

Rare handwritten manuscript collection in Indic Languages at Scindia Oriental Research Institute (SORI), (India)

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Abstract:

The paper defines manuscripts in India, states their importance and narrates in brief various types of manuscripts available. The paper then studies dispersion of five million Indic manuscripts in India and abroad. The paper reveals some earlier efforts to catalogue them. A literature survey on the topic is included in the paper. The paper gives an account of the National Mission for Manuscripts (NMM) in India, its MRC, MCC, MPC, Kritisampada, Vijnananidhi and its output. The paper then studies Scindia Oriental Research Institute, (SORI), Ujjain, which is one of the Manuscripts Resource Centers in National Mission for Manuscripts. Brief historical account of ancient city Ujjain and establishment of SORI, its collection and collection of very rare manuscripts are given. In the end paper concludes with need of international cooperation and suggests for signing MOUs between countries for cooperation on conservation and digitization of manuscripts and prepare an international database and suggests National Mission for Manuscripts (India) like programs in other countries. The paper also suggests for the declaration of manuscripts as national property, cultural heritage and world heritage.

Keywords: Manuscripts, Indic manuscripts, National Mission for Manuscripts, SORI, National property.

1. Introduction

Etymologically the term 'Manuscript' refers to a document handwritten by an author. But as per the Antiques and Art Treasure Act, 1972 of India, "any manuscript is a handwritten composition, which has significant scientific, historical or aesthetic value and which has been in existence for not less than seventy-five years old"¹. Manuscripts are found in many languages and in various scripts. Even one language is written in a number of scripts. They have knowledge contents on various subjects spread all over the world where human beings lived for long. They have been collected in various institutions, libraries, monasteries, temples etc. and in private collections in every part of the world.

India was magnificently advanced in intellectual activities during the ancient and medieval times so manuscripts were written during those periods. India has possibly the oldest and the largest collection of manuscripts anywhere in the world. They are to be preserved for generations. In this regard about manuscripts, the Constitution of India, under Fundamental Duties in Article 51A, states "It shall be the duty of every citizen of India to value and preserve the rich heritage of our composite culture"².

2. Importance of Indian manuscripts

India has inherited huge treasure of knowledge as gift from our ancestors in the form of manuscripts preserved down the generations. Gift of knowledge (Vidya Dan) is considered charity in India since long. In India the word 'Grantha' (Books/ manuscripts) is mentioned as back as 5th century BC (approximately 2500 years back.). The glorious past of Indian culture lies in these manuscripts. These are basic historical evidences and have great research value. These cover a variety of themes, textures, aesthetics, scripts, languages, calligraphies, illuminations and illustrations. Together they constitute the memory of history, heritage and thought. They have knowledge in traditional systems of medicine such as Ayurveda and Unani, science of building (*Vaastu Shastra*), literature, religion and philosophy, etc.³

At the same time, those manuscripts which have survived for centuries have significance of antiquity. Many of the manuscripts have been written by eminent personalities of their times, or contain their thoughts. The material of the manuscripts, the methods and techniques with which the leaf, the bark or the paper was processed and the manners in which the inks were prepared also have great historical significance. The manuscripts need to be saved for their importance as records of past society, culture and politics.

¹ Gaur, Ramesh C., Chakraborty, Mrinmoy (2009), "Preservation and access to Indian manuscripts: A knowledge base of Indian cultural heritage resources for academic libraries", *Proceedings of the International Conference on Academic Libraries*. Accessed 02.04.2013, http://crl.du.ac.in/ical09/papers/index_files/ical_14_227_489_2_RV.pdf

² Gopalakrishnan, Sudha, "Manuscripts and Indian knowledge systems: the past contextualizing the future". Accessed 15.04.2013, www.unesco.org/new/fileadmin/MULTIMEDIA/HQ/CI/CI/pdf/mow/mow_3rd_international_conference_sudha_gopalakrishnan_en.pdf

³ Bhat, V. N. (2012), "Manuscripts as sources of knowledge". Accessed 15.04.2013, www.vnbhat.wordpress.com/2012/09/05/manuscripts_as_source_of_knowledge-experts-from-a-talk/

India's manuscripts have, for centuries, captured the fascination of the world. As early as in the seventh century, Chinese traveler Hiuen Tsang took back hundreds of manuscripts from India. Later in the late eighteenth century, the Nawab of Awadh gifted a superb illuminated manuscript of the *Padshahnama* to King George III of England. Today, it is considered one of the finest pieces in the Royal Collection. When the East India Company first came to India, they acknowledged the sub-continent as the bearer of a great and rich civilization that abounded in intellectual and artistic endeavour. Several company officers developed fascination with various aspects of Indian civilization including languages, philosophy, art and architecture. There are some great scholars including William Jones, C. P. Brown, John Leyden, Colin Mackenzie, Charles Wilkins, H. H. Wilson and H. T. Colebrook etc., who took an avid interest in many facets of the culture of the sub-continent as found in the vast treasure of handwritten manuscripts on a variety of materials including palm leaf, paper, cloth and even gold and silver⁴.

3. Types of Manuscripts

There were various surfaces used by human being for writing purposes. The manuscripts have been prepared on clay tablets, stones, metals like gold, silver, copper, iron, bronze and lead, bricks, earth wares and terracotta, wooden boards, palm leaf, birch bark, papyrus role, ivory, bone, parchment, leather, etc. and of course the paper, which was invented in 5th century AD in China and later used in other parts of the world. In India the manuscripts are found mainly in following types, each is usually piled up together within two wooden boards and wrapped in a cloth:

Palm leaf manuscripts (Tal-patra, Borassus flabellifer Linn.)

It was one of the oldest medium usually seen in the form of bundles of 50 to 100 neatly shaped leaves of even size. These are usually found in coastal states of India and dispersed all over India. The palm leaf manuscripts of 10th century AD are available though it was used earlier as seen in several earlier sculptures but might have destroyed completely⁵.

Birch bark manuscripts (Bhoja-patra, Betula utilis Linn.)

These are usually available in the form of a sheaf thin 'folios' of birch bark cut to an even size.

Eagle wood manuscripts (Hansi-pata, Agar Tree, Aquilaria agallocha Roxb.)

These are made from bark of the eagle tree, are also usually seen in the form of a sheaf of 'folios' cut to an even size.

