

## Library - A History

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Exactly a year after Dr.H.D.Kanga passed away ie on 29th December 1945, friends and well wishers got together to started a fund to perpetuate the name of Dr.Kanga. Under the chairmanship of the Vice Presidents of the the Bombay Cricket Association, Mr.H.M.Mehta and Mr.A.A.A.Fyzee, an appeal was sent out for contributions. The response was tremendous, the first to respond was the Tata Sports Club, among the other clubs were the Brothers Club, B.E.S.T. Sports Club, Zoroastrian Cricket Club, KhatauSports Club, Fort Vijay Cricket Club, Law College Gymkhana, Bombay University Sports Board, Cricket Association of Bengal,Bombay Telephone Co.C.C., B.B.& C.I. Rly., Traffic Dept. C.C., Ghatkopar Jolly Cricket Club, Wellington Cricket Club and PathareShatriya C.C. Among the Maharajas were Maharaja of Porbandar, Duleepsinhji, Prince Fatehsinhji of Limdi and Thakore Saheb of Dhrol, eminent individuals included messrs: A.A.Jasdenvala, Lady Saklatwala, Vijay Merchant, Anthony De Mello, M.K.Mehta, M.M.Amarsingh, H.N.Contractors, Bhogilal Shah, J.Birtwistle, R.A.Wagle, Vimadalal, P.E.Palia, K.S.Ragarao and B.A.Kapadia, a sum of Rs.9,619.00 was collected.

Under BCA and the chairmanship of Mr.A.A.Jasdenvala a committee was formed comprising of H.N.Contractors, Vijay Merchant, V.M.Chandana, S.N.Mehta, V.J.Divecha, Col.K.M.Mistry, Bhogilal C.Shah, S.M.Khatkhatay, M.S.Naik and D.P.Thanawalla. This committee in May 1950 sanctioned Rs.6500 / - for purchase of books and periodicals to start a library in the name of Dr.Kanga.

On 25th May 1950, Mr.V.J .Divecha, the Jt.Hon.Secretary of the Bombay Cricket Association sent a letter to the Cricket Club of India requesting space to house the library in the dormitory at the North-West corner of the Braboume Stadium. Mr.H.N.Contractors then Hon Secretary of CCI immediately replied, not only granting permission to use part of the dormitory but also donating furnitureworth Rs. 4500 / - to the library. Mr.Divecha in his letter thanking the CCI request Mr.H.N.Contractors to assist and work in the committee of the library.

It is apparent from the library records that from that point onwards that Mr.Contractors was solely responsible for the formation of the library for framing the constitution, bye laws, membership forms, writing of minutes of the meetings, handling the correspondence.

On December 13th 1950 at 6pm Hon'ble Justice Mr.S.R.Tendolkar, then President of the Bombay Cricket Association inaugurated the library. Rich tributes was paid to Dr.H.D.Kanga by Mr.Tendolkar. Mr.A.A.Jasdenwala, then President of CCI, paid tribute to Dr.Kanga and explained the idea behind starting the library. Mr.Vijay Merchant in his speech hoped the library would not only be the best in Bombay but the best in India.

Mr.Tendolkar unveiled the portrait of Dr.Kanga and cut the ribbon to the library that housed the first 700 sports books to the Dr.H.D.Kanga Memorial Library.

The Parsee Gymkhana donated their rare collection of books to the library, mainly through Mr.Contractors advised, as he was also attached to the Gymkhana. Donations of books also came from A.R.Talyarkhan of Parsee Gymkhana, R.G.Sardesai and J.B.Dave.

Donations in cash also came from Mrs.(Dr) P.H.D.Kanga (Rs.20,000 / -), Miss Goolbai Kanga and Miss Jerbai Kanga (Rs.6,000 / -) and Directors of Messrs H.M.Mehta & Co (Rs.2,000/-)

The first Board of Management consisted of Trustees: A.A.Jasdenwala, H.N. Contractor, V.J.Divecha and Vijay Merchant, the members on the Board were: Anandji Dossa and D.P. Thanawalla. H.N.Contractor was the Hon.Secretary and Treasurer.

