

A Critical Study of Public Library Legislation of North East States of India

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Abstract

An attempt is made in the paper to study different aspects on the public library development and need of library legislation in the states covering the challenges and opportunities on the library legislation in all the states of North East India. Out of 8 states of North East India, 3 states have enacted the library legislation i.e., Arunachal Pradesh, Mizoram and Manipur. The study attempts to make a comparative analysis of Public Libraries Legislation enacted in the states of the NE India. The present work is based on data collected from primary and secondary sources. Literature searches have been done covering different sources like journals, books, proceedings, web sources and other relevant publications. After proper analysis, this paper explores that although three states of North East India have already enacted the Public Library Legislation after a long journey of struggle, their implementation is a neglecting part till present. Library Associations like Manipur Library Association (MALA) and Mizoram Library Association (MLA) are playing significant role in the enactment of Public Library Legislation in Manipur and Mizoram respectively. Assam and Tripura state have taken initiatives for enactment of the Public Library Legislation but the remaining states have not made any such type of effort.

Keywords: Public Library, Library Legislation, Library Association, North East India, MALA, MLA

Introduction

Public library can be considered as the mirror of the development of human civilization. The concept of public library has been modifying positively with the passage of time. It is the demand of time on public library system to improve its identity and functional ability within some laws and regulations so that the status and glory of public library will move consistently upward.

Library legislation is widely recognized as a helpful means for the establishment and development of public libraries and the provision of adequate library services to all sections of people of a country. According to Oxford Learner's Dictionary, legislation means a law or a set of laws passed by a government body.¹

'The library legislation guarantees establishment, development and maintenance of libraries. The provision of free public library services naturally involves the provision of adequate funds for rendering services. Only the legislation can empower the appropriate authorities to provide the services and ensure adequate financial support and efficient administration according to a national standard'².

'A number of countries have promulgated Public Library Legislation (PLL) according to their requirements. The USA is the first country to introduce a system of free public library in 1848 through public library legislation. Public library legislation had been promulgated in United Kingdom in 1850. Subsequently, Japan became the first country in Asia to enact library legislation in 1899 and now most of the developed and some developing countries have well established public library legislation'³.

UNESCO has been laying great emphasis on the development of public libraries as institutions contributing to the progress and advancement of the society in its Public Library Manifesto. It has been encouraging its member countries to enact library legislation as a necessary and effective means of placing the development of public libraries on a stable organizational and financial footing. According to IFLA-UNESCO Public Library Manifesto 2022, 'The public library is the responsibility of local and national authorities. It must be supported by specific and updated legislation aligned to international treaties and agreements. It must be financed by national and local governments. It has also been an essential component of any long-term strategy for culture, information provision, literacy and education.'⁴

As a forwarding step on UNESCO's continuing program to promote public library development throughout the world, the seminar on the development of public libraries in Asia, held in Delhi, 6-26 October, 1955 prepare a final report by Frank M. Gardner, seminar director suggest that '...Overall control and co-ordination of development, to provide for a permanent and progressive national public library service, can be obtained only by legislation....'⁵. Again, UNESCO in IFLA-UNESCO Public Library Manifesto 2022 suggests that 'to ensure nationwide library coordination and cooperation, legislation and strategic plans must also define and promote a national library network based on agreed standard of service.'⁶

India is one of the oldest civilizations in the world with a kaleidoscopic variety and rich cultural heritage⁷. The country is divided into six zones based upon climatic, geographic and cultural features namely - Central Zone, East Zone, North Zone, North East Zone, South Zone and Western Zone. Each zone is comprised of certain number of states and Union Territories. All these zones include 28 states and 8 Union Territories of India⁸. North East Zone comprises of

eight states - Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Sikkim and Tripura.

Among 28 states and 8 Union Territories of India, 19 states and Union Territories have enacted library legislation. The credit of enacting a Library Act for the first time in India goes to Kolhapur Princely State (present Maharashtra) which was enacted in 1945 during British rule. Madras Public Libraries Act was the first public libraries Act enacted in India in 24th March, 1948 among the full-fledged states after the independence.

Objectives

The main objectives of the study are -

- i. to study the scenario of enactment of public library legislation in the states of North East India.
- ii. to make a comparative study of the structure of public library legislations enacted in the states of North East India.

