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# Role and Contribution of Shri Sayajirao Gayakwad Maharaj III in Public Libraries

**Dr. Ganesh Shankar Vidhate**

Associate Professor and Head,

Dept. of History,

Radhabai Kale Mahila Mahavidyalaya,

Ahmednagar. 414001.

Email: [rkmm.history1989@gmail.com](mailto:rkmm.history1989@gmail.com)

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## **Abstract:**

The contribution made by Maharaja Sayajirao Gayakwad-III of Baroda to modern public library movement in India is really remarkable. He was inspired by the progress of American public libraries during his visits to this country. He invited William Alanson Borden (1853-1931) to provide similar library services for his own people. Borden went to Baroda in 1910 and founded the first public library system in the world. A person Asa Don Dickinson from America also contribute a great to the Indian library edifice. They set the path for the progress of the Indian library movement. Many other American educator-librarians contributed toward this great cultural renaissance. The contribution made by Maharaja Sayajirao Gayakwad III towards library movement in India is significant and remarkable.

## **Introduction:**

Public libraries are necessary for the improvement for literacy, stimulate imagination and expand personal horizons. They also inform and empower citizens, enable access to a common cultural heritage and support education at all levels. With this Motto Maharaja Sayajirao Gayakwad took a great effort for the public

library system in India in 1910. He carefully devised a compulsory programme of Mass education in one district in 1893 and extended it to the entire state by 1907. He also made elementary education compulsory to all boys and girls in the state. He also realized that universal education required, a network of free public libraries, which would keep literacy alive, and enable men and women in rural areas to have access to the source of knowledge not hither to open to them.

## **Maharaja Sayaji Rao Gayakwad's view regarding education:**

Maharaja Sayajirao who was a famous educationalist, adopted progressive policies and strongly propagated the knowledge advocacy of the education for the people in Baroda state. He delivered a speech at Aligarh in 1901. He stated that Education is the basis of all reforms and is the only way of salvation from our present condition. Educationally our people are little better than beasts. Emphasizing the value of education, he said, "It is the general lack of education and intelligence which hampers us at every turn and has been our ruin. Once we can make education general we may hope for increased dexterity, an increased power of concentration, increased trustworthiness and quickness to discover new processes. We need these qualities in every class of Indian Society. Education in England has diffused a spirit of self-



reliance and a capacity for initiative; education in Germany aims at thorough knowledge, methodical application, and exact learning; but education in India has hitherto aimed only at providing a certain amount of food for thought without ever touching the mental capacity or character." The Maharaja said: "The first and the most important means of promoting our industries is to spread general education amongst the masses. Great and far-reaching changes might be made in the educational system of the country, and I am of the opinion that no ultimate solution of our problem will be reached until schools have been provided in every village, and education is taken to the very threshold of the people; until in fact education at least in its primary grades has been made free and compulsory throughout the land."

The Maharaja took initiative in Baroda to provide compulsory free primary education. Maharaja Sayajirao decided to build up his new social order with the means of Education. This was the great achievement of Maharaja Sayajirao Gaikwad that Baroda became the first territory not only among the native states but also in British India to have compulsory free primary education. Maharaj Sayajirao Gaikwad III endowed a sum of Rs. 200,000 for the promotion of Gujarati literature. Translations of suitable English books in Gujarati were published under a series called Shri Sayaji Literary Series. A new series was started in 1918-1919. It was called the Shri Sayaji Children's Knowledge Series."

### Role in Public Libraries:

Public libraries play a key role in the process of learning. Public libraries improve literacy, stimulate imagination and expand personal horizons. They also inform and empower citizens, enable access to a common cultural heritage and support education at all levels. Maharaja Sayajirao Gayakwad is the father of the public library movement in India. The library movement in Baroda is part of a carefully devised

programme of mass education inaugurated and developed by Maharaja Sayajirao Gayakwad. The State of Baroda established a state-supported network of free public libraries available to all irrespective of caste, class, color, creed, social status or any other differentiating characteristic in India. This public library movement aroused great interest both in India and abroad. He realized that universal education required a network of free public libraries. It is essential for the keep literacy alive. And enable peoples in rural areas to have a access to the source of knowledge. Library movement in Baroda was a part of the general cultural renaissance generated by Sayajirao, who had truly imbibed the spirit of the New Age during his sojourns in Europe and America. Not only did he found libraries and institute the system of compulsory free primary education in his State, but he also helped in the creation and publication of good healthy literature in the regional languages in the form of original writings by great writers and translations by specialists.

