CHAPTER 2

ARCHIVES IN INDIA – HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Archives are often viewed as records that are old, decaying, and musty. Archives are written in indecipherable, ancient scripts on yellowing scraps of paper. They are perceived to be treasures waiting to be discovered or nuisances, jumbled in basements or piled high in attics. But one should remember that the Archives are the mirror of the society. Archives indicate an assembly of writings, papers, documents, photographs, sound recordings, etc. They are from a variety of unconnected sources but which together provide a body of evidence about an activity or way of life, which is either defunct or dying out and which, for this reason, have been purposely brought together in order to preserve the information they contain for future generations. The history and nature of archives; the role of the archivists are discussed in-depth in this chapter.

2.2 DEFINITIONS

The term Archives, ārkivz, derived from the Greek archeion (office building), applies to records of Government agencies (public archives), institutions (institutional archives,) business firms (business archives), and families and individuals (family and personal archives).
Jinkinson (1922) writes, "A document which may be said to belong to the class of Archives is one which was drawn up or used in the course of an administrative or executive transaction (whether public or private) of which itself formed a part; and subsequently preserved in their own custody for their own information by the person or persons responsible for that transaction and their legitimate successors".

Schellenburg (1956), an archivist of international fame defines 'archives' as "those records of any public or private institution which are adjudged worthy of permanent preservation of reference research purposes and which have been deposited or have been selected for deposit in an archival institution".

Encyclopaedia Americana defines: "Archives are organised bodies of records, including papers, books, maps, sound recordings and other documentary materials, made or received in personance of the law or in connection with the transaction of business and preserved because of their enduring value".

2.3 HISTORY OF THE ARCHIVES

The record keeping practices, developed by the Sumerians, Hititis and Egyptians were inherited and improved by the Greeks and particularly Romans. With the collapse of Roman authority, the Catholic Church kept these practices alive. The technique of keeping archives was adopted and perfected in the National States Archives that developed in Western Europe. The advantage of
concentrating the archives of individual officers in a centralised repository were first recognised by the Spanish in 1543 (examples: General Archives of Simancas, Spain and Archives of the Dynasty, State, and Court in Vienna, Austria, 1749). During the course of French Revolution, France created a National System of Public Archival Administration directed by the Central Service Agency. France established its National Archives (Archives Nationales) in Paris in 1789. Following the example of France, many European countries began to establish Archives. Accordingly, Netherlands in 1802, Great Britain in 1838, Italy in 1875 and Soviet Union (Russia) in 1918. Though the United States of America (USA) established its National Archives in 1934, it emerged as an important centre for importing and implementing new archival system by applying Science and Technology in Archives. The archives in African countries owe much to colonial rulers of the European countries like England and France.

The Asian Countries were not silent of the art of writing and archival institution. Many countries in Asia established their archives. For example: China in 1534, India in 1891, Sri Lanka in 1902, Pakistan in 1948, Iraq in 1963, Singapore in 1967, Iran in 1970 and Japan in 1971.

2.4 ARCHIVES IN INDIA

In India, the Portuguese claim the credit of first establishing the Archives. Tombo do Estado da India was started after the name of the principal Archives Office at Lisbon in Portugal namely Torre do Tombo de
Lisha. King D. Filippe II appointed Diogo do Couto as the first Record Keeper in India. He was succeeded by many Record Keepers like Domingos de Castilho, Gasper Aires, Joao Vasco Casco, Gasper Souza de Lacerda, Alvaro Pinto Coutinho, Domingos de Barros, Bartolomeu Galvao, Antonio Bacarro, Francisco Moniz de Carvalso, Antonio de Matos Socifo Jao de Moniz Antonio Alvares and Inacio Sebastiao de Silva till 1840. Joaquim Heliodoro da Cunha Rivara who came to Goa as the Secretary of Governor General in 1855 thought of printing the documents on a large scale in the form of Arquivo Portuguez Oriental series. In 1930, the Governor General Joao Carlos Craveiro Lopes gave a fresh lease of life to the deteriorating precious record holdings. The name of the archives was changed to Arquivo Geral e Historico da India Portuguesa with the initial collection of about 1500 volumes only of the Secretariat of the Government in 1937, it was renamed as Cartorio do Governor Geral do Estado da India. It was developed into a separate Directorate of Historical Archives in 1953 and was named as Arquivo Historico do Estado da India which continued till liberation of Goa after which it was known as Historical Archives of Goa⁷.