Handmade paper manuscripts

Manuscripts made of handmade paper are found as bundles and sheaf of folios. Most of the earlier Indian manuscripts are on this material after the invention of preparing handmade paper.

Manufactured paper manuscripts

⁴ National Mission for Manuscripts. Accessed 02.04.2013: www.namami.org

⁵ Udaya Kumar D., Sreekumar, G. V., Athvankar, U. A. (2009): Traditional writing system in southern India: Palm leaf manuscripts. *Design Thought*, July. Retrieved 15.04.2013 from www.idc.iitb.ac.in/resources/dt_july_2009/Palm.pdf.

With the invention of machine made paper, a large number of manuscripts are also found on folios of modern manufactured paper.

4. Manuscripts in India

In the ancient times, in India, the earlier method of transferring knowledge from one generation to another was oral through schools called *gurukula-s* (“family of the guru”=teachers). It started shifting to “written” through symbolic drawings and then words and development of many languages took place. The earliest alphabets deciphered so far are Ashokas Brahmi Script in Prakrit language in 3 BC⁶.

In India it is estimated that there are 5 million manuscripts out of which so far only 1 million have been recorded in catalogues. There are 60,000 Indian manuscripts deported in European countries during British rule. There are 150,000 manuscripts in South Asia and other Asian countries. Most of the Indian manuscripts are in Sanskrit. They are lying in many institutions in various parts of India. Sampurnanand Sanskrit University, Varanasi has the largest collection while Rajasthan Oriental Research Institute, Jodhpur is next. Scindia Oriental Research Institute, Ujjain has large collection with 11th rank in the list of 24 institutions having 10,000 or more manuscripts in their collections⁷. (Appendix 1)

1	Total number of manuscripts in India	5 million
2	Indian manuscripts available in European countries	60,000
3	Indian manuscripts in South Asia and Asian countries	1,50,000
4	Number of manuscripts recorded in catalogues	1 million
5	Percentage of manuscripts language wise	
	Sanskrit	67%
	Other Indian languages	25%
	Arabic/ Persian/ Tibetan	8%

Table 1: Manuscript Treasures of India

4.1 Cataloguing of Manuscripts

Cataloguing of manuscripts is a hard task. In India many efforts have been made. In 2006 Satkari Mukhopadhyaya has made an extensive survey of the cataloguing efforts of manuscripts in India⁸. According to his survey, the credit of listing the manuscripts in India for the first time goes to a Jain monk (name unknown) who compiled ‘Brihattipanika’ listing manuscripts of Patan, Cambey and Bharauach in 1383. The manuscript of this catalogue is still preserved in the Shantinatha Bhandara Patan. The following effort is in the 17th century, when Kavindracharya of Varanasi completed the subject wise catalogue of 2,192 manuscripts between 1628 and 1688. Recognizing his work emperor Shahjahan conferred him the title of ‘Sarvavidyanidhana’.

Emperor Tipu Sultan of Mysore (18th century AD) had a library which was catalogued by General Charles Stewart after the defeat and death of the king. It was published in 1809. Travancore Palace Library collection of king Vishakhram Tirunal (1880-85) was later catalogued by K. Sambashiva Shastri in 8 volumes and published by V. V. Press (1937-38).

⁶ Basu, Sanghamitra (2007): “History of writing in India”. *Kriti Rakshana*, 2 (5), p. 2-6.

⁷ Gaur, Ramesh C., Chakraborty, Mrinmoy (2009), “Preservation and access to Indian manuscripts”, *op. cit.*

⁸ Mukhopadhyaya, Satkari (2006): “History of survey and cataloguing of manuscripts in India”. *Kriti Rakshana*, 2 (3), p. 4-9.

The Curator Office Library of Government of Travancore was also catalogued and published by him (along with others) in 1937-41 in 10 volumes.

The survey also reveals that rulers of Bikaner and Jodhpur, Dogra rulers of Jammu & Kashmir also contributed in collecting manuscripts. During British rule, the Asiatic Society in Calcutta was established in 1785 and took work on manuscripts collection and documentation. Dr. Nicholas, Chief surgeon of General Hospital Surat completed 15 pages list of manuscripts between 1788 and 1795. James Fraser published a catalogue of Indian manuscripts in 1742. Works of Sir William Jones and Lady Jones and Sir Charles Wilkins (1783) in cataloguing of manuscripts are also noteworthy and published in the *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society of London* in 1798 and 1799 respectively. Another noteworthy contribution mentioned in the survey is by Pandit Ramagovinda Tarkaratna. He compiled a 149 pages catalogue of 3,000 manuscripts in the holdings of College of Fort Williams, Library; College of the Asiatic Society of Bengal and Banaras Sanskrit Colleges under the instructions of James Prinsep (1838). Other important names mentioned in the survey are G. Bhuler, F. Kickhorn, Peter Peterson, R. G. Bhandarkar, S. R. Bhandarkar etc. who have listed many manuscripts between 1867 to 1905. Raja Rajendralala Mitra has done a great job in cataloguing manuscripts in 1877, 1871-1891, and published 6 catalogues. After his death, his incomplete work was finally published by M. M. Harprasad Sastri in 1898-1915 in 6 volumes.

The Asiatic Society of Bengal also took its task and the first volume came in 1895-1909. The catalogue includes Sanskrit, Bengali, Rajasthani, Assamese, Tibetan, Arabic, Persian and Urdu manuscripts in various volumes. Its revised series began in 1956. The survey also gives an account of catalogues of Governmental Manuscript Library in Chennai having three vast collections which have been shifted to Government Oriental Manuscript Library, Thanjavur. Library catalogue was prepared in 1880. Between 1928-1952 27 volumes have been reported in the survey. The State of Mysore (1884), Oriental Research Institute Mysore also published catalogues in 16 volumes. Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, Pune's first volume of catalogue of manuscripts came in 1916 and still continues. The huge task has now been organized at national level through the National Mission for Manuscripts.

The great Indian poet and noble laureate Rabindra Nath Tagore has rendered services for the preservation of manuscripts. In 1924 N. Aiyaswami was appointed director of manuscripts library in Tagore's university, named Vishva Bharti, who prepared a descriptive catalogue of the collection. Tagore also collected manuscripts from Javanese Island and Persia (Iran) in 1927 and 1932. The Maharaja of Baroda contributed Rs. 66,000 between 1924-34 and Nizam of Hyderabad contributed Rs. 100,000 to his library for conservation and preservation of manuscripts⁹.

