CHAPTER 3
ROLE OF ORIENTAL LIBRARIES IN THE ORGANIZATION OF MANUSCRIPTS

3.1 Introduction
Knowledge Systems have passed down from generation to generation through oral and written traditions. India has got one of the richest oriental collections in the form of manuscripts in both time and space. The beauty of this collection is in its variability in forms, writing materials, languages, scripts, and local regional concepts throughout the history of manuscripts. Content and knowledge-wise it is perhaps the best in the world. They have been the flag-bearers of our diverse culture. Thus this becomes a vital subject of library science. A variety of writing materials such as stones, copper plates, birch bark, palm leaves, parchments and paper had been in use to preserve our intellectual heritage. This valuable treasure containing the ancient knowledge has come down to us through manuscripts available in oriental libraries. These oriental libraries possess the richest collection of manuscripts written in both classical and Indian languages namely Sanskrit, Pali, Prakrit, Arabic, Persian, Hindi, Tamil, and Urdu etc. These resources represent the history of Indian cultural heritage and provide information on the existence of different civilizations presentable in subjects of Theology, Languages, Literature, Philosophy, Religion, Mysticism, Architecture, Archaeology, Epigraphy etc.

3.2 Meaning of Oriental
The literal meaning of the term ‘Orient’ is ‘the East’. The related terms oriental, orientalist and orientalism have come from the word orient. All these terms derive from the Latin word oriens meaning rising and, equally likely, from the Greek word 'he'oros' means the direction of the rising sun (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oriental_studies). The term oriental means eastern. It includes everything which is part and parcel of eastern cultures, countries, peoples, language, literature, folklore, and goods. It is used as an adjective to objects, places and the people from the east. Here east means anything belonging to and from Asia.
As per Simpson and Weiner (1989), Oriental is a term which reflects something belonging to, found in, or characteristics of, the countries or region lying in the east of Mediterranean up to Japan and North Eastern part of Africa, and also Asia and Oceania. The languages spoken in these regions are Arabic, Persian, Urdu, Turkish, Hindi, Sanskrit, modern Indian languages, Indonesian, Malaysian, Chinese, Korean, Japanese etc.

The term oriental means eastern in contrast to the word “occidental” of similar nature which means western. Those, who being an occidental i.e. western, study the language, literature or culture associated with eastern societies, are technically known as orientalists.

### 3.3 Aspects of Oriental Studies

Oriental studies represent the academic field of study and research that embraces Near Eastern and Far Eastern societies and cultures, languages, people, history and archaeology.

Oriental studies form historically established in Europe, are an integrated branch of knowledge to promote study of the history, economics, languages, literatures, ethnology, arts, religions, philosophies, and monuments of the material and spiritual cultures of the Orient i.e. the Near and Far East as they relate to the countries of Asia and parts of North Africa. In recent years the subject has often been turned into the newer terms like Asian studies and Middle Eastern studies. Traditional Oriental studies in Europe are today generally focused on the discipline of Islamic Studies, while the study of China, especially traditional China, is often called Sinology and the study of East Asia, especially in the United States, is often called East Asian studies (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oriental_studies).

Within Oriental studies the regional branches of study involved are Egyptology, Assyriology, Semitics, Arabic studies, Iranian studies, Turkology, Sinology, Mongolian studies, Indology, and Japanese studies. New regional branches are appearing all the time in combination with scientific progress, for example, Sumerology, Urartology, Qumran studies, Korean studies, and Malayan studies. There is a specialization in the basic branches of Oriental studies like History,
Economics, Literature, and Linguistics etc. and a tendency to differentiate and separate the study of Art, Philosophy, and Religion of Oriental countries from one another. African studies have been separated completely from Oriental studies and are an independent scientific discipline. Nevertheless, Oriental studies continue to develop as an integrated science (http://encyclopedia2.thefreedictionary.com).

In most universities, Oriental Studies has now been replaced by Asian Studies localized to specific regions, such as Middle Eastern or Near Eastern Studies, South Asian Studies, and East Asian Studies. This reflects the fact that the Orient is a broad area encompassing multiple civilizations.

3.4 Definition and Concept of Oriental Library

‘Oriental libraries’ are those libraries that have literature pertaining to oriental studies and languages. ‘Oriental’ in this context refers to the ancient Near East, including India, Persia (Iran), and ancient Arabia, among other places, and the languages and literatures of those places and peoples (Gul and Khan, 2008).

