | Festival issues were procured previously, such as Desh, Anandaloke etc. Now occasionally, one or two issues are purchased but this is very rare. | Festival issues are being procured. Many of them are donated by some users. | Every year this library subscribes many festival publications of current periodicals according to the need of the users | The requirement of its readers procures 15 - 20 festival issues of current periodicals . | Presently, nine such issues are being subscribed , all of them are in Bengali language - Anandame la, Patrika, Anandalok e, Aajkaal, Bartaman, Desh, Nabakallol , Prasad and Pratidin |
| Newspaper procurement | | Two newspapers are regularly subscribed. The Statesman' and 'Anandabazar patrika | Two newspapers are regularly subscribed. The Statesman' and 'Anandabazar patrika | Presently five daily newspapers are being procured. One of them is in English namely 'The Statesman' and other four are in Bengali. | Five daily newspapers among which one is in English namely, 'The Statesman', three are in Bengali and one is in Hindi, 'Karmakshetra', 'All India appointment gazette' and 'Employment news'. | This library procures three Bengali newspapers of which one has been procured daily and other two only for Sundays. Besides these, only one English daily newspaper had been procured regularly | Three newspapers are presently subscribed , two of them are in Bengali, and one is in English, - The Statesman |
| Services | Reading room | Contains a big free reading room. for newspapers and text books | Contains a small reading room where members or non-members on permission can avail | Contains a small reading room | Contains a big reading room at its ground floor for reading newspapers only. Besides, it | Contains a small reading room where users come and read newspaper | Contains a reading room where users regularly come and read |

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| | | | reading facility | | has a small reading room at the first floor for reading magazines, books etc. | s and periodicals | newspapers |
| | Lending | This service available for members (15 days) | Two books at a time for 15 days | One can get a book/periodical equal to his/her caution deposit | One should deposit the net amount equal to the price of the book/periodical he/she wants to borrow (14 days). | Books are issued for 14 days whereas periodicals are issued for 7 days | For this purpose, Rs.125/- are taken for caution deposit and users can get one document at a time (10 days) |
| | Others | No computer and Reprography service | No computer and Reprography service. On permission to the Secretary of the Association, Xerox copy of the document can be made from outside | Reference service, Photocopy available on charges. | Reference service is very good, No Reprography service | Reference services are rendered particularly for the needy and research scholar. No Reprography service | There is no reprographic facility. If required, on permission of the librarian |
| Some other features | Working hours | Monday - Saturday: 7 - 8.30 p.m. Sunday closed | Monday, Wednesday and Friday, 4 - 7 pm | Tuesday - Sunday; Morning 6:30 to 8 am (except Children section) Evening 5:30 to 9.00 pm; Monday closed. | Monday - Saturday: 7 am - 8:30 am. and 7 pm - 9 pm; Sunday: 7 am - 8.30 am. | Monday - Friday 5:30 pm - 8:30 pm; Sunday 7:30 am - 10:30 am; Saturday closed. | Monday - Saturday 5:30 pm - 8:30 pm; Sunday closed. |
| | Physical description | Consists of two (2) floors | Three storied building of which library is in a small room at the first floor beside the Association's | Two storied building, ground floor is for newspaper reading room and lending and | Three storied building; ground floor consists of four rooms including a very big | One big room for issuing, return, stack, etc. and another small room | This library contains one big room for reading, lending and |

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| | | auditorium. | the first floor is for children section and reference section | reading room for newspapers reading, first floor has eight rooms including one reading room and second floor has three rooms. | for reading purpose | stacking purpose and one very small room for preserving rare documents |
| Finance | Monthly rent of ground floor and members' subscriptions | Totally look after by the Association. There is no limit of book purchase as well as no system of regular book purchase | Occasional grants and subscription from its members. Furniture and book grants of RRRLF fulfill some purposes of the library | Subscription from users. Besides, very irregular government grant. Furniture and book grants of RRRLF fulfill some purposes of the library | Very irregular grant from the government, different bodies like RRRLF etc. The main source of finance becomes the members subscription and interests of their deposit in banks | This library is directly under the Asuthosh Mukherjee Memorial Trust. This Trust gives Rs.2000/- per month which is the main source of income and subscription from members is another source of income. |
| Different sections | Two sections (2) namely lending section and text book reading section | Two sections (2) namely Research section and Bose family library section | Two sections: a) General section (Sadharan Bibhag), b) Children section (Mukul Bibhag) | This library four sections namely -- a) Reading room, b) Lending, c) Newspapers and d) Text-book section | There are two sections a) Juvenile; b) General | There are two sections -- a) Reading room, newspapers and journal section; and b) Lending section. |

