

History of Archives and Archival Sciences from 1950 Onwards Based on Indian Practices

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ABSTRACT

We have inherited official archives of India from the British Colonial Rulers. The concept of Modern Archives keeping came to India from England through Trading Companies. Indians had also experienced the problem relating to Archives administration and had tried to solve them before the coming of the Europeans. One of the legacies of the Mughal's British inherited is the records management (particularly related to land records). The main focus of the paper is on the History of Archives and Archival Science with main stress on its evolution through the ages with focus since Independence i.e. 1947. It is based on archival records available in National Archives of India. In August 1947 India was declared an independent Nation - though partitioning India into two, India and Pakistan. The study is in three parts. First part of the paper has focused the study in historical perspective. In the Second part of the paper an effort has been made to discuss the evolution of archival system under the British Colonial Government and how they used to administer and transact their business activities. In the Third part of the paper an effort has been made to highlight the status of the archives as a profession from 1950's, impact of the integration of the Princely States into the Indian Federation and the Princely archives besides, the archives of former Crown Representative Offices, issues and challenges posed to the world of Archivists and the record managers of the time and the impact of the partition of India on Archives after independence has been addressed. The influence of the scholars and the historians on access to archives, the current issues, after effects/impact of the archival legislation of 1993 and the other laws in particular the IT Act of 2000, the e-records and the Act of the Right to the Information - 2005 and access to information in Archives and Archives administration in e-environment.

Storia degli archivi e della scienza archivistica dal 1950 in poi basata sulla pratica dell'India

SINTESI

Abbiamo ereditato gli archivi ufficiali dell'India dai governanti coloniali inglesi. Il moderno concetto della tenuta degli archivi ci viene dall'Inghilterra attraverso le compagnie mercantili. Gli Indiani hanno anche sperimentato il problema relativo all'amministrazione archivistica ed hanno tentato di risolverlo prima dell'arrivo degli Europei. Una delle eredità dei Mogul ricevute dagli Inglesi è la gestione degli archivi (in particolare quelli legati al territorio). L'argomento principale dell'articolo è la storia degli archivi e dell'archivistica, con particolare riguardo alla loro evoluzione attraverso i tempi specialmente a partire dall'Indipendenza, ossia dal 1947. È basato sui documenti disponibili nell'Archivio nazionale dell'India. Nell'agosto 1947 l'India è stata dichiarata stato indipendente, sebbene divisa in due: India e Pakistan. Lo studio si compone di tre parti. La prima parte tratta l'argomento dal punto di vista storico. Nella seconda parte della relazione ci si è sforzati di discutere l'evoluzione del sistema archivistico sotto il governo coloniale britannico e come esso usava amministrare e trattare i propri affari. Nella terza parte dell'intervento si è cercato di sottolineare la condizione degli archivi come professione dal 1950, l'impatto dell'integrazione dei principati nella Federazione indiana e dei loro archivi, gli archivi degli ex uffici di rappresentanza della Corona, le problematiche e le sfide poste al mondo degli archivisti e record managers del tempo e l'impatto della suddivisione dello Stato dopo l'indipendenza. L'influenza degli studiosi e degli storici sull'accesso agli archivi, le problematiche correnti, dopo gli effetti e l'impatto della legislazione archivistica del 1993 e delle altre leggi, in particolare lo IT Act del 2000, quello sugli archivi elettronici ed il diritto all'informazione del 2005, e l'accesso all'informazione negli archivi e l'amministrazione archivistica.

Zgodovina Indijskih arhivov in arhivistike od leta 1950

IZVLEČEK

Indija je uradne arhive podedovala od britanskih kolonialnih vladarjev. Koncept sodobne hrambe arhivskega gradiva je prišel v Indijo iz Anglije preko trgovskih podjetij. Indijci so imeli težave tudi v zvezi z arhivsko upravo, poskušali pa so jih rešiti pred prihodom Evropejcev. Ena izmed zapuščin Mughala, ki so jo Britanci podedoval je upravljanje z dokumenti (zlasti v zvezi z zapisi, ki se nanašajo na zemljišča). Avtor v prispevku daje glavni poudarek na zgodovino arhivov in arhivske znanosti, pri tem pa poudarja njen razvoj skozi stoletja, predvsem pa po razglasitvi neodvisnosti, torej leta 1947. Članek temelji na arhivskem gradivu, ki ga hrani Državni arhiv Indije. Avgusta 1947 je bila Indija razglašena za neodvisno državo - čeprav z delitvijo Indije na dva dela, in sicer Indijo in Pakistana. Prispevek je razdeljen na tri dele. Prvi del članka se osredotoča na zgodovinsko perspektivo. V drugem delu članka je predstavljen razvoj arhivskega sistema pod britansko kolonialno oblastjo in upravljanje ter izvrševanje njihovih poslovnih dejavnosti. Tretji del prispevka osvetljuje status arhivistike kot stroke vse od leta 1950, vpliv integracije knežjih držav v Indijsko federacijo in knežje arhive. Prav tako pa tretji del obravnava tudi arhivsko gradivo nekdanjega Urada Predstavnikarone, vprašanja in izzive, s katerimi se soočajo sodobni arhivisti in upravljavci z dokumentarnim gradivom ter vpliv delitvi Indije po osamosvojitvi na arhive. V članku pa je predstavljen tudi vpliv znanstvenikov in zgodovinarjev na dostop do arhivskega gradiva, aktualne teme, vpliv arhivskega zakona iz leta 1993 in drugi zakoni, zlasti Zakon o informacijskih tehnologijah iz leta 2000, elektronski zapisi in Zakon o pravici do informacij iz leta 2005 ter dostop do informacij v arhivih in arhivska uprava v e-okolju.

Why Archives are important since ages? Archives are important and valuable because of their precedent, reference, and informational value. Archives and Archival organisations have played a vital role in the public life of the people and society at large since ages in managing the memory of the mankind and the nations. No two countries are identical, hence the history of evolution of official Archives are different from nation to nation. India has a very interesting life history of the evolution of Archives of its own, which is very special and peculiar to itself.

