



6th Ashok Jambhekar's Memorial Lecture 2016

A Brief Report

MANAGEMENT LIBRARIES NETWORK (MANLIBNET) organized its 6th Ashok Jambhekar's Memorial Lecture on "Intellectual Heritage of the Walled City: Windows to a Lost World" at India International Centre on 26th February 2016 at IIC New Delhi. Dr. Kavita Sharma, President, South Asian University, New Delhi delivered the lecture on this highly important topic that contains facet of complete neglect of highly precious literary treasure lying in the narrow lanes of the walled city and how this valuable assets can be preserved for posterity and researchers. 48 participants in addition to organizers and the invited guests participated in the programme.

Dr. R. K. Sharma, Librarian, United Nations Information Centre chaired the session. Dr. S. K. Majumdar, Librarian, IIC helped in overall arrangements and smooth conducting of the lecture.



Programme started with paying homage to Late Prof. J. L. Sardana, Ex-Head, Department of Library and Information Science, University of Delhi who passed away day before and was cremated in the morning.

Dr. Tariq Ashraf, Librarian, South Campus, University of Delhi commenced the programme with welcome to Dr. Kavita Sharma and the Chair R. K. Sharma. He gave a brief introduction to the topic and MANLIBNET mission and activities. He also spoke about Late Shri Jambhekar's and his contribution in shaping up the MANLIBNET. After that he invited the Chair to introduce the Chief Guest and take the proceedings further.

Dr. R. K. Sharma introduced the Chief Guest Dr. Kavita Sharma to the participants and admired her love for libraries and their development. He mentioned that Dr. Kavita Sharma was the first woman to head a co-educational college in the country and has worked intensively for women empowerment.



An accomplished academician, Dr. Kavita Sharma has been an active contributor to the cause of higher education through her teaching, publications and the institutions she has been associated with. Dr. Kavita Sharma started teaching in 1971 in Delhi University's Hindu College and became its Principal in 1998 and served there till 2008 when she took up another challenging assignment as Director of India International Centre, New Delhi.

She has published a number of books including Internationalisation of Education, Sixty Years of University Grants Commission, Hindu College, Delhi – A People's Movement and The Windmills of the Mind. Her research papers on a wide range of topics, including higher education, language, immigration and identity, culture and women, have made their ways in many reputed national and international publications.

Dr. Sharma holds a Ph.D. Degree in English from the University of Delhi and an LL.M degree from the University of British Columbia, Canada. A Fulbright Fellow, she was conferred the Indira Gandhi Sadbhavana Award by the National Integration and Economic Council in 2005.

Widely travelled around the world, Dr. Sharma had also been an Honorary Visiting Lecturer at Tokyo's Women's Christian College and University of Indonesia. She is associated with many professional organisations including English Association, Indian Association of Canadian Studies, Indian Law Institute and Indian History Congress. She has been the Founder President of Parent's Forum for Meaningful Education.

Dr. Kavita Sharma started his lecture by paying her tributes to both Late Prof. Sardana and Late Shri Jambhekar and was glad to know about their immense contribution to the cause of librarianship in India.

She started with a reference of a little known place in walled city 'Pahari Imli' and her visit to that place along with Dr. Majumdar to learn about the literary treasure lying in the libraries lying there. She mentioned how caretakers of Shah Waliullah library have been able to successfully retain and maintain the highly precious ancient collection of Persina, Urdu and Hindi books in spite of all odds. Owners of Shah Waliullah library were present on the occasion who drew audience attention towards space crunch and no support from government authorities to preserve this collection.

She also narrated the history of old libraries of walled city like Fateshpuri Masjid library, Mahavir Jain library, Hardinge Library now called as Hardayal Library, Marwadi Public library and so on. She mentioned how some of these libraries were patronized by the either the Amirs or the Hindu merchant class. She also discussed current state of affairs of these libraries.

She also spoke about her visit to these libraries in order to get and extract information while writing on the history of the Hindu College earlier known as Presidency College. How the only indigenous college called Delhi College was closed down in 1867 and Stephen's College was established in 1881. She narrated continued struggle of the society to have their own indigenous college and hence set up of the Presidency College known now as Hindu College as missionary colleges were termed as places for conversion.

