

# INDIAN MANUSCRIPTS: AN OVERVIEW

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**Abstract :** The manuscript is an ancient written document, it represents our most precious national and cultural heritage. This paper highlights the categories of manuscripts and gives a picture of manuscript repositories in India. It focuses on the rules for storing and jointly handling of the manuscripts.

**Keyword:** Manuscripts, Type of manuscripts, Storage and handling.

**1.0 Introduction:** “Manuscripts in India have a long tradition. They were produced in all parts of the country; they are in many languages and scripts and on a wide range of religious, philosophical, historical, literary and scientific subjects. Frequently they have rich illumination and illustration of outstanding quality, in a great variety of schools and styles of miniature painting. In some periods and places in India their importance to the history of the development of painting is great. Everywhere they are a reflection of profound and wide ranging learning, and of the richness, variety and long history of Indian culture.” (Saini, 1969)

Manuscript suggests that ancient document that is written by hand. The word ‘Manuscript’ springs from the Latin phrase “manu scriptum” suggests that “written by hand”. The Antiquities Act 1972 defines manuscript “as a record of scientific, historical, literary or aesthetic worth and that has been existing for not but seventy five years.” A manuscript may be a written composition on paper, cloth, metal, bark of tree, palm leaf or the other material. In Bharat manuscripts are unit written in varied languages and scripts. The foremost manuscripts are unit found in Sanskrit language. The Sanskrit language assortment of Sarasvai Mahal is that the largest manuscripts of India that contain the foremost works of Sanskrit literature starting with the Vedas. These manuscripts were written in palm leaf and papers.

## 2.0 Manuscripts collection in India

In the earliest days the methodology of transferring information to new generation was oral. However it had been quite challenging on the part of the learners to recollect all the teachings of their Gurus. From then the writing for recording the information were initiated. At the primary step information was expressed through symbolic drawings and after that word and many language developed.

India is wealthy in its cultural heritage. The Indian culture is wealthy and numerous one; it is unique in its terribly own approach. Our cultural heritage attracts folks from each nook and corner of the globe. From the time period, folks from completely different countries of the globe are visiting India as rulers, as tourists, as educators, as research worker, as a magnate, as traveler and plenty of a lot of. within the fashionable history, India is treated joined of the foremost necessary and outstanding countries of the south Asian region and its ancient civilization is such as Egyptian, Chinese, Sumerian and Babylonian, and alternative civilizations of that age.

The origin of Indian manuscript is meant to be developed in religious text age once Sanskrit was a flourishing language with a huge literature. The Vedic manuscripts were the earliest manuscripts and before that oral literature was there. These manuscripts square measure thought of as rare commodities, and sense of religious holiness and reverence is related to the manuscripts. These manuscripts square measure being idolized like relics. These have a high position in socio-cultural and spiritual life. In those days, the usually used writing materials were palm leaves, tree barks, and varied metal plates, etc.

The palm leaf manuscript on the medication of the 6th century is that the oldest of its kind found in Republic of India. Odisha is taken into account because the mine house of palm leaves manuscripts as thousands of such manuscripts square measure there in Odisha. The southern part of Republic of India used palm leaves as writing material and in geographical region and also the northern region; birch bark was additionally popularly used. The ‘Satpata Bramahana’, a manuscript written on paper within the eleven the Century is there within the Jammu Library. (Ali, 2007)

India's mighty documentary heritage, the manuscript collections have a special attraction for the folks of the complete world. Within the 7th century, Chinese human Hiuen Tsang cosmopolitan Republic of India and took back many manuscripts from here. Later within the late 18th century, the governor of Awadh talented a manuscript of the Padshahnama to King King of England, that remains thought of one among the finest items within the Royal assortment. (Jain, 2013)

The manuscript collections which are in India are now preserved in different Archival institutions, museums, oriental manuscript libraries, religious institutions, and libraries located in various parts of the country. A professional association of such manuscript libraries was also formed in 1944 under the name of All India Manuscript Library Association. In the following table some of the prominent manuscript centers of the Country are listed.

