THE HUMAN SIDE OF THE LIBRARY: A STUDY OF THEORY AND LITERATURE

RAMANSU LAHIRI
Manipur University Central Library
Canchipur
Imphal
Manipur - 795003

An attempt has been made to point out the negligence shown so far towards the library staff's mental make up. Background about the changing conception for the study of working community is discussed. Motivation theories are remembered briefly. Causes of low motivation and suggestions for creating motivations are noted. A survey of literature over the problems of library staff published in some important Library Science Journals (Indian) during 1975-85 is made. Concludes with some suggestions for the development of the Library staff.

INTRODUCTION

"The art of the composer, as that of the conductor, is first of all an emotional process. Then comes, in each of them, the blending of the separate parts into an inseparable whole and making them function together in perfect harmony" - Antal Dorati of Royal Philharmonic Orchestra in London, once said. Just imagine the library in such a background: Management is the ‘Composer’ and the available documents and equipments, the available service system, available manpower and users of the libraries are the different ‘components/parts’ which need to be blended and made functional in ‘perfect harmony’.

Why has such ‘perfect harmony’ in the library (particularly in India) not been achieved so far? Where are the defects? It is widely recognised that information is not properly managed within the documentary channel (i.e. library) to day. And recognition of the problems of inadequate information management and ineffective systems can be found in many papers not only in India, but in many developed countries also. [1] The library scientists, of course, are not sitting back. They have been exploring the possibilities (to find a better result) and, consequently, we have a number of studies and there have been discussions on various aspects of the library. But, surprisingly, excepting a very few, what do we have about the most important part of the library, i.e. the human factor? It may be noted in this connection that the three classes of living factors - "those who are using the library", "those who are operating the library", and "those who are responsible for authorising and financing the library development" - are involved in the formulation of library management. [2]

The study in this paper is confined to the second group only, i.e. the working community of the library. What exactly is the position of the worker who belongs to the group relating to the following: his sentiment, his desires and needs, his satisfaction and dissatisfaction, his ideas, experiences, and dreams, his likings and dislikings, his sorrows as well as his joys? Attempts have been made to improve the conditions of the library workers by improving their ‘status’ and increasing their ‘salary’. But, are these all? Is it not true that the workers’ mental makeup can never be ignored if the ‘best’ of the objectives of the library are to be achieved? A survey of the literature reveals little evidence of any serious concentration on this vital question.

An attempt has been made in this paper to study this human factor through the eyes of the management scientists and also to examine the causes of depression of the working community as a whole. A study, based on the analysis of the results of a survey through a questionnaire directed to the library working community, will be the second part of this paper. The ultimate objective of this study is to bring about a fair and finer understanding between information workers and management and to achieve more rational, effective, and properly integrated information systems.
BACKGROUND

It is a recognised fact that the socio-economic thrust of an era has tremendous effect upon the structure and activities of the organisations of that area. "Each era designs organizations that suit its genesis which implies that changes in the design of the organisations are concomitant with the changes in times". [3] But what we find is that the post-industrial revolution era has brought about a great change which has thrown new light on the concept and practice of 'work organisation'. The restructuring of work organisations and jobs appears necessary to manage a new industrial society and also to create a society which will promote the values of individual and group autonomy, individual responsibility and interpersonal interdependence. There is growing evidence that the proper distribution of work and power in the different levels of job structure provide not only a fresh life in the working place but greater organisational effectiveness as well. It is also now realised that a substantial part of a worker's life is spent in work and work related activities which exert a significant influence on his physical and psychological set-up. And perhaps, as a result of these realisations many institution-building techniques have also come up. One such technique is Emery's 'Search Conference', i.e. a process of collective learning and deliberation by all concerned for the purpose of solving problems. [4] The ultimate aim of these new developments is to develop 'a super system' based on meta ideals that establishes the pattern of interdependence and legitimate structure of power relations, i.e. the goal seeking human structure to the institutions, i.e. ideal seeking human structure. [5]

