

Rabindranath Tagore
W. G. Sebald
Jens Holten
A. Einstein
C. F. Andrews
C. R. R. R. R.
M. M. M.
Benjamin Russell
S. P. S.
Harold L. L.
P. S. S.
V. R. R.
S. K. K.



HDFC LIBRARY AND ARCHIVES OF CONTEMPORARY INDIA

HDFC LIBRARY
AND ARCHIVES OF
CONTEMPORARY INDIA



Produced by Ashoka University

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Designed by The Little Biggest Design Company

“I have always imagined
that Paradise will be a kind
of library.”

Jorge Luis Borges
Argentinian author

“A library outranks any other
one thing a community can
do to benefit its people.

It is a never-failing spring
in the desert.”

Andrew Carnegie
American industrialist and philanthropist



At the entrance of the HDFC Library is an installation of a statue of Mahatma Gandhi. Gandhi inspired an entire subcontinent and the world through his letters and words. His presence is deeply etched in India's consciousness. Two peerless quotes from history and Indian civilisation are inscribed on the base of the statue.

The first from Albert Einstein, on Gandhi that reads: "Generations to come, it may well be, will scarce believe that such a man as this one ever in flesh and blood walked upon this Earth."

The second is a Vedic hymn that is a prefatory verse before several Upanishads:

पूर्णमदः पूर्णमिदं पूर्णात् पूर्णमुदच्यते ।
पूर्णस्य पूर्णमादाय पूर्णमेवावशिष्यते ॥

There is One - excellent
Here is a world - excellent
Excellence breeds excellence
Extract excellence from excellence - it remains undepleted



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FOREWORD



“Education is not preparation for life; education is life itself.”

John Dewey

American philosopher and education reformist

Higher education is an integral part of a nation's overall growth and development and a driver for social and economic change, as it builds aptitude and skills and enhances one's global perspective. India is home to the third largest higher education system. Our academic landscape presently needs more funding and research-orientation, both critical to propel the growth of the nation. As the world amalgamates into a global village, setting up institutions that deliver quality education is the only means to respond to this demand.

HDFC has played a pivotal role towards institution building by pioneering retail housing finance since 1977. With the establishment of a dynamic institution that prides itself on being customer centric, we enabled the common man to take a leap of faith to own their home. For HDFC, building an institution of excellence and pioneering the housing financing industry for India, holds a place of pride for us today.

Much like HDFC, Ashoka University has also been an early pathfinder in laying the cards for a world-class, Liberal Arts education in India. Since 2015, our support to Ashoka has been focused towards the steady development of an institution of excellence. In a span of a decade, Ashoka has proven its determination to put India on the global education map, by offering the best infrastructure, multi-disciplinary courses and a faculty that is par excellence. Add to that, a vibrant scholarship programme, aiming to make quality liberal arts education accessible to deserving students from across India.

A library is the 'heart centre' of a university. In the words of the famous British essayist and historian Thomas Carlyle, 'The true university of these days is a collection of books'. Over the past four years, we have supported Ashoka in establishing a state-of-the-art Library and Archives, in a building that beautifully integrates aesthetics and functionality. Continued investment in building a rich collection of books, resources and digital technology coupled with a professional team to execute this vision, is needed to make this the best university library in India. The HDFC Library at Ashoka must function as a dynamic space to re-imagine the delivery of education for both students and faculty.

I am certain that in this opportune time of tremendous growth in our country, Ashoka will be an exemplar to spearhead India's academic growth, building capable leaders and providing global recognition to India.

Deepak S Parekh

Chairman, HDFC Limited

FOR THIS GENERATION OF STUDENTS AND THE ONES THAT WILL FOLLOW

The library has always felt like home. It's difficult for us to rationalise this deep-rooted attachment but it all goes back to that spark. Between musty pages and stocked shelves, we found ourselves able to imagine a world outside our own. It's where we started, what made us who we are and how Ashoka was born.

We began our journeys as students at prestigious international universities. For the first time, we set foot into libraries that were larger than life. From the vast architectural facades to the warm interiors, we discovered our very own version of paradise. A refuge from the chaos and commotion of campus life. A community where we built genuine connections and learnt from one another. A place, halfway across the world from our friends and family, that finally felt like our own.

In our minds, each library had its own unique personality that made them special to us. The Sterling Library at Yale resembled a cathedral, which made it the ideal muse for any creative project. The Van Pelt Library at the University of Pennsylvania, with its soundproof, low wall workstations, was perfect for much needed alone time. And the little library at Yale's Brandford College was for the frequent all-nighters – it remained open till 2 in the morning!

But, why does all of this even matter to begin with? As we look back, we look forward, at creating Ashoka's very own world-class HDFC Library.

We began our process by chalking out what our dream library would look like. We didn't know what we wanted, but we knew what we didn't want. We didn't want a homogeneous collection of books that wouldn't be interesting to most. We didn't want a limited range of titles

that one can buy in any bookstore. And most importantly, we didn't want to be out of tune with the times that we live in.

Think of the Ashoka Library as the convergence between old and new. Forward thinking yet aware of traditional methods. Contemporary technology that makes reading more accessible than ever. The best of the country at one's fingertips.

Next, we reached out to people and requested them to send us their most prized possessions. Books that they loved, valued and those that impacted them in some way or the other. As a result, at Ashoka you will find books contributed by several eminent people, such as Sheldon Pollock, a notable Sanskrit scholar, Thomas and Barbara Metcalf, renowned academics from the University of California, and HM Patel, former Home and Finance Minister of India – to name a few.

Apart from physical books, we curated an impressive collection of digital books and journals, which include partnerships with other universities. Since our students spend a significant amount of time inside the library, we wanted to give them a space they looked forward to be in. Rather than a colourless and austere environment, we embellished the library with colour, spaces and light. Meeting rooms and working corners for inspirational collaborations and brainstorming sessions. And then there are couches and sofas – even recliners where one can get in a quick snooze!

Libraries are the intellectual centres of academic institutions: the heart and the brain. The HDFC Library reflects that ethos and spirit, however, it doesn't just end there. Beneath the two-storied library, discover the Archives of Contemporary

India, our version of a modern day archive. Focused on post-independence India, Ashoka's archives are broad in terms of intellectual sweep. Our contributors include eminent politicians, sportspeople, playwrights, environmentalists and journalists. The Archives house documents of former Indian President, Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan, former Indian Prime Minister, Dr Manmohan Singh, and writer and director, Girish Karnad. These are deeply personal collections that have been gifted to us by people who wanted Ashoka to be their custodian. We have sixty collections built over six years – and it's only the beginning.

When you walk into the campus and look straight ahead, it's an image that stays with you and continuously reappears. The library building – as it is popularly known – is more than just a landmark. It's a landmark of what we, as a young university, have been able to achieve – built carefully and thoughtfully with warmth and affection for this generation of students, and the ones that will follow.

We're at the start of our journey and would like to express our gratitude to Mr Deepak Parekh, HDFC Ltd, and the HT Parekh Foundation. Without their contribution, this would not have been possible.

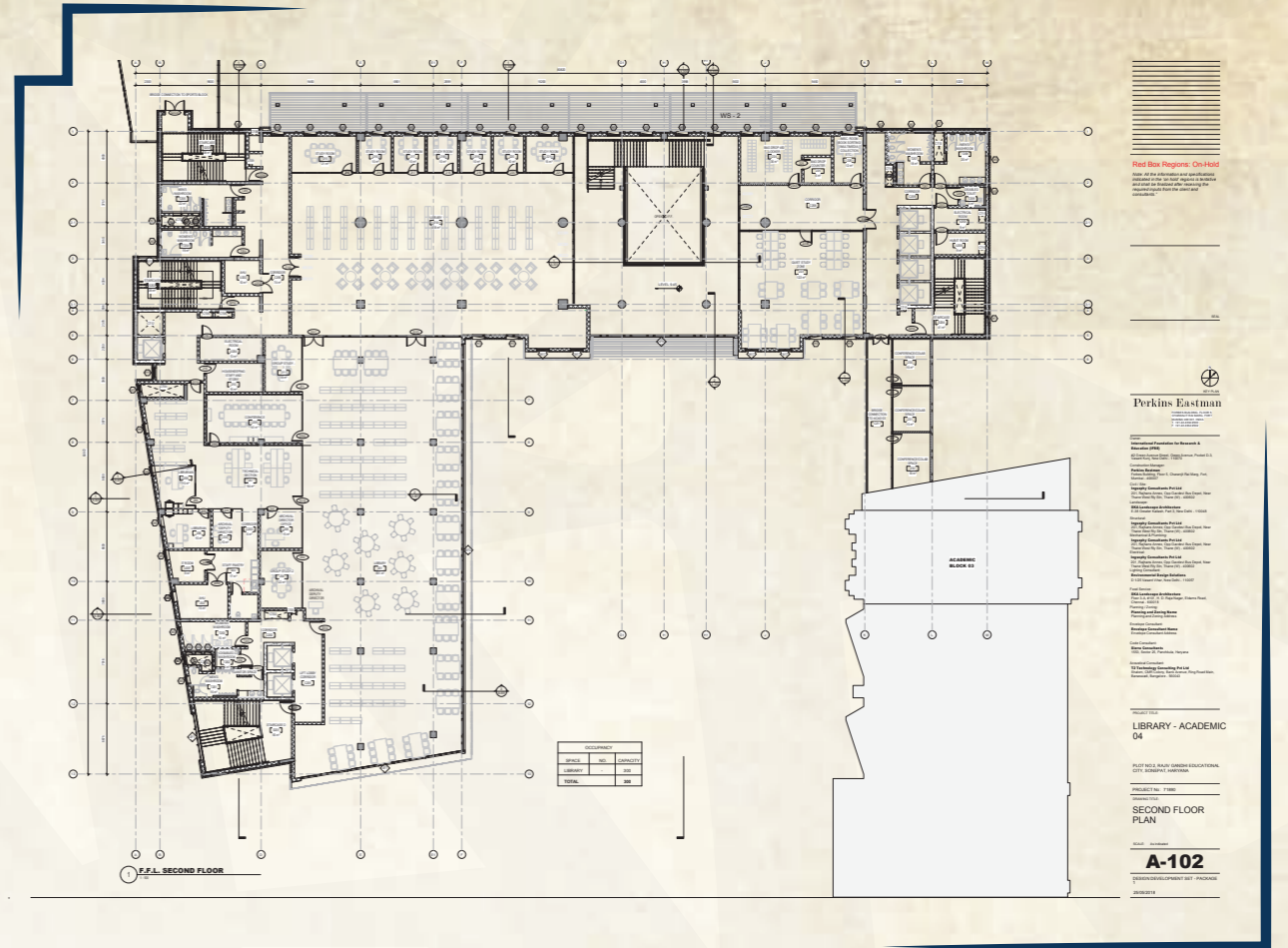
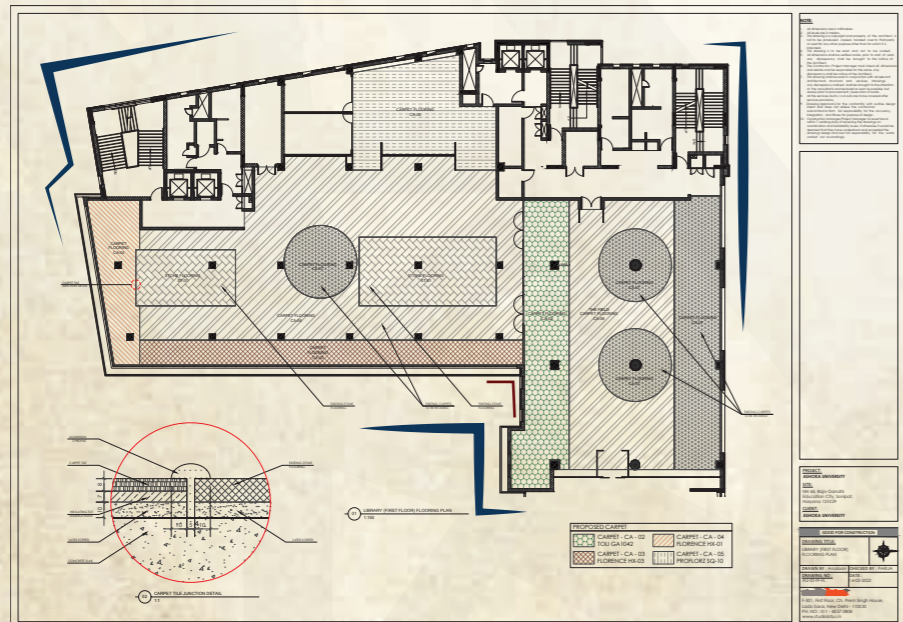
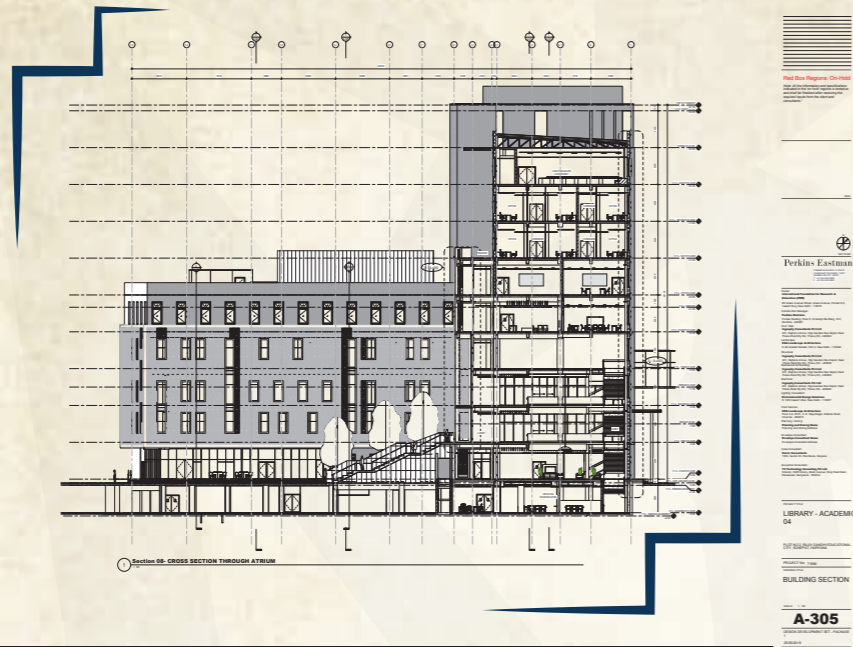
Ashish Dhanwan & Pramath Raj Sinha