Methodology

The study is based on the data collected from both primary and secondary sources. Data have been collected through prescribed questionnaire from the Directorate/Chief librarian of the respective state library system of N E India states. Besides, literature search has been done on different sources like journals, books, proceedings, web sources and other relevant publications. Data collected from these sources have been processed, analyzed and presented in tables and figures in the right manner.

Public Library System in the States of North East India: a Brief

Description

All the North East states of India have a long developmental journey of public library system. Of course, due to various constraints prevailing in the regions like communication, geographical location, hilly areas, comparatively less transport facilities, etc. are the some of the major causes of lacking behind the public library system in these states. The states are, though in a limited way, having developed public library system and people are availing benefits of the public library establishments.

The brief note is presented here on initiation of public library system in different states of the area.

Assam

Assam is the gateway for North East India. During the period of British Rule, a small library was established by Assam government in 1903 at Shillong in a rented house basically serving the government officials. A large number of collected materials scattering all over Assam were kept in that library. The concept of library in modern period of Assam has started in 1903 at Shillong. A remarkable step of especially public library system in the state is the formation of Assam Library Association, 1938 with great initiative by Late Kumudeswar Borthakur, a retired school teacher and a renowned figure in the growth and development of public library services of Assam with some of his associates. This association, from its formation till today

is trying for improving the library system by adopting and executing number of professional agenda at different levels and different locations in the state.

At present, Public Library system in Assam is with the Department of Culture. Directorate of Library Services, Assam was created in 1984 under the jurisdiction of Education Department at the beginning and later shifted to Department of Culture. The public library system in Assam spread over to all the districts of the state where in State Central library is at the top of the organization and rural library is at the bottom.

Arunachal Pradesh

The state Arunachal Pradesh has become a state on 20th February, 1987 from erstwhile North East Frontier Agency (NEFA) by the Act of Government of India. The public library system in Arunachal Pradesh was first introduced in the year 1956 by setting up one district library at Pashighat. During 1960-62, two more district libraries were opened at Daporijo and Roying. The Changlang district library was opened in 1966. The Tawang and Seppa district libraries were established in 1967-68. In 1978 the Secretariat Library was converted into the State Central Library when the capital of Arunachal Pradesh was shifted to Itanagar from Shillong. The Government took up the scheme for developing libraries in the State during the Seventh Five Year Plan of Government of India. In its effort the concerned Department set up a number of libraries at block and circle level at different places in the State⁹. The Mobile Library service was also introduced in the capital city of Arunachal Pradesh through automobile van. 'The state's first roadside library Self-help Library was established in August 30, 2020 by the social activist Ngurang Meena'¹⁰.

Manipur

Manipur was originally a Princely State before independence and continued till October, 1949 after which this princely state had become a state of India by an Act of the Govt of India. 'The very idea of the library movement in this part of the country was conceived in the year 1927 with the establishment of Manipur Club, mainly to provide public library service by Dr. H. Atulchandra Singh, a Philanthropist, a great social reformer, indeed a multifaceted person of the 20th Century'.¹¹ The first Public Library in Manipur was the Imphal Public Library founded as a subscription library in 1938, with a plot land allotted by Darbar in Manipur and has been functioning till 1960 satisfactorily.¹² Manipur Public Library was privately established in 1950.¹³ The initiative of the Government towards the development of public library in Manipur came bit late in the state with the establishment of District Library and Children Library-cum-Museum in 1958.¹⁴ The Manipur Library Association (MALA) was established in 1987 and was very active from its inception. It has created library awareness in the entire state. The Manipur Library Association (MALA) is continuing in taking the leading role in library movement in the state.

