CHAPTER II

EARLY EDUCATION IN ANCIENT INDIA AND ITS RELEVANCE TO MUSEUMS
The historical traditions of elementary education in India is discussed here.

Early India gives no evidence of systematic type of education. During this time family was perhaps the only agency of education. The head of the family transmitted the knowledge of the Vedas to his children. Later on when life became more and more complex, some learned persons attracted pupils to come and live in their respective homes by virtue of having their vast knowledge and reputation. Thus gradually the professional teachers called gurus appeared on the scene and informal educational institutions called gurukuls came into being. In due course of time Brahmins being the more learned than the others took over complete control in imparting education and gradually evolved a systematic pattern of education known as Brahmanic education. It aimed at imparting religious education as well as preparing individuals for their future vocations strictly in accordance with their family occupations. Gradually caste and class systems became predominant in the society and became rigid during the later Brahmanic period. The lower class (Sudra) was considered unfit for receiving education, leading to total neglect in this regard. The religious education was also reduced to the learning process of complicated ritual performances in Sanskrit language which was hardly approachable to the common man. The gurukuls were located in peaceful places, away from habitations, so that there was no disturbance or interference. A pupil could admit himself into the gurukul by an admission ceremony called Upanayana. Vedic study was the most important part of the curriculum. The pupil was taught how to pray and perform his religious and social duties, physical work according to his age, status and caste. The pupil was also expected to work for the personal needs of the guru and his
family. Fetching firewood, begging food, caring of cattle, cleaning of the house and gardening were included in the contingent of work. The life and activities in gurukuls were designed to meet the harmonious development of pupils. In Brahmanic India, the teaching and learning processes were involved mostly in oral tradition. Teachers used to recite vedic hymns and pupils were made to listen carefully and memorize them. Other teaching and learning techniques employed were questions and answers involving teacher - pupils discussions.

Demonstration was also a method of education during the Brahmanic period. The guru demonstrated different types of rituals to be performed in various kinds of religious ceremonies. During this period there emerged a practice called monitorial system, which is prevalent even today in formal and informal institutions. The teachers used to seek the help and co-operation from senior pupils in teaching, advising and supervising younger pupils work and studies. The teacher - pupil relationship was very cordial and affectionate and had a positive effect on the pupils' learning and personality development.

The growth of Buddhism gathered roots all over India by 600 B.C. It developed through monasteries which served as educational agencies. Originally the monasteries were meant to educate only monks and nuns, but later educational facilities were thrown open to all children of all castes and classes in Pali, which was then the language of the common man. There was no over-emphasis on rites and rituals in the Buddhistic system of education. Therefore it was more popular than the Brahmanic type of education.

The admission ceremony was known as Pabbaja. More emphasis was given on reading and arithmetic. Education was mostly verbal, and the system of education was mainly based on memorization.
Ancient Indians held the view that a child began to receive influences that moulded his character and determined his efficiency right from the time of his conception. It was believed that impressions conveyed to the mind of an expectant mother would be transmitted to the mind of the child to be born. Examples from Hindu mythology in this regard were Prahlad became a deep devotee and Abhimanyu a skilful warrior, as influenced by Narada and Krishna after they were conceived.

Pre-school education was imparted generally at home by the grand-parents or elders of the family orally in the form of stories, fairy tales, riddles and tables.

As books were costly and beyond the means of average people primary-education was based on folklores like kathas and kirtanas under religious preachers.

Around 200 B.C - 800 A.D primary education was assigned a definite place in the educational system by exaltation of its beginning into a religious ritual known as aksharasvikara which was performed at 5 or 6 years. This method of teaching children involved writing on the ground covered with dust or sand. The children either used their fingers or pointed sticks for writing. This method trained the muscles and this system of training was advocated also in later times by Madame Maria Montessori.

A sculpture of Buddha at Peshawar Museum represents child Buddha holding a rectangular slate and engaged in writing on it. This representation reminds one that Buddha received early education in a primary school. Since it was difficult to procure paper, boys used to write on sand board, then on a palm leaf with an iron stylus and then on a banana leaf.

It was found that in ancient India, Vidyarambha ritual was performed at the commencement of the fifth year, which was
usually regarded as suitable for initiation of primary education.