Founding Chairperson, Board of Trustees,
Ashoka University

Chairperson, Board of Trustees,
Ashoka University



HDFC LIBRARY BLUEPRINTS



Red Box Regions: On Hold

Perkins Eastman

LIBRARY - ACADEMIC 04

A-102

PROJECT: KODAKA UNIVERSITY
 SITE: 101/44, Raju Gandhi
 Maharashtra City, Mumbai
 Maharashtra 400009
 CLIENT: KODAKA UNIVERSITY

DATE FOR CONSTRUCTION: 2014-01-01

DRAWING TITLE: LIBRARY (FIRST FLOOR) LAYOUT PLAN

DESIGNED BY: ARCHITECT: PERKINS EASTMAN
 DRAWING NO.: DATE: 2014-01-01

PROJECT NO.: 101/44-01-01

PROJECT NO.: 101/44-01-01

PROJECT NO.: 101/44-01-01

LIBRARIES: LIBRARIES: LIBRARIES: JOURNEYING THROUGH TIME THROUGH TIME

One might describe libraries as a medium to support learning about new subjects, help build ideas for future research and maintain a record of studies done. To each person who has ever visited a library, it evokes a different, distinct memory. It represents a different kind of treasure.

Knowledge centres may not have always looked as they do today. Even in eras bygone, those who have ruled the world, valued them. Before the library, as we know it today, took shape, manuscripts – often handwritten – were stored in centres of learning. For instance, several Tibetan accounts described the library of Nalanda University as a rich repository of manuscripts on varied subjects. Centuries later, the Mughal emperor Humayun, a bibliophile, travelled with his library everywhere he went. His successor and son, Akbar, although himself illiterate, is credited with introducing – possibly for the first time – science in management, classification and storage of books.

The popularity of the printing press in the early 1800s marked a watershed moment for these centres of knowledge. Institutions such as the Asiatic Society of Mumbai, the Madras Literary Society (then known as the Asiatic Society of Madras) and the National Library in Kolkata, were established under the British. These institutions were a great leveller – they brought knowledge closer to the masses and paved the way for many other public libraries.

In the age of information, many wondered if libraries would become redundant. But rather than dying, libraries flourished. The internet has today made the world's biggest libraries reachable to billions, at the click of a mouse.

Libraries over the years have remained important, not just as storehouses of information but as revered institutions of knowledge. Universities aspire to inspire young minds to become the leaders of tomorrow. Ashoka University hopes to be the torchbearer of new India, where ideas are not just discussed but also encouraged, where books give rise to questions, and questions lead to new discoveries. The HDFC Library is not just a laboratory for impactful research, it is also the nest where leaders of tomorrow are being nurtured.

Sohini Sen

Senior Manager,
Strategic Communications,
Ashoka University



IN CONVERSATION WITH: ALPH

Perkins *Eastman*

Chhavi Lal and Prashant Salvi

Architects,

HDFC Library and Archives of Contemporary India

The brief

The library has transformed its function over time. It used to be a repository of books, but now it does much more in terms of engaging students and the rest of the community on campus. Our intent for this library was exactly that. We wanted to make the library into a space that does what it needs to do but can also do things that we cannot anticipate yet. Having a building that sits by itself usually sets you up for an inflexible space. No one knows how a library might be used, 20 years from now. But we do know that if the space is easy to get to and is flexible to use, it can adapt. The idea was to give the students many more reasons to be at the library, and I think we have managed to do that.

Learnings

As we started looking at the library in greater detail and wondering what the design should be, we realised that the number of archival documents that the University was receiving was a lot. They were struggling with space to store it. That's when we got the idea to have the archives as an extension to the library. Now, while they are built as two independent set ups, there is plenty of scope for cross collaboration.

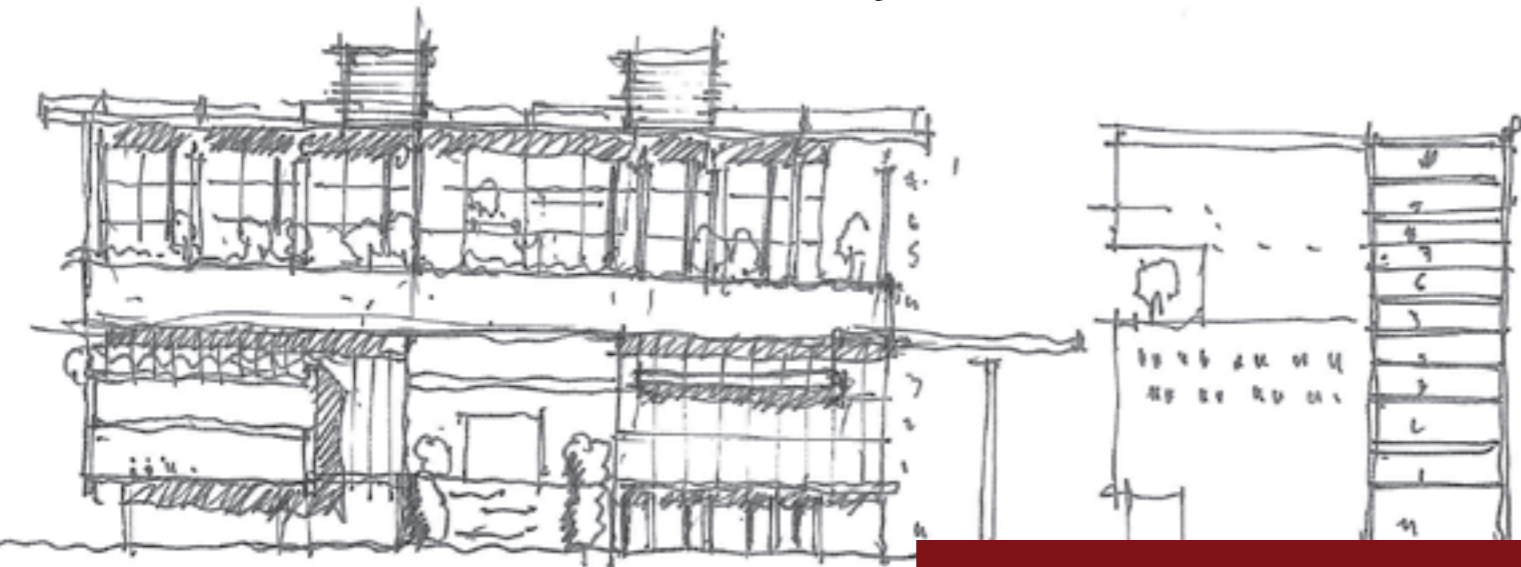
We have designed a lot of libraries, but the archives was definitely a first for us. There were a lot of technicalities that we worked with the team to understand. These included the fire system, as well as the temperature-controlled settings and space for chemical treatment. We also had to be mindful of smaller things – how the displays are done, what kind of interaction researchers who come in want with the archives staff, how do we protect documents while still issuing it to them to read – all of this had to be taken into account while visualising the space.



The 'jaali' design

The *jaali* has been the most surprising, challenging, and rewarding aspect of the design for us. The initial brief from the founders was that they wanted to build a Liberal Arts university campus which brings in the best learning environment and pedagogy, but it has to be Indian. Sustainability, then, became integral to the thinking. We went back, studied a lot of ancient Indian architecture, whether it is the caves, or the forts and palaces – to understand what they did differently which made it suitable to this kind of climate. We came up with a couple of elements.

One of the things we came up with was the idea of a screen or *jaali* which can be seen in several Indian architectural marvels. Our idea was not to emulate those buildings, but to incorporate a similar essence within a contemporary design. Essentially then, the *jaali* helps us cut the glare and harsh sunlight, and protects the space behind it so that it is not cold, but comfortable. When we came up with the *jaali*, we tested it with multiple materials to see what is sustainable and arrived at a specific type of sandstone called Gwalior Mint. Had the *jaali* not been there and the library only had glass windows, it would have been very harsh weather-wise, and we would have had to keep the blinds down all the time. This would defeat the purpose of the library, which is to feel open and connected with the campus.



Initial sketches by Perkins Eastman

IN CONVERSATION WITH:

Studio *Lotus*

Asha Sairam

Designer, HDFC Library

The nostalgia factor

When I first saw the HDFC Library, it was very nostalgic for me. It helped me be cognisant of all the things that were missing or required in libraries when I was in college. Amenities, seating typologies and pockets of space that I wished my institute had. I saw plenty of opportunities for them here.

What also stood out for me was that the library has a lovely vantage point. You are in a quiet space, but even while sitting inside, you can see all the activities going on and be a part of campus life.

First thoughts

The first thought we had was that the building was made keeping in mind that all the spaces should have ample natural light. Even as you approach the building, you climb up this grand staircase that sort of lifts up from the landscape outside. There is a sense of grandness in how one arrives at the building.

The fact that the building had a single material palette, gave us the opportunity to come in with specific colours and materials. Each zone could, hence, take on its own identity.

