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National Legal Literacy Mission: An Overview

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Abstract

There are certain missions undertaken by the government. All are having to a certain extent common motive to provide equal opportunities, equalities and non violence to all. But there are a few missions who are not much popular among the public. One such mission is National Legal Literacy Mission. In this research paper the researchers have made an attempt to highlight the mission. Their objectives of the study were to bring conceptual understanding of legal literacy in India and also to bring about the awareness of National Legal Literacy Mission. The researchers find in their research that the work done by the National Legal Services Authority (NALSA) and State Legal Services Authority (SLSA) are fruitful. The research paper gives a brief review of Maharashtra Legal Services Authority. Finally researchers conclude that the mission is successful but it is not reachable to all the masses. There is still awareness of such mission to be spread through any mass media means.

Keywords_ National Legal Literacy Mission, National Legal Services Authority, State Legal Services Authority.

Introduction:

The preamble of the Indian Constitution guarantees Justice, Liberty, equality and Fraternity to maintain unity and integrity of the nation. The Preamble declares India to be a sovereign- which means India has supreme power, its own independent authority. Socialist- which means democratic socialism that holds faith in a mixed economy (private as well as public



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sectors both go hand in hand). Secular- which means all religions are treated equal in India. Democratic- which means the will of the people is important and has supreme authority in an election. Republic- which means president is the head of the state and he is elected by people indirectly.

Indian constitution is one of the lengthiest constitutions in the world. It is a land of various laws on a diverse variety of subjects. These laws are fundamentally for the benefits of the masses. But it is sad plights that due to the lack of awareness of these rights among people such laws are hardly fruitful to them. Taking this situation into consideration and to ensure justice to all the sections of society, a need is felt to make the public aware of these rights and get benefitted by the laws made for them.

It is due to this scenario, making the masses literacy of the laws and rights, the concept of legal literacy evolved. It means the knowledge of law in the initial level. When one becomes aware of the rights or when one becomes a legal literate, it is then they can use law as a powerful weapon to fight against any injustices done to them. It can surely transform their lives. Thus, ensuring them a better life in every sphere of their life. Due to this unawareness an initiative was adopted by the central government of India on 6th March 2005 by the Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh, in Delhi, named "National Legal Literacy Mission". The basic aim of this mission is to ensure legal empowerment to all in the society. The mission in general aimed to empower the poor, educating the minority, downtrodden and women by providing them with wholesome knowledge and legal aid.

The objectives of the mission which starts from debarring ignorance to empowering all the weaker sections was unveiled by the Prime Minister with Chief Justice Ramesh Chandra Lahori and Law and Justice Minister Hans Raj Bharadwaj.

Definition:

According to the Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC) "Literacy is the ability to identify, understand, interpret, create, communicate and



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compute and using printed and written materials associated with varying contexts. Literacy involves continues of learning in enabling individuals t achieve their goals, to develop their knowledge and potential & to participate fully in their community and wider society.” (Anoop Kumar, 2013)

Prior to the launch of National Legal Literacy Mission, the need for having literacy of legal terms was identified in India and it is this need of legal literacy which forms an important part of the legal aid to the masses. It is but obvious that law will be meaningless, if only the creamy layer of the society will have the access to it.

Objectives of the study:

The objectives of the present research work is as under

- 1) To understand the concept of legal literacy in India.
- 2) To bring out awareness of the National Legal Literacy Mission scheme.

Research Methodology:

The proposed research work is descriptive in nature. For this study researchers have used secondary data. This data was collected through books, research articles, official websites, etc. to make it more effective, simple and precise.

Legal Literacy:

Legal literacy is nothing but legal aid in common terms. It is a legal aid movement which is a popular term used everywhere.

a) Legal Literacy or Legal Aid Movement in World

One of the pioneers of legal aid movement is France in 1851, when the passing of certain laws was introduced for the provision to the needy of a legal help and this was



followed by England after Rushcliffe committee, which gave birth to the first legal aid scheme in 1945.

b) Legal Literacy or Legal Aid Movement in India

In India, the legal aid movement started in 1952 it was at two time that government brought the notice to law ministers to provide legal help for the poor. The legal aid schemes were started through, law department in various states, legal aid board was formed. It was then in 1980, the committee for implementing legal aid schemes was formed under the chairmanship of the former judge of Supreme Court, Justice P. N. Bhagwati. The motto was to supervise legal aid programmes throughout the nation. (Disability News and Information Services, 2005). In the year 1987, marks a historical landmark of legal aid in India. As legal services authority act was passed and enacted, aiming to give permission to legal aid programmes throughout the country.

Finally, on 5th December 1995, the main body for legal aid services was formed naming National Legal Services Authority with the executive.

Objectives of the Mission:

The following objectives of National Legal Literacy Mission are as mentioned below

- 1) To achieve 100% legal literacy.
- 2) To target the most disadvantaged, distraught, disintegrated, vulnerable and victimized populace first and progress further in the grass-root level.
- 3) To prepare State Specific Plan of Actions for implementation of objective of the mission.
- 4) To undertake survey, research, documentation drive, social investigation reporting and social audit as a learning exercise of people's problems, and to understand the nature of redressal required.
- 5) To sensitize the judicial officers to people's cause particularly to that of women and children, dalit and minorities, tribal and such other most vulnerable groups and some others.



