Preservation and Access to Indian Manuscripts: A Knowledge Base of Indian Cultural Heritage Resources for Academic Libraries

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Abstract

The glorious past of Indian culture lies in the ancient manuscripts. These are the basic historical evidence and have great research value. It is estimated that India possesses more than five million manuscripts, making her the largest repository of manuscript wealth in the world. Though our ancestors had tried to preserve these manuscripts, thousands of such valued unpublished Indian manuscripts on varied subjects are lying scattered or fragmented in India and foreign collections and some of these are no longer accessible to research scholars. This invaluable and unique pool of knowledge is under threat and manuscripts are disappearing at an alarming rate.

The Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts (IGNCA) was established in 1987. Kala Nidhi, a National Information System and Data Bank, consists of the reference library of print collections, a large library of Microfilms/Microfiches, collection of slides, cultural archives and photo documentation in the disciplines of Arts and Archaeology. Recognizing the need to encompass and preserve this knowledge resource and to make these accessible to scholars and researchers, IGNCA had initiated the most important manuscript-microfilming programme in 1989.

The National Mission for Manuscripts (NMM) was established in February 2003, by the Ministry of Tourism and Culture, Government of India. A unique project in its programme and mandate, the Mission seeks to unearth and preserve the vast manuscript wealth of India. In this paper the following topics have been discussed:

(1) Definition of manuscript, (2) tradition of preservation and access in India, (3) institutional and individual efforts in the fields of preservation and access in India, (4) initiatives taken by IGNCA and NMM, and (5) emerging scenario in the 21st Century: prospects and challenges

What is a Manuscript?

Etymologically, manuscript means something that is hand written. Here the term manuscript is related to antiquity not necessarily means the write up submitted by an author to a publisher. The Antiquities and Art Treasures Act, 1972 lays down the legal framework for custody of manuscripts. Antiquities, defined under the Act include “any manuscript, record or other document which is of scientific, historical, literary or aesthetic value and which has been in existence for not less than seventy-five years.” If this definition is taken into consideration in phase value, a manuscript means

1. a hand written document
2. which has scientific, historical, literary or aesthetic value and
3. which is at least seventy-five year old.

Tradition of Preservation and Access in India

In one of the surveys made by Dr. S. C. Biswas and Mr. M. K. Prajapati on behalf of INTACH during 1988-90 and on the basis of scrutiny of about 1100 printed catalogues and hand lists belonging to 70 libraries, institutions and individuals, the following estimates were made:

1. Total number of manuscripts in India 5,000,000
2. Indian manuscripts available in European countries 60,000
3. Indian manuscripts in South Asia and Asian Countries 150,000
4. Number of manuscripts recorded in catalogues 1,000,000
5. Percentage of manuscripts languages wise
   - Sanskrit 67%
   - Other Indian Languages 25%
   - Arabic/Persian/Tibetan 8%

(Source: Project Document, NMM, 2003)
To meet the twin objective of preservation and access, Indians resorted to a comprehensive policy of preparing manuscript, starting with seasoning and processing of the material and treating the material with eco-friendly insecticides to careful storage. It may be followed that the life of a palm leaf manuscript is far longer than a modern day device like CD or microfilm. The tradition of manuscript preparation, preservation and coping continued in full strength till the end of the 19th Century. The downfall started since the beginning of the 20th Century when printed books started to gain popularity. After Independence, i.e. the second half of the 20th Century, the old tradition ceased to be practiced and it took a long time to adopt and utilize a new practice to preserve manuscripts. It is primarily because of this vacuum or otherwise in this transitory period after Independence that the half of the manuscript reserve in the country was lost.

Modern Concept of Preservation and Access

Awakened by the alarming rate of destruction of manuscripts, modern devices and techniques are being developed and utilized. In IGNCA, for example, there is a conservation wing to provide preventive and curative conservation treatment to original manuscript or source. Again, IGNCA resorts to microfilming to preserve the content of a manuscript. For access, digitized copy of a manuscript is more convenient, and the NMM has launched digitization project in a massive way; the culmination of which can be seen in the establishment of the National Digital Library in IGNCA. It may be relevant here to mention that as the microfilm ensures durability, it is better than the digital copy so far as the preservation aspect is concerned. On the other hand, digital copy proves to be handy to provide efficient access. Therefore it can be followed that to ensure the preservation and access to manuscripts techniques and devises like preventive and curative treatment of original manuscript, microfilming and digitization are resorted to. Besides these, publication of the facsimile copy of the manuscript, with or without translation and/or transliteration is another important medium that ensures preservation and access. Realizing the need of publication, many an institute such as IGNCA is coming forward to publish the unpublished manuscripts.