The colour palette

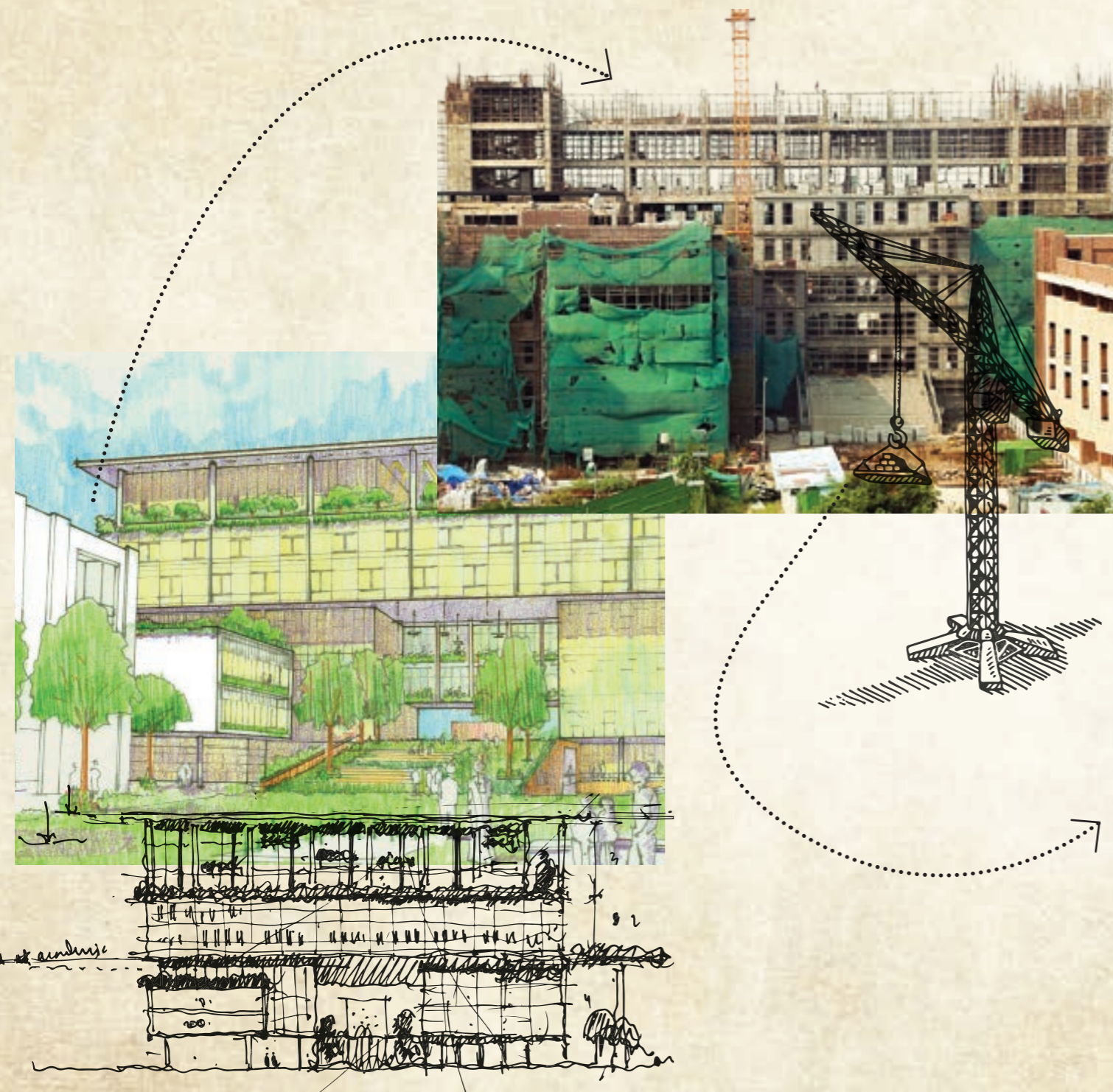
We wanted to give particular spaces a certain identity so that every pocket you were seated in, feels different. In a space like a library, especially as a student, you are in the process of having many different types of conversations. Sometimes you might be sitting and working alone, sometimes you might be engaged in group projects. We wanted the different pockets of the library to facilitate all of these different scenarios.

Consequently, we decided to zone all of the seating areas and change the seating typologies. Some became working tables, some were designed as hot desks, where students can sit by themselves and work on laptops. Others were more lounge-y in nature - allowing for students to sit closer to the ground and be more relaxed.

The intent was to create different social dynamics with all these spaces. And because we were going out of our way to create these individual zones, we decided to give each zone its own identity with a colour.



THE EVOLUTION OF THE LIBRARY AND ARCHIVES



**FROM BLUEPRINTS
TO BRICK AND MORTAR**
- the journey of a marquee building

Libraries: A Home, A Refuge

We all know of that one kid who feels uneasy without a book around. When other children are playing outside, she has her nose buried in a book. When the grown-ups are asleep in the long hot summer afternoons, she is the one browsing her parents' bookshelves for something to read. As she gets older, she is reading at airports and in metros, waiting for interviews and even flipping through brochures at the doctor's. That was me.

Libraries were a part of my life even before I knew what the word properly meant. It started with small bookshelves in my room, expanded to include that of my family and relatives, and then even friends and colleagues. Through browsing those shelves – and sometimes climbing up moving ladders to reach them – whole new worlds were opened to me. I read National Geographics and Westerns, war novels and literary texts, anthologies and romances. I read about the Northern Lights and huskies, about the Samoans and the Polynesians. As Jhumpa Lahiri said, I “travelled without moving my feet.”

Growing up in a world before Google, libraries were the place to check facts, figure out where places like the Galapagos were located and to suddenly find dried leaves and flowers in some book. Books that were handed down generations would have notes in the margins, old library catalogue tags and titles of ownership. The act of going through an encyclopaedia or dictionary instead of just searching for information online helped me expand my general knowledge and vocabulary beyond what I had initially gone to find out. I read about the great libraries in Alexandria and Baroda, the Library of Congress in the US and the burning of books and libraries during the Cultural Revolution in China. I understood early that books and the spaces that house them wielded power way beyond their physical presence.

The library in my school had been set up by my grandmother, and my mother and aunt were also frequent visitors as students. It was a small delight to occasionally check out a book and find that it had been ‘issued’ by my grandmother or mother years before. In college, the St. Stephen's library was a haven, hang-out spot, as well as a valuable resource centre. It even fostered friendships that were built solely on the plan to go to the library together. Outside of college, I was a frequent visitor to the British Council Library and a member of a small colony library. Even a visit to Princeton University felt incomplete till I had spent some time in a library there.

Little wonder then, that the Ashoka University campus felt like home the minute I walked in over seven years ago. With many buildings still under construction, the first sight that met the eyes was of the library with its large glass windows and lights on inside. Students were reading, making notes and working on their laptops, and that made the alien familiar. Over the years, the library has outgrown its modest beginnings, but not its place at the heart of the University. The beautiful new library occupies centre stage in the campus and its wide steps invite one to enter. As its shelves are populated with books on a range of subjects – including by our own faculty – and its corners and sitting areas occupied by students, its quietude, and beauty seem to encourage scholarship and thought. I am sure that it will be a home, refuge and space for learning for students, faculty and staff for years ahead.

Aniha Brar

Dean, Young India Fellowship and Vice
Chancellor's Office



Regional language books



Within rows of books

“We were already curious when the library was being built. It stood out from the rest of the University buildings and we really wanted to see what was inside. Once it was ready, I quickly made it my place for studying. It is quiet and peaceful. Personally, I cannot study in one place for too long. The library design solves this problem with its couches, high tables and sofas.”

Nandhana B

UG 2024

“The regional language books at Ashoka are a great resource. We have Kannada books at home. And I have read them in the university library in Mysuru. But finding them here in Ashoka, when one is so far from home, is comforting.”

I remember during the pandemic when we couldn't come to the library, the team actually offered to mail physical books to us without any extra charges, we just had to bring them back. This kind of trust and encouragement is what makes the library stand apart.”

Vighnesh Hampapura

ASP 2021

A Bodleian in making

I grew up in a small town in sub-Himalayan Bengal where there was no library. It was only after I started going to college that I discovered that there was a tiny state library in the same neighbourhood. I visited it a few times – it was damp and dull. My parents could not afford to buy books for my brother and me, and, even if their salaries had permitted this, there were no bookstores from where these books might have been bought.

‘Library period’ in school would begin when I was in the fifth grade, but, before that, there would be Mrs Nora Bansal, my class teacher in the second grade, who would let me read books that she had bought for her children. There were two other sources: the newspaper boy, from whom my father would sometimes buy us a copy of *Sportsworld*, and whom my mother often fed an evening snack just so that her children could quickly read through some of the magazines he was carrying. The other was the itinerant scrap dealer, who would come with a large sack of scrap iron and discarded books and magazines. From him, as he weighed the old newspapers that my parents would try to sell to him, my brother and I would plead to borrow a very old copy of *Reader’s Digest* or *National Geographic* or, if we were lucky, a comic book. All of this is to state the obvious: I grew up in a place where I felt deprived of books, of reading material, so that sometimes I would read half-lines on *thongas*, paper packets in which grocery was packed before the plastic intrusion.

From Siliguri – where much has changed since then – to the Ashoka Library is a journey that even the best fantasists would have found difficult to conjure. At our provincial university, when scholars would visit, I would hear a sound often: ‘Bodleian’. I didn’t know how to spell it, and there was no internet for me to grope around for investigation. There must have been something about its sound that led me to speculate what it might be – a

semi-mythical but real place where all the books in the world could be found. Unlike the Bodleian, the Ashoka University library is young. That is both its advantage and its lack. Being deprived of the book collecting and curating instinct of librarians and departments over decades and centuries that creates its own heritage, our library will only have new editions of books that have come to be considered significant.

What it has, though, and in great abundance, is enthusiasm and, to back it, infrastructure. There has not been an occasion when I have made a request for some obscure essay that the library staff has not located for me. I still find it hard to believe, for such is our conditioning in deprivation, that almost anything I need for my reading or research is available here. Now that I am on a committee that attends to the growth of the library, I am able to see the labour that has gone into creating what students and faculty at Ashoka University have come to gradually take for granted. I know that I would not have been able to do much of my writing during the lockdown had it not been for the library system that the team has developed. My husband, who teaches at the university where both of us studied and who now benefits from the Ashoka University library secondhand, has in fact begun calling it his dowry.

