

INFORMATION NEEDS OF INMATES USING LIBRARY OF DISTRICT JAIL, GAUTAM BUDDHA NAGAR: A CASE STUDY

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In this paper, authors have tried to portrait how libraries can extend their help for the overall improvement of the inmates. Paper is divided into two parts. In the first part, a brief historical account has been provided about how prison libraries have been utilized by various inmates as a place of reading and writing. This part also highlights how prison libraries can be used to inculcate reading habits in inmates. In the second part case study of District Jail Library, Gautam Buddha Nagar, Greater Noida has been discussed in detail. The library is setup by Ranganathan Society for Social Welfare and Library Development under the BIMTECH Pustakalaya Project. A study conducted to find out the information needs of the inmates is also discussed. The present study highlights on Library resources, services, and physical facilities available for prisoners in the District Jail Gautam Buddha Nagar. The study also enquired about the satisfaction of inmates about the library resources, services and physical facilities provided in prison. It was concluded that prison libraries can play a major role in the reformation and rehabilitation process of prisoners.

Keywords: Prisons of Uttar Pradesh; Prison Libraries; Ranganathan Society for Social and Library Development; BIMTECH Pustakalaya; District Jail Gautam Buddha Nagar.

INTRODUCTION

A model civil society tries to be very inclusive in the distribution of resources and learning opportunities not only to the bonafide citizens but also to it extends the opportunities of reforms and growth even to the defaulters and criminals. Therefore, in view of that, there has been a worldwide attempt to educate the prisoners and prepare them for a better sense of the self and the world. Society has also shifted its focus from punishment of the prisoners to the rehabilitation of the prisoners and the productive use of their time while they are serving in prison. According to IFLA Guidelines for Library Services to Prisoners, the prison libraries should ought the public library model and should include the collection which provides information about laws and jurisdictions. It should also provide the resources, which can enhance the education of the prisoners

and accelerate rehabilitation programs of the prisoners (Lehmann and Locke, 2005).

Alexander Macconochie established the first prison library in the early 19th Century in Australia (Wilhemus, 1999). Many prison libraries continued to develop even up to the present 21st Century. United Nations (Rule 40) Standard Minimal Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners of 1955 (IFLA 2005) has recognized the prisoners' right to information. This states that every prison should have a library with an adequate collection of resources and prison inmates should be motivated to make use of it. The International Book Committee and UNESCO (1994) in their Charter for the Reader assert, "all including prisoners are entitled to have access to information and libraries to provide this access should be located within the prison premises" (Lehmann and Locke, 2005).

PRISON LIBRARIES

Prison inmates are cut off from the world and that is why it is more important to make information available to them in the prison itself. Educating them may reduce the repetition of crime by modifying their behavior and will help to reduce the amount of contraband, such as drugs and weapons, smuggled into the prisons. According to Kaiser (1992), "the prison library is a substitute for the library at home", and that is why it is very important to develop a good library in the prisons. The argument is well supported by Shirley (2004), who stressed the programmes, services, and collections (resources) to provide effective library service to the inmates.

Access to libraries can also provide strength to the inmates to face the difficult circumstances of prisons. They can consider libraries as a place where they can spend their free time productively and ultimately it will help in their rehabilitation. Libraries and book clubs in prisons can play a vital role to enhance the literacy and education levels of the prisoners. Through the reading material available in the libraries they will be able to know what is happening in the outer world leading to their social and mental stimulation. Prisoners who read are less likely to end up back behind bars. Reading may improve, inside and out of inmates, their body and as well as their mind and ultimately leading to upsurge their self-confidence.