Institutional and Individual Efforts in the Fields of Preservation and Access in India (Historical Perspective)

With increasing popularity of printed books the interest for collecting and preserving of manuscripts gained ground in India. Some famous bibliophiles and institutions built up their collections and as a result large repositories of manuscripts emerged and have played a significant role in preservation and access to manuscripts in India. The credit of compiling the earliest known catalogue of manuscripts in India goes to the Jains. As per the available information, the earliest catalogue of manuscripts was compiled under the title, Brihpatipanika, as early as 1383 by a Jain monk, whose name is not known. The Brihpatipanika, covers some manuscripts in the collections in several places, such as Patan, Camby and Bharau. It furnishes data of authors’ names, time and grantha-parimana (extent of texts). The manuscript of this catalogue is still preserved in the Shaninatha Bhandara. Next the celebrated name of the monastic Kavindracharya of Varanasi (Kashi) comes Kavindracharya built up a good library of manuscripts. He compiled his subject-wise classified catalogue of 2192 manuscripts between 1628 and 1688. Collecting manuscripts from various regions and traditions and collating them for the purpose of fixing a particular text or writing commentaries were not unknown in ancient and medieval India. Since the late medieval period, the emperors of Delhi and rulers of different states all over India took keen interest in collecting and preserving manuscripts. Among the independent rulers, Tipu Sultan of Mysore (18th cent. C.E.) built up a library of oriental manuscripts in Arabic, Persian and Hindustani languages. After his defeat and death, while fighting with the British forces, his library was taken over by the Britishers. The manuscripts from Tippu’s library were studied and catalogued by General Charles Stewart; the Catalogue was published from Cambridge (A Descriptive Catalogue of the Oriental Library of the Late Tippu Sultan of Mysore....Cambridge: University Press, 1809). Native rulers under the paramountcy of the East India Company and subsequently of the British Royal Government, collected manuscripts and built up libraries. Enlightened rulers of Travancore, Cochin and Mysore are celebrated names in this field. The Travancore Palace Library collection was started by Maharaja Vishakham Tirunal (1880-1885). The manuscripts collected and preserved in this Library were subsequently catalogued by eminent traditional Sanskrit scholars, such as K. Sambasiva Sastri and K. Mahadeva Sastri, and a catalogue in 8 volumes was published (A Descriptive Catalogue of the Sanskrit Manuscripts in H.H. the Maharajah’s Palace Library, Trivandrum. Trivandum: V.V. Press Branch, 1937-38). In this regard, it should be mentioned that another important collection of Sanskrit manuscripts was built up by the Government of Travancore in the Curator’s Office Library and a catalogue in ten volumes was edited by K. Sambasiva Sastri, K. Mahadeva Sastri, P.K. Narayana Pillai and L.A. Ravi Verma (A Descriptive Catalogue of Sanskrit Manuscripts in the Curator’s Office Library, Trivandrum, V.V. Press Branch, 1937-1941).

Rulers of Bikaner and Jodhpur also collected manuscripts which have been, however, documented at much later date. The contribution of the Dogra rulers of Jammu and Kashmir in this field is also noteworthy.
The British rulers who took upon themselves the cause of education and patronizing Indian traditional knowledge systems, directed their attention towards the Indian literary heritage preserved in the manuscripts. Since the inception of the Asiatic Society in Calcutta, in 1785, systematic search, survey, collection and documentation of manuscripts were started. Several government collections gradually came into existence, in Calcutta, Varanasi, Pune and Madras.

Extensive survey of and search for manuscripts were carried out by Indian and European experts in various regions of the country in 19th and 20th Century. Survey and search were carried in Bengal, western, central and northern regions.