Oriental Library possesses valuable information and knowledge about the oriental language, literature or culture that belongs to eastern world. Most of the public, academic and special libraries in India holding a large number of books and manuscripts in oriental languages and literature are generally treated as oriental libraries. Even libraries of research centre are having emphasis on oriental languages, literature, and culture have been categorised under oriental libraries.

Most of the oriental libraries possess literature in the form of books and manuscripts pertaining to oriental studies in languages such as Hindi, Urdu, Bengali, Tamil, Telugu, Persian, Arabic, Sanskrit, Kannada, etc. These oriental collections appear to be of great importance as these are the scientific records of the art, history, literature, culture and civilization mainly of the period of ancient and medieval India.

India is a vast repository of different cultures both because it was invaded by a number of foreign countries and people, and because of its contacts with people from the East. The languages from those Eastern countries are part of Indian literature. The literature in those Eastern languages created India’s oriental libraries. Their
history can be traced back to the Vedic period (Gul and Khan, 2008). With
development of big kingdoms and emergence of powerful kings in ancient India, the
kings and their nobles, and rich persons of the ancient society who wanted to develop
an advanced course of life in their society, took keen interest in promoting the
education by giving rich donations of money and lands to the learned scholars who
developed the seats of higher learning in ancient India. With the introduction of
writing their libraries started collecting and preserving the oriental literature for the
society and the future. Accordingly, their libraries possessed a wealth of oriental
literature. This practice paved the way for the formation and development of
manuscript libraries.

3.5 Collection of Oriental Library
Oriental libraries possess following types of information resources in their
collections.

- Books- included printed literature from the East and in the Eastern languages
  like Arabic, Persian, Urdu, Turkish, etc.
- Manuscripts- included variety of forms like papyrus, paper, palm leaf, birch
  bark, parchment/vellum (animal skin or leather), cloth (Cotton and silk),
  paper scrolls, wooden boards, and glass, etc. with hand-written contents. Also
  included illustrated and illuminated (decorative) calligraphic hand written
  works.
- Codex/Codices- is a folded hand-written book constructed of a number of
  sheets of paper, parchment/vellum, or papyrus.
- Clay Tablets- included inscriptions on a backed bricks.
- Inscriptions on Copper Plates and Metal Plates
- Inscriptions on stones
- Sculptures
- Coins
- Seals, estampages (an impression of an inscription made on paper)
- Relics- included the physical remains of a saint or a holy person.
- Edicts- included a decree, order, command or proclamation issued by an
  authority in history.
- Paintings (Mughal, miniature)
Although oriental libraries possess variety of resources but for present study focus is restricted up to the organization manuscripts only.

3.6 Manuscripts and Its Important Features

*Encyclopaedia Britannica* (19th Ed.) states, manuscripts are the form of recorded information, which are the vehicle for preservation and dissemination of knowledge to the endless generations to come. The word ‘Manuscript’ (Man you script) came from the Latin word ‘Manuscriptum’ which means something written by hand (Perumal, 1999).

Manuscript refers to any hand written document from ancient times until the introduction of printing in the 1400s (*World Book Encyclopaedia*, 1992).

*Harrod’s Librarian’s Glossary* (1984) gives meaning of a manuscript as, a document of any kind which is written by hand, or the text of a music or literary composition in hand written or transcript form, and which, in that form has not been reproduced in multiple copies. An illuminated manuscript is one, which has been decorated.

*The Antiquities and Art Treasures Act* (1972), India, 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, artistic or aesthetic value and which has been in existence for not less than seventy-five years.”

The manuscripts have a long history of its existence. They include all types of early writing, which are not printed and published. In other words hand writings of any kind whether on paper or any other material in opposition to printed materials are called manuscripts.

Manuscripts in India have got a long tradition that was produced in all parts of the country in a variety of languages and scripts. These manuscripts were considered as rare commodities, produced with hard labour and great care. A sense of religious sanctity and reverence were associated with them and they were worshipped with
sacredness like they are holy relics, which are at presently stored in different temples, madrasas, museums, libraries as well as in private collections.

