

“One of our major misfortunes is that we have lost so much of the world’s ancient literature – in Greece, in India and elsewhere... Probably an organized search for old manuscripts in the libraries of religious institutions, monasteries and private persons would yield rich results. That, and the critical examination of these manuscripts and, where considered desirable, their publication and translation, are among the many things we have to do in India when we succeed in breaking through our shackles and can function for ourselves. Such a study is bound to throw light on many phases of Indian history and especially on the social background behind historic events and changing ideas.”

Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, *The Discovery of India*

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From the Editor

The defining feature of the present issue of *Kriti Rakshana*, is its multiplicity. We have here essays that range from the Guru Granth Sahib to Buddhist manuscripts in Sanskrit, from Vedic poetry to *Mirat-ul-Quds*. Three authorities on Vedic literature have dealt with certain basic questions relating to the Vedas and Vedic poetry. In his informative article on the conservation of Guru Granth Sahib manuscripts, Dr. Mohinder Singh has highlighted the origin of the text and the present state of Granth Sahib Manuscripts in different repositories.

The 'Institution in Focus' in this volume is the Nava Nalanda Mahavihara, which propagates the great tradition of learning that existed in ancient India.

A large number of manuscripts from India are scattered in various parts of the world. Among them, Central Asia possesses a rich collection of Indian manuscripts, mostly Buddhist. Sri Satkari Mukhopadhyaya's article throws light on the 'Turfan manuscripts', collected by the Germans from Central Asia in the early twentieth century. The author discusses in detail the discovery, content and conservation of this significant collection.

This issue explores further, the origin of Silheti Nagari, a less known script that is currently no longer in use and analyses the factors responsible for its decline. We also have here an essay on the significance of studies in Manuscriptology and Palaeography, apart from our highlights on the activities of the Mission.



Neha Paliwal

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Conserving Guru Granth Sahib Manuscripts

Mohinder Singh

One of the greatest achievements of the fifth Guru, Arjan Dev, was the compilation of the *Adi Granth* and its installation in the sanctum sanctorum of the Golden Temple in 1604. The Sikh community is singularly fortunate in so far as its scripture is concerned. The Guru not only supervised the compilation but also authenticated the first copy by inscribing the *mool mantra* (the primal creed) on its first folio in his own hand. Its first copy (in original) is preserved with the Sodhi family in Kartarpur near Jalandhar in a place known as Quila Sodhian.

According to popular belief, after the completion of the *Adi Granth*, Bhai Bano, a devotee of the fifth Guru, was asked to take it to Lahore for binding. It is said that on the way Bhai Bano was tempted to make a copy which he got hurriedly done. This resulted in some mistakes and inclusion of a few additional hymns. On coming to know about this act of Bhai Bano the fifth Guru expressed his displeasure and the *bir* (volume) so copied did not find approval with the community of believers. Since printing or any other mode of making copies of the scripture were not available in those days, making handwritten copies of the *bir* was considered an act of religious merit. Devotees spent months together in copying the *birs* neatly for the benefit of the congregations. However, a survey of some of the rare Guru Granth Sahib *birs* pertaining to seventeenth and eighteenth century shows that in spite of Guru's disapproval of the *bir* copied by Bhai Bano, some of the devotees also made its copies along with the *Kartarpuri Bir*. It may be mentioned here that in terms of length, the Bir consists of nine hundred seventy four large size folios (one thousand nine hundred forty eight pages).

Since the original *Kartarpuri Bir* was not given to Guru Tegh Bahadur by the Guru's rivals, Dheermal and his supporters, the tenth Guru, Gobind Singh had to prepare another

version of the Guru Granth Sahib, popularly known as the *Damdami Bir*, which also included a few hymns of his father Guru Tegh Bahadur. It is this version of the Granth that provides the authentic text of the printed Guru Granth Sahib.

Copying of Adi Granth Sahib

As regards the hand written *Adi Granth* manuscripts, it has been an established practice of the scribes to compare their copies with the original *granth*, popularly called *Vadda Granth* (Great *Granth*) inscribed by Bhai Gurdas. It was believed that a *granth* corrected against the *Vadda Granth* becomes *shudh* (correct and acceptable). Those who did not have access to the original *granth* did so by comparing their copies with another *granth* popularly called *Jagana Brahamin's Granth*, which is considered more authentic than others.

With the tenth Guru's decision to elevate the *Adi Granth* to the status of *Guru Eternal* for the Sikh community before his death in Nanded in 1708 A.D., the *Adi Granth* came to be popularly known as *Guru Granth Sahib* and became a subject of veneration like a living Guru. Though the Guru Granth Sahib is not worshipped like an idol or a deity, it occupies a central place in any gurdwara and is shown utmost reverence by the devotees visiting that place. In fact reverence for the Granth started from the days of Guru Arjan Dev. After the installation of the *Adi Granth* in the Golden Temple, he devised a practice whereby after the day's service the *Granth* was ceremoniously closed and taken in a palanquin to a place called *Kotha Sahib* in the Golden Temple precincts and rested at night. It is important to note that while the *Granth* was kept for rest in the palanquin, the Guru himself slept on the floor to demonstrate respect for the scripture. Similarly the next morning the *Granth* was carried with great reverence to the Golden Temple and installed therein with due ceremony.

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With the passage of time, hundreds of handwritten copies of the Guru Granth Sahib were made for installation in the gurdwaras or for use by individual devotees. With the establishment of Maharaja Ranjit Singh's rule in Panjab and induction of eminent Pahari and Kashmiri painters and scribes into his court, some of the beautifully illustrated copies of the Guru Granth Sahib came to be made. We thus find many illuminated *birs* available in different repositories. The National Museum, New Delhi, has a number of illuminated copies of *Guru Granth* manuscripts.

One manuscript with 52 x 74 cm folio size is dated 1839 A.D. and is believed to have been got prepared by Sodhi Bhan Singh for presenting it to Maharaja Ranjit Singh. This Granth also has a sister *bir* minus the illustrations presently in the custody of a private family in Quila Bagrian near Patiala. Takhat Patna Sahib, birthplace of Guru Gobind Singh, has the largest collection of Guru Granth Sahib manuscripts. Some of them are also illuminated. While the *Granth* in the National Museum is very well conserved, the one with the Bagrian family and the large collection in Patna Sahib need urgent attention of those looking after the rare manuscripts.

