CHAPTER – 2

DEVELOPMENT OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN DELHI: A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

2.1 Introduction
2.2 Education in Ancient Period
2.3 Education in Medieval Period
2.4 Education during British Period
2.5 Education in Post Independent Era
2.1 Introduction

Higher education began after 12 years of schooling. Several methods were used to test the eligibility of the student for higher education. One of the most important components of the method was to ascertain the true quest of the aspirant for knowledge. Proper mental caliber of the aspirant was another factor. Sometimes 'temptation was offered in lieu of knowledge. Long waiting before imparting instruction was also resorted to.

India is the site of one of the most ancient civilizations in the world. After the settlement of Aryans, a section of intellectuals, the Brahmins became priests and men of learning. The Indian civilization embraced every aspect of life philosophy, religion, morality, law and government. The study of Vedic literature was indispensable to higher caste. Learning and teaching have been traditions in India since ancient times. Dr S. Radhakrishnan, former President and great educationist of India once said “In the old days teachers of India were themselves librarians, and they were held in highest esteem”.

2.2 **Education in Ancient Period**

An assessment of libraries in ancient India is significant in order to understand the growth and development of libraries in modern India in its historical perspective. The concept of a library is not new, though many differences exist between the libraries of ancient India and the libraries of modern India. In the ancient period, owing to the absence of printing, only handwritten books or manuscripts comprised the library. The basic significant as everything worthy of knowing had to be acquired by the ear and retained through learning by heart. The Vedas, the Upanishads, the Puranas, the Sastras and canons of art, culture and philosophy survived in either thought or the ‘Kantha’, i.e. the entire knowledge was stored in the memory of the scholars. Having one of the largest educational systems in the world, India today can boast of a large network of libraries as direct descendants of the ancient libraries and academies.

The discovery of a Chalcolithic civilization at Harappa (in the Montgomery district of the West Punjab in the present day Pakistan) and Mohan-jo-Daro (in the Larkana district of Sindh also in Pakistan) provided strong evidence to refute the much publicised thesis of the late emergence of civilization in India and supplied an incontrovertible proof of the hoary and highly original nature of the Indian culture. It also established the prevalence of writing in the then Indian civilization. The
discovery of the Harappan civilization is, in fact, linked with Alexander Cunningham’s discovery of a seal with an unknown inscription in 1875.

The age of the Magadhan and Mauryan kings was a period of rapid cultural development. To judge by the Asokan inscriptions, found in many regions of India, and also in the territory of modern Afghanistan, writing would appear fairly widespread as early as the third century B.C. However, there is little doubt that it existed several centuries earlier as well in many Buddhist writings.

Every aspect of life including education was influenced by religion in ancient India. However, it must be remembered that education aimed at the many sided development of the personality of the student of course with a religious orientation. The concept, aims and ideals of education were correlated with the ideals of life. Religion played an important role in life in ancient India. The whole of social structure of those days was religious. It was to a great extent independent of government. “Governments may come and go but social life, religious life and national culture were not much affected by these changes.” Not only political but even the economic changes could not affect the religious aspect of education.
The whole of educational system surged with religious atmosphere. Teachers were usually priests. It is, therefore, no wonder that the infusion of a spirit of religiousness in the minds of the pupils should have been regarded as the first and foremost aim of education.

Indian Institutes of Higher Learning as International Institutions of Higher Learning/Universities: Centuries before universities in Europe and other parts of the world came into existence, there flourished universities in India which had international reputation and attracted foreign students. Education in India was for a long time imparted by private teachers in their own houses. They were scattered all over the country but they congregated in large numbers in certain places on account of the facilities they got in their work. Such places were usually the capitals of kingdom or holy places. Kings and princes in those days were patrons of learning and so learned Brahmans were attracted to their courts. That is why Taxila, Kanauj, Patiliputra, Mithila etc became famous centres of learning. As the pilgrims supplied a subsidiary source of income to the famous teachers residing at holy places, these places became centres of learning, e.g. Banaras, Ranchi and Nasik, etc.

Takshila University acquired an international reputation in the 6th century BC as a centre of advanced studies. The University was founded in the city of Gandhara in northwest India. It is
considered to be the first University in the world. It was a great centre of learning with a number of famous teachers, each-having school of his own. The University had an excellent library. The library collection included works on Hinduism, political science, literature, medicine and philosophy. The city of Gandhara, including the University and the library was destroyed during the invasion of Hunas, in the middle of the fifth century.