In Western Region, G. Buehler, F. Kielhorn, Peter Peterson, R.G. Bhandarkar, S.R. Bhandarkar were the pioneers in the field. Their tour reports contain description of manuscripts. A few of these reports are mentioned below:

1. Report of Georg Buehler’s tour in Southern Maratha in search of Sanskrit manuscripts for the Govt. of Bombay, 12th Feb. 1867, contains the description of 200 mss. (Pub. in ZDMG);
2. Detailed Report of a tour (by G. Buehler) in search of Sanskrit mss. made in Kashmir, Rajputana and Central India (Pub. in two parts, 1877)
4. His two lists of Sanskrit Manuscripts purchased for the Government of Bombay, during the years 1877/78, 1879/80 (Pub. 1881) are very important.

The Deccan College of Poona gradually developed a veritable repository of Indic manuscripts. The preliminary cataloguing of the Deccan College was done by G. Buehler and F. Kielhorn, as for example:

6. Three lists of Mss. in the Deccan College and the Elphinston College collections by G. Buehler (Pub. 1874/1875).

12. Reports on search of Sanskrit Manuscripts…..through Central India, Central Provinces and Rajputana by S.R. Bhandarkar during 1904 and 1905.

In Eastern Region, Raja Rajendralala Mitra and Mahamohapadhyaya Haraprasada Sastri are the most celebrated names in the field of search, survey and cataloguing of manuscripts in the eastern zone. We have already mentioned the earliest catalogue of manuscripts from Calcutta (i.e. Ramagovinda Tarkaratra’s Suchipatram, 1838). Rajendralala Mitra started working in this field in the early second half of the 19th Century.

16. Most outstanding work of Raja Rajendralala Mitra is the Notices of Sanskrit Manuscripts (deposited in the Library of the Asiatic Society of Bengal, Calcutta or in other collections), First series: Vols. 1-11. Published under order of Govt. of Bengal (Calcutta: Baptist Mission Press, 1871-1895). On the demise of Rajendralala Mitra, Mm. Haraprasada Sastri took up the Project and published the Second series in four volumes (1898-1911)
17. The Asiatic Society of Calcutta (earlier known as Asiatic Society of Bengal) started compiling and publishing excellent descriptive catalogues of Sanskrit, vernacular and Arabic, Persian and Urdu manuscripts preserved under the Society’s care since the last quarter of the 19th century. Mitra’s first catalogue, published in 1877 was followed by a long series of catalogues of manuscripts. The catalogues published by the Society are the best specimens of descriptive cataloguing in India. The first volume in this series appeared as early as 1895 (the volume number was changed and the contents revised later on). The Series
continued till recently. The Sanskrit manuscripts have been described in 14 volumes, the latest fasc. having been published in 1887. Scholars such as Mm. Haraprasada Sastri, Hrishikesh Sastri, Sivachandra Guin, Nilmamani Chakravarti, Bhavabhuti Vidyaratna, Ashutosh Tarkatirtha, Nanigopal Banerji, Jogendranath Gupta, Narendra Chandra Vedantatirtha, Chintaharan Chakravarti, Satyaranjan Banerji, et al. have been the compilers and editors of different volumes. Besides, the Society has brought out quite a few volumes of catalogues of Rajasthani, Bengali, Assamese, Tibetan, Arabic, Persian and Urdu manuscripts.

18. Government Sanskrit College in Kolkata has been, since its inception, a rich repository of Sanskrit manuscripts and published a series of catalogues in ten volumes between 1895 and 1909, and again started a revised series since 1956.

In Southern Region, the most important and rich repository of manuscripts is the Government Oriental Manuscripts Library in Chennai. The nucleus of the vast collection of manuscripts in this Library is formed by three collections of Colonel Colin Mackenzie (1754-1821), Dr. Leyden and C.P. Brown (1798-1855). Mackenzie took his collection to Calcutta and went on adding to it till his death in 1821. This collection was examined by H.H. Wilson, the then Secretary to the Asiatic Society, who compiled a descriptive catalogue of the collection which was published by the Society in Calcutta in 1828. Subsequently a part of this collection was brought to Madras by the East India Company. Dr. Leyden collected some manuscripts between 1803 and 1811 which was deposited in the India House Library of London. C.P. Brown noticed this collection in 1837 and thanks to his efforts it was brought to India. Brown’s own collection of Sanskrit, Tamil and Telugu manuscripts, which was presented to the East India Company was brought to India in 1855. All these three collections were first deposited in the College Library, Madras and then shifted to the Government Oriental Manuscript Library when it was founded in 1869. The collection grew rapidly during the last 140 years. The present holding of Sanskrit, Tamil, Telugu, Kannada, Marathi, Urdu, Arabic, Persian, Sinhalese and other manuscripts comprises 72,000 manuscripts. The first catalogue of manuscripts in Madras Mackenzie collection was compiled by Gustav Opert in 1878. Since then, almost a hundred volumes of catalogues have been published by the Library.

