SATKAL Annual Award Giving Function & Seminar on Future of Libraries

DR. KP SINGH

Inculcating reading habits among the library users and potential users is the main challenge for libraries that have to reach both tech-savvy users as well as neo-literate and info-poor users. This was emphasized by the Chief Guest, Mrs. Shailaja Chandra, Chairperson of Delhi Public Library Board (DPLB), Delhi at the inaugural address at the Inaugural Session of Seminar on Future of Libraries organized during the 12th Annual Function of the Satinder Kaur Ramdev Memorial Trust for Advancement of Librarianship (SATKAL) on 27 August 2011 at the Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts (IGNCA), New Delhi. She also described the activities of DPLB in promoting reading culture in libraries, and the use of information and communication technologies (ICTs) in bridging the gap between knowledge and information available in the libraries, and the seekers of the information. She also applauded the motivating role of SATKAL for younger generations of librarians.

Prof Jagtar Singh, Head of the Department of Library & Information Science, Punjabi University, Patiala and President of SATKAL, introduced the Trust, its objectives, and activities, to the audience. He paid tributes to Mrs. Satinder Kaur Ramdev (1935-1997), in whose sweet memory her life partner Prof. Jagindar Singh Ramdev instituted SATKAL in the year 2000, and also described the story behind the establishment of this Trust for a noble cause. He lauded the role played by Prof. Ramdev and called him as Carnegie of Indian librarianship. Sh. Buta Ram Kashyap, Senior Vice President of the Trust read out a message especially sent by Prof. Ramdev, Patron-in-Chief of SATKAL from USA. In his message Prof Ramdev welcomed the Chief Guest, other guests, and chairpersons of seminar sessions and panel discussions; introduced the new team of Trustees; and congratulated this year’s awardees of SATKAL awards in various

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Prof S Ansari, Former University Librarian, Jamia Millia Islamia, New Delhi and Guest of Honour at the function described the increasingly challenging role of libraries and librarians in disseminating knowledge and information in the 21st century. He said that efforts of SATKAL in promoting hardworking librarians through awards instituted should be replicated by other societies and trusts. Mr V B Pyarelal, Joint Secretary, IGNCA described the role of a librarian as a friend, philosopher and a guide for all. He also discussed the activities of IGNCA and its library in preserving and disseminating the documentary heritage of the country.

Earlier, Dr Ramesh Gaur, Librarian and Head, KalaNidhi Division, IGNCA and Organizing Secretary of the function welcomed more than 200 delegates who had come from different parts of India and from Sri Lanka to attend the Annual Function and Seminar.

Five awards, namely SATKAL Lifetime Achievement Award, SATKAL National Librarian Award, SATKAL Woman Librarian Award, SATKAL Young Librarian Award, and SATKAL School Librarian Award were presented respectively during the function to Dr Jagdish Arora, Director of Information and Library Network Centre (INFLIBNET) of UGC; Prof Dr I V Malhan, Dean, School of Mathematical, Computing and Information sciences, Central University of Himachal Pradesh, Dharamsala; Dr Mrs Pradeepa Wijetunge, Librarian, Peradeniya University, Sri Lanka; Dr KP Singh, Department of Library & Information Science, University of Delhi, Delhi; and Mr Harish Kumar, Librarian, Delhi Public School, Amritsar. Citations of the awardees were read respectively by Dr HPS Kalra, PRO of SATKAL; Dr HS Chopra, Vice-President of the Trust; Dr Sangeeta Kaul from Developing Library Network (DELNET); Dr Raj Kumar, Secretary of SATKAL, and Mrs. Paramjeet Kaur Kharal, Incharge Extension Activities of the Trust.

All the awardees thanked the Patron-in-chief and the trustees for the recognition of their work by the Trust. It is important to point out the uniqueness of SATKAL that has honoured 38 librarians from different parts of India with four awards during 2000 to 2010. SATKAL Lifetime achievement Award has been instituted in 2011. Dr Mrs Wijetunge is the first person in the rest of South Asia to receive SATKAL Woman Librarian award, and she thanked the patron-in-chief of SATKAL for the award in the following words. “I’m greatly honoured by this award. It is not very often librarians get recognized for their services. This occasion is very special for
me because librarians are honored today by a former deputy librarian and a teacher of library science. Prof Jaginder Singh Ramdev deserves a very big applause for his praiseworthy initiative, Satinder Kaur Ramdev Memorial Trust for the Advancement of Librarianship (SATKAL) that has been synonymous with library philanthropy in India. I must say that Prof Ramdev is the Carnegie of the library profession in India doing what Carnegie did for education, investing millions of his personal savings for the advancement of the library profession. I feel flattered that I am the first foreign librarian to receive this prestigious SATKAL Woman Librarian Award. I consider it as an award not only for me but for all those who have helped to achieve what I have achieved and contributed at national and international levels: my colleagues, friends and my devoted husband and two beloved sons.”