Meghalaya

Meghalaya is a state exclusively inhabited by the hill people consisted of mainly Khasi, Jaintia and Garo people with its capital at Shillong. The Government of Meghalaya was privileged to get the State Central Library originally for entire Assam once the state had got its statehood in

1972. In Raja Rammohun Library Foundation website in Public Library Scenario in India about Meghalaya it explains as:

“The Government of Meghalaya was privileged to get State Central Library of erstwhile Assam in its share, because of its location at Shillong. The North Eastern Council was formed in 1972 with an objective of overall development of the region. It constituted an Advisory Committee on Libraries for suggesting the nature of the library services needed for the region”.¹⁵

Currently Meghalaya has 11 districts with three hill divisions of which only 7 districts having the district libraries along with the State Central Library, Shillong .¹⁶ Meghalaya is yet to have library legislation for the state, though pressure is mounting to the state government from different corners. Presently, library services of the state are under the Directorate of Art and Culture, Government of Meghalaya with State Central Library is at the top of the organizational structure located at Shillong.

Mizoram

Mizoram is one of the beautiful hilly states of North East India with eternal varieties of landscape and rich granary of flora and fauna. The Mizos came in contact with civilization only during 20th century and there is nothing to highlight development of library services before Independence of India.¹⁷ Public library was never known in Mizoram until establishment of the first Public Library at Aizawl, the capital, as sub-divisional Library in the year 1969 .¹⁸ In 1974, The Mizoram State Library was established along with two district libraries at Lunglei and Sahia districts respectively. Establishment of two Sub-Divisional Libraries at Kolasib in 1980 and at Champhai in 1983 was also the emergent sign of the public library system of Mizoram. Mizoram Library association, since its inception (23rd October, 1987), has been actively engaged to achieve its aim and objectives, particularly for the promotion and the development of library service in the state .¹⁹ The Young Mizo Association (YMA) was created in 15th June 1935, which is a voluntary association working for overall development of the public library system of Mizoram from its beginning. YMA has established public libraries in every nook and corner of Mizoram including urban and rural areas.²⁰ Besides YMA, the government has also been assisting these libraries by supplying books and other infrastructural requirements.

Nagaland

The state of Nagaland comprises of the former Naga Hills District of Assam and the Tuensang Frontier Division of the North East Frontier Agency (during British rule).²¹ Its capital is Kohima. The increasing importance of a public library is made clear by the fact that there is no well-equipped, well-organized public library in the state and also within the educational institutions to contribute for disseminating knowledge of the universe through informal education .²² It was not until 1975-76 that the modern concept of library services began when the State Government realized the need of setting up of public library services for the common people, resulting in the setting up of a State Central library at Kohima in 1981. In the same year, the State Government took a decision under which provision was to register libraries under the Department of Art and Culture. Provision was also made to give assistance to voluntary organizations and trusts for running public library service, which prompted keen

interest in various in various organizations and trusts for running public library services, which prompted keen interest in various organizations and eight village libraries were registered during the same year i.e. 1975-1976.²³ As per the records of the Department of Art and Culture , every district headquarters of Nagaland , except Noklak, has a government-run District Library taking the total to 12, including the State Library Kohima .²⁴ Efforts are yet to be made for Library Legislation in the State.

Sikkim

Sikkim was a traditionally governed by monarchies and kings who literally enjoyed the divine rights till about a decade and half ago .²⁵The capital of the Sikkim is Gangtok. Sikkim consists of four districts and each district has its own library. These libraries are controlled by Cultural Department of Government of Sikkim.²⁶ The name of the fours District Libraries are East Sikkim Community Centre Library, South Sikkim District Library, North Sikkim District Library and West Sikkim Library.²⁷ East Sikkim Community Centre Library is the oldest public library of Sikkim in Gangtok. The State Central Library was established in the year 1969 under the Cultural Affairs and Heritage Department, Government of Sikkim .²⁸ The scenario of the library in the state has changed significantly in the last couple of years, where Sub-Divisional libraries are being set up at the four Sub-Divisional offices with one librarian in each: Chungthang in North district, Pakyong in east district, Rabongla in South district, Soreng in West district.²⁹In 2002-03, a new Children's Library came up in State Central Library, Gangtok. But the government has not taken any initiative for the enactment of library legislation in the state

Tripura

Tripura was a Princely State before its accession to the independent India as a Union Territory on 15th October, 1949. It achieved statehood in 1972. Maharaja Birchandra Manikya established a library at Comilla (now in Bangladesh) which was then within his territorial jurisdiction and also a very culturally enlightened place and it was popularly known as Place Library .³⁰ Earlier Place Library is known as the Birchandra Public Library and it is known as Birchandra State Central Library which is the first public library of Tripura. This library is taken over by the Government of Tripura in 1953.³¹ The King Radha Krishna Manikya (1896-1909 A.D.) constructed the Ujjayanta Palace Library in 1900 A.D. The establishment of Palace Library was the land mark of the library movement of Tripura, though the library was closed to the common people.³² The public libraries are controlled by the Department of Higher Education. No effort is visible for library legislation in the state.

