Medieval Universities

Of all medieval institutions except the Catholic Church that handed down to the posterity the universities were perhaps the most important and have remained, so far as their organisation was concerned, unchanged. Ancient Greece and Rome had their schools of rhetoric and philosophy. The Saracens set up schools for religious teaching in Egypt, Turkey and Asia. But the universities and college of modern Europe traced their origin chiefly to institutions originally fostered by the church in the Middle Ages. Hence we can say that the Universities were the creation of medieval genius.

Influences other than love of new learning favoured the growth of earliest Universities.The12thCentury Renaissance, especially the revival of literature and speculation were the first factor encouraging the growth of Universities. The growth of heresy in 12th Century made imperative the need of some kind of institutions where the clergy could be trained to defend the dogma and the organisation of the church. By this time the church had to develop into a massive centralised organisation. It required services of the lawyers for its courts and men trained in the formalities and intricacies of correspondence for its chancelleries. The feudal lords and the kings too felt the need for civil servants trained in law and the use of Latin language. The fast growing town with autonomous existence likewise needed the services of the lawyers and the administrators. The scholastics of the 12th Century was well adapted to meet these needs. (The rise of scholasticism was closely associated with the rise of the 12th and 13th century schools that developed into the earliest modern universities, including those in Italy, France, Spain and England.)

It is impossible to mention any specific date about the emergence of the oldest university. They took form in the 12th Century. It was not in one way the universities grew up. Secular schools which were numerous in Italy developed into universities. Universities also grew up when scholars flocked around eminent scholars. Even scholars from different nations also gathered around great teachers. Migration of scholars also gave rise to new universities as in the case of Oxford and Cambridge. Some of the universities like those of Bologna and Paris were originally organised as guilds and these educational guilds or Universities as they were called, sought and obtained some kind of autonomy as any other.

The very name has its own history. The original name was *Universitas Magistorum Et Scholarium* which practically meant a guild of masters or scholars. But in the 12th Century the *Studium Generale* was being used for institution which may be compared to what we understand by University.

The three earliest Universities were Salerno, Bologna and Paris. Each of them became a model for later foundations. Both Salerno and Bologna were non-ecclesiastical in origin and nature. Salerno was the oldest University. It reached its zenith in the 12th Century. The University Of Bologna was chartered by Frederick Barbarossa in 1158, specialised in Roman and Canon law whereas Salerno maintained an unbroken relation with ancient medical practice and theory. The University Of Paris stressed on theology and philosophy. Oxford claimed to be the oldest English University in dates from the 12th or early 13th Century. Cambridge was almost its contemporary. The University Of Prague (1347-48) was the oldest in Central Europe and Heidelberg (1385-86) the oldest of the German Universities. The University Of Vienna was found in 1365. The first Scandinavian University was organised at Uppsala, Sweden in 1477. The Spanish University Salamanca was founded in 1215.

The curriculum which included the study of liberal arts was divided into two parts—the Trivium and Quadrivium. In Trivium grammar, rhetoric and logic were taught whereas in Quadrivium arithmetic, astronomy, geometry and music were taught. All students were bound to learn these things and after completion then only a student was deemed fit to study philosophy and theology. Science, History, geography literature were not part of this curriculum. Even humanities were not a part of the medieval curriculum. Though the medievalists called a University *Stadium Generale,* the meaning of place of general study. The medieval university did not give knowledge about the ——. It was indeed very limited.

The methods of instruction in the medieval period were simple. There were no university buildings, no laboratory, therefore no experiments, no library and even no regular class rooms. Masters were the university. In Paris the professors delivered them lecture in the Latin Quarter -in Straw Street. It was so called from the straw strewn on the floors of the hired room where the students sat to get their learning. The sole method of instruction was lecture based on a particular text book. All that was required was a copy of the text-book,— Gratian's *Decretum,* the *Sentences,* a treatise of Aristotle, or a medical book. This the lecturer explained sentence by sentence , and the students listened and sometimes took notes. The task of the teacher was to explain and comment the authorities of his bench. Books were rare and expensive and beyond the reach of most of the students. There was the provision of renting books which some students availed. On late afternoons and weekends students met to discuss the subjects recently taught in the class. Skill in debate was often regarded more important than soundness of learning.

Some of the universities were formed by the teachers, such as athe university of Paris, while others such as Bologna were corporative of students. Medieval universities were indeed corporations or groups distinguished by their craftsq or skill of learning. After several years of study and on passing his tests the students became a bachelor. He took his degree and underwent a further period of study. Only then he was admitted by the masters as one of themselves. The degree of 'doctor' or 'master' entitled the person who received it to teach in the university.

The medieval students were more indisciplined than those of modern times as the universities did not provide any organised sports or student activities to serve as an outlet for youthful energy. Secondly the age itself was an age of violence. The drunkenness, violence and immorality of students shocked many of their contemporaries. Riots between town and gown sometimes took a very serious turn. The students of Oxford went to the streets with open sword and bows and arrows. Shortly before the hour of curfew the students assaulted all who passed by. Paris University students had to be warned to stop playing dices in the altar of Norte Dame.

