

Rare Manuscripts of Musafir Memorial Central State Library, Patiala : A Hidden Treasure

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ABSTRACT

This paper endeavors to depict the role and importance of manuscripts for the creation, preservation and promotion of art, history, culture, literature, tradition and civilization of a country. For this purpose manuscripts, especially the rare ones are very indispensable as primary sources of the subject. The researchers make efforts to authenticate their subject by locating their findings in the primary sources. Hence, the present paper also provides an opportunity for all those researchers by introducing to them a great library - M.M.C.S. Library which has preserved a great many rare manuscripts. The paper also present some of the very rare manuscripts alongwith illustrations so that anyone may be rightly introduced to the library and manuscripts present on its shelves. In fact the paper lay bare a treasury before researchers and knowledge seekers, which remained hidden from public scrutiny so far.

Introduction :

Manuscripts are very precious sources for preservation and promotion of art, history, culture, tradition and civilization of a nation or a country. Manuscripts are of enormous significance as information source of humankind. They are rare treasure of knowledge in natural world. India's manuscript wealth is legendary.

According to Georges Cartier "Manuscripts are the lifeblood of history. In them it is possible to trace the development of writers and their work, the lives of statesmen, the manifold activities of peoples. Their value is impossible to calculate, and even if it is perceived as relatively slight in the world context, within each culture and each country it is absolute"¹. Manuscripts are primary source of human civilization. The various physical forms of Manuscripts include palm leaves, clay tablets, metals, animal skins, tree barks, cloth, paper etc. According to Grace Morley "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 wide range of religious, philosophical, historical, literary and scientific subjects. Frequently, they have reach illuminations and illustrations 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"².

Researchers are always interested to dig-up facts of the past and depict them in their research projects. For this purpose they frequently turn to the primary sources pertaining to the subject. They may have to work very hard to decipher the ancient or age old manuscripts. Manuscripts are perhaps very indispensable for the authenticity of the subject matter. In this regard Montesquieu, a French philosopher, has rightly said in his letters "I have a little room full of very precious and very dear manuscripts; although I ruin my eyesight reading them, I much prefer to use these rather than printed works, which are less reliable..."³.

Musafir Memorial Central State Library, Patiala: Brief History

Musafir Memorial Central State Library (MMCSL) at Patiala is the state library of Punjab. Its foundation stone was laid as the Central Public Library on Feb. 1, 1955 by the then Hon'ble Chief Minister of PEPSU Sh. Bhrish Bhan Ji and was opened on July 23, 1956 by Hon'ble Sh.C.P.N. Singh the then Governor, Punjab. In 1978, the library was renamed as Musafir Memorial Central State Library in honour of late Giani Gurmukh Singh Musafir, Chief Minister of Punjab. The total area of this library is 23 bighas and 2 biswas. M.M. Central State library works as apex library in Punjab and 14 district libraries of the state are under the administrative control of this library. It is centrally located in the heart of Patiala city in a very

calm and serene environment. It is just about half a kilometre away from the Railway Station and the Bus Stand. The library provides not only lending and reference services but also serves as community centre for educational and cultural activities. It has two halls attached to it, one serves as a seminar hall and the other auditorium can accommodate eight hundred persons. The building of MMCS Library has been planned in such a manner that it can be extended to meet the future needs. The registered members of this library are about 19000 in the Adult Section and about 3500 in the Children Section. The library provides service to its members/readers through five sections i.e. Technical Section, Lending Section, Reference Section, Children Section and Periodical Section. The library has a rich collection of about 1.5 lac. documents on various subjects in different sections.

Rare Manuscripts of M.M. Central State Library

The State Archives Department of Punjab donated about 3000 rare manuscripts to M.M. Central State Library. The oldest manuscript available in the Library is "Skanda Puran" which is engraving on leaves. Scholars from far off places come to consult these manuscripts. These belong to a variety of subjects like history, religion, ayurveda, palmistry, literature etc. Language wise break-up of manuscripts is:

Persian	:	961
Sanskrit	:	784
Gurmukhi / Punjabi	:	595
Urdu	:	152
Hindi	:	126
Arabic	:	102

Following is a select list of manuscripts displayed in the Reference Section of M.M. Central State Library:

1. Bhagvad Gita Translation by Faizi & Raja Jai Singh Sawai Dated : 1872 A.D. There are three columns on each page. First column contains the translation in Hindi the second is the original

