

# University of Delhi

## ARCHIVES





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## The Archive at the Viceregal Lodge

### OVERVIEW

The historical journey of the University of Delhi since its inception on 1 May 1922 is inscribed in physical spaces, written records, maps, photographs, artifacts and visual representation. As a repository of history, memory and popular imagination, the Viceregal Lodge is unique, and it predates the formation of the university. At one level, the building



itself is the archive. It holds the memory of being a part of the British cantonment, then a circuit house, then being expanded and transformed into a home for Imperial rulers. The existing structure served as the residency for five Viceroys and the site for major parleys that led to India's independence. The Viceroys ruled India from here. Mahatma



Gandhi traversed these corridors in planning for a free nation, especially attending lengthy meetings before signing the pact with Lord Irwin in 1931. And, the hidden chamber of Shaheed Bhagat Singh's confinement in the basement of this building can be visited for the first time. The building records a highly romantic moment. Edwina Ashley, a beautiful, young heiress was visiting her aunt at the Viceregal Lodge when she fell in love with the handsome lieutenant, Louis Mountbatten. The marriage proposal was made in a room, which is now the office of the Registrar of the University of Delhi and carries a plaque. The aunt, it is said, was 'disappointed'; no one knew then that Lord Mountbatten would become a Viceroy (1947) and Edwina would be the First Lady of India.

The Viceregal Lodge Estate was given over to the University of Delhi in 1933. The story of India's higher education is delineated in the records of the University of Delhi, preserved carefully from the early years to the present. This historic building is the office of the Vice Chancellor and the nodal point from where the university administration functions. The inter-relationship between the past and the present is encrypted in the Archive, which has been reorganized, expanded and relocated, now occupying three floors within the Viceregal Lodge. The collection brings alive the story of the geographical area in which the University is placed.

## **Permanent Exhibition of Photographs**

### **Traces of the Uprising of 1857"**

(University of Delhi and the Alkazi Foundation for the Arts)

In the annals of colonial history of India, the Uprising of 1857 occupies an important place. One could recall events that led to the political and military crisis. British Imperialism



had been using war and diplomacy to annex Indian states. Colonial oppression at local



levels had been opposed since the days of Fakir and Sanyasis uprisings in the 1770s, but large-scale opposition came from a single episode in 1857 when sepoys in the East India Company's army refused to bite off the paper cover of cartridges, which they suspected were greased with animal fat from cows and pigs.

On 29 March 1857, Mangal Pandey in Barrackpore declared his revolt against the British regime. Protest surfaced in the

Meerut Cantonment, when on 9 May, the 3<sup>rd</sup> regiment of Bengal cavalry refused to use greased cartridges. The Sepoys were court marshalled and arrested. On 10 May, fellow soldiers arose in revolt, freed arrested officers and marched towards Delhi. On 11 May, 54<sup>th</sup> NI joined by 38<sup>th</sup> Cavalry



occupied the city of Shahajahanabad and proclaimed the Mughal Emperor Bahadur Shah Zafar as their leader. British soldiers, women and children fearing large scale violence took



shelter at the Flag Staff Tower. Between 11 May and 20 September 1857, British and Indian soldiers fought with each other for the control of Delhi, its glory and for their future. The Northern Ridge was a significant site of this conflict. Attacks and counter attacks were launched from the strategic locations of Flag Staff Tower, Chauburzi Mosque, Bara Hindu Rao House, Metcalfe House, Sammy House, Ludlow Castle and Subji Mandi. These locations are within easy distance of the University of Delhi. The exhibition 'Traces of the Uprising of 1857' reminds viewers of the history of protest, bravery and survival that constituted the making of Delhi. The photographs taken by several persons offer vivid and often disturbing images of the times, but the candid eye of the camera gives a perpetual reminder of the context to the Indian independence. Prints made by John Nicholas Tressider, Felice Beato, Samuel Bourne, C.H. Mecham, Patrick G. Fitzgerald, John Edward Sache, G.W. Lawrie & Co, and J.C.A. Dannenburg are displayed. Most images are of Delhi, but the rebellion spread to Lucknow and Kanpur, which are also captured.

The exhibition was curated in 2007, when India was commemorating 150 years of the Uprising. Aimed at reminding the University community of its geographical surroundings and the saga of the independence, the exhibition has been given a permanent place in the Archives. It is a collection that ought to inspire further research on the Uprising from the viewpoint of the Indians, who were compelled into trying circumstances. The violence took its toll on innocent persons. The memorials to the memory of Europeans were constructed immediately, and plentiful information on them is available in visual images. However, the fate of the Indians was not made public and the records of opposition to the government and the hanging of 'rebels' still lie buried in the Mutiny Files. There is need to highlight this history and seek fresh perspectives.



## History of the University of Delhi

The Archive stores records of the growth of the University of Delhi from the time of its establishment in 1922. Information on curriculum, pedagogy, policy and finance offers a rare glimpse into the development of higher education in India.



In the background is the philosophy of education in colonial India. The Wood Dispatch of 1854 led to the creation of the universities of Calcutta, Madras and Bombay. Delhi had its colleges: St. Stephen's College was set up by the Cambridge Mission in 1881, Hindu College was started by Kishan Dasji Gurwale in 1899 and Lala Balkrishan

Das established Indra Prastha Girls Schools in 1904. Lady Harding

College appeared in 1916 and Rai Kedar Nath laid the foundation of Ramjas College in 1917.

