



**ORIENTAL MANUSCRIPTS IN SHRI PARTAP SINGH (SPS) LIBRARY SRINAGAR,  
KASHMIR (INDIA)  
*MANUSCRITOS ORIENTAIS DE SHRI PARTAP SINGH (SPS) DA BIBLIOTECA  
SRINAGAR, CAXEMIRA (INDIA)***

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**ABSTRACT:** The paper attempts to survey the manuscript treasures of Sri Pratap Singh (SPS) library deciphering the cultural and heritage wealth of Jammu & Kashmir state in oriental languages. It provides a general introduction and present condition of these rare collections. The paper is useful for researchers related to oriental disciplines, students of Library and Information Science, library professionals and all those who have interest in rare and valuable manuscripts available in Kashmir.

**KEYWORDS:** Oriental Libraries; Oriental Wealth-Kashmir; Manuscripts

**RESUMO:** O artigo tenta examinar os manuscritos do tesouro da biblioteca Sri Pratap Singh (SPS) decifrando a riqueza cultural e patrimonial de Jammu e do estado da Caxemira nas línguas orientais. Fornece uma introdução geral e a condição atual dessas coleções raras. O artigo é útil para os pesquisadores relacionados às disciplinas orientais, estudantes de Biblioteconomia e Ciência da Informação, bibliotecários e todos aqueles que têm interesse em manuscritos raros e valiosos disponíveis na Caxemira.

**PALAVRAS-CHAVE:** Bibliotecas Orientais, Riqueza Oriental da Caxemira, Manuscritos.

## INTRODUCTION

Manuscripts play a fundamental role in throwing the light on the literary development and hold a key place in preserving the culture and tradition of a nation or a civilization through. The heritage, history and culture of a country are aptly depicted by the manuscripts it possesses. Manuscript, literally mean a hand written document defined more technically as a hand written document having age more than 75 years and the author of which is no more. However, **Free Dictionary (2009)** defines it as a book, document or other composition written by hand or a type written or hand written version of a book, an article, a document, or other work, especially the others own copy prepared and submitted for publication in print. **Webster (2009)** characterizes manuscript as a hand written or type written composition or document as distinguished from printed copy; a book or document

written before the invention of the printing. Thus, a manuscript is a recording of information manually created by someone, such as hand written letters as opposed to being printed or reproduced by some other way. The term may also be used for information that is hand recorded in other way than writing e.g. inscriptions that are chiseled upon hard material or scratches as with a knife point in plaster or with a stylus on a waxed tablet, or in cuneiform writing, impressed with a pointed stylus in flat tabled unbaked clay.

Manuscripts are the linking mechanism of past with the present civilization. Oriental manuscripts, hold a prominent position among the manuscripts about literature **pertaining to Near-East has been penned down**. Oriental libraries, the abode of oriental manuscripts are special libraries which are having literature pertaining to oriental studies and languages **Gul & Khan (2008)**.

According to **Sufi (1974)** before the introduction of paper various materials were used for writing, like animal skin, birch bark (Burza or Bhoj Patra ), palm leaf ,stones, cloth ,clay tablets etc. Hand made paper began to be used as a writing material around 103 C.E in China and this invention helped in the production of documents on large scale than the earlier period. **Sufi (1974)** further says that, "In Kashmir, the hand made paper was introduced in the late 14<sup>th</sup> century by Sultan *Zain –ul- Abideen (referered to as Badshah: meaning the great emperor)* who sent local artisans of Kashmir to Samarkand where the method of paper making had reached 1300 years ago. The art of paper making and the establishment of paper industry in Kashmir made its demand from India for manuscript writing material, and they were used by all who wished to import dignity to their correspondence. The material during such period was processed at ***Dachigam nalla (stream)***, the present wildlife sanctuary from where it was taken to the city, the present ***Nowshera*** for final processing. In addition to this art, the calligraphists of Kashmir also invented an ink which could not be washed with the water for these manuscripts. The oriental manuscripts are available at various places in Kashmir like, SPS museum and SPS library (Lal Mandi, Srinagar), Archives Department of Civil Secretariat, Oriental and Research Library ,J&K Government, Alama Iqbal Library (university of Kashmir) and also at various Hindu and Muslim shrines holding the age old cultural and heritage wealth of Kashmir.