5. Literature Survey

There are few works done on manuscript collections in India. Shafi and Lone (2012) made a worth mentioning literature survey on some important institutions in India engaged in manuscripts collection and preservation¹⁰. Other work: of Jan and Majeed (2009) on the

⁹ It was a great amount during that period (Rs. 80 = one Euro approx.). Chakraborty, Mrinmoy (2010): "Collection, conservation and publication of manuscripts: Tagore's initiatives". *Kriti Rakshana*, 6 (1-2), p. 7-10.

¹⁰ Shafi, S. M., Lone, M. I. (2012): "Oriental manuscripts in India: a literature survey". *Library Review*, 61 (8-9), p. 577-591. Accessed 02.04.2013, www.emeraldinsight.com/journals.htm?articleid=17065496

Oriental Research Library of Kashmir¹¹; Maharana and Mahapatra (2008) on Dr N.K. Sahu Museum of Sambalpur University¹²; Majumdar (1984) on Asiatic Society Calcutta¹³; Gaur and Chakraborty (2009) on universities libraries manuscript collections¹⁴; Ali (2004) on Maulana Azad Library of Aligarh Muslim University, Aligarh¹⁵; Nikam *et al.* (2004) on University of Mysore and Dharwad¹⁶; Nath and Sharma (2006) on Punjab University¹⁷; Bansode (2008) on the Balasaheb Khardekar Library of Shivaji University¹⁸; Londhe *et al.* (2011) on Jayakar Library of University of Pune¹⁹; Saikia and Kalita (2011) on KKH Library of Guwahati University²⁰; Vaishnav and Sonwane (2001) on Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar Marathwada University Library (BAMUL)²¹. Ali's book entitled 'Oriental Manuscripts Worldwide' on the topic is worth mentioning²².

6. National Mission for Manuscripts (NMM)

There are many enemies of manuscripts such as dust, humidity, light, heat, pollution, fire, flute, rodents, moths, fungi and insects and of course nature pretends and human being themselves. Preservation of manuscripts requires great efforts and technical knowledge. The collecting of manuscripts is much more difficult. Digitization is an advantage of use of new technology which is helpful both in preservation on one hand and dissemination on the other hand. Projects like 'Memory of the World' of UNESCO and 'Down Memory Lane' of National Library, Kolkata, are some of the worth mentioning efforts towards digitization of manuscripts. Besides, many countries have made efforts for preservation, conservation and digitization of manuscripts. The National Mission for Manuscripts in India is one such big effort and an example for international community.

In India the preservation, conservation and digitization work of Manuscripts at national level was organized with the establishment of National Mission for Manuscripts (NMM). The

¹¹ Jan, R., Majeed, I. (2009): "Oriental research library of Kashmir: a treasure trove". *Trends in Information Management*, 5 (1), p 81-95.

¹² Maharana, B., Mahapatra, R.K.(2008): "Digitization of manuscripts of Dr N.K. Sahu museum of Sambalpur University: a draft proposal", in Satpathy, S.K. and Swain, C. (Ed.), *Libraries in Digital Environment: Problems and Prospects*, New Delhi, Mahamaya Publishing House.

¹³ Majumdar, M. (1984): "Persian manuscript on agriculture and horticulture". *Indian Journal of History of Science*, 19 (4), p. 341-360. Accessed 12.03.2012, www.new.dli.ernet.in/rawdataupload/upload/insa/INSA_1/20005abd_341.Pdf

¹⁴ Gaur, Ramesh C., Chakraborty, Mrinmoy (2009), "Preservation and access to Indian manuscripts", *op. cit.*

¹⁵ Ali, A.(2004): *Oriental libraries of India and their collections*. New Delhi, Ess Ess Publications.

¹⁶ Nikam, K., Ganesh, A. C., Tamizhchelvan, M. (2004): "The changing face of India (2): knowledge management for digital preservation". *Library Review*, 53 (6), p. 309-312. Accessed 01.03.2012, www.emeraldinsight.com/

¹⁷ Nath, A., Sharma, A. (2005): "Digitization of manuscript collection of A.C. Joshi Library, Chandigarh: a case study", in Kaul, H. K., Sen, G. (Ed.), *Library and Information Networking NAACLIN: Proceedings of the National Convention on Library and Information Networking (NAACLIN), DELNET-Developing Library Network*, New Delhi, 2006, p. 314-325.

¹⁸ Bansode, S. (2008): "Creation of digital library of manuscripts at Shivaji University, India". *Library Hi Tech News*, p. 13-15. Accessed 24.03.2012, www.emeraldinsight.com/

¹⁹ Londhe, N. L., Desale, S. K., Patil, S. K. (2011): "Development of a digital library of manuscripts: a case study at the University of Pune". India, Program: *Electronic Library & Information Systems*, 45 (2), p. 135-148.

²⁰ Saikia, R. R., Kalita, B. (2011): "Prospects of digitizing manuscript collections in KKH library: a model". *8th International CALIBER*, Goa, Goa University, p. 312-319, Accessed 06.06.2013, <http://ir.inflibnet.ac.in/bitstream/handle/1944/1627/32.pdf?sequence=1>

²¹ Vaishnav, A. A., Sonwane, S. S. (2001): "Infrastructure requirement for digitization of manuscripts at BAMUL". CALIBER, INFLIBNET Centre, Pune.

²² Ali, A. (2005), *Oriental Manuscripts Worldwide*, New Delhi, Ess Ess Publications, p. 75.

Ministry of Tourism and Culture, Government of India, established it in February 2003. It is an ambitious project with the specific objectives of creating a national resource base and locating, documenting, conserving and digitization for disseminating the knowledge contents of vast manuscripts wealth of India²³. The NMM has created a network of institutions at various levels involved in manuscript documentation, preservation, digitization and dissemination. There are 57 Manuscript Resource Centers (MRC), 50 Manuscript Conservation Centers (MCC) and 32 Manuscript Partner Centers (MPC), set up across the country by NMM. A few of them are both MRC and MCC or MCC and MPC. Only one is all MRC, MCC and MPC. The lists are given in the appendices 2–4.