Cataloguing of Guru Granth Sahib Manuscripts

While a large number of Guru Granth Sahib manuscripts were available including some very rare ones such as the *Kartarpuri Bir* prepared under the direct supervision of Guru Arjan Dev, the *Damdami Bir* prepared under the direct supervision of Guru Gobind Singh and various other copies duly signed by the sixth, seventh, ninth and tenth Gurus, no catalogue or any such account of the Guru Granth Sahib manuscripts was prepared and kept under the control of Akal Takhat or any other central Sikh authority. As a result, with the passage of time some of the rare volumes, either changed hands or simply disappeared. No one knows the fate of the first five volumes of the *Damdami Bir* got copied by Baba Deep Singh and sent to different Takhats (seats of temporal authority). Similarly one does not know for sure which is the Guru Granth manuscript, which was bestowed *Guruship* by Guru Gobind Singh before his death at Hazoor Sahib, Nanded, in 1708 A.D.

Sardar G. B. Singh's Efforts

The first serious attempt at locating and cataloguing rare Guru Granth Sahib manuscripts was made by Sardar G.B. Singh, a high ranking official of the Indian Post and Telegraph Department. As an outcome of it, he published a book called, *Sri Guru Granth Sahib Dian Prachin Biran*, popularly known as *Prachin Biran* (rare manuscripts). In his preface to the book, G.B. Singh writes that he became interested in the study of rare Guru Granth Sahib manuscripts when the Sikh Sangat of Dhaka presented him with some rare *Hukammamas* of Guru Tegh Bahadur during his visit to that place in 1915 A.D.

During his long tenure in the postal service he tried to locate and study some more rare Guru Granth Sahib Birs while travelling to different parts of India. Since facilities like photocopying, microfilming or digitization were not available then, G.B. Singh took exhaustive notes in his own hand. Whenever he found any writings in these manuscripts in the hand of the Gurus he tried to make their copies faithfully by using the tracing paper and has reproduced these rare writings in his book referred to above.

In the second part of his book, G.B. Singh mentions about the rare manuscripts that he was able to go through during his research. This includes such rare manuscripts as the *Kartarpuri Bir*, the *Damdami Bir*, *Bhai Bano Bir*, *Bura Sandhu Bir*, *Pindi Lala Bir* (destroyed during the army action in the Golden Temple in 1984), Dehradun Bir and other rare manuscripts at Agra, Mirzapur, Lucknow, Ayodhya, Allahabad, Burhanpur and Patna.

Even though the fifth Guru did not approve of Bhai Bano's action of copying the Adi Granth it is interesting to note that the devotees kept on making its copies since the original Bir, now known as *Kartarpuri Bir*, had gone into the hands of the descendents of Dheermal who did not allow its access to anyone. Under the circumstances the devout Sikhs were left with no option but to make copies from the *Bano Bir* which was easily available. Therefore, we find many manuscripts of the Bano recession. According to popular belief, the original *Bhai Bano Bir* was kept with a family of Bhai Bano in village Mangat, District Gujarat (now in Pakistan). After the partition of the country this *Bir* was temporarily kept in the house of one

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Bhai Mastan Singh in village Barot, District Meerut (U.P.). It was here that this *Bir* was examined by Bhai Randhir Singh, a Gurdwara Inspector of the Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandak Committee. Later on, this *Bir* was installed in a Gurdwara built in the memory of Bhai Bano in Jawaharpur, Kanpur. Bhai Vir Singh Sahitya Sadan, New Delhi, has six manuscripts of *Bhai Bano Bir* pertaining to different periods.

Search for Rare Manuscripts

While no one knows the exact number of Guru Granth manuscripts presently available whether copied from *Kartarpuri*, *Bano* or *Damdami Birs*, there are scholars who have tried to locate them and have worked on different *birs* available with different institutions and individuals. Most notable among them are Prof. Pritam Singh, Prof. Piar Singh, Dr. Pashaura Singh, Prof. Gurinder Mann and Dr. Jeevan Deol. While these scholars have done commendable work in their own fields none of them has prepared a detailed catalogue of the extant *birs* available at different places. With a view to filling this gap the National Institute of Panjab Studies, New Delhi, has taken up a project - "Locating, Cataloguing and Digitizing Rare Guru Granth Sahib Birs" with the help of the National Mission for Manuscripts, Department of Culture, Government of India. As per a preliminary survey, apart from different individuals, the following institutions have very useful Guru Granth Sahib manuscripts, which need to be catalogued and digitized on an urgent basis:

1. Takhat Sri Patna Sahib, Patna (Bihar): This is perhaps the biggest repository of rare Guru Granth Sahib *birs* and *Hukamnamas* including some illuminated *birs* signed by Guru Tegh Bahadur and Guru Gobind Singh.
2. Takhat Sri Hazoor Sahib, Nanded, (Maharashtra): It was at this place that Guru Gobind Singh, the tenth and the last Sikh Guru, bestowed guruship on Guru Granth Sahib before his death in 1708. As per Sikh tradition, Baba Deep Singh prepared five copies of the *Bir* for five Takhts and it is believed that one of the copies of that *Bir* is still preserved in the collection of Takhat Sri Hazoor Sahib in addition to the various other *birs*.
3. Takhat Damdama Sahib: As per popular Sikh belief, it was at this place that Guru Gobind Singh prepared the *Damdami Bir* which has since become authentic and the accepted format for printing Guru Granth Sahib *birs* throughout the world. Many rare *birs* are lying at this Takhat.
4. The Golden Temple, Amritsar: The Museum of the Golden Temple, Amritsar, has many rare *birs*. In the *Toshakhana* of the Golden Temple is lying the *Shahidi Bir* of Nankana Sahib. It needs urgent conservation. On the first floor of the Golden Temple one handwritten *bir* is being used for daily service which also needs conservation.
5. Guru Nanak Dev University, Amritsar has nearly twenty three rare Guru Granth Sahib *birs*.
6. The Punjabi University, Patiala has three rare *birs* including two illuminated ones.
7. Dr. Balbir Singh Sahitya Kendra, Dehradun, has some rare *birs* in its collection.
8. Language Department of Panjab has some rare Guru Granth Sahib *birs* which need conservation.
9. Punjab State Archives, Patiala, has a rare *bir* pertaining to the period of the ninth Guru.
10. National Museum, New Delhi, has some rare *birs* including some illuminated ones.
11. Museum of Union Territory, Chandigarh.

In addition to the above institutions, some rare Birs are also believed to be available with various individuals.

Since a large number of precious Guru Granth Sahib manuscripts have either disappeared or got destroyed it is time a concerted effort is made by individuals and organizations to conserve the valuable tangible Sikh heritage by getting the manuscripts digitized through the good offices of the National Mission for Manuscripts.