The Maharaja insisted that "libraries should not limit their benefits to the few English knowing readers, but should see to it that their good work permeates through to the many", and that "the vernacular libraries should be encouraged" so that every citizen of the State "may enroll himself as a pupil in the peoples' university-the library". During his very first visit to the United States in the year 1906, the Maharaja was greatly impressed by the development of public libraries there. For example, Kudalkar says: "To an educational enthusiast and an idealist like His Highness, who had already introduced free and compulsory primary education in his State, the splendid sight of thousands of public libraries in the U.S.A. could not but appeal." Kudalkar also had seen them, though at a later date, but, perhaps more extensively. He had met Dewey too. With this noble idea he set up free public libraries in the State beginning from 1910. For this purpose he



established a separate Library Department with Mr. W. A. Borden as the first full time Director of State Libraries. The next step was to establish a Central Library at Baroda with a nucleus collection of 88,764 volumes which included the Maharaja's private collection of about 20,000 books. A full time Curator of Libraries with a Staff strength of around 50 were appointed to manage it. On December 17, 1910 he also laid down the foundation stone of Bombay Marathi Library at Girgaum, Bombay and briefly addressed the assembly in Marathi.

It is mind-boggling to learn that even a century ago the Maharaja arranged to purchase a Photostat camera and a camera projector by the State. The projector was utilized to view the silent films etc. He also launched publication of a quarterly journal called Library Miscellany in English, Gujarati and Marathi with Shri J. S. Kodalkar as its first editor, started Library Associations from Taluk level, organized 'Mitra Mandal' in the town and village libraries and organized regular library conferences. Mobile library service was organized to cater to the book need at remote villages.

The Maharaja also established an Oriental Institute and Library with 6,846 printed books and 1,420 manuscripts in Sanskrit, Gujarati and other languages. He was the first to initiate the publication of Gayakwad's Oriental Series in 1915. This was the first public library system in the country. The successors of Gayakwad III had no interest in the public libraries programmes. Due to lack of royal patronage, the great public library system of Baroda gradually wore off.

Sayajirao chose the head librarian, William Borden, at The Institute Library to establish a free public library system in Baroda. In 1910, Borden left New Haven for Baroda. He created a comprehensive network of libraries, which was made up of a state central library, four district libraries, forty-five town libraries, and more than a thousand village libraries. The district libraries

had extensive traveling systems with a Visual Instruction Branch to reach the most illiterate people. This system reached 80% of the population within two years. The classification system Borden created for these libraries was similar to the one he created at The Institute Library. The library building was finally ready in Year 1931 and was built at the cost of Rs. 4 lakh and an additional Rs. 1 lakh spent on furniture and one more lakh on books and magazines. Borden left Baroda in 1913. And, unfortunately, after the death of the Maharaja Sayajirao, the library system did not continue.

#### Specifications of the Libraries in Baroda:

The center of these activities is the Library in Baroda-with its adjuncts, the Oriental Institute, the women's library, the juvenile library and the visual instruction branch. Then come the district and town libraries, 45 in number-with-19,000 readers and 2,22,000 books. Lower down in the scale are 61 villages' libraries with over 37,000 readers and more than 2,50,000 books: while villages which do not own libraries are served by the travelling libraries section which, in 1926-27 circulated 418 boxes with 13,400 books to 123 centers.

#### Significance of the Public Libraries:

Libraries in Baroda fills in the life of the village. boys and girls who have left school due to some reason, to ascertain the extent of lapse into illiteracy among them, and invariably find how negligible this is in a village with a library. For, directly a boy or girl leaves the school, he or she becomes a member of it. The provision of a good building for the library was a favorite manner of celebrating Maharaja Sayajirao's Golden Jubilee and it often happens that the library building is the best building in the village, and serves as a meeting place for all local interests. Great as this influence is, it can become more potent for good if the movement continues to be guided by the high ideal which Maharaja



Sayajirao Gayakwad III placed before it years ago. Speaking in 1912 at the opening of a library he said, "A library must be built up as men are built, slowly and, and with due consideration of the work to be performed. This is an institution that should never die: an institution the work of which in the future may help or mar the men by whose hands that future will be performed and we must look well to our handiwork that the generations to come may be benefited, that we may be honored in the thoughts of our children."

#### Conclusion:

The contributions of His Highness the Maharaja Sayajirao III, Gayakwad of Baroda towards library movement in India cannot be overlooked. He is remembered today as the Father of Library Movement in India. Maharaja Sayajirao III strongly advocates that education was the foundation to reconstruct a new social and economic life and education should be the right of the humblest villager. He was of the opinion that primary education was to be the very base and decided to preserve it by means of libraries, which were the only agencies for perpetual universal self-Education. The success of library movement encouraged by Maharaja Sayajirao III was deviated for public spirit and enlightened policy of him. He put forth the idea behind it. founded the library organisation, supplied enough funds, assisted and guided the staff with kindly critics and wise advice, and who continued to watch over its destinies with all the solicitude of a loving parent. In this way, the contribution made by Sir Sayajirao Gayakwad III towards library movement in India is significant and remarkable.

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