

LIBRARIES AND LIBRARY MOVEMENT

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ON the 5th of November 1940, the Public Library at Bangalore celebrated the Silver Jubilee of its installation and the event may be used as an occasion for reviewing the library movement in India.

The sister State of Baroda had already made a name in library matters when the Bangalore Public Library was established. For as early as 1907 the late Gaekwad had instituted public libraries in the State. In 1910 he secured the services of Mr. W. A. Borden, an American librarian, to work out a library system for his State. Mr. J. S. Kudelkar was the first Indian librarian to take charge of this library system. In collaboration with Mr. M. N. Amin he developed the Central Library, the numerous local libraries and the travelling library system.

The example of Baroda did not take long to stimulate Mysore. In 1914 two public libraries of the modern type were established, one in Mysore and the other in Bangalore. These libraries were formally opened to the public in 1915. They were managed directly by the Government till 1921 when they were transferred to the care of mixed committees of officials and non-officials.

The first British Indian province to think of a library system was the Punjab. In 1915 its university engaged the services of Mr. A. D. Dickinson, an American librarian again, to reorganise its library on modern lines. Fortunately for the Punjab he went beyond his scheduled work, organised a library training class, wrote the *Punjab library primer* and initiated the library movement in the province. Thus again 1915

turns out to be an important date in the library history of India.

Taking our stand on that year let us have a look backwards and forwards. Isolated libraries had existed all along from very early days. But they do not constitute library movement. The apex of such isolated libraries in the provinces was constituted at Calcutta with the name Imperial Library by the Curzon Act I of 1902.

On the non-official side the Andhradesa has done pioneering work. The first Andhra library is said to be the one started about the year 1898 in the village of Kumudavalli in the West-Godavari district by Ganjam Venkataratnamgaru. The library workers of Andhradesa had also been actively sponsoring an All-India Library Conference during the twenties, as one of the many auxiliary conferences associated with the Indian National Congress.

Work through non-official library associations has now become a regular feature. The Madras Library Association was founded on the 30th January 1928 and the Punjab Library Association on the 30th January 1929. The Andhradesa Library Association and the Bengal Library Association had come into existence a few years earlier. An All-India Library Association was formed in 1933 and is holding biennial conferences. Since that date provincial library associations have been formed in some other areas like the United Provinces (1935), and Bihar (1939).

The Andhradesa library workers have the credit of having started the first library periodical. It was called the *Indian library*

journal. It sent out a few issues at irregular intervals and it seems to have now gone into suspended animation.

The Punjab Library Association inaugurated the *Modern librarian* in November 1930. It began first with the ambition of being a monthly. After the first two issues it was put to the necessity of issuing double numbers in alternative months. Now it has avowedly declared itself a quarterly. It has completed ten volumes of considerable value.

The Bengal Library Association has been issuing a *Bulletin* at regular intervals. The combined numbers 1 and 2 of volume 2 which came out in 1938 appear to be the latest ones.

The Andhradesa Library Association started a bilingual quarterly entitled *Andhra granthalayam* early in 1939. It has just now completed the first volume by clubbing issues 3 and 4 into a double number.

The Madras Library Association has inaugurated an annual periodical with the title *Memoirs of the Madras Library Association*. The first volume came out in April last.

Of all the different Library Associations of the country it is the Madras Library Association that is most prolific in its publications. It has inaugurated three important series of publications: Everything About Something Series; Bibliographical Series and Publication Series.

The first is an attempt to bring out books on current thought in modern Tamil, as such books are not easily forthcoming in the book-market of the province. Two books have come out in this series till now.

Sixteen items made up of book-selection lists in South Indian languages, library companions to certain text-books and bibliographies in certain subjects have appeared in the bibliographical series.

The volumes of the publication series form the most considerable contribution of that Association to the world's library literature. Nine volumes have come out so far. Three more are in preparation. The intention is to cover all branches of Library Science. The basic book is the *Five laws of library science* (1931) which in the words of Sir P. S. Sivaswami Iyer "reduces everything connected with the libraries to five cardinal principles from which all the rules of library organisation and management are developed as necessary implications and inevitable corollaries". The other volumes cover the fields of classification cataloguing, administration, reference service and bibliography. Another publication of some value on reference service was published this year by Mr. Fazl Elahi. Library movement cannot flourish in our land unless substantial treatises come out continuously from all parts of India.

The Madras Library Association has also the credit of having made two outstanding contributions which have received international recognition. They relate to classification and cataloguing.

The Colon Classification sponsored by that Association has many novel features of which its composite nature is the outstanding one. The *Library Association record* (London) estimates it with the words "The result is almost perfect. . . . A new subject creates its own number in the notation". The *Year's work in librarianship* pronounces it to be the best exercise in synthetic classification. On account of its composite nature and the eight devices it has developed, it carries the individualisation of ideas and subjects to a far greater degree than any other scheme.