Manuscript Resource Centers (MRC): The NMM recognizes well-established Indological institutes, museums, libraries, universities and non-government organizations to act as the Mission's coordinating agency in their respective regions responsible for survey and documentation of every manuscript in their area. Any institute which has a collection of at least 5,000 manuscripts and having its own spacious library and reading room facility has been considered for the purpose. The MRCs engage trained researchers and students in the field of Manuscript studies for survey and documentation work, help in the national survey, prepare network with private and institutional custodians of manuscripts in the region, identify scholars to decipher manuscripts and coordinate with the NMM office to organize various lectures and seminars. The mission so far involved more than 18,000 persons in survey through which more than 50,000 manuscript repositories were identified during last one decade.

Manuscript Conservation Centers (MCC): Through MCC the NMM organizes workshops and training programs across the country to generate skills and awareness among the institutional and private holders of manuscripts.

Manuscript Partner Centers (MPC): The Mission has identified prominent institutions with large holdings of manuscripts for collaboration with the Mission as Manuscript Partner Centres (MPC). They are required to document their own collections and catalogue them using the primary text itself to Manus Granthavali. This is done by the institution's own staff on a pro-rata basis.

The NMM has launched many projects to achieve its goals:

(a) **Kriti sampada**: a national database of manuscripts available on the internet through its website. It contains information of titles, themes, authors, commentaries, scripts, languages, conservation and status of existing catalogues, etc. It has prepared Cat Cat, which provides the catalogue of manuscripts already published under this program. Presently it lists 1,000 catalogues. The software used by the mission is e-Granthawali, developed by the National Informatics Center (NIC) and updated frequently. E-granthawali is based on the Dublin Core Metadata standards that are globally accepted. The software is bilingual and accommodates Hindi and English²⁴.

The documentation unit at mission's office receives data in both electronic form as well as filled-in-datasheets. Before making an entry in the National Database of Manuscript, data is carefully screened and verified. More than 2 million manuscripts have been catalogued in

²³ Gopi, Neerja (2006): "Conservation of manuscripts: efforts taken up by the National Mission for Manuscripts". *Kriti Rakshana*, 2 (2), p. 2-4.

²⁴ Panda, Ganesh Prasad (2006): "*Kritisampada*: the national database of manuscripts". *Kriti Rakshana*, 2 (3), p. 2-3.

Kritisampada, of which the first cache of one million manuscripts is available on the web at www.namami.org²⁵.

(b) **Vijnananidhi**: Vijnananidhi program (the treasure of Indian manuscripts), launched on 14.02.2007 and still under process, is also an important program of the NMM. It aims to recognize the pioneering manuscripts that contain insights and discoveries, and that have at different parts of time, broken new grounds in Indian knowledge system²⁶. It is a very selective list but is no way creating a hierarchical status. The list contains 45 manuscripts across 20 repositories in India so far. It is available on www.namami.org²⁷. [Appendix 5]

(c) **Digitization**: In 2004, the Mission had initiated a Pilot Project of Digitization, which was completed in 2006, setting standards and guidelines for digitization. In the second phase, the Mission selected important collections from a wider range of institutions. They have been compiled in book form as *Guidelines for Digitization of Manuscripts*²⁸. So far 2,6 million pages of 14,798 manuscripts have been digitized in phase I and 4., million pages of 41,863 manuscripts have been digitized in phase II. (Table 2-3)

Agency	Institution	No. Mss.	No. of Pages
IGNCA	ORI, Srinagar	10,591	21,00,000
NIC	OSM, BBSR	1,749	3,50,000
INTACH*	Jain Manuscripts	180	42,951
CIDIT*	Kutiyattam	340	38,260
MSP**	Siddha Manuscripts	1,938	78,435
	TOTAL	14,798	26,09,646

Table 2: Status of Digitization Initiated Under Phase I

Agency	Institution	No. Mss.	No. of Pages
CBSL	OSM, BBSR	3,802	4,60,000
CBSL	KKHL, Guwahati	2,091	1,56,150
Sigma Tech	Harisingh Gaur University, Sagar	1,010	1,17,603
Sigma Tech	Anandashram Sanstha, Pune	7,939	4,40,290
Sigma Tech	Bharat Itihas Samshodhan Mandal, Pune	1,523	1,60,730
Adea Infotec	Himachal Academy, Simla	225	55,751
Adea Infotec	Vrindavan Research Institute	15,668	11,44,503
ACI Infocom	Institute of Asian Studies, Chennai	481	34,505
ACI Infocom	French Institute	502	1,70,629
ACI Infocom	Kundakunda, Indore	8,622	11,60,433
	TOTAL	41,863	48,16,015

Table 3: Status of Digitization Initiated Under Phase II

(d) **National Manuscript Library**: A National Manuscript Library in the Indira Gandhi National Center for the Arts (IGNCA) is established as the national nodal agency of the mission. Indira Gandhi National Center for the Arts (IGNCA) has 20 millions microfilmed folios of unpublished manuscripts from various institutions. SORI of Ujjain is one of them. *Kalasampada* (Art treasure) project is a digital library resource of Indian cultural heritage.

²⁵ Arora, Anurag (2007): "Online catalogue of one million manuscripts: *Kritisampada*". *Kriti Rakshana*, 2 (4), p. 3-5.

²⁶ Paliwal, Neha (2007): "*Vijnananidhi*: manuscript treasure of India". *Kriti Rakshana*, 2 (4), p. 6-7.

²⁷ National Mission for Manuscripts: *Report of the seventh year 2009-2010*, Accessed 15.04.2013, www.namami.org/seventh%20annual%20report.pdf

²⁸ *Ibid.*

Digital corpus of IGNCA includes 7 million folios of manuscripts, 100,000 slides, 4,000 photographs and 400 hrs. audiovideos by 2005. The project has won a Golden Icon Award for exemplary implementation of e-Governance initiatives under the category of Best Documented Knowledge & Case Study, 2009²⁹.

