RURAL LIBRARY SERVICES BASED ON TAGORE'S EXPERIMENT AT SRINIKETAN AND ITS ADJOINING AREAS

Pritam Gurey*

Abstract

Tagore's philosophy of life was concerned with the creation of a synthetic and harmonious way of living which he tried to bring back to the rural life through self-reliance and co-operation among all sections of people through his experiment on rural reconstruction. Tagore's educational ideals are a part of his philosophy of life. The principles of his educational philosophy are: freedom, creative self-expression and active communion with nature and man. Tagore always wanted to organize the villages so that the villages could be self-sufficient and supply all their needs on cooperative basis. The article highlights Tagore's concern and activity for village upliftment by the process of rural reconstruction. Importance of *Chalantika* - the mobile library first one of its kind was started by Tagore to reach the mass and disseminate information. The paper further provides the present condition and activities of rural library services based on the rural reconstruction programme introduced by Tagore. Finally, the paper tries to show the users satisfaction about the rural library services.

Keywords:

Rabindranath Tagore;

Sriniketan;

Chalantika;

Rural Reconstruction;

Rural Library Services.

* **Assistant Librarian, Presidency University, Kolkata**

1. Introduction

Rabindranath Tagore's contribution as a dynamic social philosopher is never less than as a poet, dramatist, and cultural leader. Tagore's individualism defines belief in the fundamental unity of mankind and not only of mankind but also of the whole universe of nature and men. He emphasizes the need for social service not only for social uplift but also the spiritual uplift of an individual. According to Gurudeva, the highest education is that which does not merely give us information but makes our life in harmony with all existence, that's why he tried to bring back rural life through self-reliance, co-operation of all sections of people a self-reliant ever striving society for realizing its full potential. The principles of his educational philosophy are: freedom, creative self-expression and active communion with nature and man. Tagore identified that illiteracy, lack of awareness; superstition and ignorance are the chief drawbacks of rural people.

In this regard Tagore started his rural reconstruction programme in 1922 as a means towards development of the rural community at Sriniketan. Different programmes were been taken up by Gurudeva to fulfill his experiment in rural development. Rural libraries helps the villagers in development of knowledge power and dissemination of information, promotion and retention of their acquired literacy skill, development of reading habits among rural people, development of logical thinking and attitudes of the villagers and open up a platform for sharing ideas and views with others which ultimately have a mass effect in development of a society. So Tagore introduced '*Chalantika*' a library mobile in nature in the year 1925 to reach the common mass who could not reach the library.

The present article is a part of doctoral research work to provide an insight on the Tagore's experiment at Sriniketan and its adjacent areas along with to get an idea at the present scenario and services provided by the rural libraries towards fulfillment of Tagore's objectives. Further the study tries to assess the satisfaction of the users related to the services of the rural libraries.

2. Objectives of the study

o   To highlight the important aspects of Tagore's idea on rural development through his rural reconstruction programme.

o   To find out few important points on *Chalantika*: Mobile Library introduced by Tagore

o   To have an idea towards the present condition and activities of rural library services towards fulfilment of objectives of rural reconstruction programme introduced by Tagore.

o   To assess the user satisfaction about the rural library services.

3. Scope of the study

At present 50 villages are affiliated under Visva-Bharati, Rural Extension Centre, out of which 37 villages are aided with 39 rural libraries and are provided with assistance. These 39 rural libraries functions under 38 Village Development Societies and 01 Health Society. The area of the study is limited to 35 rural libraries out of 39 as 04 libraries are in a non-functioning stage.

4. Methodology

For the study survey through questionnaires was done to identify the functioning of libraries in Sriniketan and its adjacent areas. 35 rural libraries including 01 health library, affiliated under Visva-Bharati, Rural Extension Centre were surveyed. Survey population includes library personnel as well as the users of the libraries. Total 35 library personnel and 532 library users were surveyed.