Next to GOML, Chennai, mention must be made of the Thanjavur Maharaja Serfoji’s Saraswati Mahal Library. The Nayaka and Maratha rulers of Thanjavur had always been great patrons of art and literature. The Library was first conceived by the Nayaka kings (1535-1676) and further developed by the Maratha kings (1676-1855). It was known as the Royal Palace Library of Tanjore. The first Index of Sanskrit manuscripts was prepared by Arthur Coke Burnell (Pub. A Classified Index to Sanskrit Manuscripts in the Palace at Tanjore. London: Truebner, 1880). In 1918, the Royal family made it a public library which became known as Thanjavur Maharaja Serfoji’s Saraswati Mahal Library. The Library possesses very valuable and some very rare manuscripts collected since the medieval period. Between 1928 and 1952, twenty seven volumes of descriptive catalogues (29 vols. Sanskrit, 3 vols. Tamil, 4 vols. Marathi, 2 vols. Telugu and 1 vol. Medi). The former princely State of Mysore, now Karnataka, has rich heritage of manuscripts in government and private collections. Tippu Sultan’s collection has already been mentioned. The first known catalogue from Mysore is Catalogue of Sanskrit Manuscripts in several private collections in Mysore and Coorg; compiled by Lewis Rice (Pub. Bangalore: Mysore Govt. Press, 1884). Then come the Catalogue of Sanskrit works in the Saraswati Bhandaram Library already described. The richest repository of Manuscripts in the state is the Oriental Research Institute, now under the University of Mysore. The Library was established by Chamaraja Wodeyar, the then Maharaja of Mysore, in 1891, then named as the Government Oriental Library, and later on renamed as the Oriental Research Institute in 1916. The manuscripts preserved in the Institute have been collected during the last one hundred years from different parts of the State. The Institute has published Descriptive Catalogue of Sanskrit manuscripts in 16 volumes (1978-1990). Besides, the Institute has to its credit more than two hundred works, mostly published for the first time, edited from the manuscripts preserved in the Institute.

The Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute of Pune possesses one of the most important and valuable collections of manuscripts in India. The total number of manuscripts in this collection is estimated to be 28,000. In 1868 the then Government of Bombay Presidency appointed George Buehler and Franz Kielhorn to search for and collect manuscripts from the Presidency and other areas. The work was continued by other scholars such as R.G. Bhandarkar, Peter Peterson, Kathawate, S.R. Bhandarkar, K.B. Pathak and V.S. Ghate till 1915. The scholars mentioned above prepared and published reports on their activities and acquisitions from time to time, some of which have been detailed above. The manuscripts had been initially deposited in the Elphinstone College of Bombay, and subsequently the whole collection was shifted to the Deccan College, Pune in 1878. When the Bhandarkar Oriental Institute of Pune was established the collection of some 20,000 manuscripts, known as the Government Collection was shifted to the Institute and placed under the supervision of Prof. P.K. Gode, the first curator. In course of time about 8,000 were added. Cataloguing of the manuscripts was undertaken in early 20th century by various professors and curators and the
first volume of the Descriptive Catalogue appeared in 1916. Till 1957, nineteen volumes of subject-wise classified catalogues have been published by the Institute.

In Kerala, the biggest collection of manuscripts is housed in the Oriental Manuscripts Library and Research Institute in which earlier collections of Sanskrit and Malayalam manuscripts have been merged. The uniqueness of this collection lies in the works on continued literary compositions of Kerala, Musicology, Performing arts such as Kathakali and Kutiyattam, etc.

The writer of these lines is aware of the fact he could touch only the tip of the iceberg. He looks forward to an opportunity to describe the history of survey and cataloguing of manuscripts in other regions, particularly Jain Bhandaras, Libraries of Arabic, Persian and Urdu manuscripts, and microfilm projects of Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts covering important manuscript collections in India and outside.