7. Scindia Oriental Research Institute

Scindia Oriental Research Institute (SORI) is situated in Ujjain, an ancient, historical, culture pilgrimage city of India, also called by ancient people Vishala, Knank Shringa, Pratikalpa, Avantika, Ujjaini etc. It stands on the right bank of holy river Shipra, and is one of the seven sacred cities of the Hindus where one of the 12 Jyotirling of Lord Shiva named 'Mahakal' rests. It holds world's largest gathering event 'Simhasth Mela' (festival), held once every 12th years. It is also known as city of world's great poet 'Kalidas' and is also famous for great teacher of all times 'Sandipani', where Lord Krishna completed his education 5,114 years ago. Historically, this city was the capital of the king 'Vikramaditya', famous for his judgment and Navaratna (Nine Jewels) of scholars, dating back to 57 BC. It is also a place of astronomical importance and an observatory was constructed long back.

SORI is a pioneer manuscript library and research institute of India. It is one of the fifteen premier institutions in the field and a major institute in Central India. The story of its establishment goes back to 1930 when many manuscripts available around Ujjain reached Baroda Oriental Institute. The King of Baroda SayajiRao Gaekwad wrote to Regency Council of Gwalior, under whom Ujjain was ruled, about scattered manuscripts in Ujjain and nearby areas for their collection and preservation and recommended establishment of a manuscript institute in Ujjain itself. Acting on it, the Council established Oriental Manuscripts Collection in a rented house in old city area called "Pan Dariba" with only 11 manuscripts on 20.10.1931, during the Hindu festival day Dashhara. In 1933 it was shifted to nearby Madhav College with 2,000 manuscripts collection by then. Catalogues of the collection were published in 1936 and 1949. In 1941 it was named Scindia Oriental Research Institute and transferred to the Department of Education of the Gwalior State. In the memory of great king of Ujjain Vikramaditya (57 BC), a committee was setup to commemorate the occasion. On 06.11.1960 a contract was signed and on 26.06.1961 it was handed over to the newly established Vikram University, Ujjain. It was transferred in the central library of the university in 1966, and transferred again to the newly constructed "Vikram Kirti Mandir" in the Vikram University premises. In 1968, during 6th five-year plan, the University Grants Commission (India) gave a grant for a separate independent building, where it was shifted later. In 2003, it has been recognized as Manuscript Resource Center under National Mission for Manuscripts. The collection of manuscripts grew year by year by collecting through various sources. Presently it has 20,417 manuscripts of great importance in its collection, on various writing materials, on various subjects and many languages and scripts. The table 4 shows the growth of manuscripts and Table 5 shows their subject wise distribution.

Block Period	No. of Manuscripts	Block Period	No. of Manuscripts
1931 – 1940	6090	1981 – 1990	18567
1941 – 1950	7369	1991 – 2000	19213
1951 – 1960	9794	2001 – 2010	20340
1961 – 1970	14146	2010 – 2013	20417
1971 – 1980	18122		

Table 4: Growth of Manuscripts at SORI (Decade wise)

²⁹ Jha, Pratapanand (2006): "Digitization and documentation of manuscripts and other cultural heritage at the IGNCA". *Kriti Rakshana*, 2 (3), p. 25-26.

S. No.	Subject	No. of Manuscripts
1	Worship (Karma Kanda, Puja, Vrata Uddyapana, Bhakti)	3079
2	Prayers	2184
3	Indian Philosophy (Justice, Vaisheshik, Statistics, Yoga, Purva Mimansa, Shaiv, Bouddh, Vedant and Jain)	1898
4	Astrology	1656
5	Jain Literature	1429
6	Vedic Literature (Samhita, Upnishat)	1086
7	Tantra Mantra	1038
8	Religious Literature (Dharma Shastra)	945
9	Epics (Ramayana, Mahabharata, Purana)	575
10	Medicine (Ayurveda)	574
11	Sanskrit Poetries	541
12	Other Language Poetries	382
13	Stories	512
14	Mnemonics	129
15	Arabic & Persian Literature	117
16	Sanskrit Dramas	101
17	Other Languages Dramas	4
18	Others	97
19	To be Classified	4070
	Total Manuscripts	20417

Table 5: Subject-wise Distribution of Manuscripts at SORI

8. Few Very Rare Manuscripts available at SORI:

There are so many manuscripts which are rare in its collection but few of them have made the collection rare of rare.

1. Bauddhagam: This manuscript is 1,000 years old on palm leaf written in Gupta Brahmi script which was in use at that time. Only 34 leaves are available. It is in deteriorating stage. University of Delhi (India) has published some important notes from it in roman scripts in 1975. The work is an important manuscript for Buddha religion. It is stored at Sr. No. 4737.
2. Bhragu Samhita: The manuscript is related to astrology available in 13 volumes, though few leaves are missing. It is stored at Sr. No. 3264.
3. Anand Samuchchaya: It is an important manuscript on Yoga. A copy of it is also available in L. D. Indological Institute Ahmedabad. It is stored at Sr. No. 10013 and 17731.
4. Ashwa Phal Prakash: This is a rare manuscript on veterinary science which was rare subject during those days. It is illustrated but is in very much deteriorating stage. It is stored at Sr. No. 14197.
5. Kalindika Prakash: This encyclopedic work is an unpublished work of famous author Somnath Vyas of this part of country, who has also written another work, *Srimad Bhagwat* which is 300 years old. It has used silver and gold inks to prepare art. This is of 1,670 folios with 137 illustrations. It is stored at Sr. No. 5696.
6. Bhakti Vijay of Mahapati: It is an illustrated biographical work by great writer Mahapati. The work is in Marathi language and written in the year 1762 AD. It contains 57 references with 57 illustrations. It is stored at Sr. No. 5314.
7. Persian manuscripts: Persian translations of many Indian epics like Geet Govinda, Srimad Bhagwat, Raj Vijay, etc. are stored at in the collection.
8. Art works: The collection has many art works; worth to mention is a picture of great battle of India 'Mahabharata'. It depicts the strategy adopted in the battle field approximately 5000 years back.

9. Conclusion

The preservation, conservation and digitization of manuscripts are huge tasks anywhere in the world. The manuscripts are stores of knowledge treasure without any boundaries of language, script, religion or country. The manuscripts are scattered, not limited to libraries but may be found anywhere, in religious places, with monks, with persons, in houses, in stores and in boxes, etc. It is a huge and difficult task to collect information of their whereabouts. Possibly many manuscripts are incomplete and few leaves may be available elsewhere anywhere. The copies may be available or may not. The translated copies too may or may not be available. All this is unknown and knowing all this is really huge task and very difficult. All the more the manuscripts have only aesthetic value in a sense and academic value for very few researchers only hence governments are reluctant to spend lot of money for their search and digitization.