In ancient times the information and wisdom was passed from one generation to another by oral traditions before writing was introduced in India. There are evidences to substantiate the existence of Archives in ancient times having regional, provincial and central units. But we do not have much information of the management, maintenance and preservation of records in the earlier periods. Still certain evidences through excavations and available treatise tell us about our past history and traditional methods used for documentation and preservation of information.

Indian civilization being one of the oldest civilizations, its history of archives would have been equally illuminating, that might have evolved bits by bits. But many of them have got destroyed with the ravages of the time for obvious reasons: due to constant western invasions who took away lot of records and manuscripts besides its wealth as part of their booty, natural calamities, nature fury like floods and fire, white ants besides other factors. Few survived as family assets or were taken away beyond the shores of this country. While in transition since the time of Indus valley civilization, we have come across evidences to establish the fact that information was documented and preserved by way of signs, drawings, pictures on engravings on a variety of material and different formats like clay, wood, stone, rock wall, caves, leaves or animal skins etc.

Writing is stated to have been introduced in India sometime in 5-6 century B.C., simultaneously when the Greek and Athenians civilization were flourishing. Paper was invented in China in 1-2nd century A.D. and is considered to have been introduced in India in 6-7th century A.D. Till 19th century we find that Birch and Palm leaf have been in use as writing material in India since ancient times. Record offices existed in India during Buddhist times, just to refer to its rich tradition-though a disjointed one and sometimes give fairly good idea about India's great Heritage. Chinese Travellers account, (who came to India in between 3-7th centuries AD) do refer to record offices in India. Likewise the European and Arab travellers who visited India during the Muslim Rule(1000-1600AD) like Peter Mundi, Razaak and others have also written about existence of record offices during the period¹. It becomes more clearer when we approach towards our own time.

1. S. GHOSE, *Archive in India*, Calcutta 1963, pp. 5-7.

It is said that the idea of Archives administration travelled from Italy to England during the 19th century. The concept of Modern Archives keeping came to India from England through Trading Companies. We have inherited present day official archives of India from the British colonial Rulers. Indians had also experienced the problem relating to Archives administration and had tried to solve them before the coming of the Europeans. One of the legacy of the Mughal's British inherited was the records management (particularly related to land records) as the Mughal Rule is known as the '*Kagha-zi Raj*'. Akbarnama gives a fair description as to how Emperor Akbar established a Record Office in 1574 AD, known as Daftar Khana by issue of an order that what happens at the court should be recorded and preserved².

Likewise there are references to Maratha Records. Chhtrapati Shivaji and the Peshwas followed many of the Mughal practices and their records were kept in the form of '*Bastas*' and are still extant and are available in a well organised manner in Peshwa Daftar, Pune. The British Government of India did not inherit any records in the name of Archives from the Mughals barring those which were seized by the British troops when they occupied Delhi in September after the Mutiny of 1857 from the Palace of Bahadur Shah Zafar the last Mughal Emperor³. During the 18th century when the Company had settled down, the Nawabs of States of Oudh and Rampur and the Libraries of Khuda Bux in Patna indigenously collected a number of manuscripts by purchase, conquest etc. and even patronised the artists for their rare skill to build up their collections. Today they have some very rare manuscripts setting fine examples of calligraphy and illuminated (in gold) manuscripts as part of their treasure trove. National Archives of India is also the proud owner of such rare collections of Persian and Arabic manuscripts acquired through gifts, donation and purchase. Many of the manuscripts were sent back to London or gathered at the Asiatic Society at Calcutta established for the purpose. Many of them were sold or were given as presents to please their bosses or important people who subsequently took them away and many of them found their way to many foreign Libraries. That is how they are now available in many foreign libraries like Bodleian, the British Museum, and India Office Library (currently merged with the British Library) and collected by the European travellers. Thus it is clear that archives existed in India during ancient and medieval times and at the advent of the Europeans to India.

The British system of Record Keeping and Archives Administration in India is unique in a way that it is an amalgam of Indian, Persian, Portuguese, Dutch and English systems but more of Dutch pattern. Systems followed by most of the European trading powers had many commonalities and were not different fundamentally. The transition of East India Company from a trading Company to a territorial power resulted in rapid expansion of its administrative activities and the growth of the secretariat. Lot of correspondence was generated on account of distance between Britain and their trading stations and settlements in India and elsewhere, explaining in full their actions at both the ends. Further there was increase in correspondence with the Native powers, within the Presidencies and the authorities in London. As an outcome there was extraordinary flow of records at all ends. These changes compelled them to reorganise their secretariat a number of times during the period of the Rule of East India Company and of the British Crown. Though the East India Company consolidated its power and also organised its administration but the government records of the early period are not available. If some of them are there they are with gaps. The oldest record of the British period dates back to 26th July 1630 preserved in the State Archives of Maharashtra (erstwhile Bombay Presidency) at Bombay (Mumbai).

It was at Fort St. George Madras that for the first time principles of regular British administration took shape under the Governorship of Streyntsham Master (1675-1680) and drew up Rules for Secretary's guidance, to summon the Council and deal with other related official matters. They were known as **Rules for the conduct of Business in the Office of the Secretary in the Public Deptt**⁴ amended and revised from time to time as per necessity and working. The filing system also evolved out of it. One can say that the nature of official records of the East India Company for about 233 years (1600-1833) were more of Business Archives in nature, for about a quarter both business and official and for the last 100 years of the British rule in India were official archives, perhaps unparalleled in the History of Archives of any country.

