CHAPTER - I

HIGHER LEARNING IN ANCIENT AND MEDIAVAL INDIA

1. Hindu and Buddhist Education: Centres of Learning

From time immemorial India had been known as a land of great natural wealth and rich cultural treasure. Through the ages Hindus developed a system of education largely for the benefit of the three upper classes of society, the Brahman, Kshatriya and the Vaisya, which effectively served for a long time the social and cultural needs of ancient India, and contributed towards the development of a great civilization known far and wide for its high moral discipline, spiritual earnestness, artistic excellence and social efficiency. The ancient tradition of classical learning has come down to us through a succession of pupils and teachers who cultivated it with great veneration.

Higher education in ancient India with Sanskrit as the medium of instruction provided a large number of courses for specialization in different branches of knowledge, both religious and secular, and the curriculum became ever

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1. "Education is no exotic in India. There is no country where the love of learning had so early an origin or has exercised so lasting and powerful an influence. From the simple poets of the Vedic age to the Bengali philosopher of the present day there has been an uninterrupted succession of teachers and scholars." - Thomas, F.W., "The History and Prospects of British Education in India", p.9. Report of Indian Education Commission, p.8.

wider according to the social and academic needs of the times. The standard of intellectual attainments demanded of pupils was very exacting and the discipline inculcated was rigorous bordering on asceticism. The admission test in the Nalanda University meant to ascertain the ability and aptitude of a pupil was very severe and only a few candidates could succeed. All the pupils, rich and poor, were required to offer personal services to the 'guru' and to go out begging, both as a means of discipline and a source of maintenance.

Throughout its long history ancient Indian education passed through several phases of development in curriculum, method and organisation. From pre-historic times to about the second millenium B.C. "the family was the only educational agency both for the literary and professional education. 'Asramas' or hermitages of famous 'gurus' became centres of learning, for instance, the 'asrama' of Saunaka in the Naimisha forest, Kanva's 'asrama' on the Malini river around which numerous other hermitages grew up, and the biggest of the hermitage Universities was under the sage Bharadwaja at Prayag, which was known far and wide."

1. Altekar, A.S., "Education in Ancient India", p.73.
2. Majumdar, R.C., "The History and Culture of the Indian People", edited by Majumdar, R.C., vol.II, pp.589-60. Viswa-Bharati University of Rabindranath Tagore was established in 1921, at Santiniketan, West Bengal, on the model of hermitage Universities of ancient India.
The age of the specialist teacher emerged as the field of knowledge expanded in scope and complexity, till, by the early years of the Christian era, organised educational institutions came into existence in the Buddhist monasteries, and under their influence in the Hindu temples. But, the old tradition of 'gurukula', the private and domestic system of schooling provided by the 'guru' at his own cost in his own house, ever remained the most common agency of education in the country. Private teachers used to set up 'tols' where pupils of primary and secondary stages received instruction and 'parishads' or councils of teachers of higher learning for mutual benefit and assistance retaining the full autonomy of their individual institution at home. From the most ancient times there existed in Brahmanic settlements 'parishads', which used to give decisions on questions of Brahmanic religion and learning. A 'parishad' could consist of one to twentyone learned men who were specialists in some branch of knowledge. Thus, specialisation in Vedic study began in very early times. In certain respects the 'parishads' were like judicial assemblies and in others like ecclesiastical synods, but, as most of the members of the 'parishads' were teachers, they were like the associations of teachers in the Middle Ages of Europe, which developed into universities.  

Buddhist monasteries developed since the time of King Asoka who patronised them for the spread of the Law, into centres of learning for both monks and nuns and the lay population as well. As Buddhism did not accept the caste as the basis of social status these monasteries being cosmopolitan in outlook and organisation permitted children of all castes and communities to receive education in them. Nalanda, a Buddhist University founded in Magadha in C.450 A.D. supplied the model for the temple universities of the Hindus established in famous shrines in popular centres of pilgrimage and elsewhere.

Seats of higher learning grew up in holy places, centres of administration and capitals of kingdoms. Colonies of learned Brahmans founded and maintained by kings and rulers, known as 'agraśhara' villages, were designed to be seats of Hindu learning.