Sumana Roy

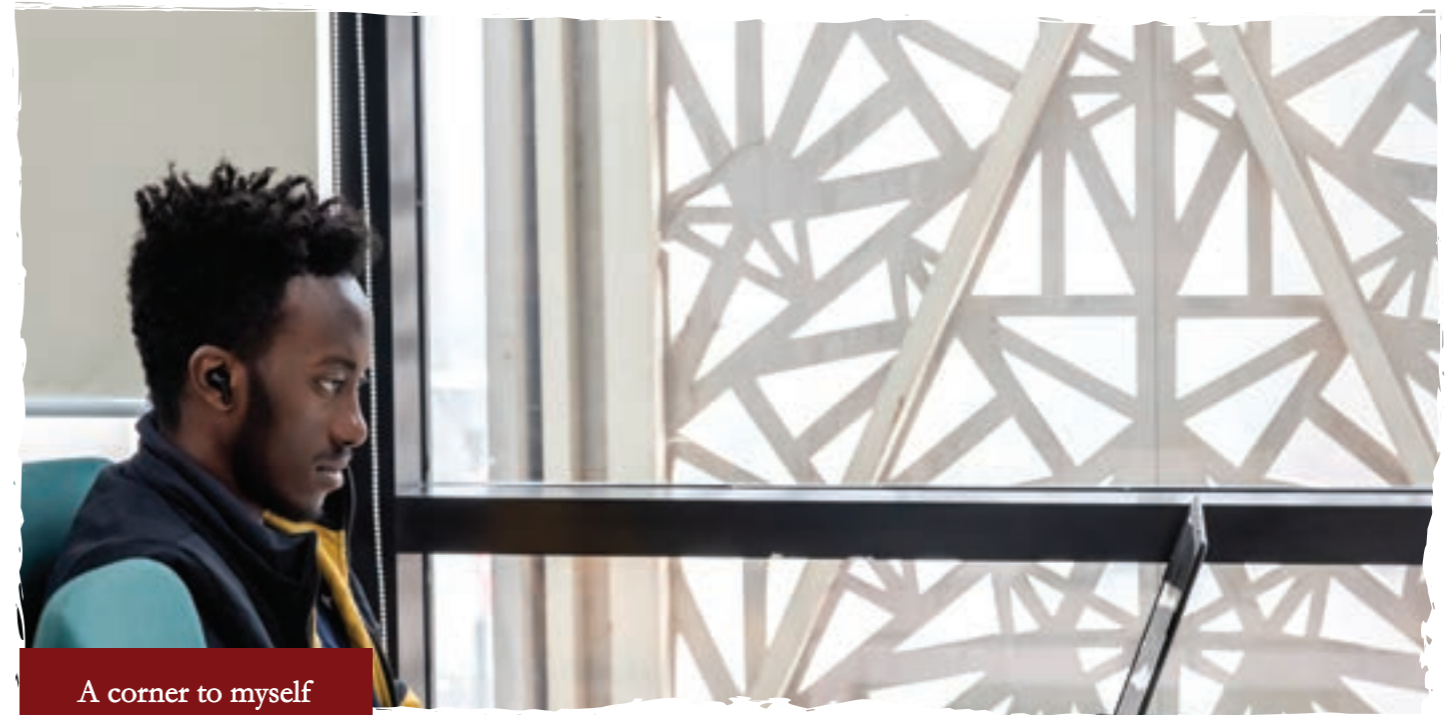
Associate Professor of English
and Creative Writing

“Libraries are at the heart of scholarship. Some of my most cherished moments are associated with the hours that I have spent exploring some of the leading libraries across the world and reading in them. I know in a growing digital world, physical

libraries are losing some of their salience. But I am old-fashioned enough to believe that there is nothing more enriching than actually browsing through books in a library and reading in a large room surrounded by books.”

Rudrangshu Mukherjee

Chancellor and Professor of History



A corner to myself

“A library is more than the sum total of the books it contains. The building, reading spaces, catalogue, arrangement and care of the books, readers and library staff combine to give a library its unique aura and personality. Over the years that I have been at Ashoka, the library has been an essential resource for my teaching and writing. The Ashoka Library is young, still growing

and developing its unique personality. It is not just the centre of the University’s present, but also, its future.”

Upinder Singh

Professor of History

“In the days leading up to our final exams, one would find scores of students hunched over their laptops, poring over reams of academic literature, while also offering each other in equal measures, jokes and support. I would then see the library reveal yet another

purpose – enabling camaraderie and injecting a bit of levity in the moments we’d needed it the most.”

Kshirin Rao *Eshwara*

ASP 2022

“We seldom realise that a library is a gift, a privilege to humankind. Libraries are a turning point for many people, and they are the ones who know what a privilege it is to have access to one. Had it not been for the availability of a ramshackle library in my hometown, I would not have known that the world of imagination was so dear to me.

Metcalf and Shelden Pollock has a place of pride. We must all remember to visit more often, nurture it, and congratulate the staff who work relentlessly to make it even better.”

Rita *Kothari*

Professor of English and Director of the Masters in English Programme

It is for this reason that I become an intimate part of libraries wherever I teach. The joy of seeing this huge library at Ashoka, with collections from scholars like



Library Love

My earliest memory of a library is a rundown shack next to the biggest market in south Calcutta, which stocked a delightful collection of pulp as well as serious English fiction. It was a ‘lending library’, the kind where you could borrow a book for a day or a week, and pay accordingly. Every copy I devoured was falling apart from use – a comforting thought when I picked it up, for clearly it had a history of satisfied readers.

More important, though, was that this dingy room was my safe place. In the real company of books and the imagined company of readers, I felt secure, protected from real life, as it were. All these years later, the lavishly stocked library at Ashoka University is also, to my mind, a safe space. Not just for me personally, but also for the increasingly threatened practice of learning and thinking.

What exactly is a public library, though? It is not to be confused with a mere collection of neatly catalogued and arranged books. It is, in fact, a living organism, a collective curation of knowledge conducted by a variety of minds – ensuring community-determined excellence, diversity, eclecticism, and more. Crucially, it grows constantly, having a beginning but no ending, and does not submit to ownership. It lives on its own once it has been born. This, precisely, is what the Library at Ashoka University is all about. Students, teachers, librarians – beings, in other words – will enter and exit the University, but the Library will remain, ever-expanding, ever-delightful.

The writer, historian and philosopher Umberto Eco had a personal library of over 30,000 books, which he referred to as an anti-library – for the unread books whose ontological value surpassed that of read books. Jorge Luis Borges’s 1941 story ‘The

Library of Babel’, envisages a library that stores every conceivable book ever written in the world, many of which are, naturally, gibberish.

In any such library, the reader must seek out what matters, what is valuable for them, with or without the help of bewildered librarians. It is the possibility of discovering what one didn’t even know existed that makes a library so tantalising, so different from pre-packaged, pre-selected information. There is a seductive strength to such chaos, and it is my personal hope that the Ashoka University library, too, will offer such possibilities – a path on which it has already begun working.

Is there anything better than the company of a great book? Yes, the company of many others, each of them in the company of a great book. A community of readers, looking to read the universe, to understand it, to ask questions of it, to align their own minds to the vastness of what we know and what we are trying to know, is one of the best gifts we can give ourselves. In this collective pursuit of knowledge lies a happiness and a fulfilment that the individual quest to know both draws from and enhances. This is why our Library at Ashoka University will always be a place of safety, of joy, of learning.

Arunava *Sinha*

Associate Professor of Creative Writing

THE MOST INSPIRATIONAL SPACE WITHIN THE UNIVERSITY

At the heart of a great university, there is always a great university library. It is so appropriate from this perspective that the final building that marked the completion of Ashoka's south campus is the library building. The stunning HDFC Library on two floors and the Archives below, provide a vital intellectual space. It is a catalyst to the University's teaching, learning and research. The best libraries are also known for key strengths in particular fields of knowledge. These areas of specialised strength are sometimes carefully planned but on occasion, unexpected events lead to such enrichment. Both can be illustrated through the HDFC Library at Ashoka.

It was both exciting and challenging to manage the setting up of the library through multiple Zoom meetings during the pandemic and our library staff managed the transition in an exemplary manner. I would also like to record my deep appreciation of the significant contribution of the late Professor Swapan Chakraborty, whose guidance on policies, infrastructure and acquisition planning has been invaluable.

The Ashoka Archives of Contemporary India situated in the basement of the library building provide a significant storehouse of primary materials meticulously preserved and catalogued and made available for researchers. Complementing this are the books and journals relating to History, Political Science and allied fields that showcase contemporary India in the main Library and in the special collections comprising gifts received. In addition, the Library has electronic resources available for readers. The

Library also houses nearly 400 books on Keats and Shelley. This was offered by a friend of many years, Professor Kelvin Everest, Bradley Professor of Modern Literature Emeritus, University of Liverpool. This collection of books is a precious resource for undergraduates as well as researchers working in the field of Romantic Studies.

It is hoped that in the near future the HDFC Library will not only be an exciting intellectual space for the Ashoka community of students, researchers and faculty, its special collections will also be the magnet that draws scholars from across India and from other parts of the world.

Books, John Milton reminded us in *Aeropagetica* in 1644, are the vials that preserve the "living intellect" of the author for "a life beyond life". As the HDFC Library grows from strength to strength, it will be the most inspirational space within this University.

Malabika Sarkar

Principal Academic Advisor
and Former Vice-Chancellor,
Ashoka University



LIBRARIES ARE THE HEART OF ANY ACADEMIC CAMPUS

LIBRARIES ARE THE HEART OF ANY ACADEMIC CAMPUS

Several factors make the HDFC Library unique – the vast array of books and other reading material it houses, the colour coded seating arrangements, the many spaces for collaboration.

The first floor is earmarked for books that are frequently used by students and the second floor is for rare books. Our library is also special given that every third book is a donated book. The donors include Ashoka faculty, founders, leading academicians, renowned authors, amongst others.

The digital medium has changed how libraries function, and the Ashoka Library too, is a new-age library. As opposed to buying hundreds of copies of a book that students would need to refer to, a significant section of our collection is digital. The beauty of this is that it is available anywhere, anytime.

In the near future, we want to see this library grow and evolve. Our existing facilities already make our automation at par with the best, but we plan on bringing in more technology. Ours is, after all, a modern library. A lot of thought has gone behind building it. Founders have been generous with their efforts to build this space and we must especially thank HDFC in this regard.

BP *Prakash*

Chief Librarian, HDFC Library





ARCHIVES

OF CONTEMPORARY INDIA

Supported by **HDFC LTD.**



“Without archives many stories of real people would be lost, and along with those stories, vital clues that allow us to reflect and interpret our lives today.”

Sara Sheridan
Author

“Archive as if the future depends on it.”

Lisbet Tellefsen
Archivist, collector and curator

Dr. M.A. Wahab, National Institute of Environment & Forests
 Project Director, Central Design Authority

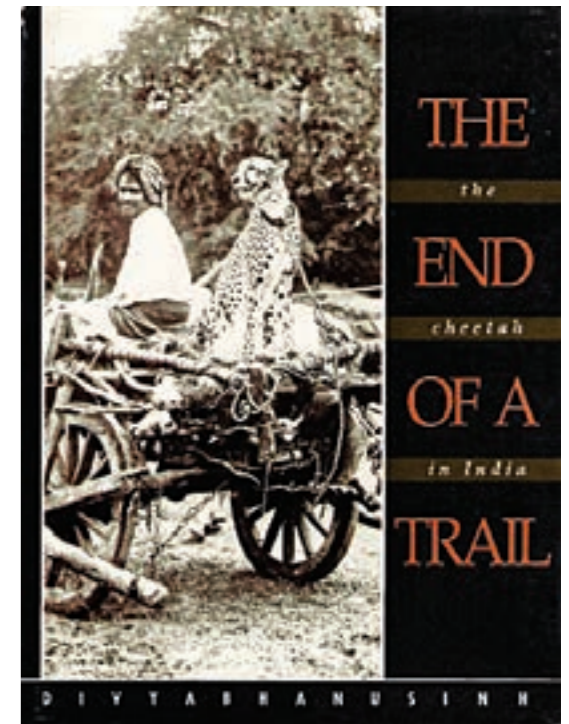
April 25, 1970

Dear Mr. Herbert Hoover,

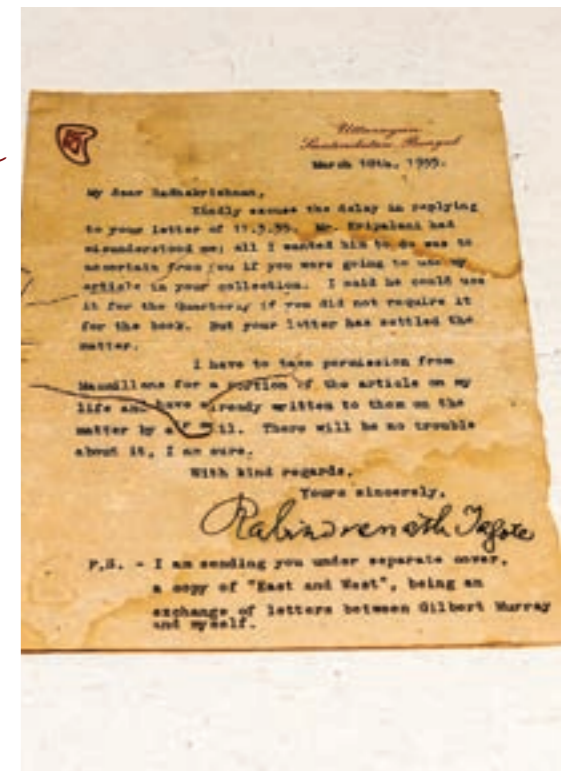
I had been established in the absence of the Drafting Committee to assist Mr. John F. Kennedy, and was assisted by a drafting committee also appointed to the Ministry. I looked over the material to be sent to the U.S.A., which is now complete and is being submitted.