The inaugural year attracted 82 ordinary members, consisting of journalists, commentators, cricketers and sportsmen.

In the early years, if a member suggested a minimum of three good books, or even purchases these and submits the bill, the amount was reimbursed and a new sports section was welcomed by the committee and also started.

Members were encouraged to add, suggest or buy the sports books of their choice, so that the entire sports fraternity of Bombay was satisfied. Thereby the library grew in representation of every sport and in size.

While Mr.Homi Contractor took active interest in the day to day running of the library. Every morning Contractor would be at the library as if a matter of ritual, doing the job of a clerk cum librarian cum accountant. Mr.Vijay Merchant made every effort to obtain the best sports literature from the world over. He also donated his collection and all that he received. He also took great pride to build it into the best sports library in India.

In the second year came a fabulous donation of Rs.10,000/- from an 'Anonymous donor' making the library financially sound and 94 new members were elected and enrolled.

Again in the third year there was a donor for Rs.10,000 / - given 'in grateful memory of Dr.Kanga'. In the fourth year Miss Gulbai and Jerbai Kanga donated Rs.5,000 /-.

In 1956, Mr.S.M.Hadi, Secretary of the All-India Council of Sports, Delhi, visited the library and was surprised to see the collection.

Mr. Dicky Rutnagur an active user of the library, also a editor of Indian Cricket Field Annual, and a commentator suggested at the seventh AGM that a catalogue of books should be printed and circulated to the members. He also suggested that a quarterly journal be published sent to its members on a additional subscription. The committee examined this suggestion but look at the purpose and the priority and felt it would be advisable to buy books rather than produce a catalogue and journal, and the idea was dropped. The library then had grown to 2607 books and 258 members.

In 1960 the membership rose to 334 and so did the stocks - 3422 titles. In view of the increase in the number of members and the readership growing, the wait for new books were too long, the committee decided to stock two copies of the books in demand.

In 1961 a donor donated a bookcase and with it 56 titles on sports, valued at Rs.800 / -, with it the collection rose to 4,344 books.

In 1963 Mr.V.J.Divecha expired, in a condolence message the library put on record his contribution from inception, the guidance and legal assistance given to the library and mostly his keen interest in the affairs and smooth functioning of the library.

In 1964 Mr.A.A.Jasdenvala resigned as Chairman on grounds of ill health. The library put on records the long and meritorious service rendered to the library from inception and being instrumental in the financial soundness of the library. Mr.Vijay Merchant took over as Chairman.

In 1965 the library produced their own ties, being a tradition in those days of sports clubs, associations and to sport a tie at important functions. In this year at the AGM the ties were presented to Padma Shree and Arjun Awardee like Wilson Jones, Jal Pardivala, Polly Umrigar, Nari Contractor and G.R.Diwan. This became a regular feature at the AGMs and the following received the awards over the years: In 1972 at the 22nd AGM, Jal Pardivala and Dilip Sardesai for receiving the Shiv Chhatrapati Award and Sunil Gavaskar for his sparkling display at the West Indies.

The attendance at the AGMs were better each year in the seventies and so was the membership which was 636 and stocks of books to 7,769. The readership was also at its peak and demand for new books tremendous and the library used to add even three copies of some titles, specially the cheaper cricket titles. Financially too the library were well off with Rs. 61,600 in fixed deposits.

Until 1974 all AGMs were held at the library premises of the Brabourne Stadium, as the premises was large enough to accommodate the members.

In March 1975 the library shifted from the CCI's Brabourne Stadium to the ground floor of the Gaware Club House, at the Wankhede Stadium, where the Bombay Cricket Association had its own stadium, building etc.

In 1975 for the first time the AGM was held at the SS Hall at the Gaware Club House. Vijay Merchant continued as Chairman and H.N.Contractor as Hon.Secretary and Treasurer.