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Vedic Poetry: Experience at Multiple Levels

In Conversation: Prof. T. N. Dharmadhikari, *Pune* ; Prof. G. C. Tripathi, *Delhi* and Prof. Om Prakash Pandey, *Lucknow*

The conversation was coordinated by
Dr. Sudha Gopalakrishnan

We have the privilege of the presence of three renowned scholars here with expertise on Vedic Studies. The National Mission for Manuscripts wishes to draw the benefit of this occasion and seeks your views on certain aspects concerning Vedic studies. At the outset, may I ask why the Veda-s are considered *apaurusheya* (not created by human being)?

Prof. Dharmadhikari: The Veda-s are *apaurusheya* because they are considered to be of a divine origin. The *rishi-s* have “seen” the mantras in deep meditation. In deep meditation, the *rishis* may go through different levels of sound manifestations *para* (transcendental expression), *pasyanti* (intellectual expression) and *madhyama* (mental expression). In the earlier stages, they are *apaurusheya*, because they have only been seen by the *rishi-s* through these three stages. According to our tradition, Brahma first uttered the sound 'om' and from that developed the three stages, *para*, *pasyanti* and *madhyama*. Dr. Radhakrishnan has stated in his Introduction to the translation of the Upanishads, “The Vedas were composed by the seers when they were in a state of inspiration. He who inspires them is God”. The *rishi-s* are *drashta* (seers), for they have seen and grasped the Veda-s. But when are recited by a human being it becomes *vaikhari* (human expression), and that *vaikhariya vani* at that stage of the Veda-s may be called *paurusheya* (human creation).

Do you think that once Vedic poetry is expressed in human thought and human expression, it loses the sacredness of the mystic language?

Prof. Tripathi: What Prof. Dharmadhikari has told is correct and it is also the philosophical

explanation of the question. Scientifically also, this is very apt explanation of the *apaurusheyatva*, for it is corroborated by our tradition. I have a much simpler explanation for *apaurusheyatva*. Very simply, 'veda' means knowledge; it is knowledge par excellence. Now, knowledge is something which is not created by any human being. Knowledge cannot be created; it is something which always exists. That is why it is identified with *parabrahman* (Ultimate Reality), '*satyam jnanam anantam Brahma*'. Brahma is always *jnanam* (knowledge); *ajnanam* (absence of knowledge) is *maya* (illusion). It is said that when you know yourself completely or 'when you know Brahman you become Brahman itself' (*brahmavid brahmaiva bhavati*). So *jnata* (the one who knows), *jnana* (knowledge) and *jneya* (the subject of knowledge), all three become one. Since *jnana* is Brahman and *jnana* is personified in the form of written word or spoken word, it is not the creation of any human being; it is a form of God himself. This is supreme knowledge which is identified with Supreme Being or Brahman. In this sense, Veda is identical with Brahman, so to say. Thinking otherwise also, knowledge, as I told you earlier, cannot be created. You can simply discover it; it is always there. It can reveal itself to you or you can achieve it through own efforts, through *abhyasa-s*, through meditation (contemplative exercises) or with the help of your guru. But it does not mean that the knowledge that you have achieved, did not exist before. In the same way, just as Brahman exists, *jnana* also exists. They are not the creation of any human being because *jnana* is not the creation of any human being. It is totally independent of human effort, though through human effort you can find it. To that extent, Veda is *apaurusheya*.

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Prof. Pandey: I agree with the views expressed by both the scholars. *rishi-s* are called *atindriya drashta*, that is they who have the capacity to perceive beyond their ordinary senses. The knowledge which is beyond the senses is spiritual knowledge; it does not matter whether it is created by God or it is created by human being. Whatever is there in the Veda-s is useful for the human being, and therefore the question of *apaurusheyatva* is not very pertinent to our times.

Who may have been the compilers of the Veda-s?

Prof. Pandey: The names available in the *Anukramanis* are those who expanded this knowledge or those who communicated this knowledge. There is an aphorism in the Mimamsa Sutras, '*Arsha Pravachanat*'. According to this *sutra*, those who exposed the verses were not the authors. They did not compose the verses. They just composed the verses by visualizing the knowledge and expressing it in their own language.

Prof. Dharmadhikari: It is just possible that the *rishi-s* had the inspiration in their state of *samadhi* (deep meditation). Just as Dr. Pandey has said, the *rishi-s* may have realized the Veda-s in meditation and later on translated those into *vaikhari*. They had very much intended to express the verses in a beautiful language.

At the same time they are not direct poetry. Would you comment on the multi-layered meanings underlying Vedic language and expression?

Prof. Dharmadhikari: It is beyond doubt that the Veda-s are the crystallized experience of the Vedic *rishis* which feature multi-layered meanings embedded in them. Even at an ordinary level of perception, elemental forces such as *prithvi* (earth), *akasha* (sky), *vayu* (air) are deified in the Vedic literature. At the philosophical level, when they say that '*nasad asin no sadasit tadanim*', then they are at a higher stage.

Prof. Tripathi: You are right that there are many *sukta-s* which depict, perhaps, day to day or ordinary lives, but what was the reason behind accepting those *mantras* in the Samhita-s or incorporating those *mantra-s* in the Samhita-s is to be found out. About some *sukta-s*, scholars have written elaborately. I think there are good explanations for, say, *Yama-Yami sukta* and a few others. As far as these three levels are concerned,

I think that there are many *sukta-s* which can be considered. For example, *Agnisukta*, starts with *Agnimile purohitam Yajnasya devamritvajam / Hotaram ratnadhatamam //*

Now, what is *agni*? Agni is *hota*, it is also *purohita* and *ritwik* and then *agni* is also the deity whom the *Rishi* pays his respect. Thus *Agni* is everyone. But *agni* also contains jewels (*ratnadha*). Why is *agni* '*ratnadha*'? What are the *ratnas* that *agni* contains in itself? The *ratna* cannot be ordinary jewels or pieces of stones. They must be something else. Again, how could the same *agni* be *hota*, *purohita* and a *kavi*, as well as a deity? *Agni* is the officiating priest, at the same time in *agni* you are offering oblations to *Agni*, the god. *Agni* is god, but is also a mediator because he is the *hota* and brings gods to the sacrifice. *Agni* is referred to as *kavikratuh* (knower of your intention). *Agni* is also called the supporter of life, (*vaishvanara*) and is referred to with other terms as well. All these cannot be related to ordinary fire. Take again the *gayatri mantra*, '*tat savitur varenyam*'. What is *savita*? First of all *savita* is sun. *Suun praniprasave*, that is the *dhatu*. *Prasava* means to inspire. So *savita* is also the inspirer. He inspires; but it is not just the sun which is the inspirer otherwise *dhiyo yo nah prochodayat* does not have any relevance. So '*varenyam bhargo devasya dhimahi*'. If you translate *bharga* just with light it does not go well. There are perhaps a dozen other words for light in the Rigveda; or even more than that. Rigveda is full of light. I think there are no synonyms for *bharga*. You can connect it with *Bhriqu* (root *bhrij*), shining, rays, etc. But you are meditating upon '*varenyam bharga*', the great or adorable light, and this *bharga* is to inspire your intellect. *Dhiyo* is also not *buddhi*. Again it is different. If loosely translated, it can be thoughts, intentions resolutions or determinations, because it is in plural. If it were intellect, it should be in singular. It is not merely at a mundane level that we meditate upon the lustre of the sun which inspires our thoughts. But that light, the inspirer, is a mystical phenomenon.

