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# **Library Legislation In India:**

## **1. INTRODUCTION:**

India celebrated its 73 years of Independence in 2019. A brief stock of its development in the library field help to introspect the progress made in the library field. An important landmark in the history of public library services in India was made by Maharaja Sayaji Rao Gaekward by introducing free compulsory elementary education backed by libraries in 1883 in the district of Baroda and thus free public library services in India were introduced as a system in 1907. Bombay Government appointed the Library Development Committee under the Chairmanship of A. A. A. Fyzee in 1939. The committee recommended the establishment of district libraries, taluka libraries, town libraries and village libraries in several stages to create library services to all sections of the people. After independence number of significant developments have taken place for expansion of public library system in the country. The first step was towards the enactment of library legislation. The credit for providing first public libraries Act goes to S.R. Ranganathan and state of Madras.

## **2. Need:**

It is recognized that 'freedom, prosperity and the development of society as well as of individuals are fundamental human values'. These values can be achieved through proper utilization of public libraries. Public libraries are necessary for developing human resources. They must support by specific legislation and financed by National and Local Governments. Proper library legislation guarantees establishment, development and maintenance of libraries. They have the authority to appoint the staff, make necessary regulations, inspect the functioning and control the system and services. Library legislation is required to constitute a proper administrative and supervisory body with executive power; to provide well organized library system for the state, district and up to the remote village level with free access to all citizens; to provide a steady and permanent source of finance and to maintain a slandered in library services.

The main reasons behind the public library legislation are as follows:

- It provides the guidelines for the structure of the public library system that is appropriate for the area and concerned authorities.
- It saves the public libraries from any type of interference of bureaucracy and politics and thus the system functions effectively and smoothly.
- It ensures the perennial and adequate finance for the development of the public libraries through introducing the concept of the library cess, Govt. grants, library fund etc.

- Library legislation provides the opportunity to the representative of the public for participating in the functioning of the public libraries at all levels.
- It defines the responsibility of the Govt. for the development of the public library system.
- It represents the constitution and functions of the library authorities at various levels like National, State, District, Panchayat levels etc.

As per the Indian Constitution, the state has the responsibility to establish and maintain the state, uniform, effective and integrated public libraries in the state. Library legislation becomes highly necessary and vital for organization and systematic functioning of the public libraries.

It is only after India's independence that, Dr. Ranganathan's dream of public Library Act enactment was fulfilled. Through the good offices of the then Minister for Education, Avinaslingam Chettiar, a modified Bill was introduced in the state legislature which was passed as the Madras Public Libraries Act in 1948.

### **3. Function of library legislation:**

The Advisory Committee for Libraries<sup>2</sup> constituted by the Government of India (1958) proposed the following five functions of library legislation:

- a. It should clearly define the government's responsibility in the matter of public libraries;
- b. Legislation should lay-down the constitution and functions of the library authority at national, state and district levels;
- c. Legislation should provide an assured basis for library finance. There are two ways of providing a firm basis for library finance:
  - i. A Special library cess; and
  - ii. Reservation of certain percentage of the education budget.
- d. Legislation should lay-down the structure of the public library system; and
- e. Legislation should provide for participation of the representative of the public, in the work of the public libraries at all levels.

#### **4. Advantage of Library Legislation:**

A Library Act provides the following advantages:

- Helps in the establishment of an organized network of public libraries;
- A sound administrative set-up;
- Proper and continuous financial support;
- Coordination in administration and management of public libraries;
- Centralized services like purchase, processing, bibliographical and other service that can be provided conveniently;
- Possibility of providing quality library service, with qualified hands, at free of charge.

#### **5. Model Acts/Bill:**

Over sixty eight years, we have drafted six Model Public Library Acts in India on different occasions.

- 1) Union Library Bill ASTELEVEL Dr. S.R. Ranganathan 1951.
- 2) S.R. Ranganathan (Revised number of times till 1972) 1930 to 1972.
- 3) Model Model Public Libraries Bill Ministry of Education, Govt. of India 1963.
- 4) Model Model Public Libraries Bill Planning Commission, Govt. of India 1963.
- 5) Model Public Library and Information Services Act V. Venkattappaiah, Sponsored by Indian Library Association 1989 revised in 1995.

#### **Model Act of Dr. Ranganathan:**

Dr. S.R. Ranganathan initiated the Model Library Act as a conference paper during All Asia Educational Conference held at Banaras in 1930 and later he revised it as Model Public Libraries Act. Attempts were made to introduce this Model Act in West Bengal in 1931 and Madras in 1933. But, it could not be enacted due to some compulsory clauses. The salient features of this Model Act are mentioned below:

- 1.** Model Libraries Act will provide a system of Public Libraries for the city, rural and other areas.

2. Minister of Education shall be the State Library Authority (S L A). It shall be the duty of the State Library Authority to provide for adequate library service in the State.
3. Constitution of a State Library Committee for the purpose of advising the State Library Authority on all matters arising under the Act.
4. Constitution of a Local Library Authority (L L A) for each city and one for each district.
5. The State Library Authority and Government, and a Local Library Authority may raise the library rate in such a manner and at such cess as may be determined from time to time.

### **Impact of the Model Acts:**

Attempts were made to introduce the Public Libraries Bill in West Bengal and Madras. respectively. The Acts could not be passed due to some compulsory financial clauses. After independence, the public Libraries Acts were passed in Madras (1948), Hyderabad (1955), Andhra Pradesh (1960), Karnataka (1963), Maharashtra (1965), WestBengal (1979); etc. These Acts have structurally adopted; to certain extent, the Model Act of Dr: S.R. Ranganathan. There is no impact of the Model Bills of Ministry of Education and Planning Commission for passing Library Acts in these states in India. The ILA circulated the Model Act by to all the States.

### **6. SUMMARY:**

The prominent public libraries at the national and state level did not spring up through legislation; however, they received continuous financial support and authority as public institutions for the equal service to every member in the society. Though many attempts were made to cover all states of entire country, only 19 states could enact public library legislation. The four states of South India, namely, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and Kerala, were in the forefront to adopt public library legislation in the country. Being at the apex of the public library system of their respective states the State Central Libraries need to assume leadership role.