**Table 1. List of Manuscript Repositories of Different States in India**

Sr. no	State	Place	Name of the institute	Number of manuscript	Official website
1	Andhra Pradesh	Hyderabad	Andhra Pradesh Government Oriental Manuscripts Library and Research Institute	24,040	manuscriptslibrary.ap.nic.in
2	Arunachal	Tawang	Tawang Monastery	5,000	NA
3	Assam	Guwahati	KKH Library, Gauhati University	4,500	gauhati.ac.in
4	Bihar	Patna	Khuda Bakhsh Oriental Public Library	21,000	kblibrary.bih.nic.in
5	Bihar	Arrah	Shri D. K. Jain Oriental Research Institute	6,679	NA
6	Gujarat	Ahmedabad	Hazrat Pir Mohammed Shah Library	2,000	NA
7	Himachal Pradesh	Dharmashala	Library of Tibetan Works and Archives	1,09,881	<a href="http://www.ltwa.net/">http://www.ltwa.net/</a>
8	Jammu & Kashmir	Leh	Central Institute of Buddhist Studies	10,000	<a href="http://cibsleh/">http://cibsleh/</a>
9	Madhya Pradesh	Ujjain	Scindia Oriental Research Institute	20,417	NA
10	Maharashtra	Mumbai	Asiatic Society Library	3000	NA
11	Maharashtra	Pune	Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute	29,510	<a href="http://www.bori.ac.in">www.bori.ac.in</a>
12	Odisha	Bhubaneswar	Odisha State Museum	37,273	<a href="http://www.odishamuseum.nic.in/">http://www.odishamuseum.nic.in/</a>
13	Rajasthan	Tonk	Maulana Abul Kalam Azad Arabic and Persian Research Institute	8,513	<a href="http://www.maapritonk.nic.in">www.maapritonk.nic.in</a>
14	Tamil Nadu	Chennai	Government Oriental Manuscripts Library and Research Center	72,314	<a href="http://www.tnarch.gov.in/">http://www.tnarch.gov.in/</a>
15	Tamil Nadu	Thanjavur	Maharaja Serfoji's Saraswati Mahal Library	46,695	<a href="http://tamilelibrary.org">http://tamilelibrary.org</a>

16	Telengana	Hyderabad	Salar Jung Museum and Library	8,500	<a href="http://www.salarjungmuseum.in">www.salarjungmuseum.in</a>
17	Telengana		Osmania University Library	6,428	<a href="http://www.osmania.ac.in/oulwebpage/About%20Library.htm">http://www.osmania.ac.in/oulwebpage/About%20Library.htm</a>
18	Uttar Pradesh	Azamgarh	Darul Musannefin Shibli Academy	650	<a href="http://shibliacademy.org/">http://shibliacademy.org/</a>
19	Uttar Pradesh	Lucknow	Darul Uloom Nadwatul Ulama		<a href="http://www.nadwatululama.org/">http://www.nadwatululama.org/</a>
20	Uttar Pradesh	Rampur	Rampur Raza Library	15,000	<a href="http://razalibrary.gov.in">razalibrary.gov.in</a>
21	West Bengal	Kolkata	Asiatic Society Library	47,000	<a href="http://asiaticsocietycal.com">asiaticsocietycal.com</a>
22	West Bengal	Kolkata	National Library of India	3600	<a href="http://www.nationallibrary.gov.in">www.nationallibrary.gov.in</a>
23	Chandigarh	Chandigarh	Lal Chand Research Library, DAV College	8,360	<a href="http://www.davchd.com">www.davchd.com</a>

### 3.0 Types of Manuscripts

In earlier period varied surfaces were utilized by creature for writing functions like stones, clay tablets, birch bark, palm leaf, papyrus, leather, bricks, picket boards, paper, clay tablets and additionally varied metals like gold, silver, copper, iron, bronze, ivory etc. The varieties of manuscripts will be classified on the basis of the material used for writing functions. In Asian country, the manuscripts area unit found mostly in following varieties, each one is generally assembled along among 2 picket boards and wrapped in a red cotton or silk artifact however in India following sorts of manuscripts square measure typically found.

**3.1 Palm Leaf :** Another writing material employed in Ceylon, India, Tibet, and different components of Southeast Asia is palm leaves. In India, this writing surface was principally employed in the southern half and within the states like state and Odisha. The process for making ready the palm leaves differed from place to position. But the basic technique was same. Palm leaves were dried, poached in water for some hours, and they dried and once more polished with a stone or conch-shell. The leaves were cut to size, per want, varied from one5cm to 1 meter long and a pair of to ten cms in width. Sometimes, 2 or additional leaves were sewn along to arrange a broader writing surface. Palm leaves used for writing area unit according to be of 2 varieties i.e. Western Samoan monetary unit and sritala. Western Samoan monetary unit leaf is thick and coarse and is troublesome to handle. It doesn't absorb ink. Sritala leaf is skinny, flexible, and delightful and can be handled sort of a paper. Within the palm leaves, the text was scraped into the surface, then rubbed with dark color to create the characters additional distinct.

