

Bibliopathy, the Cognitive Treatment for Social Sicknesses Through Public Libraries: A Brief Introduction

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ABSTRACT

This article tries to recognize and ascertain the scope of rural libraries, library experts and government officials to put into practice bibliopathy as a remedial measure to mental troubles to the members of our society.

Keywords: Public libraries, Bibliopathy, Therapy

INTRODUCTION

As the modern world is advancing towards optimum physical well being of the civilians, many segments of the society have been sidelined from the psychological fulfillment due to various mental afflictions. In other words, emotional contentment seems denied to those people with social interface disabilities. Disability denotes the deficiency in some kind of values in transactions when compared with an equal member in the same society. Moral values are fast eroding out of the human life when we moved forward to the maximum material happiness in the ordinary life. Many people are distressed with mental tensions in the daily life, personality disorders, sexual harassments from superiors, etc. People turn to alcoholism and eventually ending up their life with terminal illnesses or suicide. Often kids become aggressive by losing interest in their studies and turn to the habit of stealing, got involved in the anti social activities because of the attitude of their parents towards them. Although medical experts, educationists and psychologists have their own diverse reasons and treatment methods to these problems, they are either time consuming or expensive or unproductive. It will not be wrong to say that, the omnipotent modern world is not armed enough with the popular potential solutions to compete with these kinds of issues which vary from person to person.

Bibliopathy is a technique to renovate a downward state of mind of a person by encouraging, adjusting him by taking least effort, with minimum cost and also during a short span of time.

MEANING AND DEFINITION

At the outset bibliopathy means treatment with the help of books. Books offer a base for the moral rationalization and evaluation, and help people to differentiate right and wrong. They facilitate readers to develop a logic that makes them vigilant when something is ethically not correct. Books also narrate role model characters to the readers. Bibliopathy is a particular style of psychological treatment that incorporates appropriate books or other written materials, to identify the problem and to find out a solution out of it. Books are used as a remedial tool. As books are an integral therapeutic tool in the course of bibliopathy, it is also termed as bibliotherapy by some authors.

According to Russell and Shrodes, (1950) (1) bibliotherapy is 'a process of dynamic interaction between the personality of the reader and literature which may be utilized for personality assessment, adjustment and growth' In its most fundamental outline, bibliopathy is administering with the suitable books to help the individuals in unraveling the issues, they are confronting at a certain period of time. It

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involves careful selection of the therapeutic materials applicable to the patient's living conditions. Bibliotherapy has also been explained by Lehr (1981) (2) as 'a process of dynamic interaction between the personality of the reader and literature which may be utilized for personal assessment, adjustment, and growth'. Bibliopathy for general public, as ascertained by McKenna and Hevey (2010) (3) as, a type of self-managed treatment in which, printed materials are provided to wipe out the distress. So, a person goes through three different stages of actions during the course of treatment namely, introduction of the idea, conceiving the situation and adjustment. The basic theory behind this method of treatment is to help the affected person with appropriate literary works, so that he or she will get personally involved with similar situations and characters, and an attitudinal transformation takes place to relieve him or her by the reorganization of mind-set.

NEED AND OBJECTIVE

Health is nothing but a positive sense of well being - physical, mental, social. It is just not the absence of illness in the body. An integral component of total health thus, is mental health. It is a balance between all aspects of life, like emotional, economical, and spiritual as well as physical which shows how a person feels and think about themselves, others and how he faces different situations. (4) Unfortunately, Kerala does not qualify as a state of mentally sound people as per the facts and figures available, leave alone its higher literacy rate. Compared to other states, suicide rate among youngsters and family is also in a higher rate in Kerala.

- (i) Of all the patients consulted with primary health care specialists, 20 % have mental disorders of one kind or another.
- (ii) One member of every four families likely to have a behavioral or mental disorder According to a study in 1990, Mental disorders account for 10.5% of the global burden of disease (GBD). This was 12% in 2000 and is expected to shoot up to 15% by 2020.