Dr Wijetunge further emphasized the importance of such awards particularly for younger generations of librarians, and to the students of library & information science by saying that “such awards are essential to reassure the committed workers to contribute more to their profession. I am sure that SATKAL would be source of inspiration motivation, and encouragement for the younger generation of librarians, LIS researchers and students not only in India but in the entire Asia and Pacific Region. This award is very special for me in another aspect. The foundation of SATKAL is love, devotion, faithfulness and remembrance of Prof Ramdev towards his beloved late wife Mrs Satinder Kaur Ramdev. These are precious
human values which I cherish but slowly disappearing from the high tech society. This award will always remind me that still there are people who are faithful to the memories of those who have loved, cherished and transformed them.” She also wished good health and long life for Prof Ramdev and eternal bliss of the sweet memories of his wife late Mrs Satinder Kaur Ramdev. She also expressed her gratefulness to SATKAL President Prof Jagtar Singh, Dr Ramesh Gaur and the other Trustees of SATKAL for organizing this function in such a magnificent manner. She concluded by saying “that if I get an opportunity to do something to promote the mandate of SATKAL in Sri Lanka, I would deem it a great honour to me.”

A shawl and a memento each as a token of love were presented to Mrs Shailaja Chandra, Prof S Ansari, Mr V B Pyarelal, and Dr Ramesh Gaur, at the Function on behalf of Prof Ramdev. Mrs Ranjana from IGNCA Library proposed a vote of thanks. On this occasion, Mr KK Bhatia, a veteran librarian from Delhi who has provided library service to prisoners in Tihar Jail, Delhi was also honoured with a shawl by the SATKAL.

The second session of the seminar had a panel discussion on theme Future of Libraries: Road Ahead chaired by Prof PB Mangla, former Dean, Faculty of Arts, University of Delhi. This panel also included the keynote presentation by Dr Jagdish Arora. Other panelists of this panel were Dr Jagtar Singh; Dr I V Malhan, Dr Pradeepa Wijetunge; Mrs. Kalpana Dasgupta, Former Director, Central Secretariat Library, New Delhi; Dr M C Ragavan, UNESCO Expert, New Delhi; and Dr Usha Mujoo-Munshi, Librarian, Indian institute of Public Administration, New Delhi. Panelists discussed various facets of the theme. Dr Jagtar Singh spoke about the future of academic libraries; Dr Malhan spoke on user empowerment; Mrs. Dasgupta on marketing of library services, and Dr Arora in his keynote presentation discussed about some assumptions on libraries and ICTs; Dr Mujoo-Munshi on innovative library services; and Dr Wijetunge spoke on general issues facing the libraries, librarians and library users. The Chair summarized the discussion that the future of libraries would be bright and invited questions from the audience. A lot of questions on issues and concerns raised by panelists were asked that resulted in a lively discussion.

The third session of the seminar had another panel discussion on Innovative Library Services in Digital Era chaired by Dr R K Chadha, Joint Secretary, Parliament of India, and co-chaired by Dr R L Raina, Professor & Dean of the Indian Institute of Management, Lucknow. Other panelists of
this panel included Shri D V Singh, President, Indian library Association; Mr Subhash Deshmukh, Librarian, Guru Gobind Singh Inderprastha University, New Delhi; Dr H S Chopra, Librarian, GNDU, Amritsar and Vice-President SATKAL; and Dr Raj Kumar, Librarian, Panjab University, Chandigarh and Secretary, SATKAL. The panelists discussed various ways in which innovative services could be provided in digital era. Discussions on innovative library services using ICTs during the session were exemplified with the services offered by various libraries in India such as Panjab University Library where RFID system has been implemented. Various questions such as on use of ICTs in libraries, and on the possibility of an exclusive search engine for libraries. The Chair summed up the session with remarks that though ICTs have been used and would continue to be used extensively in libraries and information centres in India, there is no need for a specific search engine for libraries and their collections when union catalogues of major libraries, such as those developed by INFLIBNET in India and WorldCat of OCLC etc. are freely available for searching on the Web.

On this occasion, Dr Jagtar Singh also proposed that in view of the contributions made by the Patron-in-Chief Prof. Jagindar Singh Ramdev for promotion of librarianship in India and South Asia, he should be honoured by the library community in a befitting manner by organizing a seminar/function whenever he arrives in India. This proposal was met with a thundering applause among the audience. At the end, Dr. Ramesh Gaur thanked the panelsists and the audience for making the annual function and seminar a grand success.