Later the British established the Imperial Record Department at Calcutta in 1891. It was started as a result of the efforts of the Government of India to find an adequate and permanent solution to the problem of storage and preservation of their ever-increasing bulk of records. In 1889, the Government placed G.W. Forrest, on special duty to examine the records of the Foreign Department. He alerted Government to the necessity of establishing a record
office and recommended that all the records relating to the administration of
the East India Company should be placed in one Central Records Office. Then
the question of establishing a Central Records Office was discussed in the
Governor General in Council which also recognized the need for a record
office. Accordingly on 11th March 1891, the Government of India employed
G.W. Forrest as officer-in-charge of the records of the Government of India for
examining old records in each of the department. Eminent British personalities
were in-charge of the Record Department. They are: George William Forrest
1891 - 1899, Samuel Charles Hill 1899 - 1902, Charles Robert Wilson 1902 -
1904, Norman Leslie Hallward 1904 - 1905, Edward Denison Ross 1906 -
1914, Alwyn Fober Schotfield 1914 - 1919 and Richard Henry Balkar 1919 -
1920.

The formation of the First Royal Commission of Public Records in 1910
by the British Government in England, was a milestone in history of Record
Management in England as well as in India. The British issued a number of
instructions to the Indian Archives pertaining to methods of preservation and
publication of records. The transfer of the capital from Calcutta to Delhi in
1911 was an important event in the annals of the National Archives. As the
collective memory and administrative tool of the Government, the records had
to follow the transfer. Accordingly the Government constructed the present
building in 1926 and transferred the records. This also paved the way for the
formation of the Indian Historical Records Commission in 1919. 
For the first time in 1920, an Indian was appointed as the Keeper of the Records. The following are the Indian Keeper of the records appointed by the British Rulers. They are: Jamini Mohan Mitra, 1920 - 1922; Abul Fiaz Muhammed Abdul Ali 1922 - 1938, Dr.Surendranath Sen then onwards.10

For weeding the records, the Government of India constituted a sub committee consisting of eminent members of the Indian Historical Records Commission, K.F.A. Cotton, Jodunath Sarkar and Rushbrook Williams. They categorized the records into three classes (a) those of permanent value (b) those of secondary interest and (c) those of no historical or administrative value. They decided to destroy the third category and preserve the papers of the first two categories (a & b) and press listed11.

The Indian Historical Records Commission was urging both National and State Archives to encourage research by permitting bona fide research scholars to refer archival records and which was conceded to in 1939.12

With the declaration of Independence for India on 15th August 1947, resulted in the renaming of Imperial Record Department as the National Archives of India. Since 1947, changed policy and plan of the National Archives were effected in all the administrative matters of the archives, the functions of the archives like collection, preservation, training and publication of the records received new sponsorship at the hands of the Indian Government. In 1953, the Committee of Archivists of India was constituted. The archival legislation has been enacted in India entitled “Public Record Act, 1993”. This legislation offers the National and State archives an active role in record management, records appraisal, record transfer and preservation13.
2.5 ARCHIVES OF CATHOLIC CHURCHES IN INDIA

According to tradition, Christianity was introduced in India by St. Thomas, one of the 12 Apostles of Jesus Christ. He was martyred on St. Thomas Mount in 72 AD and his remains were buried at Mylapore in the sepulchre which lies in San Thome Cathedral Basilica, Chennai\textsuperscript{14}.

When the Portuguese arrived by sea route in 1498, they found the Church flourishing. They occupied Goa in 1510 and regarded commerce and conversion to Christianity as intimately related to one another. The great majority of population in their possession entered Roman Catholic Church. The Diocese of Goa was established in 1533. Its territory extended from cape of Good Hope to India and onward till China. Being so vast, the necessity arose of creating other Dioceses among which were Cochin in 1557 and Mylapore in 1606\textsuperscript{15}.