Total number of suicide in Kerala during the year 2012 was 8490 (2.54 per million). Kerala is far ahead in the case of divorce rate as well. All these display the gravity of Mental Health related issues existing in Kerala. Urgent interventions of Medical and Educational authorities are invited to resolve this issue. The

national scenario also is not at all satisfactory. According to Institute of Child Development, New Delhi, as many as 3 out of every 100 children in the country have mental retardation (5)

Hence, it is an important time to integrate different systems of medicines prevailing in the society, in order to assess and alleviate the mental and physical health issues of the people. A novel method to assuage mental strains of the citizens called Bibliopathy is put forward herewith which has to be discussed in line and length.

The basic idea of this article is to classify and ascertain the scope of the public libraries, library professionals and government authorities to put into practice of bibliopathy as an answer to mental troubles. It is also attempted to recognize the developing pattern of public, looking for help in tackling their issues of psychological well being. The duty to institutionalize bibliopathy as an approachable and feasible way of healing to the affected persons depends primarily on the library specialists themselves.

PUBLIC LIBRARIES AS HEALING CENTERS

Bibliopathy is a powerful experience of self identification and enlightening into brave new vistas of self actualization. Great literary works help us to attain this by being introduced to variant representations of human thinking and feeling. Books develop humanitarian values, educating about profound personal experiences elevating the feeling of empathy and tolerance, exciting aptitude, etc. Understanding the depths of somebody's experience and gaining an insight into their fate and failures, might remind us about what people are capable of and how to reassure the mental health of the fellow human beings, as they carry on each day.

Public Libraries are a store house of these kinds of enthralling experiences recorded in books. Public library is a place where anyone can enter and refer to the books and documents freely. Hence, these are the appropriate places where members of the general public can expect relief and comfort through reading treatment for their mental tensions. The services offered by children's section in libraries are very significant for early personality development. Book reading helps the children to explore and recognize the feelings, environments, surroundings and social situations of others. It is a superior thing to understand all the people's

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lifestyle and living conditions. Through bibliopathy, children can find out more opportunities to develop reading skills, patience and harmony among others. This procedure of utilizing scholarly fiction, verse, dramatization and life story to recuperate and change is accessible to any individual who needs to pick up a more profound comprehension of them.

According to a study conducted by Siti Arphan Noordin, Haslinda Husaini and Shamila Shuhidan of MARA University of Technology, Malaysia titled "Bibliotherapy in Public Library : A Conceptual Framework", the role of a library will be more visible and significant with bibliotherapeutic schemes rather than the traditional perception of being the custodian of information/books. Library plays the role of a stress reduction agency through their services and activities of bibliotherapy (6).

The association between the librarians and bibliopathy in healing process is very crucial. Public Libraries have a lot of freely available material and knowledge, situated mostly in the community surroundings. They can also recommend a welcoming, neutral, compassionate atmosphere that is also assimilative in its nature. It is not assured to say that a book can completely useful to condense somebody's psychological depression, but at the same time, optimistic thinking might also be very helpful. According to an article published in *Psychology Today*, (by Hara Estroff Marano, published on 01/07/2001) 'One of the most powerful actions you can take in combating depression is to understand how critical the quality of your thinking is to maintain and even intensifying your depression. The quickest way to change how you feel is to change how you think.'

LIBRARIAN AS A THERAPIST

Librarian of the 21st century is not at all a person who is just a manager of a library. The role of a successful librarian has to be redefined to that of a counselor, a facilitator or a therapist. Understanding the users of a library is the first step of SDI as well as bibliopathy. Librarian must be ready to personally interact with the distinctive requirements of his customers.

She/he must try to find a lot of time to be spend with the users in order to transact with the individual needs, patiently and attentively. It is in this stage that the person will get a chance to release the mental strains and worries to the librarian who will be in no hurry to chase the person away. The visitor might feel as if he has found a person to discharge his entire mental burden and thereby to free himself from all irrational anxieties. A sense of sincerity and genuine attachment with an affection of compassion has to be developed in between him and the librarian. The librarian will now start to look for a literary work or a document either in his collection or from outside the library, the character, theme, plot or story line of which conceives the reader might reduce or dissolve his mental tension. The selection of literary work and recommending it to the user by the librarian is a delicate, sensitive act to be performed with a holistic approach. Here, the librarian alters to that of an omnipotent occupational therapist or analyst from the erstwhile decomposed avatar of just an administrator in a library.

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