Elementary education under the Muslim period was imparted in Maktab which were generally attached to mosques. Bismillah Khani ceremony was performed at the beginning of primary education at the age of 5 or 6. So we find that in ancient times religious aim dominated the field of education also. Some sports and games were included in the curriculum also where children were encouraged to write on wooden boards called takhtis. The first phase of elementary education in modern India began with the advent of the European merchants as early as 16th century. Portuguese, Dutch, French and English traders started coming to India with an intention of carrying out trade with India. Finally the English succeeded in establishing their empire in India, and it was during their rule that formal system of education came into being. In the 16th century British missionaries started establishing charity mission schools with an objective to spread Christianity among Indians. These schools marked the advent of a new system of education which was totally different from that of its old indigenous system prevalent in India.

The second phase (1813 - 1853) saw the Charter Act, which was passed by the British Parliament in 1813, and it compelled the East India Company to assume responsibility for education of Indians. In 1835 Maculay's minutes aimed at creating a class of citizens Indian in blood and English in taste and intelligence. This was soon followed by the Downward Filtration, thereby approved by Lord Auckland in 1839 which neglected elementary education.

In the third phase (1854 - 1920) the Government of India Act 1919 was passed with the announcement of Sir Charles Wood’s Despatch in 1854, which stated that elementary education was the responsibility of the Company.
After the first war of Independence (1857) company rule came to an end and the progress of elementary education was very slow during 1855 - 1881 in the hands of the British Crown.

In 1882, the Indian Education Commission was set up under the chairmanship of William Hunter to review the progress of education in the context of recommendations made by the Wood's despatch. On the basis of these observations they were to suggest measures for expansion and improvement of education. The Commission made the following recommendations regarding different aspects of elementary education:

Elementary education as imparted through mother tongue, raising the standard of elementary education, full autonomy to be given to provinces to prescribe their own curricula, according to their needs and to select text books of their choice.

Lord Curzon in 1904 published his educational policy in the form of a Government resolution, which stressed on rapid expansion of elementary education with prominence being given to the mother-tongue and English not being taught before 13 years of age.

This showed that elementary education was given priority at that time. By the Government of India Act of 1919 all control and responsibility was transferred from the Government of India to the provincial government. Thus we find that during 1921 - 37 the Indian ministers of education showed a keen interest to bring about improvements in elementary education, but no marked achievement was possible due to lack of finances, political unrest and after effects of two world wars.

The Hartog Committee appointed in 1927, submitted its report in 1929, pointed out that wastage and stagnation in elementary education was due to poverty, unsuitable
The following measures were suggested by the Committee. The duration of primary education should be of four years. The curriculum should be related to conditions of village life, which facilitates children's learning. Wastage and stagnation to be reduced. It also suggested hasty steps to be taken to introduce compulsion in education. But the Indian masses were not attracted to it because they felt that it was a political device of expansion of mass education on the pretext of raising the standard of education. In 1937 an all India Educational Conference was organised at Wardha, under the Presidentship of Mahatma Gandhi. He elaborated the scheme of 'Basic Education' which is popularly known as Wardha Scheme. He was in favour of teaching certain crafts in elementary schools.

A report of the Wardha Scheme was prepared by Zakir Hussain Committee in 1937. It recommended free and compulsory Basic Education to all children from 7 to 14 years. It also suggested that the entire education should centre around some basic crafts chosen with regard to the needs, interests and environment of children. The selected crafts should enable pupils to become self-supporting in later life. Manual work, art, music, basic craft, mathematics and general science were to be subjects to be taken up.

In 1938 and 1940 the Central Advisory Board of Education (CABE) appointed two Committees under the Chairmanship of B.G. Kher to give their views on the scheme of Basic Education. The Committees supported the scheme and recommended that the age limit for education be 5 to 14 years. But the Sargeant Report made the following recommendations in relation to elementary education; such as free and compulsory elementary or basic education for all children between 6 and 14 years be divided into Junior Basic
(6 - 11 years) and Senior Basic (11 - 14 years). Games and physical training should have a place in the curriculum. Basic crafts taught should be suitable to local conditions. The changing focus of elementary education in free India was classified as follows:

a) Universal expansion of elementary education making it free and compulsory to be accomplished within a limited period of time, providing equal educational opportunities to all types of children.

b) Qualitative improvement of elementary education to accompany universal expansion.

c) New educational strategies were imposed on non-formal and part-time education. Universalization of education means making it available to all children in the country even those living in the remote areas. Thus from various references it can be ascertained that the age of initiation into education for a child was approximately five to six years in the earlier times.

