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Historical Background of University Libraries in India

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Chapter - 1

Historical Background of University Libraries in India

1.1. Introduction:

The birthplace of one of the earliest civilizations in the world, India has a glorious past. There is in fact no country where love of learning has so early an origin or has exercised so lasting an influence. Even in the remote past academic institutions were highly significant in India. In the following paragraphs a comprehensive detail is presented as regards the historical almanac of University libraries in India.

1.2. Ancient India:

Taxila and Nalanda were known for their well-equipped libraries with a wide variety of manuscript collections. According to Tibetan accounts—Nalanda had a grand library called Dharamaganja (Piety Mart). It consisted of three grand buildings called Ratnasagara, Ratnadadhi and Ratnaranjika respectively. Among them, “Ratnasagara” which was a nine-storied building, specialized in the collection of rare and sacred manuscripts on classical literature. The library of this institution of advanced learning was believed to be the biggest in the world. However, despite the growth and expansion, the prestigious Nalanda library could not service the surge of invaders from the west particularly the Muslim iconoclasts. It was at the merciless hands of these intruders that Nalanda passed into oblivion and now has become almost a sacred name for the scholars the world over.

Though Taxila was a famous site of learning from 700 B.C. to 300 A.D., no libraries have been found in the archaeological excavations yet. The reason being that it is believed that instructions were imparted orally, without the medium of books. With the advent of Buddhism, teaching came to be practiced through written word and this gave rise to libraries. Fahien noticed such libraries at
Jetavana monastery at Sravasti (U.P.) had a huge library complex known as Dharmaganj. Jagaddal, Kanheri, Mithila, Odantapuri, Somapuri, Ujjain, Vallabh, and Vikramasila were the other seats of learning which had good collections of manuscripts in the libraries attached to them. However, all these libraries were destroyed either by natural calamities or at the hands of Muslim iconoclasts.

1.3. Medieval India

The medieval period was marked by Sultanates love for books, libraries and knowledge. It is said that "the great Persian scholar, Amir Khusro was the librarian of the imperial library" set up by Jalal-ud-din Khilji. It can, therefore, be safely concluded that "the Sultans regularly maintained libraries in the palace under the direct aegis of a full time librarian."

After taking over Delhi's region in 1526, Mughals also patronized penmanship. The first Mughal emperor, Babar, was a great lover of books; and when he invaded India, he took possession of the personal library of Ghazi Khan. In his own words he "went into Ghazi Khan's room, there were many books of learned contents." Also, he took keen interest in the development of an imperial library as well as his personal library. His son, Humayun, continued the jurisdiction and converted a pleasure-house in Purana Qila of Delhi into a library. Incidentally, a fall from the stairs of his library was the cause of his death.

Akbar the great "took much delight in the collection of books in his library. He made several provisions for the good management of his library, and its books were classed under sciences and histories." Aurangzeb also had mad love for books and knowledge and transferred his library to merge with his palace in Delhi.

1.4. Modern Times

1.4.1 Early Nineteenth Century

A modern university library has its roots in college libraries. Warren Hastings, Governor-General (1774-85), founded a Madarsa at Calcutta in 1781.
Jonathan Duncan in 1792 stressed the need to collect books of the ancient period to preserve valuable general learning and tradition. Lord Minto, Governor-General (1807-13), in his minutes of the 6 March 1811 wrote "Library be attached to each of the Colleges under the charge of a learned native with a small establishment of servants for the care of manuscripts", This is probably the first statement on record concerning libraries in academic set-up in India. Lord Auckland, Governor-General of India (1836-40), further outlined the library policy in his minutes of the 24 Nov., 1839: In order to make the greatest use of the advantages of the colleges, I would attentively watch the degree to which the students profit by their access to the considerable libraries which are now attached to many of our institutions Important deficiencies in these libraries should be promptly supplied.¹⁵

After an analysis and evaluation of the college libraries in India, the Hunter Commission observed: "As regards the extent to which libraries are used, the information obtained seems to show that among the students of some colleges a perceptible taste for general reading has sprung up. Yet, Bombay, Bengal and the North-Western Provinces reports agree in saying that the general reading of students is confined to a very narrow range, being almost entirely limited to the books which have some bearing on the subjects of examinations, though an exception to a limited extent is made in Bombay in the case of the Elphinstone College⁶. Seven years after the Hunter Commission Report in 1889, the Library of the Forman Christian College at Lahore was established- Within five years this Library had a collection of 13,000 books, with a Librarian (H.M, Grawold) to administer it. This library played a prominent role in promoting education among the students. The reading room was opened twenty four hours in a day and promoted self-study. It encouraged inculcation of knowledge beyond the prescribed text-books.¹⁶