The effect involved a very important matter as far as the 1971 Act was concerned, but the central States of the Union had come forward with their own amendments which had to be taken into account which led to the present amendments and amendments. They are now being prepared to be presented to the President in the near future and it was thought expedient and advisable to spread them. These were obtained from the U.S.A. Law Center in New York.

What was most important was to give expression to the various aspects of the forest policy and to take into account the present needs and conditions. On the one hand getting individual and family owned lands and communities in the hands of the State had to be taken into account, while on the other it is essential that an impulse is given to the people to plant trees in villages and some protected forests by giving them economic incentives in the form of subsidies and facilities, etc. While amendments have to be related considerably to be commensurate with the essential role in the value of forest products, it would be also necessary to give some incentives in the context of our forest products to benefit the growers. Previously forest was a State subject. Since it is now a concurrent subject, the Centre has to ensure a much greater role and provisions have also been made whereby the Centre can direct the management of forest operations.



Archives of Contemporary India



WHY THE PAST MUST BE PRESERVED FOR THE FUTURE



Across all our partnerships, HDFC has endeavoured to identify key organisational priorities and seek areas of support that are synergistic with our work. When Ashoka University proposed establishing the Archives of Contemporary India, it resonated with our goal of contributing to a core academic resource at the University. It was also an obvious value addition to our commitment to building a world-class library at Ashoka. The story of India's contemporary history is an important one to tell and the Ashoka Archives houses original documents, photographs, speeches and other historical material from some of India's most prominent contemporary figures.

Archives, where public records are scientifically preserved, are indispensable for a healthy dialogue between the past and present. Archiving, being both an art and a science, is a monumental task in itself. Furthermore, there is a pressing need to establish more repositories such as the National Archives of India, which currently bears the major burden of archiving in our country. Considering the significant costs on infrastructure and specialised manpower, there is a need not just to have strong public archives, but also have equally active private archives to ensure that the history of India is preserved for posterity. Hence, it is imperative for private organisations and universities to step forward and contribute to the set up and running of such initiatives.

In a short span of time, Ashoka was able to collect the original papers of a former Prime Minister and a former President, leading journalists, economists, artists, historians, amongst others. The faith placed by private donors in handing over their personal collections, that were previously unavailable to the public, gives us great hope that the Archives will grow to become an invaluable repository of documents providing insight into contemporary India's political, social, economic and cultural development.

It has been Ashoka's sincere commitment to source authentic, primary source material and preserve it using the best technology and archiving practices. They have also placed equal emphasis on developing intellectual capacity, through a team of experienced and passionate archivists, thereby addressing the need to have the right talent working on archival projects.

Ashoka has always been guided by the power of collective philanthropy and fostered a culture of collaboration. They have not just the potential to be a worthy custodian of valuable collections, but the vision to share it with the world without prejudice. HDFC is proud to be walking this path with Ashoka.

Ziaa Zalkaka

CEO, HT Parekh Foundation

WHY AN ARCHIVE FOR CONTEMPORARY INDIA

The Archives of Contemporary India at Ashoka came into being in January 2017 with not one but two purposes – to preserve documents from India’s recent past, and in doing so, make them available to scholars and students alike who we hope will be informed better for the future. Unlike the National Archives of India or the various state level archives, our focus is not on government but on private papers. We focus mainly on post-independence India. From the start, we have attempted to have a broad canvas ranging from civil society to journalism, the women’s movement and environment, and the worlds of literature and Science.

Most world-class universities house archives: we aspire to the standards of the best and also hope to become a vital educational resource for the Ashoka community and beyond. Our collection is built on contributions which are placed here not only because they will be preserved for posterity but also accessible to scholars as per norms and rules of archives.

The collection sheds light on matters great and small. For instance, the papers of Dr S Radhakrishnan, India’s first Vice-President and second President, include letters from all those who contributed to the volume he edited on Gandhiji’s 70th birthday, even one from Jan Smuts who had been the latter’s adversary in South Africa. The photo record and the documentary collection of the late Captain Lakshmi Sahgal has insight into the first ever women’s regiment of the Indian National Army and much more on her long and distinguished life.

The great playwright and veteran actor, Girish Karnad’s drafts and works are here, as are the papers of a doyen of Hindi literature, Agyeya. The Chandi Prasad Bhatt collection takes us to the early years of the Chipko movement. The Divyabhanusinh papers have the early records of debate on the reintroduction of the cheetah, an event that earlier this year made world headlines.

The key to this is not only the assemblage but the preservation, cataloguing and keeping of the materials – be it in print, visual or digital format – in a manner that survives the vagaries of time. Our team is small but high on expertise and motivation.

An archive is more than a record of the past. It serves as a beacon to the future. Among the sectors we hope to explore are business history and that of civil society, all vital to those interested in how the past shaped the future. We have a long way to go but have made a sound start.

Mahesh *Rangarajan*

Chair (Hon), Ashoka Archives of Contemporary India
Professor of Environmental Studies and History



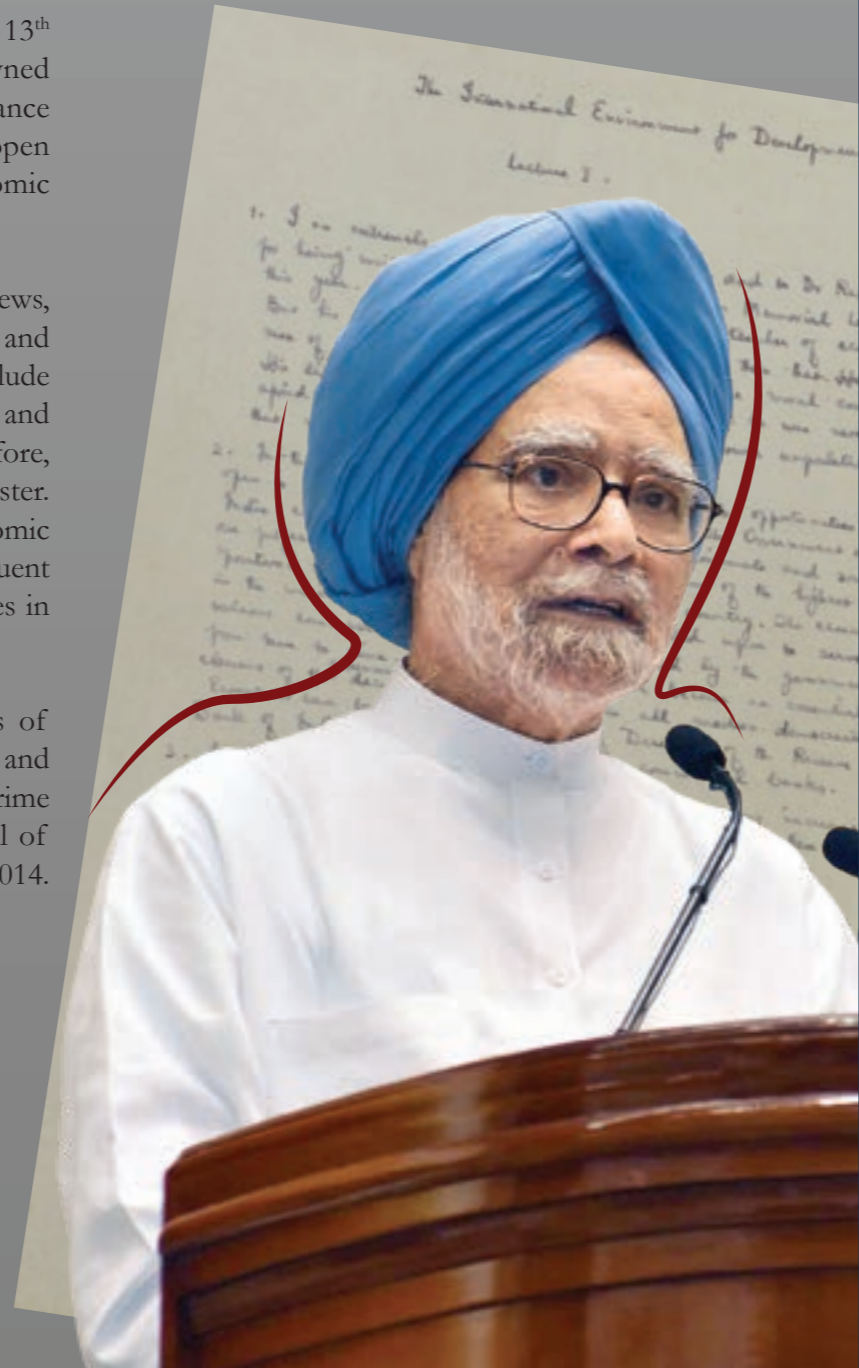
MAHARAJA MARQUEE COLLECTIONS

Dr Manmohan Singh

Dr Manmohan Singh served as India's 13th Prime Minister and is a globally renowned economist. His tenure as India's Finance Minister was historic, as he introduced policies to open up India's economy. These eventually led to an economic expansion in the country.

Ashoka's Archives has speeches, articles, interviews, audios, videos and photographs of Dr Singh's academic and political career spanning over six decades. These include writings and speeches published in various books and journals. The papers and writings relate to periods before, during, and after his term as India's Finance Minister. They are an important source for the study of economic reforms initiated in the 1990s and the subsequent political, social, economic and foreign policy changes in the country.

The Archives also houses several video recordings of speeches, lectures, interviews, press conferences and other public events from his tenure as India's Prime Minister. Additionally, the collection includes a total of 9,970 official photographs taken between May 2004-2014.



“In 2017, I donated a digital collection of my private papers to the Archives of Contemporary India at Ashoka University. This collection of documents and audio-visual material reflects various aspects of my professional journey from 1957 to 2014. A number of eminent persons from diverse fields have similarly reposed their trust in Ashoka University. I am happy to learn that the Archives are being managed in line with the highest international standards. This outstanding initiative will, no doubt, expand the frontiers of knowledge for generations to come.”