Prison library can be of great use for the inmates who want to continue their education. However, the number of trained teachers in prison is insufficient, and no supervisory staff is provided. Open universities have come up as the solution to this problem and many centers have been set by them in the jail premises itself. Inmates can continue their education by enrolling themselves in the correspondence courses and a well-equipped library can support their studies by having an adequate amount of learning resources. Many examples are there in history where inmates even got a Doctoral degree while living in a prison. In addition to the formal education, inmates can also learn any vocational skill, which would enable them to earn money once they are released from jail. They can learn and earn while they are in prison itself. Libraries can have reading material for learning vocational skills like Agriculture, Canning, Carpentry, Tailoring, Weaving/Knitting, Soap & Phenyl making,

Handloom and many more. Libraries can also have the simulation videos, video lectures or podcasts for learning the skills.

Browsing through the books is only one aspect. A prison library is much more than a place of silence, solitary self-scanning, rather it is a place where books bring like-minded people together. It may provide a space for inmates to meet with others with common interests. Programs like book clubs and community service projects can help the inmates to improve their social skills. It can be rightly said that Prison libraries are “more than just libraries” but they are actually cultural “community” centers. The exchange of ideas will definitely lead to the change of mindset of the inmates. Libraries of the Prison can also play the role of a councillor for the inmates. They can lay down a positive impact on the lives of the prisoners by providing the collection, which can help the inmates to solve their psychological and behavioural problems.

In this way, the prison library can become an important hub to support the education, recreation, and rehabilitation of the inmates. Prison library service is an extraordinary service, which needs more attention, resources and planned development. Though there are thousands of inmates in prisons in India from all strata of society, providing them with quality library and information services is still a distant dream.

STUDIES CONDUCTED TO KNOW THE STATUS OF LIBRARY

In the past, various studies have been conducted to ascertain the satisfaction of the inmates with regard to the library services

provided in the Jail. According to Sambo and Ojei (2018) “factors affecting information needs of women in prisoners include congestion/lack of hygiene/ poor funding (96%), lack of medication/ health care (91%), lack of security (89%)”. In the view of Gladys (2015), current information resources should be made available to prison inmates to enhance rehabilitation and reformation. According to Šimuni et al. (2016), “prison libraries in Croatia are underdeveloped and in need of a new organizational and financial model”. Hussain et al. (2019) concluded that lack of library space and professional staff, fewer collections, less budgetary provision are the major problems that Pakistani prison libraries are facing. Owusu-Ansah (2012) suggested that for effective and efficient library services for the prisoners, attention should be made for the development of an adequate library collection, maintained by professional librarians and collaborating with the nearby public library. Omagbemi and Abiodun (2008) recommended that among other readership promotion campaigns, Library Associations should also have provision of outreach services to the inmates. Finlay and Bates (2018) proposed a theoretical model, which draws on theories of resistance, informal learning theories, and critical librarianship. This brief overview of literature and policy has outlined the importance and usage of prison library services, and the range of services it offers to incarcerated individuals. None of this kind of study has been conducted for to know about the information needs of inmates of District Jail, GB Nagar. The study in hand will fill this gap as it talks about organization of BIMTECH Pustakalaya at District Jail, GB Nagar. It further

talks about the information needs of the inmates and the services offered to them.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To know about the brief history of Library, District Jail, G B Nagar, Greater Noida
2. To ascertain the Information Needs of the Inmates of Library of District Jail, GB Nagar
3. To know about the satisfaction of the inmates about the library service provided by BIMTECH Pustakalaya
4. To give suggestion to improve the use of library by the inmates of the District Jail, G B Nagar, Greater Noida.

Case Study of Library, District Jail, G B Nagar, Greater Noida

As per the data of 15th edition of the 'Prison Statistics in India' compiled by National Crime Records Bureau, Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India in 2015, Uttar Pradesh (UP) has 67 jails (in 2019 number of jails increased to 71) of which there are 5 Central Jail, 57 District Jail, 2 Sub Jail, 1 Woman Jail, and 2 Special Jails. It has no Borstal School and Open Jail. As per the report among states, a maximum number of prisoners are imprisoned in the jails of UP amounting to 88,747 of which 85,214 are Male and 3,533 are Female. Out of total inmates, 26327 (29.66%) are illiterate and 33054 are educated upto Class X only. 19246 inmates are having the education of above Class 10th but below graduation. The number of graduate inmates is 7006 and postgraduate is 2388. 565 inmates hold Technical Degree/Diploma. Report further states that only 98 prison inmates have been imparted

training in tailoring and 639 under various other vocations in 2015 while they were imprisoned.

