

## A HISTORICAL STUDY OF LIBRARIES AND LEARNING CENTRE DURING MEDIEVAL PERIOD

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### ABSTRACT

*Libraries are originally started in the ancient India when Ved.*

*Upanishads were created by the priests and Rishis. These libraries were not in the shop as Mughal period but these were housed in personal custody and were not available for study to all. These were small in size. Collection was special and rare nature. In Medieval period the shape of libraries was developed in size and shape. The libraries were in the hands of some special learned people like Bodha Vihar, Jain temples, Kings palace and other places under the supervision of temple chiefs and royal kings. The collection was largely of religion, the philosophy, and spiritual and astrology discipline. The collection was in less quantity but qualitative in nature. Libraries were treated as symbol of their privilege in the society. Most of the readers were interested to study Sanskrit, Arabic. They learned play, dances, medicine and public affairs.*

*Muhammedaninvasions were the change in the history of libraries in social and political, education and learning. The Muslim wanted to influence Hindu but they were not so much interested as library was not commonly known in the society. Till Christian era Gurukul system continued. During Christian age learning centers were converted to schools and colleges. The Taxshila, Nalanda centre of learning were given less importance. Christians started their own system of education based English languages. The method employed was to assembled in convenient from in which libraries played an important role. There system was to present an interpretation of facts about various uses of libraries reading, questionnaire, correspondence and visits.*

**Keywords :** *Ancient Libraries, Libraries after independent, Libraries before independent, Libraries during medieval era.*

### INTRODUCTION

To know the present one, one has to know the past. A study of the historical growth and

development produces principles which are valid because they make the relations contained in the subject explicit. Understanding the past experiences uncovers the meaning of the

present situation and thereby provides us with definite criteria for selecting what is relevant and deciding what is important for the education of Libraries?" It is necessary to know the libraries of ancient and medieval times, their aims and objectives and how they were organized and administered, so as to enable us to get a clear perspective of the present day library system. These studies will reveal that some of the tools, techniques and methods of medieval libraries, borne by tradition and practice have continued in those of modern libraries and they have profited by them. Besides, enquiries and methods, practices and organization of medieval libraries, will furnish us with better insight into the social and cultural life of the people of those days.<sup>1</sup>

The historical development of the library has been told often, either wholly or in part. According to Prof. Gates,<sup>2</sup> the past history has made clear the following facts of significance and importance:

1. Libraries are essential ingredients of a civilized society.
2. Libraries come into being to meet certain recognized needs. These needs, in turn, determine their forms, purposes, functions, and service.
3. Certain conditions-economic, scientific, geographical, cultural or social-encourage the development of libraries.

Library history is an essential part in the history of the intellectual development of civilization.

## OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

The main object of the study is to highlight –

- a) State-of-the-art of the libraries
- b) Social environment and the change in libraries
- c) Contribution of royal kings and their associates
- d) Contribution of academicians, learned persons during medieval period

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- b) Libraries come into being to meet certain recognized needs.
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## SCOPE/LIMITATION OF THE STUDY

This study is limited to learning centres and the libraries since ancient period to Medieval period of 1707 AD. Its description is the discussion of emerging the libraries whether in the form of depositories like Moth, Vihar, Mosques, Temples and the church libraries or learning centres.

This work will emphasize the historical development of libraries during kings, emperors, Governors in the era of Hinduism, Muslims, and Christians.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This is a historical based on primary and secondary sources available in various important archives, libraries, Museums etc. The study has included datas relating to the collection, finance and the status of librarians and scholars under whose guidance these libraries were managed and developed.

Being a historical research the following libraries have been consulted for studying the origin and development of the libraries and learning centres.

- a) Nation Archives of India, Janpath, New Delhi.
- b) National library of India, Velvadare, Kolkata.