1.4.2 Later Nineteenth Century:

Though the East India Company's court of Directors earlier rejected the proposal to start universities at Madras and Calcutta in 1834 and 1845 respectively, they yet revised this view due to: (1) the rapid spread of liberal
education among Indians; and (2) the requirements of an increased European and Anglo-Indian population. Accordingly, a Despatch (No 49 of 19 July, 1854) was addressed to the Governor-General in Council by Sir Charles Wood. An immediate outcome of this Despatch was the establishment of three affiliating universities at Calcutta, Bombay and Madras in 1857 on the model of the London University which itself was an examining body then. According to their preamble these three universities were established for the purpose of ascertaining, by means of examinations, the persons who had acquired proficiency in different branches of literature, science and arts, and of rewarding them by academic degrees as evidence of their respective attainments and marks of honour. Since these universities had no role to play in respect of teaching and research, the need for attaching a library to them immediately after their establishment was not felt.

The credit for the establishment of Bombay University Library in 1874 which was completed in 1878 and occupied on 27 February, 1880, is attributed to Premchand Roy Chand, who donated Rs. 2 lakh towards it. It had then a small collection of books on history and biography presented to the Library by the Government in 1874. Similarly, Calcutta University Library owes its origin to the philanthropy of Joy Kissan Mookerjee who offered to donate Rs. 5,000 for purchasing books in 1869, but it was not before 1873 that a library was started there. The same was the case with the Madras University Library. In his will, William Griffith transmitted to the University a gift of Rs. 26,519 which was utilized for the establishment of its library in 1907.

A major obstacle to university library development was that the universities established during the 19th century did not serve the primary purpose of the advancement of learning and research. They restricted their activity merely to holding examinations and awarding degrees. The teaching work was done by colleges which did not form an integral part of the universities. The universities served as an administration and examination centre where existence of library was not needed.
1.5. Twentieth Century:

1.5.1 Indian Universities Commission, 1902:

The establishment of Punjab and Allahabad universities in 1882 and 1887 made the total number of universities in India rise to 5. However, libraries in these universities were conspicuous by their absence in the priority list of university development. The Report of the Indian Universities Commission of 1902 (Chairman: Sir Thomas Raleigh) was very critical about this situation. It remarked:

"Of the present university libraries there is not much to be said. The library at Madras appears to be entirely neglected. Bombay has a good collection of oriental and other books; but the library is little used by graduates and hardly at all by students. Calcutta has a library and money has been granted for the purpose of making it supplementary to other libraries in Calcutta. It is opened to fellows and to persons permitted by the Syndicate to use it for the purpose of literary search. the Allahabad University has no library. Lahore has not a very large University Library".19

Further, the Commission recommended: "Good reference libraries should be provided in connection both with universities and colleges in order that students may have an opportunity of forming the habit of independent and intelligent reading".20

1.5.2 Calcutta University Commission (1917-19):

The Calcutta University Commission (1917) highlighted the libraries and also their pitiable and pathetic sates. The Commission remarked that some libraries here and there may be exceptions but "in general the libraries are quite inadequate for the needs of the students, and still more for those of teachers".21 The Commission, in its findings, recommended that training should be given to students and teachers towards use of the libraries to strengthen the library system. It further recommended that adequate facilities for teaching function would facilitate great libraries.22
1.5.3 University Libraries During 1919-1947:

Eight new universities along with their associated libraries were established during the period 1919-1930. There were international contacts between Indian and British university libraries, and gradually with American university libraries as well. The administrative set-up of Indian university libraries was on the basis of the model of the western libraries. After 1921, upgradation of colleges to universities took place that had some kind of libraries attached to them. For instance; the Aligarh Muslim University (1921) was one of the few colleges which had taken the initiative in establishing a library.

The years between 1939 and 1947, shadowed by World War II, were bleak so far as university library development was concerned. Only two universities, Utkal in 1943 and Saagar in 1946 could be established during this eight-year period. The 20th century provided Indians the opportunity for interaction with librarians in the western countries. This paved way for innovations and improvements, such as, open access, card catalogues, subject bibliographies, reference service and inter-library loans as essential features of library service. Also, some India university librarians went to England and America in particular, to study librarianship. They brought back rich library experiences based on their close observations of western libraries and study of new methods and techniques of library services. The knowledge and experience, they earned benefited the functioning of their respective and other university libraries in the country in general.

Many western librarians of prominence posted in India, particularly during the Second World War, also helped in “widening the horizons of library service”. But then this was only like a drop in the ocean. Though the changes were characteristically slow the development of libraries continued upto 1947, when India got Independence.

