CHAPTER—V
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Delhi is a city of mixed society with different religions, castes, languages and customs. It had been the capital of many rulers and is now the permanent capital of free India. It finds prominent references in the prehistoric era right from the epic of the Mahabharata. Later Delhi passed through one kingdom to another beginning with the Mauryans, the Guptas, the Palas of Central India and finally to the Chauhans in the 12th Century. Then came the Afghans and the Moghuls who remained here for four centuries. The Moghuls occupied it in the 16th century and in the 18th century it was engulfed by the British. In 1911 it was made the capital of British India and after 1947 it became the capital of independent India. It was made a union territory in 1956. It has a total area of 1483 sq.km. surrounded by Haryana and Uttar Pradesh. It has a total population of 62,20,406 according to the 81 census. It has more than 300 schools and colleges besides a number of educational and technical institutions. Way back in 31 Delhi had about 7,000 libraries, including those in schools, colleges and universities. Besides, there were a number of social, private and public libraries as well.

Delhi has also a number of foreign agency libraries. Among them are the United States Information Service, the £e of Soviet Culture, Science and Arts Library, the British
Council Library, the Japan Information Library, etc. All of them are not free libraries. Some of them are subscription libraries. Therefore, it was felt there should be libraries for the public. There are 30 free libraries which are run by the Delhi Administration. (Appendix-II)

After independence a campaign was launched to stamp out poverty and illiteracy. Communication in the absence of education became very difficult. Language and religious problems also came in the way of communication with the public. Our first Prime minister, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, realised the importance of public library.

While our leaders were planning to open a public library in Delhi itself, the Unesco came out with a pilot project to be considered by the Government of India. In the 1st week of May 1949 the project was referred to Dr. Prem Kirpal, Deputy Secretary in the Ministry of Education, who found it quite useful. After a week Dr. Kirpal, on behalf of the Government of India, and Edward Sydney, on behalf of the Unesco, signed the documents for the proposed project. This was a preliminary agreement.

The project was discussed at the Unesco Conference. India represented at the conference by Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, the Minister of Education. India agreed to take up this project all earnestness.
The Unesco at its Fourth General Conference in Paris in September-October 1949 resolved to Organise in one of the member states at the request of the state and with the assistance of the Government as a part of the campaign for the spread of fundamental education a pilot project for public library mainly intended for persons who have just learnt to read and write.1

In the last week of November 1949 Mr. E. N. Peterson, Head of the Public Libraries Department of the Unesco, visited Delhi to make preliminary arrangements with the officers of the Ministry of Education. After long discussions between Mr. Peterson and the officers of the Ministry of Education, the ground was prepared for a formal agreement. The first agreement was signed between India and the Unesco on December 2, 1949 which was later replaced by a modified agreement.

The second and last agreement was signed between the two authorities on May 22, 1951 under which the Unesco was to pay 1,00,000 (Rs. 2,85,000) in the form of aid and fellowship for six months to the director of the proposed library and also provide the services of a foreign advisory director. Also the government of India was required to spend double the amount, i.e., 1,20,000 (Rs. 5,70,000) at the outset of the library.

When everything was cleared up and it was decided that the library has to be opened in India, the Ministry of Education brought out a notification in February/March 1950 for the award
of the fellowship to the future director of the library for training abroad. In June 1950, the interviews were conducted by a high-powered selection board comprising Dr. Tara Chand, Secretary (Education) as Chairman, Dr. S. S. Bhatnagar, Secretary (Science) and Dr. Sen, Vice Chancellor of the University of Delhi as members. The candidates with long experience attended the interviews. But the committee decided to offer this post to the lowest-paid but youngest candidate, Mr. D. R. Kalia. In July 1950 a formal letter was sent to Mr. Kalia asking him to proceed to Malmo (Sweden) within a week's time. This appointment was also approved by the Unesco. Simultaneously, an appointment letter was also sent by the Unesco headquarters to Mr. Kalia. Accordingly, Mr. Kalia proceeded to Malmo for six months.