Availability and Cataloguing of Indian Manuscripts outside India
Outside India, Sanskrit, Pali and Prakrit manuscripts are available in almost all the famous libraries in Europe, Japan, Sri Lanka, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Thailand, Myanmar, etc. At Bibliotheque Nationale, France cataloguing of manuscripts started in Eighteenth Century and the first catalogue, Catalogus Codicum Manuscriptorum Bibliothecae regiae, was published under the supervision of Stephen Fourmont in 1739. This series continued for a long time and Department des Manuscripts Catalogue Somaire des Manuscrits Sanskrits et Palis published catalogues in 1806, 1844, 1854, 1880, 1882 and 1907-08.

Tuebingen University (Germany), St. Petersburg Academy and Bodleian Library were in forefront in publishing catalogues of Indian manuscripts. A large number of Indian manuscripts are there in the custody of various institutes and libraries in Germany, England and France.

Major Initiatives in Independent India
National Archives of India (NAI)
The core mandate of NAI is to function as a central repository of public records. However, NAI has also taken some initiatives for preservation and cataloging of manuscripts. NAI has been implementing a project called National Register of Private records since 1957. Under this project NAI undertakes surveys and listing of private papers, manuscripts and historical documents in the possession of individuals, NGO’s, churches, temples and mutts in collaboration with State Archives Departments. The information so collected is published on a regular basis. National Archives has published 19 volumes of the National Register of Private Records till date, containing over 34,000 entries. The volumes contain lists of documents from Rajasthan, Karnataka, Orissa, Punjab, Tamilnadu, Bihar, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Assam, Maharashtra, Jammu and Kashmir, Delhi, Andhra Pradesh, Haryana, Arunachal Pradesh and West Bengal. However, this database is neither a comprehensive reference guide about manuscripts nor does it provide the necessary level of details about the nature of manuscripts or their preservation status. Apart from the publication of National Register of Private Records, NAI implements the following two schemes:

1. Scheme of Financial Assistance to State/Union Territories Archival Repositories, Government Libraries and Museum and
2. Scheme of Financial Assistance for preservation of Manuscripts/Rare Books.

Under these schemes funds are provided to the state governments’ archival repositories, museums, libraries, voluntary organizations, educational institutions, Temples, Mutts and individuals on matching basis. While the institutions of the state governments are eligible for a grant of Rs. one million, the maximum grant to individuals and private institutions is limited to Rs. 0.2 million per annum.

Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage (INTACH)
In 2001 INTACH has launched project for the conservation of manuscripts. The aim of the survey is also to enhance awareness amongst owners about the deteriorating condition of manuscripts and the need for preventive conservation. Under this project, a surveyor of temples and granthagars is being undertaken along with the preparation of a conservation status report for each manuscript in their collection. Some institutions and temples surveyed under this project are Dwarkadheesh Sanskrit Academy, Dwarka, Sandipani Vidya Niketan, Porbandar, Somnath Temple, N.C.Mehta Gallery, Ahemadbab, L.D. Institute of Indology, Ahemdabad and Jain temples at Gwalior and Shivpuri. Besides this, INTACH is also implementing a project to document manuscripts dispersed in villages and towns of Orissa in collaboration with the Government of Orissa. INTACH has already surveyed more than 300 sites in three districts and prepared an inventory of about 47,000 palm leaf and paper manuscripts.

Museums and Libraries under Department of Culture
The Manuscripts available with some of following organizations under Ministry of Culture, Government of India are as indicated below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organization</th>
<th>Number of Manuscripts</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Rampur Raza Library</td>
<td>15,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Khuda Baksh Oriental Public Library</td>
<td>20,060</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Asiatic Society, Kolkata</td>
<td>32,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4. National Library, Kolkata 3,258
5. Central Institute of Buddhist Studies, Leh 10,000
6. Central Institute of Higher Tibetan Studies, Sarnath 1,028
7. Salar Jung Museum, Hyderabad 10,000

Though the resource base and information about manuscript with autonomous organization funded by the Department of Culture is quite vast, there has been no systematic attempt by these organizations to consolidate the database into subject catalogues.