Church Archives in India is as old as the creations of the dioceses. Earlier, the Portuguese started the Archive in India in 1595. In 1775, Archbishop of Goa, Dom Francisco de Assuncao e Brito despatched from Goa to Lisbon, Portugal, the religious papers belonging to various ecclesiastical units in Goa\textsuperscript{16}.

Later the British started the Ecclesiastical Department in the Madras Presidency in 1818 to look after the affairs of the Christian Missionaries and their records reveal the socio-economic and political condition of South India for nearly three hundred years. All materials related to the life of the Christian
Churches were classified as "Ecclesiastical". In India ecclesiastical materials were not considered purely historical materials, and were exclusively used by the church scholars. In the past few decades, however secular scholars have also realised the value of historical information found in ecclesiastical materials. Therefore, the effort to preserve ecclesiastical material is gaining momentum in India.\textsuperscript{17}

Besides the archival holdings of the ecclesiastical records in National and State archives, a number of Churches and Christian organisations have also maintained their own archives. In India a large number of such archives existed in the places where Christianity had a better footing. The documents preserved in the archives of the Catholic Church represent an immense and precious heritage. This is shown by the large number of archives which have been instituted by the presence and activity of Bishops in the Episcopal cities. As per the Catholic Directory of India 1998,\textsuperscript{18} there are one hundred and thirty nine dioceses, six thousand two hundred and seventy seven individual Churches (Parishes) and two hundred and ninety five religious congregations in India, each having its own archives. For the present study, one hundred and thirty nine Diocesan Archives were considered and one Diocesan Archives in Madras - Mylapore was taken up for case study.

2.6 THE CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK OF ARCHIVES

An archive is a collection of documents which reflect and give evidence of the activity of the body that created them. Such documents are not created
randomly and form an interrelated collection. It is the duty of an archivist to preserve not only the documents themselves, but the integrity of the whole. This is known as the Principle of Provenance, by which the archivist respects the creating body as a unique source and preserves its activity as reflected in the archives. From this first principle derives the Principle of Original Order, whereby the archivist does not disturb the order in which the documents were created.

The word “Archives” has three possible meanings:

i. **Materials**: The noncurrent records of an organisation or institution preserved because of their enduring value.

ii. **Place**: The building or part of a building where archival materials are located.

iii. **Agency**: The programme officer or agency responsible for identifying, preserving, and making available records of enduring value.

Archives have a twofold nature and use. Firstly, they perpetuate the memory of the rights and activities of their creator and assist him in maintaining his rights and in planning his actions. Secondly, they furnish information on the political, economic and cultural developments of the past, which cannot be fully understood by the scholar unless he has access to the rich store of human experience embodied in the archive.
2.6.1 Archival Mission

The archivist should draw up a formal mission statement. This statement set out the triple responsibility of the archives, namely

i to identify records and papers of enduring value
ii to preserve them
iii to make them available to patrons

A cyclical model of the archival mission permits one to locate the various archival functions and to relate them to one and the other as a part of identifying records and papers of enduring value, archives conducts surveys and appraise records. A survey is a systematic procedure used to locate items of possible archival value. Appraisal is the process of determining the value, and thus the dispositions (retention or destruction), of records\(^\text{21}\). Each record series should be appraised applying five established appraisal consideration or criteria:

i Administrative value: Records that document the establishment of policy and operations have administrative value. Policy records are generally retained permanently. Operations records are usually considered short-term.

ii Legal Value: Records having legal value generally document legal or property rights of individuals or of the entity that created or maintained the records.
iii Fiscal Value: Records having fiscal value relate to financial transactions and normally have a short term retention. Records documenting fiscal policy may have permanent value.

iv Historical Value: Records having historical (or research) value are retained permanently because they provide documentation on the origins, organisation, development, functions, policy, activities, and events, of the originating entity, and / or provide information on associated persons, subjects, and events.

v. Sacramental Value (In the case of church records): Records documenting the administration of sacraments to the Faithful have sacramental value. Sacramental records are always retained permanently.²²
Fig. 2.1
ARCHIVAL MISSION CYCLE

Source: Hunter, Gregory S. (1997). Developing and Maintaining Practical Archives
The bridge between identifying records of enduring value and preserving them is represented by two archival functions: acquisition and accessioning. Acquisition covers such areas as donor relations and contacts, and policies for collecting records and papers. Accessioning involves the actual transfer of records or papers to an archives or manuscript repository, along with transfer of legal rights to the physical and intellectual properties.

