

Centennial Libraries in Mumbai: With Special Reference to Sarvajanik Vachanalay (Public Library), Kalyan

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Abstract

The present research paper titled, “Centennial Libraries in *Mumbai*: with special reference to *Sarvajanik Vachanalay* (Public Library), *Kalyan*, intends to study how it helped in social change and development in the ancient port city *Kalyan*. *Sarvajanik Vachanalay* (Public Library) *Kalyan* was established on 3rd February, 1864, with the efforts of Rao.ⁱ *Sadashiv Moreshwar Sathe*.

Rao. Sadashiv Sathe initially established this *Vachanalay* (Library), at his own place and named it as ‘Native *Vachanalay* (library).’ In 1884, it was shifted to Dak (Lat Veredus, Veredius)ⁱⁱ Bungalow building and was renamed as ‘General Library’. Later inspired by *Lokmanya Tilak* (The great leader of Indian National Congress who followed Extremist ideology, one of the tripartite commonly known as Bal amongst the Lal, Bal, and Pal), it got its today's name i.e., ‘*Sarvajanik Vachanalay Kalyan*.’ The occasion was blessed by a great author of Marathi Literature *N. C. Kelkar*, who is fondly known as ‘*Tatyasaheb Kelkar*.’ Initially *Sarvajanik Vachanalay Kalyan* was the center, responsible in the social, economic, and political development in *Kalyan*. Located at the nodal center of the city, along with its technical growth as a library it has also proved as a center for new thoughts towards the independence of *India*.

It has been a prominent place for the research scholars, for authors and writers, for those who wanted to inculcate the development the thoughts of Renaissance in the *Kalyan* city and *Bombay (Mumbai)* in general. As we see *Bombay* has witnessed many new beginnings of culture and thinking, similarly *Sarvajanik Vachanalay Kalyan* has been the center for the same.

Our former President of India, Hon’ble *APJ Abdul Kalam* wanted *India* to always get acquainted with modern technology and implement the same. Therefore, the *Sarvajanik Vachanalay Kalyan* introduced the system of e-book in the *Vachanalay*. The book titled ‘*Subhe Kalyan*,’ authored by Dr. *Vivekanand Godbole* was the first such book which was converted into e-book.

Introduction:

The present research paper titled, *Centennial Libraries in Mumbai: With Special Reference to Sarvajanik Vachanalay (Public Library), Kalyan* intends to study how it helped in social change and development in the ancient port city *Kalyan*. *Sarvajanik Vachanalay Kalyan* was established on 3rd February, 1864, with the efforts of Rao. *Sadashiv Moreshwar Sathe*.

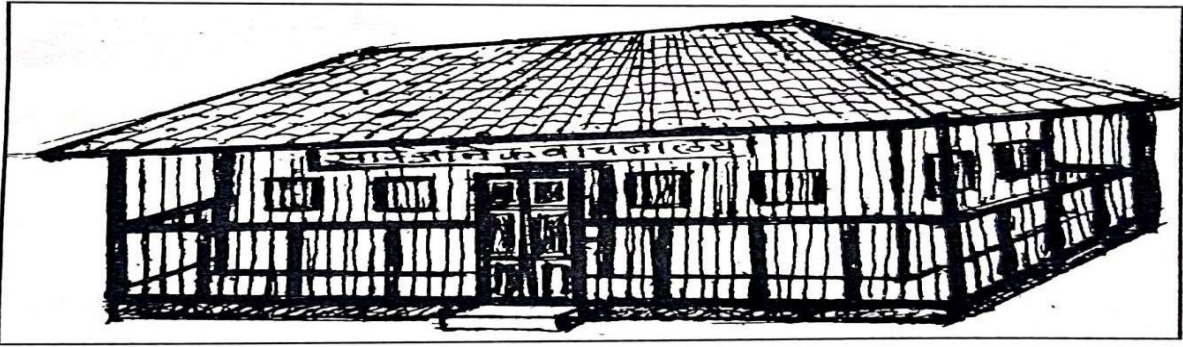
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Methodology:

The researcher has visited the *Sarvajanik Vachanalay Kalyan*, for the original documents and references for the research work. The interview methodology for collecting data has been used. The *Sarvajanik Vachanalay* has been working since 1864, they have published souvenirs, pamphlets, and other research projects through interested scholars which have helped in the development of this research paper. However, efforts have been taken to give as much as primary data for the given research paper.

The picture below of the Library Building drawn in 1958 by artist Mr. Shankar Devlalkar



हीच ती १९५८ पूर्वीची वाचनालयाची इमारत
(रेखाचित्रकार श्री. शंकर देवळालकर)

Granth Kalyani:

Granth Kalyani a book written by Mr. *Jitendra Bhamare*, and Mr. *Prashant Mulehrkar* on *Sarvajanik Vachanalay Kalyan* is one of the book that focuses on the history and the journey of the *Vachanalay* covering 130 years. However, the two authors, too believed that the idea of establishing the *Vachanalay* was to spread knowledge all over the city.ⁱⁱⁱ

The progress of the *Sarvajanik Vachanalay Kalyan*:

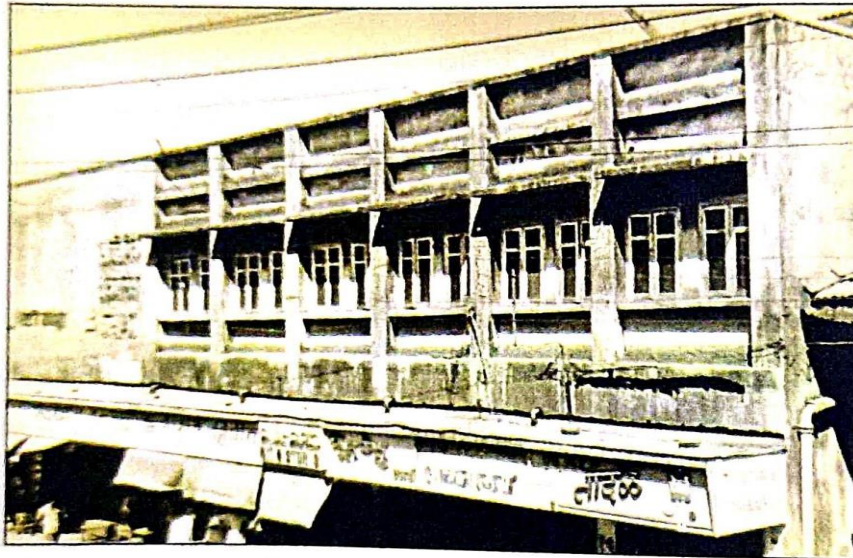
The *Vachanalay* in its early days bought prominent newspapers like '*Kesari*' and '*Marattha*' edited by *Lokmanya Balgangadhar Tilak*. '*Kesari*' was published in Marathi and '*Marattha*' published in English both the newspapers helped in understanding the views of *Lokmanya Balgangadhar Tilak* about the British rule in India. This helped the citizens to understand the importance of the freedom struggle before independence and to understand the role of Extremists in the Indian National Congress. The *Sarvajanik Vachanalay Kalyan* therefore became a place to understand the development of the freedom struggle in *India* in general and in *Maharashtra* in particular.

One of the present chief committee member of *Sarvajanik Vachanalay Kalyan*, namely Mr. *Bhiku Baraskar* in his interview taken on 5th December 2022, in the *Vachanalay* was excited to share the information that he himself being born and brought up in *Kalyan* and is now in the age of 65 years

mentions that during their childhood they were surprised to see such a place where there are so many books kept. According to him many school going children and those who were taking higher education in college, for them the *Sarvajanik Vachanalay* was a place where they could read many books on *Marathi* theatre. They read these books and organized the cultural programs in their schools and at *Sarvajanik Ganeshotsavs* (a public festival of *Lord Ganesha* (Hindu God) started by *Lokmanya Bal Gangadhar Tilak*) in *Kalyan* city. However, he emphasized that as they found the *Sarvajanik Vachanalay Kalyan* as a place to learn and entertainment, because they were acquainted with so much of literature. This also helped them in increase their knowledge.

The *Sarvajanik Vachanalay Kalyan* in its preliminary period gave a big services to the white-collar workers in the early mornings too. *Kalyan* been one of the suburban city of *Bombay (Mumbai)*, there were many men and women who travelled regularly for their services up to *Bombay* by local trains of *Bombay (Mumbai)*. While travelling in the morning they first used to visit the *Sarvajanik Vachanalay Kalyan*, selected the book to read and travelled, and while coming back home they again could change the books for reading. However, this proves that the *Vachanalay* was the nodal place for spread of knowledge and interest for many freedom ideas from its initial period.

The picture below if the building of the *Sarvajanik Vachanalay* in 1994 before the broadening of the roads in *Kalyan* by the Municipal Corporation.



रस्तारूंदीकरणापूर्वी (१९९४ पूर्वी) वाचनालयाची इमारत

Mr. *Bhiku Baraskar* also discussed about the various schemes undertaken by the *Sarvajanik Vachanalay Kalyan*. These schemes were implemented for distinct levels of readers. The schemes like '*Vidyarthi Chalavtayet Vachanalay*' meaning students are running the library was especially implemented for the school children. This helped the students to personally handle the books and work in the library so that when they handle the books directly, they will be encouraged to read these books. '*Vachanalay Tumchya Dari,*' meaning library at your doors, this scheme brought the people directly have the access to read the books. There is no age group in this scheme. One another interesting scheme the *Vachanalay* implemented for small children is '*Chala Goshti Sangu,*' meaning let us tell the stories. This motivated the small children to visit the library in the vacation period and they enjoyed listening to short stories read by those working in the *Vachanalay*.

Conclusion:

There were many difficulties in the mid period of the era. The *Vachanalay* was almost shut down for some period, due to lack of funding. This gave a notable set back to the readers of the *Kalyan* city. The researcher while interviewing Mr. *Baraskar* tried to find out since when the women started visiting the *Sarvajanik Vachanalay Kalyan*, the answer was, ‘Oh! We never had this thought, and one must really think over it.’ The idea to find the answer to this was, *Kalyan* being one of the ancient port city, and the *Vachanalay* been established in 1864 A.D. naturally the people who visited the library were either people belonging to upper caste only, as the education during this period was not compulsory and many a times permissible to lower caste people. Secondly few women in those days were allowed to take education irrespective upper or lower caste. However, he admitted that it is difficult to have this information.

Mr. *B. Baraskar* also brought into notice another aspect of the society, and that was that it was women who specifically worked in the *Vachanalay*. The reason was as the library due to less funds could not pay high salaries to men workers, therefore men did not preferred working in the library, so only women worked.

Today the library is supported by club like *Rotary Club of Kalyan*, which has helped in the redevelopment of the library. Hence, there is need of government support and an increase in funds. The funds given by the government is meagre and if the government wish to encourage such intellectual activities in all over the country, through such public libraries, they must sanction huge funds too.

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References

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2. : *Kulkarni; K. P; Marathi Vyutpatti Kosh* (Marathi Etymological Dictionary), Shubhada-Sarasvat Prakashan, Pune, First Ed. 1946, Third Ed. 1993, p. 375
3. *Bhamare Jitendra & Mulehrkar Prashant; Granthkalyani*, Published by Sarvajanik Vachanalay Kalyan, p. 2, 2008.