From pre-historic times Taxila or Takshashila, the capital of Gandhara, had been a famous centre of higher education where pupils used to come at the age of sixteen to specialise in different branches of knowledge, such as, medicine, law, eighteen 'sippas', and a number of other subjects. The University of Taxila came under Greek and Persian influences, and, in spite of foreign invasions and political vicissitudes, retained the fame of its high academic eminence for centuries. Prince Jivaka, son of King Bimbisara of...
Magaddha, (physician of Buddha), King Prasenjit of Kosala, a contemporary of Buddha, Panini, the grammarian of immortal fame and Kautilya, the prime minister of Chandragupta Maurya, were students of Taxila. It was a national University where pupils from Benares, Rajagriha, Mithila, Ujjayin, Kuru, Kosala, and other regions came for higher education. Students of the neighbouring countries came to Taxila for higher studies.

Varanasi or Benares, a holy place and capital of the kingdom of Kasi, was developed through ages as a centre of higher learning by students who had received education at Takshashila, and they followed the high standard of education and discipline of their great 'alma mater'.

There were other famous centres of higher learning, such as the Nalanda University in Bihar where Chinese Buddhist monks, Huien Tsang (629-645 A.D.) and I - Tsang (673-687 A.D.) received instruction and copied manuscripts, to be taken home, under the guidance of Silabhadra and other celebrated teachers. The University of Nalanda became the symbol of the intellectual and cultural renaissance that characterised the Gupta age. The fame of this great seat of learning reached the remotest corners of Asia and attracted

students from all parts of this vast continent. It became an international centre of culture which was universally acknowledged. This culture was promoted by increased intercourse during this age between India and other Asian countries.¹

Nalanda was the principal source of Buddhist influence in Tibet. In the great traditions of Buddhist learning Vikramāśīla in Bihar succeeded the Nalanda University and maintained for several centuries a continuous cultural link with Tibet. Valabhi, the capital of an ancient kingdom in Kathiawar and part of international trade was, like Nalanda, a seat of higher education visited by Chinese Buddhist scholars. The great University of Kanchi "dominated the intellectual life of the south as Nalanda did of the north".²

Besides the universities of both Hindu and Buddhist higher learning, there were in the country, particularly in the south, a large number of temple colleges which provided Hindu education and some of them which rose to eminence were the colleges at Salatgi, Ennayiram, Tirumukkudal, Tiruvarriyur and Malkapuram.³

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3. Ibid., pp. 94-97.
2. Ancient Education - a Free Social Service

Under the Hindu system education was a free social service rendered by Brahmins who were forbidden to demand tuition fees from their pupils. Buddhist monasteries too gave free education. As the relation of the teacher and the pupil was to be loving and lasting no pecuniary deals were allowed to viciate it. "There is ample evidence to show", wrote Altekar, "that this theory was acted upon in all public educational institutions in ancient India. Evidence of indisputable character shows that the Buddhist universities, temple colleges, 'agrahara' institutions and 'mathas' (monasteries) were all imparting free education to their students".2

While it was a sin for a Brahman to demand tuition fees from his pupils, it was the moral obligation of every student to offer, on the completion of his education, a present to his 'guru', according to his ability, 'gurudaksina', it was called, which as Nana prescribed might consist of "a field, a cow, a horse, a parasol and shoes, a seat, grain, even vegetables", and this would give his teacher much satisfaction.3

1. "The History and Culture of the Indian People", vol.II, p.581. Socrates said that knowledge is not meant for sale in the market. No Greek Citizen should receive payment for imparting instruction.
2. "Education in Ancient India", p. 81.
3. Patrons of Ancient Learning

Teachers in ancient India were not wholly dependent for their living on the precarious source of begging and students' presents. Rulers, merchants, affluent people and society at large used to promote the cause of education in diverse ways helping teachers, students and institutions. Families, rich and poor, were obliged by social convention to give alms to teachers and pupils when they came for begging. On occasions of social and religious festivals, students and teachers used to be invited and entertained by the people and contributions in cash or kind given to teachers and institutions. Affluent families helped poor students financially and otherwise, and paid for copying manuscripts to be presented to scholars. These families made endowments for schools and colleges, granted lands and provided for construction of buildings for educational institutions. Village communities and trade guilds organised and maintained educational centres, for instance, temple colleges, by their own resources.