For many years, managements have depended on trait-oriented employee appraisals as the basic tool of managing performance, which are often too general and unrelated to specific work. In addition, there has been an unfortunate tendency to rely on job descriptions that are frequently outdated before they have been fully written off and frequently do not describe the work actually performed on the job. [6] What has been said above applies to libraries everywhere and the library scene in India is no exception. "The large library organisation was, to some extent and still is, a bureaucratic hierarchy. It comprises an establishment of several professional grades - each performing prescribed and relatively specific duties appropriate to his office, and for which he is responsible to his immediate superior. Within this bureaucracy, 'professionalism' manifests itself in various -- sometimes convoluted forms" [7] This is the classical management structure and an important drawback of such an organisation is that it lacks proper work motivation among the employees at all levels of the organisation, which in turn results in improper utilisation of human resources. It was not realised that individuals could be more creatively productive if standards and objectives were defined and skill and knowledge requirements more clearly and specifically defined. [6]

The picture in the general management scene, of course, as has been pointed out earlier, has changed. To a greater extent than before, managements are concerned with such basic human resource problems as planning and control of staffing requirements, development and succession of talent for senior positions, improving the match between individual capabilities and performance and the rewards and requirements of their jobs and improving the performance of the employees in their jobs.

MOTIVATION THEORIES

Based on this new thinking, theories have already been coming up. One theory includes the traditional belief that worker is by nature indolent and averse to work, lacks ambition and avoids responsibility, prefers to be led and must be persuaded and pushed, punished and rewarded, tightly controlled and supervised. The other theory operates on a different postulate: Work is as natural as play. Circumstances only can direct it to satisfaction. In a favourable atmosphere generally, all classes of people assume responsibility. The task is to build a climate and so organise working relationships that the employee can best attain his goals by directing his effort towards corporate aims. Where the first theory counsels management by imposition, the second proposes management by involvement, contribution and commitment. [8]

Let us see which are the factors that can motivate an employee to work and which
factors induce low motivation. It may not be out of place if we have a look at some of the important contributions in this regard.

The ‘need hierarchy theory’ of Abraham Maslow (1954), [9] emphasising need satisfaction, states that human needs stand in a hierarchy of importance, the lowest being most pressing. While Physical Needs are essential for survival, Safety and Security Needs are concerned with economic, physical and mental satisfaction. After these are satisfied, a human being naturally feels certain Social Needs (social acceptability and belongingness), Ego Needs (i.e. status, recognition, appreciation) and finally for Self actualisation. Since needs are the driving forces the higher order starts operation just after lower needs are satisfied. Therefore, the opportunities given to the employees to satisfy the needs are motivational devices.

Chris Argyris[10] (1957) argues that the classical direction as task specialisation, chain of commands, unity of direction, and tight budgets and controls, etc, are calculated to make subordinates passive and submissive, allowing them little direction in their work world. As a result employees become epatheptic, engage in self-protective defence mechanisms, or fight the system. Thus for real motivation, changes in organisation structures and managerial studies are essential.

VIE model (Valence, Instrumentality and Expectancy) presented by Vroom[11] (1964), makes the assumption that individuals are thinking, reasoning beings who have beliefs and anticipations concerning future events in their lives. It argues that the motivational force to perform or make an effort is a multiplicative function of the expectancies or beliefs that individuals have concerning future outcomes and the value they place on those outcomes.

According to the ‘Two Factor Theory’ propounded by Frederick Herzberg [12] (1966), there are two classes of motives: (i) extrinsic job context (i.e. external), and (ii) intrinsic job context. The first one, i.e. hygiene or maintenance factors which include management policy, security to the staff, fringe benefits, working conditions, supervision, interpersonal relations, etc, make the job congenial and the employee comfortable in his work. And the intrinsic job context, i.e. satisfiers or motivators which include achievement, recognition, responsibility, growth, advancement, the nature of the work itself, etc make the job challenging. They appeal to a person’s drive for growth and development. Thus work and the job itself are the real motivators. Both maintenance factors and motivators are required. Most people want a balanced diet of the two with emphasis on the later.

CAUSES OF LOW MOTIVATION

So far, the discussion was confined to the role and importance of the worker, to his ‘needs’ and to the factors which can be considered as motivators. Although, causes of low motivation are implied, an explicit discussion, perhaps, is needed.

