

# NEED TO RECOGNIZE READER'S RIGHT TO ACCESS UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES: ONE NATION, ONE LIBRARY CARD



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## Abstract

*In the year 1931, S. R. Ranganathan formulated five laws of library in which he tried to establish that books must not be kept unused as every book has its reader and vice versa. He also explained that libraries are growing and it is due to its increasing subscribers hence every reader must be paid full attention so as to save his or her time. Nonetheless, these all five laws are for its local subscribers only and if a reader is willing to be benefitted by these laws in the libraries of which he is not a subscriber, would definitely disappoint us at all. Now in the era of technological advancement, there is a need to implement these five laws of library in libraries throughout the nation and to recognize the right of accessing public libraries as well as the libraries of all other institutions which may be kept under the term of 'State' under article 12 of Indian Constitution, especially the university libraries. In this literary work by collecting and analysing the secondary data, the researchers have suggested to introduce 'One Nation, One Library Card' for the readers so that they may access libraries of any place for getting information. It has been also suggested that the 'Right to Information' must include 'Right to Access Libraries'.*



## Key words

*Library, Right, Reader, Books, University*

## 1. Introduction

The origin of library and its science is as old as the first text had been written hundreds of years back. Though it is not possible to explain that when exactly the written text came into existence first time but it is explicitly accepted almost in all civilizations that the holy texts were written hundreds of years back and were transmitted from generation to generation by word of mouth. Keeping of these texts for transmission to future generation gave birth to libraries. If we talk about the growth and development of libraries in India, we found that we have many world-famous libraries. The libraries of Nalanda, Nevada and Takshshita were the most renowned as these were equipped with books at large, robust building structure and managed efficiently with the help of trained staff members. Kings of those Eras from Ashok to Akbar contributed in their development. It is a bitter truth that after Akbar the contribution ended and continued till independence. It is also noteworthy here that the concept of libraries for public use was rarely discussed before independence. Till India's independence, there was not a single library in the country except few libraries which were established either by the Individuals, voluntary organization, endowments or by few municipal bodies in some states.<sup>1</sup> These libraries were subscriptions libraries and have a small number of its subscribers. These small numbers of subscribers were the English knowing elite class people and who constituted only 1% of the total population. English books published in U.K were the main assets of these libraries as it is no wonder that only 6455 books were published in India in 1947 and that too in 15 Indian languages. If or making an average of 430 books per language against 1,627 in English alone.<sup>2</sup> To draw attention of government on importance of library and library sciences, the efforts of Dr S. R. Rangnathan is not hidden which paved a way for library legislation and policies.

## 2. Research Methodology

The relevant data for this research was collected from some primary and secondary sources. Primary Data was collected through a personal interview.

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<sup>1</sup>D. R. Kalia, "A Review of Public Library Development" 6 International Library Review 29-33 (1974).

<sup>2</sup>Ibid



At the same time, the secondary sources were the Books, articles, newsletters, schemes and other publications etc. Efforts were also made to access the non - government organisations that were active in promoting the interest of the readers.

### **3. Reader Viz. a Viz an Informed Citizen**

An informed citizen is one who apart from becoming aware about the government and its governance, knows or seeks to know how the different aspects of politics, geology, sociology, environment and economy that are prevalent. A citizen can be an informed citizen only, when he or she has right to get information from the authorities basically from the government. But this is a half-truth as government under this right as RTI can provide only limited information and that too which is related to the management, administration and governance of the concerned department. The researchers here wish to submit that a citizen can be an informed citizen only when he or she is aware about each and every branch of knowledge either of history, political science, geography, psychology, science or other subjects (as per choice of the reader).

In India Right to Information Act was passed in 2005 to make the citizens of India as Informed Citizens but we have miles to go for getting this goal. A citizen should be able to access any information that he may require from any public authority but what about the information from libraries? Now the remarkable fact is here that libraries are considered to be the ocean of information contained in the form of books, periodicals etc. and one can get verities of information from here; therefore, why not the right to get access in libraries should be a part of right to information.

The issue related to this concern is that the term 'Public Authority' includes only the public libraries and not the other libraries. The researchers here are willing to add libraries maintained by institutions like colleges as well as Universities under the term 'Public Authority' and to introduce 'One Nation, One Library Card'.

### **4. Rationale Behind 'One Nation, One Library Card'**

1. Every reader should be given access to library for getting information from the books irrespective of its availability in public library or the libraries of other institutions.<sup>3</sup> Apart from making him a well-informed

<sup>3</sup>Muhammad Safdar, Shafiq Ur Rehman, Muhammad Arif, Murtaza Ashiq. "Research data services in libraries: a systematic literature review", Information Discovery and Delivery, 2022,.



citizen, it is needed for the career development and to make him more sensible towards his role in society. Without books it is impossible as web world alone cannot fulfil the reader's need, desire or wishes.