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| Users - Membership and Numbers | <p>There are two kinds of members -- a) <i>Ordinary</i>: Having the facility of borrowing one book/journal at a time. b) <i>Special</i>: Having the facility of borrowing two books / journals at a time. There are at present 200 members as a total</p> | <p>There are two types of members -- a) <i>Association members</i>: Members of the Indian Association can have the opportunity of being the member of the library. b) <i>Non-Association members</i>: One who is not the member of the Indian Association can be a member of the library. Total members at present are about 150.</p> | <p>There are three categories of user -- a) <i>Children</i>: between the ages group 5-14 yrs. b) <i>General</i>: Person above the age of 14 years and above. c) <i>Life members</i>: Any person who wants to use this library for ever can take the life membership . Presently there are about (230+70+50) 350 members</p> | <p>There are four categories of members -- a) <i>Children members</i>: Any child up to the age of 18 years; b) <i>Adult members</i>: Any citizen above the age of 18 years; c) <i>Life members</i>: One cannot get life membership for the first time demanding it; d) <i>Members of the Text-book section</i>: Students from Class IX to graduation standard.</p> | <p>Two sections which are - a) <i>Juvenile</i> - includes members up to the age of 16 years; a) <i>Juvenile</i> - - includes members above the age of 16 years</p> | <p>There are 150 users at present. However, there is no life member concept in this library</p> | |
| | Staffing | <p>One (1) librarian, 2 assistant librarians for evening shift and 2 for afternoon shift, and 1 peon. All are non-professionals</p> | <p>Only one (1) staff i.e. the post of librarian who is the member of the Association.</p> | <p>Three staff members - one librarian, one assistant librarian and one library assistant. All are non-professional</p> | <p>Three staff members including one librarian and one caretaker. Other one is library assistant. All are non-professional</p> | <p>There are three staff members including librarian and none of them are professional. Besides, there is a cleaner in the library</p> | <p>Total staff members are three - one librarian and two other library assistants. All are non-professionals.</p> |
| | Access | <p>Open access</p> | <p>There is no rigid rule.</p> | <p>Closed access</p> | <p>Closed access</p> | <p>Closed access</p> | <p>Open access</p> |

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| Classification / Cataloguing | Classified under different subject heads following local classification scheme. No standard catalogue code is followed. The handwritten register system where entries are arranged alphabetically according to the author. | DDC scheme follows, but there is no catalogue code | No standard classification scheme is followed and no standard catalogue code is followed. | No standard classification scheme is followed. Here, staff members follow their own scheme for classifying documents. Again, no standard catalogue code is followed for cataloguing of documents | No standard classification scheme is followed. The documents are classified under conventional subject categories. there are printed catalogues in this library, which gives list of authors, titles and accession numbers (Card Indexing System) | Previously DDC followed, now document classification but now books are kept directly in shelves after accessioning, arranged according to the author, Catalogue cards were also prepared some years ago. Accession register provides the only answer regarding books |
| Stock verification | No such thing has recently done in this library. | by the staff members occasionally | an interval of two/three years | This is done regularly almost every year generally between 26-31 December | This is done in every year by the staff members of the library | This is done more or less regularly and likely after Puja vacation or during Puja vacation. |
| Library committee | 17 members and they meet generally half-yearly as usual but in special cases they meet to look after the situation. | 7 members and unfortunately the librarian is not a member of the library committee. usually they meet once a | There is a library committee, the president and the secretary of this committee meet | This library has a library committee which is constituted by 21 members. Members are elected for the duration | There is a governing body for this library which acts as the library committee. Members meet | The library committee consists of one President and one secretary and they meet regularly |

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| | | year to decide various aspects of library | regularly together for resolving various issues. | of three years. They regularly meet to take decision regarding various aspects of the library. | regularly to decide various issues regarding the library. | to discuss different matters of library. Unfortunately that the librarian of the library is not a member of the library committee |
| Annual report | It is not issued annually, a General Meeting is occurred once in two years and a report is published then. | Every year there is an annual report published for the Association and library being a part of the Association, there is some words relating to the library | An annual report has regularly been published. It deals with different aspects of library such as administrative committee, income, expenditure, auditor's report etc. | Annual reports were regularly published previously. But recently they are not yet published | Every year, the secretary is responsible for the publication of annual report on behalf of the Governing body. The problems, different issues etc. of the library are discussed in the annual report. | There is no separate annual report for the library. However, the Trust regularly publishes its annual report, and being an organ of the Trust, there is a separate column for the library |
| Social role | Saraswati Puja, celebration of its foundation day etc. started an art school named as 'Chhanda Rekha' for the children. | xx | Organised seminars, discussions regarding various aspects like education, literature, science, economics etc. Sometimes recitation, drawing and other competitions are | The name of the library was decided to be kept as 'Beadon Square Literary Club'. This library regularly organised different competitions, one of which was very popular and of high | Regularly organises Saraswati Puja. On this occasion, cultural programmes, competitions, discussion programmes by the users are organised. In one | xx |

