

## LIBRARY MANAGEMENT IN MEDIEVAL ASSAM

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**Abstract:** Library management system or science of librarian ship was developed at of medieval period itself. The Ahom kings had their Royal libraries Mahapurush Srimanta Sankardeva started another type of library system in the Satra and Namghars. The libraries established by the kings were not for the general people. But the libraries of Satra and Namghars were open for the general people. Both of there libraries had management systems in the libraries.

**Introduction :** Libraries were the most honoured institution of society of medieval time, when these were not only the reservoir of books, but also the industry of reproduction or publication of books. Assam kings had royal libraries where they engaged the higher authorities like 'Gandhia Bharali', 'Parhia', 'Lekharu', 'Kakoti' etc. in the libraries. These professionals were responsible for managing the libraries as well as reproduction of books. In the Satra institution, the portfolios like 'Pathak' (Reader) was also there who was responsible to read out the books for the listeners or village people. A 'Pathak' may not be a scholar but a capable person to explain in texts to the listeners. There were a group of people in the Satras who scribed the books on Sanchipat.

**Libraries of mediaeval Assam:-** There are three types of libraries in medieval Assam. Those were- (a) The Royal libraries. (b) Libraries of Academic institutions (c) The libraries of Religious institutions. The Royal libraries were established by the kings, Academic libraries were established by the academic institutions like 'Tol' or 'Ashrama'. In most of the cases, these tols or Ashramas were supported by the kings. The libraries of the Religious institution like Satra or Namghar were set up by the general people lead by the 'Guru' or religious leaders. All of these had management systems for the libraries.

**Royal libraries:-** The Royal libraries were organised by the government . The Chief librarian of the royal libraries of Assam was known as 'Gandhia Bharali'. Gandhias were responsible for conservation of books, manuscripts, documents or any other reading materials of the king or the government. 'Gandha' means scent; gandhia means who offer scented materials to the

documents or books to conserve at that time, the libraries produce pungent odour because of the skin or bark materials, which were used to produce books. So, to get rid from such bad odour, Gandhia sprayed scented materials in the libraries. These were also used to protect the books from deterioration due to micro organism, insects or rodents etc.

In the royal libraries, there were special professionals like 'Parhia', 'Parhia' means who can read particular language. The documents of parsi, Hindustani, Urdu etc. were unable to read by the kings. So, to read those documents, which were sent from other countries in other languages were read out by the 'Parhia's. Parhians were manuscriptologists or linguistics. There were number of employees to keep the reading materials in scientific order and conserve them by proper methods. All these professionals were directed by the 'Gandhia-Bharali' – the chief librarian. The royal libraries were not used by the general people of the state.

**Library management in the Satra libraries:** Satra were established by great saint, scholar, writer, artists, social reformer and vaisnava 'Guru' Srimanta Sankaradeva and his disciples. Sankaradeva established libraries which were attached to Satras. Unlike the royal libraries the Satra libraries were open for the people. There were no bar of classism in the Satra libraries and every member of the society had the liberty to read books in the libraries of Satras. There were well organised terms in the Satra libraries like Lekharu, Kakati, Bharali etc. who were engaged in the management system of the libraries. Sanchipat, the reading materials made-up of Sanchi tree bark were produced by the Kakatis. The process of writing was done by the 'Lekharu's. Lekharu had the capacity of writing and drawing on the Sanchipat skillfully. Bharali was the organiser or manager of the library. They collected all the required materials for production of books and also directed the professionals responsible for writing. The 'Pathak' who used to read the books in front of the listeners. Most of the listeners did not know how to read and write, but they got knowledge from the mouth of the reader. In every Naamghar or in the Satras, there are open hall, where the tradition of reading and listening process in still followed. The Satra institutions still have enough indirect readers.

**Management of Academic libraries:** the libraries of 'Tol's were the academic libraries of mediaeval Assam. These were managed by the masters of the tols. The students were the readers of the libraries and they were engaged in reproduction of books. (Sri Manta Sankaradeva read in the 'Tol' of Mahendra Kandali from where he educated about book conservation or librarianship also.) Tol libraries are still live in Assam. Where are can see numbers of Sanchipat

manuscript of medieval Assam. This manuscripts were produced, managed & preserved by the library Professionals.

**Conclusion:** The science of library management or librarianship was developed in the mediaeval Assam. The tradition of library management of that time are still followed by the Satra and Namghars of Assam. Namghars are still the living libraries of rural Assam, where the tradition of reading and listening process have been existing with a devotional involvement.

**References:**

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