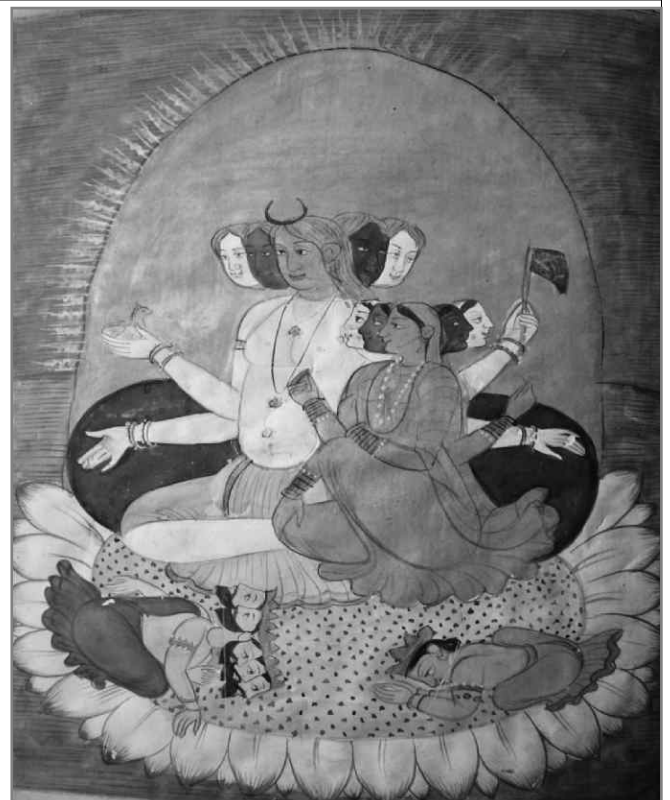
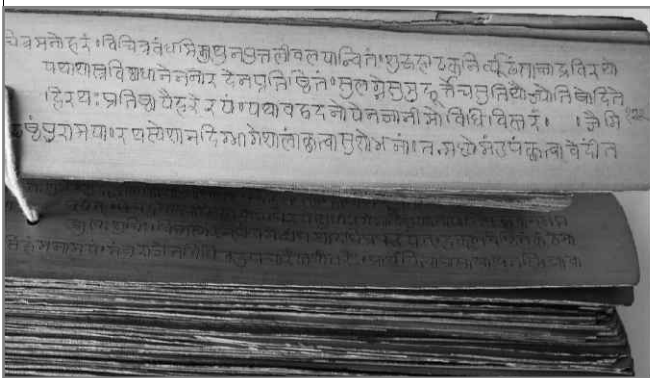


Sanskrit in Devnagri and the third Persian translation by Faizi. There is a running commentary in margin of each page in Hindi in Persian script.

2. Masadas da madah mubark Hazrat Baba Guru Nanak Sahib. Rehmat Aliaalia Qudas. Allah Sira ulaziz. By Mohd. Ali Khushnavis.
3. Asap Namah A Persian manuscript on the various kinds of horses, their diseases and remedies.
4. Bhagvat (Bhagvad Puran) Dated : 1787 BK. Persian translation of the twelve chapters of the Bhagvad Puran.
5. Noor Audin Abdul Rehamajami Yusaf - Wa Zulikha Jami Persian (169 pages, 56 illustrations)
6. The Holy Quran By Kashid Ul Umar Dated : 1252 A.H. (1733 AD) An extremely rare manuscript on account of its calligraphy and ornamentation.



7. Bazam Afroz Love story of one of the kings of Kanauj
8. Tuti Nama By Ziauddin Bakshi 170 pages & 55 illustrations
9. Hanuman Natak By Hirda Ram Dated : 1880 BK 342 pages & 1 illustration
10. Bhavattanparkash By Fatha Singh Dated : 1877 BK (1820 AD) 173 pages & 2 illustrations
11. Ashev Perkalunidh Granth By Fatha Singh
12. Skandapurana Engraving on leaves (The oldest manuscript in the library)
13. Pothi Gurbani



Shiv Puran Translator: Kishan Singh Nishat
 Dated : 1929 BK (1872 AD) Persian translation in 20 adhyayas.
 Sri Bhagwat Puran 300 pages & 261 illustrations

16. Mahabharat Translated by Muhammad Sultan Thanesri, Naqieb Khan & Abdul Qadir Badayuni. Dated : 1903 BK A translation into Persian of the original work in Sanskrit



17. Shah Namah By Firdausi A superbly illuminated copy of the famous Persian epic.



18. Guldashta-i-Akhlaq Dated 1288 AH (1928 BK) (1871 AD) A beautifully transcribed manuscript on morality



19. Baznama : 20 pages & 60 illustrations



20. Bhavrattparkash By Fatha Singh Dated : 1877 BK (1820 AD) 173 pages & 2 illustrations.



The Role of National Mission for Manuscripts:

The team from NMM visited the library in September 2006 and stayed for 20 days. They went thoroughly through these manuscripts. They first classified the manuscripts according to their physical condition A –Deteriorated, B-Okay, and C-Good. Different subject experts then identified these manuscripts in different languages and subjects. Then these manuscripts were chemically treated with Thymol and Ethnol spray and wrapped in red cloth and moisture resistant white thick paper. These manuscripts are used by Ph.D scholars of different subjects, historians, religious and literary scholars from India and abroad, local astrologers, vairs and hakims are the frequent users. They are not allowed to get any manuscript photocopied and they have to handle the manuscripts with great care.



Why it is a Hidden Treasure ?

In the world of information and communication technology where information is available on tips with a single touch on the keyboard through computer and internet no bibliographic details of these rare manuscripts are available on internet. An E-catalogue (web OPAC) of these rare manuscripts should be prepared so that scholars from all over the world could get the source of this rare information. Digitization of these manuscripts is the need of the hour. More and more work on each manuscripts is required to save the heritage of our Nation.

Digitization will be a great triumph to conserve the precious and rare manuscripts of this library. National Mission for Manuscripts, National Archives of India, State Archives in India, National Library Kolkata, Rashtrapati Bhawan library are digitizing the rare manuscripts and other documents. The major advantage of digitization is that scholars can gain access to the information at any time, 24x7, day or night.

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