**3.2 Birch Sheet:** Birch sheets referred to as Bhurja patra or bhojaparta in Sanskrit language are made from the birch tree. The tree is generally range of mountains in origin and could be a moderate size tree growing within the chain at a height of nearly 14000 feet. The inner bark of this tree is extremely versatile. to arrange them for writing, they were slowly dried, oil was applied to them and that they were polished. These sheets are composed of several layers joined alongside natural gum and woody knots.

**3.3 Eagle Wood Manuscripts :** It is conjointly celebrated as Hansi-pata. These square measure created from bark of the eagle tree (Agaru tree), also are sometimes seen within the style of a package of 'folios' move a good size.

**3.4 Paper :** Paper was unreal by the Chinese concerning 2000 years a gone around in a hundred and five A. D. The paper was the initial product of the fiber of the hemp plant or the inner bark of the mulberry tree. Later the Chinese used the fiber obtained from pounding rags, rope, or previous fishing nets into a pulp. The first Chinese paper was too coarse for use in writing. Developed in China, the techniques of craft unfold east via migrating

Mongolians and ultimately to the Maya in the United Mexican States, and west via Samarkand to Islamic lands and at last to Europe and America.

#### **4.0 General Handling Guidelines for Manuscript Materials**

- Wash hands with soap and dry them fully. Wash hands often once victimization materials for an extended amount of your time. Oils and salts in perspiration can harm paper and parchment. Hand lotions, creams and wipes ought to ne'er be used before handling assortment materials. We tend to don't need gloves to handle books or single leaves of paper or parchment.
- Do not contact assortment materials or place something on prime of them. Don't bit or drag something, like wear, jewelry, your hair or the other object across the surface. This is often particularly necessary once handling early manuscripts, wherever the media may be terribly loosely connected to the page.
- Manuscripts can open up to a varied degree, looking on however tightly they're sure. Never force a manuscript open on the far side what it'll well enable. Don't place something on high of or lean against a manuscript.
- Photocopying a manuscript isn't allowed. Pictures of the manuscripts area unit obtainable within the library and a digital copy are often created obtainable by the institute upon request. Photographing while not flash is allowed.
- Don't leave the manuscripts open unless necessary.
- Avoid direct sunlight on the manuscript and especially the illuminations.
- Do not bit areas with text or illuminations. Use a bookworm to carry the manuscript open ensuring that it additionally doesn't bit areas with text or illumination.

#### **5.0 Storage and Preservation of Manuscripts**

Manuscripts and repository materials are the first sources of data that have vital worth. These are distinctive, irreplaceable, and sometimes fragile. Manuscripts give info on the existence of various civilizations and emphasize the importance of their survival. The wonderful part of Indian culture lies within the ancient manuscripts. These are the fundamental historical proof and have nice analysis worth. So as to make sure that these manuscripts are obtainable for future generations we want to forestall the damages that are typically caused because of mishandling the documents.

- The clean and tidy area is important for the storage of manuscripts
- Good lighting and sensible ventilation within the hold.
- The hold should be inspected at regular intervals. Train personnel to examine reserve rooms and manuscripts frequently for mold, dust, insects, and rodents. A quarantine area wherever recently no inheritable or given manuscripts brought to be examined for insect or flora attack and unbroken below observation before being documented and brought into the hold.
- Use blinds screens and shutters to guard documents against daylight. Don't expose manuscripts to direct daylight as this might cause pages and inks to discolor and breakdown.
- Provide fireproof extinguishers and additionally outline measures be taken at the natural event of fireproof be outlined.
- Pipes and ducts shouldn't suffer the library or reserve rooms. Offer an emergency evacuation arrange to be applied in the event of flooding.
- Clean library frequently and for removing dirt vacuum cleaners should be used.
- The spacing of shelves ought to be enough to permit correct circulation of air. The lower shelf ought to be a minimum of fifteen cm higher than floor level for shielding the books from moistness and rodents.
- Display the manuscripts in safe showcases and place source of illumination outside showcase.

#### **6.0 Conclusion**

The literary treasures representational process our culture, customs, youth and far a lot of want to be organized scientifically. Manuscripts area unit the first sources of our culture and tradition, the gathering of manuscripts area unit offered everywhere the utmost a part of the country. Now a day's most of them face several issues

because of several reasons, within the past we've got additionally lost an enormous range of manuscripts because of lack of awareness. Manuscripts cannot survive while not correct care, therefore it's our duty to conserve and preserve those manuscripts, nonetheless successive generation.

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