In the 3rd century BC Buddhism received great impetus under India’s most celebrated ruler Ashoka. Buddhist monasteries existed as corporate bodies. As Buddhist education was at first confined to the education of monks. Buddhist monasteries developed into corporate educational institutional institutions. Later on it was realized that the best way to propagate religion was to educate the rising generation which had pliable mind. The Buddhist monasteries, therefore, after taking up the education of the lay population became great centres of learning and came to be known as universities. They were Nalanda, Vallabhi, Vikramasila, Jagaddala, Mithila, Odantapuri and Nadia. It was the age of the rise of Indian sciences, mathematics and astronomy. The University of Nalanda owed its foundation to six generations of the Gupta Kings. Nalanda University’s Library was the biggest in Asia.

Educational institutions and especially institutions of higher learning provided a stimulating and vibrant intellectual
environment. The educational system was by and large successful in developing character and personality, preservation and enrichment of culture. The system developed sense of self-confidence, self-respect and self-restraint. It fostered powers of discrimination and judgments. It laid emphasis on social obligations. It led to the production of literature of a very high quality. It brought about a remarkable cultural unity. It helped in the spread of learning in several countries of Asia. As observed by Altekar, “The success of Indian missionaries in spreading Hindu and Buddhist culture in South-East, Eastern and Central Asia must be attributed to the success of the educational system in enkindling a strong zest in the minds of the students for spreading national culture far and wide. Above all, the educational system produced independent minds and creative intellects; there is hardly any other civilization in the world, which went on awakening rich and diverse contributions to the different branches of knowledge for a long and continuous period of two thousand years.”

There is no exaggeration in the statement that in ancient times on account of its contribution to learning and education including scientific and secular literature, India was called ‘Jagat Guru’ (World Teacher).
2.3 **Education in Medieval Period**:

In its long history Delhi has been the centre or seat of empire and the site for a succession of cities, each of which served as the capital or centre of a vast domain. It has been on several occasions the victim of military occupation accompanied by pillage and rapine, and these occasions have sometimes altered the course of the city’s fortunes, both materially and culturally. One such occasion was its capture by Qutubuddin Aibak on behalf of Sultan Muizud-Din-Muhammad-ibn-Sam of Ghur in 1192 or 1193. Others, much later, occupation by Ahmad Shah Durrani, the British in 1803, and the destruction which accompanied the uprising of 1857 and its suppression. Timur’s visitation of the city was as destructive as any of these, and marked the demise of the Delhi Sultanat.

Whereas existing Hindu and Buddhist libraries were made victims of plunder and destruction, particularly by Muhammad Ghori and some of the earlier Sultans like Qutb-ud-din and Baktiyar Khaliji, it is a strange contradiction that during the 13th and the 14th centuries learning was promoted in the Delhi of the Sultans and the scale of learning and intellectual pursuits in Delhi then had necessitated the need for dissemination of information and exchange of ideas concerning such activities. During the rule of the Sultans and the Mughals, Delhi had witnessed not only a rich intellectual and cultural life but also a good system of
libraries. For instance, the Imperial Library of Delhi was founded by Jalal-ud-din Khalji and had its librarian no less a scholar than Amir Khusrau. Nizam-ud-din Aulia, an important Sufi saint, also had a library which was open to every man of learning. The name of Jalal-ud-din deserves special mention who himself being a poet remained surrounded by eminent men like Amir Khusrau, Taj-Ud-din Iraqi, Khwajah Amir Hasan Sijzi, Muyyid Diwanch, Amir Arslan Quli, and Baqui Khatir. He established the Imperial library at Delhi and appointed Amir Khusrau as the librarian. The Sultan gave great importance to the post and selected the right person for the right place. Not only did he appoint him as the librarian of the Imperial library but he also made him the keeper of the holy Quran. Amir Khusrau, the Librarian was a great scholar and poet, and was held in high esteem by the Sultan and the library can, in a way, be considered the first public library in the known history of Delhi. Among the many poets and philosophers who flourished in this time, the name of the learned saint Nizam-ud-din Aulia needs to be mentioned. He established a library by raising public donations. It was a big library with a large collection of manuscripts. It was, however, more like a public library since unlike other libraries of the time, the public is stated to have had access to this library. The library was housed in his khanqah at Ghiyathpur in Delhi which is known today after the saint. The great Mughals also were very fond of books and extended their help and encouragement graciously not only to the cause of the growth and development of art, literature and music.
but also to the growth and development of libraries. The great Akbar’s contribution in this regard is highly appreciable particularly for the introduction of library administration and management techniques.

