

The R. N. Dandekar Library at Pune's Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute (BORI)

Dr Adam Bowles

Humanities researchers by and large require three things to prosper: solitude, quiet and access to good research collections managed by efficient staff. It is such qualities that the R.N. Dandekar Granthalaya at the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute has in abundance. I was fortunate to recently spend a productive period ensconced in the R.N. Dandekar library, which has long been an important center of ideological research. The library recalls an earlier age. In an era when libraries increasingly focus their resources on developing digitized collections, the R.N. Dandekar library follows a more traditional path maintaining a good research collection for Indological specialists supported by excellent staff, led by chief librarian Satish Sangle, who know the contents of the library's shelves as if they were their own.

The uniqueness and historical significance of the library are evident from the moment of entering the foyer. Crowding its walls and staring down at each aspiring researcher are portraits of great scholars every Indologist knows well-of the likes of P.V. Kane, S.K. De, S.K. Belvalkar and R.N. Dandekar himself-may of whom developed their academic careers at Bhandarkar and were involved in its seminal project for which it is justly famous, the Critical Edition of the Mahabharata. Beneath these luminaries are an increasingly rare sight in today's digitized world, comprehensive card catalogues documenting every item held in the library's collection. While this is an old library cataloguing method, it has its romance and efficiencies, since once the desired volumes are located in the catalogue, one of the helpful librarians searches for the books, allowing the researchers to get on with his or her research.

Between the foyer and the library's extensive collection of Indological books lies a reading room, a quiet haven from the busy streets on the Institute's doorsteps. Also in this room, which is cool due to its high ceilings and fans, can conveniently be found the reference collections and the latest editions of most of the major Indological journals. There are thankfully few distractions from whatever tasks, researchers have set themselves. Many generations of the finest Sanskritists and Indological-from India and far further afield-have

wiled away many hours in the R.N. Dandekar Library, enjoying the benefits of its excellent collection and its hospitable surrounds while producing fine and important research. Long may this remain the case.

About Author:

Dr Adam Bowles

The University of Queensland

Brisbane, Queensland,

Australia

<http://www.bori.ac.in/>