### **SDG No. 10 (Reduced In equalities)**

2. Right to Information comes under Article 21 of Indian Constitution as a part of 'Life and Personal Liberty'<sup>4</sup> and it has been clarified by the Supreme Court in many cases that 'right to life and personal liberty, does not merely mean animal existence but extended to all those aspects of life which go to make a man's life meaningful, complete, and worth living. In this regard authority of using library for getting information, completing academic journey and finally for making career also comes under the interpretation of article 21.
3. In the case of Maneka Gandhi<sup>5</sup> the SC overruled its judgment of the Gopalan Case by taking a wider interpretation of Article 21. It ruled that the right to life and personal liberty of a person can be deprived by law on the condition that the procedure prescribed by that law is reasonable, fair, and just. Depriving a person from getting information by using library should be treated as violation of right of 'Personal Liberty' as RTI comes under Article 21.
4. Right to access library is an integral part of 'Educational Right' under article 21 and 21 A. It is also relevant under welfare schemes as explained under 'Directive Principles of State Policy' and for making the concept of 'Fundamental Duties' more effective in reality.

### **SDG No. 04 (Quality Education)**

5. Right to Information includes inspection of documents and taking its copies by paying the reasonable amount as fixed by the government. Hence 'reading' books by accessing libraries must be included under its interpretation.
6. Private Universities has been declared State<sup>6</sup> by the Supreme Court of India under article 12 of Indian Constitution hence these can be

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<sup>4</sup>Ojilere, Aloysius Ndubuisi. "Quest for a Sustainable Legal Framework for the Protection of Women's Right to Dignity in Nigeria: Lessons from India and South Africa", University of Malaya (Malaysia), 2023.

<sup>5</sup>Maneka Gandhi vs. UOI, AIR 1978 SC 597

<sup>6</sup>Dr Janet Jeyapaul vs. SRM University, AIR 2016 SC 73, Also see Manmohan Singh Jaitla vs. Commissioner, Union Territory of Chandigarh, AIR 1985 SC 364



coined as public authority and a citizen of India must be allowed to access libraries maintained by these Private Universities. Public Universities are state under Art.12 as it is created by an act of legislature; it works as a body of public importance and enjoys monopoly status under state protection. Private Universities are also state as it imparted education in higher studies to the students at large, discharged public functions by way of imparting education, notified and governed under UGC Act, hence “other authority” within the meaning of article 12 of the Constitution.<sup>7</sup>

7. In India Public Libraries are very less in numbers as compared to population and the existing public libraries are mostly in poor condition and not updated with the new edition of books due to bureaucratic
8. India is having 46,746 public libraries throughout India (as per the records of available on the website of Ministry of Culture, Government of India in 2023) against the population of India i.e. 140.76 crores (2021) that means one public library on an average of 30,000 persons which is very poor.
9. Universities have been established almost in all part of India similar to public libraries and thus can be accessed easily.
10. Libraries of Colleges and Universities are mostly well maintained and updated.
11. Libraries of universities and colleges have academic as well as non-academic books, therefore; a reader may get books of his choice easily.
12. As of 26 November 2022, there are total 1070 universities and more than 42,000 colleges of higher education throughout India and each of them is having one library or central library apart from departmental libraries.
13. If reader’s entry is permitted, these university and college libraries can fill a huge gap in between library and the population.
14. In the present-day context, the term “book” should be used in a broader context to mean a “Resource” and this resource must be for public use.

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<sup>7</sup>Bineeta Patnaik Padhi v. UOI & Ors. (2021) SCC OnLine Cal 1662



15. Rationale behind introduction ‘One Nation, One Library Card’ are manifold and some of them are the part of interpretation of five laws as introduced by Dr S. R. Ranganathan<sup>8</sup>.

### **SDG No. 16- Peace, Justice & Strong Institutions**

- a. The first law constitutes the foundation of library science “books are for use”<sup>9</sup> means that books in libraries are not meant to be shut away from its users. Its implications talk about Open access of books that enhance their use and under this every reader should be allowed to go to the shelves and choose the book of his interest. Here reader means subscribers and researchers have suggested that reader means the subscriber of library service having ‘One Nation, One Library Card’ publication of details of each and every book of the library is it’s another implication which supports researchers view.
- b. The second law of library science is “Every Reader His / Her Book” implies that the “books are for use of all” or “books for all.”<sup>10</sup> It also implies that every reader has the equal right to get the book of his/her interest and the state, the library authority and other concerned persons are under responsibilities or obligations for the same hence the subscriber of ‘One Nation, One Library Card’ must be served by the library authorities irrespective of their age, race, or economic status.
- c. The Third Law prescribes ‘Every Book has its Reader’<sup>11</sup> and desires that every book in a library must find its reader so that the maximum book resources utilization can be done. This law thus also supports the opinion of researchers in relation to ‘One Nation, One Library Card’.
- d. The Fourth Law says “Save the Time of the Reader.”<sup>12</sup> As he is assumed a busy person. In the same way if a reader is on tour and he needs information, why he or she must not be allowed to access the nearby library of that locality. Not only the one library card will