In the primitive or tribal society children are provided with an immediate environment, which infiltrates during the years of his greatest plasticity of childhood. So a major part of education of such children takes place by absorption of their life activities suggestions and imitations. These children only need to heed the testimony of their senses to drink in all that are seen and heard. Mountains, rivers, nature are the schools for children of the primitive society. Nature is their teacher, observation is the source of information. Children of the jungle folk get the scope to study each animal and plant identify its characteristics, discover their habitat and recognize the footmarks of different animals. The children are aware of birds, fishes, their food habits and breeding seasons. Methods of food collection, hunting, fishing are also learnt directly from adults. Children learn to make boats, houses, toys, utensils, baskets, clay pots right from early
childhood. The children of the primitive society gain practical experience on basket making, fishing rods and net making, metal craft, wood carving, sculpture making and rearing poultry and cattle in their childhood. Thus the education of children in primitive society is self-acquired and based on the principle of learning by doing.

There were informal centers in the villages called Bachelor's Dormitory. They were named differently in different tribal societies such as jonkharpa, dhumkuria, ghotul, morung etc. These centres were a regular feature in every village in the past but have almost disappeared at present due to the fact that free-mixing was disliked by the rural guardians. All the members of the dhumkuria were divided into various age groups. Every three years a new group entered the morung. A boy was entitled to become a member of this group when he attained three years of age. The small boys were taught to collect firewood, water and clean the weapons of the senior members. They used to graze cattle in the field. The senior members of the bachelor's dormitory were engaged to protect the village from the attack of enemies.

During the post-independence period emphasis was given on the elementary education to all children of the country. Efforts were taken to improve the quality of education including improvement of text books, adoption of better methods of teaching and evaluation, intensive utilization of available facilities etc. Gadgets like tape-recorders, video projectors, slide projector, etc. were to be used as teaching aids to ease the style of presentation, quality of teaching as well as supplement text books during the post-independence period.

Education, which aimed at all-round growth of personality of children, the development of scientific spirit and with the outlook of national integration, through
exploration and experimentation was emphasized during the post-independence period. In this way curiosity was instilled in the minds of children making education more meaningful and relevant to the needs of child-learners, thereby laying stress upon learning and doing. A new area of craft education aiming at development of inherent skills, termed as Socially Useful Productive Work (SUPW) came into being.

Three kinds of curricula were suggested for elementary education by different committees such as - Basic education as recommended by Zakir Hussain Committee, Sri Prakash Committee and Sampurand Committee. All the Committees suggested some improvements in elementary education to infuse moral and spiritual values in children. The government appointed a Commission under the chairmanship of D. S. Kothari (1964 - 66) to advise on National pattern of education as it was felt that the prevailing educational systems had not evolved in accordance with the need of the time. The Kothari Education Commission proposed the inclusion of work-experience and social service. Subjects like science and social studies were proposed to be integrated as environmental studies. The inculcation of moral and spiritual values in pupils were also emphasized by the Kothari Commission with regard to elementary education and suggested that the primary education should start at 6+ and continue for seven or eight years. The aim of long range of primary education was to lay the foundation of life on a solid base. The course contents would deal on phenomenal, social and environmental aspects including health. Emphasis was laid on work-experience involving activities like gardening, pottery making, cane work, bamboo craft, leather work etc.

All these attribute to the fact that education was conceived as a natural process of self-expression and self-development. Hence children were at the focus of all educational and amusement endeavours. The introduction of
experience oriented and attractive curriculum is conducive to self-expression, enabling spontaneous expression of innate abilities. Play-way education has paved the way to life centred education through creative activities which are much more appealing than mere abstract book learning.

Activity centricism is the guideline where children's education must not exceed their needs, demands, capacities and experiences. The present educational concept in India regarding elementary education of children, encompasses their all-round development including aesthetic sense, values, attitudes, social co-operation, emotional balance, acquaintance with creative activities involving games and exercises, creative and productive work, direct experience, along with reading, writing and arithmetic.