**State Archives, State Libraries and State Museums**

According to information compiled by IGNCA, the holdings of some of the major state-administered institutions are as follows:

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Organization</th>
<th>Number of Manuscripts</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Adyar Library and Research Centre, Chennai</td>
<td>40,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Andhra Pradesh Oriental Manuscripts Library and Research Institute (Shifting to Osmania University Campus)</td>
<td>23,115</td>
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<tr>
<td>Delhi Archives</td>
<td>171</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goa Central Library</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government Manuscript Library, Allahabad</td>
<td>11,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manipur State Archives</td>
<td>334</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manipur State Kala Academy</td>
<td>1636</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oriental Institute and Manuscript Library, Thiruvananthpuram (Kerala)</td>
<td>56,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orissa State Archives</td>
<td>5,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orissa State Museum</td>
<td>37,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rajasthan State Archives, Bikaner</td>
<td>14,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rajasthan Oriental Research Institute (Jodhpur with 8 branches)</td>
<td>1,16,123</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State Archives, J &amp; K</td>
<td>1,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State – Central Library, Hyderabad</td>
<td>17,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The State Archives of Andhra Pradesh</td>
<td>6,209</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TMSSSM Library, Thanjavur (Tamil Nadu)</td>
<td>47,625</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Manuscript holdings with State Government run institutions are widely distributed. However, information is not readily available regarding the extent to which these manuscripts are catalogued, scientifically preserved and made accessible to scholars.

**Universities**

Universities are key players in the overall strategy for protecting the nation’s written heritage. A number of old universities are known to have substantial collections of manuscripts. These universities receive limited funding and are unable to commit the regular funds required for cataloguing, preservation and dissemination. Equally, potential readers from a non-university environment are often unaware of the nature and accessibility of universities collections for research. Some of the major universities with substantial collections of manuscripts are indicated below:

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Organization</th>
<th>Number of Manuscripts</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aligarh Muslim University (UP)</td>
<td>12,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Andhra University Library (AP)</td>
<td>3,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Banaras Hindu University, Varanasi (UP)</td>
<td>10,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute (Pune)</td>
<td>20,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gauwhati University (Assam)</td>
<td>3,248</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kameshwor Singh Darbhanga Sanskrit University (Bihar)</td>
<td>13,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kurukshetra University (Haryana)</td>
<td>5,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GOML, University of Madras (Tamil Nadu)</td>
<td>72,620</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Osmania University Library (Andhra Pradesh)</td>
<td>6,428</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patan University (Gujarat)</td>
<td>3,700</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poona University (Maharashtra)</td>
<td>4,416</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Punjab University (Punjab)</td>
<td>18,395</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sampurnanda Sanskrit University, Varanasi (UP)</td>
<td>1,40,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sanskrit Academy, Osmania University (Andhra Pradesh)</td>
<td>3,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shivaji University Library, Kolhapur (Maharashtra)</td>
<td>5,673</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tamil University, Thanjavur (Tamil Nadu)</td>
<td>3,365</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Calcutta (West Benbal)</td>
<td>42,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Utkal University (Orissa)</td>
<td>3,053</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vishwabharati University (West Bengal)</td>
<td>15,354</td>
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</table>

**Voluntary Bodies, Trusts, Temples and Individuals**

Hundreds of societies, trusts and voluntary bodies throughout the country, often with no permanent staff or premises, have a substantial number of manuscripts in their possession. While many of them, are relatively well organized, many more are, unaware of the basic need for record management and professional care. In most cases where such organizations need (or choose) to retain their archives, grant-aid for such purpose is hard to come by. Nonetheless, the National Archives of India/National Mission for Manuscripts endeavors to meet their minimal requirement and to ensure reasonable standards of care through its
schemes. There are a number of religious organizations such as churches, mutts and temples that have traditionally been in possession of manuscripts. Many of them receive grants from the National Archives/National Mission for Manuscripts for preservation activities. There is another category of privately owned records and manuscripts about which, not much information was available till recent past. The owners of private collections need advice and guidance about the care of their records in situ if they desire to retain them.

Initiatives at Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts (IGNCA)
Recognizing the need to encompass and preserve this knowledge resource and to make these accessible to scholars and researchers, Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts (IGNCA) initiated the most important manuscript-microfilming programme in 1989. It has approached many of the private and public institutions and individuals who are in possession of valuable manuscripts preferably in Sanskrit Language and has signed Memorandum of Understanding with each of them for microfilming of their manuscripts. IGNCA has, so far, microfilmed over 2.5 lakh manuscripts. Out of the total of over 20,600 microfilm rolls, 17087 rolls have been digitized and 13803 rolls duplicated. Some of the reprographic material of various primary and secondary texts has also been obtained from many foreign institutions including Bibliothèque Nationale (Paris), Cambridge University Library (Cambridge, UK), Staatsbibliothek (Berlin), INION (Russia), Wellcome Institute for the History of Medicine (London), and India Office Library & Records (London).