Now with the efforts of many institutions like UNESCO and IFLA, people and government have started realizing their value and necessity for their conservation and preservation for the next generation. Initiatives such as National Mission for Manuscripts of India will be required in every country. NMM too need more money and manpower to digitize one of the largest manuscripts collections in the world.

In India, the manuscripts are not covered under any law so that they can become the property of the state. The manuscripts are still property of the persons and institutions, which hold them. If they are reluctant to handover them or provide facilities to digitized them, there is no way out. An Act of Parliament in this regard is necessary to overcome this situation.

International cooperation will be necessary for its complete success because India was larger than now in the past when manuscripts were written and those manuscripts are still lying scattered in those countries which were parts of India at that time. Moreover, India has been ruled by foreigners and many manuscripts have been transported in other countries. This led to incomplete and missing links in the knowledge available in those manuscripts of India. India will need their cooperation by procuring, if not an original one but at least a digitized copy of them. For this international cooperation is necessary. The programs such as National Mission for Manuscripts in India must be initiated in other parts of the world.

10. Suggestions

The following suggestions can be made on the issue:

1. Digitization and conservation work should go simultaneously to avoid duplication of work.
2. For the preservation it should be made mandatory to provide facilities to digitize every manuscript available in personal and institutional collections.
3. All manuscripts should be declared as property of the government by an Act so that they can be procured and maintained at a relevant place so that they are not lost in future.
4. Countries should take initiative to start programs like National Manuscripts Mission of India by providing sufficient funds.
5. The catalogue of manuscripts of each country should be prepared at an early date.
6. International cooperation is sought for the digitization of manuscripts.
7. International databases should be launched in various languages, scripts and subjects.
8. Manuscripts of one country available in another country should either be returned or at least a digitized copy should be made mandatory by signing an international treaty in the subject.
9. International cooperation must be sought by signing of MOUs between countries to improve conservation, preservation and digitization of manuscripts.
10. The Library Science courses should incorporate a paper in Manuscript Studies. Separate courses at Diploma, Bachelor, Master, M. Phil. And Ph.D. in Manuscriptology should be initiated for their proper conservation and preservation.

Appendix 1: Manuscript collections at major Institutes in India

S. No.	Name of Organization	Number of Manuscripts
1	Sampurnanand Sanskrit University, Varanasi	1,40,000
2	Rajasthan Oriental Research Institute, Jodhpur (with 8 branches)	116123
3	Government Oriental Manuscript Library, Chennai	72620
4	Oriental Institute and Manuscript Library, Tiruananthapuram	56,000
5	Saraswati Mahal Library, Thanjavur	47,625
6	University of Calcutta, Kolkata	42000
7	Adayar Library and Research Center, Chennai	40,000
8	Orissa State Museum, Bhuvaneshwar	37000
9	Asiatic Society, Kolkata	32000
10	Andhra Pradesh Oriental Manuscript Library & Research Institute, Hyderabad	23115
11	Scindia Oriental Research Institute, Ujjain	20,417
12	Khuda Baksh Oriental Public Library, Patna	20060
13	Bhanderkar Oriental Research Institute, Pune	20000
14	Punjab University, Chandigarh	18395
15	State Central Library, Hyderabad	17,000
16	Vishwabharati University, West Bengal	15354
17	Rampur Raza Library,	15000
18	Rajasthan State Archives, Jaipur	14,000
19	Kameshwr Singh Darbhanga Sanskrit University, Darbhanga	13000
20	Aligarh Muslim University, Aligarh	12000
21	Government Manuscript Library, Allahabad	11,000
22	Banaras Hindu University, Varanasi	10500
23	Central Institute of Buddhist Studies, Leh	10000
24	Salar Jung Museum, Hyderabad	10000

Appendix 2: List of Manuscripts Resources Centers

- 1 Akhil Bhartiya Sanskrit Parishad, Lucknow
- 2 Anandashram Sanstha, Pune
- 3 © Andhra Pradesh Government Oriental Manuscripts Library and Research Institute, Hyderabad
- 4 © B.L Institute of Indology, Delhi
- 5 Bhai Vir Singh Sahitya Sadan, New Delhi
- 6 © Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, Pune
- 7 Calcutta University Manuscripts Library, Kolkata
- 8 © Central Institute of Buddhist Studies, Leh
- 9 © Culture and Archaeology Raipur(Chhatisgarh)
- 10 D.G, Centre for Heritage Studies, Thripunithura
- 11 Department of Archaeology, Chennai
- 12 Department of Manuscriptology, Kannada University, Hampi
- 13 Directorate of State Archaeology, Archives and Museum, Srinagar
- 14 Dr. H. S. Gaur University, Sagar
- 15 French Institute of Pondicherry, Pondicherry
- 16 GOML & Research Centre University of Madras Library Campus, Chennai
- 17 Gurucharan College, Silchar, Assam
- 18 H. N. B. Garhwal University, Pauri Garhwal, Uttaranchal
- 19 Himachal Academy of Arts, Culture and Languages, Shimla
- 20 Institute for Oriental Studies (Shiva Shakti), Thane
- 21 Institute of Tai Studies and Research Moranhat, Assam
- 22 K. M. Hindi Institute of Hindi Studies and Linguistics, Agra
- 23 Kameshwar Singh Darbhanga Sanskrit University, Darbhanga