To extend the library services all over the India in cooperation with State Government and Union Territory and organistons working in the library field Government of India established the Raja Rammohun Roy Library Foundation (RRRLF) in 1972. It is central autonomous organization established and fully financed by the Ministry of Culture, Government of India. It is the nodal agency of the Government of India to support public library services and systems and to promote public library movement in the country.³³ Table 1 is reflecting the present position of public library system in the eight states of North East India as found in RRRLF website and State Government (Govt.) websites respectively. We have found some differences

in the number of libraries in each category, perhaps, because of the information received by the specific organization/ department in different sources.

Besides, in Table 2 the controlling agency of respective states of the region along with the State Government Department under which the public libraries belong are presented.

Brief history of Public Library Acts of the three States of NE India

Library Legislation is an essential need for the provision of sound, integrated and systematic development of a public library network in a region³⁴. In North East India, as mentioned, three states, namely Manipur, Mizoram and Arunachal Pradesh have enacted library legislation in 1988, 1993 and 2009 respectively. In Figure1 the Location Map shows the Library Act enactment states with other North Eastern states of India. A brief discussion has been made here on these three Acts with their respective provisions made for the growth and development of public library system in the mentioned states along with their basic similarities and differences.

Manipur Public Libraries Act, 1988

The library movement in Manipur started by Dr. H. Atul Chandra Singh, a Philanthropist, a great social reformer, indeed a multifaceted person of the 20th century by establishing Manipur Club on April 17, 1927 with provision of library facilities. He was a real pioneer of the public library movement in the state. He was also very much inspired by the nature of library movement launched in Bengal in 1925 by the Bengal Library Association headed by Vishwakavi Rabindranath Tagore as the President. The Manipur Club was renamed as Manipur Club Library on 1st January, 1931. The name of the library has again changed to Juvabati Memorial Library on April 19, 1933. The initiative of the government towards the development of public library in the state came a bit late with the establishment of District Library and Children Library-cum-Museum in 1958. The overall affairs of the public library matters were monitored by the Department of Art and Culture. The Raja Rammohun Roy Library Foundation (RRRLF), Kolkata has been playing a vital role in the process of development and promotion of library movement in the state as done in other parts of the country. On 24th May, 1987, the Manipur Library Association (MALA) was established and the library movement in Manipur was started its development journey swiftly. As the library movement has speedily been progressed, the need to have a sound legislation has also been felt for an effective public library system through this movement in Manipur. Shri Y. Erabot Singh, the Education Minister of the State took initiative on behalf of MALA about moving of a Private Member's Resolution on the Manipur Public Libraries Bill on 26th July, 1988 on the floor of the House. As a member of the Business Advisory Committee of the Assembly, Dr. M. Narar Singh, MLA also tried his level best to put up the Bill in the agenda list of the House for discussion. The Bill was passed on 1st August, 1988 by the Assembly as Manipur Bill No.14, 1998. There were many controversies over the Bill when the same was sent to the President of India for necessary approval which was duly corrected. With due effort of Manipur Library Association (MALA), the Bill was given assent by the then President of India, Dr. Sankar Dayal Sharma, on 9th June, 1993.

Manipur Library Association (MALA), as such has been very much instrumental in the state towards having a Public Libraries Act. The state thus could become the sixth state in the country after West Bengal having such Act. The same has partially been started its implementation since 1st October, 2002 while Dr. M. Nara Singh was the Minister of Art and Culture of the state. The participation of the voluntary organizations of the state in the development of the library is of great significance too.