- c) Delhi university Library
- d) Delhi Public Library

## LIBRARIES IN MEDIEVAL PERIOD

Of all the factors influencing Ancient Indian Education, religion played a dominant role, starting perhaps with the worshipping of nature. Primitive man keenly observed nature and took beautiful striking objects as aroused his wonder and reverence to the forms to be worshipped. Later on different methods of worship were adopted when awe and a fear of the nature overwhelmed him. The sacrifice as one of the methods of worship grew in importance. Ways and means of singing hymns and offering oblations to him and elaborate rituals and singing of mantras gained importance. Slowly, sacrifice became the central force of primary religious activity and the rites and rituals of sacrifice gained in importance. Rites and rituals were accompanied by mantras and hymns committed to memory. These were passed on by oral communication from generation to generation.

It is in this context that an attempt has been made to narrate a brief historical overview of the historical development of libraries. This presents certain facts and describes certain movement, events and conditions which show the library as an essential part of civilized society. While dealing with the communication pattern in written form or the development of writing and printing, it has been noted that it had followed the general trend of civilization development. Emerging in the early civilization of near and Middle East, India, China it moved to Greece and Rome and followed the emergence of western civilization. Libraries likewise have developed in different cultural period. No doubt this is an interesting chronology of the cultural existence of man, the heritage being preserved for posterity in the clay tablets, papyrus or parchment rolls, the illuminated manuscripts, the vellum codex, the

incunabula, through the printed book and culminating in the micro film and microcard.

Library history is an essential part in the history of the civilization. Library has left indelible marks on the winding paths of civilization from antiquity to the present age. The goals of library in the earliest cultural stages were general. During the Roman period, like other institutions, libraries were open to the public. The use of library in the medieval period was much restricted, books being chained to the cases. Again during the periods of Renaissance and Reformation, community of learned men increased rapidly and due to the revival of learning on the eve of modern era and the printing from moveable types multiplied the number of books in library's holding serving the extended community of readers.

At several stages of survey, the social forces made their impact on the origin and development of libraries. Prior to the invention of printing technology, the manuscript libraries were strictly restricted both in form and content to the scholars in the community. The printing press multiplied the number of manuscripts. In the 17th century, the Emperors, kings and noble-men maintained their libraries as symbol of their privilege in the society and they were not meant for the public. In 19th century, the library assumed the form of subscription library, open to the chosen few, the well-to-do in society. It was by the middle of that century that the social forces came into play to revolutionize the character of the library making it more and more a public institution.

Urbanization in the medieval period may be regarded as a Muslim contribution to Indian life. Alongwith it architecture had to be developed which still represents the evolution of life on it came to be. Though a large majority of Muslims were converts, the conversion of converts from the Hindu to the Islamic way of life took centuries and it was during the process that Hindus and Muslims influenced each other. The question of Muslim impact or contribution

to the Indian way of life created very large and absorbing problems. Ishwari Prasad point out that the Arab conquest of Sindh, from political point of view, was an insignificant event in the history of Islam. But the efforts of this conquest upon. Muslim culture were profound and far-reaching when the Arabs came to India, they were astonished at the superiority of the civilization and advanced learning centers which they found in this country. The sublimity of Hindu philosophical ideas and the richness and versatility of Hindu intellect were a strange revolution to them. The cardinal doctrine of Muslim theology, that there is one God, was already known to the Hindu Saints and philosophers, and they found that in the nobler arts, which enhance the dignity of man, the Hindus were far ahead of them. The Indian musician as the philosopher and the man of learning. The Arabs, learnt from the Hindus a great deal in the practical art of administration, and the employment of Brahman officials on a large scale was due to their better knowledge, experience and fitness for discharging efficiently the duties of administration. A great many of the elements of Arabian culture, which afterwards had such a marvelous effect upon European civilization, were borrowed from India. India, then, stood on a much higher intellectual plane, and the Arabi scholars sat at the feet of Buddhist monks and brahmana pundits to learn philosophy, astronomy, mathematics, medicine, chemistry, and other subjects of study. "It was from them that the Arabs learnt the first principles of scientific astronomy".<sup>3</sup>

