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LIBRARY : NOW AND THEN



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Present Scenario of Rural Libraries of South Kamrup : A Study

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Abstract

Rural libraries are the important institution for the rural community. Most of the people in Assam live in the rural areas. Poverty and illiteracy is the main problem of rural areas. Seventy percent of the total population based on agriculture. Govt. finance can not reach of the villages in the matter of library services. These libraries are managed by the local people. The Libraries are built in public place with public donations. Rural libraries are generally situated near the village Namghas, Club Ghar or the primary schools.

This paper is an attempt to depict the picture of rural libraries of south kamrup of kamrup district. Most of the rural libraries of south kamrup are facing lots of problems. Govt. has not taken active role for the development of rural libraries. Library legislation, Library building, Collection of books, Poor infrastructure facilities, irregular salary for the working librarian are the major issues in respect of development of the rural libraries.

Key words: Rural Libraries, Rural community, South kamrup, Rural development

1. Introduction:

The rural communities are the basic unit of social, economic and cultural life of Assam also the centres of political and administrative

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activities. Almost 70% people of India live in the rural areas. Rural libraries and information centre plays a vital role in providing rural information services. Simply rural library is defined as library as information service in rural setting. A rural library is one of the effective ways of disseminating information to the people. The major aim of rural library is to provide basic rural information to the rural dwellers. Rural libraries can act as a information and community centre to improve living conditions and the quality of life. The benefits of the rural development programmes have not reached the grass root level beneficiaries due to lack of proper information support.

2. Methodology:

Survey method of research has been adopted especially structured questionnaire and interview in order to assess the present status and functioning of the rural libraries of south kamrup under directorate of library services, Assam. A total of eight questionnaires were distributed among the rural libraries for collection of data. However for the purpose of this study, I collected data through field work. Most of the data were collected through interview with the rural librarian and the local community. In addition to the observation and interview methods, I have utilized some books and articles for reference. The local journals and magazines also helped me in collecting the necessary information.

3. Objective of study:

The objectives of study are as follows:

1. To know the existing situation of the rural libraries of South Kamrup.
2. To study the infrastructure of the rural libraries under study.
3. To identify the problems hindering in providing rural information service.

4. Scope of study:

The present study was based on a survey of rural libraries of South kamrup from kamrup district those are functioning under Directorate of Library service, Govt. of Assam. There are eight rural libraries working in south kamrup area.

These include the following:

1. Sadhana Puthibharal, Dharapur.
2. Pragati Puthibharal, Parilly.
3. Gramin Puthibharal, Sanmilita Tiniali Sangha, Moniari Tiniali.
4. Satpur Pragatishil Puthibharal, Satpur.
5. Janasewa Puthibharal, Rampur.
6. Nehru Puthibharal, Noapara, Chayygaon.
7. Ashomi Puthibharal, chayygaon.
8. Jeuti Puthibharal, Balagaon, Chayygaon

5. Area of Study:

The area of study is the south kamrup, i.e. the southern part of the kamrup district of Assam which is separated by the mighty river Brahmaputra. The location of south kamrup is as follows: Nagaon district is on the east and southern part of Goalpara on the west, Brahmaputra on the north and the hills of Meghalaya on the south. The south kamrup area includes five revenue circles, viz., Chamariya, Boko, Nagarbera, Chayygaon and Palashbari. These eight rural libraries of south kamrup come under mainly Chayygaon and Palashbari Revenue Circle. There are 66 nos. of Gaon Panchayats and nine numbers of community development blocks in south kamrup area.

6. Rural Library:

Rural libraries are part of the public library system in the country. A rural library is defined as library providing information service in rural areas free of charge or for a nominal fee. It is considered as library open to all the rural people irrespective of race, region, colour, sex, language etc. A library is an integral part of the mass education programme and its main aim is rural development.

Following are the aims of rural library and information centre:

1. Awareness among the rural people of the sources of information and encourage them to make use of information which are available in the library.
2. To take care of economic, educational, social, cultural and information needs of the local people.
3. To provide information on all aspects, such as agriculture, financial, public hygiene, family planning etc.
4. To convert uneducated/illiterates and neo-literate into potential users.

7. Structure of Libraries under Directorate of library service, Assam:

The whole hierarchical structure along with no of libraries as shown below:

Sl. No.	Type of Library	No. of Libraries
1.	Directorate of Library service, Assam	1 No.
2.	District Library	23 Nos.
3.	Branch Library	4 Nos.
4.	Sub-Divisional Library	14 Nos.
5.	Rural Library	204 Nos.

Out of 204 Nos. of sanctioned rural libraries in Assam, only eight rural libraries exist in the South kamrup area of kamrup (R) district.