It was the duty of the king to provide not only security and protection to his subjects, but also to supply adequate resources to the learned classes for cultivation

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1. "Education in Ancient India", p. 95.
of knowledge and for preservation and communication of the cultural heritage from generation to generation. Manu and all other law-givers of ancient India recognised "patronage of education as one of the most important duties of kings; and as a general rule, rulers in ancient times used to vie with one another in discharging it". They granted lands and pensions to poets, scholars and philosophers and founded and made endowments to seats of learning. King Asoka under whose patronage the Third Buddhist Council was held in his capital at Pataliputra had eighty four thousand 'viharas' built in his vast empire and he sent missionaries abroad to spread the message of the Buddha, and his pillar inscriptions, rock-caves and edicts were eloquent monuments of Asoka's endeavours to educate his subjects in the principles and practices of 'Dharma' or Law of Piety. The Buddhist University of Nalanda of Magadha, "which was renowned alike for the Magnificence of its establishment and the intellectual as well as moral pre-eminence of the inmates", owed its foundations to six successive generations of Gupta kings. Under the vigorous patronage of the Gupta kings "Indian intellect reached its high watermark in most branches of art, science and literature, and Indian culture

3. Ibid., p.385.
and civilisation reached a unique stage of development which left a deep impress upon succeeding ages", and it was rapturously termed as the 'Golden Age', the 'Classical Period' of Indian history. Poets, philosophers and scholars used to be members of royal courts where public debates and discussions on vital religious and philosophical problems were held to assess the merit of a point of view and also the intellectual ability and integrity of the participants.  

King Kanishka under whose patronage a Buddhist Council was held, had a spectacular body of celebrated elite in his royal court at Purusapura, which included the Buddhist philosophers Asvaghosa, Parsva, Vasumitra, Sangharaksha, Nagarjuna, Charaka the renowned physician, Mathara, a politician of superb diplomatic insight, and the Greek engineer Agesilaus, all of whom played a leading role in the religious, literary, philosophical, artistic and scientific activities during the reign of the great Kusana king. Chandragupta II, who was a great conqueror and patron of learning assumed the title of Vikramaditya after the legendary king Vikramaditya of Ujjayini, who expelled the first Saka conquerors of India. Chandragupta Vikramaditya had in his royal court a galaxy of

2. Ibid. vol.I, p.460.
3. Ibid. p.147.
'navaratna' (nine jewels) headed by the great poet Kali-dasa. Harshavardhana, ruler of the kingdom of Thaneswar with Kanauj as its capital, was himself a dramatist of no mean calibre, and had in his court distinguished writers like Banabhatta, Mayura, and according to the testimony of Huen Tsiang "royal revenues are divided into four parts, one for the expenses of government and for state worship, one for the endowment of great public servants, one to reward high intellectual eminence and one for acquiring religious merit by gifts to the various sects.\(^1\)

Students and learned men used to receive stipends, scholarships and liberal allowances from kings and chiefs, and on completion of their studies they used to be appointed in offices of the State. Chanakya or Kautilya, a Brahman student of Taxila became the prime minister of Chandragupta Maurya and by his able and intrepid guidance set up a stable and efficient administration which was highly praised by Megasthenes, the Greek ambassador in the court of the Mauryan emperor at Pataliputra.

With all their generous patronage of the cause of education and culture, kings and princes, local chiefs and merchants exercised no control over the education policy and programme pursued by teachers and institutions, and they enjoyed complete freedom and autonomy in their academic activities.

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\(^1\) "The History and Culture of the Indian People", vol. III, p.117.
4. Decadence of the Old System

The Gupta era which was a golden age of political unity, social integration and cultural renaissance of India from 4th to 6th century A.D. came to an end with the fall of the Gupta empire which was followed by the rise of regional kingdoms struggling for supremacy. One of them the kingdom of Thaneswar under Harsha-Wardhan grew up into a mighty power and revived for a short while the glory and spendour of the imperial Gupta rule before it also declined and died out in the 8th century A.D.