There cannot be very good translation of the Rigveda, because you don't have the words which exactly express the connotations or the concepts expressed by the Vedic poets. We cannot translate, we cannot even write a proper *bhashya* on the Rigveda because we don't have



Prof. G. C. Tripathi, Prof. T. N. Dharmadhikari, Prof. Om Prakash Pandey and Dr. Sudha Gopalakrishnan

synonyms in classical Sanskrit for these Vedic words. There are at least two hundred words in the Rigveda which have no synonyms in classical Sanskrit, not to talk of other languages! If you are to translate in Hindi, you will have to take words from Sanskrit. You cannot translate *bharga*, *ketu*, *rita*, *vayunam*, *pracheta*, etc., for example. Many of these words are related to the root *chit*, meaning 'to shine'. But at the same time there are *citi*, *chitta*, *chaitanya*, *prachetas*-all these words cannot mean "one who is shining", "illuminated". It's not a concrete; this illumination is totally internal. I think the Veda-s are to be interpreted on different levels. They are not the 'songs composed by shepherds' as some Western scholars have said. It is on a very high plain. They have mystical meanings. That's why in Rigveda it is said in *Brihaspatikushta* (RV X. 71),

*"Uta tvah pashyan na dadarsha vacham
Uta tvah shrinvam na shrinoti enam....."*

"Many people see Veda-s in print or in written form. Many people hear the Vedic words, listen

to the Vedic poetry, but they don't listen to *what* it is saying. Many people see the language that is speech and many people hear it but hear it not, they see it but see it not. There are very few fortunate ones to whom the speech or the *vak* manifests its real beauty as a loving wife does only to her husband".

Following the same thing that you are talking about, could you throw some light on the word, 'akshara'? Would you explain some of the multi-layered meanings of the term and the concept?

Prof. Dharmadhikari: Practically, *akshara* refers to the original, indestructible sound of 'om', uttered by Brahma at the beginning of this *kalpa*. From that 'om', the Veda-s developed and then from the Veda-s all the *pravrtti*-s were created. It is the original meaning of *akshara*.

Prof. Tripathi: There is a very interesting discussion about its basic concept in Indian philosophy. What is 'akshara'? Whether it is *nitya* (eternal) or *anitya* (ephemeral)? *Akshara* is, of

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course, imperishable as you rightly pointed out, in case all the speech has emerged out of 'Om'. But every sound is *akshara*, imperishable, in its para or *pashyanti* form. What is perishable? The sound is perishable. The *vaikhari* is perishable. But all other forms of the *vak* are not perishable. *Vak* signifies the basic concept, the basic thought which is there in your mind or in your heart. When a carpenter wants to build a table, he has the table first in his mind. Later on, he creates something (gives rupa), and then gives a *nama* to it. The subtlest form of the *vak*, which is *sukshma*, is imperishable, just as you can destroy an object, but the concept of that object cannot be destroyed.

Do you connect this concept with similar ideas in other cultures?

Prof. Tripathi: Yes. 'Every thing is transient and perishable', according to Buddhism, *sarvam kshanikam* (everything is momentary). The concept of *akshara* is very much a part, according to our philosophers, our grammarians, of a language and it is indestructible. Only the fourth form that is only the twentyfive per cent of the *vak* is destructible, but seventy five percent of it is *amurta* (formless) because of its subtlety. The sounds are called *matrika*-s (mothers). They are the mothers of everything; they are the sources of everything. With the sounds, words are created, concepts are transmitted and views are exchanged. They are the mothers of the words and languages. *Matrika*-s are the basic sources of whatever there in this world. The first *sristi* is *manasi sristi*, first humans or gods are *manasa putras*; concrete shape comes much later. It evolves from *sukhma* to *sthula*, from subtle to gross. From space (*akasa*) comes air (*vayu*), from air the fire (*agni*) and so on. Same is true in context of language also. And in its original form, it is *sukhma*. The elements are destructible, but all the *tanmatras* as well as *mula prakriti*, are indestructible, according to our philosophers, especially our *Sankhya darshana*.

How could you explain the evolution of Veda-s from Samhita-s to Brahmana-s, to Aranyaka-s and then Upanishad-s? Could you explain the thought pattern that may have influenced this evolutionary process that started with rituals and gradually moved towards abstract thought as reflected in the Upanishads? Is it a revolution or an evolution?

Prof. Pandey: In the beginning, there were small prose sections in the Vedic literature, which are known as *nivid adhyaya mantras*. Though it is considered that Rigveda is the oldest written document, it is not the first product of the Vedic literature, because first writings are the *nividadhyaya mantras* which are in prose form. So the first verse "*Agnimile purohitam...*" is not the first outpouring of the Veda-s. Later on, in course of time, there were floating masses of verses which were collected, compiled and edited. The Samhita-s are regarded as the first part of the Veda-s. Second part is the Brahmana-s, third the Aranyakas and lastly, the Upanishads.

But there was a thought process that worked throughout.

Prof Tripathi: Since those who were living in forests did not have facilities to perform big *yajna*-s, their reverence was translated into mental *yajna*-s, consisting of speculations on the meaning of *yajna*-s. For them, the thought process mattered; the concrete *kriya* (ritualistic action) itself was not important. According to Indian belief, *karma* can be performed in three ways- *manasa* (mental), *vacha* (verbal) and *karmana* (action-based). *Karma* is the grossest, for they believed that the same deed could be performed through *vachas* or through your *manas* as well. The *tapasvin*-s (hermits), who resided in forests did the same things but in a subtler manner. The speculation on the meaning of the rites connected with sacrifices gave rise to the Aranyaka-s and the still subtler speculations about the nature of the world and the nature of the Supreme Being for whom sacrifices are performed gave rise to the literature of the Upanishad-s. Thus there is continuity in the development of Vedic thought and literature.