Thus, one of the conditions was fulfilled through this appointment. The other condition was to provide the services of a foreign librarian as Advisory Director to the library. The Unesco proposed the name of Mr. Edward Sydney, M.C., MLA, Borough Librarian, Leyton, London, chairman of the Executive Committee of the Library Association and a well-known public librarian in the world. He was finally sent for six months to help in the planning and establishment of the library. He formally reported for duty in December 1950 and stayed in India up to June 24, 1951.

In February, 1951 Mr. Kalia returned to India and joined as Director of the Delhi Public Library. The Ministry of Education
by a resolution established the Delhi Library Board. It has 12 members from different organizations comprising a Chairman, a vice chairman, one member each from the Ministries of Education and Finance, one member nominated by the Chief Commissioner, Delhi, two members elected by the Municipal Committee of Delhi, one member elected by the Delhi District Board and three experts from outside including one of them from the Unesco.

Delhi was found as the most suitable place for this library keeping in view the social strata, religious sections, business houses and the population, both rural and urban, for the planners. But there was no suitable building available for this purpose. Many proposals were put forward for consideration. Ultimately, Dalmia Jain House, opposite the Delhi Railway Station, which used to be a canteen in the Second World War, was selected to house the library. Known as 'Wevell Canteen', it was used as a rest house for the soldiers. With minor modifications in the 'Wevell Canteen' building, the library started working. Though open from all the sides the building was not safe from all angles. It was a very rough house.

It was all set for the inaugural function. On the request of Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, the Prime Minister, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru agreed to inaugurate the library. The date was fixed as 7th October, 1951.
Some 8,000 books were hurriedly procured for the library. Racks, a reading room, chairs, tables, the membership section, the Children's and the social education sections were all ready. A big tent-house was erected and decorated for the occasion.

It was 27th October 1951, the inaugural pandal was packed with distinguished guests from different sections of society. There were writers, poets, journalists, politicians, doctors, engineers, and officers of the Government of India, especially from the Ministries of Education and Finance, MCD and the Unesco, beside the public at large. Maulana Abul Kalam Azad was made Chairman of the inaugural function. Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru arrived at 5.30 PM and took a round of the library. He was so happy with the opening of the library that he kept on making suggestions to the officers in the library. He also enquired about the open access of the library since Indian conditions were not suitable at that time for such an arrangement. It was a unique experience to have the open access. But he was assured of full cooperation from the staff and the public.

Exactly at 5.35 PM, Panditji performed the opening ceremony by cutting the ribbon. It was the opening of a great historical chapter in the library movement in India. The Prime Minister made a historical speech on the role of the library in society. His inspiring speech gave an impetus to the library development in India.
At this moment he said:

"We sit down wisely round a table discussing labour troubles and consider them from the point of view of bargaining. There is seldom any real emotional understanding of that poor man who may be misled or who may be acting wrongfully. We are almost living in a different world. ... The library was meant for the spread of literacy but somehow that passion subsided as soon as one learnt the alphabets. What we have seen is completely useless and the sooner we put an end to this business of removal of illiteracy in this excessively limited way the better for us."*

While saying this he meant that the approach of the planners for solving the problems of the countrymen should be humanistic rather than a routine work. He further said, "The only right approach was to carry the process of education further. After literacy had been obtained, very few individuals got opportunities while others forgot what they learnt. The present library was not meant for the kind of the persons present at the gathering but rather for those unfortunate persons who had no opportunities in life and who would not have them now. The library would not be mere collection of books but would represent the bigger idea of trying to understand emotionally the problems of the common man and to create a basis of emotional awareness in
Panditji was very optimistic in solving the problems of literacy in the country. He stressed in his speech that the country should give top priority to eradication of illiteracy. He said, "Opening of the library was an indication of the right approach to the problems of adult literacy and the authorities concerned should rise to the occasion by making available all opportunities to the poor and ordinary people. Library will create a basis of emotional awareness."  

Maulana Abul Kalam Azad in his presidential address stressed the need for the collection of the library. He said, "The library service which should provide suitable literature for persons who had attended the basic and primary school was an essential condition for the maintenance and development of literacy in the country."  

Present at the occasion was Dr. Patrick Young, Head of the Unesco Science Cooperative office for South Asia. He thanked the Government of India for helping the organization in starting its first pilot project for public libraries. 