The mission of preserving historically valuable items encompass three archival functions: arrangement, preservation and security. Arrangement is the organisation of archives or manuscripts in accordance with accepted professional principles. Preservation is both the protection of records from physical deterioration and damage, and the restoration of previously damaged items. Security is the safeguarding of records from natural and human disasters.

Description is the bridge between preserving records and making them available; it is the opportunity for the archivist to record what is known about the collection and its arrangement, in a way that will facilitate access by researchers. Description requires both clear and concise writing skills and a feel for the research questions archives patrons ask.

The third part of the archival mission, making records available, focuses on two archival functions: access and reference, and outreach and promotion. Access and reference involves more than just presenting a box of records to a researcher. Rather, archivists employ a number of policies and
procedures to ensure that use of the records involves neither physical damage to the items nor violations of copyright and right to privacy. Outreach and promotion are attempts to make people aware of archival records and the valuable information they contain. Thus, the archival mission completes full circle or cycle (Fig.2.1). It is a continuous process of determining which records have archival value, preserving them in a professional way, and making them available to a variety of researchers.

2.6.2 Differences between Archives and Libraries

Archives and Libraries have been closely related. In fact, many archives collections are located within library structures, especially on College and University Campuses. This does not mean, however, that archives and libraries are the same or that the theories and practices of one are transferable to the other.

The nature, scope and functions of archives differ from libraries. Table 2.1 provides in brief the distinction between archives and libraries.

There is also a difference in creators or originators of the items collected by libraries and archives. The books, journals, videotapes, and other items acquired by a library are created by many different individuals and organisations, ranging from a lone novelist to agencies of the Federal Government. Archives, on the other hand, usually collect only the records generated by the parent organisation or institution; there is one creator as opposed to thousands.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description/Feature</th>
<th>Libraries</th>
<th>Archives</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nature</td>
<td>Published</td>
<td>Unpublished</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Discrete items</td>
<td>Groups of related items</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Independent significance</td>
<td>Significance from relationship to other items</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Available elsewhere</td>
<td>Unique</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creator</td>
<td>Many different individuals or organisations</td>
<td>Parent organisation or institution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Method of creation</td>
<td>Separate, independent actions</td>
<td>Organic – normal course of business</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Method of receipt</td>
<td>Selected as single items</td>
<td>Appraised in aggregate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Decisions revocable</td>
<td>Decisions irrevocable (destruction is forever)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arrangement</td>
<td>Predetermined subject classification</td>
<td>Provenance and original order (relation to structure and function)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level of description</td>
<td>Individual items</td>
<td>Aggregate (record group or series)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Descriptive media</td>
<td>Built into the published item (title page, table of contents, index)</td>
<td>Must be prepared by the archivist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Card catalogue, online public access system (OPAC)</td>
<td>Guides and inventories, online systems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Access</td>
<td>Open stacks Items circulate</td>
<td>Closed stacks Items do not circulate</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Hunter, Gregory S. (1997). Developing and Maintaining Practical Archives*
The method of creation similarly varies. Library materials are created as the result of separate independent actions by a wide variety of authors or compilers. Archival materials, however, are never explicitly created. Archives grow organically as a part of the creations of records in the normal course of an institution's business. Only at a later date or the records judged to be of archival interest and properly preserved for future generations.

There is a difference as well in the receipt of items. Libraries usually select items one at a time, though they may buy a number of books at once from a single source. Library acquisition decisions usually are revocable. An archivist appraises materials in aggregate and adds them to the collection — accessions them — in a group. Archival decisions are irrevocable — destruction is forever. The appraisal of materials is thus one of the most important duties an archivist performs.

