

Bureaucratic control on libraries



A book review by ABU BAKR SIDDIQUE

Public Libraries in Great Britain and Bangladesh by (Miss) Rawshan Ara Parvin. Dhaka, Shaikh publishers Ltd. 1988, xii, 147p, TK. 60/

The book "Public Libraries in Great Britain and Bangladesh" is the latest addition to the scanty library literature in Bangladesh. According to the author, "this was a thesis work completed for the fulfilment of Master's degree in library science. Later on, the work was re-written and updated for publication in book form."

This has made the work unique because this is the first ever thesis submitted to the department of Library and Information science for Master's Degree in Dhaka University that has been brought out as publication for the public.

Public Libraries in Great Britain and Bangladesh

Rawshan Ara Parvin

The book contains 147 pages divided into ten chapters. The work begins with origins of the public library concept, followed by the objective of the public library, historical growth and development of public libraries both in U.K. and Bangladesh with special emphasis on library legislation, a comparative study and conclusion and recommendations.

Each chapter is full of citations where required. This has given an air of authority on the subject. Addition of two appendices viz, "Directory of public libraries in Great Britain" and "Directory of public libraries in Bangladesh" have made the book more informative and useful.

The "public library" is called people's university. This is specially significant in our situation because of our high percentage of illiteracy and low percentage of indigenous publications. Literacy cannot be attained without books. Literacy too cannot be sustained without reading materials and reading facilities being made available.

Apart from the high percentage of illiteracy, majority of our literate population end their schooling just after learning the alphabets at the primary level. In most cases, with the end of schooling comes the end of reading and learning. But the schools do not teach all the things which a man can learn during one's life time.

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course, some incomplete sentences here and there may mar the reading. Another vital suggestion appears to be missing.

That is, the recruitment of professionally trained manpower with due status and pay-scales in want of which the modern public libraries cannot develop on healthy basis in our country. A paragraph on it could make the book more perfect.

Except this observation, the book may be graded as one of the finest publications in the field library and information science published so far in Bangladesh. Students, teachers and research workers in library and information science both at home and abroad will find the book extremely useful and interesting.

Moreover, today human knowledge is developing at such a supersonic speed that even doctors, scientists, engineers, lawyers and so on who are practising in their fields discover that within ten or fifteen years they are at a serious disadvantage professionally and economically in competition with recent graduates if they have not energetically and systematically kept their knowledge up-to-date through continued reading.

So unless we can make reading not a treatment received once when young but a persistent habit inculcated from birth and practised throughout life, unless we keep alive our zeal for continued reading with an adequate supply of reading materials, there is every danger that even our neo-literates may soon relapse into illiteracy.

As the per capita income of our people is one of the lowest in the World, most of us cannot afford personal collection of books. The libraries attached to our educational institutions on the other hand, cannot give service to the others neglecting their own clientele.

In the circumstances, the establishment of a network of public libraries in the design of GREAT BRITAIN appears to be the possible solution. This has become all the more necessary in our situation.

To cope with the ever increasing students for higher studies, the Government is considering opening of open university in our country. In that case, the public libraries would be the only source for availability of reading materials for students of the open university.

The author identifies the major problems and issues of the development of public library system in the country. Of these, the most noteworthy is the bureaucratic control and lack of library legislation. According to author, "the development of public libraries in Bangladesh lies in full bureaucratic control of the Government of Bangladesh. So long this continues, there is little hope for the healthy development of (public libraries) in Bangladesh."

To improve the situation, the author has suggested "...like Great Britain, there should be some independent authorities empowered with public library legislation."

This is indeed prime need of the hour if we sincerely want to develop healthy public library system in the country. This and other suggestions given by the author may help moulding the thinking of the authorities concerned for future development of public libraries in the country.

The jacket (dust cover) of the book is attractive and the printing is exceptionally good free from printing error. Of

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