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# Bibliophilism and Management of Library under Mughal Empire, 1526-1707AD: A Historical Approach

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### Abstract

The cultural history of the Timurid dynasty is the culmination of the tradition started in Turko-Afghan period. The Mughal emperors were great patrons of learning and great builders. Innumerable mosques, mausoleums and educational institutions were constructed during this period. All Mughal emperors extended their help graciously to the growth and development of art, literature and music. Bookmaking as well as library development made remarkable progress during this period. The Mughal era is characterized as a significant phase of intellectual and cultural rejuvenation in India. The Mughal celebrated for their patronage of artistic and scientific endeavors. This study explores the transformation of libraries from private collection to structured institutions, their importance in the conservation and dissemination of knowledge, and the strategies that enabled the development of a new library system. The influence of Mughal libraries is assessed in relation to their contributions to cultural amalgamation, education and modern library methodologies. The comparative peace and stability in political structure must have greatly contributed towards the growth of all types of educational institutions including libraries during Mughal period. This factor must have brought about positive qualitative and quantitative change in educational institutions.

**Keywords:** Maktab, madrasah, education, library.

### Introduction

The Mongol and the Tartar rulers and chieftains were greatly desirous that their name should be preserved in history. They were keen to leave behind them splendid accounts of their conquest and military exploits. Thus with a view to surpassing the rivals in the respect every Mughal ruler devoted himself to the compilation of history of his dynasty and encouraged historians to do so.

With the coming of Mughal in India libraries along with institutions of social and cultural life received great encouragement. The libraries of Mughal proved to be a valuable asset for the spread of education. The royalty as well as the nobility used to collect invaluable literature for their personal use and build up comprehensive libraries which they considered their proud possession.

### Imperial library

Mughal sovereigns like all the Timurids were deeply interested in the collection of books. With the coming of Babur, India witnessed the establishment of imperial library for the use of emperors as well as the nobles and scholars of the court.

One of the ministers of Sultan Hussain of Herat had established a valuable library containing the best books. This stimulated Babur's desire to build a similar library of his own in future and at a later stage, he established a library of his own as referred to in his memoirs. <sup>[1]</sup>

His fondness for books is also evident from the fact that when he captured Milwat and got control over the library of Ghazi Khan, he took some books from it and gifted them to his son Humayun. <sup>[2]</sup>

Humayun was a great scholar and scientist. He was highly interested in studies as well as in research. Beni Prasad writes that Humayun's library and librarian formed his inseparable companions on his military expedition, even on his flight to Persia. <sup>[3]</sup>

The famous Turkish admiral Sidi Ali Reis had written in travel account (Safarnama) that he was entrusted by Humayun with the task of examining the calculation of the solar eclipse with the assistance of Indian astronomers, working day and night he completed the entrusted work, such scientific investigation could not have been completed without adequate library facilities in the court. <sup>[4]</sup>

There is mentioned of Mullah Surkh, as kitabdar (librarian) in Humayun Nama. However Tuzuk-i-Jahangiri refers to one nizam as librarian during the reign of Humayun.<sup>[5]</sup>

Akbar after his accession to the throne reorganized the library of his predecessors by adding to its new and rare books procured by him from Bengal, Bihar, Kashmir, Gujarat and Deccan in the course of his conquest. The historian Badauni in Muntakab-ut-tawarikh holds that a number of fine and rare books were added to the imperial library after the conquest of Gujarat. These books had been taken away from the library of Itimad Khan Gujarati.<sup>[6]</sup>

The imperial library of Akbar was further enriched by incorporation of four thousand and three hundreds books belonging to the library of Shaikh Faizi on his death.<sup>[7]</sup>

According to V. A. Smith Akbar collected an enormous library of extra ordinary pecuniary value to which probably no parallel than existed or has existed in the world.<sup>[8]</sup>

Unanimously hold that the manuscripts in the Agra library numbered about 24000 and were estimated to be worth Rs. 6463731.

Akbar divided his library into two sections; one was kept constantly in the harem where the ladies of the household read out books.<sup>[9]</sup>

The imperial library of Akbar was located in a big hall within the fort of Agra. Maktab Khan was the sole in charge of the library and the art gallery.<sup>[10]</sup>

Jahangir maintained the tradition of his father's court in many ways. In addition to Mughal imperial library, he organized a separate library for his own use which contained books of different subjects.<sup>[11]</sup>

Jahangir tells us that in the fifth regnal year the Khan -i- Khanam sent him as present a finely illustrated and illuminated copy of Yusuf Zulekha with a gold binding written by Mullah Mir Ali. It was valued at thousand muhars. It goes to the credit of Jahangir that a well organized picture gallery was added to the imperial library during his rule.<sup>[12]</sup>

Shahjahan took a personal interest in the efficient management of library. This library was well administered and Shahajahan used to take a lively interest. He placed the ablest person in charge of the library whose names are mentioned in the contemporary account. The Daroga of the library was Abdur Rahman Khusnavis.<sup>[13]</sup>

Aurangzeb was an orthodox Muslim and was inclined towards Islamic theology and law. Aurangzeb appointed a group of scholars with Shaikh Nizam placed as head to compile a work on Fatwa, at the last this book the famous Fatwa -i- Alamgiri the most comprehensive digest of Muslim jurisprudence was compiled at a cost about two lakh rupees. Shaikh Raziuddin a very learned and high born of Bhagalpur in Bihar was among the scholars engaged in compiling the Fatwa -i- Alamgiri, and got a daily stipend of three rupees.<sup>[14]</sup>

### Management and Maintenance of libraries

Adequate care was taken during the Mughal period to place these libraries under proper management. The highest official of the library during period under review was the nizam, corresponding more or less to the modern chief librarian. Generally the post of nizam was held by a high noble of court. Besides the secretarial staff these were also other employees under the daroga whose duty was to arrange the books in bunks and almirahs in serial number. Then there were some others known as sahhaf and warraq whose duty was to dust and clean the books at regular intervals.<sup>[15]</sup>

### Conclusion

During the Mughal rule it had become fashion for rulers and wealthy nobles and ministers to become patrons of learning. During the period under review many libraries sprang up in the country. Thus we see that the cause of education was greatly championed by Mughal emperors all the Mughal emperors from Babur to Aurangzeb without any exception were men of literary taste. The Mughal emperors were indeed great bibliophiles.

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