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| | | | organised by the children section | standard namely 'Essay Competition' | such programme users discussed about 'Bhalo laga na laga bai' | |
| Problems | a) decrease in number of readers, b) financial constraint, c) staff members is very small, d) incapability of maintaining old and rare reading materials | a) lack of space rare documents are kept on table and thus attacked by insects and dust, b) Incapability of maintaining old reading materials which have great value in society | a) Severe shortage of fund; b) Space problem; c) the local youths take this library every year to perform Kali Puja inside the reading room | a) The first and foremost problem is the shortage of finance. b) Remuneration given to the staff members is very small | a) Severe problem of finance, b) the staff members is very small, c) space problem | a) Lack of reader is the major problem, b) Remuneration given to the staff members is very small, c) Incapability of maintaining old reading materials |
| Future Plans | a) increase the reading habit of user, b) install a Xerox machine and a computer, c) inaugurate a career guidance centre to help the local youth, d) solve the financial problem at any cost | a) reopen the closed text book section to help students, b) organise the library to help research activities, c) develop a career guidance centre for the unemployed youth, d) computerisation is the ultimate objective to run smoothly | xx | a) Immediate intention is to manage fund to maintain old and rare materials. b) Install a Xerox machine and a computer for user. c) increase the working hours of the library | Members are very much trying to solve the financial problem. They know, if they do not manage this in coming years, then it will be very difficult to keep the existence of this library | According to the librarian, finance is not a great problem, if there are more users, they can demand more money from the Trust to run the library smoothly and purchase more reading materials according to the need of the |

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Conclusion:

The purpose of this study was to identify the old & rare collections of the libraries surveyed. But due to the poor record management system of some of these libraries, sometimes, no data are available on old & rare collections, and moreover, sometimes, dependences have been made on the interviews of the concerned staff members. In case of most of the libraries surveyed, accession registers regarding old collections are not available and probably they have been lost for ever. Moreover, there is no record at all of many old documents which were available at the time of the establishment of these libraries. Actually, they have not yet felt the importance of accession register for smooth functioning of library. For this, it is a common feature that more or less every library surveyed either lost a sufficient number of documents or do not know the mines of information they have in their libraries. Again the maintenance of these rare collections is very much neglected. These collections are not preserved with care, binding and other preservative measures have been undertaken occasionally and like normal documents don't keeping in mind the peculiarities and rarities of these documents.

Starting from the above point, it is practical that as these libraries crossed hundred years, they contain many valuable documents. Every library had been developed by the active support of great personalities, by providing both money and their personal writings, manuscripts etc. The value of these things at the present age is immeasurable. But most of these libraries do not bother about this. Many of them do not have any list regarding these materials, some others have lists but very incomplete, only giving author, title and accession number, if any. From this, one cannot trace about the rarity of these documents. They are most of the cases kept in dumps having all types of facilities – darkness, rain, insects, dust etc! These documents become brittle, full of insects and dust. Thus, the records of civilization are being lost for ever.

Another point to be noted here that, most of these libraries do not record periodicals and festival publications. These are weed out after two/three years.

All of these libraries were established at the end of 19th century. Till then, these are indispensable parts of the society. Most of them except the two government aided libraries are still maintaining good social contact. They regularly organise competitions, cultural programmes, Saraswati puja, Vijaya sammilani and other such programmes with active support from the society. For this, society provides necessary means for the survival of these libraries. These social interactions are the important features of these libraries.

West Bengal is a state having a separate department for library services and there is a minister of cabinet rank. Here maximum money is spent among all other states in India on library budget. Though more than 80% of the budget is spent for salaries of staff members, but the residue is still high. The libraries surveyed are mostly not supported by the government. Their conditions are very bad. Shortage of fund, space problem, lack of furnitures make it very difficult to run them. All of them have the agitations against the government. RRRLF rarely provides books and furnitures as donations to these libraries. These libraries only survive with the assistance of the government.

State government is now trying to connect all the public libraries through computer. But for this, the libraries must be well organised and maintain their records rightly. It has already been stated about the poor record management of these libraries and without the active support of government, it is not possible to organise them properly. And without proper organization, the records they have will not last long. Government should look into the matter with importance. At least a project work should be undertaken on listing of rare documents as well as organising the libraries with proper classification and cataloguing. Only through this, the actual networking project becomes liable. Though financial support, these libraries will exist in future and thus our literary and cultural heritage will be kept for the coming generations.

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