- 24 Kavikulaguru Kalidasa Sanskrit University, Ramtek
 25 Keladi Museum and Historical Research Bureau, Shimoga
 26 © Khuda Bakhsh Oriental Public Library, Patna
 27 © Krishna Kanta Handiqui Library, Gauhati University, Guwahati
 28 © Kunda Kunda Jnanapitha, Indore
 29 © Kurukshetra University, Kurukshetra
 30 © Lalbhai Dalpatbhai Institute of Indology, Ahmedabad
 31 Library of Tibetan Works and Archives, Dharamsala
 32 Mahabharata Samshodhana Pratishthanam, Bangalore
 33 © Manipur State Archives, Imphal
 34 © Mazahar Memorial Museum, Bahariabad, Ghazipur (UP)
 35 © National Institute of Prakrit Studies and Research, Shraavanabelagola
 36 Nava Nalanda Mahavihara, Nalanda, Bihar
 37 © Oriental Research Institute and Manuscripts Library, University of Kerala, Thiruvananthapuram
 38 Oriental Research Institute, Mysore
 39 © Oriental Research Institute, Sri Venkateswara University, Tirupati
 40 © Orissa State Museum, Bhubaneswar
 41 © Patna Museum, Patna
 42 © Rajasthan Oriental Research Institute, Jodhpur
 43 © Rampur Raza Library, Rampur
 44 Sampurnanand Sanskrit Visvavidyalaya, Varanasi
 45 SARASVATI, Bhadrak
 46 Sat Shrut Prabhavana Trust, Bhavnagar
 47 Sciendia Oriental Research Institute, Vikram University, Ujjain
 48 Shivaji University, Kolhapur
 49 Shree Dwarakadhish Sanskrit Academy and Indological Research Institute Dwaraka, Gujarat
 50 Sri Chandra Sekharendra Saraswathi Viswa Mahavidyalaya, Kanchipuram
 51 © Sri D. K. Jain Oriental Research Institute, Arrah, Bihar
 52 © Thanjavur Maharaja Serfoji's Saraswati Mahal Library, Thanjavur
 53 Thunchan Memorial Trust, Tirur
 54 Tripura University, Tripura
 55 Uttaranchal Sanskrit Academy, Haridwar
 56 Visweshvarananda Biswabandhu Institute of Sanskrit and Indological Studies, Hoshiarpur
 57 © ρ Vrindavan Research Institute, Vrindavan

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ρ These centers are work as MPC also.

Appendix 3: List of Manuscripts Conservation Centers

- 1 © A P State Archives and Research Institute, Hyderabad
 2 AITIHYA, Bhubaneswar
 3 Akank Shodh Sansthan, Kota
 4 © B.L Institute of Indology, Delhi
 5 © Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute (BORI), Pune
 6 © Central Institute of Buddhist Studies (CIBS), Leh
 7 ρ Central Library, Banaras Hindu University, Banaras

- 8 Centre for Heritage Studies, Thripunithura
9 ⑧ Culture and Archaeology, Raipur
10 Department of Language and Culture, Shimla
11 Gurucharan College, Silchar
12 Indian Conservation Institute, Lucknow
13 Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts (IGNCA), New Delhi
14 INTACH Chitrakala Parishath Art Conservation Centre, Bangalore
15 INTACH Orissa Art Conservation Centre, Bhubaneswar
16 Kannada University, Hampi
17 ρ Karnataka State Archives, Bangalore
18 Keladi Museum & Historical Research, Keladi
19 ⑧ Khuda Bakhsh Oriental Public Library, Patna
20 ⑧ Krishna Kanta Handiqui Library, Gauhati University, Guwahati
21 ⑧ Kund Kund Jananpith, Indore
22 ⑧ Kurukshetra University, Kurukshetra
23 ⑧ Lalbhai Dalpatbhai Institute of Indology, Ahmedabad
24 Mahaveer Digamber Jain Pandulipi Samrakshan Kendra, Jaipur, Rajasthan
25 ⑧ Manipur State Archives, Imphal
26 Manuscript Library, University of Calcutta, Kolkata
27 ⑧ Mazahar Memorial Museum, Ghazipur
28 Mural Painting Conservation Research and Training Centre, Trippunithura Palace, Cochin
29 Nagarjuna Buddhist Foundation, Gorakhpur
30 ⑧ National Institute of Prakrit Studies and Research, Srovanabelagola
31 ⑧ ORI & Manuscripts Library, Trivandrum
32 ⑧ Oriental Research Institute, Sri Venkateswara University, Tirupati
33 ⑧ Orissa State Museum, Bhubaneswar
34 ⑧ Patna Museum, Patna
35 ⑧ Rajasthan Oriental Research Institute, Jodhpur
36 ⑧ Rampur Raza Library, Rampur
37 Regional Conservation Laboratory, Thiruvananthapuram
38 ρ Salar Jung Museum, Hyderabad
39 Sambalpur University, Burla, Orissa
40 ⑧ Sri Dev Kumar Jain Oriental research Institute, Arrah
41 Sri Vadiraja Research Foundation, Udupi
42 Tamil Nadu Government Museum, Chennai
43 ⑧ Tanjore Maharaja Serfoji's Saraswati Mahal Library, Thanjavur
44 Tawang Monastery, Tawang
45 The Himalayan Society for Heritage and Art Conservation, Nainital
46 Thunchan Memorial Trust, Tirur
47 Tripura University, Tripura
48 Uttranchal Institute for Conservation Research and Training
49 ⑧ Visweshvarananda Biswabandhu Institute of Sanskrit and Indological Studies, Hoshiarpur
50 ⑧ ρ Vrindavan Research Institute, Vrindavan
- ⑧ These centers are work as MRC also.
ρ These centers are work as MPC also.

Appendix 4: List of Manuscripts Partner Centers

- 1 Abrol Manuscripts and Rare Book Library, 197, Gali Tanga Wali, Upper Bazaar, Jammu Tawi, 180 001, Jammu and Kashmir
2 Academy of Sanskrit Research, Melkote 571 431, Mandya Dist, Karnataka
3 Amir-ud-Daula Public Library, Qaiser Bagh, Lucknow 226001, Uttar Pradesh
4 Asom Kalaguru Kristi Mondir Bodha Samaj, H.O. Karhal Gaon, P.O. Majuli Bongaon 785110, District Jorhat, Assam
5 Banki Anchalik Adibasi Harijan Kalyan Parisad, At P.O. Banki, District Cuttack 754