In the second half of the seventies Vijay Merchant's firm the Thakersey Group used to conduct a Cricket Talk on All India Radio 'Cricket with Vijay Merchant'. The Talks had tremendous mileage, as radio at that time was extremely popular, the library was often mentioned in these Talks and over 100 members enrolled in that year.

Twenty-five years later the library grew to 8,331 books, representing every sports. The speciality being the complete set of Wisden Cricketers' Almanack from 1864 to 1974 except 1879 to 1884 which was not available anywhere in the world at that time. Membership was 189 Life members, 554 Ordinary members and 23 Corporate members. Financially the funds in hand included Rs.55,021 / -. The Life membership then amounted to was Rs.24,480 / - and Fixed Deposits were Rs.61,600 / -.

The Silver Jubilee celebration of the library was held on 13th December 1975, at the Wankhede Stadium Ground. The programme included a get together of members, a Bharat Natyam Dance Recital by Kum. Aditi Merchant, daughter of Vijay Merchant, a welcome address by Vijay Merchant and a speech by A.A.Jasdenwala, with a vote of thanks by Prof. M. V.Chandgadkar.

In 1978 after the 28th AGM, the Board of Management under the Chairmanship of Vijay Merchant decided to put a picture of Mr.H.N.Contractor, in recognition to his services to the BCA and library in particular. Vijay Merchant in his speech recalled the past achievement of Mr. Contractor including his playing days, where as a twelfth man went to captain the Ranji side, his involvement in the BCA committee and his skill in framing of the bye-laws and selecting the Association's colours. As the Hon.Secretary and Treasurer of the library, the solid start and smooth function was mentioned. Hon'ble S.K.Wankhede who also spoke mentioned of his contributions and unveiled the photograph of Mr.Contractor. Praises also came from Mr.A.A. Jasdenwala Mr.Contractor was moved by this gesture and just could not speak in reply to this honour. It must be mentioned that all the years the refreshments at the AGM was paid for by Mr.Contractor and not the library.

In the year 1977-78, Mr.Anandji Dossa took over as Hon.Secretary and Treasurer as the health of Mr.Contractor did not permit him to look into the affairs of the library. In 1979, Mr.S.V.Kadam took over as Hon.Secretary and Treasurer.

1981 was the year of sadness two stalwards of the library passed away. The first Chairman Mr. A.A.J asdenwala passed away on 25th September 1982. He was the Chairman for thirteen long years and under his chairmanship and guidance the library gain a sound footing and grew in size and stature. He was also the President of the CCI and due to him the club donated furniture and was given the use of the dormitory free of charge. He was also Vice President of the BCCI and President of the BCA, besides other State sports bodies and association.

The other stalward to depart was Mr.H.N.Contractor, once given the reign of the library did not look back, he devoutly went every morning to the library and looked after minute details like selections of books, satisfying the members and putting the library in a sound footing. He was Hon Secretary from inception untill his health permitted till 1977. He was Jt.Hon Secretary of the BCA, Hon.Secretary of CCI, Chairman of Selector of the BCCI and was the Manager of the Indian team that toured Ceylon in 1945. He too was attached to several state sports bodies and was the first administrator to be awarded the ABSJ Award.

The first librarian C.F.Fernandes who was responsible to set up the library continued till Rosario Rodrigues took over, though was not a qualified library knew the complete working and always ready to assist the member to find the books, the library had the most orderly look until : then. Mrs.Nirmala Patel was appointed in 1980, though willing did not have the skill of library sense. Then came Deepak Joshi, R.Irani and I A.C.Vagai. Today M.V.Katti a scorer, club manager and tournament secretary has taken the work of the librarian.

The library started with fees as : Entrance Rs.5 / -, Quarterly subscription Rs.2/ - and Deposit of Rs.10 / -, for 21 long years the fees remained the same. At the 22nd AGM on June 28, 1972, the quarterly subscription was raised to Rs.3/ -. At the 33rd AGM on July 18th 1983, the Entrance fee was raise to Rs.10/ -, Quarterly subscription to Rs.5/- and Deposit to Rs.50 /-.

