



## Study of Manuscripts in Garhwal region and their conservation strategies

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### Abstract

Manuscripts are the handwritten documents used by the people in ancient time to record their views and experiences. They have cultural and historical importance as artists and scientist study such manuscripts to get knowledge about our past civilization and cultural history. People in ancient time had knowledge of preparing such material which can be used as manuscript and can be conserving for a long time. Present contribution is made to collect manuscripts from Garhwal region and to know how they are used and preserved successfully.

*Keywords: Conservation, importance, manuscripts, material, preservation*

### Introduction

Manuscriptology is the scientific study of manuscripts which deals with the observations on preparation of raw material used for making manuscripts, style of preparing a manuscript and the process of their conservation for future use. Wikipedia encyclopedia defines manuscriptology as preservation, conservation and storage of manuscripts, designing museums and archives for manuscript storage, linguistics, knowledge of scribal traditions, critically editing texts and their cataloguing. According to Dobriya *et al.* (2015), the manuscripts provide important information about our historical past. These are ancient handwritten documents that are used by the people in ancient time to record such experiences in their own script preferably on the leaves of palm and birch, bark of tree, papers, clothes and metals etc.

Indian manuscripts are found in a variety of languages and scripts—Kannada, Naskh, Sanskrit, Gaudi and Tibetan, etc. Even one language is written in a number of different scripts. The mother of all languages, the Sanskrit is written in Brahmi, Devanagari, Oriya and Grantha scripts. These manuscripts of historical and cultural importance are in the danger of being extinct as there are very few people who can decipher these documents. Apart from this serious efforts for conservation of these manuscripts are also not made. According to Gaur and Chakraborty (2009) there are more than

5 million manuscripts in India. About 60 thousand Indian manuscripts are available in Europe and 150 thousand in the South Asia and other Asian countries. Viewing the importance of the subject a project was undertaken by the senior author (JKG) with financial assistance from National Mission on Manuscripts, New Delhi to collect and conserve these manuscripts.

### Materials and Method

The study of manuscripts in Garhwal region was conducted during 2008-2015. Survey work was conducted by the qualified surveyors employed in the project and study of the manuscripts and their analysis was made in the department. The collected manuscripts were further classified depending on the subject matter and material of the manuscripts.

### Results and Discussion

About 4000 manuscripts were collected from entire Garhwal region which were conserved and handed over to the National mission on manuscripts, New Delhi for further study if needed. It was observed that different type of material was used for preparing these manuscripts. The use of tree bark, palm leaf, tadpatra, cloth and the paper was dominantly observed. Review of literature (Fred Pinn - edited by David Heppel, (2001) indicated that during ancient times, leaves of the palm tree were used after being dried out and were used by tying the leaves together. The oldest extant palm-leaf document dates from the second century A.D.,

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but the use of palm leaves as writing material was already recorded in the fifth century B.C. In Cochin, written documents and books have been inscribed on the leaves of two species of palm tree, specially prepared for that purpose, for more than 600 years. In order to make this material suitable for permanent record, it must go through a long process of preparation which varies in detail from place to place. The leaves have first to be dried in the sun, then boiled with herbs for an hour, dried again and kept in a special press for several weeks until they are flat; in some places they may also be smoked for a couple of days and polished. They are then cut to the required sizes and one or two round holes are cut into them with a special scribing tool. The ancient Egypt used Papyrus as a writing material which is composed of 57 percent cellulose, 27 percent lignin, nine percent minerals, and seven percent water (Shephard, 2008). The famous philologist and founder of the Asiatic Society of Bengal, William Jones. Scholar of Telugu, C. P. Brown, traveler and Eastern language scholar, John Leyden, The first Surveyor-General of India Colin Mackenzie, Sanskrit scholar Charles Wilkins, The translator of numerous Sanskrit works H. H. Wilson and the multi-faceted Orientalist H. T. Colebrook were some of the dignitaries who found great Indian culture in the vast treasure of handwritten manuscripts on a variety of materials including palm leaf, paper, cloth and even gold and silver were as follows. The Ministry of Tourism and Culture, Government of India, established the National Mission for Manuscripts in February 2003 as an ambitious five year project with the specific objectives of locating, documenting, conserving and disseminating the knowledge content of India's manuscripts. The available manuscripts in Garhwal region were analysed and it was observed that these manuscripts were written in all facets of Sanskrit language. Dominated subjects were Jyotish, Yoga,

Ayurveda, Karm kand, Sanskrit sahitya, Kosh Sahitya (Amarkosh, etc.), surgery and use of medicinal plants. These manuscripts were also depicted with pictures and photographs.

### Conservation of Manuscripts

The manuscripts can be conserved by avoiding direct exposure of light and moisture, and piling up of the manuscripts one above the others. Proper air circulation must be provided. Manuscripts must be kept away from fire, water, insects dust and dirt. Use of neem extract, eucalyptus oil or clove oil should be made to keep away from micro-organisms. The manuscripts be preferably wrapped in acid free paper.

Manuscripts are historical documents. These depict various social, economic, political and cultural history of the past. Many manuscripts are still needed to be deciphered. They can provide knowledge about unknown mystery of the past and remarkable preservations for future generations to work on.

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