3.6.1 Types of Manuscripts
The types of manuscripts can be classified on the basis of the material used for writing purposes. The manuscripts had been prepared on clay tablets, stones, metals like gold, silver, copper, iron, bronze and lead, bricks, earthenware and terracotta, wooden boards, palm leaf, birch bark, papyrus roll, ivory, bone, parchment, leather, and paper etc. In India the manuscripts are found mostly in following types, each one is generally piled up together within two wooden boards and wrapped in a red cotton or silk cloth.

a) Palm Leaf Manuscripts
Palm leaf is a natural material used for writing after the leaves are shaped neatly in even size. It is known as Tala Patra, Tada Patra or Panna. These were usually found abundantly in coastal states of India and dispersed all over India. One was to inscribe letters on the leaves using stylus and other was to write on the surface of leaves with reed pens or bamboo pens.

b) Birch Bark Manuscripts
It is also known as Bhurja-patra. It is the inner bark of a tree. The Bhurja tree is the silver birch, which is very commonly grown in the Himalayan slopes. The inner bark consists of several thin layers. Those layers are carefully separated. Each layer is used as thin as manifold paper. These are usually available in the form of a sheaf of thin ‘folios’ of birch bark cut to an even size.

c) Eagle Wood Manuscripts
It is also known as Hansi-pata. These are made from bark of the eagle tree (Agaru tree), are also usually seen in the form of a sheaf of ‘folios’ cut to an even size.

d) 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. The ink was used for writing on paper.
e) *Sanchipat, Tula Pat and Bamboo Leaf*

The Assamese manuscripts are made out of *Sanchipat, Tula Pat* and bamboo leaf. In Assam the Aguru or Aloe tree is called *Sanchi* and its bark is called *Sanchipat*. It is popular mostly in North Eastern part (Sircar, 1965). *Tula Pat*, is a paper made from wood pulp, and bamboo leaf were also been used for writing in Assam.

f) **Manuscripts in Other Materials**

The other materials of manuscripts can be divided into two categories:

a) Metals – Inscriptions on Copper-plate (*Tamra-Pata*), Gold (*Suvarna-Patra*), Silver, Brass, Bronze (Bell-Metal), Iron and Tin.

b) Non-Metals – Inscriptions on Stone/Pillars, Clay Tablets, Bricks, Parchment/Leather, Ivory, Tortoise Shell, Wooden Boards (*Phalaka*), and Cloth (*Pata*)

g) **Illustrated Manuscripts**

The manuscripts in illustrated nature are called illustrated manuscripts, which are generally reflected some ideas or themes with the help of colourful pictures along with the texts. Most of these manuscripts have been decorated by ornamental, floral and geometrical designs. Mughals were the patrons of this art. In some manuscripts the letters are bright in nature, which are called illuminated manuscripts. Illumination is the art of embellishment and beautification, which was done to create the work more interesting and attractive to the readers with gold, silver and bright colour.

3.6.2 **Languages and Scripts in the Manuscripts**

Indian manuscripts are composed in different Indian languages such as Sanskrit, Pali, Prakrit, Ardhamagadhi, Urdu, Persian and the different regional languages such as Marathi, Hindi, Tamil, and Kannada etc.

The scripts that were current in different regions are found in manuscripts written in the respective parts. Indian manuscripts are mostly written in various scripts like Brahmi, Devanagari, Modi, Grantha, Maithili, Sharada, Tigalari, and Nandinagari etc.

No evidence for the existence of writing before the time of Ashoka is available. It is generally believed that Brahmi script came into general use by the 3rd century B.C.,
which the king Ashoka used as the national script. Devanagari was developed fully by the 10th – 11th centuries A.D. It is not confined to any particular region. This script is called as Balabodha in Maharashtra and Karnataka. Grantha script was prevalent in the Tamil Nadu area from about 7th century A.D. It was used in writing Sanskrit only. Kannada is one of the early scripts of south India evidenced from about 450 A.D. in Karnataka. Maithili script is originally from Eastern Bihar and Western West Bengal. Malayalam script is confined to Kerala. This script is evidenced late in 15th century A.D. Modi script is a running hand script of Balabodha, the Devanagari of Maharashtra used since 13th century in non-literary private correspondence and official records. Nandinagari script in South India evidenced since the Yadava-Hoysala period (13th century) and frequency of its use grew during the Vijayanagara period. Nepali or Newari script was used in Nepal from 11th -12th century A.D. Oriya script is from Orissa. Sharada script is evidenced in 8th century A.D. in Jammu-Kashmir and North-Eastern Punjab. Srilankan manuscripts about Buddhist works were written in Sinhalese script. Telugu is the script employed in Andhra Pradesh. Tibetan script from Tibet appears since 7th century A.D. Tigalari script evidenced from 12th century was employed mostly in the coastal Karnataka. It contains the elements of Malayalam, Grantha and Kannada. Vanga or Bengali script was fully developed by 15th century A.D. and used in west and east Bengal (Murthy, 1996). Kaithi script was used widely in the North-Western Provinces, Awadh and Bihar for writing legal, administrative, and private records. The Kharosthi Script was appeared around the 3rd century BCE in Northern Pakistan and Eastern Afghanistan, although some manuscripts written in Kharoshti are also available in India. Kharosthi was been developed for Prakrit dialects. The Pahlavi script was used to record the Pahlavi, the Middle Persian language that was spoken in Pre-Islamic Iran between 3rd century BCE and 9th century CE. The Avestan script was used from the 5th to the 13th century AD for writing the Avestan language from Eastern Iran which is now only known from its use as the language of Zoroastrian religious texts called Avesta.