The Auditors for the library from inception to 1983 were N.M.Raiji & Co, owned by Vasant Raiji, who played cricket from Pentangular days to Ranji Trophy. After his playing days, continued to be attached to cricket by his writing. He has authored the most number of Indian books on cricket and some of finest historical works on Indian cricket have come from his pen.

The felicitations continued at the library AGMs and on July 16, 1979, Prof. M.V.Chandgadkar was felicitated for being given the Hon. Life Membership of the MCC. July 28, 1980, R.G. Nadkarni for receiving the Hon. Life Membership of the MCC, Jayashri Khadilkar for her International Chess achievement, D.N.Sardesai, S.M.Gavaskar and D.B.Vengsarkar for being honoured with Special Executive Magistrate, Govt. of Maharashtra. September 14, 1981, Sunil Gavaskar for receiving the Padmabhushan and Dilip Vengsarkar for receiving the Chatrapatti Award. December 20, 1982, Yaduvendra Singh, R.K.Naidu, B.A.Jamula, R.R.Kadam and Madan Singh for being included in All India Panel of Umpires. On 17th Setember 1984, Sunil Gavaskar was felicitated for scoring the highest number of runs in Test cricket, Dilip ,Vengsarkar for receiving the Arjun Award for cricket, Uday Deshpande, Shiv Chhatrapati Award for Physical Education, Gymnastics and Malkhamb, Jal Pardivala for an administrator and author in Track & Field - a Olympic order from the IOC and for spreading the Amateur Movement in India. On 15th October 1984, Sunil Gavaskar again for captaining India to victory in the B&H WCS, and Man of the Series in the Rothmans Cup at Sharjah. On August 20, 1985, Sunil Gavaskar again for his highest appearances in Test cricket. V.B.Prabhudesai for being appointed Jt. Hon. Secretary of BCCI and touring England as Assistant Manager of the Indian team. Marcus Couto for standing first in the Umpires Exams held in 1981. On 30th September 1986, Sunil Gavaskar once again for scoring 10,000 runs in Test cricket. On 11th September 1987 Polly Umrigar for receiving the Shiv Chhatrapati Award and M.K.Mantri for being the President of BCA and Hon.Life Membership of CCI. On 5th August 1988, Pilo Reporter for being appointed the neutral umpire for Test between West Indies and Pakistan, P.Pansare for being appointed SEM by the Govt. of Maharashtra, Ramesh Kosambia for being elected Treasurer of the BCA On 20th September 1989 S.Z.Irani for being honoured to give away the Irani Trophy to the winners of the Cup - Madanlal, captain of the Delhi team. On 20th September 1990. M.K.Mantri for being elected Treasurer of the BCCI and Manager of the Indian team to England. On October 26,1993, Ajit Wadekar for managing the victorius Indian team and also for being selected manager of the team for the Hero Cup. Dr.Ali Irani for being appointed Physiotherapist of the Indian team. On 23rd December 1996, Ramakant Desai for being appointed Chairman of Selectors, Bal Mahaddalkar for receiving the Shiv Chhatrapati Award. A.R.Kudroli and Prof.Ratnakar Shetty for being elected Jt.Hon.Secretaries of the MCA. At the 48th AGM on 29th October 1998, Mr.Raj Singh Dungarpur was again felicitated for being elected President of the BCCI for the second term, Mr.A.R.Kudroli for being deputed by the BCCI to attend the Sahara Cup at Toronto and Prof.Ratnakar Shetty for the excellent job of Administrative Manager of the Indian team to Sri Lanka, Dara Pochkhanawala for receiving the Sanskriti Gaurav Award, Uday Gharat for the Anandji Dossa Trophy, Bal Mahaddalkar for the Special Award from the Bank Association for the Best Administrator in the field of cricket and Dara Dotiwalla for being nominated as member of West Zone in the Umpires Committee of the BCCI.