5. Tagore's Experiment in Rural Reconstruction

Early efforts of rural development was made by Tagore's when he was in Silaidaha and Patisar (both are now in Bangladesh) looking after the family zamindari by establishing youth organization, as he experienced the socio-economic conditions of rural Bengal. Constantly a thought for development of the rural community runs into his mind and he formed Sriniketan (Adobe of Prosperity). Sriniketan was founded ceremonially on 6th Feb, 1922 as the Institute of Rural Reconstruction under Visva-Bharati. With the vision of Rabindranath Tagore and leadership of Leonardo Elmhirst, experiments in rural reconstruction started functioning at Sriniketan. Activities like demonstration on scientific methods of agriculture, training of youths, adult education and health co-operatives were important aspects of the work aimed to make a group of villages self-reliant. This was a very comprehensive programme combining culture, health, education and economic aspects of village life together and to develop a technique of community development for the whole of India. Education to all is the key area of all the

activities in the programme and for that he introduced a circulating library named *Chalantika* to support the rural community.

5.1 *Chalantika*: the mobile / circulating library

With the vision to reach the rural people of Bengal, the emergence of *Chalantika* took place in 1925 at Sriniketan. *Chalantika* had become an important example of mobile library services in India for building up a new society with quality of life for rural people. Tagore wished and planned to extend education up to the grass root level of the society through the mobile library services. With the collection of 200 (two hundred) books *Chalantika* started the extension of library services in five branch centers at the adjacent villages of Sriniketan, which in times had increased to 15 branches. The numbers of books increased up to 1504 (one thousand five hundred four) in the year 1940. The villagers were issued books according to their choice, interest and demand for a certain period. This shows that *Chalantika* satisfies the **first three laws of Library Science** (1931), propound by Shiyali Ramamrita Ranganathan. Tagore had already implemented these laws in practice since 1925. The library extensive and mobile practice was introduced before S.R. Ranganathan advocated the fifth law as "Library is a growing organism" (Gurey, 2010).

5.2 Rural Extension Centre: (REC)

In order to have a better socio-economic situation of the village people Visva-Bharati developed Rural Extension Centre (REC). Visva-Bharati (a central university) follows an area based approach to rural education and extension. The current name of REC is "Department of Lifelong Learning and Extension, Rural Extension Centre". Operational area of REC comprises of 02 (two) blocks: Bolpur-Sriniketan & Illambazar, 08 Gram Panchayats and covering 50 villages and the Village Development Societies (VDS) of those village are affiliated with REC. (Visva-Bharati, Annual Report 2014-15). At present the activities or programmes of REC is concentrated to Brati-Dal, assistance to rural library services, agriculture extension programmes, different workshops and training programmes and women and child welfare programme.

5.3 REC of Visva-Bharati & Raja Rammohan Roy Library Foundation (RRRLF):

With the increasing demand for the rural libraries at the adjacent villages of Sriniketan, REC provides assistance to the villages. Further initiative was taken for enriching the library services by Raja Rammohan Roy Library Foundation (RRRLF) in the year 1975. RRRLF and REC under the matching grant mode provide financial assistance in form of books, furniture's to the affiliated Village Development Societies for smooth functioning to rural library services to the rural community. RRRLF also finance for establishing permanent buildings for the rural libraries in the villages through REC, Visva-Bharati.

