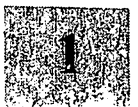


Tribute to Philosopher: Dr S R Ranganathan

Dr Shiyali Ramamrita Ranganathan, the man of legendary vision, a mathematician turned librarian launched an endless, tireless effort and eternal mission to establish new and fundamental concepts in the Library and Information Science. His most notable contributions to the field were his five laws of library science and the development of the first major analytic-synthetic classification system, the colon classification. Ranganathan was not only a veteran speaker but also a prolific writer. He devoted his full life for the development of libraries and library profession in India. He is considered as the father of library science, documentation, and information science in India and is widely known throughout the rest of the world for his fundamental thinking in the field. His birthday is observed every year as the Librarians' Day in India.

Childhood and Education

Dr. S.R. Ranganathan, was born in Shiyali in Tanjavor District of Tamil Nadu on 9th August 1892. He was the first child of Ramamrita Ayyar and Seethalakshmi. Ranganathan's education was initiated on Vijayadasami day in October, 1897. Ranganathan attended the S.M. Hindu High School at Shiyali and Passed Matriculation examination with a First Class in 1908/1909. He joined the junior intermediate class at the Madras Christian College in March 1909. He passed B.A. with a first class in March/ April 1913. In June, same year, he joined the M.A class in Mathematics. He also took a course in teaching technique and gained LT degree from teachers' college.



Ranganathan as a Teacher

In 1917, Ranganathan was appointed to the Subordinate Education Service and worked as assistant Lecturer in Government College in Mangalore and Coimbatore between 1917 and 1921. In July 1921, he joined the Presidency College, Madras as Assistant Professor of Mathematics. At Mangalore and Coimbatore, he taught Physics and Mathematics and at the Presidency College, he taught Algebra, Trigonometry and Statistics. He was a follower of the individual method of teaching putting discussion method into active use. The classes used to be lively, learning-active, and teaching- purposive. He would interpose his teaching with many anecdotes and examples from life which would keep his students engaged and attentive. In 1962, he founded DRTC and under Dr. Ranganathan, it was like a Gurukul. On many occasions Dr. Ranganathan called students at his house for discussions, he himself used to come to DRTC even though with his dereriorating health. He would involve all of the students in the 'question answer method' of teaching in order to prepare their minds to receive new knowledge. If a solution was given, he would pose a problem to a student and watch the psychological struggle and attitude of other students towards the same.

Stepping into the Library World

In January 1924, he appointed as the first librarian of Madras University. Ranganathan left to England for study-cum-observation tour in September 1924 and returned in July 1925. In England, he came in close contact with W.C. Berwick Sayers, Chief Librarian of Croydon Public Library, London. Under his guidance, he noticed that how the libraries act as community reading centres. He also found how the libraries rendered service to various classes of the society: to children, to the working class and to women, besides other groups. This made a lasting impression on his mind; thus he discovered a social mission for the library profession.

While in England, Dr. S.R. Ranganathan saw that the Dewey Decimal Classification (DDC) was the most popular system in use. His analytical mind quickly discovered its fundamental deficiency and its inability to express all the aspects of a specific subject of a document. He also thought that a classification system should allow for future subjects to be combined in unexpected or unplanned ways. Shortly he began work on his classification scheme i.e. the Colon Classification (CC). Later he devised the technique of chain indexing for deriving subject index entries.

After returning to Madras, Ranganathan began a mission for librarianship and reorganize the University Library. His first concern was to attract more readers to the library and provide facilities to them. He used mass media to make the library hub of activity. He had applied the Five Laws of Library Science, the Colon Classification, The Classified Catalogue Code and Principles of Library Management in his Library. Also active reference service began to blossom. He introduced open shelved system and provided open access. He formed the Madras Library Association, which became the living symbol of the library movement. A school of library science was also initiated in 1929, first under the auspices of the Madras Library Association and later taken over by Madras University. Later in 1957, during centenary celebrations of the University, he donated his life's savings of one lakh rupees to the University to endow a chair known as Sarada Ranganathan Professorship in Library Science.

In 1945, he received an invitation to develop the library system of Banaras Hindu University, by the then Vice-Chancellor Prof S Radhakrishnan. He reorganized the entire collection single-handedly, classified and catalogued about 100,000 books. He also conducted the Diploma Course in Library science during the same period. In 1947, he moved over to Delhi University for teaching and research in library Science. He initiated to start courses in Bachelor of Library Science and

master of Library Science between 1947 and 1950. While he was in Delhi, he drafted a comprehensive 30 year plan for development of library system for India as a whole.

Ranganathan was also elected the President of the Indian Library Association (ILA). He was the Chairman of the Classification Research Group of the International Federation for Documentation (FID) between 1950-62. During this period, he promoted the Madras Public Library Act and initiated the classification Research Group at London. He was the chairman of the Documentation Committee of Indian Standards Institution till 1967. He was acting as an adviser at the INSDOC, the Planning Commission, and the University Grants Commission.

Notable Honours and Awards:

- In 1935, the Indian government bestowed on him the honorific title Rao Sahib.
- In 1948, he received an honorary doctorate of literature from University of Delhi
- In 1957, he was honored with the public service award Padmashri.
- In 1964, he received an honorary doctorate of literature from the University of Pittsburgh.
- In 1965, he was made a national research professor by the Indian government.
- In 1970,, he received the Margaret Mann Citation in Cataloging and Classification of American Library Association (ALA)
- In 1976, after his death, the FID, established the Ranganathan award in his memory.

The certificate of merit is awarded biennially for a recent outstanding contribution in the field of Classification.

- In August 1992, the Indian post office issued postage stamp on his birth centenary.

Selected Works by Dr. Ranganathan:

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- The Five Laws of Library Science (1931)
- Colon Classification (1933)
- Library Administration (1935)
- Prolegomena to Library Science (1937)
- Suggestion for the organization of Libraries in India (1946)
- Classification and Communication (1951)
- Library Manual (1951)
- Philosophy of Library Classification (1951)
- Library Book Selection (1952)
- Classified Catalogue Code: with additional Rules for Dictionary Catalogue Code (1958)
- Reference Service (1961)
- Documentation and its Facets (1963)
- Ramanujan: the Man and Mathematician (1967)
- Documentation: Genesis and Development (1973)
- New Education and School Libraries (1973)

Dr Ranganathan concentrated his whole body, mind, and soul on the discipline of library science, and it was felt that he had embraced it as a path to spiritual perfection. He could be seen as an optimist who had great hopes for the country's future as well as the library profession in India. He is truly called as the "Father of Library Science in India".

(Source: A Tribute to Dr S R Ranganathan (2015) edited & published by Mission Director, National Mission on Libraries, India)