Libraries have been an integral part of civilization and actively related with society and its culture. We are able to have a lot of information regarding our culture and civilization in the ancient past from the libraries comprised of clay table, parchment and papyrus rolls and vellum codex which worked as repositories of knowledge. With the development of civilization and in the course of

time there emerges towns and towns grew into cities. The instrument of writing was invented in crude form. This was used as a tool for dealing with the affairs of the community. The initial techniques of writing on clay, because sufficiently flexible in the form of papyrus or parchment rolls, the incunabula and printed book. It may be stated that whenever records were prepared there came the need for the place to keep them so that they could be protected and preserved and used, library, thus, is an indispensable agency of civilized society. Just as civilization is ever changing and ever becoming so are libraries and librarianship ever becoming something different so are libraries and librarianship ever becoming something different and something better today than they were yesterday.

The Brahmanical literature shrouded in Smriti and Sruti was reduced to writing on the materials like stone, brick-bark and palm leaves. Scribes, a class themselves, came on the scene to copy the manuscripts. Consequently handwritten documents began to be produced slowly and were stored in the religious centers like temples, monasteries, Viharas, Upasrayas and educational centers. The scholars and rich persons also built up the book collections. Such collections began to grow from 4th century to 13th century A.D. The ancient name of a library Bharatibhandagara, treasury of the goddess of speech, occurs frequently in Jain works; more rarely the modern synonym, Sarasvatibhandagara<sup>4</sup>. The library in ancient India functioned more as an archives than a library in the modern sense of the term. It may be noted that the first libraries in India were established not by the Hindus but by the Buddhists<sup>5</sup>.

## CONCLUSION

The historical study of libraries is an essential part of the intellectual development of the civilization. Undoubtedly, during several stages

of historical development, the social forces have made their influence on the origin and development of learning's and libraries. In other words, we can say that the development of learning and libraries is directly rated to the cultural development of the society. However, religion and industrial revolution played a vital role in this regard. Eminent scholars and intellectuals used to assemble at holy places to discuss various problems. It was belief that the free gift of knowledge would bring credit for the knowledge in the next birth. The industrial revolution which widely affected the existing conditions in the society, created the environment and urge for new religious economical, political and social order. This vital transformation led to the emergence of a new thinking, that to preserve the achievement of human mind and action. The system of book collection and library is essential. The institution of library was a pre-condition to the changing social order and to foster the new thought and ideas. It made great impact on the concept of the library, transforming it from institutional and personal library to a democratic one, for the benefit to the public.

The ancient Indian education was greatly influenced by religion beginning with the worship of nature, later on different methods of worship were adopted, when we fear of the nature overwhelmed the human mind. The ways and means of singing hymns gained much importance. Slowly, sacrifice or primary religious activity and the rites and rituals of sacrifices gained its importance. Rites and rituals were accompanied by mantras and hymns committed to memory. These were passed on by oral communication from generation to generation. Regarding school education it seems that the school as such was run by the teacher privately at home. There were no hard and fast rules for education. The teacher used to lead the pupil from simple lessons to difficult ones, taking into consideration the pupil's grasping capacity. Thus the educational system was teacher-

oriented. The teacher was essential, as far as the meaning and pronunciation were concerned. For Vedic study, a teacher became indispensable, and on many occasions, he moulded the career of his students. So the teacher's conduct influenced directly students. It indicates that study was primarily religious and it was directly concerned with the religious literature whether of the Hindus, Buddhists or Jains.

The divisions in Indian history, the medieval period coincides with Islamic rule. The cultural activities of Hindus came to be reoriented. The fall of Harsha's empire was a major event towards disintegration of Indian political unity. The defeat of Prithviraj Chauhan paved the way for the advent of the Muslims. A number of important books collections were lost forever during this period. But Vijayanagar and other minor Hindu Kingdoms saved Brahmanical culture and tradition from imminent danger of extinction. By the close of the year 1600 A.D., Muhammadan invaders held dominance over large parts of the country owing to local dissents.

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