During the next two centuries the broadening of the cultural base was a significant factor in the life of Delhi. During the last quarter of the 17th century, Delhi had emerged as one of the two rival centres, the other one being Aurangabad, for the development and transmission of cultural values where the traditions of liberalism initiated by Akbar and Jahangir and nurtured by Darashukoh were continued and developed further. Akbar the great (A.D. 1556-1605) succeeded Humayun. Although he himself was illiterate, yet he was a highly cultured man with a strong desire for learning. The growth and development of libraries in medieval India got much boosted during his regime, because he was more intent on establishing the library on a firm foundation with regular administrative supervision and state control, which has been amply substantiated by the available records. It is interesting, however, in the case of Akbar that, although illiterate, he was perhaps the most consummate, listener, keen to learn. Its role as a metropolis of liberalism in the field of culture and religion is significant.

The period from 1724 A.D. to Nadir Shah’s invasion in 1739 A.D. was one of rapid internal decay of the empire, but one
of outer brilliance for Delhi as far as its cultural life was concerned. The phase of 1740 to 1760 was a period of growing anarchy. It was in such an atmosphere that broadening of the cultural base took place.

Within the framework of a feudal society, the culture that was developed in Delhi during the first half of the eighteenth century was as broad-based as it could be. The interest in architecture declined and painting remained largely repetitive, but the real glory of this period lied in the field of literature and music and in the consolidation of the traditions of an urban, humanistic, broad-based culture largely free from sectarian bias.

2.4 **Education During British Period**

Modern Delhi began with the slow revival of the city under British domination. During the ‘Delhi Renaissance’, approximately 1830 to the outbreak of the uprising of 1857, Delhi exhibited the beginnings of a similar cultural ferment as had already appeared in Calcutta, Bombay and Madras. Western technology and ideas entered the city and supported each other. The printing press provided the technique needed for publishing newspapers, journals, pamphlets, and inexpensive books. In turn publishing disseminated the ‘new learning’ from the west to a growing literate audience. The Old Delhi College, founded in 1792, was taken over by the government in 1825 to become the
centre of new ideas, as it was transformed into a British institution of education. In Delhi, as elsewhere, western learning became associated with either Christianity or open criticism of the existing tradition. The uprising of 1857 effectively destroyed the ‘Delhi Renaissance’, its cultural and intellectual life. The two decades from 1857 to 1877 saw a collapse of life in the city. However, the intellectual and cultural life of the Delhi came back in a limited fashion during these years, first with the establishment of the Debating Society in 1861, and the Delhi Literary Society in 1865. The Delhi Literary Society created its own journal which joined the small but growing number of newspapers published in the city. According to an estimate, in 1868 the city housed 1,54,417 people; by 1881 the total had risen to 1,70,245 increasing to 1,89,648 by 1891, and reaching 2,06,534 at the end of the century.

In the 18th and the 19th centuries the political status of Delhi had changed more frequently than that of any other Indian town or city. The Delhi College was closed on April 1, 1877 by the British Government that deprived the city of higher education and also illustrated the growing predominance of Lahore as the centre of cultural and intellectual life in the Northwest. The St. Stephens College came in existence in 1881 and was affiliated to the University of Punjab incorporated in 1882. It offered various courses of study in the arts subjects, and the college had a Christian atmosphere. Having a monopoly of higher education in Delhi, it developed steadily. In 1899 the Hindu College, an
orthodox Sanatan Dharma institution, was established. Its fees were relatively low, and the flow of Hindu students in the St. Stephen’s College dwindled. During the years 1900 to 1914 many new Hindu institutions were founded in Delhi, but they could not perform well, as they were facing one problem or the other. For instance, the Hindu orphanage suffered from a lack of financial backing and the Hindu College failed to attract a significant number of students. In the words of Mrs. Annie Besant, the Hindu College was ‘badly in need of popular support; little interest is taken in it by the townspeople who care more apparently for commerce than for education’.

