

FOREIGN AND
COMMONWEALTH OFFICE

*A Guide to the
India Office Library*

with a note on the India Office Records

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HER MAJESTY'S STATIONERY OFFICE

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Preface to the Second Edition

THIS revised and enlarged edition of the *Guide* takes account of many developments in the Library since the first edition was published in 1952. A wholly new feature is the section on the India Office Records. A full guide to the Records is being prepared, but will not be ready for some years. Meanwhile the brief account given here may be of use to readers who consult the archives and other resources of the Records.

For valuable suggestions in preparing this edition I am indebted to present and former members of the Library staff, to the staff of the India Office Records, to Mr J. D. Pearson, and (in the section on Drawings and Prints) to Mrs Mildred Archer and Mr Basil Robinson.

S. C. SUTTON

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Illustrations

FRONTISPIECE

A maid killing a snake, before the eyes of her mistress, in a palace courtyard. By Mīr Kalān Khān. Mughal painting, c. 1740 after a Deccani original of c. 1615. (*Johnson Collection, Album XV, folio 8*)

Plates (between pages 52 and 53)

PLATE I

Book plates of Sir Charles Wilkins (Librarian, 1801-1836) and Richard Johnson

PLATE II

A manuscript of selections from the *Qur'ān* with a Chinese translation (*Arabic II 1062, I. O. 3440*)

PLATE III

Sanskrit palm-leaf manuscript of the *Gita-Govinda* (*I. O. 3508*) (right-hand half of leaf above, left-hand half below)

PLATE IV

Shivala Ghat, Benares. Water-colour by Thomas Daniell, 1788 (*Western Drawings 1295*)

PLATE V

Bentinck's Buildings at the Beach, Madras. Water-colour by John Gantz, 1822 (*Western Drawings 1362*)

PLATE VI

Extract from a letter dated 21 April 1763 from Robert Lord Clive to Major John Carnac (*Sutton Court Collection, MSS. Eur. F. 128*)

A GUIDE TO THE INDIA OFFICE LIBRARY

THE INDIA OFFICE LIBRARY was founded, as the Library of the Honourable East India Company, by a decision of the Company's Directors in 1801 to establish a public repository for the safe custody of oriental books and manuscripts placed in its care by its servants in India and by others. The Company's Directors, not content to remain the passive recipients of such materials, very soon adopted a systematic policy of strengthening not only the Library but also the museum illustrating Indian art, antiquities, social life, and natural history, which was growing up side by side with the Library. In 1858, on the transfer of the Company's powers and material possessions to the Crown, the Library, with its associated museum,¹ came under the administration of the newly-created Department of State, the India Office.² On the extinction of the India Office in 1947, as a result of the Indian Independence Act of that year, the Library came under the control of the Secretary of State for Commonwealth Relations, to whom responsibility for the conduct of relations with India and Pakistan was transferred.

Throughout its history the Library has fulfilled two distinct purposes. It has served as a library of official reference, at first for the East India Company's Court of Directors, after 1858 for the Secretary of State for India in Council, and from September 1947 for the Secretary of State for Commonwealth Relations; at the same time it has functioned as a learned library for the use of orientalists. The Company's primary intention in founding the Library was, as already noted, the

¹ The museum properties were later (mainly in 1879) dispersed among other institutions in London.

² For a detailed history of the Library see *The Library of the India Office: a historical sketch* (London, 1938), by A. J. Arberry (Assistant Librarian 1934-44).