I take this opportunity to thank you all for engaging in a thought-provoking and enlightening discussion.

Corrigendum

Vol. 1 No. 6, June 2006 issue of *Kriti Rakshana*

The title of the picture on page no. 13 to be read as "The five great entities of Jainism and their respective colors, depicted at the beginning of a cosmological manuscript" and the title of the picture on page no. 14 to be read as "A folio from Bhaktamarastotra, a famous Jain hymn."



Institution in Focus

Nava Nalanda Mahavihara

Ravindra Panth

In the early 1950s, in order to revive the lost glory and the heritage of the ancient Nalanda Mahavihara, His Excellency Dr. Rajendra Prasad, the first President of the Republic of India, declared that the ancient seat of Buddhist learning at Nalanda would be revived.

At the request of Ven. Bhikkhu Jagdish Kashyap and with the objective of reviving the tremendous cultural heritage that Nalanda represented, the Government of Bihar established the 'Magadh Institute of Post-Graduate Studies and Research in Pali and Allied Languages and Buddhist Learning' at Nalanda in 1951. Eventually, this institute came to be known as Nava Nalanda Mahavihara. The inspiration behind the establishment of this Institute was to develop a centre of higher studies in Pali and Buddhism along the lines of the ancient Nalanda Mahavihara (University of Nalanda). From the beginning, the Institute functioned as a residential institution, with a limited number of Indian and foreign students.

At present the campus of the Mahavihara is ninety kms. from the metropolis of Patna, situated on the southern bank of the historical lake, Indrapuskarani. Close to the northern bank lie the ruins of the ancient University of Nalanda.

On 20th November 1951, the foundation stone of the first building was laid by His Excellency, Dr. Rajendra Prasad. Engraved upon it are the following words:

“Let the rays of the sun of Nalanda rise from the summit of this rock in order to brighten the vernacular (*lokaḥaṣa* in Pali) after the passing away of its nights of darkness (period of its obscurity).”

The first building, designed by well-known artist and architect Padmashri Upendra Maharathi, upon completion, was formally inaugurated by His Excellency Dr. Sarvapalli Radhakrishnan, the then Vice-President of the Republic of India, in March 1956.

Ven. Bhikkhu Jagdish Kashyap became the Founder-Director of Nava Nalanda Mahavihara, and continued in that capacity until February 1955. One of his major accomplishments was the complete publication, in forty one volumes, of a critical edition of the entire Pali *Tipitaka* in Devanagari script. For the first time, the original words of Buddha were published and made available for the Indian scholars by Nava Nalanda Mahavihara.

Since its inception, the Institute has been

honoured by the presence of several eminent scholars who have served and contributed in the growth and development of the Institute. Besides Ven. Kashyap, Prof. Satkari Mukherji, Prof. Tatia, Prof. Upasak, Prof. Roth, Prof. D.K. Barua are among those that have served as Directors of the Mahavihara.

From the beginning, until March 1981, the Mahavihara functioned as a State government Institution under the Department of Education, Government of Bihar. His Excellency, the Governor of Bihar, was the Chairman. In



Entrance of the Library Building, Nava Nalanda Mahavihara

Kriti Rakshana



Manuscripts Collection at Nava Nalanda Mahavihara

order to give the Mahavihara freedom to plan its own development, the Government of Bihar granted autonomy to the Institute. However, lack of funds, decreasing staff, gradual shrinking of activities and localization and isolation hindered the development and the position of the Mahavihara. Considering the glorious past of Nalanda, the esteem and reverence Nalanda receives from Asian countries and the immense potential for development as an Institution of international importance, the Government of Bihar decided to hand it over to the Government of India in December 1990. Instrumental in this decision of the Government of Bihar was Prof. Gustav Roth of Germany, who joined the Mahavihara as Director in 1982. With the support of his mentor, the Governor of Bihar, His Excellency, Dr. A.R. Kidwai prevailed upon the Government of Bihar and the Government of India to join together to preserve the Mahavihara. The Department of Culture, Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India finally assumed responsibility for the Institute with full financial liabilities in February 1994.

Present Status

In April 2000 Dr. Ravindra Panth was appointed as the Director of the Nava Nalanda Mahavihara. On his joining as the Director he started working hard to revive the lost glory of the Nava Nalanda Mahavihara. As a result a drastic change

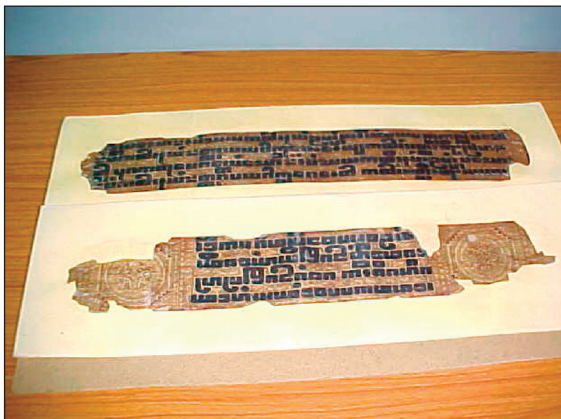
was brought in all the fields of teaching, research and publication, library, infrastructural development etc. One of the major steps in this regard was taking over of Xuanzang memorial Hall by the Nava Nalanda Mahavihara.

The academic activities of the Mahavihara include teaching and research, seminars and conferences, special convocations, publications and the maintenance and development of the library. At present, the Mahavihara offers a one-year certificate course and a two-year diploma course in Pali. The Mahavihara is affiliated to Kameshwar Singh Darbhanga Sanskrit University for the Pali Acharya Course (traditional degree).

Similarly, the Mahavihara, in affiliation with Magadh University of Bodh Gaya, conducts M.A. courses in Pali, Philosophy, and Ancient Indian and Asian Studies, following the syllabus of the University. In order to revive the lost glory of Nalanda the Mahavihara has signed MoUs with several reputed institutions and universities in India and abroad.

Publication

As Nava Nalanda Mahavihara is a Post - Graduate research institute, emphasis has been given to research and publication projects from the beginning. The Mahavihara undertakes long and short term projects. Short-term projects include doctoral research and publication of research volumes and monographs by staff



Pali Vinaya manuscript in Myanmar script preserved in Nava Nalanda Mahavihara

members and research scholars. Long-term projects include publication of Pali texts not yet published in Devanagari script, Hindi translation of the entire Pali *Tipitaka*, cataloguing, critical decipherment and publication of manuscripts. The compilation work of a Pali-Hindi Dictionary, the first of its kind in India is also in progress.