2. Ibid, p. 15.

3. Ibid, p. 21.

4. Home, Pub-Misc., Vol. 116 and 214.

In the early days, all Departments organised their records based on the pattern of Departmental Record Offices. In due course, with the expansion and consolidation of the British Empire, there was sudden increase in the outgrowth of records with not much space left for new accruals. Efforts were made in isolation in different Dept.'s offices in respective Presidencies. Even Presidency Committee of Records and Regional Mofussil Committees all over Bengal which were established as an outcome of a Resolution dated 17 March, 1820 adopted by the Supreme Government, to preserve land records, outgrown as a result of the new system of Permanent Settlement in Bengal Presidency (having boundary even up to Delhi at that point of time - 1820 AD). It was operative in both Bengal and Bombay Presidencies⁵. These Committees were to undertake listing, arrangement and better preservation of records and covered records of the Sadder Diwani Adalat, offices of several Revenue Boards, the Secretariat, and the Revenue Accountant. Mofussil (small towns) Committees dealt with records of regional Courts and the Collectorates. It was a revolutionary move of the time as Revenue records, Secretariat, Judicial, Territorial, General, Political and even the Court records were included in the jurisdiction of these committees. The Bengal Government established a General Record Office at Fort William for public records related to landed properties in Bengal and forwarded their proceedings to Bombay Presidencies to make similar arrangement in Bombay Presidency. As an outcome Bombay Record Office was established in 1821. However the Presidency Committee of Records was dissolved after 9 years in 1830 as an economy measure, as recommended by the Finance Committee. However one can note that a move had started. Though the problem of space and maintenance of records gained lot of significance with the time, Lord Dalhousie (1849-56) did not agree to a proposal for establishment of a Public Record Office rather favoured publication of selected documents.

Even the passing of the Public Record Act in U.K. in 1838 had no positive effects on the British Colonial Masters in India. The Act had streamlined Archives Administration in U.K. but was never extended to their colonies. They were keeping official records as tools of governance over British Colonial Empire in the East. The year 1860 is significant in the history of National Archives of India and the archival activities. A beginning was made in the Foreign Department by associating G. W. Forrest, a Professor of English at Eliphinstone College, Bombay, who had earned a reputation of a good Archivist on account of his personal interest and the work he had done in the Bombay Record Office. He found the Records in a very deplorable condition and many of them were getting destroyed by "**ignorant and indifferent custodians, dampness and white ants**". He recommended the urgency of transferring all records to a central repository. The Viceroy's Council ultimately supported the recommendation and it resulted in the establishment of Central Archives of the Government Of India known as **Imperial Record Department (IRD)** on 11 February 1891 and G. W. Forrest was appointed the first Officer-in-Charge⁶. His primary duties included examination, transfer and Cataloguing of Records of all Departments and organising a Central Library in place of various departmental Libraries. The rest is history. By and by non-current records of all Departments were transferred to IRD located in new Imperial Secretariat Building at Calcutta. It was ultimately transferred to Delhi when Delhi became the capital of India in 1911⁷. A new Red Stone Building for Archives was constructed on Rajpath-Janpath intersection as part of the Development Plan of the New Delhi, completed in 1926. The office of IRD was shifted to Delhi subsequently along with records till shifting of records was completed in 1937. Hence records travelled to Delhi from Calcutta, the new seat of the British Government in India. Keeper of Records had been designated as Director of Archives in 1944.

India gained independence in 1947 but with territorial partition of the country into two i.e. India and Pakistan. Imperial Record Department was now rechristened as National Archives of India, the custodian of non-current records of the Government of India. The functions of the Department were regrouped in to four Main Divisions i.e. Administration, Records, Publication and Preservation Divisions. Subsequently they were further sub-divided into smaller sections based on nature and distribution of work⁸.

5. Home Dept. Misc. Volume No. 432, Bengal State Archives.

6. Home Public, A Proceeding, March 1891, No. 20-42, NAI.

7. Home – Delhi – A, December 1911-No. 8-11.

8. F. No. 1-5/52 R.I., Guide to the records of Imperial Record Department, NAI, p. 243.

ISSUES BEFORE ARCHIVES AFTER INDEPENDENCE IN AUGUST 1947

The immediate challenge was as to how to deal with the quantum of records generated by more than 500 government record creating agencies, whose number was rapidly increasing since independence. It was a formidable mass of records which was a difficult task if at all to conduct an extensive survey to work out a strategy or an action plan. Records of the central Ministries alone covered more than 2, 10, 000 linear feet of space (about 40 miles) and difficult to assess records lying with subordinate/attached offices (tentatively estimate was 68 miles app., of 232 agencies having responded to the questionnaire of survey)⁹. What about the records of State Governments, local bodies like Municipal, Local and District Boards, the documentation of prevailing practices relating to their control, servicing, disposal either by destruction or retirement to a public repository, the current procedures relating to the control on the one hand and servicing and public access to record retired to public repositories on the other. To provide opportunities for cooperation between the record repositories and the records creating agencies in the existing arrangements, how to address the problem of unsystematic and haphazard manner of the problem of disposition of records lying with the creating agencies in the centre. These estimates have not taken into account the likely accruals in the other agencies who did not respond, records to be retired annually about 41,000 linear space (estimated to be 8 miles). Hence Government required addition of one repository every year¹⁰.

So challenge was how to contain this geometrical progression- segregate chaff from the grain i.e. important record from less important or of no value and significantly to save storage space, time, money and manpower. Need of the hour was to find out effective method of appraisal of records judiciously for selecting records of greater significantly for preservation and simultaneously to contain the unnecessary growth of records on account of expansion of government business. But much could be attributed to existing procedure of documentation and disposal of the British administration to decide about the appraisal strategy to be adopted by virtue of peculiar documentation practices. Further there was need of efficient record management programme to ensure well planned system of administering the records which have outlived their requirement and to bring in uniformity in retirement/transfer of records to archival repositories (Central or States, even to consider having Zonal repositories located outside Delhi in different regions having offices of the Union Government) in line with international archival practices and principal of arrangement of Archives.