Access to IGNCA Manuscripts Collection
Scholars and researchers can access the microfilm/ microfiche collection at the IGNCA and they can also obtain copies, subject to copyright restrictions, and indeed the conditions spelt out in the MoU signed between IGNCA and concerned manuscript Library. As a general practice, one needs to seek permission of concerned library to obtain a copy of the manuscript from IGNCA Collection. Copies are being made available in digital / microfilm / print formats on charge basis. The consultation to all above manuscripts at IGNCA Reference Library is open to all without any charges. Online catalogue of these manuscripts in MARC 21 will be made available soon. More details regarding above collection and its access can be had from www.ignca.nic.in

National Mission for Manuscripts, IGNCA, New Delhi
The National Mission for Manuscripts (NMM) is the first consolidated national effort for reclaiming India’s inheritance of knowledge contained in the vast treasure of manuscripts. The Mission was established in 2003 by the Ministry of Tourism and Culture with Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts as its nodal agency. The major objectives of the Mission are

- Survey, document and catalogue Indian manuscripts, in India and abroad, and compile a National Database
- Facilitate conservation and preservation of manuscripts through training, awareness building and financial support
- Provide ready access to these manuscripts through digitization and publication
- Promote scholarship and research in the study of Indian languages and manuscriptology
- Set up a National Manuscripts Library at the Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts, New Delhi

The Mission functions through different types of centres established throughout the country to materialize these objectives. There are 46 Manuscript Resource Centres (MRC-s), 33 Manuscript Conservation Centres (MCC-s), 42 Manuscript Partner Centres (MPC-s) and 300 Manuscript Conservation Partner Centres (MCPC-s)

Documentation
One of the major objectives of the NMM is to unearth information about manuscripts, where, which manuscript is and in what condition. The National Mission for Manuscripts engaged itself with the detailed documentation of the manuscripts in India, by creating a National Catalogue of Manuscripts known as Kritisampada: the National Database of Manuscripts provides information of manuscripts from institutions – religious, cultural and educational, as well as private collections across the country, and also from Indian collections abroad. Survey is conducted to gather information about repositories, Post Survey exercises are designed to document information about every individual manuscript. The Mission endeavors to provide complete and valid information about each manuscript. This database can be searched at http://www.namami.org/pdatabase.aspx

Documentation through digitization
- Digitization of manuscripts as means of protecting and documenting textual heritage has emerged as an important field in recent times. With the advancement of information technology, digitization promises documentation and preservation of original texts, facilitating at the same time, greater access for scholars and researchers. In 2004, the Mission had initiated a Pilot Project of Digitization, aiming at digitizing several caches of manuscripts across the country. In 2006, the Pilot Project has been completed, with the Mission setting standards and guidelines for digitization. New projects have been undertaken up, targeting some of the most
important manuscript collections of the country. So far NMM has digitized more than 26000 manuscripts from different manuscripts repositories in India.

- **Digitization of New Catalogus Catalogorum volumes** The Mission, in collaboration with University of Madras, Chennai is currently digitizing the existing volumes of New Catalogus Catalogorum (NCC). We have already digitized 5 books and the project is expected to be complete by the end of the year. In the next phase,

- The Mission plans to digitize 500 manuscripts each in 50 important repositories across the country.

- **The 'Manuscript Treasures of India'** The Mission also plans to digitize 45 most valuable and rare manuscripts in the country.

**Manuscriptology and Paleography**

As a significant part of the Mission's initiatives to generate skilled researchers in manuscript studies, workshops are organized all across the country, promoting the knowledge and expertise in regional scripts as well as the classical ones. The MRCs of the regions are taken as coordinating bodies for the workshops at the state level. In other instances, institutions of repute in the states are brought in within the fold, organize the workshops. Practically each aspect of manuscript studies are dealt with in these workshops, spanning reading of scripts, classical and vernacular, collation, editing, preparation of indices as well as aspects of conservation and preservation. The Mission conducts two types of courses - Basic Level and Advanced Level courses.