In the article "Uttar Pradesh jails grapple with 50% staff shortage, overcrowded prisons" (2018), it was reported that there is an acute staff shortage in jails of UP. About 9,000 personnel are required to maintain the 71 prisons of UP, but at present, these jails are maintained by only 4,350 personnel which is less than half (48.33%) of the required strength. Jails of UP are understaffed but at the same time, they are overcrowded. As per the website of the Prison Administration and Reforms, UP, in April 2019 about 96,580 inmates are imprisoned in UP jails. 71 jails of UP can only accommodate 58000 inmates but the total acquisition is 166% more than their original capacity.

Although this data reflects, the severe problems like understaffing and overcrowding at the prisons of UP, the Prison Administration is making serious efforts to provide basic and hygienic infrastructural facilities to their inmates. According to the Citizen Charter Prison Administration and Reforms, the inmates in UP jails are entitled "to facilities of food, medical assistance, clothes, bed, clean and hygienic environment, meeting with family members as per rules, observing fast to the extent possible, legal assistance, pursuit of religious beliefs, writing petitions and letters, moral teaching, exercise, studies, religious and spiritual literature. According to the website of Prison Administration and Reforms Services, UP, a library is functional in every jail which contains the sufficient number of books of different kinds for the use of inmates".

BIMTECH Pustakalaya at District Jail, G B Nagar

As per the instructions of UP government all state jails in UP are supposed to have a library. Although District Jail, Ghaziabad also had a library, it was in a much-neglected state and because of the limited choice of reading material inmates were not making use of the library. Ranganathan Society for Social Welfare and Library Development (RSSWLD) came up with the project proposal to develop the library in the District Jail, Ghaziabad premises which was duly approved by the authorities and this is how first BIMTECH Pustakalaya came up in UP. RSSWLD came into existence in 2009 with an aim to facilitate knowledge dissemination and provide access to information at the grass-root level by setting up libraries in rural areas. RSSWLD initiated many social welfare projects since its inception. RSSWLD is the implementing agency of BIMTECH Foundation, which has established many libraries in villages, temples, and in Jails and has named BIMTECH Pustakalaya. As per Viresh Raj Sharma, the then Superintendent of

District Jail, Ghaziabad, “the existence of a library has brought about many positive changes, earlier, inmates used to spend their fighting on trivial issues but now they prefer to read. The literacy rate of inmates has increased and they have composed poems and stories and some were even published”. Since then, ten more such libraries have been setup by RSSWLD in various district jails of UP and all the libraries are well established and fully functional. A team of inmates who are being trained by RSSWLD maintains the libraries and the library users are making optimum utilization of the library resources.

District Jail Library, GB Nagar, Greater Noida is one of the libraries set up by RSSWLD. District Jail, GB Nagar, was inaugurated on April 17, 2014, and the jail was setup because the nearby jails became overcrowded. It occupies a land area of 36 Hectares and is well lit. As depicted in table 1, GB Nagar, Greater Noida can accommodate 3750 prisoners at most and at present it has 2756 prisoners (Government of Uttar Pradesh, Prison Administration and Reform Services, 2019).