A study conducted by **Indian Historical Record Commission** (IHRC) between 1948-1952 had brought to light startling facts about the condition of unretired records in the Centre and the State's Ministries and Dept. , a situation alarming enough as a matter of concern, demanding immediate action as to how to ensure their survival for future¹¹. IHRC is a national organisation of individuals and Institutions engaged in the study, upkeep and preservation of records and historical manuscripts, set up in 1919 by a Resolution of the Government of India¹². Till then the British Government had been very conservative in giving access to Government records. For technical guidance relied mainly on British experts and were expected to follow the lead of the British Government in their archival policy, then to use local expertise and had no committee of experts to help them to deal with the subject professionally. It was more an official body and was broad based gradually making it a more representative body by giving representation to provinces and States, representative of association of historians, Universities and Archivists before 1947¹³.

9. *Report of the Committee on Archival Legislation*, December, 1960 (New Delhi, 1962) p. 11.

10. Ibid.

11. As per information gathered on the basis of the questionnaire 232 agencies who had responded, only 31 seem to have separate record rooms but no muniment rooms, 158 kept their record in office rooms, 12 in the basement and many in their godowns . Regarding storage 185 departments had some packing boxes, closed cupboards or simply stacked on floor, 55 Depts. reported dampness in their record rooms and only 92 claimed to be damp free. None had regulated environment. Regarding cleanliness 77 departments had system of regular dusting and fire fighting arrangements, while it was reported to be done at irregular intervals, having no safe guards against fire hazards. So far as insectal or fungal attacks, most of the department had no arrangements for prevention. 123 agencies had arrangements for keeping their files with protective covers, 72 thought it necessary to keep them tide in bundles between two wooden boards. None of them had any arrangements for repair of brittle records. None had trained staff to look after the records, nor a full time qualified custodian of a responsible status to administer them. (Details of the Survey available in the Proceedings of Indian Historical Records Commission. XXVIII session, 1951, pp. 38-46, NAI).

12. Dept. of Education (Genl.), Resolution No. 77 dt. 21st March, 1919.

13. Dept. Edu. Health & Lands, F. No. 92-9/E, Resolution dt. 16th September 1941.

Its main role was purely consultative in character i.e. to make enquiries and give recommendations relating to archival matters, their preservations, publication programme, promote research and publication, reference media, treatment of archives for the purpose of historical studies in all the provinces and Native Indian States, access to archives, archival training of Indian students from universities in method of historical research, selection of competent editors and assistants for publication of documents¹⁴. Its early achievements were not very effective but through a number of resolutions adopted at its various sessions it did draw the attention of the then British Government to various archival problems and issues of records right from District to State and Central level, their housing, upkeep, storage and physical conditions, appointment of trained officers etc. as it could not appeal to public being a Government body.

Financial support constitutes an integral part of archival development programme and the Commission has consistently laid stress for allocation of separate Plan funds for the purpose. The demand for functional buildings by NAI and other States to have an organised Archives Office were not finding favour with the Government of India due to constraints caused by the war and the partition of the country. IHRC also kept these issues alive by adopting resolutions in its various sessions. The demand for funds for development of archives failed to find a place in the First Five Year Plan of the Union Government with priority being accorded to other development schemes for building a New India. In the second Five Year Plan though the Government agreed to the proposal of NAI Annexe building but only token amount was provided. It was only during the third Five Year Plan that funds were made available for establishment of archives offices as also for construction of functional buildings for housing records of enduring value. NAI, Annexe was completed and inaugurated in 1991. By 1975 the State Archives of Andhra Pradesh, Orissa, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu and Uttar Pradesh had their own functional buildings. Some more States like Assam, Bihar, Delhi, Goa, Gujarat and Kerala have since joined this group. Other State Archives have also been pursuing the matter vigorously with their respective Governments.

The Government of India initiated in 1986 two Centrally Sponsored Schemes for providing financial assistance to the State Archives and other Non-Governmental Archival institutions and organisations through Ministry of Culture/NAI to provide fund support on project basis for further growth and development of archival institutions in the country. The Commission had played a vital role in launching of these schemes. Since then financial assistance is being provided by the centre even for construction of building, purchase of conservation equipments and repair material etc. under these two Grant -in- aid schemes being executed by National Archives.

ACCESS TO ARCHIVES

It was only through IHRC that research students' right of access to historical records in official custody was first recognised. It was only due to the efforts of IHRC that in 1939 the Government decided to throw open all their non-current non- confidential records to *bona fide* research students, much left to the discretion of the Keeper of Records. First pre 1860 records and subsequently up to 1880 were given access to bona fide students who were recommended by the Head of a University Department. The research students had to pay an inspection fee of Rs. 5/-, an examination fee of Rs. 2/- per ten typed foolscap pages of transcript with a minimum of Rs. 15/- and typing charges - all excerpts were required to be submitted in typescript - were regarded as prohibitive, for official rate far exceeded the rates that were current in the market. Research students with limited means could hardly afford it hence proved vexatious. Even some portions of the excerpts were expunged if found otherwise or without any understanding of the issue or subject as they were scrutinised by officials who were not having historical training hence influencing the historical findings. Further months elapsed before they were released¹⁵.

These were applicable to central records in provincial custody but were not binding on the Provinces and different practices were followed in different regions. The rules governing access to public records were further liberalised in 1947 and all pre- 1902 official records were made available for research.

14. Ibid.

15. Indian Historical Records Commission – A Retrospect, 1919-1948, pp. 16-17.

To facilitate research and use of these records a pilot project of preparing Indexes was initiated providing a more in depth reference media, to begin with Land Revenue Records and other series were taken up subsequently. Such indexes were prepared by Provincial Records offices also at Bombay, Madras etc. *A Manual of Rules Regulating Access to Archives in India and Europe* was also published for the benefit of the researchers¹⁶.