Dr Manmohan *Singh*

(Donor of his papers)

Former Prime Minister, India

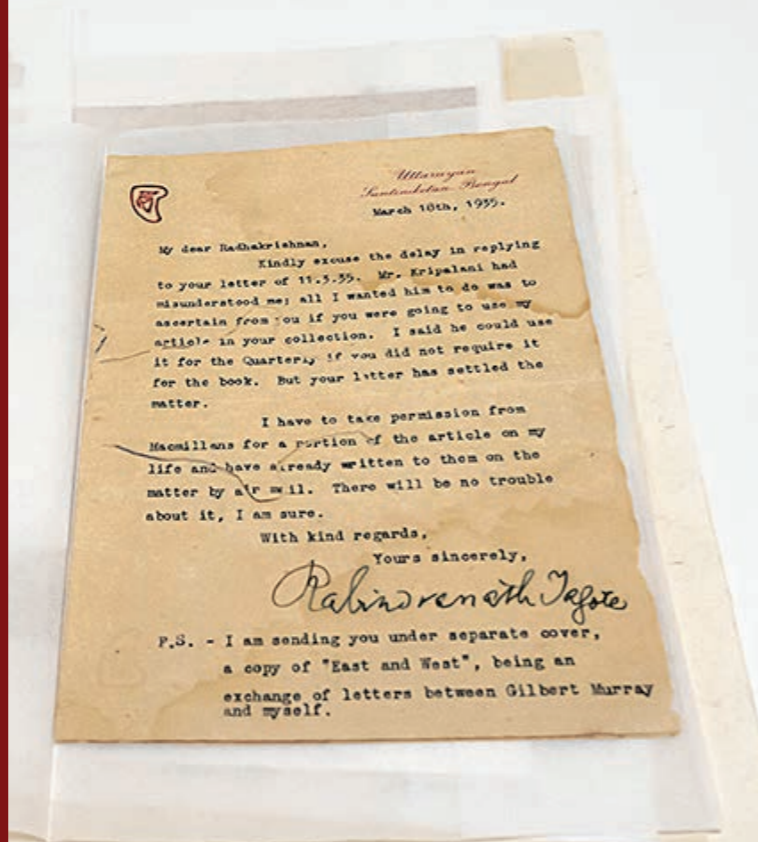
Dr Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan

Dr Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan, an eminent scholar in the field of Philosophy and Comparative Religion, was India's first Vice-President and the country's second President. He is one of the most recognised and influential Indian thinkers from the 20th century.

ABOUT THE COLLECTION

The papers of Dr S Radhakrishnan were donated to the Ashoka Archives by Mrs Indira Gopal (daughter-in-law of Dr S Radhakrishnan). These rare papers date back to almost a hundred years, from his stint as an educator at various universities. The collection also includes documents from his tenure as India's Vice-President and President.

Besides correspondence with his contemporaries, the collection contains material related to his publications, handwritten notes, manuscripts, articles and speeches on religion and philosophy. There are also rare books, journals, pamphlets, photographs and photo albums. They cover the tenure of three Prime Ministers in post-independent India and open up new avenues of study for those interested in knowing about the initial years of the Indian republic.



Rabindranath Tagore's letter to Dr Radhakrishnan



Dr Radhakrishnan during his Iran visit in 1963

Gopalkrishna Gandhi

Gopalkrishna Gandhi, diplomat and renowned academic is the grandson of Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi. He is also Distinguished Professor of History and Politics at Ashoka. He joined the Indian Civil Services in 1968 and served in Tamil Nadu till 1985. Thereafter, he held the positions of Secretary to Vice-President of India (1985–1987), and Joint Secretary to the President of India (1987–1992).

After his voluntary retirement from the Indian Administrative Service, Gopalkrishna Gandhi held various diplomatic and administrative positions, including the High Commissioner of India to the UK and Director of The Nehru Centre, London. In 2004, he was appointed as the Governor of West Bengal.

ABOUT THE COLLECTION

The collection of papers includes documents from Gopalkrishna Gandhi's tenure as High Commissioner in South Africa and Sri Lanka, and as Governor of West Bengal. The collection also includes his academic writings.

He has also given papers related to MK Gandhi from the HSL Polak collection, which includes copies of Polak-Gandhi correspondence, and letters of Viscount Halifax, Rabindranath Tagore and Purshotamdas Thakurdas, amongst others. Other papers include those on South African affairs, the world unity movement, Adyar Library, Kasturba Gandhi Fund, a proposed Congress delegation visit to the US, problems in the North-West Frontier Province, and on personal matters. The collection also includes papers of Parvathi Krishnan. These include rare correspondence related to the national movement between her father, P Subbarayan, and Mahatma Gandhi.



Gopalkrishna Gandhi



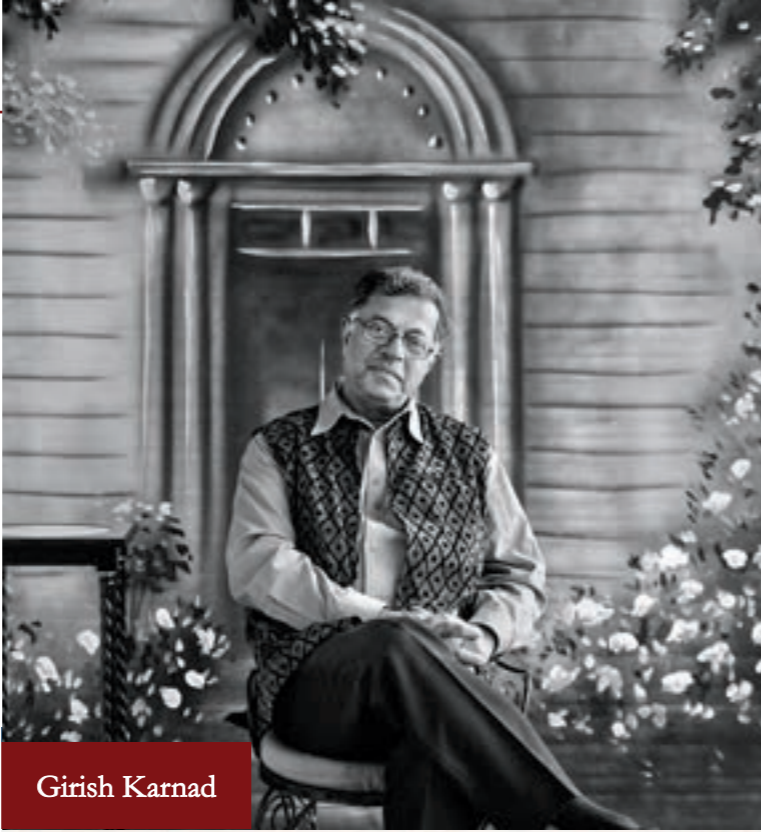
Letters by Mahatma Gandhi

Girish Karnad

Renowned Kannada playwright Girish Karnad was a Jnanpith awardee and a recipient of the Padma Bhushan award. Karnad led the new wave of progressive Indian cinema in the 1970s and 80s, with movies such as *Nagamandala*, *Hey Ram*, *Vamsha Vriksha*, *Dharam Chakram* and more. A versatile author and playwright, he depicted contemporary social issues through his Kannada and English plays, namely *Yayati*, *Tughlaq*, *Hayavadana* and *Rakshasa Tangadi*.

ABOUT THE COLLECTION

In addition to vital correspondence with Doordarshan, Sangeet Natak Akademi, National School of Drama (New Delhi), Janus Films (New York), and several film and theatre personalities like E Alkazi, Satyajit Ray, Vijay Tendulkar, Amal Allana, Peter Brook, Vijaya Mehta and A K Ramanujan, the collection also contains papers of the Nehru Centre, London, and Guthrie Theatre, Minneapolis, US. The collection includes personal and travel diaries, notebooks and memoirs, and private papers of his parents. There are also conference and seminar papers; book reviews, translations, interviews and articles; scripts, manuscripts and drafts of documentaries, telefilms and TV serials; and CDs of films, press clippings and photographs showcasing his contribution to the world of cinema and theatre.



Girish Karnad

Poster of the play *Tughlaq*

Lakshmi Sahgal

Freedom fighter and social activist, Captain Lakshmi Sahgal is perhaps best remembered as the first woman commander of the Indian National Army (INA). Armed with a medical degree, Sehgal (then Swaminadhan) moved to Singapore to set up a medical clinic for the poor and migrant workers. She met Subhas Chandra Bose and joined his All Women Infantry Regiment of INA, named after Rani Lakshmi of Jhansi. Later, Sahgal, became the only woman minister in Bose's Council of Ministers of the Provisional Government of Azad Hind. As the founding member of the All India Democratic Women's Association, Sahgal led many campaigns and worked towards restoring peace after the anti-Sikh riots of 1984. A committed social activist, Lakshmi Sahgal was awarded the Padma Vibhushan in 1998 and bestowed with an honorary doctorate by the University of Calicut in 2010.

ABOUT THE COLLECTION

Lakshmi Sahgal's papers include correspondence exchanged with her contemporaries, members of INA, freedom fighters and NGOs. The collection throws light on her contribution to All India Women's Democratic Association, All India INA Committee, Netaji Research Bureau, Netaji Subhas Trust, Mukherjee Commission, Freedom Fighters' Association and ex-INA pension related issues. There are also papers on the Communist Party, Trade Unions, Burma Freedom Fighters and on the India-Burma relationship.



Captain Lakshmi Sahgal



Subhas Chandra Bose with members of Azad Hind Fauj. Captain Lakshmi Sahgal to his right.

Chandi Prasad Bhatt

One of India's first modern environmentalists, Chandi Prasad Bhatt played a critical role in India's Chipko movement in the 1970s. Bhatt was deeply inspired by Mahatma Gandhi's philosophy of non-violence, and dedicated his life to improving the lives of villagers in the Garhwal region. Bhatt won the Ramon Magsaysay Award for community leadership (1982), Padma Shri (1986), Padma Bhushan (2005), Gandhi Peace Prize (2013) and Sri Sathya Sai Award (2016).

ABOUT THE COLLECTION

The papers in this collection include correspondence, reports, articles and press clippings relating to the Chipko movement in Uttarakhand. There are also several papers on the forest conservation movement, the Uttarakhand Andolan and on the environmental impact of hydro-electric and big dam projects in the Himalayan regions.



Chandi Prasad Bhatt

Kuldip Nayar

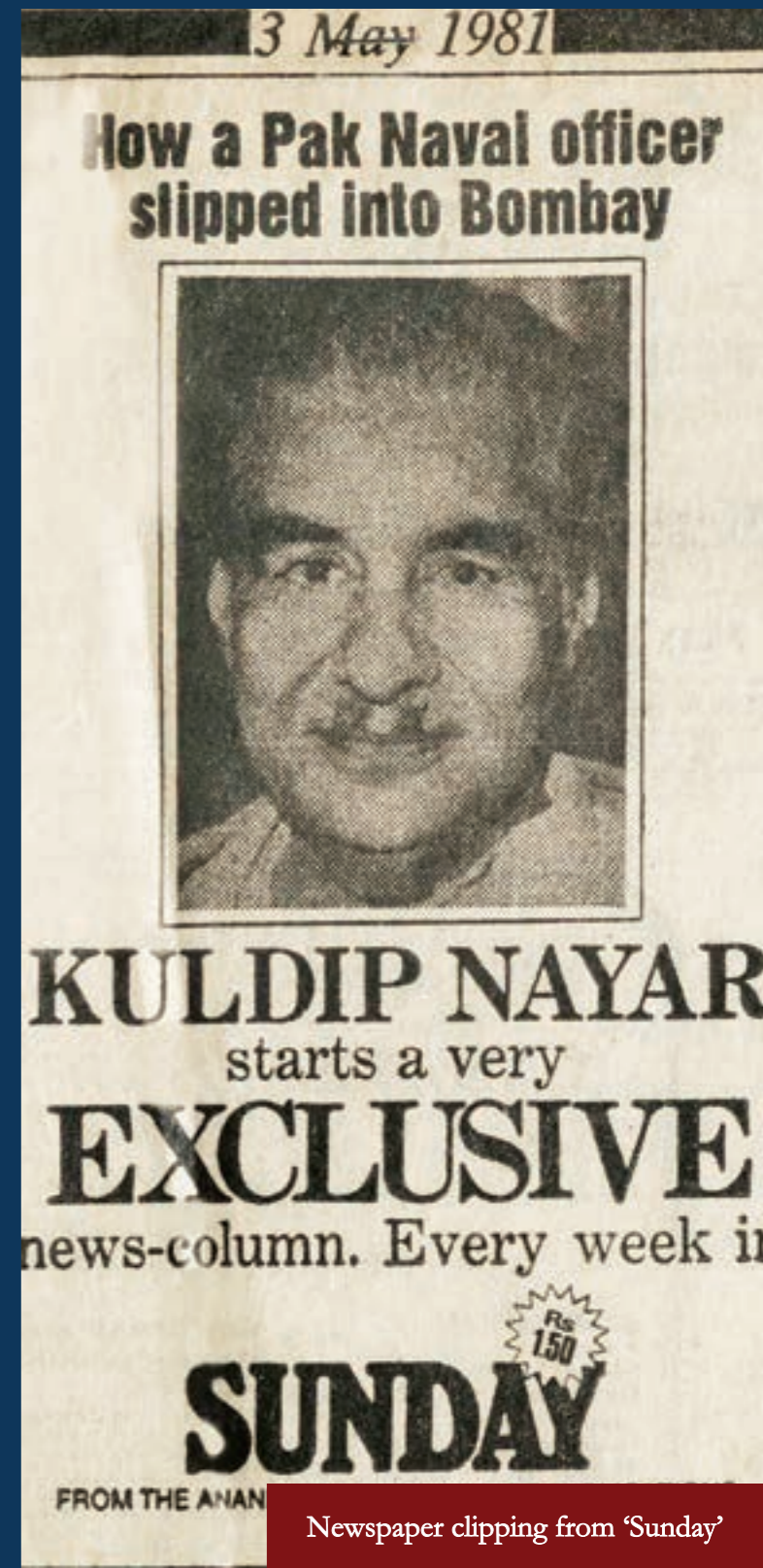
Kuldip Nayar was a renowned journalist and author. A staunch human rights and peace activist, he led many peace-centred initiatives. Mr Nayar has reported on some of India's greatest historic moments - from the 1971 Indo-Pak war for the liberation of Bangladesh to the infamous Emergency of 1975. His column, 'Between the Lines', was a true reflection of his dedicated advocacy for the freedom of the press.