The Mahavihara published the entire Pali *Tipitaka* in forty one volumes and some commentaries in Devanagari script for the first time in the 1950s. Eight Nava Nalanda Mahavihara Research Volumes have been published so far. A collection of other publications related to Buddhism have been published as well.

Library

At present the library is housed in a two-story building, and it has grown quickly as a result of various opportunities to purchase a number of personal libraries. Presently, the library includes over forty nine thousand books, various journals and a rare manuscript collection. Donations and purchases were made from Rash Bihari Mukherjee of Hoogly, West Bengal; Prof. (Dr.) Nalinaksh Datta, Former Professor and Head of the Department of Pali, University of Calcutta ; and Prof. (Dr.) K. Venkat Ramanan, Director, Cheena Bhavan, Santiniketan, West Bengal .

Governments of countries like Myanmar (formerly Burma), Sri Lanka, Thailand, Kampuchia (Cambodia), Japan and South Korea donated complete sets of the Pali *Tipitaka* published in their respective scripts, including *Atthakathas*, and other miscellaneous works to the Mahavihara.

The Mahavihara also houses a collection of Manuscripts. Currently, planning is going on to catalogue and preserve the manuscripts and rare book collections. The process of computerization of the Library has already started and is in progress.

Xuanzang Memorial Hall

During a visit to China in the 1950s, Ven. Kashyap had the opportunity to meet the Premier Zhou-en-Lai with whom he discussed the possibility of the Chinese Government giving some of the physical relics of Xuanzang to Nava Nalanda Mahavihara. On January 12, 1957, Pandit Jawharlal Nehru, on behalf of the Government of India, received the relics of Xuanzang from His Holiness the Dalai Lama and the Panchen Lama of Tibet during a function at the Mahavihara, along with a cheque for the construction of a Xuanzang memorial at Nalanda. The relics, which had to be enshrined in this hall are currently preserved in the Patna Museum. The dream of Pt. Nehru to develop Xuanzang Memorial Hall as a symbol of Indo-Chinese friendship is now taking shape. The work of the first phase was completed with the installation of the statue of Ven. Xuanzang in bronze in 2004. The Memorial Hall will be inaugurated in December, 2006 as a part of the celebration of the 'India-China Friendship Year'. The area around the Xuanzang Memorial Hall will be developed as a cultural village.

Contact Details

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Kriti Rakshana



Profile: Ven. Bhikkhu Jagadish Kashyap

Ven. Bhikkhu Jagadish Kashyap was born in 1908 at Ranchi. Even as a child, Jagadish Narayan proved himself to be an intelligent student. In 1931 he gained a Masters degree in Philosophy and Sanskrit. At a time when the freedom movement was picking up momentum, a young Jagadish Narayan also participated in the *Satyagraha* Movement.

Due to his attraction towards the teaching of the Buddha Bhikkhu, Jagadish Kashyap went to Ceylon and was ordained as a monk in the Shyamavamsa order. When he came back to India, he tried to restore Pali and Buddhism to its country of origin. Coincidence decreed that Ven.

Kashyap was included in the entourage of His Excellency, Dr. Rajendra Prasad, the first President of India, on his visit to Burma (Myanmar). Overwhelmed by the warm reception and profound reverence shown to the modern Missionary of Buddha Dhamma from India, His Excellency, Dr. Rajendra Prasad proclaimed to revive the ancient seat of Buddhist learning at Nalanda. Accordingly, the then Chief Minister of Bihar, Honourable Dr. Shrikrishna Sinha, who had great regard for higher education and

scholarship, approved the plan. Thus at the instance of Ven. Bhikkhu Jagadish Kashyap, the Government of Bihar established the Institute presently known as Nava Nalanda Mahavihara at Nalanda. The idea behind the establishment of the Nava Nalanda Mahavihara was to develop it into a centre of higher studies in Pali and

Buddhism on the line of the ancient Nalanda Mahavihara.

Ven. Kashyap also tried to enrich the Mahavihara Library. Being attracted by his personality, Buddhist countries like Thailand, Cambodia, Laos, Ceylon, Burma etc. presented their valuable publications to the Mahavihara. During this time His Holiness the Dalai Lama, on behalf of the People's Republic of China, visited the Mahavihara and presented the relics of



Ven. Bhikkhu Jagadish Kashyap

Xuanzang and other Buddhist literature in Chinese. The greatest contribution of this great erudite scholar of Pali and Buddhism lies in the revival of a great tradition. It was his life-long dream to make the Nava Nalanda Mahavihara an independent University of Pali and Buddhist Studies and a unique institution in India. Now his dream is getting fulfilled since it is hoped that the Nava Nalanda Mahavihara will get the Deemed University status in the near future.

Kriti Rakshana



उस्ताद शालिवाहनचित्रित ऐतिहासिक विज्ञप्ति-पत्र

जितेन्द्र बी० शाह

वर्तमान युग में पत्र व्यवहार का स्वरूप पूर्णतः बदल गया है। इन्टरनेट एवं विडियो कॉन्फरेन्स का युग आ चुका है। एक स्थान पर बैठ कर ही दूर सुदूर तक अपना संदेश भेज सकते हैं, परन्तु प्राचीन काल में ऐसी सुविधा उपलब्ध नहीं थी। अतः पूर्व काल में संदेश भेजने के लिए विधिवत् पत्र लिखा जाता था और उसको दूत या सेवक द्वारा भेजा जाता था। विनती के लिए विनती-पत्र भी लिखे जाते थे। ऐसे विनती-पत्र की एक परम्परा जैन धर्म में प्राप्त होती है जो अन्यत्र दुर्लभ है।

जैन धर्म में चातुर्मास के दिनों में सांवत्सरिक क्षमापना के पश्चात् गच्छानुयायी और शिष्यादियों द्वारा

अपने आचार्यों को क्षमापना विषयक पत्र भेजे जाते थे। इन पत्रों में क्षमापना के अतिरिक्त पर्युषण पर्व के दिनों में अपने नगर में सम्पन्न विशिष्ट धार्मिक कार्यों का उल्लेख किया जाता था, साथ में आचार्यश्री को अपने नगर में पधारने के लिए और श्री संघ को दर्शन देने के लिए बड़ी जिज्ञासा से विस्तार पूर्वक विज्ञप्ति प्रार्थना भी की जाती थी। इसी विज्ञप्ति के कारण इन पत्रों को विशेष रूप से विज्ञप्ति-पत्र कहा जाता था।