3.6.3 Subject Areas of Manuscripts
Generally manuscripts were rare commodities written on a wide range of subjects like Religion, Philosophy, History, Literature, Medicine, Science, Culture,
Linguistics, Mantras, Upanishad, Veda, Ayurveda, Architecture, Music, Dance, Drama, Astrology, Astronomy, Arithmetic, and Geography etc. Indian manuscripts mostly deal with the above-mentioned subjects.

3.7 Importance of Manuscripts

The heritage, history and culture of a country are appropriately reflected by the manuscripts that the particular nation possesses. Thus manuscripts form an invaluable part of India’s documentary as well as literary heritage, as they capture our thoughts, achievements, experiences and lessons learnt from history.

3.7.1 Historical Importance

Manuscripts are the valuable sources for the reconstruction of the history and culture of a country. They are valuable sources of history and knowledge and mirror the contemporary society. When the manuscript disappears we lose not only fundamental evidence for the textual transmission but also an irreplaceable cultural history.

3.7.2 Literary Importance

Manuscripts play a fundamental role in throwing light on the literary development. It holds a key place in preserving the culture and tradition of a nation or a civilization through the literary values involved into it. For understanding the history and culture of the country, the literary treasures enshrined in the manuscripts cannot be ignored.

3.7.3 Importance as a National and Cultural Heritage

The manuscripts are one of the most important records of the past wisdom and intellectual attainments of a nation, which help later generations to learn the cultural heritage of humankind. It should be the cherished possession of an awakened nation. The effective utilization of knowledge hidden in manuscripts has recently been recognized as an essential tool to fill in the gaps of our socio-cultural understanding of the tradition.

It is necessary to preserve the manuscripts for present and future use of society. Cultural heritage in manuscripts integrates the history, traditions and culture of a
country, and while it is an irreplaceable source of pride for the country and people, it also possesses a universal value that can touch all people around the world.

3.8 Challenges with Manuscripts

Indian manuscripts face the problem of corrosion like intentional and/or unintentional inaccuracy, misrepresentation of facts, or defaced, replaced, and deleted words in the process of copying and making additional copies by the scribes. Perhaps adding scribal mistakes to those that might had been there already. In manuscripts, a letter omitted by the scribe through oversight was generally written above or below the line near the spot of omission or engraved in the margin with or without indication sign. The spot of omission was generally indicated by a small upright or inclined cross, called kaka-pada or hansa-pada. Instead of the cross the swastika symbol was also used. Even wrong words or passages were often covered with turmeric paste and the erasure was either kept blank or the correction was rewritten on it. In such cases reading and deciphering of manuscript is most difficult job (Sircar, 1965).

There is no specific pattern in Indian manuscripts. The name of the author can appear in the beginning, end or middle. In copied manuscripts the scribe’s presentation as author is very problematic. Some of the manuscripts do not give the name of the authors. Accordingly, every manuscript has its personality and reveals the personality of the scribe and the characteristics of his surroundings.

In addition the writing on the palm leaves is very small. There are other difficulties in deciphering the manuscripts as those are written in not so good handwriting or using some unknown scripts.

The identification of particular manuscript is a major problem as the manuscripts on same work are often ascribed to different authors or the same work is given different titles in different manuscripts.

3.9 Manuscript Libraries

According to P. Perumal (1999), manuscript libraries are the medium of communication of the ancient art, culture, literature and history, which are as old as
the written word. Evolution of libraries is based on the intellectual development of civilization. There is always an intimate relation between the development of libraries and spread of literature. The literary treasures of ancient India were preserved in the house of learned scholars, Gurukulas of pundits, *Mutts*, Temples and Palaces of kings, who were patrons of art and literature. Generally, these libraries were called as ‘Sarasvati Bhandar’ or ‘Saraswati Mahal’, which means treasure house of knowledge or the abode of the Goddess of learning. The libraries were also called as *Grantha Kuthi, Jnana Bhandar, Pustaka Bhandar, Bharati Bhandagara* etc.