The New Educational Policy (1986) suggested that Operation Blackboard would be undertaken to improve the conditions of existing primary schools by ensuring that every primary school in the country at least has a black-board along with maps, charts, globes, games and science tool kits.

It cannot just be overlooked that the pre-school and primary stages of children are the most crucial ones where the foundations on which the building of knowledge has to be built. Application of play-way technique in education can reduce wastage and stagnation and lessen the number of drop outs.

Museums can come into focus by provoking the interest of children by introducing interesting teaching devices and aids so that children feel the excitement of learning new things and pursue their studies. Unattractive school environment diverts children from learning. If the atmosphere, specially of rural schools is made children friendly by allowing children to think and feel for themselves it would be easier for them to learn.

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Museums can be of great help in this regard. They can lend out their duplicate materials to rural as well as urban schools in the form of loan kits in history, geography and science. Temporary exhibitions can be conducted by museums in rural schools arranged mainly on the school curricula. Folk-lore museums could be of immense importance in this matter. Tools weapons, costumes and dioramas help to develop clear concepts about the ways of life of early man. (Fig. 9)

Some tribal children are skilful at the bow and arrow and like to hunt and shoot right from early childhood. Such children are to be made aware of the need of preserving the natural environment by various programmes conducted by museums, like film shows, slide shows, demonstrations and dramas. Children can make toys, weapons, canoes, tents and toy-carts, and they also learn to set traps for rodents and pests. The folklore is the medium of transmitting culture in the primitive and tribal society in the form of tales, myths, legends, which are constantly recited under a pleasing guise of music and rhythm. These stimulate the minds of children. The tribal wisdom is stored up in this manner through oral traditions and communicated to the children. These tales which are sources of knowledge have didactic intention as well as moral value. Fables, ballads, proverbs and verses sorted as text-books of children, embody the experience of their fore-fathers. Thus education of primitive children was practical based self-learning and based on real life experiences, catering to the need of the hour.

In earlier times, temple terracottas and folk painting imparted visual education to people about scriptures and mythology. Folk painting and puppet shows representing popular religious themes were very appealing to children.

Puppet shows are indeed a medium of imparting audio-visual education to children. The style of puppet show enchants children and it is not dependent on language for comprehension. (Fig. 10)
Such shows could be organised by museums on different topics related to child education. Story telling with the help of puppets can be enchanting to children, if they are supplemented with objects. Folklore materials may represent different aspects such as action, science, language, literature, folk music and folk crafts. The action type of folklore materials include drama, dance, music, games, paintings etc. Linguistic type includes riddles, verses and proverbs. Literary type includes ballads and epics. Folk musical instruments and masks are also very meaningful as well as appealing to children since they are fond of folk dances, costumes and ornaments. Dolls toys ornaments of animal tooth, bamboo, wood, pottery both baked and unbaked enchant children. Utensils, bamboo objects, baskets, leather, bone, horn, woven garments, hunting equipment, images of votive offerings, recorded folk songs, films, slides and photographs are very interesting to both tribal as well as urban children. Tribal children can be educated about the importance of preserving the environment, cleanliness, hygiene, and other facets of life through puppet shows and folklore.

Education through museums encourages a power of observation, spirit of enquiry and a desire for investigation among children, for e.g.; if children are shown the different kinds of wooden specimens, such as teak, bamboo, deodar, mahogany, sal, neem, cane etc. can foster a sense of differentiation and enhance their knowledge with the help of museum exhibits. Oil yielding plants, creepers, shrubs, herbs, edible roots, tubers, mushrooms can be understood and classified by children if illustrated properly by means of charts and pictures. Ideas of different spices, pulses and crops can be easily obtained from museum charts, diagrams, models and actual specimens. Geographical population and regions can be envisaged through models, dioramas, pictures and maps. The modes of transport from palanquin, dandy, camel cart, bullock cart, canoe, fishing boats, chariots to motor cars, trains, ships may be...
displayed in the museum for children to study. Air vehicles such as aeroplanes and parachutes can be depicted through working models, which could engross children as well as act as source of information.