Table 1: Prisoners in District Jail, GB Nagar, Greater Noida

Particulars	Male	Female	Juvenile	Total
Capacity of Jail	3330	180	240	3750
Convict Prisoners	374	5	4	383
Undertrial Prisoners	2214	70	89	2373
Total Occupant	2588	75	93	2756

The jail provides a calm and healthy atmosphere for the prisoners, which helps in their better reformation. At present, the administration of the prison is in hands of Jail Superintendent Mr. Vipin Mishra and Jailor Mr. Satyaprakash. The

jail campus is on continuous surveillance by CCTV Cameras. The jail is very well maintained and very neat and clean and one can enjoy the beauty of the green campus. According to the superintendent inmates, themselves maintain all

the gardens of the campus. Walls of the jails are beautifully painted with motivational and spiritual thoughts and quotes. Jail is divided into two circles, male wing, and female wing. Various NGOs are contributing to the reformation of the prisoners. Many facilities are being provided to jail inmates for leading their life in a better way. Various recreational activities are available in the jail in order to foster the mental, physical, and cultural development of the inmates. Infrastructural facilities in the jail include a hospital, meditation room with a 50" LCD, Video conferencing room, Art gallery, music room with various music instruments (Guitar, Harmonium, Dholak, Tabla, Casio and Drum), Computer Centre, Electrical Room where inmates are producing Solar Lantern. A Study Center of the Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU), New Delhi and National Institute of Open Schooling (NIOS), Delhi has been setup within the premises where about 1000 inmates appeared for various Examination in April 2019.

The jail has also developed an innovative center to run a state-of-the-art eco-friendly waste management project. Under this project, a team of ten inmates under the guidance of Volunteers of BIMTECH Foundation and RSSWLD are making beautiful craft items and sculptures using the residue generated by incense sticks in temples is used to create. The female wing of the jail also has some extra facilities including a Beauty Parlour, a teaching room, a worshipping room and a stitching center, etc. Jail authorities are working very hard to provide reformation and rehabilitation facilities to the inmates to help them to settle back in the society once they are released from jail.

BIMTECH Pustakalaya at District Jail, Gautam Buddha Nagar

When District Jail, Gautam Buddha Nagar (GB Nagar) was set up, it was decided to shift some of the prisoners from the nearby jails to lessen the burden of the respective jails. Few of the prisoners from District Jail, Gaziabad who were selected for shifting requested Dr. Preetinder Singh, Senior Superintendent of Police, that they require the library facilities at District Jail, GB Nagar also. Looking at the use of the library at District Jail, Gaziabad, Jail authorities contacted the President and CEO of RSSWLD to set up a modern library in the newly constructed building of the District Jail, GB Nagar. A hall was allotted to establish the library. The main motive was to encourage the reading habits of the inmates. A need assessment survey was initiated to assess the information needs of the inmates after which popular fiction in Hindi language and, religious books were purchased. The library was inaugurated on May 29, 2014, with a collection of 2500 books. A team of inmates who volunteered to run the library was given training for the functioning of the library. On January 24, 2019, a Toy Library for children in the female ward of the jail was also started. At present, the library is housed in a big hall on the ground floor of the ‘Activity Building’. The library is organized in a very systematic closed access system and a catalogue is also developed to help the inmates to browse the collection of the library. Curtains, floor beds, carpeting, cane sofas with tables, study table chairs along with steel cupboards have enhanced the exquisiteness of the library.

The humble attitude of the Jail authorities has made the library more functional as the inmates are allowed to use the library in a very liberal manner. As per the records of the library, in April 2019, there were about 3000 books and the collection include fiction, biographies, religious books, etc. in the Hindi language. Some books are in the English language also. Of 2756, only 200 inmates visit the library regularly. Each inmate is allowed to be there in the library for a maximum of 4 hours. Some of the readers also bring their personal books and notebooks in the library and they prefer to sit and read in the library as they like the cosiness and silence in the library. Due to legal restrictions, some of the inmates are not allowed to visit the library but a provision has been made for this also, they give their request of the books to the incharge inmate who works as a postal worker, and he ensures that books are supplied to the readers in their respective prison. Only one book is allowed for issue per inmate and that too for a week only.