1. Data Analysis:

1.1 Year of origin of the Rural libraries of South Kamrup:

Sr. No.	Name of Rural Library	Year of Origin
1.	Pragati Puthibharal, Parly	1950
2.	Jeuti Puthibharal, Balagaon, Chayygaon	1958
3.	Janasewa Puthibharal, Rampur	1960
4.	Gramin Puthibharal, Tiniali	1962
5.	Satpur Pragatishil Puthibharal, Loharghat	1974
6.	Nehru Puthibharal, Noapara, Chayygaon	1980
7.	Asomi Puthibharal, Chayygaon	1981
8.	Sadhana Puthibharal, Dharapur	1986

From the above table it is seen that origin of rural libraries of south kamrup started from 1950. As the year of origin is concerned, Pragati Puthibharal, Parly (1951) is the oldest rural library of south kamrup while Sadhana Puthibharal, Dharapur (1986) is the latest one. Jeuti Puthibharal started in 1958 in the Chaygaon development block, Janasewa Puthibharal in 1960, Gramin Puthibharal, Tiniali in 1962, Satpur Pragatishil Puthibharal in 1974. During eighty decades three rural libraries started in South kamrup. They are Nehru Puthibharal, Noapara, Chayygaon (1980), Asomi Puthibharal, Chayygaon (1981), Sadhana Puthibharal, Dharapur (1986).

All the above rural libraries of south kamrup were included their name under directorate of library services, Govt. of Assam in 1986.

Since 1986 these libraries were able to get the benefit from the directorate of Library service. Besides these libraries, there are some libraries exist in the most of the villages of south kamrup region. But, these libraries are registered only under society registration act. They are yet to be enlisted their names under Directorate of library service, Govt. of Assam.

1.2 Collection of Resources:

Sr. No.	Name of Rural Library	Total Collection
1.	Pragati Puthibharal, Parly	5,200
2.	Jeuti Puthibharal, Balagaon, Chayygaon	3,000
3.	Janasewa Puthibharal, Rampur	3,500
4.	Gramin Puthibharal, Tiniali	8,227
5.	Satpur Pragatishil Puthibharal, Loharghat	2,657
6.	Nehru Puthibharal, Noapara, Chayygaon	2,428
7.	Asomi Puthibharal, Chayygaon	3,885
8.	Sadhana Puthibharal, Dharapur	4,000

The above table represents the data relating to the total collection of the rural libraries under study. As the collection is concerned Gramin Puthibharal, Tiniali has the highest collection of books (i.e. 8,227 nos.) while Nehru Puthibharal, Noapara, Chayygaon has the lowest collection of Books (i.e. 2,428 nos.) Jeuti Puthibharal has 3000 nos, Janasewa Puthibharal has 3,500 nos. Satpur Puthibharal has 2,657 nos, Asomi Puthibharal has 3,885 and Sadhana Puthibharal has 4,000 nos. of books. Rural libraries received books from the directorate of library services, Assam time to time. Most of the books are in Assamese, English, Hindi and Bengali languages. It includes mainly text-books, reference books, story books, novels, biography of great man etc.

The above table can be depicted by the following diagram:



1.3 Subscription of Newspaper and Magazine:

Subscription	Number	Percentage
News Paper + Magazine	1	12.5%
Daily News Paper	4	50%
Not subscribed	3	37.5%

Daily Newspaper and magazines are the medium of communication of information and knowledge. Out of 8 studied rural libraries, only 1 (12.5%) library regularly subscribe magazine (i.e. Prantik) and newspapers (i.e. The Assam Tribune, Dainik Asom, Employment News). 50% rural libraries subscribe only one daily newspaper for the user community. 4 rural libraries (37.5%) do not subscribe any magazines and newspaper. Directorate of Library service, Assam does not provide regular fund to the rural libraries for the subscription of newspaper and magazines. But with the support of the local community some rural libraries are regularly subscribing magazines and newspapers.

1.4 Facilities available in the Rural Libraries of South Kamrup:

SL. No.	Infrastructure facilities	Yes	Percentage
1.	Separate building	6	75%
2.	Reading facility	8	100%
3.	Electricity	8	100%
4.	Television	8	100%
4.	Generator Service	1	12.5%
5.	Drinking water	8	100%

The above table shows the picture of facilities available in the rural libraries located in the south kamrup area. Most of the rural libraries are located at the centre point of the villages. These six rural libraries have independent building but their present conditions are not good. Floor of the library building are not well. The total area of the building is not adequate for the stack area and the reading room facilities for the readers. 6 (75%) rural libraries surveyed have own library building. All the rural libraries in south kamrup have reading room facility though they are operating in a single room. 100% rural libraries in south kamrup have electricity connection. Only one (12.5%) rural library has generator provision. Drinking water facility is available in all surveyed rural libraries of south kamrup.

1.5 Opening hours of the Rural libraries:

Opening Hours	Number	Percentage
Morning	0	0
Evening	8	100%

The above table shows the opening hours of the rural libraries of south kamrup. All (100%) surveyed rural libraries of south kamrup generally open their libraries in the second half of the day (4P.M-

7PM). In the morning time students, service holder, and other people busy their own works. So for the convenience of the local people library open in the evening time. Local youth comes to the rural library in the evening time to fulfill their needs.

1.6 Staff Strength:

Staff	Number	Percentage
Librarian+Helper	7	87.5%
Librarian	1	12.5%

Number of library staff is very limited to carry out library activities to the users in these libraries. Librarian and one helper is the only library staff in the rural libraries. 87.5% rural libraries of south kamrup has librarian with one helper. They are providing library service to the rural community. Only 1 library (12.5%) is providing service without helper. The name of the library is Parly Pragatishil Puthibharal. One female librarian is working there.