Manuscript libraries mean the libraries that have handwritten old books as their stock, including those which started as repositories of manuscripts with a solitary function of preservation of manuscripts (Corea, 1993).

The civilization and cultural developments are the basis for spread of formal education. Books were written and libraries were formed to satisfy men’s curiosity about achievements of the past. In ancient and medieval India, libraries were considered as centers of learning and which were the most significant medium of education and wisdom. Emperors, kings, nobles, various religious organizations and monasteries reared and maintained libraries of their own. Some of the Manuscript libraries that exist fall under this category.

The manuscripts libraries are either individual collections or Government sponsored, or are controlled by private trusts. This is so, because these libraries originated mostly as philanthropic gestures, or as patronizing attempts of the heirs of erstwhile princely states. Therefore, initially most of them were parts of charitable trusts founded by the rulers of princely states. Most of these were nationalized. But, a few, which were parts of the religious foundations started by *Rajas* or *Maharajas*, are still under private control or with new trusts.

Considering the importance of the manuscripts, these are not only collected and preserved in the oriental manuscript libraries but also in various religious and educational institutions as well as public libraries, archives, museums, universities,
academies, oriental research institutes, temples, *Mutts*, mosques, churches, Jaina bhandars etc.

With time new information on different aspects of ancient civilizations is pouring in manuscript libraries which always have remained a source of research and scholarly interest of posterity.

### 3.10 Functions and Objectives of the Oriental Manuscript Library

All the manuscript libraries function more or less with common objectives. Only some libraries undertake special work applicable to them. The common functions and objectives of manuscript library are to locate and identify the availability of manuscripts through exhaustive survey, acquire and document them through catalogues, facilitate preservation and conservation, and promote the ready access to these manuscripts through publications and digitization.

#### 3.10.1 Identification of Manuscripts

To add to the existing collection of manuscripts, the oriental libraries adopt the peculiar way of identifying the availability of manuscripts elsewhere in India. The most important and common way of identification of manuscripts is to get information regarding the manuscripts from the oral statements of experts, users of the manuscripts, friends and individuals who possess the manuscripts.

#### 3.10.2 Collection or Acquisition of Manuscripts

In order to preserve, the oriental libraries are collecting manuscripts. Mostly, mode of acquisition of manuscripts is by way of donation or gift from the philanthropists, individual donors, Government and Public institutions etc., but some libraries have the provision for purchasing the manuscripts.

The acquired manuscripts are then accessioned in the library register with its details like accession number, author, title, subject, age, material, size, extent, number of lines and letters, date of receipt, and from whom it was acquired etc.
3.10.3 Organization of Manuscripts

The organization of the collection of manuscripts is a major function of the oriental library. After collecting the manuscripts, these should be organized properly and systematically in the library, for easy and increased accessibility.

The organization consists of various activities like classification, cataloguing, and systematic arrangement of manuscripts. Organization of manuscripts is thus a skillful and a job of trained person.

The New Oxford Dictionary of English (1998) defines an organization as: (a) The action of organizing something, (b) The structure or arrangement of related or connected items, (c) An efficient and orderly approach to tasks, and (d) An organized body of people with a particular purpose, especially a business, government department or charity.

The manuscripts collection is categorised by their types or material like paper manuscripts; palm leaf manuscripts and so on, then further categorised by language and then the accession number is used as location number of the manuscript to organise it in order. If the manuscript collection is classified according to subject, then these are been organised by subject and then by accession number. In some cases paper manuscripts are assigned with a codex number which is nothing but the reference number of the printed descriptive catalogue. Manuscripts are arranged by accession number or the reference number of the descriptive catalogue. This arrangement enables one to identify the manuscript in the stack room.