At the AGM on 11th September 1987, Pradeep Vijayakar a journalist from The Times of India suggested that the library start a video section and the management discussed the feasibility and when Mr. Marcus Couto an umpire and founder member of the ACSSI volunteered to set up the library on his own, permitted him. So 1989, this library wing was added at a very reasonable deposit of Rs.100/- and rental of Rs.2/- per day.

In 1988 Mr.Vijay Merchant passed away, the library paid tribute to the departed founder of the library, a picture and homage was included in the Annual Report, as done for the earlier founders. Mr.S.K.Wankhede President of the BCA, a patron and well-wisher of the library also passed away in the same year.

In the year 1991-92 the library started organising Talks on Cricket, in the first year Mr.Raj Singh Dungarpur was invited to Talk on current cricket, Pилоo Reporter on Umpiring and Dr.Ali Irani on Sports Medicine. This year the library also lost an active founder member Mr.Lakadawala of Tata.

The 43rd Annual report for the first time had an advertisement of the members' subscription which was Rs.300 / - for Life, Rs.50 / - Ordinary, Rs.400 /- deposit, Rs.10 / - entry and Rs.120 /- conversion.

In 1995 Dr.Vaze an active umpire from Mulund and Secretary of the Mulund Gymkhana offered space and a cubboard to house the suburban wing of the library, for the convenience of the members from the eastern suburbs.This wing was inaugurated by Mr.Satish Pradhan MP and a local corporator Mr.Shishir Sindhe from Thane. Also present were the office bearers of the MCA and library, along with members from the eastern suburbs. 32 new members were enrolled on the every first day. The library started with 100 books on a rotation basis. This wing continues to be active due to the efforts of Dr. Vaze.

In 1997 the space of the library was reduced by the MCA to accomodate a Conference Room. This was after the officials observed the fall in readership and the members not frequenting the library as before. Unfortunately at the time the library was at its worst mainly due to constant change in the library staff, the staff employed had no library background nor knowledge of managing a library and worst of all were just not fond of books or reading, hence the shelving of the books, were in the most haphazard manner, without any sort of system. It was at this time that some precious books were either destroyed, stolen or not returned by members. To add to this during the renovation the books were left to be handled by the peons, gardners and malis of the Wankhede Stadium and dumped in cement sacks in the godown. Yours truly was almost in tears to see the state of these precious books most of with are irreplaceable, and to turn into a junk of books and paper.

With the help of volunteers like Deepak Joshi, Uday Gharat, Ramesh Parab, Archana Dabholkar, James Godad and a few others including the staff of Marine Sports, all the books were restored, rebound, numbered as per Dewey decimals - a book classification used international and most up-to-date method of arranging any library and shelved according to the subject / sport and further divided into sections, so that a books by one author will all be together. All the cupboards were arranged and labelled, sectioned displayed and arranged for easy guidance to the user. Though the books are all numbered, the entry is not computerised, hence the physical count of the books are still not available. At the AGM on 29th October 1998, the library felicated each of the volunteers, including yours truly with a gift and bouquets.

**The progress of the library every ten years is as under:**

10thAGM - 24th June 1960, the books were 3,422, and investment stood at Rs.27, / -  
20thAGM-17June 1970, 728 members, 6,537 books and investment at Rs.46,600 /-.  
30th AGM - 28th July 1980, 946 members, 9,181 books and Rs.72,000 / - investment.  
40th AGM - 19th September 1990, 1,806 members and investment 1,48,000.  
50th AGM - 20th September 2000, 1131 members and investment Rs.4,03,000 / -.

**The Chairman were as follows:**

Chairman - A.A.Jasdenvala 1950 to 1964,  
Vijay Merchant 1964 - 1987,  
Madhav Mantri 1987 - 1994,  
R.M.Dadachandji 1994 - 1996  
and N.S.Tamhane 1996 till date.

**The Hon Secretaries cum Treasurers:**

H.N.Contractor 1950 to 1977,  
Anandji Dossa 1977 - 1978,  
S.V.Kadam 1978 - 1983,  
D.S.Vesarkar 1983 - 1985,  
Prabhakar Pansare 1985 - 86  
and R.K>Kosambia 1986 till date.