- 008 , Orissa
- 6 Barr. Balasaheb Khardekar Library, Shivaji University, Kolhapur 416004, Maharashtra
- 7 © Central Library, Banaras Hindu University, Varanasi 221005, Uttar Pradesh
- 8 Chinmaya International Foundation, Adisankara Nilayam, P.O. Veliyanad, Ernakulum 682 319 , Kerala
- 9 Department of Palm leaf Manuscripts, Tamil University,Thanjavur 613005, Tamil Nadu
- 10 Dharma Ayurveda Medical College and Hospital, 48, Grand West Trunk Road Sriperumbudur 602105, Kancheepuram, Tamil Nadu
- 11 Digambar Jain Trilok Shoda Sansthan, Jambudvipa, Hastinapur 250404, District Meerut, Uttarpradesh
- 12 Hastlekhagar Evam Sangrahalaya, K.M.Institute of Hindi Studies and Linguistics, B.R.Ambedkar University, Paliwal Park, Agra 282 004, Uttar Pradesh
- 13 Idara-e-Adabiyat-e-Urdu, Aiwan-e-Urdu, 6-3-662/A, Panjagutta Road, Somajiguda, Hyderabad 500 082, Andhra Pradesh
- 14 Institute of Asian Studies, Chemmancherry, Sholinganallur Post, Chennai 600 119 Tamil Nadu
- 15 Institute of Rajasthan Studies, J.R.Nagar Rajasthan Vidyapeeth, Udaipur 313001, Rajasthan
- 16 Jain Vishva Bharti Institute (Deemed Univeristy), Ladnun 341306, Rajasthan
- 17 © Karnataka State Archives, Room No. 9, Vidhan Sauda, Bangalore 560001, Karnataka
- 18 Kashi Prasad Jayaswal Research Institute, Museum Building, Patna 800 001, Bihar
- 19 Mithila Institute of Post-Graduate Studies and Research in Sanskrit Learning, Maheshnagar, Kabraghat, Darbhanga 846004, Bihar
- 20 Mr. V. Ramesh Karanth, Punarvasu, Main Road, Ulavi, Sorab Taluk, District Shimoga 577434
- 21 Rashtriya Sanskrit Sansthan (Deemed University), Ganganath Jha Campus, Chandra Shekhar Azad Park, Allahabad 211002, Uttar Pradesh
- 22 © Salar Jung Museum, Salar Jung Road, Hyderabad 500 002, Andhra Pradesh
- 23 Shree Forbes Gujarati Sabha, 3 rd Floor, Opposite Utpal Sanghavi School, Sant Gyaneshwar Marg, Juhu Vile Parle (West), Mumbai 400 049, Maharashtra
- 24 Shree Sankaracharya Univeristy of Sanskrit, Kalady, Ernakulam District 683 574 , Kerala
- 25 Shri Natnagar Shodh Samsthan, Sitamau, Malwa 458 990, Madhya Pradesh
- 26 Shri Samarth Vagdevta Mandir, Ramwadi, Malegaon Road, Dhule 424 001, Maharashtra .
- 27 Sree Sarada Education Society, 32/2 &4, 2 nd Main Road, Gandhi Nagar, Adyar, Chennai 600 020, Tamil Nadu
- 28 Sri Puthige Vidya Peetham, Sri Sugunendra Theertha Veda-Agama Sanskrit College, Sri Puthige Math, Hiriyaadka 576113, District Udipi, Karnataka
- 29 Sri Sri Jagadguru Shankaracharya Mahasamstanam, Dakshinamnaya, Sri Sharada Peetam, Sringeri 577139, Karnataka
- 30 The C. P. Ramaswami Aiyar Foundation, The Grove, 1, Eldams Road, Alwarpet, Chennai 600 018. Tamil Nadu
- 31 The Kuppuswami Sastri Research Institute, 84, Thiru Vi Ka Road, (Royapettah High Road), Mylapore, Chennai 600 004, Tamil Nadu
- 32 ® © Vrindavan Research Institute, Raman Reti Marg, Vrindavan 281121, Uttar Pradesh

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Appendix 5: Vijnananidhi – Manuscript treasure of India

No.	Institution	Title of Manuscripts
1	The Asiatic Society, Kolkata	1. Kubjikamata 2. Maiteryavyakaranam 3. Samputatika 4. Kalachakravatara
2	Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, Pune	1. Rigvedasamhita 2. Chikitsasarasangraha 3. Upmitibhavaprapanchakatha 4. Bhagavatpurana 5. Mahabhashya
3	Calcutta University, Kolkata	1. Shaivagamatantra 2. Astasahasrikaprajnaparamita 3. Krittivasaramayana
4.	Institut Francais de Pondichéry, Pondicherry	1. Shaivagama
5.	Kannada University, Hampi	1. Shunya Sampadane 2. Kurbararattamala 3. Basavapurana
6.	Kargon Gompa, Igo, Ladakh	1. Dhul wa 2. Gyad Stongpa
7.	Khuda Bakhsh Oriental Public Library, Patna	1. Diwan-i-Hafiz 2. Tarikh-i-Khandan-i-Timuria 3. Kitab al-Hashaish 4. Kitab al-Tasrif
8.	Krishna Kanta Handiqui Library, Guwahati	1. Chitra Bhagavat 2. Ratnamalavyakarana
9.	Lalbbhai Dalpatbhai Institute of Indology, Ahmedabad	1. Uttaradhyanasutra 2. Shantinatha Charita
10.	Library of Tibetan Works, Dharamsala	1. Aryabhadra-kalapika-nama-mahayana-sutra
11.	Manipur State Archives	1. Yumbanlol 2. Subika
12.	The National Archives of India, New Delhi	1. Gilgit Manuscripts
13.	National Museum, New Delhi	1. Baburnama 2. Tuzuk-i-Jahangiri
14.	Oriental Research Institute, Mysore	1. Arthashastra 2. Natyashastra 3. Sharadatilaka
15.	Oriental Research Institute, Sri Venkateswara University, Tirupati	1. Saubhagyaratnakara
16.	Oriental Research Institute Manuscripts Library, Thiruvananthapuram	1. Aryamanjushreemulakalpam
17.	Orissa State Museum, Bhubaneswar	1. Gitagovinda 2. Chikitsa Manjiri,
18.	Rajasthan Oriental Research Institute, Jodhpur	1. Arsharamayana 2. Dhvanyalokalochana
19.	Rampur Raza Library, Rampur	1. Al-Quran-al-Majid 2. Ramayana 3. Kalila-wa-Dimna
20.	Visweshvarananda Biswabandhu Institute of Sanskrit and Indological Studies, Hoshiarpur	1. Sarvarogaharanaganagambhirata or Ashvaphala Prakash

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