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Target group:

As per legal services authorities act 1987, section 12 in which there is a criteria for providing legal services to the needy persons is as follows

- 1) A person belonging to Schedule Caste or Schedule Tribe
- 2) A beggar or a victim of trafficking in humans
- 3) A women or child
- 4) A mental challenged or disabled person
- 5) A person suffered from natural or manmade calamities such as flood, earthquake, drought, or ethnic violence or industrial disaster.
- 6) An industrial worker
- 7) A person in police custody
- 8) A person whose annual income is less than nine thousand or such other higher amount and less than rupees twelve thousand or such other higher amount as prescribed by the state and central government respectively.

Progress of National Legal Services Authority (NALSA)

The progress of the mission depends largely on NALSA which implements legal literacy programmes. Various functions are prescribed to NALSA amongst them, the work done for implementing legal literacy progress and evaluation and monitoring the same at periodic intervals is one of major work done.

Table No.1: National Level legal Literacy Awareness Camps

Sr. No.	Duration	No. of Camps	Growth Rate
1	April 2012- March 2013	64625	-
2	April 2013- March 2014	60904	-5.75
3	April 2014- March 2015	110580	81.46



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4	April 2015- March 2016	110400	-0.16
	Total	346509	

Source: National Legal Services Authority

Table no. 1 shows that national level legal literacy camps held in different states. Total 346509 awareness camps were arranged from 2012 to March 2016. All these four years, 2014-15 shows maximum growth. In this particular year 110580 camps were arranged all over the nation.

State Legal Services Authority (SLSAs):

Under section 6 of the Legal Services Authority Act there is composition of State Legal Services Authority. It is compulsory for state legal services authority to provide effectively the policies and directions of the NALSA. The duties assigned in the act are to provide with legal aid to those who are in need to conduct Lok Adalats and to perform several other functions as mentioned in regulations. These are High Court Legal Services Committee, District Legal Services Authority and Taluka Legal Services Committee.

Maharashtra State Legal Services Authority (MSLSA): A Brief Review-

Maharashtra State Legal Services Authority has tried to achieve the goal of cent percent legal literacy is also work to be taken, MSLSA has organized micro level legal literacy camps on various topics throughout Maharashtra. Organized legal literacy campaign for 'Plea Bargaining' which means the state has given priority to the problems of trial prisoners and published booklet too on 'Plea Bargaining'. MSLSA has also been organizing annual meet of District Legal Services Authorities (DLSAs).

There are a total number of 34 DLSAs in Maharashtra and 305 Taluka Legal Services Committees. A total number of literacy programmes or legal literacy camps organized in the year 2016-17 were 5263, in 2017-18 were 7335, in 2018-18 were 6933 and camps had a sound



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response of 418073, 752941 and 650206 respectively. The following table will show the total number of legal aid beneficiaries in the state of Maharashtra.

Table No. 2: Legal Aid Beneficiaries of Maharashtra

Sr. No.	Categories	Year			
		2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19
1	SC	434	408 (-7.58)	733 (79.65)	952 (29.87)
2	ST	125	130 (4)	338 (160)	475 (40.53)
3	BC	144	-	-	-
4	Women	2742	2794 (1.89)	5674 (103.1)	9388 (65.45)
5	Children	107	156 (45.79)	317 (103.2)	1072 (238.17)
6	In Custody	2343	2514 (7.29)	4030 (60.3)	5548 (37.66)
7	Persons with Disability	-	36	181 (402.77)	249 (37.56)
8	Industrial Workmen	-	6	25 (316.66)	84 (236)
9	Transgender	-	20	19 (-5)	0
10	Victim of Trafficking in Human Beings or Begar	-	0	2	0
11	Victim of Mass Disaster, Violence, Flood, Draught, Earthquake and Industrial, Disaster	-	0	0	1
12	General (whose annual income does not exceed the prescribed limit)	-	893	1734 (94.17)	2613 (50.69)
	Total	7225	7692 (6.46)	14219 (84.85)	21265 (49.55)

Source: National Legal Services Authority

Note: Figures in bracket indicates annual growth rate



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Above table shows that, beneficiaries of legal aid in Maharashtra. Up to 2019, total 50,401 people get the benefits of this legal aid in Maharashtra. Compare to other years in 2017-18, maximum people are covered. In all categories shows good growth rate.

Conclusion:

The work done by the central and state government is satisfactory and efforts taken are noteworthy to teach the masses about law, their rights and the benefits of their rights but the mission is not known to a majority of population. The mission needs to advertise the aims and the outcomes to the people so that even the people of rural areas will be benefitted to them. No special attention is given to rural areas which is a lacuna of the mission. The work of government is made easy by the NGOs who work at the grassroots level.

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