

Origin and Development of Library Activities in Navsari Region

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As the beginning of modern education was initiated from Navsari region, the beginning of library activities was also initiated from the Navsari region. The library activities were initiated from Navsari because this region was near to Mumbai and education lover Parsi people were residing in the region. There were about 7 libraries established in the region by the private donation before the beginning of library activities in the state. There were major three libraries: (1) Gazdar Library, Gandevi (1864), (2) Maherji Rana Library, Navsari (1872) and (3) Piti Library, Bilimora (1882). Major points of discussion of these libraries have been presented as under.

(1) Gazdar Library, Gandevi (1864)

The oldest library of the state was established in Gandevi of Navsari region. A reading room and library was established in the year 1864 whose name was The Kavasji Ghanabhai Gazdar Reading Room and Library. Now a day, this library runs in the new building. According to the condition of Manekbai Gazdar, the library had been given the name of her son for which she had given the donation of rupees 6000. The new building had been constructed according to rule of Panchayat and department. The Suvarna Mahotsav (golden Jubilee) of the library was celebrated in the year 1914 and Mani Mahotsav was celebrated in the year 1925. The first library meet of the state was met there. This institution was visited by Shree Mahatma Gandhi, iron man of India, Shree Sardar Patel and Dr. Jivarajbhai Mehta. ¹

(2) Maherji Rana Library, Navsari (1872)

The building of Maherji Rana Library was constructed by Sheth Barajoraji Bamanji Padam giving the donation of rupees 5000 in the memory of first Dastur in the year 1872. The second part of the building was constructed in the year 1906 giving the donation of

rupees 22000. The maintenance of the library was done by the fund of Jummedar Trust. The peculiarity of this library is that this library has 425 manuscripts in Gujarati, Farsi and Arabi languages. The facility of the library is not free.

Pitit Library, Bilimora (1882)

The library of Bilimora was established by Sheth Jahangir Pitit in the year 1882. The building of the library was constructed in the year 1908 by his donation. The expense of the building was rupees 9250.²

Moreover, the public library was established in Kathor in the year 1880. One public library established in Songadh in the year 1884 whose expense was rupees 2400. Shivaji Public Library was established in Vyara whose expense was rupees 6500 in the year 1898. Public library established in Palsana whose expense rupees 5600.³

Shree Sayaji Vaibhav Sarvajanik Pustakalaya, Navsari

Sarvajanik reading room was established in the year 1878. Sarvajanik Pustakalaya was established in Baroda in the year 1898. Both reading room and library were joined and they were placed in Laxman hall. When there were public meets, the books and other things should be placed in other room. So, the employee had to face many difficulties. So, Suba of Navsari region Ravbahadur Govindbhai Hathibhai Desai gave the money which was saved from the celebration of silver jubilee of Maharaja Gayakvad in the year 1907 for the purpose of new building of the library. The process of new building was done. The land was donated by heirs of Gokaldas Narasidas Parekh and Ramdas Shivadas Modi. The new building was constructed by the total expense of rupees 6100. The plan of the building was prepared by executive civil engineer Motibhai B. Patel of Navsari region. The building was prepared in the year 1911. So, the library was transefered from Laxman hall to this new building.

In the year 1916, there was a need to increase the rooms for the library. The process was done by the donation of Bai Sahib Ratanbai Edalji Bamanji with the inspiration of Suba of the region Shree Govindbhai Hathibhai Desai.

Library Activities in Navsari Region

As seen above, it is clear that before the attempts of government the libraries were established in the villages and town by the donation of the prosperous people of the society. Some of them were included in the government libraries by the state government. The government had started to give them the grants. The government had opened many more libraries in the villages and towns. There were 32 villages of the Navsari region which were given the benefit of circulating libraries. There were 80 villages in which government libraries were opened. The libraries were opened in villages like Velachha, Mangarol, Mahuva, Vesma, Nankal etc. There were 60 libraries established in the year 1919. There were 23 libraries in Navsari Mahal, 2 libraries in Gandevi Mahal, 1 library in Palsana Mahal, 15 libraries in Kamrej Mahal, 9 libraries in Mahuva Mahal, 7 libraries in Mangarol Mahal, 2 libraries in Songadh Mahal and 1 library in Vyara Mahal. Maximum numbers of libraries were opened in Navsari Mahal. The libraries in Mahuva, Amachak, Ranat, Kurel, Mudet, Dholikuy, Zervavara, Butvada and Anavala were opened.

With the reference to village libraries programme, the total population of Navsari region was 335467 from which there were 123622 people were getting the benefit of the library. The support was given by the department of library of Baroda state. The government and region Panchayat would give the money the same as collected by the help of people.

Circulating (Mobile) Library

The places where there were no library or the place where there were no certain books which the reader wanted, the circulating or mobile libraries were initiated. There were boxes of the books which could be lifted by the coolie. Announce forms and other forms remained in the issue registered suggestion book. The boxes could be handled and locked. The service of the circulating libraries was provided free of coast. The experiment of circulating library was applied in Baroda by the department of library. The educationalists and social activist were influenced by the mobility and simplicity of this plan. 32 villages of Navsari region were covered by this facility. Small villages were benefitted by this plan of the government. ⁴

Women Library

Kekhsharu Bamaji library was established for the women in the building of Shree Mahila Rest House in Navsari in the year 1932. The reading room was also opened. There were 1729 books from Gujarati, Marathi and English languages were kept in the library in the year 1935. There were 3941 women members of the library.

Thus, the library activity inspired and initiated by Shree Maharaja Sayajirao Gayakvad III was noteworthy and unprecedented not only in state but in the India. Baroda state was on the hot seat in the field of circulating library, visual instruction department and library training field. There were 60 physical libraries and 32 circulating libraries in Navsari region. There were 36.85% of the total population benefitted by the library activities of the state by which the reading excitement of the commonwealth was satisfied. Reading interest and education were encouraged by the government of Maharaja. The quote "those who literate will never forget" was made significant by the conscious effort of Maharaja Sayajirao Gayakvad. The impression of Navsari was "Cultured Navsari." After the death of Shree Maharaja Sayajirao Gayakvad, the library activities faced many difficulties. The main difficulty was regarding the economical assistance from the government. Once the progressive library activities gradually became weak because of least and irregularity of economic support of the government. The major reason of the end of the library activities of the state was the integration of nation. The library activities felt crises by the neglect of newly formed national government.

However there are some libraries of Baroda state and Navsari region which developing swiftly now a day. The innovative approach of circulating library which was initiated by Shree Sayajirao Gayakvad can become very important in the nation like India. The library system of that time can become rationale at present time also.

Thus, at the end of the present study, it can be said that the government and non-government organization have many efforts for the education of the people of the state. The new and innovative structure was shaped in the Navsari region. The interior villages of the state benefitted by the educational policy of the state government and developed. The education was given by the government without any differences like gender and cast. The government had established the educational institutions from kindergarten to higher education. The professional education like technical institutions and training colleges were established by the government.

The libraries were established with the aim and betterment of "those who studied would not forget." Thus, there were many challenges against the development of education yet by the conscious efforts of government, the education was fostered and developed in the state. The education made the people socially, economically and culturally aware of the current trends of the world. The education had also accelerated the freedom fighting movement of the nation and created the patriotic temperament in the mindset of the people.

References:

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