6. Data Analysis and Findings

To fulfill the objectives of the study, the data obtained from the survey with the help of questionnaire have been analysed.
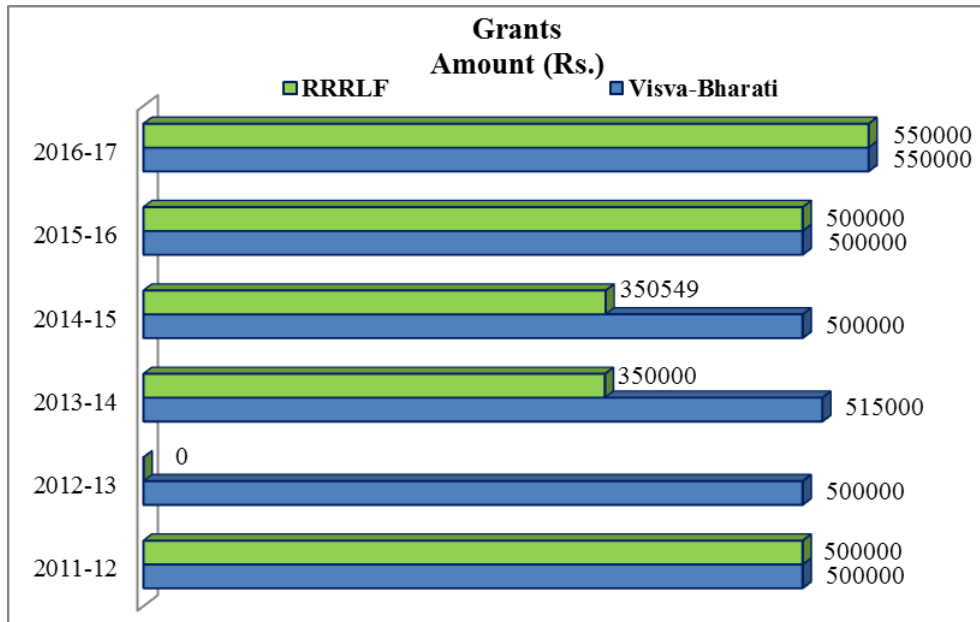
6.1 Rural Libraries and REC, Visva-Bharati

Out of 50 affiliated villages, 37 villages are aided with rural library services**.** These 37 villages have 38 Village Development Societies and 01 Health Society. The 38 Village Development Societies and 01 Health Society have 38 Rural Libraries and 01 Health Library respectively. All the 39 rural libraries are assisted with buildings, furniture, books, journals and equipment's by RRRLF. One respective librarian and one assistant librarian from each village development societies provide rural library services on voluntary basis. At present 35 libraries (including 01 Health Library) are in functional condition and the total collection of books is **1,30,882** (as on March 2017).
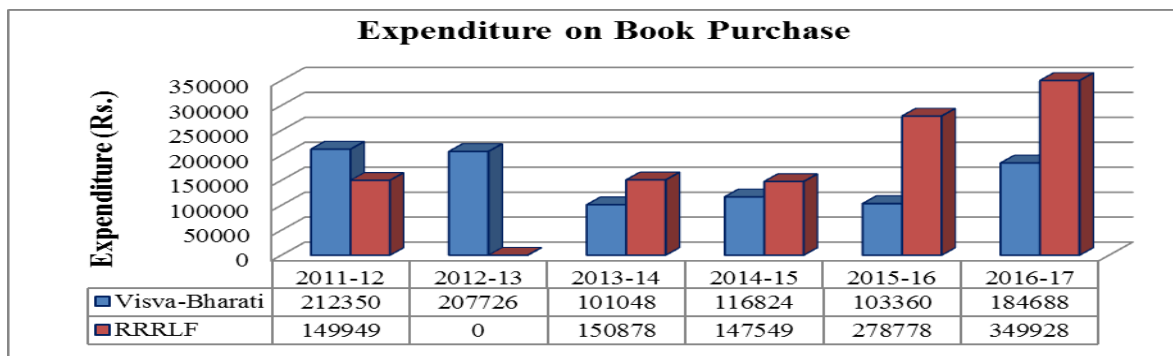
6.2 Grants & Expenditure

The functioning of the libraries depends on two types of grants – Matching Grant and Non-matching grant. Matching grant is received in equal ratio from RRRLF and Visva-Bharati to procure books, furniture and equipment.

6.2.1 Total Grants from the financial year 2011-12 to 2016-17

Chart-2: Total Grants (FY 2011-12 to FY 2016-17)

From the figures, it is clear that, the maximum amount received under matching grant is Rs.11 lakhs (5.5 lakhs from each). But during the FY 2012-13, no grant was provided by RRRLF, Visva-Bharati has provided the grant for the financial year to meet the expenditures.