India enjoyed undisturbed peace for five hundred years from the time of Toramanna, the leader of the Hun hordes (sixth century A.D.) to the time of Mahmud of Ghazni (eleventh century A.D.) being free from the threat of external aggression. No part of the known world had for so long a time been out of threats of foreign invasions. In the result, the Hindus "lost completely the sense of patriotism and national honour which grows up only under the stimulus of danger from outside."¹ A facile feeling gained ground that India was providentially chosen to be a land ever to remain outside foreign domination and influence. This imaginary sense of security dried up the springs of national greatness and discipline and

weakened the urges for upholding human dignity and social values and subordinated the civic sense to self-aggrandisement.

During this period of national decadence which succeeded the era of peace and prosperity, the living contacts India had established with foreign countries of East and West through commercial and cultural intercourse, were snapped, and India had became isolated from the rest of the world. The overland contact with China had dried up as a result of changed political conditions in Central Asia and the sea-route was under the control of the Sailendra monarchs of the South which made free communication with East Asian countries difficult. No country was isolated from other lands for so long a time as India was for more than three hundred years. Utterly insular in ideas, without any knowledge of what was happening abroad, the Indian people ceased to grow. "Civilisation became decadent and inbred for lack of fertilising contacts with dissimilar cultures. Society became static and the systematisations of previous ages, which were more academic than real at the time of their conception like Chaturvarna - the four castes - and food and drink taboos came to be accepted as divine regulations and conformed to with a rigidity which would have surprised Manu and Yajnavalkya".¹ The creative impulse and

¹. "A Survey of Indian History", p.110.
the scientific outlook that characterised both Hindu and Buddhist education and the high order of civilisation founded on them began to lose its old vigour and brilliance. Hindu intellect which had been rich, varied and original became only imitative and reactionary and the age of commentators to explain and interpret the heritage of the past in order to perpetuate the sway of traditions on society, had begun. The cultivation of knowledge with an earnest effort to discover truth gave place to a blind reverence for old orthodox ways which encouraged a profound faith in mere routine and rituals, social and religious forms and ceremonies having little bearing upon the existing conditions of life. Belief rather than reason, unquestioning acceptance rather than critical assessment of dogmas and creeds began to dominate the intellectual perspective of this age of decadence when superstition had a more powerful grip on life than science. Not only the classical learning cultivated by the Brahmans and other upper classes, but also vernacular education was neglected. With the political dismemberment of the country after the age of Harsha-Vardhana social and cultural decline of the Hindus was complete, and the patronage of ancient learning which had been widespread became only a tradition hardly acted upon. The advancement of learning lay in the hands of the Brahmans, who, with the decline of the Buddhist monasteries, became
the major purveyor of formal education in many areas of the sub-continent. Technical knowledge was gradually relegated to the position of a craft tradition practised in the guilds. "Formal education became scholastic, resulting in intellectual in-growing".\footnote{Basham, A.L., "A Cultural History of India", p.49.} Having lost the former vitality and earnestness of scientific enquiry Indian scholars became dogmatic and doctrinaire, arrogant and chauvinistic. Alberuni, a reputed Arab scholar who had deep regard for the high ideals and achievements of Hindu culture, while visiting India in the 11th century, was constrained sadly to observe with a shock of disappointment that Brahman scholars presumed that they had acquired all knowledge of this life and beyond and they had nothing else to learn and that "there was no country but theirs, no other race of men than theirs that have any knowledge of science whatever".\footnote{Altekar, A.S., Alberuni, 1030 A.D., quoted in "Education in Ancient India", p.282.} This megalomaniac attitude of overbearing vanity of the learned classes of India brought about a perversity of social values and moral and spiritual impoverishment which had no parallel in history.

The tradition of ancient Indian learning has, however, survived the vicissitudes of time and changes in the political administration of the country. In a static and stagnant state of age-old decadence it has come down to us with
the traces of a dynamic system of education the glory of which has vanished for ever. "Brahmanic education has continued from very early times right down to the present day, and throughout that long period, though there was some development and change, its salient features have remained the same. The long struggle with Buddhism ended in a triumph for the Brahmans though not without their own system becoming modified, but it has little influence in changing the educational system. The rule of the Muslims was, on the whole, unfavourable towards Brahman learning, although it was patronised by Akbar and others. Some of the more ruthless, or more orthodox, of Muslim sovereigns destroyed Brahman places of learning, and scattered their students, but in spite of this interruption Brahman learning continued".1