(1) Family Background: The background, in the Indian context, has considerable influence on low motivation. Most of the workers’ lives are spent in meeting the demands of old parents, the spouse, and other dependents. They can hardly give sufficient energy, time and endeavour for their own well-being. Very often, and this is by far one of the most important factors: “Work” for the sake of personal mastery over the job or for personal sense of task accomplishment is somewhat alien to many.[13]

(2) Socio-Economic Background: Most of the worker’s socio-economic lives are full of dissatisfaction due to negligence, exploitation, which in turn take away much of their enthusiasm to work. The apathy and attitude of the powerful section of the society towards them, frequently lead them to think: (i) Work for what? (ii) For whom? (iii) In whose interest? If survival is the question, then minimum work is enough. By doing more work can social equality and justice be ensured?

(3) Organisation-Work Background: Being a cadre of the general working community, the employees often experience the pseudo-leadership behaviour from people in key positions. They care for narrow personal loyalty much more than efficiency. Their whole attention is towards maintaining their status or saving their skin by pleasing everyone, avoiding conflicts and confrontations. They don’t like to venture any firm decision even in organisational interest because it might
disturb their personal popularity. In any case, this attitude of the top level cannot help the workers to get motivated to their work. It is well-known that reward in the form of promotion has a direct effect upon motivation for sincere, hard, creative job-orientation. Hence, a rigid rule-bound promotion policy adds to the causes of low motivation. Rewarding both the sincere and the insincere, the efficient and the inefficient in seemingly even handed way never increases the enthusiasm of workers.

False assurance for betterment often misleads the workers which can ultimately only discourage them to take risk and responsibility.

Lack of job clarity and job variety, unhealthy working conditions, disturbed working atmosphere, lack of proper equipment, furniture, etc., clashes among unions and managements, motivated directives of union leaders, closures, ‘gheraos’, and sometimes the job itself -- are causes of low motivation.

The causes of low motivation mentioned above are more or less true in the working life of a library employee also. The same routine work, lack of variety in the job, the same old hide-bound tradition, often makes him bored and tired mentally. The employees sitting in the stock rooms do not find any charm in their work. Classifiers, cataloguers starting work with enthusiasm soon lose their energy. Sometimes, placing a man in a particular spatially wrong position causes dissatisfaction to the man concerned which disturbs the other man’s work also.

Many library jobs are not rich in self-achievement potential and they tend to be impersonalised to the extent that incumbents infrequently experience personal recognition from clients and colleagues. Furthermore, many jobs contain elements of repetitive work. When the job content is deficient in one or more of the motivational factors, lack of motivation will almost certainly result.[30]

Cold, unsympathetic, often unappreciative responses from readers’ end also make the staff ineffective. What might be called human interaction is most often missing. Uninformed approaches and unstudied queries from the users generally mislead the workers who then are wrongly considered inefficient.

SOME SUGGESTIONS FOR MOTIVATION

Despite the apparent homogeneity in aims and goals and objectives, libraries differ from one another in their setup and procedure and so in personal practices and supervisory styles.

Keeping in view this difference, some steps suggested by different schools may be taken to improve the working style of the library employees.

(i) Maslowian lower level needs (i.e. salary, security, reward) and Herzberg’s extrinsic or hygiene context may be implemented in the right way;

(ii) Job-requirements may be enriched or enlarged to satisfy the need of ego or esteem of the staff,

(iii) A large amount of professional work may be associated into the dull nature of job;

(iv) Available staff may be restructured into small groups to enhance the sense of identity and to overcome boredom;

(v) Initiating steps for delegation of responsibility or providing more opportunities to the staff,

(vi) The socio-economic background, the nature and aptitude of the worker should also be studied before assigning him a particular job;

(vii) The nature of the job and expectations of the job should be clearly defined and the employee should be made to understand them before the job is assigned to him;

(viii) The staff should be involved in planning and reviewing the management programme because of their direct attachment with the work which gives them an opportunity to be the first to notice the problems arising from crisis;

(ix) Excessive control and making minor matters assume importance should be eliminated,

(x) Rewarding the right man at the right time and providing facilities of improvement
and growth to bridge gaps in skills and knowledge should be taken up periodically,

(xi) Incentive to individuals in the form of merit pay that reflects actual performance should be introduced,

(xii) Safe and healthy working conditions should be provided,

(xiii) Status for librarian in decision making bodies should be enhanced.

(xiv) Conflicts should be resolved in the spirit of give-and-take and consensus emerges through a tortured process of gaining. Consensus is an appropriate way of conflict resolution.

(xv) A personal growth committee be established in a library to advise and participate in the staff development activities. It can prepare a human resource accounting report every year which can be used as internal document for human resource planning and development and for taking administrative decisions on these lines.