विज्ञप्ति-पत्र का स्वरूप

विज्ञप्ति-पत्र प्रारम्भ में सचित्र तत्पश्चात् विशिष्ट गुण वर्णन युक्त होता था अर्थात् दृश्य-श्रव्य ऐतिहासिक अभिलेख। इनका आकार ज्योतिषी की बनायी हुई जन्मपत्री जैसा होता था। सामान्यतः १०-१२ इंच के कागजों के चौड़े टुकड़ों को एक दूसरे के साथ जोड़कर ४० से ६० फीट के लम्बे पत्र बनाए जाते थे। इनमें प्रायः आरम्भ में आकर्षक चित्र बनाए जाते थे जिनमें पूर्णकुम्भ, अष्ट-महामंगल, चौदह स्वप्न, तीर्थंकर की प्रतिमा के चित्र आदि चित्रित किये जाते थे तत्पश्चात् नगर के बाहार, विभिन्न धर्मों के देवालय, कुंआ, तालाब, धर्म के जुलूस और विशिष्ट प्रसंगों के चित्र चित्रित किये जाते थे।

चित्रों के बाद अच्छे लेखक के पास सुन्दर अक्षरों में संस्कृत, प्राकृत या देश्य गुजराती भाषा में नाना प्रकार के वर्णन किए जाते थे। भगवान की स्तुति, आचार्य की स्तुति, गृहस्थ उपासकों की समृद्धि का वर्णन एवं चातुर्मास में हुए धार्मिक अनुष्ठानों का सविस्तार वर्णन करके क्षमापना की जाती थी। बाद में आचार्यश्री को अपने नगर में पधारने की विनती एवं अन्त में स्थानिक संघ के अग्रगण्य श्रावकों के हस्ताक्षर पूर्वक पत्र की समाप्ति की जाती थी। अतः ऐसे विज्ञप्ति-पत्र तत्कालीन इतिहास एवं विशिष्ट घटनाओं का एक प्रमाणभूत ऐतिहासिक अभिलेख हैं।

जैन ग्रन्थभण्डारों में इस प्रकार के अनेकानेक विज्ञप्ति-पत्र प्राप्त होते हैं। जिनका समय १५वीं शती से लेकर १८वीं शती तक का है जिसमें श्री लाभविजय,



Vignaptipatra, preserved at L.D.Institute of Indology, Ahmedabad

Kriti Rakshana



नयविजय, अमरचन्द्र, विनीतविजय, मेघविजय, रविवर्धन जैसे विद्वान् मुनियों के द्वारा अपने आचार्यों को भेजे हुए विज्ञप्ति-पत्र सुप्रसिद्ध हैं।

इनमें अद्भुत चित्रकला एवं उत्तम संस्कृत, प्राकृत काव्यकृतियाँ और गुजराती भाषा में लिखे हुए वर्णन प्राप्त होते हैं। ऐसे ही एक विलक्षण चित्रकार द्वारा चित्रित विज्ञप्ति-पत्र, जो ऐतिहासिक दृष्टि से अत्यन्त महत्त्वपूर्ण है, का संक्षिप्त वर्णन प्रस्तुत किया जा रहा है।

सम्राट अकबर का नाम भारतीय इतिहास में सुप्रसिद्ध है, उन्होंने दीन-ए-ईलाही नाम के स्वतन्त्र धर्म की स्थापना भी की थी। विभिन्न धर्मों एवं सम्प्रदायों के तत्त्वों को जानने एवं समझने की तीव्र उत्कण्ठा के कारण वि० सं० १६३९ में अकबर बादशाह जैन धर्म के महान आचार्य हीरसूरिजी के सम्पर्क में आया था। आचार्यश्री की धर्मसाधना, कठिन आचारपालन, जीवदया, निष्पृहता आदि की गहरी छाप अकबर बादशाह पर पड़ी और बादशाह ने छः महिनों तक मांसाहार त्याग एवं समग्र देश में वर्ष के कई दिनों में जीव हिंसा की बंदी का आदेश दिया था।

सं० १६६२ में सम्राट अकबर के अवसान के पश्चात् यह परम्परा शिथिल हो गई। शहंशाह जहांगीर ने अकबर

बादशाह के अहिंसा के आदेशों को रद्द कर दिया और जैनों के प्रति अरुचि दर्शाने लगा। उस समय जैनाचार्य विजयसेन सूरिजीके शिष्य वाचक विवेक हर्षगणि ने सं० १६६६ में आगरा में चातुर्मास रखकर अपनी असाधारण प्रतिभा से राजा को पुनः प्रसन्न किया और पर्युषण के अवसर पर १२ दिन की अहिंसा का आदेश प्राप्त किया। इस समग्र ऐतिहासिक घटना का सचित्र वर्णन इस आदेश में प्राप्त होता है। जिसमें बादशाह जहांगीर के द्वारा फ़रमान आदेश देना, राजा रामदास उपाध्याय विवेकहर्ष द्वारा फ़रमान लेकर देवपाटण पधारना एवं आचार्यश्री विजयसेन सूरि के चरणों में फ़रमान समर्पित करना यह ऐतिहासिक घटना जहांगीर के राजदरबारी चित्रकार उस्ताद शालीवाहन द्वारा मुगल शैली में चित्रित की गई है। प्रस्तुत फ़रमान लालभाई दलपतभाई भारतीय संस्कृति विद्या मन्दिर में सुरक्षित है। इसकी चित्रशैली उत्कृष्ट कोटि की वास्तव्यलक्ष्य है। यह निर्विवाद एक श्रेष्ठ विज्ञप्ति-पत्र है।

जितेन्द्र बी० शाह, निदेशक, लालभाई दलपतभाई प्राच्य विद्या संस्थान, अहमदाबाद

Quiz

1. How many *slokas* and how many *skandhas* (cantos) are there in the original *Srimad Bhagavata* of Veda Vyasa?
2. Who for the first time compiled the holy book of the Sikh religion, *Adi Granth Sahib*?
3. What is the recommended optimum temperature for a display or storage area of paper manuscripts?
4. What is the name of the travelogue that was written by Greek traveler Megasthenes on his visit to India during the reign of Chandragupta Maurya?
5. Who was the author of the definitive Sanskrit book on drama, *Natyashastra*?
6. How many libraries were there in the ancient Nalanda Mahavihara?
7. In which language may be found the roots of the word 'manuscript'?
8. To which type of literature does *Jatakamala* belong, characteristic as it is of a mixture of verse and ornate prose style?
9. Which sukta of the Rigveda describes the vice of dice-playing most vividly?
10. Who is the author of the famous Sanskrit drama '*Anarkali*', based on the romance between Anarkali and Jahangir?