She referred how the period of decay set in after Nadir Shah's invasion to the country and then emergence of Shahjahanbad as the administrative centre of Delhi. She referred how emperors and amirs continued to patronize the artists. Dr. Sharma referred to renaissance of Delhi College and role of Master Ramachandra and Munshi Zakaullah in putting new science into vernacular languages in subjects like Math and Science at Delhi College. The historian C. F. Andrews called them as pillars of Delhi's renaissance.

This was followed by rise of newspapers and she referred to community places known as "Chabutaras" where newspapers were kept and where learned men used to read the same loudly for the benefit of others present there. She showed some pictures in her presentation of the places "Pahari Imli" book shop, Mati Mahal, the ancient libraries and so on.

She also mentioned how initially books were only manuscripts written by people in their own handwriting and then setting up of lithographic press first in Kanpur and Lucknow and then in Delhi so that books started printing. She referred to Munshi Naval Kishore's role in printing of theological, education and literary books and then the period of 1857 which totally collapsed the life of Delhi mentioning the accounts from history that except stray dogs nothing was visible in Delhi.

She went on explaining formation of institutions like Arya Samaj and role of people like Zahi Dehalvi to again establish an institution free from missionary thoughts. She referred to the calligraphy work produced by Mohammed Saedadaddin about 100 years back and private collection of Changezi family. She also referred to the famous calligrapher of the walled city Mir Panjakash, known for wonderful calligraphic writing who was shot dead in 1857 at the age of 90.

Again coming back to Shal Waiullah library and its patron Abdul Sattar who has preserved and kept historical collection of Urdu, Persian and Arabic text in his library. She referred how the vast collection of Fatehpuri Masjid library is lying neglected.

She then raised the issue of digitization but the problem of not being able to search in vernacular languages is a big barrier on usability of these collections. In the absence of same, even after digitization people are not able to use these works.

She also discussed the role of business class in setting up and running of some of the famous libraries in the walled city and visits to these libraries by the famous personalities like Acharya Kriplani, Narender Dev and so on and how the visitor books are still preserved by these libraries containing the comments of these people.

She ended her lecture by calling upon librarians especially young generation to take up steps to preserve this collection.

After her speech, the floor was open to discussions. Participants raised number of observations and queries and also suggested the ways forward. Mr. Shaji John mentioned that now technology is available to make search in any language and his company is already engaged in this work. Dr. Majumdar mentioned that preserving and working for this cause requires passion and people will have to do selfless and philanthropic work and not for monetary gains if they really want to associate themselves to this cause. Responding to a query posed by the current owners of Shah Waliullah library, Dr. Kavita Sharma mentioned that there is a need to create a social media and mass media campaign to preserve such priceless jewels and call upon participants to take initiative.

Followed by her speech and discussion, Dr. R. K. Sharma summarized the proceedings and cited his own example how he searched the material in one of these libraries while working on a project.

This was followed by memento presentation to Dr. Kavita Sharma, Dr. R. K. Sharma and Dr. S. Majumdar as a token of gratitude by MANLIBNET office bearers.



Treasurer of the network, Mr. Jitender Sharma proposed Vote of Thanks mentioning how the topic was new to most of the participants and how the reference of such valuable intellect hidden in the walled city was hidden from history books. He said that Dr. Kavita Sharma's lecture has helped the participants to come out of the stereotype image of the walled city as a whole sale market or a place for foodies and participants can now visualize the walled city from a new perspective. He thanked Dr. Kavita Sharma to enlighten the participants with such wonderful insights on the intellect treasure of the walled city. He also thanked Dr. Majumdar and Dr. R. K.Sharma for extending their valuable support for the organization of this lecture.

He thanked office bearers and EC of MANLIBNET and specifically Dr. Tariq and Dr. Rajesh Kumar to materialize and shaping up the lecture and how in spite of paucity of time and last minute changes Dr. Rajesh was able to arrange everything in time. Finally he thanked participants for participating actively in the deliberations and IIC management for allowing holding this lecture on their premises.



Post the lecture, informal gathering and discussions among the participants were witnessed to the fact the lecture was highly meaningful and insightful and it was a purpose well served by MANLIBNET.