In leaf form of manuscripts the leaves are arranged in a particular way and the two extremities are secured by means of two symmetrical wooden rectangular planks. Both the leaves and planks have holes separated by distance and through the holes passes a strong thread which is then wound on the two planks to keep the bundle intact. All leaves of manuscripts are arranged according to the folio numbers and the sequence of the leaves is restored in a bundle. On the front plank a cloth flap is pasted. This flap is treated as contents of the bundle as the flap gives the details of the works. This is how a manuscript bundle is processed for easy location.
The information retrieval technique adopted in the library is a unique one. To begin with, searching is made with the help of general surrogates like catalogue card, stock register and printed descriptive catalogues etc. By making use of the approach terms it is possible to identify the reference number of the document. Once the reference number of the manuscript is identified and with its help the concerned manuscript is retrieved from the stock.

3.10.3.1 Cataloguing of Manuscripts

Cataloguing is one of the most important activities of any library. It facilitates the readers to make use of the library collections. A catalogue is a key to locate the resources in the library. It helps to know about which documents the library has, where they are located and how to access them. For paper and palm leaf manuscripts, catalogue entries are also maintained in card form. Normally title entries are made in the concerned language and script below it a transliteration of it in Roman script is also provided. Every catalogue entry gives details about accession number, author, title, language, script, age, folios, number of lines and letters along with remark about whether the work is complete or incomplete, descriptive catalogue reference number, collection, and section etc. of that particular manuscript. Reference number indicates the location of description of the work in the printed descriptive catalogue.

Apart from the card catalogue, printed catalogue registers are also maintained in the library, in order to facilitate an elaborate study of the contents of the available manuscripts. Such printed catalogues are called Descriptive catalogue.

3.10.3.2 Descriptive Catalogue of Manuscripts

A descriptive catalogue is a catalogue which gives a description of the manuscripts so that a scholar referring to it may get hint about contents without opening the original. The ordinary catalogue informs the existence of a copy whereas a descriptive catalogue furnishes details (Murthy, 1996).

This catalogue gives physical details of a manuscript like title, author, material, language, script, size, number of folios, number of lines per page, number of letters per line, extent along with the status of whether the work is complete or incomplete, and condition of the manuscript etc. It also gives the extract of the manuscript by
mentioning a few lines from the beginning and a few lines at the end of the manuscript and the colophon. The colophon involves the title of the work, its nature, the name of the author with his title, his parentage, and his patron’s name etc.

Generally, these descriptive catalogues are published either according to subject, collection, language, type or in the name of an institution.

3.10.4 Publication of Rare Manuscripts
Publication of rare manuscripts is one of the main functions of the manuscript libraries through which they disseminate the unearthed knowledge to public. This way researcher can understand the past, culture, art, philosophy etc. and have tremendous knowledge of all subjects. This can keep the cultural chain unbroken for centuries.

3.10.5 Rendering Services to the Researchers
The Manuscripts are generally not issued to be taken outside but only to refer in the library. Permission is accorded, occasionally, to the scholarly public for studying, copying, comparing and also for preparing xerox copies of the manuscripts within the Library premises.

The manuscript libraries normally render the following services. These services are useful to bring the ancient literature for the benefit of contemporary and future generations.

a) Reference Service
The libraries offer general reference services to their users. Under this service the manuscripts are issued for general consultation. The short range and long range reference queries, such as availability of manuscripts in the library and specific enquiry on a particular topic of the manuscript, are fulfilled under this service. The tools such as descriptive catalogues; indexes are helpful to find out the relevant information about the manuscript in the library.

b) Reprographic Service
Reprography is the reproduction of manuscripts through mechanical or electrical means, such as photography or Xeroxing. This service is usually given on demand.
c) Translation Service
The libraries also provide translation service to the users with the help of the language and script experts when the available manuscripts are in different languages and scripts. The experts translate the manuscript in required language and disseminate it to the users for their research work.

d) Transcription or Copying Service
A transcription of a manuscript is as exact a copy as possible, reproducing its precise text letter by letter. A transcription may also reproduce the layout of the manuscript and show any corrections that were subsequently made to it.

An electronic transcription is essentially the same. It consists of a file or series of files containing in plain text a letter by letter reproduction of the text of the manuscript. Corrections, layout features and anything else considered noteworthy are tagged so that they may subsequently be displayed, searched and analyzed as required.

e) Transliteration Service
Transliteration is the conversion of a text from one script to another. Transliteration enables one to convert the original text phonetically in chosen script. Transliteration of manuscripts in the favoured script of the researcher is done on demand.

f) Bibliographic Service
Library prepares bibliographies of manuscripts under different languages and subjects. The prepared bibliographies are issued as a reference tool.

g) Reading the Manuscript for Users
Reading of the manuscript is a specialized job. It requires ability to decipher the various hand writings as well as the meaning of the scripts. A language expert of the concerned language helps to read the manuscript and tell the concept of the topic if the user does not acquire the required skills.
i) Organising Training Courses
Training courses on various aspects of written heritage and Manuscriptology, such as script learning, cataloguing, editing and preservation of manuscripts are organised by oriental libraries.

j) Developing an Online Platform / Database
An online platform/database of catalogues and other bibliographical works is developed to enable the scholars and researchers from all parts of the world to get easier access to the hidden treasures of the manuscripts and heritage.