5. Muslim Learning and its Centres

With the establishment of the sultanate at Delhi in the twelfth century till the fall of the Mughal empire in the eighteenth century the larger part of India was under the Muslim rule. The Muslim invasions and occupation of India marked the beginning of momentous changes not only in the political and social spheres, but also in the domain of education and culture. Muslim education introduced a new tradition side by side with Hindu and Buddhist systems,

which India had inherited from the past. The political supremacy established in India by a foreign power with its distinct religious and cultural heritage placed indigenous traditions in an embarrassing situation of stress and strain. "And so the indigenous system of education", wrote N.N.Law, "was for a time deprived of the stimulus and support of State or royal patronage which now applied itself to the promotion of the new Islamic learning, the old learning being left to shift for itself and thrown upon the resources of popular support. Sometimes it was even put down and persecuted by the political power flushed with its first victories, and we have harrowing tales of old universities broken up, libraries looted and the votaries of indigenous learning, Hindu or Buddhist, murdered or driven away homeless"\(^1\). Indeed, these were days of the

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1. Law, N.N., "Promotion of Learning in India (During Muhammadan Rule)", pp.xlv - xlvi.

"It was part of the policy of Aurangzeb (1658-1707), who was a strict and orthodox Muslim, to give great encouragement to Muslim education. He was hard indeed on the Hindus, and in 1669, ordered the destruction of temples and the prohibition of Hindu teaching and worship at Benares and other places. He also once confiscated the buildings belonging to the Dutch in Lucknow and made them over to a Muslim for use as a college. Towards Muslim education, however, Aurangzeb showed great favour". - "A History of Education in India and Pakistan", p.125.
war of conquest, unrest and transition from the old political order of a free people to a new rule imposed by foreign conquerors. For nearly two hundred years after the Muslim conquest Hindu education followed almost in isolation its own independent course supported by its own patrons before Muslim rulers could offer encouragement to both Muslim and Hindu learning with equal ardour.

In those days of despotic and autocratic rule the personal character of the reigning sovereign was the most important factor influencing the well-being of the people and it was specially true in the case of education. If the emperor was, like Akbar, a person of literary tastes he would encourage cultivation of learning and his court would be the resort of literary men, poets and philosophers and imitating their Sultan his noblemen would lavish endowments upon schools and colleges and scholars received their support and encouragement from them. If, on the other hand, the emperor were devoid of literary tastes and cultural refinement and addicted to flippant and frivolous pleasures and pastimes learning and learned men would languish and education suffered through neglect.

Islam attached great importance to acquisition and extension of 'ilm' or knowledge and held scholarship and scholars in high esteem. For an 'allama' to teach was considered to be a religious duty, and teachers were treated
with great veneration, and though poor, they commanded universal respect and confidence. Although a high standard of legal, scientific and philosophical knowledge was attained in the great centres of Muslim education in Baghdad, Cairo, Damascus, Kairawan and Nisapur in Iran, Cordova and Saville in Spain, Muslim education in India could not reach that height of excellence owing to the inevitable difficulties involved in the conquest of the country by a completely alien people. But, the basic ideals of Muslim education were inculcated here also. Isolated from the home of Muslim culture, India under Muslim rule, could not attain much intellectual success, and the progress of education was neither uniform nor continuous throughout the country. "Its fluctuating and uncertain character was very largely the result of despotic rule", observes Keay, "which indulged in sudden impulses, and afforded no certainty of the continuance of any new undertaking, as shown in the many Delhis which were built and deserted. The same happened in the case of the 'madrasahs'. Moreover, the poverty of the country and the rapacity of officials stifled the popular demand for education".2

Muslim education provided both religious and secular knowledge.3 Higher education consisted not only in the

1. Jaffar, S.M., "Education in Muslim India", p.3.
3. "Education in Muslim India", p.28.
cultivation of Arabic and Persian languages and literatures, theology, sciences, medicine, philosophy, law and many other subjects of intellectual interest, but also of technical branches of useful knowledge, and music and painting, through a system of apprenticeship under 'ustads' or specialists. There were 'karthanas' or workshops where instruction in arts and crafts was given.¹ The medium of higher instruction was Persian which was the language of the court, and the study of the 'Qur'an' in Arabic was compulsory for every Muslim student.