6.2.2 Expenditure on Book Purchase (Matching Grant) from the financial year 2011-12 to 2016-17

Chart-2: Expenditure on Book Purchase (FY 2011-12 to FY 2016-17)

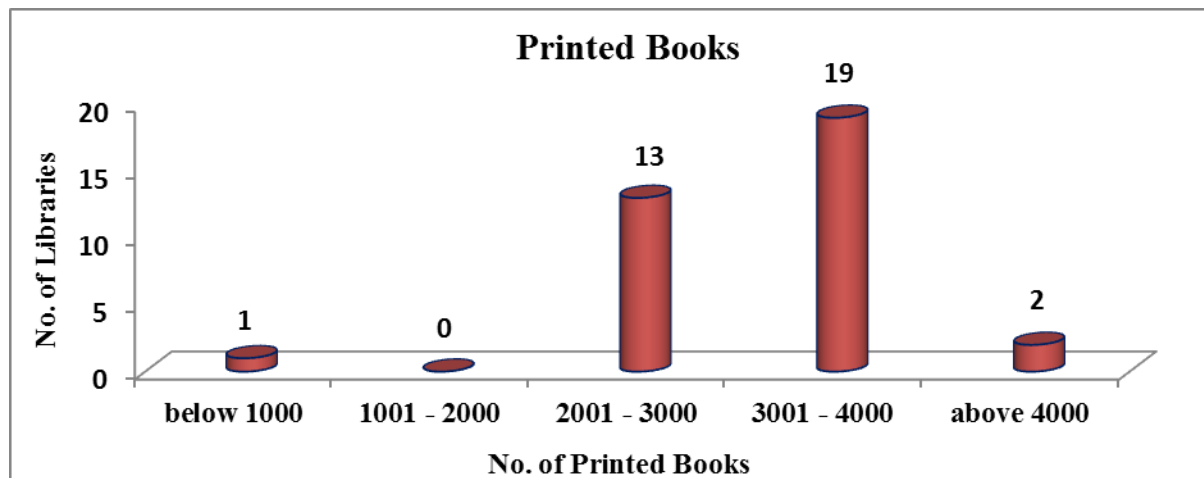|	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17
Visva-Bharati	212350	207726	101048	116824	103360	184688
RRRLF	149949	0	150878	147549	278778	349928

From the chart, it may be stated that the average annual expenditure made on book purchase is near about 2 lakhs rupees (1 lakh from RRRLF and 1 lakh from Visva-Bharati). Therefore, each of the 35 libraries is allotted Rs.5714/- approximately per year for book purchase. During the

year 2011-12 and 2012-13, Visva-Bharati has provided more than 2 lakhs rupees because Surul Health Library and Taltore Gramin Granthagar got associated with REC.

6.3 Library Collection

REC, Visva-Bharati each and every year purchase books with the fund received from RRRLF and Visva-Bharati under matching grant and distributes those among these rural libraries. Same copies of books are distributed among the 34 rural libraries and one health library is provided with health related books only. The collection covers mainly books on Bengali and English languages. Collection covers more or less all types of books. Books on vocational training, children, religion, health, travel, general knowledge, and competitive exams are part of the collection.

Chart-3: Collection of Books

The chart indicates the collection of libraries ranges from 2000 to 5000 approximately. 19 libraries have a collection ranging from 3001 to 4000 books. Only 01 library i.e. Surl Health Library has a collection below 1000 books as the library was established in the year 2012 and contains only health related book.

6.4 Infrastructure of the rural libraries

Infrastructure includes library building for which one time grant is received from RRRLF, electrical connection, ICT equipment, furniture and other items, etc.

6.4.1 Building

Chart-4: Types of Building

The chart demonstrates that four libraries (11.43%) have mud building, six libraries (17.14%) have two storied building, twelve libraries (34.29%) have children library section/corner. Separate one time grant is provided by RRRLF for initiation of children library section/corner.