However, the job of a librarian was not considered as very respectable and did not attract many people. Besides, the librarians were regarded as custodians and were even penalised for loss of books. As a result, the librarians did not perform their duties truly and did not encourage use or took interest in
their job. Practically, they did not offer any library services, such as, reference service, bibliographical service, etc. The documentation service was, however, unknown to most of them. Thus, the services of these libraries were deplorable.28 The entire system of recruitment of librarians was in disarray where under qualified individuals were appointed to the job who were devoid of professionally training.29 As a result, in some university libraries, an honorary librarian, usually one of the professors, was appointed over the library staff as 'Professor-Incharge of library'.30 This deprived the librarians of all initiative, and rather infused in them an attitude of inferiority complex. Moreover, it did not attract others to take up a librarian’s job. Inevitably it had its adverse effects on the overall library image, as the "professor-in-charge" restrained the library staff from innovations and developments.31

It can safely be concluded from the above that the concept of library was a mere formality in the pre-independence period. As a result of which, libraries even in the most well-established universities were not properly organized and the status of the librarians was pitifully low.32

1.6. Post-Independence Era

1.6.1 University Education Commission, (1948-49)

After Independence vigorous efforts were made to improve the quality and standard of higher education; particularly at university level. The Government of India in this direction appointed the University Education Commission in 1948, with the eminent philosopher and educationist, Dr. S. Radhakrishnan as Chairman. The Commission enquired into the existing conditions of university education and made important recommendations to bring it to the level of universities abroad. The importance it accorded to university libraries can be well verified by the following statement of the Commission:33

"The Library is the heart of all the University's work; so as regards its research work, and indirectly as regards its educational work, which derives its life from research work. Scientific research needs a library as well as its
Burma (now Myanmar) on the east. The northern boundary is made up of China, Nepal and Bhutan. The channel formed by the Palk and Gulf of Mannar separate India from Sri Lanka. India for administrative purposes is divided into the national capital territory of Delhi, 28 states, and 6 centrally administered union territories.46

U.P. is the short form of Uttar Pradesh, is the most populous state of India. India’s total population was more than one arab and that of Uttar Pradesh 166,197,923 as per 2001 census. As against India’s total area of 32.9 lakh sq. km., Uttar Pradesh has 2.94 lakh sq. km. which is about nine percent of the country’s total area. The literacy of U.P. is 56.27%. There are 898 females per 1,000 males in the state. Tibet and Nepal bound Uttar Pradesh in the north, Himachal Pradesh in the northwest, Haryana in the west, Rajasthan in the southwest, Madhya Pradesh in the south and southwest and Bihar in the east.47

Even under the British administration, Uttar Pradesh maintained its intellectual leadership. The British combined Agra and Oudh into one province called the United Provinces of Agra and Oudh. The name was shortened to United provinces in 1935. After independence in January 1950, the United Province was renamed Uttar Pradesh.

1.8. Central University (India): A Case Study of Four Central University Libraries of U.P.

A Central University in India is established by the Government of India, normally by Act of Parliament, while most universities are established by state governments. The Government of India is responsible for allocating and distributing financial resources required by the University Grants Commission (UGC) for establishment of Central Universities in India.

There are currently 23 Central Universities:48

1. Central Agricultural University, Imphal (Manipur)
2. University of Delhi, (Delhi)
3. Jawaharlal Nehru University, (New Delhi)
4. Jamia Millia Islamia, (New Delhi)
The following paragraphs present a brief history of the four referred Central University Libraries of U.P.

1.8.1. Banaras Hindu University (BHU)

Situated in the holy city of Varanasi, Banaras Hindu University is an internationally reputed centre of learning founded by the great nationalist leader, Pandit Madan Mohan Malviya in 1916 with cooperation of great personalities like Dr. Annie Besant, who viewed it as the University of India. Banaras Hindu University was created under the Parliamentary legislation B.H.U. Act 1915. It played a stellar role in the independence movement and has evolved into a remarkable centre of learning in India. It has produced many great freedom fighters, renowned scholars, artists, scientists and technologists.
who have contributed to the progress of the nation. The area of the main campus of	his premier University is spread across 1300 acres having well maintained
roads, extensive greenery, a temple, an air strip and buildings which are an
architectural delight.