Today the library proudly pocesses the entire set of Wisden Cricketers' Almanack from 1864, a complete set of Indian Cricket from 1946- 47, a complete set of the BCCI Statistical Annuals and Playfair Cricket Annuals. The library obtains all the annuals from Australia, New Zealand, South Africa and Pakistan. Cricket books from all cricket playing countries and sports books all over the world.

The Annual section also pocesses all the major annuals of the world, most Olympic Reports are also in this section

Unfortunately the readership has dropped to such a great level that besides cricket, chess, bridge and the odd reader for football, the other sports books are not touched for months and years together.

The library also has a section for souvenirs / brochures produced for benefits matches, tournaments, landmarks like silver, golden, platinum jubilees and centenaries. All these are also classified subject-wise and tournament-wise and shelved year-wise.

The reference section holds all the Indian cricket books published so far and which are irreplaceable now. The shelf also holds reference and costly books from the rest of the world.

The magazine section is unfortunately not touched, but possesses the complete set of Indian Cricket published by CCI, Sports Illustrated, Sports & Pastime, Cricket Quarterly, Sportsweek, Sportsweek Cricket Quarterly, Sportsworld, Sportstar and other odd magazine published and folded over the years. From the foreign section, there is The Cricketer from 1921, Playfair Cricket Monthly, Wisden Cricket Monthly, Football Illustrated, World Soccer, Soccer World, FA News, Track & Field News, Athletic News, Swimming Times, World Tennis.

Besides English, the books published on Sports in Marathi are also quite a few. Few titles in Hindi, Gujarati and the odd book even in Bengali are there, shelved after each sports section.

The space constraint is now felt and books are kept in a single row for easy accessibility, except the reference section. All the magazines are bound year-wise or quarterly for safe handling and are stocked above the huge cubboards, almost touching the ceiling which fortunately has a good height, making these inaccessible.

But the need of the hour now and future is the entire computerization of the stock and instead of printing a catalogue. If computerized, the user would know what is available in the library. I would also suggest that the library goes online, so that the user - journalists, writers, statisticians, sports lovers can visit the library, search for the books of their interest and even requisition a book online from the convenience of his office or home, or anytime convenient to him. This online facility would save precious time to hunt in the library and the library could be thrown open to far more sports lovers.

I would further suggest all the articles in the magazines and annuals be classified - subject, author-wise and computerised, so again the user has accessibility to them. But this is wishful thinking in the days when readership is dropping, although the rate of literacy is rising. People take the remote control to bed rather than a book. They would have taken a computer, but at the moment this technology has not catered and looked at the relaxed readers.



Coming back to the library 50 years ago a group of gentleman under the instruction of BCA were given the responsibility to perpetuate the name of Dr.Homi Kanga, successfully started a sports library which contributed not only to sports lovers of Bombay and the district of Thana, but upto Poona, Surat and Baroda. In the advent and time when newspapers were a luxury and besides the elite, who use to receive it at home, newspapers were read at reading rooms, offices, clubs or public vachanalayas. Magazines were subscribed only by the rich and the foreign magazine was out of reach and unaffordable only through radhiwallas that too months, years later after it gone through several hands. Hence the library turned out to be a nursery for writers, journalists, statisticians, commentators besides the sportsmen who satisfied their hungry and sharpen their skills by going through books. The frequent visitors to the library were Madhav Mantri, Wilson Jones, Sunil Gavaskar, Dilip Vengsarkar, Jal Pardivala, Vijay Merchant, R. V. Sapre and many bridge and chess grandmasters. Coaches, umpires, referees. officials of all sports were another sports fraternity that the library catered to.

Today we owe the preservation of the library for the future generation, not just the next and next and next, but till time immorial. Technology will definitely take over the preservation, but until then we have to care, love and preserve the print technology and it you and I as a lover of sports, the Dr.H.D.Kanga Memorial Library.