Mizoram Public Libraries Act, 1993

Mizoram is the tenth state of India having Library Legislation. The State Legislative Assembly enacted Mizoram Public Libraries Bill in 1993, which provides establishment of State, District, Sub-Divisional and Village Libraries. Until 1988, library service of Mizoram was overseen under the Director of Education, but from 1989, it is under the Department of Art and Culture. The first Public Library in Mizoram was established in 1969 at Aizawl which was known as 'Aijal District Library'. The State Library of Mizoram was established in 1974.

Mizoram Library Association (MLA) has been working very hard for the improvement and development of library services in the state. Mizoram Library Association (MLA) was formed on 23rd October, 1987. The association has been enthusiastically engaging for the promotion and development of library services in the state.

The Mizoram Public Library Bill was drafted in 1980 and submitted to the government for legislation, but it was not introduced in the Assembly due to various reasons and the same draft was submitted again in 1988 which had been again returned many times by the Law Department for necessary corrections. With the initiative taken by Dr. H. Thansang, the former Education Minister, the Bill was introduced in Mizoram Legislative Assembly again in 1992, which was referred to the Select Committee. After the correction of the Bill by the Select Committee, it was laid on the table of the Assembly in 1993 by the Education Minister and Assembly approved the Bill as 'The Mizoram Public Library Legislation, 1993' on 6th January, 1993 which received the assent of the government on 5th March, 1993.

Arunachal Pradesh Public Libraries Act, 2009

The library service was introduced in Arunachal Pradesh since 1950's. During the 7th Five Year Plan period, the state government took up the scheme of developing libraries in the state and set up a number of libraries at block and circle levels. The State Central Library of Arunachal Pradesh was established in 1956 in its capital city Itanagar. The public Libraries of Arunachal Pradesh are under the Directorate of Public Libraries, Government of Arunachal Pradesh. Arunachal Pradesh Legislative Assembly passed the Arunachal Pradesh Public Libraries Act in 2009. The Act received the assent of the Governor on 31st August 2009 and came into existence in its real sense.

Implementation of the Acts

Regarding the implementation of the acts, all the three states have gone through different experiences. By conducting a pilot survey with the authorities of the respective departments of the states it is identified that Arunachal Pradesh has implemented the Public Libraries Act fully, i.e., 100%, while Mizoram executed the Library Act less than 40%. Mizoram has attained an

important development with the enactment of library legislation. Manipur has not provided any data regarding the implementation of the library act. But the Manipur has partially been started its implementation since 1st October, 2002, while Dr. M. Nara Singh was the minister of Art and Culture of the state. However, implementation of the act in its true spirit is the need of the hour.³⁵ Manipur has failed to bring any change even after passing the Library Act in the state.³⁶

The Library Acts in the three states of North East India: A Comparative study

The Library Acts of the States

Manipur Libraries Act, 1988

Manipur Public Libraries Act has seven chapters. Chapter-1 Preliminary, is consisted of 2 sub-clauses i.e., short title, extent and commencement and definition. Chapter-2 is heading as the State Library Committee and it describes about its constitution and composition of the State Library Committee and its functions, terms of office of the certain members, filling up casual vacancies, meetings of the committee, act and control of the State Library Committee by the state government into 6 different sub-clauses. Chapter-3 is captioned as the Department of Public Libraries and it has only 1 sub-clause i.e., constitution of the Department of Public Libraries and appointment of the Director and his duties. Chapter-4 is tagged as the district library authorities and under this heading, 11 sub-clauses are discussed. Finance and Account head is discussed in chapter-5. This chapter has 2 sub-clauses, library fund and maintenance of accounts. Chapter-6 is naming reports, returns and inspection which have 2 sub-clauses. Miscellaneous part is discussed in chapter-7 in sub-clauses like power to make rules, power to remove difficulties. According to the Act, the organizational structure of the library services is presented in Fig.2. This Act was drafted mainly on the basis of Madras and West Bengal Public Libraries Acts of 1948 and 1979 respectively.³⁷