Muslim education was given in 'maktabs' and 'madrasas' attached to mosques and 'khanqahs' (monasteries), and 'dargahs' or shrines, tombs of celebrated Muslim saints known as 'derwishes', by the 'allama' (teacher) of the 'muballigh' (preacher). Every centre of administration had seats of higher learning besides places of popular education. Universities and libraries were founded in principal cities such as Goramau, Khairabad in Oudh, Delhi, Agra, Jaunpur, Lahori, Bijapur, Hyderabad, Murshidabad and Multan "where students flocked from all parts of India,"

¹ Imperial Gazetteer of India, vol. IV, p.436.
² "The place in India which was most famous in its day as a Muslim place of learning was 'Jaunpur'. It was compared to Shiraz in Persia and called the Shiraz of India. It came into prominence during the reign of Ibrahim Sharki (1402-40), and although Sikandar Lodi destroyed its colleges when he conquered Jaunpur, it regained its position as an educational centre. Scholars from far and near came to study here, and amongst the students was one at least, Sher Shah, who afterwards became the paramount Muslim sovereign of India". - "A History of Education in India and Pakistan", p.148.
and even from Afghanistan and Bokhara, to attend the lectures of renowned specialists.\(^1\) Schools were established in almost all regions of Muslim India having Muslim places of worship. Not only tombs of saints like Nizam-ud-Din Auliya near Delhi, and of Muin-ud-Din Chishti at Ajmere, had each a 'madrasa' in it, but also those of rulers and noblemen had seats of learning attached to them, for instance, Firoz Shah Tughlaq's and Humayun's tomb at Delhi.

There was a system of domestic education privately provided by individual Muslim teachers, who followed the general pattern of Muslim education pursued in recognised institutions, and their services to the cause of popular education was very great indeed. Generally Muslim educational centres permitted rich and poor children of all communities to attend them.

6. **Patrons of Free Muslim Education**

Under the Muslim system instruction was given free, and poor students received special care from both the community and the State. Teachers demanded no fee from their pupils, but they received personal service or gifts in cash or kind, from their students.

Muslim rulers, like the Muslim society, held the learned classes in great respect and associated them with the work of administration as ministers, judges, courtiers and lawyers. Firoz Shah Tughlaq (1351-88) himself a scholar

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\(^1\) Imperial Gazetteer of India, vol.IV, p.408.
and writer of repute, was a great patron of learning whose royal court, like that of Akbar (1555-1605), had a large body of distinguished scholars, literary men and physicians, who received gifts and pensions on a liberal scale from the Sultan.¹ The 'madrasa' as a seminary of higher learning trained 'ulama' (scholars) for appointment in public service. Both kings and nobles needed the assistance of the 'ulama' to suppress subversive elements which challenged their authority. The 'ulama' tried to influence the State policy, and prevailed upon the rulers to enforce orthodox doctrines of Islam. These scholars were mostly government officials "whose religious prestige was exploited by the sultans as a counterpoise against military adventurers. But although the 'ulama' issued 'fatwas' (legal opinions) declaring that opposition to the ruling authority was an abominable sin, not all of them were themselves loyal to their rulers".² In Muslim India there was a separate department of the Government to regulate religious affairs and deal with problems of public instruction. Kings and courtiers and the pious rich gave endowments for the maintenance of religious and educational institutions and granted stipends and scholarships to students and pensions to learned individuals. "There was hardly a prince of any import-

¹ "Promotion of Learning in India", p.51.
² "A Cultural History of India",
Rizvi, S.A.A., 'Islam in Mediaval India, p.283.
ance whose name is not in some way or the other, connected with the opening of a school or a college during his reign". Establishment of 'maktabs' and 'madrasas' by kings and their courtiers was a great cultural tradition of Muslim India. "Schools were attached to mosques and supported by State grant in cash or land or by private liberality. Individual instances of merit were also aided by the State, and land-holders and nobles vied with each other in supporting scholars of repute".