Children are generally fascinated by the animal world. They are curious to know about animal behaviour. Slides, pictures, illustrations are very appealing to children and stimulate their curiosity. They like to touch them, feel them and feed them. Live animals in cages would be the best option since participation entails better conception and perception. There are undoubtedly a few children's museums in India exclusively, namely Sir Girdharbhai Children's Museum, Amreli, Gujarat, Bal Bhawan and National Children's Museum, New Delhi, Motilal Bal Sangrahalya, Lucknow, Nehru Children's Museum, Calcutta, Children's Museum Gandhi Smriti, Bhavnagar, Gujarat, International Dolls Museum, New Delhi. But compared to the large proportion of children in our country the number of children's museums are inconspicuous. So all museums have to be geared up to serve the function of education and entertainment of children simultaneously with adult visitors. Some traditional media, such as story-telling could be highly effective in imparting education to children of pre-school and primary stages.

In this context the scroll pats may be a valuable device of imparting education visually, accompanied by songs composed in co-relation with the topic painted on the scroll pat. The pats of Bengal may be classified into dighal pat, scroll pat and chouka pat or rectangular type. Other types of rectangular pats are the Gazi pat, Acharya pat and Pancha kalyani pat. Originally these pats were carried by painters known as patuas to be shown at village gatherings in accompaniment with music. The themes of scroll painting were taken from popular mythological stories, like the Ramayana and the Krishnalila and the story is represented in panels in successive compartments. Story-telling activity can be ... 35/-
conducted through scroll pats those specially based on mythological stories and fables. Pats are the traditional rural media of education which can be improvised as audio-visual means of education in the present context in museums. (Fig. 11)

Painting of pats may be done on various themes pertaining to the concept of children Patuas or painters may be assigned to make scrolls on topics related to education, history, geography, hygiene, environment for imbibement of knowledge of the children. Children can be made to participate in the activities, such as story writing, story composition, picture composition and drawing, portrayed on pats, and museums may undertake these activities to educate children in museums. (Fig. 12)

While pats are prepared in museums children conceptualize the art of pat making. It involves preparation of glue, which is made by boiling rice. Rice glue is applied to a sheet of waste paper. Another sheet of glued paper is spread over the first sheet and pasted to form a padded base of the pat. Several such pads are joined end to end to form a long scroll. The scroll is spread out in the open so that they are soaked in dew. To make the scroll durable, a worn-out cloth is stuck with glue, edge to edge on its undersurface. Children can get acquainted with the natural ingredients used in colour preparation such as hingul (cinnabar) for red colour, peuri for yellow colour, neel (indigo) for blue and so on.

Painted earthen saras extensively used in rural Bengal are convex and round shaped signifying the seat of Goddess Lakshmi. These saras are usually applied with white colour coating before painting the figure of goddess Lakshmi red colour mostly. Saras could be the means of propagating education among children. By organising workshops on pats and saras paintings, museums can impart knowledge on religion and mythological aspects among children.
Masks are interesting devices for children, particularly those of urban areas. Masks stimulate these children because many complicated aspects are simplified and interpreted through dramas and skits with the help of masks. (Fig. 13) Masks help to convey ideas, values and concepts readily. So mask making can be a part of the workshop for children in museums.

For making a mask first a model of one desired mask is made with clay by hand. Then torn pieces of paper are pasted on the model. A deep layer of clay is pasted over it. A few pieces of cloth are pasted with sticky clay. Then a thin layer of clay is pasted again. After this the mask is removed from it and dried fully under the sun. Then the nose, eyes, ears, chin, hips and teeth are painted with different colours and decorated with artificial pearls and ribbons.

Urban children will be excited in observing the masks of Rama and Ravana, Hanuman and Lakshman while rural children would be enticed by modern masks.

Puppets are potent media of children's education. These are competent in arousing interest as well as relinquishing knowledge. Puppeteers may be occasionally invited to museums and requested to conduct puppet shows on various themes related to environment consciousness, hygiene, health, moral values which would be engrossing to children. String puppets can easily be utilized in educating children. Finger puppets can be effective means of amusement to children simultaneously contributing to their education as well. (Fig. 14) These are interpretive devices of children's education.