Library materials are arranged according to a predetermined subject classification systems. The bases for archival arrangement are two closely related principles, provenance and original order. Description is different in libraries and archives. First of all, the published nature of library books and periodicals means that they come with built-in descriptive media: title pages, tables of contents, indexes, and other bibliographic access points. In contrast, archives must build their own descriptive media for the unpublished materials under their control.
Since library materials are processed one at a time, it is logical that they also are described individually. Most often this is done with a catalogue, whether it be a manual or computerised system. In keeping with their nature, archival materials are not described individually, but rather in the aggregate. Archival description explains the particular group of records, their relationship to other records, and their significance for research. Though many archives use a catalogue as a secondary index, the principal descriptive devices are inventories of specific collections and guides to the general holdings of a repository.

Access is also different for library and archival materials. Library materials are stored on open shelves. Researchers locate the items they require and often are permitted to borrow them from the library. Because of their uniqueness, archival stack areas are closed to researchers. Staff members retrieve requested items and carefully observe researchers while they use the items. Archival materials do not circulate, but some repositories will provide copies (either paper, microfilm, or digital) for the private use of researchers.

Table 2.1 summarises the differences between libraries and archives. Despite these many differences, it would be wrong to assume that libraries and archives have nothing in common. They share the mission of making knowledge available to a wide variety of patrons. They share a concern about the preservation of existing materials. They share a belief that what has gone before can benefit generations still to come.25
2.6.3 Differences between an Archives and Records Centres

An archives is the repository of the permanently valuable records of an organisation. Such records are traditionally transferred to an archives, both physically and legally, when the organisation that created them no longer needs them in the course of business. Archival records then become available to researchers who use them not only to document the history of the organisation that created them but also to research the society of which that organisation is a part.

A records centre is a storage area for records no longer needed for everyday use. Records in a records centre may be either temporary records (those waiting for their destruction date) or permanent (those waiting to be transferred to an archives.) Records in a records centre are traditionally still in the legal custody of the organisation that created or received them; as a result the creating organisation, rather than the records centre staff, controls access to these records.36

2.6.4 The Work of Archivists

The primary task of the archivist is to establish and maintain control, both physical and intellectual, over records of enduring value. Archivists select records, and this involves the understanding of the historical context in which the records were created, the uses for which they were intended, and their relationships to other sources. The archivist then arranges and describes the records, in accordance with accepted standards and practices; ensures the long-term preservation of collections; assists researchers; and plans and directs exhibitions, publications, and other outreach programmes to broaden the use of
collections and to enlist support for archival programmes. All archivists, especially those with administrative responsibilities, need to understand and apply the principles of sound management to their work.

The work of the archivist is related to, but distinct from, that of certain other professionals. The librarian and the archivist, for example, both collect, preserve, and make accessible materials for research; but significant differences exist in the way these materials are arranged, described, and used. The records manager and the archivist are also closely allied; however, the records manager controls vast quantities of institutional records, most of which will eventually be destroyed, while the archivist is concerned with relatively small quantities of records deemed important enough to be retained for an extended period. The museum curator and the archivist are associated; however, the museum curator collects, studies, and interprets mostly three-dimensional objects, while the archivist works with paper, film, and electronic records. Finally, the archivist and the historian have had a longstanding relationship; the archivist identifies, preserves, and makes the records accessible for use, while the historian uses archival records for research.

2.7 CONCLUSION

From the foregoing account of Archives in India and conceptual framework of Archives, it may be concluded that:

i. Archives are the agencies responsible for performing the functions of selecting the materials of enduring value, processing, preserving, and making them available to information seekers.

ii. Archival collection consists of manuscripts like Palm Leaves, Parchment, Paper, Cartographic materials and Rare books.
iii. While both Archives and Libraries perform same work of dissemination of information to the users, they differ in nature, scope and functions. There are differences in creators or originators of the items collected, methods of creation, receipt of items, classification, description and access.

iv. Relationship of Archivists with other information professionals like record managers and librarians is that they collect, preserve and make materials accessible for research, but vital differences exist in the way these materials are arranged, described and used.
REFERENCES


11. ibid. p. 172.


21. ibid., pp. 3-4.

22. ibid., pp. 49-51.

23. ibid., pp. 4-6.

24. ibid., p. 6.

25. ibid., pp. 6-10.


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Chapter 3