Mizoram Public Libraries Act, 1993

Mizoram Public Libraries Act has eight chapters. First chapter has 2 sub-clauses, short title, extent and commencement; and Definition. Chapter-2 is titled as the State Library Authority and the State Library Council, in which it has described about the constitution of State Library Council, terms of office of the State Library Council validity, vacancy, meeting and duties of the council, etc. Chapter-3 is heading as Department of Public Libraries where constitution of public libraries, appointment of officer and supporting staff and condition of absorption of existing staff are discussed in different sub-clauses. Chapter-4 is titled as categories of public libraries. In this chapter, different categories of public libraries of the state are discussed. The Act categories the public libraries into 4 categories i.e., State Library, District Library, Sub-Divisional Library and Village Library. Chapter-5 is labeled as Grant-in-Aid to Libraries where financial assistance to recognized village libraries is discussed. Chapter-6 is captioned finance and accounts head where the Act explains about the budget provision of the library under the clause 18. Miscellaneous provisions are discussed in the chapter-7 where the Act discussed about printed books of every kind to be delivered to State Library state in clause 19. The act also explains about State Library Association under the same chapter. In Chapter-8 the state

library services and power to make rules is discussed.³⁸ In Fig.3, the organizational pattern of Act Mizoram Public Library services is shown according to the Act.

Arunachal Pradesh Public Libraries Act, 2009

Arunachal Pradesh Public Libraries Act has not discussed under any chapter. The whole Act is explained with 24 numbers of clauses. First clause is short title, extent and commencement followed by definition in the second clause. In clause 3, the Act has discussed about the establishment of Library services, in clause 4, constitution of Library Planning Committee and in clause 5 it discusses about the terms of Office of the Committee. Clause 6 and 7 explain about the membership of the committee and vacancies in the membership of the committee respectively. The meeting of the committee and function of the committee are well explained in clause 8 and 9. Clause 10 discusses about the constitution of Public Libraries whereas the appointment of officers and staff are discussed in clause 11. In clause 12, the Act explains about the conditions for absorption for existing staff and clause 13 discusses in detailed about categories of public libraries.

There are eight types of public libraries in Arunachal Pradesh i.e., State Central Library, District Library, Sub-Divisional Library, Block Library, Circle Library, Branch Library, Mobile Library and Children Library. Clause 14 talks about the State Library, its post and designation, functions and different wings. Clause 15 analyses about the District Library, its functions, District Library Planning Committee and its various sections. Clause 16, 17 and 18 discuss about the Sub-Divisional Library, Block Library and Circle Library respectively. Public Library Finance is discussed in clause 19 where the Act directed that the government shall provide the necessary fund in their budget of Public Libraries in the state. In clause 20, Public Library Development Fund is discussed, where the Act defined its importance for the modernization and development of public libraries in the state. In clause 21, the Act explains about the State Library Association and in clause 22 powers to make rules is explained. In 23 clause, the Act discusses about the 'laying of rules before Legislative Assembly'. In clause 24, the Act argued about the power to remove difficulties section. In Fig.4 the organizational pattern of the library services in Arunachal Pradesh is presented.

Comparative Study of the Acts

If there make a comparative analysis among all these three Acts in North East India, the analysis has shown some differences as well as similarities. Following are some of the salient points which make it clear -

i. Preliminary section: All the three Acts so far enacted in North East India have not any clear aim and objectives. But all the three Acts have a distinct preamble which may also define the aim and objectives of the Acts. Both Mizoram and Arunachal Pradesh Public Libraries Acts include the establishment, maintenance and development terms in their preambles, but Manipur Public Libraries Act includes only the establishment and maintenance word whereas the development word is excluded by the Act. Moreover, the textual appearance of short title, extent and commencement chapter are similar in all the three Acts.

ii. Delivered of printed books to State Library: According to the part III Delivery of Books in the Press and Registration of Books Act, 1867 "Printed copies of the whole of every book which shall be printed in [India] together with all maps, prints or other engravings belonging

thereto, finished and coloured in the same manner as the best copies of the same, shall, notwithstanding any agreement (if the book published) between the printer and publisher thereof, be delivered by the printer at such place and to such officer as the State Government shall, by notification in the official Gazette, from time to time direct and free of expenses to the Government....”.