The post-independence era has truly transformed this city of virtually no library worth its name to its present position of one of the most actively, funded and used library and information networks in the country. It is strange that until independence there was no significant development in Delhi which could be responsible for the growth and development of libraries. In striking contest to the library movements in the states of Baroda, Madras and many other parts of Southern India, Delhi lacked in such an enthusiasm for establishing libraries. Lack of public libraries in Delhi during the period can be explained due to a number of reasons. First, after 1857, social and political structural growth during the Delhi Renaissance period was destroyed which caused an overall decline of cultural life in Delhi. Second, Delhi lacked in educational facilities, particularly of
higher education that is evident from the fact that the Government closed even the solitary Delhi College. No effort was made to do any thing in this regard until the foundation of the St. Stephen’s College, the Hindu College, and the Ramjas College. This is also supported by the fact that the establishment of the Delhi University was unnecessarily delayed until 1922 and not only this the attempts were also made to drag feet even after the university had started functioning. Thirdly, attitude of the authorities was also responsible for lack of public libraries in Delhi, as there were no attempts even for legislation to promote public libraries. More than the lack of legislation it was either a manifestation of the apathy and planning ineptitude or criminal neglect of this important state liability at a time when Delhi had already been flourishing into a big centre of trade and commerce with large population to sustain. Fourthly, a proper library movement like many other parts of India lacked in Delhi.

2.5 Education in Post Independence Era

After independence, the educational sector in our country was given a place of importance. Our planners as crucial components for future development considered academic institutions, particularly the universities and colleges and their libraries. Delhi being the capital of the nation has had a phenomenal and rapid growth and development of academic institutions. Resultantly, the nation’s capital houses four central
universities, a number of deemed universities, centres for excellence in higher studies and research, besides more than hundred colleges and thousands of schools.

Established in 1922, the Delhi University started functioning with Hari Singh Gaur as its First Vice-Chancellor, the university library also started functioning with K.B. Pirzada Muhammad Hussian as the first Librarian. After the appointment of Sir Maurice Gwyer who was the first Chief Justice of the Federal Court, as Vice-Chancellor of the university in 1938, the library of the university was renovated by spending rupees 25,000 donated by G.D. Birla. However, the new separate building of the library was constructed in 1958. Sir Maurice Gwyer brought Dr. S.R. Ranganathan to Delhi in 1942 to suggest ways and means to put the library on sound professional footing. Another landmark in the history of Delhi University library was the recommendations of Professor Carl M. White, an American who was invited by the then vice-chancellor, C.D. Deshmukh. Prof. White submitted a report entitled, “A Survey of the University of Delhi Library”, on 19th June 1965.

The Delhi University Library System presently encompasses the undergraduate and postgraduate, and divisional and departmental units within its administrative and organizational set-up. It has following major units under its system: (i) the Central Reference Library, (ii) Faculty of Arts Library, (iii) the
Ratan Tata Library, (iv) the South Campus Library, and (v) the Central Science Library, besides to its zonal library units in the four different corner of Delhi and number of Departmental Libraries. The collection of the Delhi University Library runs into lakhs supported by huge allocations for the purchase of books and periodicals. In addition to university libraries, Delhi do have over hundred College libraries and thousands of school libraries playing an active role in the process of information processing and dissemination.

Educational development of independent India was greatly influenced by the Education Commission. Appointed in 1948 by the Government of India under the Chairmanship of Dr. S. Radhakrishnan, the Commission looked very closely into the conditions in college and university libraries. In its report the Commission wrote that the library is the heart of all university work. For both humanistic and scientific studies, a first class library is essential in a university.

A historical study of the growth and development of libraries in India during pre-independence and post-independence period is self evident that the libraries and documentation centres in India have seen both ups and downs during its process of development. There was a time when the people of the country were concentrated more towards freedom movement than to fight for the cause of library movement in the country. But, after India
got freedom, there had been a rapid growth and development of
libraries because the builders of nation had recognized the role of
the library in the socio-economic development of the country, the
important role that library play in the over all development of the
human society was also recognized at the international level and
so many international organizations like IFLA, FID, ISO, ICSU
and UNESCO had already started extensive efforts for the
promotion and development of libraries and documentation
centres for the benefit of human society as a whole. Among them,
UNESCO particularly for developing countries made special
efforts for the growth and development of libraries.
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