1.7 Qualification of the Rural Librarian:

Qualification	Number	Percentage
Matriculation	2	25%
H.S.Pass	3	37.5%
B.A/B.Sc Pass	3	37.5%

Quality library service depends upon the qualification of the librarian. Out of eight (8) surveyed rural libraries 25% librarian are HSLC pass, 37.5% librarian are H.S pass and other 37.5% librarian are BA/B.Sc. pass. Rural librarians are not professionally qualified. Most of the librarians are not well trained for the rural library management.

1.8 Library Committee:

Whether Library Committee exist	Number	Percentage
YES	8	100%
NO	0	0

Library committee plays a significant role for the development of rural libraries. President, secretary, librarian and some executive members consist in the committee. Library committee exists in all surveyed libraries of south kamrup. They organize meetings for the development of the library time to time.

1.9 Community participation:

Community participation cannot be denied in the rural libraries. Rural Libraries development is not possible without community participation. Local community should come forward for the improvement of the rural library services. Community participation in the rural libraries of south kamrup can be shown in the following table:

Indicator	Number	Percentage
Full participation	4	50%
Partial	3	37.5%
Not at all	1	12.5%

8.11 Sources of Fund for the development of Rural Libraries:

Sources of Fund	Number	Percentage
Directorate of Library & Service, Assam		100%
RRRLF	0	0
Public Donation	0	0
Local MLA/MP Fund	0	0

Finance is the major things for improvement of all organization and as such for a library also. All the surveyed rural libraries (100%) receive funds from the Directorate of library service, Assam. The Prime financial sources of rural libraries are public donation and govt. Grant. But rural libraries under this area are unable to get proper financial support neither from the public nor from the government. The Raja Rammohan Roy Library Foundation (RRRLF) is also not active in this regard. There is no contribution of the local MLA's and MP's fund for the development of the rural libraries.

Findings:

- The number of book available in the rural libraries is not sufficient to meet the information needs of rural people.
- During visit it has been found that some rural libraries exist in some villages i.e. Amtola, kukurmara, Urput. But they are yet to be registered under directorate of library services, Assam.
- User response is very less in all the surveyed rural libraries of South kamrup.
- The daily newspaper and magazines are not available except few rural libraries of South kamrup.
- The furniture's are uncomfortable in the surveyed rural libraries.
- Space problem is found in all the surveyed rural libraries.
- Books are kept in haphazard manner in the surveyed libraries of south kamrup.
- The condition of Library buildings is not good in the villages.

Problems faced by the rural libraries:

- a. **Library Legislation:** There is a need for library legislation to ensure financial support to the rural libraries. The non-enactment

of library legislation is the main reason for the slow growth of rural libraries in Assam.

- b. **Financial problem:** Finance is the major things for improvement of any kind of organization. The prime financial sources of rural libraries are govt. grant and public donation. The RRRLF is not active in this regard. Rural librarians are still waiting for the monthly salaries for last two /three years.
- c. **Lack of government grant:** The Assam govt. is always neglecting the rural libraries for the rural people.
- d. **Lack of public donation:** Rural libraries are maintained by public through public donation. But those are living in the rural areas, they are not financially sound.
- e. **Collection development:** The book selection procedure is highly centralized. Some irrelevant books are found in the surveyed rural libraries. During supply of books to the rural libraries, authority does not provide list of books to the librarian.
- f. **Poor Infrastructure:** The library furniture and the sitting arrangements are not good to motivate the readers. Only a few numbers of reading tables and chairs are found available in the surveyed libraries.
- g. **Library opening hours:** Opening hours is not convenient for the rural people.
- h. **Proper monitoring System:** lack of proper monitoring is another problem for the development of rural libraries.
- i. **Inadequate Training:** Only a part of the rural library staff benefited by the training. Some library staff are still working without training.

Suggestions:

- The govt. may take immediate step to the enactment of library legislation in Assam.
- The govt. grant should be provided in all the surveyed rural libraries of south kamrup.
- The local community should cooperate for the development of rural libraries.
- Regular salary should be provided to the rural librarians to motivate them.
- Training should be organized for the rural librarian in frequent manner.
- Library working hours may be framed according to the convenience of users.
- There should be proper monitoring system for development of the rural libraries.
- Furniture should be provided to the rural libraries to keep the documents in scientific way.
- Govt. should provide building grant to the rural libraries to develop the infrastructure facilities.
- Directorate of library service should provide the list to the librarians during book supply.
- Government has taken effective step to raise the salaries of the rural library employees.

Conclusion:

The above data reveals that the existing condition of rural libraries of the south kamrup is not in a satisfactory condition. Lack of finance, inadequate book shelves and poor maintenance are some common

problems of the rural libraries under study. Librarians and Grade IV employees of these rural libraries have not been receiving salaries in time. So, the Government, the community and the authority concerned should take proper initiative for the over all development of these rural libraries for improving the life style of the rural community and building a good nation.

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