With Independence India was declared a democratic Republic where people have a full right to access the public records created by the Public authorities. Access Rules were further liberalised. Scrutiny of excerpts was done away with, first 40 year old records and subsequently as per Archival Policy Resolution of 1972 and Public Record Act of 1993 & Public Record Rules 1997, 30 year old records in public domain were thrown open for consultation by the bona-fide researchers. The only restrictions in force are related to sensitive zones and border areas and that too is left to the discretion of the Director General, NAI to take a decision in such matters in consultations with the concerned Ministries and Dept's. As for private papers and Microfilms collections conditions imposed by the donor regulates access to the paper/collections. Now with the Right to Information Act, 2005, any Indian citizen can access archives by proving one's identity. Foreign nationals are required to submit a letter of introduction from their sponsoring University/ Institution as well as a letter of introduction from the diplomatic mission of their country in India.

A set of Rules have been framed as prescribed under Public Record Act & Rules for the security and servicing of records to users of Archives in line with Right to Information, facilitating their consultation in a well equipped research room and supply of copies in any form including digital at minimum (actual) cost as per prescribed rates. Many of the state Archives working on the model of NAI either have their own Public Record Act (10 states out of 28) or have Archival Policy Resolutions to regulate their Archives and Record management practices while trying to have their own archival law.

ARCHIVAL LEGISLATION

THE ARCHIVAL POLICY RESOLUTION OF 1972

It took more than hundred years before National Archives of India could have its own Archival Law passed by Parliament in 1993, though established in 1891. The need for an Archival Legislation was also felt from time to time to regulate not only access to Records but also the entire working of Archives Administration within Archives and also for future accruals from Ministries/ Depts. - regulating the Records management practices in the Ministries/ Depts. right from creation to transfer of right kind of records to Archives, based on international Archival practices.

The Destruction of Record Act of 1917 was essentially permissive rather than a preventive enactment in as much as it furnished a statutory basis for the disposal of Central or State Government Records. It did not in any way compel the authorities concerned to implement any constructive functions in this regard. Nor did it prevent any unwarranted destruction of public records. Hence IHRC has been pressing hard at its various sessions to secure a statutory basis for the preservation of records on the lines of U.K., to amend the existing law to make it more effective and to prevent export of historical manuscripts. The Commission has at least build up public opinion being the national forum where historians and Archivists aired their views and by publicising its proceedings spread archival awareness among the literate classes. Its recommendations did impacted or rather stimulated official thinking on various archival issues demanding urgent attention.

An Archival Legislation Committee was constituted in 1959 by the Government of India. Dr. Tarachand an eminent Historian and Member of Rajya Sabha was the Chairman of the Committee. The terms of reference involved nationwide survey of records of all types, public & private, to study and assess the problems affecting Archives in terms of housing, Administration, management and use¹⁷.

Checking and arrangement of already accessioned records were pursued pertaining to different

16. For the details of Publications please visit NAI website www.nationalarchives.nic.in.

17. Report of the Committee on Archival Legislation, p. 2.

Depts. Abstract Lists were prepared. The Government of India introduced a Manual of office procedure in 1955 to regulate functioning of Government of India offices on uniform line. NAI took up a Pilot Project of Records management to provide relief to various agencies of the Government of India from their records of ephemeral nature. NAI started the appraisal of these records with the cooperation of these agencies and also laid down its policies and procedures to preserve records of permanent value for future by helping these Ministries and Depts. To facilitate closing and recording of files judiciously, assistance was provided in drawing up the Retention Schedules and also to facilitate their appraisal in due course.

The Government of India adopted an Archival Policy Resolution (APR) in December 1972 as an interim measure on the basis of recommendation of Archival Legislation Committee Report, submitted in December 1960. Subsequently 15 State Government also adopted the central model of Archival Policy Resolution. The APR defined responsibilities of Ministries, Departments and other offices of the Government of India for proper care, custody, management and disposal of their records and on the other those of the National Archives of India. Also recommended policy in respect of appraisal and retirement of Records to Departmental Record Room's. and Archival Repositories, stressed the need for trained personnel to run the muniment rooms, to improve storage conditions, to prepare serviceable reference media, revision of manuals for better management of records in Ministries/Dept. and Archives and to improve functional relation between them. Director of Archives was entrusted with the responsibilities of co-ordinating with the Central Government Offices in the field of Record Management. Subsequently action on the Archival Law was also taken up in right earnest and the Parliament passed the Bill on 22nd December 1993. The Public Record Act became effective on 1st March 1995.

Public Record Act of 1993 and Public Record Rules of 1997

The Act empowers the Central Government to regulate the administration, management, and preservation of Public Records of the Central Government/Union Territory Administration, Public Sector Undertaking's, Statutory Bodies, Committees and Commissions etc. and also envisages acquisition of records of historical or national importance from private source by way of gift, purchase or donation. All unclassified public and private records which are more than 25 years old and transferred to archives are open for consultations by bona fide research scholars. An Archival Advisory Board has also been constituted with Secretary, Culture, as Chairperson with members from various Ministries, nominated Archivists and historians. The Board has been broad based recently providing equal representation/ membership to non-officials members to strengthen the Body.

The experience gained during the period of operation suggests that the Act and the Public Record Rules framed to implement the Law by NAI, the nodal Agency, have not been very effective and need to be further strengthened and made more relevant in the present changed scenario of electronic records and their digital preservation. Provisions relating to transfer of non-current records after appraisal in a time bound manner, liberalisation of access rules also need to be amended in line with IT Act of 2000 and the RTI Act, 2005 besides many other provisions related to Archives and Record management issues emerging in the event of e-archives on account of use of Information and communication Technology for governing processes by the Government of India.

PARTITION OF INDIA AND THE ARCHIVES

India was divided into two nations i.e. India and Pakistan before it gained independence from the British Rule. The partition of India generated a number of issues and challenges for Archives, the problem of division of archives of the undivided Indian Government and the challenge - how to tackle it and prevent dismemberment of Indian Archives both at the centre and the states after merging of the Princely States (more than 500 principalities) in the Indian Federation. It was a very delicate and sensitive issue and records were enormous. It resulted in long deliberations held between the two sides to defuse the crisis.