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<sup>8</sup>Patrick L. Carr. “Reimagining the Library as a Technology: An Analysis of Ranganathan’s Five Laws of Library Science within the Social Construction of Technology Framework”, *The Library quarterly* (Chicago, IL), 2014, Vol 84, 152-164

<sup>9</sup>Five Laws of Library Science, (2023)

<sup>10</sup>Ibid

<sup>11</sup>Five Laws of Library Science, (2023)

<sup>12</sup>Ibid



- save his time but also his toil for getting information from the library of which he or she is a subscriber.
- e. The fifth law of library science “the library is a growing organism”<sup>13</sup> means updation and modernization of library and again the researchers have to say that why a reader would be deprived from using the updated, modernized and rich library.
16. Apart from the above, recommendations of Michael Gorman (a British-born librarian and former president of the American Library Association) and Walt Crawford in 1995,<sup>14</sup> are noteworthy in this regard-
    - a. Libraries serve humanity.
    - b. Respect all forms by which knowledge is communicated.
    - c. Use technology intelligently to enhance service.
    - d. Protect free access to knowledge.
    - e. Honor the past and create the future.
  17. In 2004, librarian Alireza Noruzi recommended applying Ranganathan’s laws to the Web in his paper, “Application of Ranganathan’s Laws to the Web” recommended the same laws for the information on web.
  18. In 2008, librarian Carol Simpson recommended Ranganathan’s law for media contents due to media richness.
  19. The American Library Association affirms that all libraries are forums for information and ideas, and that some of the following basic guiding policies are remarkable. These principles are very much relevant in context of researcher’s view.
    - a. Books and other library resources should be provided for the interest, information, and enlightenment of all people of the community the library serves. Materials should not be excluded because of the origin, background, or views of those contributing to their creation.<sup>15</sup>
    - b. Libraries should cooperate with all persons and groups concerned

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<sup>13</sup>Ibid

<sup>14</sup>Reordering Ranganathan: Impact of the Changing Research and Learning Environments on Library Services,(2023)

<sup>15</sup>Collection Development Policy of Taylor Public Library, (2023)



with resisting abridgment of free expression and free access to ideas.<sup>16</sup>

- c. A person's right to use a library should not be denied or abridged because of origin, age, background, or views.<sup>17</sup>
- d. Libraries which make exhibit spaces and meeting rooms available to the public they serve should make such facilities available on an equitable basis, regardless of the beliefs or affiliations of individuals or groups requesting their use.<sup>18</sup>

Hence, it's a time to introduce 'One Nation, One Library Card'.

## 5. Modalities

1. Public access to university libraries must be granted to all irrespective of their age, place of birth, academic background and even nationality.
2. Entry must be through unique Identity card like Aadhar, PAN etc. that must have full details of the reader so as to trace in case of any issue.
3. One open portal under state machinery must be there for registration for the same that may include a reasonable subscription fee for accessing libraries throughout the nation.
4. 'One nation one Reader's or Library Card' would have to introduce under the spirit of five laws of library system.
5. For safety reasons, book loan facility must be regulated or restricted but reading at Library must be open for all who are having the registration as well as Unique ID card issued for the same.
6. Book lending may be allowed on submission of security or on deposition of the full price of the latest edition of the book.
7. On the same online platform, the information of library resources can be uploaded and displayed so as to give an idea of the availability of book as required by the reader.
8. Intelligent system of modern technology should be introduced in the library system so as to make them smarter.

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<sup>16</sup>VLA News - August 2012, (2023)

<sup>17</sup>Ibid

<sup>18</sup>Ibid





9. Library timings must be same for the libraries throughout the nation. This will be helpful for managing library resources and their utilization.
10. Yearly renewal policy of this unique card may be made mandatory so as to know the status of the reader.
11. Separate sitting area may be marked for the readers of outside institution and may be allowed to its internal readers in case of vacancy.
12. Entry and exit can be managed by the biometric punch or by entering the unique code of the library card issued under this scheme.
13. UGC and other regulatory authorities like Bar Council of India, Medical Council of India etc. may declare this 'One Nation, One Library Card' policy mandatory for the institutions for getting recognition.

## **Conclusion**

This step may cause some challenges like infrastructural arrangement, additional staff for maintaining the library administration, specific software, registration of all libraries on web portal developed for this 'One Nation, One Library Card' facility with the full description of library resources and some others. But it is not a mammoth task and can be developed in a short period. Government machinery can provide some financial support for the same so as to lessen the burden of institutions. This may be done by sharing revenue generated through registrations for 'One Nation, One Library Card'. Hence the time has to come to implement this policy of 'One Nation, One Library Card'.