Only Mizoram Public Libraries Act discusses about delivery of printed books to State Library in chapter VII. In clause 19, it is mentioned that two copies of the printed books of every kind together with all charts or maps, print or engraving belonging thereto shall be delivered to the State Library, on and from the commencement of the Act .³⁹ Other two Acts remain silent about any scope of delivery of printed book to state library. Moreover, Manipur Public Libraries Act, Mizoram Public Libraries Act and Arunachal Pradesh Public Libraries Act have not made any provision of inclusion of The Delivery of Books and Newspapers (Public Libraries) Act, 1954. According to the Act, the publisher of every book published in the territories of India to which that Act extends should notwithstanding any agreement to the contrary, deliver at his own expense a copy of the book to the National Library at Calcutta and one such copy to each of the other three public libraries (Connemara Public Library, Chennai, Delhi Public Library, Delhi and The Central Library, Mumbai.) within the thirty days from the date of its publication.

iii. Report, return and inspections: Manipur Public Libraries Act discusses about the reports, returns and inspection of the public library system of the state in chapter VI. In clause 23, it is mentioned that every Local Library Authority and every person in-charge of Public Library shall submit the report along with returns of public libraries of the state to the Director or any person authorised by him. Moreover, according to clause 24 in the Act the director or any authorised person has the power to inspect of public libraries for the purpose of satisfying the rules and laws set by the Act. Mizoram Public Libraries Act and Arunachal Pradesh Public Libraries Act have not included the reports, returns and inspection chapter.

iv. Definition of Public Library: All the three Acts give different definitions about the public library. Arunachal Pradesh Public Libraries Act defines public library as a library which permits members of the public to use it for reference or borrowing reading materials with or without charging nominal fee, while Manipur Public Libraries Act defines public library in four ways i.e., a library established or maintained by a District Library Authority, established or maintained by State Government, established and maintained by Local Body or Co-Operative Society and eligible for aid and receiving aid from state government. Again, Mizoram Public Libraries Act defines public library in different ways. According to this Act, the library will serve the general public and which includes State, District, Sub-Divisional and Village Libraries.

v. State Library Committee: The definition of State Library Committee is different among the three Acts. Arunachal Pradesh Public Libraries Act defines the State Library Committee as Library Planning Committee, whereas Mizoram Public Libraries Act defines it as State Library Authority and the State Library Council. But the Manipur Public Libraries Act defines it as State Library Committee All the three Acts thoroughly discuss about the State Library Committee. Manipur Public Libraries Act, it suggests that the State Library Committee shall consist of 8 members where the Minister in-charge of Education is the Chairman, again Mizoram Public Libraries Act suggests that the committee should have 12 members where

Minister of Education and Human Resources is the Chairman. Arunachal Pradesh Public Libraries Act recommended that the committee should have 11 members.

vi. Categories of Public Library: Arunachal Pradesh Public Library Act as well as Mizoram Public Libraries Acts have been divided the Public Libraries in different categories. But Manipur Public Libraries Act has not any such type of provision. Arunachal Pradesh Act defines the Public Libraries into State Central Library, District Library, Sub-Divisional Library, Block Library, Circle Library, Branch Library, Mobile Library and Children Library. On the other hand, Mizoram Public Libraries Act categorizes Public Libraries into State Library, District Library, Sub-Divisional Library and Village Library. Both the Acts said that there shall be a State Central Library located in the capital of the State, a District Library in every District Headquarters of the State, a Sub-Divisional library in each sub-divisional headquarters. Mizoram Public Libraries Act also argued that there should be recognized Village Libraries in such villages as may be found and considered deserving and suitable by the Government from time to time. In Fig.5 different categories of libraries are shown according to the Acts.

vii. Finance: The Public Libraries Act should spell out financial sources to ensure a regular flow of funds and their deployment.⁴⁰ Again, the activities and accounts of the Public Library System shall be open to public inspection, supervision and as per official audit rules.⁴¹ All the three Acts have discussed it under Finance and Accounts Head thoroughly. Arunachal Pradesh Public Library Act states that there shall be a provision of necessary fund in the annual budget of Public Libraries in the state for promoting the Public Library service in the State. In clause 20, the Act discussed about the Public Library Development Fund for modernization and development of Public Libraries in the state. Any contribution or special grant from Finance Commission, from the Central Government for modernization and development of Public Libraries shall consist of the Public Library Development Fund. Mizoram Public Libraries Act has discussed this Finance and Account head in chapter VI. According to the Act, the state government budget is the major source for the public libraries in Mizoram. Moreover, the Act has the provision for consolidated fund as well matching fund from Raja Rammohun Roy Library Foundation for public library fund.⁴² In Manipur Public Libraries Act, Finance and Accounts head is discussed in chapter V. The Act discusses the source of fund from the contributions, gifts and income from endowments made to the District Library Authority, special grant from state government to libraries and social education and other amounts collected by the District Library Authority. Fig.6 represents different financial sources of public library system according to the three Acts.