ABOUT THE COLLECTION

The collection includes documents from Kuldip Nayar's illustrious career, including his writings published in leading newspapers such as *The Statesman*, *Indian Express*, *Sunday Standard*, *Illustrated Weekly of India*, to name a few. Papers include press clippings from *The Guardian*, *Times* and articles that were published in leading newspapers relating to his arrest during the Emergency.



Kuldip Nayar with Queen Elizabeth II



Newspaper clipping from 'Sunday'

Laxmi Mall Singhvi

LM Singhvi was an eminent jurist, distinguished diplomat and prominent parliamentarian. He served as Advocate General of Rajasthan (1972-1977) and as the High Commissioner of India in the United Kingdom (1991-1997). Singhvi led the Indian delegation for various conferences, including the UN Conference on Human Rights in Vienna and the UNESCO Conference on Culture of Peace in Stockholm. A recipient of the Padma Bhushan award, LM Singhvi was also elected to the International Court of Arbitration at Hague.

ABOUT THE COLLECTION

The collection comprises papers and press clippings from his time as the High Commissioner of India in the United Kingdom. Also part of this collection are papers on his literary activities, Kashmir terrorism, human rights and his association with UNESCO.



22 January 1997

Dear High Commissioner,

I wanted to let you know how very touched I was to receive your letter of 17 January.

I was deeply impressed by all that I was shown in Angola, and also by the many wonderful people I met, those working so tirelessly to support the landmine victims and their families, and those facing the seemingly endless task of de-mining these horrific weapons. I am so very pleased that I have contributed in some way towards highlighting this terrible problem.

The content of your kind letter meant a great deal to me and I have very fond memories of my time in India.

My warmest best wishes to both Mrs Singhvi and yourself,

Yours sincerely,

Diana

Dr L M Singhvi

Letter from Princess Diana to LM Singhvi, 22 January 1997



April 13, 2006

The Honorable L.M. Singhvi, M.P.
18, Willingdon Crescent
New Delhi 110011
India

Dear Dr. Singhvi:

Thanks so much for your warm welcome in New Delhi. I was grateful for the opportunity to meet with so many religious representatives, and I enjoyed our discussion about the importance of faith in our countries.

Thanks as well for the inscribed copies of your books and the tie you designed. You were kind to think of me.

Best wishes

Sincerely,

George W. Bush

Letter from George W Bush to LM Singhvi, 13 April 2006

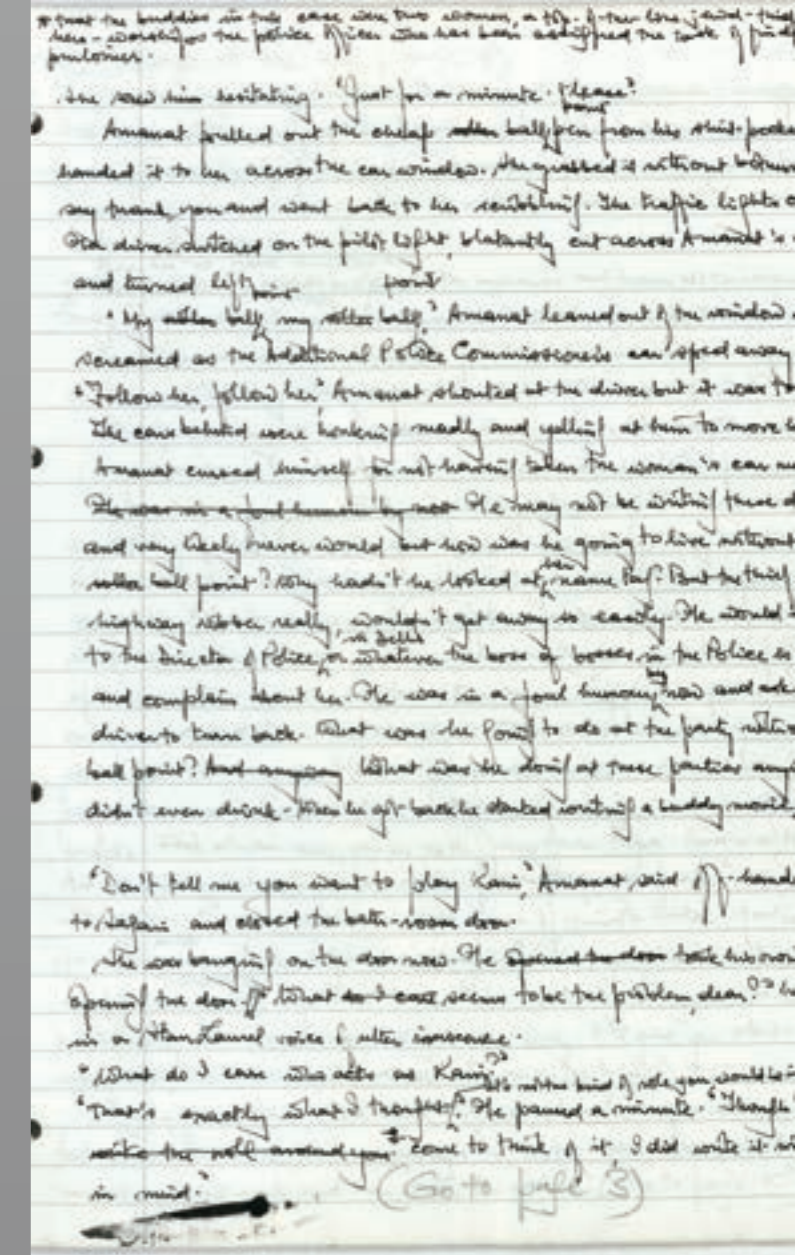
Kiran Nagarkar

Kiran Nagarkar was an acclaimed Indian novelist, playwright and screenwriter. A noted drama and film critic, he was one of the most renowned writers of post-colonial India. He published his first novel in Marathi, *Saat Sakkam Trichalis*, considered a landmark publication. It was later translated into English and published as *Seven Sixes are Forty-Three*. His other works include *Ravan and Eddie*, *Cuckold*, *God's Little Soldier*, amongst others. His books have been translated into German, Italian, French and Spanish.

He was awarded the H N Apte Award for *Saat Sakkam Trichalis*, for the best novel of 1974, the Dalmia Award in 1996, the Sahitya Akademi Award for *Cuckold* in 2000 and the Order of Merit of the Federal Republic of Germany in 2012.

ABOUT THE COLLECTION

The collection of Kiran Nagarkar comprises handwritten and typed manuscripts of his books like *Cuckold*, *Jasoda* and *God's Little Soldier*. The collection also has the very first version of *Bedtime Story* and autographed copies of forewords in Marathi by Kamal Desai for *Cuckold* and by Vidyut Bhagwat



Handwritten manuscript of *God's Little Soldier* by Kiran Nagarkar

for *Seven Sixes are Forty-Three*. The collection also includes several articles, reviews, drafts of short stories, plays, interviews, brochures, press clippings and various photographs taken by him in the 1980s.

BUILDING 60 COLLECTIONS IN SIX YEARS



It was not easy to convince people to part with their life's memorable treasures – notes, diaries, photos, etc. One has to build a rapport with the donors to gain their goodwill. We wrote to a select set of eminent people for their papers with the dual offer of preserving their heritage for posterity using the best archival practices as well as making their life's work available for research and study. Through the journey, we realised the need for a written agreement with the donor and have been making persistent efforts to build our trust with prospective donors.

The pandemic was a setback, it crippled our work. Yet we added 12 more collections during this period as people found ample time to sort the papers in their homes. We started from one small room in 2017. Now we have new premises with a state-of-the-art-repository for storing papers and facilities for archivists to work, as well as a reading room for scholars to consult papers.

We have a team of carefully picked archivists trained for different processes involved in the making of an archive – from catalogue and metadata preparation to preservation of documents and photos. With a sense of achievement – 60 collections in six years – we are now committed to elevating the Archives project to the highest standards of excellence in all its activities.

Deepa *Bhatnagar*

Director, Archives of Contemporary India



ARCHIVISTS AT WORK

“We try to provide as much clarity to collections and enable users to understand records of enduring value – what they are, who created them and what events they represent.”

Shivani *Bajpai*



“We have to take extra care while handling some sensitive papers. The process includes the preservation of each document in a sheaf of archival glassine paper and then storage in acid-free folder and carton box. These have been digitised and are now available for consultation on the Archives website.”

Chirag *Sharma*

“The journey of archiving is as engrossing, daunting and enchanting as that of a researcher. They both are involved in the process of making sense of the past, albeit in different ways and towards different aims.”

Sonali *Verma*



“With the help of digitisation, the collections – even the delicate and fragile documents – can be accessed by scholars on a broader platform.”

Deepshikha *Salooja*

“My major role is to help organise and manage the archives which includes acquisition and cataloguing the collections, look after digitisation work of the archives, website management and arranging exhibitions.”

Dharmander Singh *Rawat*



WE TRUST ASHOKA WITH OUR COLLECTIONS

Dileep Padgaonkar Papers

“To hand over Dileep’s body of work to Ashoka University was truly a load off my mind. I was convinced that it would not only remain in competent, capable and responsible hands, but that it would, in the long run, be available to researchers who might be interested in understanding the times and the people Dileep wrote about, and the cultures he opened up to Indian readers.”

Latika Padgaonkar

Wife of veteran journalist Dileep Padgaonkar

Achin Varshik Papers

“My own work – personal, collaborative, institutional – has ranged from matters concerning the problems and difficulties of economic development, Indian foreign policy and international relations, to more general areas such as communalism and cultural exclusivities, and just

peace. As one whose claim to being a scholar-activist concerned about such issues has received some small degree of public recognition, I am grateful that my work will find refuge in Ashoka.”