The library was looking after by an inmate “K P Yadav”. When the authors met him, he was very enthusiastic to tell about the library and its resources. He told that the collection of the library is arranged in a classified manner. Bookshelves are locked and after browsing the catalogue inmates requested for the particular book. When asked about the registers maintained, he told that they have Accession Register, Daily Visitor Register and Issue Return Register. When asked about the library timings he said the library opens at 9 am in the morning and is closed at 4 pm in the evening. He told that average footfall in the library was 50 inmates daily and about 20-30

books were issued daily. The only thing which Mr. Yadav stressed was the less collection of the library. He said since there was no budgetary provision of library acquisition and they solely depend on the donation of books which was also very less. In the 5 years span only 500 books were added. He joint-handedly requested that more books should be added in the library and there should be some proper budgetary provision also so that the books can be purchased in accordance with the choices of the inmates.

Information Needs of the Inmates of Library of District Jail, GB Nagar

To improve the library services in accordance with the needs of the readers it is very important to conduct survey from time-to-time. In the same row to ascertain the views of the inmates about the conditions of the BIMTECH Pustakalaya, District Jail, GB Nagar, and their information needs, a study was conducted. A structured interview was used as a tool for survey research. Authors personally visited the jail library and interacted with about 50 jail inmates of 200 inmates who visited library in a week, to fetch the first-hand information. Inmates were not so comfortable replying to the Interview questions of the researchers. Some of them left the interview in between. Interviews of 30 inmates who completed the interview and were regular users of the library were chosen for the study. The study was conducted to get the answers to the following research questions: How is BIMTECH Pustakalaya at District Jail, GB Nagar is organized and managed? What kind of library collections is available for the inmates and what are the services are offered to them? A report based on the interviews is presented here:

Data about the name, age, gender, and marital status were collected for the sake of general information, but the focus of the study was on the usage of the library and its resources. When asked about whether they use the Library facilities in prison, all respondents said that they use library facilities on a regular basis. Prisoners were also asked whether they enjoyed the library visits or they are forced to come to the library, every prisoner said that enjoy coming to the library and they enjoyed their stay in the library. The table 2 shows the frequency of visits to the library by prisoners. As per the table, 75 % of prisoners visit the library 'Everyday', followed by 25 % of prisoners who visited the library once a week.

Table 2: Frequency of visit to the Library

Frequency	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Daily	24	75
Once in a week	6	25
Twice in a week	0	0
Three times in a week	0	0
Total	30	100.00

When asked about the time they spend in the library and how many books they get issued, they replied that they spend about 2-3 hours in the library and only one book was issued to them at one time. Few prisoners even said that they spend around four hours in the library.

The table 3 reveals the purpose of the visit to the library by the inmates. 29% of the respondents visited the library to gain knowledge and about 23 % of the respondents visited the library for recreation. Prisoners were also

Table 3: Purposes of visit to the Library

Purpose of visit to the Library	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)
To Gain knowledge	10	33
To Read News	4	13
For Education Purpose	6	20
For Recreation	8	27
For Time Pass	2	7
Total	30	100.00

enquired about the kind of books do they find most engrossing. As depicted in table 4 majority of the readers liked to read books about religion, health, and education.

Table 4: Preference of Reading Material by the Inmates

Type of Reading Material	Preference of Reading Material by the Inmates	Percentage (%)
Religion	13	43
Health	12	40
Education	10	33
Legal	6	20
Fiction	8	27
GK	5	17

Some of the readers also read books on general knowledge, fiction, and legal books. One of the respondents added that he has read many books from the library namely Prem Sudha Sagar, Matsaya Krishan Chitan, Purans, etc. Many of the prisoners said that they have read more than 50 books from the library. Prisoners are also questioned about when they began to cultivate the habit of reading and most of the prisoners said that only after they came to prison. A few said that they have this habit since childhood.