6.4.2 ICT Equipment:

Computer	Printer	Multi-functional Printer	Online UPS
9	2	1	1

ICT equipment's include computer, printer, online UPS and multi-functional printer. Out of 35, only 6 (17.14%) libraries have computers. Only one library (2.86%) has multi-functional printer, online UPS, Internet and LAN facility. The situation of implementation of ICT in rural libraries is very feeble and it is because some of the libraries do not have their own electrical connection and some of them though have their own electrical connection, face severe space crunch. Therefore implementation of library automation is a way beyond dream as the libraries lack of library building, electrical connection, computers, network connectivity and professional library staff.

6.5 Services Provided by the rural libraries

The services can be majorly catogorised into two parts a) General library services, b) Services for rural community development.

6.5.1 General Library Services

Services	Total No. of Libraries	Percentage (n=35)
Reading Room	29	82.86
Circulation	35	100.00
User Awareness/Orientation	14	40.00
Career Orientation	03	8.57
Reprography	02	5.71
Referral	35	100.00

Among 35 libraries 06 libraries cannot provide reading room facility as they do not have sufficient space. All the libraries provide circulation and referral service. User awareness service is provided by 40% of the libraries. Career orientation service is provided by 3 of the libraries by means of providing access to '*Karmakshetra'* newspaper and books on competitive examinations. Reprography services like print, scan and photocopy are provided only by 02 libraries.

6.5.2 Services for Rural Community Development

These services can further be catagorised into three a) Regular Extension Programs b) Annual Extension Programs/Activities, c) Information Services / Assistance for Economic Development, Health Development and Village Organisation**.**

6.5.2a Regular Extension Programs for Academic, Health & Personality Development in the library premises

Programs	Total no. of libraries	% (n=35)
Free Tuition classes	3	08.57
Classes on competitive exam	1	02.86

Health Clinic	5	14.29
Drawing class	4	11.43
Dance class	4	11.43
Music class	1	02.86
Yoga/Gym class	2	05.71
Centre for online services	1	02.86

Depending on the needs of the rural community, 14.29% libraries provides space for health clinic and 11.43% of them provides space for dance and music classes in the library presmises. Only one library has computers and internet connectivity. It helps the village people for online ticket booking, bill payments, form fill up, etc.Only 03 libraries provide space for tuition classes for free for the poor students and 01 library provide space for competitive exam classes inside the library premises.

6.5.2b Annual Extension Programs/Activities for information and knowledge communication

Programs	Total no. of libraries	% (n=35)
Library Day Celebration	29	82.86
Exhibition/ Workshop	27	77.14
Recreational activities	35	100.00
Seminar/ Study Circle	11	31.43
Organising Camp	05	14.29

Extension programmes like library day celebration is done individually on 20th December of each year. Recreational activities like cultural functions on Durga puja, Saraswati Puja, Independence day, etc., are organised in the library premises by VDS. Health camp, eye camp, blood donation camp, etc. are also organised at library premises.

6.5.2c Information Services / Assistance for Economic Development, Health Development and Village Organisation:

Rabindranath Tagore's idea of rural reconstruction has a deep impact on the services of the rural libraries. Based on local information need of the rural community, rural libraries provide

information services and assistance for economic development, health development and village organisation, etc. apart from their general activities.

i)   Economic Development

Sl. No.	Areas for Economic Development	Total No. of Libraries	% (n = 35)
1	Industry	06	17.14
2	Agriculture	29	82.86
3	Banking	12	34.29
4	Dairy and poultry	23	65.71
5	Tree plantation / afforestation	19	54.29
6	Leather work	15	42.86
7	Fishery	25	71.43
8	Mobile repairing	18	51.43
9	Apiculture	13	37.14
10	Jute work	16	45.71
11	Book binding	22	62.86
12	Jam, jelly preparation	04	11.43
13	Stitching and knitting	11	31.43
14	Electrical work	02	5.71
15	Mushroom cultivation	02	5.71
16	Copper work	02	5.71