Apart from above-mentioned services some extension services are also planned by way of organising exhibitions of the manuscripts to spread the awareness about the literary wealth involved into the written heritage.

3.10.6 Conservation, Preservation and Restoration of Manuscripts
‘Conservation’ is all-encompassing term, which includes examination (assessment of the item), preservation (action taken to retard…deterioration…by control of their environment and/or treatment of their structure) and restoration (action taken to return a deteriorated…artifact as nearly as is feasible to its original form…with minimal further sacrifice of aesthetic and historic integrity).

According to IFLA (1979), "Preservation includes all the managerial and financial considerations including storage and accommodation provisions, staffing levels, policies, techniques and methods involved in preserving library and archive materials and the information contained in them. Conservation denotes specific policies and practices involved in protecting library and archive materials from deterioration, damage and decay, including the methods and techniques devised by technical staff. Restoration denotes those techniques and judgements used by technical staff engaged in the making good of library and archive materials damaged by time, use and other factors."

Manuscripts need to be protected from physical, chemical and biological agents of deterioration. In general manuscripts are affected by dust, atmospheric pollution, acidic impurities, temperature, humidity, termite, fungus, insects, moths, rodents, light, heat, fire and rough handling etc. Preservation of manuscripts in India is a
difficult task. Since India is in tropical region, the hot and humid climatic conditions have an adverse effect on the palm leaf and paper manuscripts. Hence it is very difficult to preserve the manuscripts in an ordinary condition. Only special permanent arrangement for maintaining constant temperature, humidity and controlling air pollution can preserve the manuscripts for long years.

In ancient times manuscripts were covered with red colour silk or cotton cloths to control it from deterioration, as the red colour acts as a repellent to insects. Turmeric paste was also used to keep away the fungal infection on paper. Margosa leaves, tobacco, sweet flag, camphor were used as repellent to insects in fumigation process. Sometimes oil extracts of some natural products, sandal wood powder, black pepper, clove oil, citronella (lemongrass) oil etc. are used for preserving palm leaf manuscripts. Along with these natural treatments the chemical treatments are also applied on manuscripts and solutions like, Thymol and Chloromate are usually used inside the fumigation chambers to protect the manuscripts which are deteriorated.

In libraries the rare and valuable manuscripts are carefully preserved in a very spacious and fully equipped air conditioned stack rooms or in climate controlled rooms. The paper manuscripts which have gone yellowish, tattered, fragile, and are in brittle condition are firstly cleaned and treated with de-acidification process and then mended with acid free polyester paper lamination process.

Earlier for preservation of rare and brittle manuscripts, making duplication by hand was common in India. But with the emergence of mechanical preservation techniques such as the photographic methods, like microfiche, microfilming, photocopying are some important techniques adopted for the same. These methods therefore make copies faster but damage the originals further.

Presently, the scientific advancement paved the way for modern reprographic equipments such as digital camera and scanners are regularly used to preserve the texts from the manuscripts in digital format.

3.10.6.1 Digitization of Manuscripts as a Preservation Technique

Digitization is prime need these days in order to document and protect the knowledge contained in the manuscripts. It helps enormously in preserving the text
from documents in their original format and consulting without handling it physically, which prone to damage. The digital media has taken advantage on all the previous media for preservation of manuscripts. It is not only more durable but offers a number of additional advantages.

The technological advancements have led to better ways for preservation of manuscripts without losing their originality. There is an added advantage of the modern methods of preservation over the traditional ones. By the new methods, the manuscripts in their original form are not needed for consultation but the access to its images is made available to the users. Thus not only the life of the manuscript is prolonged but also it has become easier to offer it to the researchers as and when needed. Even the readers can enhance the quality of the image using various softwares for clear reading. Internet is the best medium for this purpose and through the provision of web; manuscripts are made available to the outside world without compromising on their safety.