Prisoners were asked to share their experiences in prison. Most of the respondents

said that the prison has proved to be the world's biggest university for them where they have learned many life lessons. Although they can no longer see the sights and spectacles of the outside world. However, when they read they can visualize the world outside within their mind's eye. One prisoner said he has really enhanced his computer skills while in prison and love to practice maths and science activities with the help of the library books. One of the prisoners, who was there for life imprisonment, said he got an opportunity to involve himself in the devotion of 'Lord Krishna' and to sing bhajans in the praise of 'Lord Krishna'. He further added that it was impossible to get this kind of opportunity if he had been out of prison. One of the prisoners who was undertrial said he spends most of the time in worshipping and working for the library. Another respondent said he loves to be part of morning & evening exercise and rest of the time to read books. Most of the respondents thanked the positivity in the jail environment, which has helped him to overcome his anger. One prisoner said he has read more than 700 motivational books from their personal collection and he wants to donate them to the prison library. Most of the prisoners miss their families a lot and in spite of many recreational facilities available, they are not able to forget their family.

Prisoners are also asked about whether reading has brought some change in their life and their outlook and most of the prisoners were in view that yes, reading has definitely influenced their life and their outlook. They further added that reading has helped them to enhance their business skill, made them optimistic from pessimistic and lessen their mental stress. Some of them also

viewed that reading books from the library has helped them to improve their educational qualification. When asked about whether they want to render their services for the library, most of them said they are willing to give their services to the library of the prison. All the prisoners said that would keep using a library even after their release.

When asked about any gap in the service provided by the Library, or any area, which could be changed or improved, all the prisoners wanted that more than one book should be allowed for the issue. Few prisoners also wanted that they should be exempted from the rule of 4 hours, as they were very fond of the library environment. Few prisoners also said that the books in the library are very less and new books should be added to the library for those who really want to study. Few respondents suggested that more religious books should be added to the collection. One respondent suggested the library should organize activities on the enhancement of moral and ethical values. Prisoners were asked whether they were satisfied with the library services provided by the prison. Majority of the respondents were satisfied, one of the respondents complained about the dust in the environment. One of the respondents was upset with the noise in the library and he further added that due to lack of silence in the library he was not able to concentrate on the studies.

CONCLUSION

Prisoners are humans and they should be treated as humans. Their humanity is key to it as well. Prisoners live in jail and their physical world is limited to the prison premises and sometimes to the cell only. Prisons are no more places of

punishment but they are now the places of rehabilitation. The main purpose of prisons today is to rehabilitate the people and send them back to the society for which the importance of quality library services is invaluable. Adequate measures should be taken to improve the living conditions of the prisoners, they should be provided timely medical facilities, proper infrastructure and above all efforts should be made for the internal development of the prisons. We think education within the prison system needs to take care of. With the mainstream education offered by IGNOU and other open schools but more prisons should offer skill-oriented programmes, especially for the inmates who are in on shorter sentences and need to have a skill when they leave. There is a will there's a way out, for all. It's called a library, which can be made available to everyone irrespective of any condition. What a layman considers entertainment has cognitive value and there are benefits down the road when re-joining society. Libraries in jails should be more strengthened.

It is very clear from the above discussion that though the library at District Jail, GB Nagar is professionally managed but it lacks the regular supply of new books as its collections is developed mainly through gifts. A prison with 2756 inmates has 2500 books; this means the collection is very less. Therefore, there is a need for proper allocation in the jail budget, through which books can be added as per the preferences of the inmates. Collection in the jail libraries should be regularly updated. Career-oriented books should be a big part of the library collection. More books should be added to help

the inmates to learn new skills. Further, the timings of the visit to the library and the number of books issued to per inmate should be increased. Although the library has books but does not has any electronic collection and there is no supply of magazines. E-books and stimulation videos can help the inmates to learn the skills virtually. Inmates who are looking after the library can be trained in the jail itself. The library incharge should ensure that the environment of the library is welcoming and inmates should love to spend time in the library. A computer with library software should be installed in the library for access to OPAC.

The provision of library-related activities and competitions in jail should be made in order to increase readership. In the District Jail, GB Nagar. There are 3500 inmates and only 400 inmates regularly visit the library. Efforts should be made to increase the footfall in the library. Access to libraries is very important for the rehabilitation of the inmates, and to bring the inmates to the library is a big task, which should be taken care of on a serious note.

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