The library was to be organised in the light of the Unesco policy for public libraries. The manifesto of the Unesco for public libraries affirms Unesco's faith in the public library as a vital force for popular education, information, and culture for the promotion of peace.
The objectives of the library were: "To provide books, pamphlets, magazines, newspapers, maps, pictures, films, recording, etc. and give all members of the community guidance in their use of the library regardless of occupation, creed and class or race. Its ambition is to provide them with facilities for research, information, aesthetic appreciation, recreation, vocational studies and education."

The library started functioning as a model for the library development in South East Asia. To start with, the following services were offered by the library:

MEMBERSHIP : The membership was thrown open to the public with no fee for the services. One library ticket used to be issued to a reader. Late deposit fine was to be charged and only one book on one library ticket was allowed.

MOBILE LIBRARY : The mobile library system was meant to cater to the needs of the readers in remote areas. In the beginning two mobile vans were requisitioned.

CIRCULATION : The books from the central library used to be issued. Mobile library issued books at several service points. One-reader-one-book, was the policy for circulation.

REFERENCE : The reference section was started for ready reference service. People from all the disciplines started coming to the library. Some foreign dignitaries also visited the library at different times.
CHILDREN'S SECTION: The main objective of the library was to pay more attention to the children's requirements. A special section for children was started. In the very first year 32 cultural activities were arranged in which 1201 children participated.

SOCIAL EDUCATION DEPARTMENT: The objective of this section was to organise the youth for social awareness and prepare them for participation in the nation-building activities. For this purpose several groups like drama, music, literature, national hygiene, etc. were formed. In the first year, as many as 4232 youth participated in 151 activities.

BOOK POLICY: The library did not have any clear-cut policy for the books and collection development. Even the Library Board never cared about the policy on book purchase and collection development. But with the records available from the library, it is understood that the books were purchased in Hindi, English and Urdu only. This remained the policy of the library for four years. It was in 1955-56 that some books were also purchased in Punjabi language.

A notable feature of the library was its taking over in 1964, a library, in the trans-Yamuna area which had been working since 1947. It was acquired by the Delhi Public Library and was made its branch library.

The Braille library started functioning in 1962-63 with 35 members in the first year. Next year the membership increased almost seven times raising its strength to 211 in 1963-64.
The library kept on developing its branches at a fast pace. Jail library, patients library, sports library, branches, sub-branches, community libraries, and those in resettlement colonies, community libraries and reading rooms were opened as and when the necessity arose.

CHRONOLOGY OF EVENTS OF DELHI PUBLIC LIBRARY SYSTEM

January 1949 : Unesco put an agenda about the Pilot project for public libraries for discussion in the fourth General Conference.

February 1949 : The same decision was reiterated.

April 1949 : India received the proposal.

May 1949 : Dr.Prem Kirpal examined the proposal.

: The papers were signed between India and Unesco through Dr.Prem Kirpal and Edward Sydney.

Sept.-Nov.1949 : Unesco decided to start the project in India.

November 1949 : E.N.Peterson, Head, Public libraries, Unesco, visited India.

December 1949 : First agreement was signed between the two authorities.

February 1950 : One more agreement signed between the two authorities.

July 1950 : D.R.Kalia sent for training for six months.

December 1950 : Edward Sydney joined as Advisory Director.

January 1951 : Dr.Yudhvir Singh nominated as Chairman of Delhi Public Library.

1st March 1951: First meeting of the Board held.

27th March 1951: Sub-Committee for preparation of rules and regulations for the library was constituted with Dr. S.R. Ranganathan, P.C. Mukherjee, V.S. Mathur and Edward Sydney as members.

22nd May 1951: Final agreement between India and Unesco signed.

24th Oct. 1951: The Board approved the rules for the library. Timings were fixed 8 AM - 8 PM.

: The Board approved take over of the children's section of Hardinge Municipal Library by the Delhi Public Library.

27th Oct. 1951: Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru inaugurated the Library at 5.35 PM.

References as serially cited in the text.

1. Asia's Busiest Library: Delhi Public Library. Pamphlet. p. 3.
2. The Hindustan Times, New Delhi. 28 October 1951.
   . The Hindustan Times, New Delhi. 28th October 1951.