Under the patronage of Muslim kings and princes, such as Akbar and Dara, important Sanskrit works like the 'Ramayana', the 'Mahabharata', the 'Vedas', the 'Bhagvata Gita', the 'Rajtarangini' and other books were translated into Arabic and Persian by Muslim scholars and courtiers who had cultivated Sanskrit with keen interest. "Muslim kings and princes themselves became students, and included Hindu culture in their intellectual interests. Muslim literary education intermingled as freely with Hindu literature as Mughal painting with Rajput painting. Hindu classics were translated into Persian, and as a consequence Persian culture influence Hindu culture".

Todar Mall, the great Hindu finance minister of Akbar made Persian the language of administration, and thereby "helped the growth and development of Urdu also, and its acceptance as the 'lingua

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1. "Education in Muslim India", p.9
2. Imperial Gazetteer of India, vol.IV, p.408
franca' of a great part of India".  

As there was no printing press and books on various subjects were in demand, manuscripts with coloured illustrations were to be prepared, the State encouraged by grants the wide cultivation of calligraphy as a branch of educational practice. Literary activities of writers and original research work of scholars used to receive royal patronage and recognition, as in the court of Akbar poets and philosophers were generously rewarded. Establishment of libraries, orphanages and organisation of 'mushearas' (poetical symposia) by kings and courtiers with liberal grants made to them, were great cultural traditions of Muslim India.

7. **Decline of Muslim Learning**

Muslim education suffered always from serious deficiencies and failed to attain a high standard of intellectual efficiency. Akbar tried to bring about certain reforms which had only a limited effect on the whole system. The French traveller, Bernier, who visited India during the reign of Shah Jahan (1628-58) and stayed in the royal court for a number of years left a record of his

2. "Education in Muslim India", p. 81.
impressions of the state of affairs, particularly, of education during the Mughal period. There was a general decline of education and the number of institutions as of scholars and pupils dwindled and the learned classes were no longer held in high esteem and given public offices of trust and dignity.¹

Although Aurangzib, a strict and orthodox Muslim, destroyed Hindu places of worship and learning, he gave encouragement to Muslim education. But the emperor was not happy with the system of Muslim education that was in vogue at the time. It had lost much of its relevance to the problems of life and its usefulness and became much too bookish, formal and theoretical. Aurangzib took his old tutor Mulla Shah to task for having taught him wrong and obsolete knowledge of geography, history and other subjects.² But the royal dissatisfaction did not improve the situation which went from bad to worse.

Muslim education steadily declined with the fall of the Mughal empire after the death of Aurangzib in 1707. A war of succession followed in Delhi, and in the absence of an effective central authority the political system built up by the Muslim rulers disintegrated and the whole country was plunged into a welter of internecine war,

². Ibid, p. 155.
anarchy and confusion. And the situation was worse con-
founded by the foreign powers, such as the Portuguese,
Dutch, French and English, who had already appeared in
this country getting involved in local politics to serve
their own commercial, political or religious interests.
As a result of this widespread disorder and insecurity
"the cultural life of the country shared in the general
malaise. The promotion of culture depended largely upon
patronage and great men were too occupied with power poli-
tics and the problem of survival to have much time or means
to encourage the arts. There was little growth and a gene-
ral slow decay". 1

The great chaos and turmoil India witnessed at the
time involved the Mughals, the Afghans and the Marathas
fighting in the north, and the French and the English strug-
gling in the south. After Plassey in 1757, and still more
after 1761, the year of the Third Battle of Panipat, which
witnessed the complete rout of the Maratha power by the
Afghan Chief Ahmad Shah Durrani, and also of the final
defeat of the French in the south, the British power began
steadily to rise to supremacy. In 1765, when the East India
Company's forces defeated at Buxar the Mughal troops, and
Clive as the governor of Bengal obtained from the emperor of
Delhi the 'diwani' or the right to collect revenues and

1. Smith, Vincent A., "The Oxford History of India",
p. 53.
administer civil justice in Bengal, Bihar and Orissa, the East India Company became in effect a sovereign power on the main-land of India. Warren Hastings who became governor of Bengal in 1772, was made by the Regulating Act of 1773, the first governor-general of Fort William in Bengal at the head of a council of four members with superintending authority over the other two presidencies of Madras and Bombay and called upon to consolidate the British rule on a strong and stable foundation.