Political imperatives had a role in integrating these colleges within a structure that became the University of Delhi in 1922. The imperial Durbar of 12 December 1911 at Delhi had



shown that this region would be politically significant, hence higher education institutions would be required. The Saddler Committee recommended reorganization of Indian Universities as unitary, teaching and residential institutions, so affiliation with Punjab University could no longer be allowed. Moreover, it was believed that a government funded university would thwart attempts by nationalists to set up their own institutions. In December 1919, an official decision introduced a Bill in the Legislative Assembly to establish the University of Delhi. The Council passed it on 28 February 1922, and the Viceroy gave his consent on 5 March 1922. The Act came into effect on 1 May 1922, which is now celebrated as the Foundation Day of the University of Delhi.

The newly constituted University of Delhi was unitary and residential in nature, under the control of the Government of India. It began its journey with two faculties, of Arts and Science, and three residential colleges. It brought together non-sectarian and non-



communal personalities, committed to the cause of spreading knowledge. Lord Reading, Governor General of India was its Chancellor, Mohammad Shafi, Pro-Chancellor and Hari Singh Gaur, its Vice Chancellor. F.C. Western, belonging to the Cambridge Mission was appointed Rector.



Though the University had come into existence, it did not possess permanent land. It operated from the Ritz Cinema building at Kashmiri gate and its core administration was located at Underhill House. From there, it moved to Alipur Road from 1 October 1924. Despite financial and structural constraints, the University and its constituent colleges made progress. When the first convocation of the University was held on 26 March 1923 at the legislative assembly, honorary degrees were conferred on Lord Reading, Mohammad Shafi and Hari Singh Gaur. Soon after, the Law Faculty came into existence in 1924. Other institutions such as the Anglo- Arabic College in 1929 and the Lady Irwin College in 1932 expanded the academic forum.

The Viceregal Lodge Estate was handed over to the University of Delhi in 1933, thereby creating a campus with affiliated colleges in the vicinity. The subsequent growth of the University was rapid, and that trend has continued. Starting with 750 students in 1922, the university now enrolls close to 5 lakh students.



The present Archive is adjacent to the Convention Hall, which was once a ballroom of the Viceregal Lodge, then became the first library of the University. Stately book racks made from Burma teakwood were donated



by philanthropists and remain prize possessions of the Archive. University history is recounted through portraits of British administrators, Vice Chancellors, photographs of Convocations and important events, official records, university flag, crest, seal and other insignia, maps and memorabilia.

Of special interest is a group photo of the Convocation of 1948, the first one after Independence, attended by Jawaharlal Nehru, Lord and Lady Mountbatten, Rajkumari Amrit Kaur, Abul Kalam Azad, Zakir Hussain, S.S. Bhatnagar and others. Twenty-five years later, the golden jubilee celebrations of 1973 were attended by the then Prime Minister, Indira Gandhi, Satyajit Ray, Amrita Pritam and M. S. Subbulakshmi. The Archive has Bengal artist Biren Dey's original paintings, including a large portrait of Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru. At various places in the Archives, display shelves contain artifacts from the Vice Chancellor's office and include ink stands, seals, scrolls and gifts from visiting dignitaries.

### **Shaheed Bhagat Singh's Chamber**

The University of Delhi had vital links with the emergence of the nation. Under colonial subjection, students, faculty members and others responded to the call of nationalism. Chotu Ram entered legislative politics in Punjab in 1920s and served the cause of peasants; Lala Har Dayal founded the Ghadar Party in America. Both were from St. Stephen's College. There are other patriots whose work is known and several more people whose devotion to the country is yet to be documented.

In the context of the large history of political opposition to the British, the Delhi University Archive opens to public for the first time, an underground chamber of the Viceregal Lodge in which Bhagat Singh may have been confined before being taken to the gallows in Lahore.



The legend of this young revolutionary and the brutal face of colonial administration is worth recalling. Delhi had remained at the centre of nationalist activities in 1920s. On 8 April 1929 Bhagat Singh and B.K. Dutt entered the Central Assembly in Delhi. A bomb was thrown into the arena 'to make

the deaf hear'. Both remained at the site and were arrested. Trials for the Delhi Assembly Bomb Case were held at the Viceregal Lodge. Bhagat Singh was pronounced guilty on 12 June 1929. From July onwards



Bhagat Singh and others

were also tried in the Lahore Conspiracy Case for incidents from the previous year, which were seen as preparations for revolutionary action in Delhi. Bhagat Singh and his associates were deemed to have conspired against the King of England. Under a special tribunal, Bhagat Singh, Raj Guru and Sukhdev were pronounced guilty on 7 October 1930 and were hanged in Lahore on 23 March 1931. It is commonly believed that Bhagat Singh was kept in the dungeon-like basement of the Viceregal Lodge, in a windowless room, strongly guarded before being condemned to death.



## Thoughts to take away

The Viceregal Lodge is a building with a layered history from colonial times to the democratic reality of modern India. While the powerful British ruled from these premises, the underground chambers carried a narrative of colonial oppression. Several historical sites in the neighbouring area relate tales of bravery and heroism of those who opposed imperialism and dreamt of a free country. This sacred territory where the idealism of our nationalist leaders found expression is the heritage of the University of Delhi, established in 1922. The Archives present different facets of a checkered history in the hope that students and teachers, visitors and researchers will find information and also raise queries about the material collected here.

### Contact Us

The Delhi University Archive is open to visitors from 10 am to 4.30 pm on all working days and offers guided tours for groups of minimum 8 people on request. Contact Dr. Amrit Kaur Basra, History Project, c/o University Information Centre, Timing: 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. (Monday to Friday) Phone no. : 155215 (without precode) or 011-27006900. Email- [infocentre@du.ac.in](mailto:infocentre@du.ac.in)