viii. Remove of the difficulties: Manipur Public Libraries Act and Arunachal Pradesh Public Libraries Act make the provision of clause of power to remove difficulties. Mizoram Public Libraries Act has no such provision of discussion in the clause. In Manipur Public Libraries Act, it is discussed in chapter VII under miscellaneous head in sub-clause 26. It is discussed in clause 24 in Arunachal Pradesh Public Libraries Act. Both the Acts support that if any difficulty arises in giving effect to the provision of the Acts, the state government may by order make the provision to remove the difficulties.

ix. Local Library Authority: Manipur Public Libraries Act discusses about the local library authorities as the District Library Authorities under the chapter IV. The Act discusses about the constitution and incorporation, composition of the district library authority at the sub-clause

10 and 11. Terms of office of the members, filling up of casual vacancies, power and function of the district library authority all are discussed in the Act systematically. It is noticed that Manipur Public Libraries Act gives importance to the local library committee while the other two Acts i.e., Mizoram Public Libraries Act and Arunachal Pradesh Public Libraries Act are not making any discussion about local library committee.

Suggestions:

1. Once a library act is enacted by a state, it should be implemented for the growth and proper functioning of the library system. The three of NE India: Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur and Meghalaya where library act is enacted are not yet fully implemented by the state governments for which the benefit of acts are not availed by the user community in particular and public in general. It is urged upon the respective state government for implementing all the provisions of the library acts in respective states.

2. The acts are not clearly indicated the sources for generating income while expenditures are must for their implementations. Provisions are to be made for fund generation legally, though governments cannot escape their responsibilities for proper funding. If situation is conducive for charging library cess, provision is to be made accordingly in identifying the area(s) where it can be charged. Certainly, there cannot be common area(s) in each state but specific area(s) of the state can be considered for inclusion in charging the library cess.

3. The state library system be covered with a Directorate and spread over from top to bottom in proper organization set up. Of the three states, Mizoram and Manipur have no any Library Directorate and it needs to be considered seriously for developing the public library system of the states with library directorate at the top level of organization structure of the system.

4. A proper mechanism should be created by each state for suggesting measures to be adopted for the library acts to make it dynamic and user friendly with the passage of time. As time passes situation is changing in different forms. Once a library act is enacted, the provisions need to be updated as situation demands to suit them in the academic, social environments and they are to be amended accordingly.

5. All the three Acts should make amendment for inclusion of library related other Acts of India. Manipur and Arunachal Pradesh should clearly include the rules and regulation of The Press and Registration of Books Act, 1867 along with The Delivery of Books and Newspapers (Public Libraries) Act, 1954.

Conclusion

From the above discussion, it is observed that all the states of North East India have a long and very encouraging history of library development. In Indian Constitution under the seven schedules in twelfth entry of the State List the controlling or financial power public library service is conferred to state government. Therefore, the responsibility of enacting the public library acts fall under the respective state government.

Of late, in Assam, the Govt of Assam had constituted a committee for preparing a draft of library legislation, so also, in case of Tripura state. It is learnt that the proposed Acts have been submitted to the respective Governments, but yet to be enacted by the legislature. But

such efforts from the other state governments are not visible. There may be several reasons for delay of the enactment of the act in these states such as lack of spirit or interest of the policy makers and the administration, paucity of fund, backwardness and illiteracy of people, divergence in outlook, lack of interest of different political parties in power.⁴³ It is now right time to go for library legislation of each state not only in NE India but for the other states of the country where the act is yet to be implemented. So that proper library services can be extended to the mass and also to enhance the quality of living condition of the people at large. Public library is the people's university as UNESCO defined. In true sense a public library will be a people's university, when the environment is created in every geographical region by way of enacting library legislation with necessary provisions.

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