A document imaging is the most appropriate method for converting manuscripts in digital form. Digital cameras and high density scanners are used for digitization purpose. It facilitates speed in the work and shows them in their original form as it looks like.

Using the World Wide Web as medium for research in case of manuscripts is much more advantageous, as manuscripts can be referred to as and when needed by any one from any corner of the world. They can be made available to countless users simultaneously and can be archived and kept online for indefinite period.

Web provides innumerable references to the oriental collections that present a wide choice of selection to the researchers. The web works like a reference librarian automatically. With the help of information technology the transfer of manuscripts from one place to another has also become economic, easier and faster.
3.11 Important Initiatives towards the Documentation and Preservation of Manuscripts Heritage in India

India possesses an estimate of five million manuscripts, probably the largest collection in the world. These cover a variety of themes, textures and aesthetics, scripts, languages, calligraphies, illuminations and illustrations. Together, they constitute the ‘memory’ of India's history, heritage and thought. Recognizing the need to encompass and preserve the ancient and rare knowledge resources and to make these accessible to scholars and researchers, there were major initiatives taken by National Archives of India (NAI), Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage (INTACH), Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts (IGNCA), and National Mission for Manuscripts (NMM).

3.11.1 National Archives of India (NAI)

NAI has taken initiatives for preservation and cataloguing of manuscripts. NAI has been implementing a project called National Register of Private Records since 1957. Under this project it undertakes surveys and listing of private papers, manuscripts and historical documents in the custody of individuals, NGO’s, churches, temples and mutts in collaboration with State Archives Departments. The information so collected is published on a regular basis. NAI has published 23 volumes of the National Register of Private Records till 2004. Apart from this it implements financial assistance schemes like ‘Scheme of Financial Assistance to State/Union Territories Archival Repositories, Government Libraries and Museum’ and ‘Scheme of Financial Assistance for Preservation of Manuscripts/Rare Books.

3.11.2 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 to enhance awareness amongst owners about the deteriorating condition of manuscripts and the need for preventive conservation (Gaur, 2009).

3.11.3 Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts (IGNCA)

IGNCA initiated the most important manuscript microfilming programme in 1989. It approached many of private and public institutions and individuals who are in possession of manuscripts preferably in Sanskrit Language and has signed Memorandum of understanding with each of them for microfilming and later for
digitizing of their manuscripts. Copies of these manuscripts are made available to the scholars and researchers in digital/microfilm/print formats on request. They are charged formally for this service.

**3.11.4 National Mission for Manuscripts (NMM)**

NMM is an autonomous organization and was launched on February 7, 2003, by the Department of Culture, Ministry of Tourism and Culture, Government of India. IGNCA is the nodal agency for the implementation of the project. It is established mainly to survey, locate, document and conserve Indian manuscripts, with an aim to create national resource database for manuscripts for enhancing their access, awareness and use for educational purposes and also to connect India's past with present and future.

The NMM works with the help of 57 Manuscript Resource Centres (MRC) and 50 Manuscript Conservation Centres (MCC) established across the country. The MRCs include well-established Indological institutes, museums, libraries, universities and non-government organizations. These officials function as the Mission's coordinating agencies in their respective regions (www.ignca.nic.in). With the help of MRCs the Mission has documented a numerous amounts of Indian manuscripts and made accessible on internet through their national database of Indian manuscripts called *Kritisampada*. It can be accessed from http://www.namami.org/pdatabase.aspx.

The MCCs undertakes preventive conservation work on the rare manuscripts. The folios are treated for preventive measures like dry brushing, repairing, wrapping with acid free board and in Red cloth cover. The manuscripts that are in a highly deteriorated condition are brought to the well equipped laboratory, where they are passed through the process of curative conservation treatment i.e. documentation, examination, fumigation, cleaning, de-acidification, resizing as per the condition of the manuscripts, mending; filling or lining as per needed.

**Conclusion**

The literary treasures depicting our culture, customs, early life and much more need to be preserved and organized scientifically. Updating of oriental library system is highly desirable in order to preserve the heritage for future use and disseminate the
indigenous knowledge to the society. Since ancient period there has hardly been a gap in oriental libraries. However, in present scenario when Information Technology and cosmopolitan lifestyle are literally ruling the roost, it is important for us to realize the importance of oriental libraries and find ways for not only to ensure their survival but update the library collection and facilities for adaptability with the present. An oriental library system should try to reorient the library in such a way that it keeps the interest of both traditional and the e-users to get attracted to refer the manuscripts with same enthusiasm.

References:


