2.7 India

Libraries Through the Ages in India: Sojourn from Palm Leaf to Palmtop

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Introduction

In a modern society, besides fulfilling the three necessities of food, clothing, and housing, feeding the intellectual hunger of each citizen and providing him with the information relevant to his profession, health, happiness, and prosperity are the indicators of its success or failure. India, being a democratic country, with its vast and multisided regional, cultural, social, economic, and political problems, the need for organizing libraries is imperative. It is the library that is responsible for the development of the personality of the citizens of a nation, and, undoubtedly it plays an indispensable role as a community center for education, information creation, and culture. It is the need of the hour that the government of India should give serious consideration to the problems being faced by the libraries. Only then the wish of the late Prime Minister Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru, which he expressed while inaugurating the Gujarat Vidyapeeth Library on 5 January 1955, can be fulfilled. He said that it should be our endeavor to locate at least one library in every village in the country. Indian libraries, in fact, draw on the evolution of society and the consequent rise of the library as an important institution of human civilization and culture was modulated by political, social, economic, and cultural developments. The government of India immediately after independence put a lot of emphasis on the development of higher education vis-à-vis libraries in order to achieve prosperity and development as compared to other developed and developing countries. In order to make an assessment of the libraries in past and present and to envisage the future of librarianship in India, we need to look into the status of libraries in ancient, medieval India along with the study of the status of present day librarianship. Therefore, the present chapter shall be divided into the following parts:

1. libraries in ancient and medieval India
2. libraries in modern India
3. present day librarianship in India
4. future libraries in India