The study shows that majority of the libraries provide information /assistance on agriculture (82.86%), fishery (71.43%), dairy poultry (65.71%). Now-a-days, information and/or assistance are also provided on mobile repairing, apiculture, jute work, book binding, jam and jelly preparation, stitching and knitting, electrical work, mushroom cultivation, copper work, etc. by the rural libraries.

ii) Health Development

Sl. No.	Areas for Health Development	Total No. of Libraries	% (n = 35)
1	Information on public health	31	88.57
2	Maternity related information	22	62.86
3	Information on child health	29	82.86
4	Organisation of health camp	3	08.57
5	Organisation of eye camp	3	08.57
6	Organisation of blood donation camp	2	05.71
7	Health Clinic at the library premises	5	14.29

Rural libraries provides information for health development which includes child health, maternity related information and public health. It is found that 31 (88.57%) libraries provide information on public health, 29 (82.86%) on child health and 22 (62.86%) on maternity related matters. 05 libraries (14.29%) have health clinics at their premises.

iii) Village Organisation

Sl. No.	Areas for Village Organisation	Total No. of Libraries	% (n = 35)
1	Information on Rural Survey	24	68.57
2	Information on Social Work Research	18	51.43
3	Mahila Samity at Library Premises	8	22.86
4	Brati Dal	8	22.86
5	Anganwadi attached with library	5	14.29
6	Vocational Training	12	34.29

Rural libraries at present context provides information and assistance for village organisation by means of providing information on rural survey (68.57%), social work research (51.43%). 8 libraries (22.86%) have mahila samity at their premises. 12 (34.29%) of them have arranged vocational trainings on different areas like jute work, agricultural activities, mobile repairing, apiculture, mushroom cultivation, electrical works, jam and jelly preparation, fire fighting, etc.

6.6 Respondents covered

Gender	Total No.	% (n=532)
Male	353	66.35
Female	179	33.65
Total	532	

Total 532 respondents took part in the survey, out of which 353 (66.35%) are male and 179 (33.65%) are female.
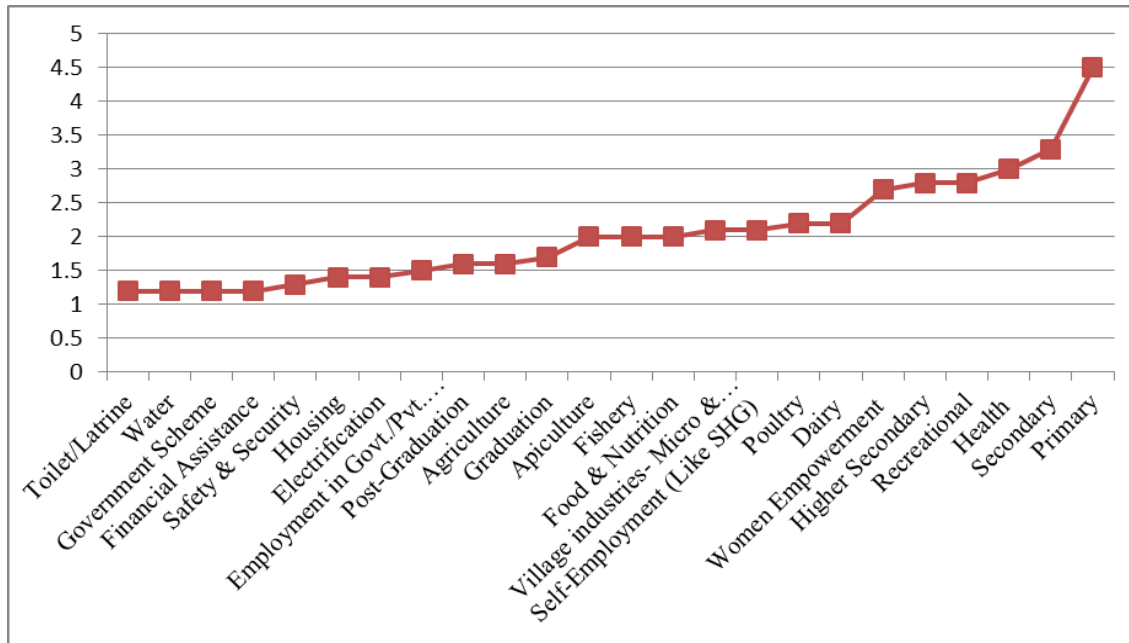
6.7 Ratings of rural library services in point scale (Likert Scale)