SURVEY OF LIBRARY LITERATURE PUBLISHED IN INDIA, 1975-85

In the Indian library situation, what is the position of staff? An analysis of articles published in some important Indian library science journals (1975-85) provides an opportunity to have some idea of the status of the staff in Indian libraries at this period. A brief study and analysis of the publications follow:

Table 1 shows that only 30 articles which focus attention on library staff in India, their present status and importance and the present library situation, appeared in important library science journals in India during the ten-year period 1975-85.

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Note: (-) No articles on Library staff
(*): Journals not available in the Library
(SR): Seminar Report
The number of publications spreading over about a decade is, however, really not encouraging. It shows very poor representation which failed to bring the library community as a whole into lime-light. The graph (Figure 1) may help us to understand the changing pattern of the attention, being paid to the problem through the publications which appeared in each year.

The motivational aspect, of course, did not get any significant place in these publications (the exception are two or three). Even then the picture could certainly be exploited comfortably as a formidable base for studying the motivational part of library workers because of its direct relation with exact situation of the present day library world in India.

Beginning with the papers of the three exponents in the field, we find that while Kumar [15] looked at the problem with Marxist Dialectic Method and found a class conflict between the library and academic communities on the one hand and among the library community itself on the other, Mangla [16] explained the need for “manpower training” and gave stress on formal education and training for library people, Bhattacharya [17] proposed a “design of a professional manpower development system specifying the participating agencies”.

Examining the present status of librarians, Kumar[15] did not hesitate to call them shudras, the last group in four level hierarchy of the traditional caste systems in India. This is one side of the problem. The other, perhaps the most damaging situation pointed out by him is that of a class war which was present within the four groups, viz. (i) the top management and academic
professional staff; (ii) the technical staff; (iii) the administrative staff, and (iv) the ‘class four’ staff, of the library organisation. And he admits that “there is no use hiding the fact that library organisation in colleges and universities is faction ridden to an alarming degree which is to the advantage of the authorities because they are enabled to confuse the real issues.”[15]

Keeping in mind the importance of information as a vital resource and the need for ready access to it through various ways of information dissemination, Mangla[16] suggested, there is certainly an urgent need to develop facilities for developing manpower for libraries, documentation and information centres in the country. He continued: “Information work and information science can be defined as professional disciplines and the goal of education in these disciplines, like other professional disciplines should be to produce personnel of competence in the theories and techniques associated with information. They must also acquire managerial capabilities, as well as an attitude and willingness to serve their community with professional conviction and tenacity.”

Manpower development system, according to Bhattacharya, [17] should recognise two types of primary agencies -- (i) the promoting agencies; and (ii) the implementing agencies. The objectives of promoting agencies which will be looked after by ‘Professional bodies, and governmental and semi-governmental bodies’ may be concentrated, according to him, implementing agencies which will coordinate, articulate, assist and encourage educational and training facilities. Though Bhattacharya’s model has a wider perspective, the development of library manpower also can be comfortably fitted into it.

The library profession in India studied by Ranganathan in 1969[18] and after eight years in 1977 by Verma[19] ended with the same disappointing note that it was at “cross roads”. In fact, the father of Indian library science had nothing with him at the end of his life but to pray: “May the library profession raise itself by its own effort....” And Verma lamented “the net result is that the institution which has been eulogised as the “Hub” by Mudaliar*, as the “Heart” by Kothari** and as “the life blood” by Sinha*** is still in an anaemic, rusted, weak and diseased condition, and the librarian has suffered in respect of pay scales and status. While Verma did not find any one after Ranganathan who could fight for the profession, Kaul,[20] straightaway blamed the “few top men” now wielding power who “are concerned with securing their own position” only and consequently “the library is in a crisis today”.

The studies made by Rewadikar, [21] Kumar, [22,23] and Mathew[24] (separately) reveal that librarians in academic libraries have neither “decision making power”, nor “status”, even nor the “opportunity to develop skills in planning, implementation, and evaluation”.

These individual views echo from the common platform also.[25,26,27] The First All India Library convention[25] in 1975 admitted that “the library staff has yet to attain its due place in the whole system” and they are “ill paid, given much lower status and not appointed in adequate number as per the requirements of the Library”. The Seminar Proceedings on “Application of Management Techniques to Library and Information Systems” organised by IASLIC in 1979[27] disclosed that we have an environment in which the top management personnel were apathetic to the delegation of powers among suitable junior colleagues and also reveal their reluctance to update their knowledge and offer a more creative leadership. The proceedings also agreed that “good and creative work went a long way in creating a positive motivation among library and information personnel”.

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The literature covered so far has focussed attention on what top professionals in the field have to say. But what is the other side of the coin? Have the common cadre got any opportunity to speak? This survey finds two such cases only: One is from Khanna[28] who collected the data by means of a non-directive interview schedules and reached the hypothesis that “work effectiveness is related to participative management”. The other one is from Iyer[29] who distributed questionnaires among the information workers of all levels and found after examining the responses that “librarians/information workers in the higher income bracket are motivated by higher order needs (i.e. esteem/ego), while those in the lower income group are motivated by the lower order needs (i.e. physical, security, social)”. She held, “... lack of recognition and status in society may be the reason why esteem needs are so very dominant amongst the librarians”. A similar conclusion was reached in a US survey:[30] “librarians responded positively to such motivational factors as a sense of achievement, recognition and work that is intrinsically satisfying.”

Finally, it may not be out of place to note the views of the industrial world[31] for whom in fact motivation theories have initially cropped up:

- People join an organisation to satisfy their needs, while the organisation thinks of its own needs while recruiting them. The real challenge is to change a relationship that started with self interest into one that produces mutual need satisfaction.

- With this purpose in mind, several motivational methods can be used. If the economic needs are satisfied, appeal can be made to higher level needs through delegation, participative management and job enrichment. Special assignments and job rotation are useful. Greater autonomy can be a motivator. A compliment, a thank you, a work of constructive criticism, an ear to genuine grievance can go a long way.

- In seeking to motivate, the techniques must be firmly founded on the rock of practicability. A few may find the job itself satisfying, for them appeals to higher level needs is effective. Others find their need satisfaction around the job, for them good wages, fringe benefits, congenial work group and good working conditions are the motivators. ... Another practical aspect is that many jobs are not amenable to job enrichment due to considerations of technology. Many such jobs are dull. In such cases, recourse will have to be made to incentives, even realising that they produce only transient improvement.[31]

Some significant catchings from the above mentioned literature flow may be organised as noted below:

(i) Existing ‘status’ and ‘scale of pay’ of library workers in India are not satisfactory.

(ii) ‘Decision-making powers’ are not enjoyed by the librarians.

(iii) Working environment of libraries is not good.

(iv) Members of library staff are divided and belong to different factions.

(v) Theories developed by management scientists (like Maslow or Herzberg) can be applied to study the motivation factors of library workers also.

(vi) The development scheme of library community can be brought under wider perspective like ‘manpower development’ programme of the country.

(vii) The pay scale, status and role in decision making are like the members of the trio in music which can not perform except in unison.

CONCLUSION

The characteristics of an individual’s own mental make-up are perhaps the most important factors on which the success of the motivation formula largely depends. Practical experience that some, even after getting all the facilities, are not at all sincere, may be
due to their own problems. In that case, they should be given the opportunity to speak out before the authority which tries to sort out the solutions to their problems sympathetically. At the same time, they may be advised to treat their purely personal problems in other ways and contribute their effort to the job on hand. In case, all attempts fail, the authority should not hesitate to take appropriate action against such employees. It is necessary to motivate employees to work. Silence or indifference in such cases may mean discouraging others from being sincere. Here, the staff association should come forward to defend the authority’s stand and do their best to maintain a good working environment so that the objectives of the organisation become meaningful.

While it is expected that the library workers should be faithful and sincere to their jobs, the top management of the library should also be responsive to questions like:

- Are they maintaining strong neutrality?
- Are they sure that they are not following the policy of ‘divide and rule’?
- Are they active in creating a better working environment?
- Are they ready to share both credit and discredit of library service along with all staff members?
- Are they ready to recognise good performance of some good employees and condemn inactivity of others by some positive measures?
- Are they fearless and bold enough to face any consequence from any side to save the interest of the library?
- Are they capable of understanding the anxieties and agonies of their juniors and share with them their joys and sorrows?

If the answers are positive and followed upon on practice, it is certain that no other motivator factor could be so powerful to motivate the employees to work. While cooperation from the rank and file is undoubtedly a prerequisite for ensuring qualitative service, the very purpose is defeated if there is even partial vacuum at the top. To borrow from WB Yeats: “Anarchy is loose upon the world if ‘the centre can not hold’. [32]

A thoughtful programme may also be adopted to increase the efficiency of the general cadres. If the top management can make the cadre involve itself in some positive series of creative activities it may produce a fruitful result. Review system for assessing the employees’ work regularly is also necessary. Of course, the review system should be impartial and accurate and have a good scientific base.

Further, thoughtfully formulated programme can be taken up where even the daily report from the janitor may become useful in studying the categories of daily visitors to the library. Similarly, library attendants whose work is to help readers to get access to the right book/document, etc, can be utilised to make a daily survey of user’s inclination towards a particular subject. Such a programme can keep them busy with some positive work. This can help reduce boredom and repetitive nature of certain kind of work. And, to go a little further: if every month, a cyclostyled publication (which is not so expensive) could be released on the basis of these reports with the names of these employees as contributors, it would certainly create enthusiasm. The authority, on the other hand could claim the credit of utilising manpower properly at its maximum. A well planned network which has some immediate value and recognition may be taken up at all levels, nonprofessional as well as professional, and this may act as a powerful motivator.

Undoubtedly, proper training facilities could increase the quality of a worker’s performance. That is why library and information scientists are always in favour of providing training facilities to library people. And they are also rightfully more concerned about the quality of education in Library and Information Science Courses and other training programmes. The present haphazard growth of library and information science schools without proper planning in several universities is rather alarming. If this is not checked, the number of below standard people will increase in the profession whose ambition will be to get job by any means without any idea of either the implications or the nature of service they will be called upon to perform. And ultimately the very objective of the library will be defeated[33] because it is widely recognised that proper education
and training are strong motivators for a working community. Since the Planning Commission has appointed a “Working Group” on modernization of Library Science and Informatics for the Seventh Plan (1985-90), and the University Grants Commission has also set up a ‘Cadre Review Committee’ to go into the structure, avenues of promotion and rationalisation of jobs in Central University Libraries under the Chairmanship of Professor P.N. Kaula (Report, HLS, 23 (2). 1984, 87,104), it is expected that some constructive proposals will come out.

It may not be irrelevant to say that while Maslow or Herzberg or other motivation theorists, mentioned above, formulated their theories of motivation, did not focus separately on another important need, i.e. the ideological need, which always remain in the subconscious stage of every human mind and which always needs provocation to flare up. Proper education and well programmed training only can activate this dormant desire in a better way.

Status (“ego need” of Maslow and “intrinsic job content” of Herzberg) is undoubtedly a very powerful indicator to an employee. Demand for it for the library officers at par with that of academic community is very high. But since the demand is only for library and information officers (i.e. librarians, deputy librarians and assistant librarians), it is not understood how the “status” of other levels such as professional assistant to janitors could be improved. While the demand is having a very strong base and it should be implemented in toto (with the decision making power), some incentives (like merit promotion, etc) should also be kept open for other junior cadres.

It may be pointed out that in our society today appointments through some Commission (like Banking Service Commission, Public Service Commission, etc) have a special status. People of this level have undoubtedly been enjoying more regard from the general public. Would it be day-dream if thinking starts in this line? Is the introduction of the Indian Library Service (ILS) Examination at A,B, C,D levels for all professionals, really a very hard task? Would the appointments through Public Service Commission at state level be very heavy burden on the state exchequer? The time has perhaps come to think about it now, particularly when the talk of establishing a National Policy for Libraries (through a National Network) has been slowly but steadily gaining ground, and when, both the Planning Commission and the University Grants Commission, as mentioned before, have started thinking about modernization of library and information service throughout the country. Internationally, UNESCO, under the UNISIST as well as NATIS programme, has also been giving particular attention on the development of manpower for library and information services. It is, therefore, expected that the human side of the library service cannot be ignored any more. The people involved in it cannot be deprived of their due either. Time may not be very far when they will assert their rightful place in the society by their own dignity.

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* L.S. Mudaliar, (Chairman, Secondary Education Commission, 1952-53)
** D.S. Kothari, (Chairman, Education Commission, 1964-66)
*** K.P. Sinha, (Chairman, Advisory Committee on Public Libraries)