Another campus of the university at Barkachha, in Mirzapur district,
covering an area of 2700 acres is coming up. The university is divided into 3
institutes, 14 Faculties 124 Departments, 4 Inter disciplinary Centres a
constituent college for women’s and 3 Constituents Schools, spanning a vast
range of subjects pertaining to all branches of humanities, social science,
technology, medicine, science, fine arts and performing arts. It further has 6
centres of Advanced Studies, 10 Departments under Special Assistance
Programme and a large number of specialized Research Centres. It also has four
Degree Colleges of the city affiliated to it. Bharat Kala Bhavan, the reputed
museum of the university is famous for the collection of varieties it has. The 927
bed hospital of the University is equipped with all the modern amenities. The
university provides a wide range of facilities for sport and hobbies, has large
playgrounds, a big auditorium, a flying club and many auxiliary services and
units like printing press, publication cell fruit preservation Centre, Subsidized
Canteens, Employment and Information bureau, Security etc. The University
family consists of about 15000 students’ 1700 teachers and nearly 8000 non-
teaching staff belonging to all streams of life, castes and religious and races. It
also attracts a large number of students from foreign countries like U.S.A.
countries of Europe, Asia, Middle East, Africa etc. The university has played a
significant role in promoting new ideas, spirit of integration, and cultivation of
intellect and culture among its students and faculty.

1.8.2. Banaras Hindu University: Central Library (Sayaji Rao Gaekwad
Library)

The Banaras Hindus University system which is considered to be the
largest University Library System in the country evolved from a small but
precious collection donated by Prof. P. K. Telang in the memory of his father
Justice K. T. Telang in 1917 and housed in the Telang Hall of the Central Hindu
College, Kamachha. In its early years it was well supported by the renowned historian Sir Jadunath Sarkar. The library was shifted in 1921 to the Central Hall of the Arts College (now Faculty of Arts) and then in 1941 to its present majestic building. It was built with the generous donation from Maharaja Sayajirao Gaekwad of Baroda, and was built on the pattern of the great library British Museum in London on the suggestion of Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya who was the founder of university after he returned from the Round Table Conference, London in 1931. The majestic circular Central hall has been adorned with elegant furniture’s made of famous and rare variety of Burma Teak woods.

It expanded and developed with the help of donations of personal and family collections from well-known personalities and families like Lala Sri Ram of Delhi, Jamnalal Bajaj of Wardha, Roormal Goenka, Batuk Nath Sharma, Tagore Family collection, Nehru Family collection, etc. amongst a score of others. There was also the purchase of books out of the regular fund which resulted in a collection of around 60,000 volumes in 1931 itself. The trend of donation of personal and family collection continued and as a result of which there is a remarkable collection of unique pieces of varieties of books and journals belonging to the 18th century.

With this strong foundation, the library made major advancements during sixties and seventies in its development and changed its form into a system of libraries with the establishment of institute, faculty and departmental libraries during the period. Presently the Banaras Hindu University Library System consists of Central Library at apex and 3 Institute Libraries, 8 Faculty Libraries, 25 Departmental Libraries with a total collection of over 13 lakh volumes to serve the students, faculty members, researchers and technical staff.49

1.8.3. Allahabad University (AU)

Founded on 23rd September, 1887, Allahabad University it is the fourth oldest university of India. In 1904, the university along with all other existing universities of India was brought under the fold of Indian University Act. In 1921, an Act was passed for the re-organization of the university as a unitary teaching and residential institution. The Act however bestowed the power to
have control over the quality and character of the teaching in its constituent colleges.

In 1909, the present site of the campus, along with the senate House and the law college were selected for the library and were designed by Sir Swinton Jacob. The University of Allahabad has 31 teaching and research departments, three University Institutes; one constituent institute; one university medical college; and eleven constituent colleges spread all over the Allahabad city. The University earned national and international reputation as a premier institute of higher learning for its role and contributions to teaching, research and social commitment. Several of its faculty members have made remarkable contributions in their respective disciplines for which they are recognized and respected world wide. The university is known as a site of learning for its students from all over the India and abroad. The University of Allahabad enjoyed the central status at the time of its incorporation in 1887. With the passage of time, it was governed under the U.P. State Universities Act, 1973 till July 13, 2005. After Parliament of India passed an act in May 2005, the Government of India by a Gazette notification on July 14, 2005 declared the University of Allahabad to be an Institution of national importance and consequently the university was granted central status.

1.8.4 Allahabad University Library:

One of the oldest and largest libraries in the Indian subcontinent, the central library developed out of the libraries of Muir Central College, and the libraries set up by the university itself during 1904-1922. Its three storey building is equipped with all facilities and sections required for a modern library. The library has a collection of nearly seven lacs volumes and subscribes to 422 current periodicals. It also has sizable collection of back volumes of journals, manuscripts, coins and non-print materials. Keeping up with the modern times, the library also provides on-line access of journals through UGC-Infonet Digital Library Consortium, a INFLIBNET/UGC initiative to serve its cliental with quality material.
1.8.5. Baba Saheb Bhim Rao Ambedkar University (BBRAU), Lucknow

Having jurisdiction over the entire state of Uttar Pradesh, Babasaheb Bhimrao Ambedkar University, Lucknow is one of the youngest central university in the country. The campus Vidya Vihar is located off Rae Bareli Road, about 10 kms south of the Charbagh Railway Station, Lucknow.