Government constituted a **Steering Committee on the division of Museum and Archives** under the control of **Partition Council**. It was argued that the Government of India had acquired sovereignty over former territories of British India, recognised under Indian Independence Act of

1947. It was in line with International practice, according to which no records of a Government are to be divided either on succession of a territory from its jurisdiction or partition or settlement of any other form as had been requested by the Government of Pakistan. Further records being an organic whole could not be divided without destroying their originality or compromising their evidential value and if done that would amount to violation of international practice. Further it was not possible practically. Records cannot be dismembered which otherwise would result in making a particular series incomplete with incomplete information. As a result it was decided that records which are at present in the Indian Dominion should not be removed but Microfilm copies may be supplied to the Government of Pakistan on demand¹⁸. This line of action which followed the approved international policy in this respect was fully endorsed by the governments of both the countries. Hence the community of Archivists the world over are opposed to dismemberment of Archives holding anywhere*.

Steering Committee of the Partition Council decided against the division of archival assets. It was agreed between the Government of India and Pakistan that Government of Pakistan could depute its nominee to examine the Reference Media of the record Series housed in National Archives of India and ask for copies of relevant records. Government of India was to extend all facilities to their nominees.

It was also agreed that if available to give printed copies of the records to Government of Pakistan; if microfilming in natural course any of those records of their interest, to give one copy to Pakistan free of cost, if not there is no obligation on the part of Government of India to supply the copies of records to Pakistan unless they place additional microfilm unit at the disposal of National Archives of India.

Indexes if marked 'Secret' should not be shown without prior permission of the concerned Ministry. Representative from the Government of Pakistan also observed that Division of Archives would have catastrophic - disastrous results and were satisfied by receiving a copy of the inventory for requisitioning copies of Records of their interest as and when required. Thus the dismemberment of Indian Archives was avoided¹⁹.

Transfer/Acquisition of Records from Erstwhile Residencies/Agencies

Records were also acquired from the Crown Representative Offices in the Princely Ruled States, having joined the federation. These records were transferred to the office of U.K. High Commissioner for India by the erstwhile British Government on the eve of the transfer of Power. Fate of the Indian Princely States was not yet clear. These records, if transferred partially, would have affected the integrity of the entire series and would have got disintegrated and lost its evidential and archival value at both ends. In fact precedent lay in the honesty of the Indian Government, when the records of Shanghai, Bangkok and Singapore kept in trust with the Government of India during World War II, were returned to U.K. High Commissioner without any hesitation. Hence a request was made through Ministry of States with all details of complete list of Residencies and Political Agencies as they existed prior to 14th August, 1949 besides the defunct bodies.

As these states lapsed or acceded to the new Dominion of India after Independence, functions hitherto exercised by Crown Representative now vested with the Government of India. Consequently ownership of the records(1759-1947) of the erstwhile Colonial Government or the Offices of Crown Representatives were inherited by the Government of the New Dominion of India and that no other authority had claims to recognise the Government of India as the owner of bulk of these series of Records and also as owner of the entire series. There cannot be part owners²⁰.

18. Tirmizi SAI, *Archives in India*, New Delhi 1979, p. 11.

* The gestures of National Archives of Netherland is commendable that they have returned in original the archives related to Surinam of its colonial day's recently, one of their former colonies besides extending full support financially and academically in the coming up of Surinam National Archives.

19. *The Indian Archives*, Vol. XL IX, Jan-December 2000 (Numbers 1-2) pp. 172-178, lot of credit goes to Shri S. Roy, former Deputy Director of Archives, in handling of this issue as Member Secretary of the Steering Committee. Protecting the sovereignty of Indian Archives in the Article S. Roy (1911-1983), *A Profile of His Hands on: Experience with Archives*, by P. Mehra - D. K. Pant.

20. Ibid.

Through diplomatic efforts and agreement with the U.K. authorities in 1960, National Archives India was allowed to have microfilm copies of the Crown representative Records from Commonwealth Relations Office as well. National Archives of India had to be judicious and cautious enough in selection of more valuable records than the less important ones for copying on microfilms - as they were to be obtained only on payment basis and not on complimentary basis (though the Government of India was the rightful owner having claims to those series by inherent rights being the legitimate successor after independence). Foreign exchange provision was substituted by purchasing UNESCO International Book coupons for obtaining the copies of Records on Microfilms. This programme is still going on.

All records of Residencies and Political Agencies in India were transferred to NAI in 1948 without disturbing their original order of arrangement. They were also listed for reference and use as they are valuable enough to construct history of those States / Region they belong to and have rich information to study the history of diplomacy of the British Government in India in various phases with the Princely States and its people before the lapse of Paramountcy. A certain portion of records were destroyed or disposed of by the Political Depts. of the British Government of India or were transferred to different Agencies by Ministry of States for administrative purposes. Ministry of States was requested for return of these documents to National Archives India.

Archival Training

There was lack of trained professional archivists in the country and general ignorance about general principals of modern archival practices as they had evolved in western European countries in the 19th and first half of 20th Century. The Government and the IHRC were equally aware of these weaknesses of the Archival profession in India. A formal beginning was made in 1941 when Government adopted a Resolution No. F. 92-9/40-E of 16 September 1941 and accepted the need of training some record office employees from the Provinces, Residencies, States and private students too, at the Imperial Record Department each year, in the field of Archives administration and rehabilitation and preservation of records in particular. IHRC too have been stressing for archival training by way of adopting resolutions at various sessions. As far back as 1920 one assistant and two attendants were deputed by Madras Record Office to IRD for training in the newly introduced methods of repair and renovation as Mr. Scholfield the then Keeper of Records had reorganised the Preservation Branch and all other state repositories were looking to IRD for technical advice, support and training. The next call for service came from State of Jaipur, having wealth of mediaeval records, the richest source of information to study the Mughal history and followed by Punjab (1927), Baroda (1928-29), Assam (1930), Bombay Secretariat (1935) and to be followed by others till a formal beginning was made²¹.