The formidable nature of the nature of the riots created a great social problem. The fact that the students were all immune from arrests by secular authority and most of them were very young made the problem more serious. It was to solve the problem of student indiscipline that the organisation of colleges were undertaken. Soon the authority found out the advantage of the collegiate system and proceeded to use it to combat the students' unrest. Between 1180 and 1500 AD fifty(50) colleges were founded at Paris University. Corresponding institutions of England attempted a considerable size, wealth and importance, and finally in the short period devour their mother institutions, the Universities.

Importance

The 12th Century was most remarkable for the development of education and the most remarkable in it was the development of Universities. Although they possessed no buildings, no libraries, no laboratories, were under the control of the church and their curriculum was of a narrow character and shared the professional conservatism of the guild system, the medieval universities bequeathed a rich legacy to the modern civilisation. It is impossible to overrate the influence that the medieval university had exercised over the life of the Middle Ages. The importance that the universities had acquired may be easily understood from the common saying that the three powers to guide the world were the church, the king and the university.

The universities as corporate bodies were makers of public opinion. It was from the time of the growth of universities that the leadership of the social and cultural life, and at a later stage, of the political life was coming into the hands of the universities.

The theology of the Western Church was largely shaped in the University of Paris and the Canon Law if not created at Bologna was taught there. Wherever the Roman Law and Canon Law were taught it became a training ground for lawyers of almost every country.

At the time when the great schism has disrupted Europe, the University Of Paris took the lead of Councillor Movement to combat the schism.

The Universities with their specialised courses and assemblage of qualified teachers became homes of advancement in the creative stage as was displayed in scholasticism.

Education imparted by the universities made opportunities open before the poor and the younger sons of nobles who were not of much importance to the society otherwise, to rise to great heights. This was the beginning of the principle: 'Career must be open to talents'.

Withdrawing from the immediate practical responsibilities the Universities shouldered great responsible task of revaluation and renewal of the cultural heritage through the living intercourse of teachers and students. They enlarged and transmitted the intellectual heritage. As the church ceased to be the repository of new values the universities gradually took over some of its functions.

Modern universities follow many of the ideas, purpose, method of medieval universities. The organisation of institutions of learning for the advancement of human knowledge, the training of each new generation of students, the pursue of a stated curriculum covering a fixed number of years, bringing together in living contact between teacher and teacher, teacher and student, and student and student. The gowns and hoods which are seen even today in the academia as dress were the attires of the medieval students.

Violence has always played a part in the development of universities However, assessing the levels of violence involving students and professors difficult. Until recently there was a consensus that university towns were most lawless and turbulent places of the later Middle Ages but revisionists begun to challenge this picture, arguing that, 'we need to recognise picture of student

excess - pleasure, amorous adventures, dice, dancing drink - for what it is: "the distorted product of cautionary tales'".Or we need to reconsider the chronology: Paul Grendler acknowledges that violence at Italian universities had always been a problem, but he argues that it became more widespread and more lethal in the late sixteenth and the seventeenth centuries.Clearly it would be useful to know whether or not levels of violence at Italian universities reflect the general pattern of violence. But this is not easy. A survey by Manuel Eisner of long-term trends in violent crime indicates that there were more murders and manslaughters in the Italian states medieval period than in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Eisner estimates that per annum there were fifty-six homicides per 100,000 population in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries and seventy-three in fifteenth century. This fell to forty-seven in the sixteenth century and thirty two in the first half of the seventeenth century. Despite the drop, according to Eisner these estimates contrast markedly with those in Northern Europe in the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, there were averages of seven and six in England, twenty-five and six in the Netherlands and Belgium, twenty-one and twenty-four in Scandinavia, and eleven in Germany and Switzerland. However, Gerd Schwerhoff has questioned Eisner's analysis. He notes the highly heterogeneous nature of Eisner's sources and points out that the judicial-normative basis in space and time is extremely variable. Schwerhoff also argues that the statistical data is undermined by many problems with measuring the basic total figure for the local population Moreover, the number of relevant analyses for modern period is still limited. Until more research has been conducted violence in the Italian states as well as on particular levels at the Italian Universities one cannot draw conclusion on their relationship.

FORMS

Violence and disorder at the Italian universities were both interpersonal and collective. Insults, assaults, and murders involved both individuals and groups Collective conflict also included riots. Furthermore, professors as well as students could be engaged in these activities, a point which is often overlooked in discussions of university violence and disorder. It should also be noted that one form of violence could evolve into another. For example duel in Siena in 1605 led to a joust and finally to a riot.
Insult formed an important category of criminal offences, which were frequently tried and punished with severe fines. This is unsurprising since honour was regarded as a significant symbolic and economic resource and had to be legally protected and publicly regulated. Verbal violence was often a prelude to physical assault. Students and professors were also implicated in murder both as victim and perpetrator.