Basic level courses are organised for a period of two to three weeks at different parts of the country in collaboration with an MRC or other institutions of repute. The course familiarises students with local script prevalent in their area as well as ancient scripts like Modi, Grantha, Gaudi, Tilagari and Persian. In addition, the course covers aspects of critically editing texts and their cataloguing, history of writing, basic conservation and storage of manuscripts and use of information technology in manuscript preservation and research.

The Mission conducts Advanced Level courses on Manuscriptology and Palaeography of one and half to two months' duration. In these Advanced Level courses, about 30 to 35 best students from among the participants in the Basic Level Manuscriptology courses are given intensive training on select scripts, as well as grounding and practical training in transcription, collation and critical editing. Various aspects of conservation and preservation of manuscripts are also included. The faculty consists of the senior scholars in the country representing different disciplines in Manuscriptology and Palaeography.

Besides these, a number of institutes and Universities have introduced Manuscriptology as a subject in degree and masters level and also started diploma course with cooperation from NMM.

**Emerging Scenario in the 21st Century: Prospects and Challenges**

“One of our major misfortunes is that we have lost so much of the world’s ancient literature – in Greece, in India and elsewhere….Probably an organized search for old manuscripts in the libraries of religious institutions, monasteries and private persons would yield rich results. That, and the critical examination of these manuscripts and, where considered desirable, their publication and translation, are among the many things we have to do in India when we succeed in breaking through our shackles and can function for ourselves. Such a study is bound to throw light on many phases of Indian history and especially on the social background behind historic events and changing ideas". This was the dream of Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru which is enshrined in his *Discovery of India*.

Manuscripts, which contain centuries of accrued knowledge in such areas as philosophy, sciences, literature, arts and the pluralistic faith systems of India are more than just historical records. They represent the collective wisdom and experience of generations of thinkers. In fact the entire gamut of history is left unexplored or partially explored in manuscripts. So what is badly needed is that:

1. The information about the Indian manuscripts available in institutions and libraries must be made available in India along with digital copies and microfilms of the content
2. Conservation treatment should be given on war footing to the manuscripts available in the custody of the individuals and institutions in remote areas.
3. To speed up digitization of manuscripts
4. To give emphasis on the publication of unpublished manuscripts and launch effective research projects and bring the knowledge content of the manuscripts in the knowledge cycle
5. Find out the way and explore the knowledge available in manuscripts to utilize the same for sustainable development of the mankind.
6. Indian manuscript Libraries/Archives both those in public and those in private domain contain very valuable knowledge base, it is unique, irreplaceable and superior in quantity and quality to any other archival source. The recently developed technologies of digitization, if wisely combined with scholarship are offering cheap and efficient methods of preservation, which would permit India to collect this documentation in a central database and provide this material to the interested scholars worldwide in an easily accessible format.
7. In India a large number of digitization of manuscript projects undertaken by various institutions such as Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts (IGNCA), Khuda Baksh Oriental Public Library, Patna etc have not delivered desired results because of lack of appropriate archiving system. Digital data are vulnerable, much more so than the originals. Digitization Projects often start with temporary grants and focus upon collecting the maximum data possible. However, at the end of the project, when a great quantity of precious data are collected often there is no institution to properly care for these data and look after the post-collection activities. This is why, for any digitization project a background institution that can take responsibility for archiving the data and preserving them for at least 50, if not 100, years is a necessary condition.

8. A general pitfall for digitizing projects is an attempt to maximize the quantity of the collected data without providing the appropriate metadata and the resulting catalogues. Metadata collection and cataloguing are essentially scholarly activities and need excellent skills. So no digitized images without appropriate metadata and catalogues should be produced during the project.

Indian National Manuscripts Library at IGNCA: A Proposal
To achieve various challenges as mentioned above Indian National Manuscripts Library at IGNCA has been proposed. With all manuscript resources compiled at IGNCA under Kala Nidhi and NMM projects, a centralized repository of manuscripts will be available to the users worldwide. This is going to the first such library in the world, and of course the foremost, to among all other institutions to fulfill the twin objectives of preservation and access to Indian manuscripts. The National Manuscript Library is being designed to inspire research on and ensure recycling of the knowledge content in the manuscripts. Indeed a revolutionary concept.

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