Education is a progressive and dynamic process. So it has changed with the change of time. But nevertheless primary education has always been cared for even during ancient or pre-independence era. Museums are in a position to co-relate ...
education to children. Children of pre-school and primary stages usually come to the museums with their guardians or parents as is the common practice in India. For this proper advertising and publicity on the part of museums is essential. Leaflets, pamphlets, handouts and banners could be some of the means of publicity. India is not in a financial position to spend extravagantly on publicity, so the bare necessities must be availed for marketing and promoting the museum.

Earlier forms of education have to some extent been practical oriented and based on experiences, innovativeness and creativity. Today's children are the torch bearers of tomorrow's nation, so their harmonious development should not be slackened at any cost.

Story-telling programmes in a museum could be made attractive and appealing to children by different objects, which are bounded together by a natural sequence. A common theme is selected prior to organizing a programme.

Generally the story-hour programme should begin with short tour in the gallery after which children may be asked to sit at a selected corner and listen to the story, aided by museum objects. Children may also be asked to narrate stories with the help of objects, scrolls, life history of insects, or sequence of historical events. Even jumbled up sequences of pictures may be given to children after going through a particular gallery. Suitable rhymes, songs and sayings may be applicable to the story.

Story hour programmes, puppet shows, mask and sara making activities have to be conducted in summer or winter camps during holidays when children become bored and crave for activity. The timings of the camps should suit the convenience of parents. Prior publicity regarding these camps is essential for full fledged involvement of children of different localities and age groups.
The role of museum educators is very important in organising these workshops and programmes. Museum educators and guide lecturers must be amiable, patient, enthusiastic and sympathetic to children.

School teachers and volunteers may be engaged by museums for children's weekly or bi-weekly activities. Children have a lot to learn from these activities and verbal communication followed during such activities. Museums can innovate some new techniques, which would be effective in educating children through enjoyment at the museums. Self-education is the most essential pre-requisite for children. So learning by doing is applicable to museum education. Exhibitions on tribal handicrafts, weapons, toy making and mat-weaving can be organised to encourage children and induce them to bring out their hidden talents. They get a feel of real things in an interesting manner. It proliferates their imagination. For e.g if the theme of the puppet show deals on natural environment, animals, trees etc. children get a clear idea regarding ecosystem and animal life. (Fig. 15)

At the same time their postures, movements and living habitats are perceptible to children. Similarly if the theme of the puppet show relates to a historical figure children come to know about the lives of great kings and their historical background, e.g. Akbar, Asokha or leaders like Netaji or Gandhiji which would help to foster sense of values which is essential for children in the present socio-political circumstances. Moral education helps to foster a sense of responsibility, sincerity and dedication among children. This would prove to be prized in the long run in the form of development into responsible citizens in future. So, in other words, human resources are to be developed right from early stages. Human resources are the real weapons of the progress of a country. All moral, aesthetic, cultural, secular as well as educational values can be instilled in children through museum activities.
Today there is disharmony, political unrest and religious fragmentation mainly due to lack of education. Museums can help to imbibe the feeling of national integration, brotherhood, fraternity, secularism and religious harmony by instilling the ideas of inter-cultural and inter-religious exchange in the form of similarity of objects and rituals of different religions and cultures. For example, co-relation between art objects of different religions and cultures can be derived through museum objects and programmes.

Communal harmony and integration are the immediate needs of our country aiming at advancement. For all these education is the foremost requirement and museums are the best agents of imparting visual education, thus enabling harmonious and integrated development of children. If a child learns about the contribution of our great leaders in the struggle for independence by visiting biographical museums then these museums could loan out some of their materials to schools and informal education centres to enhance the standard of teaching as well as learning.

Museums are the resource centres which can communicate, by themselves, with children by utilising the materials, in the form of exhibits, activities or exhibitions keeping in mind that the future of the country rests on the shoulders of our present children. What we sow today we shall reap tomorrow.
Fig.10 Puppet shows a medium of education.

Fig.11 Female patua displaying a scroll pat in the Gurusaday Museum, Joka, South 24-Parganas.
Fig. 12 Pat on display, for sale at a fair in Calcutta.

Fig. 13 Masks on display, Gurusaday Museum, Joka, South 24-Parganas, West Bengal.
Fig. 14 A sketch of the effective media of education.
Fig.15 Puppet show on environment and ecological balance.