All these developments and shortage of trained manpower necessitated need of creating a suitable training programme to ensure availability of trained manpower, who wanted to take up Archives - Keeping as a profession. Accordingly the Government of India introduced a Diploma Course (August 1943) with a few nominees from Provincial and State Government and syllabus was revised in 1946 in consultations with international authorities²². Two stipends of Rupees 100/- each was introduced as well. Training has continued since then, training thousands of Archivists. Initially it was a 2 years course for some time with two short term courses for a year and six months duration (for preservation only). In 1952, 2years course was discontinued and one year Diploma course in Archives Keeping was made more intensive with more stress on practical training. The Government approved the training scheme of NAI on regular basis as recommended by the Estimate Committee of the Parliament and also increased the stipend money by 50% and also introduced 8 stipends for each state sponsored candidates i.e. Rs 75/-²³.

In due course with the expansion of the Record management activities and particularly after the

21. INDIAN HISTORICAL RECORDS COMMISSION, *A Retrospect 1919-1948*, Calcutta 1948, p. 52-23.

22. It was an outcome of the recommendations of the Research and Publication Committee of IHRC in the form of "Post War Reorganisation of Archives Offices in India". For training in archival science, the Committee observed that when each of the eleven Governor's provinces in British India and the Princely States will put their record offices in order, they would require a large number of trained archivists. Ref. INDIAN HISTORICAL RECORDS COMMISSION, *A Retrospect 1919-1948, Appendix 'G' Post war Reorganisation of Archives offices in India*, p. 121.

23. *Report of the Committee on Archival Legislative*, December, 1960 (New Delhi, 1962) pp. 95-96.

adoption of Archival Policy Resolution, 1972, based on the recommendations of the Archival legislation Committee there was a greater demand for trained personal at professional and sub-professional level. The Institute of Archival Training was set up in 1976 as a UNESCO approved Regional Centre for Archival Training for South Asia and attracts students from the neighbouring and African Countries. The Institute was renamed as School of Archival studies in 1980. A number of Short Term Training Courses were also started in all disciplines of Archival science at professional and sub-professional level. With the enactment of Public Record Act of 1993 training of Departmental Record Officers in the Union Ministries/Departments, Attached and Subordinate Offices and even from Public Sector Undertakings was initiated by the School which is mandatory and caters to their requirement of Record Management Practices of current and semi-current records. The curriculum of the school is also updated from time to time and is quite intensive with more stress on hands on training. It is duly approved by its Board of Studies and has taken care of all latest techniques of Conservation, Reprographics including ICT, Digital Records, and specialisation paper in Business and Private archives besides Archives and Records management. Currently 20 scholarships are being provided. A mandatory six month paid Internship training has also been introduced to pass out private students of one year Diploma Course w.e.f. 2010. The professional qualification has been recognised as one of the qualification for appointment to the Post of Head of Archives at the Centre and the States Archival Repositories, University Archives and other such Institutes and Documentation Centres.

Publication programme to give access to official records

The policy of the British Government in India was not liberal enough to give access to records to the people in general - rather adopted a Policy of Publications as Selections from the Government Records to satisfy the public demand for access. They were afraid that the information from the records would be used against the government and wanted to prevent misuse of papers by the British Officers as had been misused by Capt. Joseph Cunningham. A good result was that a Comprehensive Records Publication Programme evolved and a series of source books, reference media were published on Indo - British history like Press Lists of various series of records housed in IRD like Public Proceedings, Mutiny papers, Land records, Abstracts of the early Foreign Deptt. Records, Calendar, Calendar of Persian correspondence, Descriptive List of Foreign Dept. Records, Lists of Home, Finance, Public Works Dept., Foreign, Military Dept. Records, covering various periods of the 18th & 19th centuries were published. Listing of original Treaties, transferred to IRD from foreign Deptt. was also published in 3 volumes. Guide to Records in NAI, 11 Vols. is an exhaustive Reference Media about the records holdings of NAI covering records up to 1960. As part of the UNESCO Comprehensive Project 'Guide to the Sources of the History of the Nations' - initiated in 1959 in collaboration with ICA- actually launched in 1984. An Advisory Committee was constituted which set guidelines for preparing India Chapter of the Guide to the Source of Asian History in India', allocated No. 3 for India out of 12 Asian countries. Under the project 6 Vol. have been published.

'Indian Archives' is an official bi annual journal, being published since 1947 with the object to stimulate interest and imparting knowledge of the science of archives keeping. It contains research articles on records administration, preservation and management, news-notes of select titles etc. The special numbers based on various themes are also brought out from time to time. The department has brought out 56 volumes of the journal so far.

Conservation and Preservation of Records

Repair and rehabilitation is an important aspect of archival preservation. IRD had proposed a little ambitious programme for repair of records which however could not take off before the Second World War. In the beginning programme of flattening the entire series of folded documents was taken up. Documents were repaired where necessary by using tracing papers (though replaced subsequently by chiffon repair) and were placed between docket covers, tied in bundles. Later after 1940's, the Government decided to mechanise the work by instituting modern equipments for fumigation and lamination for repair of records. A Conservation Research laboratory was set up. An insecticide paper was invented and new method of repairing palm-leaf manuscripts was evolved in the laboratory besides the technique of hand/Solvent Lamination, the process which makes use of Cellulose Acetate foil, tissue paper and acetone, developed in NAI indigenously and does not require elaborate and expensive equi-

pments and receives individual attention. At the same time it is a reversible method. Laminating Hydraulic Press was installed to do repair of brittle and fragile documents on a large scale. A Vacuum fumigation chamber was also built up to facilitate speedy disinfection of document, insects and moulds signified the change over from traditional method to scientific and mechanised modes of repair. Besides, Rehabilitation programme, Consultancy Service was initiated under preservation programme providing technical Assistance in the field of Repair and rehabilitation of records. The laboratory has been since modernised and equipped with latest equipments and the conservation works is going on in project mode of library and archival material.