The Association has also sponsored what is perhaps the only complete code in book

form in the English language for the preparation of a classified catalogue. The *Library Association record* (London) estimates the Code as one of considerable value.

The credit of having started the first school of librarianship in India goes to the Punjab University Library. It was inaugurated in 1915 and is still being continued as a six months' course every alternate year.

The second school of librarianship was founded by the Madras Library Association in 1929 as an annual summer school for three months. This was taken over by the University of Madras in 1931. In 1938 the course was converted into a full-timed one year one leading to the University diploma. About 130 persons have been so far trained by the Madras school.

The third school of librarianship was begun by the Andhra University in 1934 on a rather ambitious scale out of all proportion to what was warranted by the library conditions of the country. It had to be suspended from 1937.

Another school of librarianship is being conducted in alternate years by the Imperial Library at Calcutta.

The Bengal Library Association is also giving occasional short courses.

The outstanding library buildings of the modern type that were completed during the last few years are those of the Central Library at Baroda and the University Libraries of Lahore, Benares, Madras, Waltair, Annamalainagar and Lucknow. In most of these libraries the buildings are designed to suit the open access system. Most of them are also provided with artificial lights so as to make it possible for the libraries to work during nights. The longest hours are kept by the Madras University Library which works on

all the days of the year without exception, for 13 hours from 7 A.M. to 8 P.M.

The above resume of the recent history of Library Movement in India significantly omits mention of any considerable State action, in particular, of library legislation, which forms the basis of continued library development in other countries of the world. The first attempt at promoting library legislation was made at the Library Service Section of the First All-Asia Educational Conference held at Benares in 1930. A Model Library Act with compulsory clauses was presented to that Conference. This Model Act was made the core of the *Five laws of library science*.

Munindra Deb Rai Mahasai had the Model Act adapted to the conditions of Bengal and sought to introduce it in the Bengal Legislative Council. But it was disallowed by the Viceroy. The Madras Library Association promoted a public library bill on the lines of the Model Act but converting all the compulsory clauses into optional ones to avoid opposition from government. The Viceroy's consent was received and the support of most of the district boards and municipalities who were to be created library authorities was also obtained. The bill was introduced into the Legislative Council by Mr. Basheer Ahmed Sayeed in October 1933. It came out of the Select Committee stage in 1934, but all further progress was blocked by the unfriendly attitude of the then Finance Member. Though it was not formally withdrawn the bill lost its life by the dissolution of the Legislative Council in 1936. On the reconstitution of the legislature under the Government of India Act, 1935, Mr. Basheer Ahmed Sayeed gave notice in October 1937 to introduce the bill in the Madras

Legislative Assembly. But it was not permitted by His Excellency the Governor.

It is a matter of experience all the world over that Library Movement cannot take root and thrive, if it is made to depend purely on private philanthropy or the enthusiasm of private individuals. Nor will it receive the necessary attention of the local bodies simply because libraries are mentioned in a schedule of the Local Boards Acts among the various purposes on which a local body may spend any money that it may occasionally spare. Local bodies will go the whole hog in the matter only if there is a separate public library act implemented by a department of public libraries presided over by a professional librarian.

The experience of several countries points to the need for even a more drastic step with compulsory clauses in the public library acts which empower penalties being imposed upon local bodies which do not exercise their library function with sufficient vigilance and to a prescribed standard.

Library legislation will be required if the country is to be filled with a co-ordinated network of live public libraries capable of functioning as efficient instruments of universal education. That, as we have seen, we are yet to have in India. But so far as the needs of the intellectual aristocracy go, it can be said that India is well provided by its university libraries and the libraries of the various departments of the Government of India and of the several Research Institutions. Before the last world depression, money was easily forthcoming and many libraries were well provided for. It was this fact that brought their resources to an adequate level. But of late the finances of most of the libraries are being crippled.

If a more generous and far-sighted policy is not inaugurated it will not be long before even the combined resources of all such libraries prove inadequate to the requirements of the nation-building research activities.

Will it be too much to hope that the Government and universities will strive their very best to continue their library policy along liberal lines? Will it be too much to hope that they will realise that money spent on libraries is not money thrown away for ever, but on the other hand every pie spent on increasing the resources of the libraries and on improving their man-power and their service to the public will come back to the community in the form of extended literacy and efficient citizenship.

It is true that the war in which the country now finds itself entangled and the political abnormality that prevails in the land make the present moment inopportune to speak of library reforms, library legislation and above all finance for libraries. But surely the war is not going to be a perpetual feature of the world. Similarly the present political impasse is not going to be permanent. It is not asking for too much if we appeal to those who now wield the power that the libraries should not be starved at least for the obvious economic reason that the gaps now created will cost far more than now to get filled up later. Countries which are in the thick of the fight have not developed any serious indifference to the library needs of their people. Again thanks to the activities of library associations a good deal of popular enthusiasm has been created for libraries. If the enthusiasm is made to die out by a stingy policy, it would be far more difficult to whip up enthusiasm a second time.