1.8.6. Baba Saheb Bhim Rao Ambedkar University Central Library, Lucknow

The foundation of the library at Babasaheb Bhimrao Ambedkar University, Lucknow were laid in January 1998. The library inherited approximately a thousand reference books acquired by earlier arrangements and a thousand books in Hindi donated by the U.P. Bhasha Sansthan programs. It was then set up in two rooms at the second floor of the Block # 3 of the Administrative Building. The library has since been shifted to the first floor of the Block # 4 of the Administrative building having an area of about 500 sq. mts. and continues to fulfill its objective to supplement educational and information needs of the faculty, non-teaching staff, visitors and students of the university through its book and periodical section. Various new developments have taken place in recent times like classification and cataloging. A semi-professional staff has been sent for the new periodical section. For the future library is considering providing internet based services and the bar-code based computerized circulation.

The present day collection of the library is 5831 books on various subject being taught at the post-graduate level, subscribes to 42 subject journals and also houses back volumes of previously subscribed journals. Four daily newspaper and six magazines are made available in the reading room. In an academic year around 9000 users utilize the libraries services and approximately 4000 books are in circulation.

1.8.7. Maulana Azad Library, Aligarh Muslim University, Aligarh

Maulana Azad Library has a glorious past and being one of the major library of the world, it is expected to have a promising future. It was established with the foundation of Madarstul-Uloom Musalmanan at Aligarh in 1875, which
became Mohammadan Anglo-Oriental (MAO) College in 1877 and became full-fledged Aligarh Muslim University (AMU) in 1920. The Maulana Azad Library came into existence with the donation of personal collection of Sir Syed Ahmad Khan, the founder of Aligarh Muslim University in 1877. It assumed its name as "Lytton Library" after Lord Lytton, then Viceroy and Governor General of India, who laid foundation stone of this Library on 8th January 1877. Since then, the Library grew with personal donations of well-wishers of the University and acquisition of reading material and due to significant growth in number of volumes ultimately, space problem was realized. During Vice-Chancellorship of Dr. Zakir Husain, foundation stone of the new library building was laid by Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru. First Prime Minister of India inaugurated the building on 6.12.1960. The Library was renamed as "Maulana Azad Library" in the memory of Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, a great scholar and the Education Minister of India. The architecture of the building is a model of Islamic Indian style and was planned and designed by the famous architect, Mr. Fayazuddin.

Since then, the Library has grown steadily in terms of physical facilities, collection, number of personnel, services etc. Maulana Azad Library is the Central Library of the University and there are also 84 Sister Libraries in the campus including Libraries of Colleges, Polytechnics, Schools, Centres, Institutes and Seminar Libraries of Departments which function under overall control of the Central Library.52

1.9. Conclusion:

In a university's education primary objective is to cater to the needs of students interested in higher education. A university mainly stands for higher learning and research where scholar and faculty members are head, students are the body and the library is the heart. A library is a centre where collection of documents is done to promote their use and also to facilitate information dissemination. The fundamental role of the library is to impart education and to support and promote the teaching needs of the faculty, research, extension and publication programmes.
The Radhakrishnan Commission (1948) concentrated on both philosophical and practical aspect of higher education and endorsed the view and vehemently supported university library. The Kothari Commission (1964-66) analyzed the Indian Education system and spelt functions of higher learning and streamlining the functions of a university library.

The significance of a library in a modern university was also upheld by Salder's University Commission (1917-19). UGC Library Committee (1957) headed by Dr. S. R. Ranaganathan advised it on matters relating to proper functioning and management of college and university libraries. The UGC accepted most of the recommendations of this committee.

The National Knowledge Commission (NKC) which came into being in 2006 made recommendations for institutions National Mission on library and Information Services (NMLIS) for creating, disseminating, optimally utilizing and preserving knowledge. The knowledge commission also laid stress upon modernizing library management, efficient and effective staffing of libraries and private and personal collections

The historical perspectives on the referred four central university libraries i.e. AMU, BHU, ALU and BBRAU have also been presented in detail for studying the policies related to collection development, organization and services. In the succeeding chapter, an endeavour is made to comprehensively review the multifaceted concepts of collection development, organization and services.

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