Microfilming and digitization of Records

Likewise Micrographic Laboratory was set up to conserve valuable collections on microfilms roles. An ambitious programme of security microfilming was launched after independence as a precautionary measure against loss of fire, flood, war and sabotage besides to ensure longevity to documents in custody. These set of negative copies of microfilm roles are kept at NAI Regional Office, Bhopal. Even positive prints of these microfilms are also developed for consultation by the scholars. There are about 35000 microfilms roles in the microfilm repository. Modern technology has further facilitated conversion of microfilms directly into digital format. The computerisation and digitization programme was initiated in 1998. In view of the requirement for quick retrieval of information from Government Records a tailor made software namely Archival Information Management System (AIMS) was developed. Stand alone version of AIMS has also been given to State Repositories for networking with NAI. The software was upgraded to latest technology in 2006 with the help of National Informatics Centre (NIC), Government of India. Till now data of the reference media of 22 lakh files/ records pertaining to various ministries and departments has been created and the same is available in the intranet of the department for use by scholars, administration and users of Archives. The same data is being uploaded on the NAI website for the benefit of users in a searchable format to be available online. A number of other projects are also making steady progress converting content of the files into digital mode to be ingested into the system by using AIMS database for the metadata component and creating JPEG, PDF, XML and checksum for each record for authenticity. NAI has signed an MOU with Centre for Development of Advanced Computing (C-DAC), Pune for this project and it will enable NAI to develop its digital preservation capabilities of e-records in fulfilment of the mandate of the Public Records Act of 1993. Total Digital Images available in NAI are 38,00,000 (approx) in 4 T.B. capacity.

A National Register Programme was launched in 1959 to compile a comprehensive list of private and non-official archives scattered all over the country - Nationwide survey was undertaken for census of Records/ in private custody - in collaboration with the state/ Union Territories. So far 23 Vols. have been brought out.

National Archives of India has in its custody, a rich collection of **Private Papers** and oriental records which have been acquired mainly through donations and gifts from a variety of sources, even purchased through its expert committee - Historical Documents Purchase Committee (HDPC). These papers constitute a valuable supplement to the information contained amongst public records. Major collections of **Private Papers** are those of Mahatma Gandhi, Dr. Rajendra Prasad, Dadabhai Naoroji, M R Jayakar, Maulana Azad, G.K. Gokhale, Sardar Patel, P.D. Tandon, Minoos Masani, etc..

Besides the above records, the office has a special **Archival Library** supplementing the information available in Public records. The library holdings comprise of collection of Government reports and publications, gazetteers, native newspaper reports and books on various disciplines. NAI's Regional office at Bhopal and Records Centres at Bhubaneswar, Jaipur and Puduchery have also a huge collection of records with research facilities to the scholars visiting these offices.

States Archives in the Country have evolved on the pattern of Central Archives i.e. NAI the Premier Archival Repository in India. The National Committee of Archivists constituted in 1955 has played a vital role in bringing state/ UT Archives and NAI closer. The Committee meets once a year to deliberate on issues related to Archival problems and adopt resolution and reviews follow up action on the previous recommendations. They share a good and healthy professional relations and NAI pro-

vides them all professional, technical support in the form of Archival training, sharing of resources and expertise besides extending financial assistance under two Grant - in-Aid Schemes.

SUMMARY

The evolution of official archives in India has a life history of its own very special, interesting and peculiar to itself. While in transition since the time of Indus valley civilization, we have come across evidences to establish the fact that records were kept by signs, drawings, pictures on engravings on a variety of material and different formats like clay, wood, stone, rock wall, caves, leaves or animal skins etc.. Writing is stated to have been introduced sometime in 5-6 century B.C.. Record offices existed in India during Buddhist times, just to refer to its rich tradition - though a disjointed one and sometimes gives fairly good idea about India's great Heritage. Chinese Travellers account do refer to record offices in India. Likewise the European and Arab travellers who visited India before coming of Europeans, have also written about existence of record offices during the period. We have inherited official archives of India from the British colonial Rulers. The concept of Modern Archives keeping came to India from England through Trading Companies. Indians had also experienced the problem relating to Archives administration and had tried to solve them before the coming of the Europeans. One of the legacy of the Mughal's British inherited is the records management (particularly related to land records). The main focus of the paper is on the History of Archives and Archival Science with main stress on its evolution at the time of independence in August 1947. Hence endeavour has been made to start the study of the evolution of Archives since independence i.e. 1947, the Legacy of the British Colonial Rulers, on the basis of the archival records available of the British period in National Archives of India that we have inherited. In August 1947 India was declared an independent Nation - though partitioning India into two, India and Pakistan. Hence the study is in three parts. In the first part of the paper History of Archives in India has been discussed in historical perspective before the coming of the European Trading Companies. In the second part of the paper an effort has been made to discuss the evolution of archival system under the British Colonial Government and how they used to administer and transact their business activities. In the third part of the paper an effort has been made to highlight the issues and challenges before the new Independent India, the archival legacy of the British Colonial Government and the impact of the integration of the princely states into the Indian Federation and the Princely archives besides the archives of former Crown Representative Offices. Further as to what was the impact of the partition of India on Archives after independence in 1947 from the British Colonial Rule has been addressed. What has been the status of the archives as a profession in the country and the issues and challenges posed to the world of archivist and the record managers of the time has also been discussed highlighting the influence of the scholars and the historians on the archives and how they faced these challenges, followed by analysis of the outcome of their initiatives before the enactment of the Public Record Act of the 1993. The paper in brief also refers to some of the current issues and the after effects/impact of the archival legislation and the other laws that came into being in particular the IT Act of 2000, the e-records and the Act of the Right to the information - 2005 and on access to information in Archives and Archives administration in e-environment.

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