### **SPS LIBRARY: ORIENTAL MANUSCRIPT COLLECTION**

It was in the year 1899 that Raja Amar Singh proposed a public library in Srinagar to collect, preserve and disseminate information and it met with magnificent response from Maharaja Pratap. For this purpose the palatinate building , summer resort of Maharaja was temporarily selected for the library, built in 1872 C.E on the left bank of river Jehlum at Lal Mandi which still stands there . The library was opened in the middle of 1898 C.E under the title of "***Shri Pratap Library***" Srinagar. Presently the library holds 60,000 documents which also include manuscripts in oriental languages. These manuscripts are available in different languages and scripts and had been received by the library through donations and gifts apart from purchasing them .**[Zahida (Chief Librarian) & Farooq Ahmad , SPS Library, Lal Mandi, Srinagar. Personal communication,2010]**. The manuscripts available in the SPS library have an affluent history and have always been a source of admiration not for its own land but for the rest of the world.

The Oriental Manuscripts section in the library is radically a distinctive one, consisting of a rich heritage of manuscript works on Religion, Literature, History, Philosophy and Science etc, written in different oriental Languages, a distinguished literary genre found in the

library belonging to different periods of history.

The journey from birch bark to the hand made paper in Kashmir can be traced by having an overview on the oriental manuscript collection in the SPS Library. These hand written manuscripts are penned on a host of writing material ranging from the bark of birch tree (Bhoj Patra or Burza) and cloth to fine kashmiri hand made paper, known as '*koshur kagaz*'

## OBJECTIVES

The main objectives of the study are to reveal

- 1 Quantitative wealth of oriental manuscripts
- 2 Languages and script diversity
- 3 Materials used and age of manuscripts
- 4 Subject Richness
- 5 Preservation methods.

## METHODOLOGY

Survey method accompanied by personal visits to the library helped in gathering the relevant information about the manuscript wealth at SPS Library.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### ➤ Language and Script Diversity

The SPS library possess 74 out of which 37 (50%) are in Sanskrit, 33 (44 %) in Persian, 2 (2.70 %) in Arabic and one (1.35 %) each in Urdu and Kahmiri. The manuscripts are written in four different types of scripts viz. **Sharda, Devnagri, Nastaliq and Nasikh**. The script of all the Persian documents is in Nastaliq .About 35 manuscripts of Sanskrit are written in Sharda script where as two have *Devngri* script .The Arabic manuscripts are written in, *Nastaliq* as well as in *Nasikh* script . Both Kashmiri as well as Urdu manuscript have *Nastaliq* script.

### ➤ Subjective Distribution

The Persian manuscripts include various subjects like History (10), Political Science(10), Literature (1), Chemistry (14), Religion (1), Geography (2), Philosophy (1), Music (1), where as the Sanskrit manuscript include Hindu Mythology (13), Literature ( 4 ), Health (1), Political Science (2), Religion ( 4), Psychology (1) and Numerology (2). The manuscripts available in Kashmiri and Urdu language are on History. The manuscripts in Arabic **reflect** Physics and Geometry disciplines. The subject information regarding two manuscripts in Persian language and 9 in Sanskrit is not known to its care takers yet.

### ➤ Age of the manuscripts

Among 33 manuscripts in Persian language only 16 display the information about their age. All 16 manuscripts belong to 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century .Amid the Sanskrit manuscripts the age of only 3 is known, one belongs to 19<sup>th</sup> century and the rest two are of 12<sup>th</sup> century.

The Kashmiri and Urdu manuscripts belong to the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The Arabic manuscript does not provide any information about its age.

➤ **Material used in manuscripts**

Among 37 Sanskrit manuscripts, 12 are penned on birch bark (*Bhoj Patra or Burza*) and one on cloth while as rest of Sanskrit and all the Persian, Arabic and Kashmiri manuscripts are penned on hand made paper.

➤ **Size of folios and Colour**

The Persian manuscript with maximum area is in *Maftab-ul-Alam* ( vol 5) with dimensions , 30.7x 21.5 cms and the lowest in *Jehangir Nama* with dimensions, 15.1 x 10.4 cms. The rest of the Persian manuscripts are in the range of 17.5 x10.6 to 30.5 x 19.5 cms. The size of Sanskrit manuscripts ranges between 36 x 33.5 cms in *Yoga Wasista* and the lowest, 14.1x 8.5 cms in *Gita* in seven poems. In addition to this one of the Sanskrit manuscript in cloth has an area of 155.5x 136 cms.

All the manuscripts show different folios number. The highest folios number are found in Persian manuscript, *Nifat –i- Shareef* (585 folios) where as the lowest number of 20 is found in *Pargana Bindi Kashmir* .The folios in the rest of manuscripts in Persian language ranges between 25 -557 folios .

Among the Sanskrit manuscripts the highest folios number are found in *Karma Kunda* (456) where as lowest of 10 folios is found in *Vyachana Prakriya*. The rest of manuscripts ranges between 17-441 folios. Out of the 33 Persian manuscripts, 11 are in yellow colour ,17 in creamish, one of the manuscript is creamish- yellow and one more is light green with light brown and yellow colour. Among the Sanskrit manuscripts, 18 are in yellow, 16 in creamish, 2 creamish yellow and one creamish brown. Both Arabic and Kashmiri manuscripts are creamish in colour. Only Urdu manuscript is white in colour

➤ **Present condition of the manuscripts**

It was found that most of the manuscripts in the library are complete (without missing pages), furthermore, it is also found that out of the 74 manuscripts 39 are affected by worms which consists of 21 Persian, 16 Sanskrit and 2 Arabic. In this concern **Shafi (2004)**, states that manuscripts – a rich source of tradition, history and culture ought to be preserved, organized and disseminated to make them available to the world at large .Moreover, he advocates that digital libraries for the manuscripts should be established so that the access to contents over computer communication network without any political, geographical and social barrier could become possible.

## CONCLUSION

The preservation of oriental manuscripts - a rare literary heritage available in SPS library is of utmost importance is not done. These receive the same treatment like other 60,000 printed documents of the library. This had made these valuable resources to reach at the dying stage. In addition to this the lack of manuscript expert in the library keeps the students, scholars, public and foreigners etc away from rich heritage and antique knowledge sources of our state.

Steps need to be taken by the authorities to save this heritage. Different techniques should be employed to preserve it from further deterioration by keeping manuscripts in fumigation

chambers, use of chemicals like sprit, thymol, naphthalene, silica gel depending upon the nature of manuscript. The injured and damaged paper manuscripts should be mended. Experts should be employed who could provide the exact information hidden in these age old documents. Apart from functioning as a reference library, the library should keep digitized manuscripts open to all its users and as well as over computer communication network to make remote access possible .this technique could help in saving the original manuscripts from rough handling.

## **Appendix**

### ***Terms used in the study***

<b><i>Dachigam</i></b> Srinagar	A place outskirts of the capital city
<b><i>Nalla</i></b>	Stream
<b><i>Sharda, Devnagri, Nastaliq and Nasikh.</i></b>	Name of different Scripts
<b><i>Now-Shera</i></b>	New city
<b><i>Raja</i></b>	King
<b><i>Koshur kagaz</i></b>	Kashmiri paper

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2<sup>nd</sup> convention PLANNER Manipur  
Avalible at

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Zahida (Chief Librarian) & Farooq Ahmad ,(library