Achin Varshik (Donor of his papers)

Author and Retired Professor of International Relations

Dr MK Ranjitsinh Papers

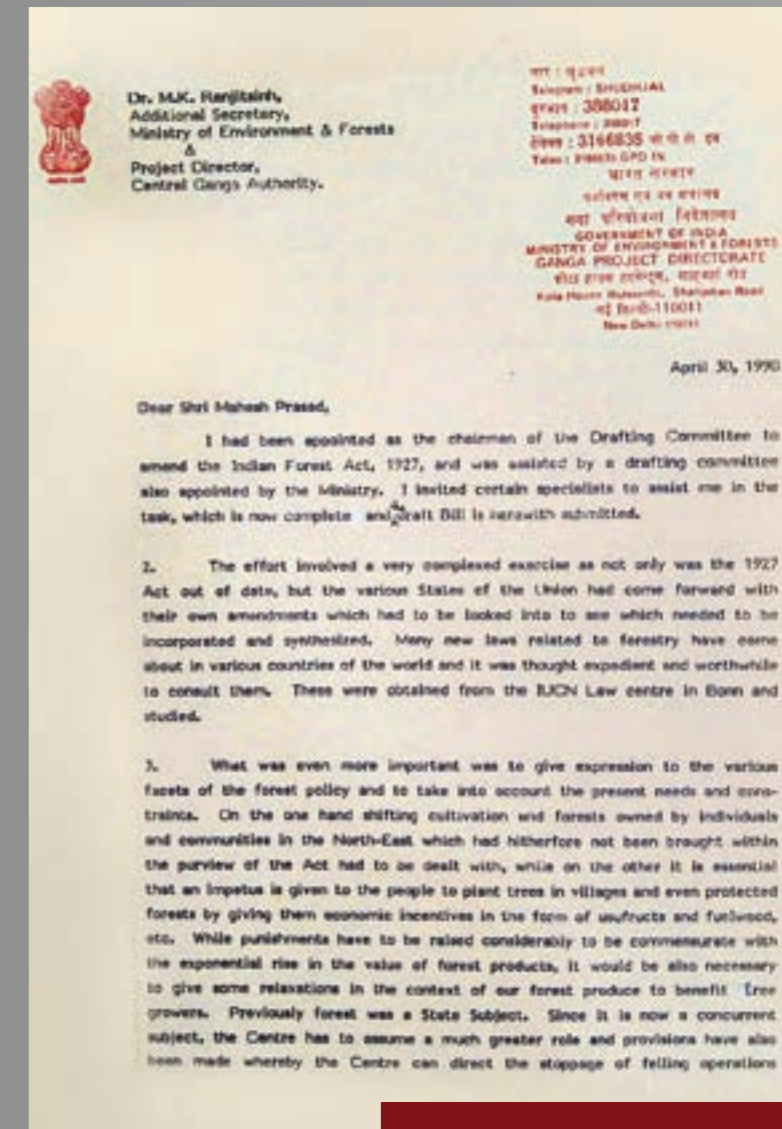
“Books are meant to be read, not just to adorn bookshelves, and documents are meant to be studied, not just stored away. There needs to be depositories where books and documents could be kept and saved so that students and savants can study them. So when Dr Mahesh Rangarajan and Ashoka University, which is a leader in imparting Environmental Science pedagogy, approached me to donate my papers, I considered it a privilege.”

Dr M K Ranjitsinh (Donor of his papers)

Author and conservation expert



Dileep Padgaonkar being awarded Légion d'honneur



Letter by MK Ranjitsinh

Raza Tehsin Papers

Tales from the Wild



Book cover of *Tales from the Wild*

“My father Raza H Tehsin’s room was a treasure cave for us. A magnifying glass or an old tripod here, a one-eyed binocular there, stacks of old photographs and transparencies, dog-eared files and stacks and stacks of wildlife and *shikar* books, from which he told us stories. Being the initiator of the wildlife conservation movement in southern Rajasthan, and coming from a family line of naturalists and some of the earliest big game hunters turned conservationists of India, his historical perspective of conservation and the jungles and animals of Mewar is singular, including his behavioural studies of the regional wildlife.

The Ashoka Archives’ team is certainly one of the best in India, and my father and I had no doubt that it would be the right home for his works. They were not only most courteous and professional, but also thoughtful in acquiring the archives from my father. Their personal visit gave him much confidence in handing over his lifetime of works to them. The team has catalogued his papers, photographs and correspondences in a planned and systematic manner. I join my father Raza Tehsin in thanking them for their efforts and wishing them the very best for the invaluable initiative of securing knowledge for posterity.”

Arefa Tehsin

Daughter of wildlife conservationist Raza Tehsin

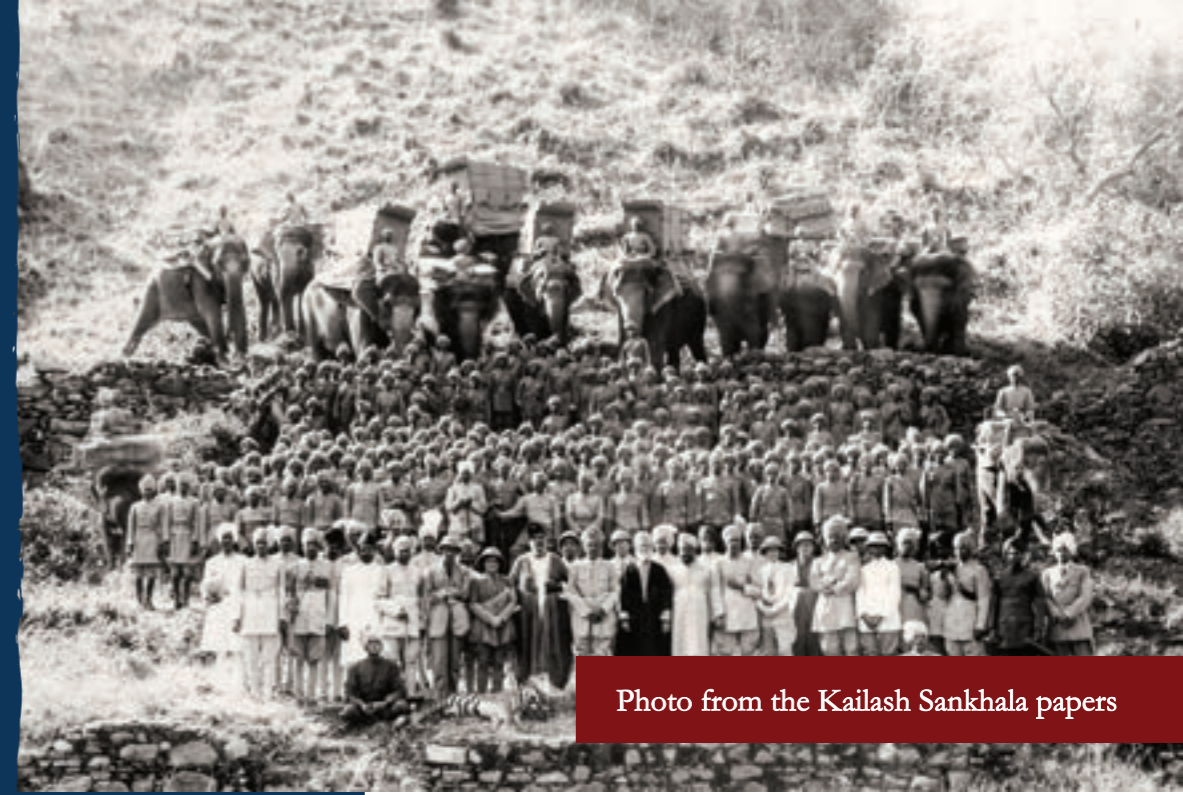
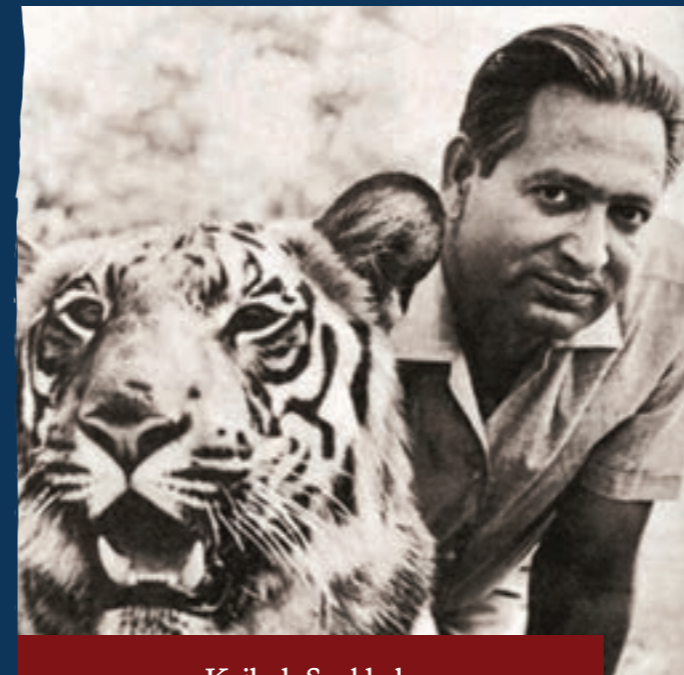


Photo from the Kailash Sankhala papers

Kailash Sankhala Papers



Kailash Sankhala

“In the ever changing times of modernisation today, it has become essential that we preserve essential moments of history. It is decisions of the past that have shaped our future. My grandfather played a vital role in the conservation of tigers, which helped shape the national parks of today. We have tried to preserve his papers, slides and letters, but with limited professional resources, we could only do so much. The Ashoka University Archives is one of the finest in the country and aims to become an archival hub in various fields. Their professionalism, team and facility had convinced me to house my grandfather’s resources at the University. I hope, in the coming years, there will be many more contributors like me, who choose to share their moments of history with the world.”

Amit Sankhala

Grandson of biologist and conservationist Kailash Sankhala

VELEB AORB AFTERWORD

Developing an archive is important in the nation-building exercise. This is especially vital for India – a civilisation and country that is richly decorated with histories and narratives, and yet remains wanting of spaces in which they can be told.

The Ashoka Archives of Contemporary India addresses this lacuna. As home to India's budding researchers, Ashoka aims to harness and build an expansive academic reservoir – for the Sciences, Humanities, Social Sciences and Business. Through this effort, we hope to sustain a conversation about the nation's progress for the wider society and future generations of students, researchers and academics.

On a personal note, it has been a tremendous honour to be part of a project that promises to emerge as one of India's preeminent intellectual centres. When the idea of building the archives crossed my mind, the project seemed exciting yet daunting. Over countless meetings and cups of coffee, the skeleton of a plan emerged. Mahesh Rangarajan (Chair of the Ashoka Archives; former Director – Nehru Memorial Museum and Library (NMML)), Deepa Bhatnagar (Director of the Ashoka Archives; former Head of Research & Publications - NMML), Dr N Balakrishnan (former Deputy Director - NNML), Anushka Prasad and I shortlisted names of individuals and institutions that would contribute their documents and papers to Ashoka.

A debt of gratitude is owed to the various architects of our Archives. We wish to thank Ashoka's Chancellor, Rudrangshu Mukherjee for being the principal catalyst and enabler, Ashish Dhawan for his interest in building India's foremost business archives, and historian and author Ramachandra Guha, for giving the Archives its name and recommending high quality collections. We also thank late Keshav Desiraju for the peerless Radhakrishnan collection, Mahesh Rangarajan, Deepa Bhatnagar, Dr N Balakrishnan and Anushka Prasad for imbuing life into an idea of this scale and ambition. A special word of thanks is due to Ravin Kumar for his indefatigable energy in travelling to the hills of Chamoli in Uttarakhand for collecting the Chipko Movement's papers, then Chennai for the Radhakrishnan Collection and enabling logistics for both the library and archives from across the world.

Today, Ashoka's Library and Archives represent the fastest growing collection in India. We hope students, scholars and researchers from across the world unearth and tell the stories that lay hidden in these intellectual treasures.

Venkat *Eshwara*

Pro Vice-Chancellor, Ashoka University