The ratings of rural library services provided by the respondents are measured by using Likert Scale. Points have been assigned 1,2,3,4, and 5 as very dissatisfied, moderately dissatisfied, average, moderately satisfied and very satisfied respectively. Areas of services are broadly catagorised as per the information need of the rural community, i.e. educational devlopment, occupational/ professional devlopment, basic needs, employment, government schemes, financial assistance and women empowerment.

Areas of Service		Very Dissatisfied	Moderately Dissatisfied	Average	Moderately Satisfied	Very Satisfied	Respondents	Total Marks	Average Score
		1	2	3	4	5			
Educational Development	Primary	0	0	1	4	7	12	54	4.5
	Secondary	7	14	29	47	9	106	355	3.3
	Higher Secondary	6	16	32	9	4	67	190	2.8
	Graduation	30	23	11	0	0	64	109	1.7
	Post-Graduation	3	5	0	0	0	8	13	1.6

	Recreational	34	85	107	49	27	302	856	**2.8**
Occupation / Professional Development	Agriculture	57	33	9	2	0	101	158	**1.6**
	Poultry	7	9	3	4	0	23	50	**2.2**
	Dairy	10	6	5	5	0	26	57	**2.2**
	Apiculture	4	8	2	1	0	15	30	**2.0**
	Fishery	16	19	12	2	0	49	98	**2.0**
	Village industries-Micro & Small (cotton, jute, leather, paper, Kantha stitch, etc.)	79	186	56	34	0	355	755	**2.1**
Employment	Employment in Govt./Pvt. Sector	36	37	0	0	0	73	110	**1.5**
	Self-Employment (Like SHG)	34	67	37	9	0	147	315	**2.1**
Basic Needs	Food & Nutrition	17	37	11	2	0	67	132	**2.0**
	Health	18	43	88	49	19	217	659	**3.0**
	Housing	59	36	0	0	0	95	131	**1.4**
	Electrification	24	13	0	0	0	37	50	**1.4**
	Toilet/Latrine	250	58	0	0	0	308	366	**1.2**
	Water	26	6	0	0	0	32	38	**1.2**
	Safety & Security	50	19	0	0	0	69	88	**1.3**
Others	Government Scheme	277	34	19	0	0	330	402	**1.2**
	Financial Assistance	233	54	0	0	0	287	341	**1.2**
	Women Empowerment	6	9	12	6	2	35	94	**2.7**

Total marks has been alloted accordingly and an average score on each information need are being calculated in order identify the satisfactory and dissatisfactory areas of the rural community in relation to information through the library.

Chart-5: Ratings of library services

The graph shows rating of library and information services on different areas in an ascending order. Information or assistance in the fields like primary , secondary, higher secondary education as well as recreational activities, women empowerment and health shows satisfactory remarks. But information or assistance on other areas like government scheme, financial assistance, safety and security, etc. has scored very much unsatisfactory.

7. Conclusion

Tagore's rural reconstruction was one of the remarkable ones which helped the then society to construct their way towards the fields of economic, health, education as well as socio-cultural growth. Tagore's model is also relevant at present context. It is apparent that development of the rural community is still necessary. And we also know that proper information may help to overcome many difficulties and helps in accessing many existing services related to rural development which may remain unknown due to lack of proper information dissemination mechanism. Rural libraries due to lack of proper space, budget, infrastructure, electrical connection, ICT equipments, etc., are unable to provide services to the rural people efficiently. The libraries are mostly used by school students and then by villagers for recreational reading. But still the village community expects information services from the libraries which will aid in

their over-all development. Demand of mobile library services is still felt. But somebody has to take the initiave to revive the rural library services for the betterment of the rural community.

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