Xuanzang Memorial Hall, Nava Nalanda Mahavihara

Answers on page 23

Kriti Rakshana



Text in Focus

Mirat al-Quds

A Persian Text on Christ and His Teachings

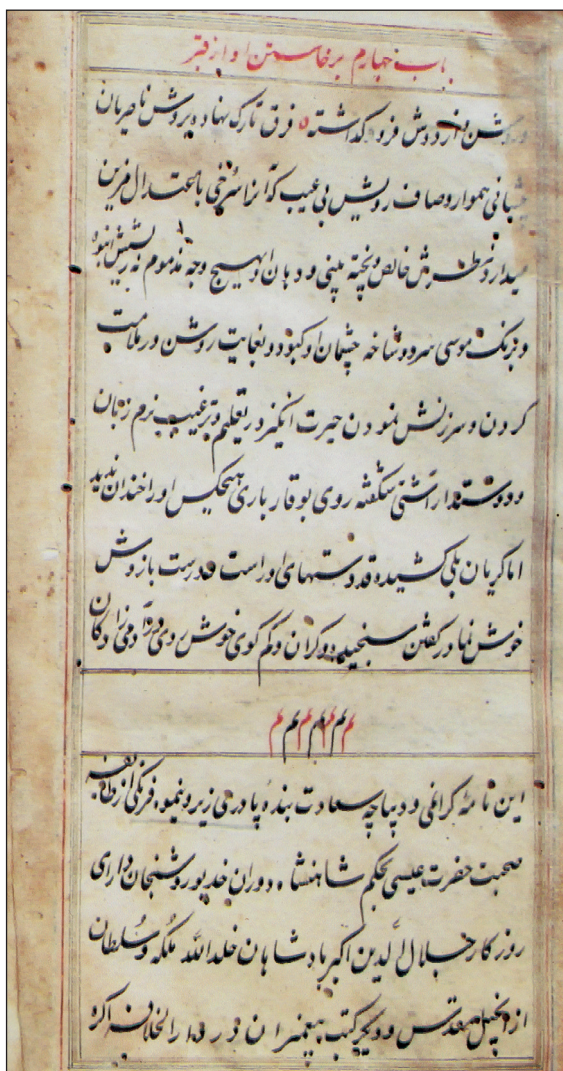
Imtiaz Ahmad

Akbar's reign of about half a century (1556-1605 ce) constitutes a landmark in the history of India for a variety of reasons. One prominent reason is the liberal outlook of the Emperor, his attitude of tolerance towards other faiths and the syncretic environment at the royal court. Among the many remarkable results of that liberal atmosphere is a unique Persian text describing the life and teachings of Jesus Christ. The text,

based on the Gospels, was written by a Jesuit priest at Akbar's Court at the specific instructions of the Emperor. It also provides one of the best testimonies to the Emperor's eclectic religious outlook. A copy of this rather rare text is preserved at the Khuda Bakhsh Oriental Public Library, Patna (Cat. No.649). Another finely written but incomplete later copy of the work, entitled *Dastan-e Masih*, is also preserved at the Library (Cat. No.650), but it contains numerous copying errors. Consequently it is not as important as the copy under reference. A brief introduction of the text, its author and sponsor follows.

The manuscript under review is more than four hundred years old. It was written at Agra in the forty seventh regnal year of Akbar which corresponds to 1602 ce / 1011 A.H. It bears the title *Mirat al-Quds* or The Holy Mirror. It offers a biography of Jesus Christ together with his teachings, based on the Gospels. The size of the manuscript is 7.5 x 4.25 inches (cover); 5.75 x 2.66 inches (folios). It has one hundred seventy nine folios with fourteen lines on each page. It is written in beautiful nastaliq characters within gold and coloured ruled borders. It has a decorated sarnamah or head-piece in golden, red and blue colours; but the same is now faded. The manuscript shows traces of rather careless preservation done, at some early point of time, with tissue-paper that has obliterated the text at many places. At the remaining places, the black ink is still bright and easily readable. The opening lines and headings are written in red colour. It begins with an invocation in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, and mentions that the book contains an account of the life of Christ and his teachings. The text is remarkably correct and shows, at several places, evidence of collation. It is also known by its second title *Dastan-e Masih* which is written as a running title in red colour on the top of every alternate page of the text.

The work begins with a short Preface giving



Folios from *Mirat al-Quds*, preserved at Khuda Bakhsh Oriental Public Library, Patna

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the circumstances that led to the writing of the text (f.1-4a). It is followed by four chapters of uneven length. The first chapter (f.4b-46a) describes the infancy of Christ; the second (f.46b-143b) explicates his teachings and miracles; the third (f.144a-163b) discusses his pains, sufferings and death; the fourth (f.164a-179a) dwells upon his Resurrection and Accession (to Heaven). The chronogram on f.179a-b gives the name of the author as Padre Geronimo Xavier "Firangi" who wrote the work at the instructions of Akbar. It mentions that the author was desirous to have an account of the life of Christ in Persian. It also states that the work was written with the help of Gospels that the author was able to collect in Agra and that he was assisted in the work by Maulana Abd al-Sattar bin Qasim Lahauri. The exact date of completion of the work, as given in the Hejira era is 19th Dulqa'ad, 1017. It would not be out of place to mention here that the text was translated into Latin, with an introduction by Louis de Dieu under the title *Historia Christi Persice* in 1639 ce.

The author of the work, Geronimo Xavier, was a Jesuit missionary who was born at Navarre in northern Spain. He joined the Mission at Goa in 1571 and died there in 1617. He came to Akbar's Court in 1594 as a member of the third Jesuit Mission, which continued to stay at Agra till the early years of Jahangir's reign. He wrote some other books as well. In the Preface to the present work, he refers to the *Aina-i Haq Numa*, which he had 'very nearly completed' at that time. There are references to other works by him as well. One of these describes the history of St. Peter, another gives the lives of all the Apostles. He is also reported to have translated the *Book of Psalms* into Persian and authored the *Guide of Kings* addressed to Jahangir.

It would be interesting to take note of the circumstances in which the work was written and also the reasons for Akbar's interest in getting such a work written at his court. The evolution of Akbar's religious ideas and the consequent measures adopted by him make for fascinating reading. Virtually a non-conformist in his beliefs, Akbar was open to the teachings and principles of the different faiths of his times - Islam, Christianity, Hinduism, Jainism, Zoroastrianism, et al. His conversations with religious leaders of different denominations, the *Ibadatkhana*

discussions organized by him, the visit of the Jesuit Missions to his court, his interest in *Vedanta* and *Sufism*, all provide evidences of what his official historian, Abul Fazl, calls his 'quest for the truth'.

Akbar was born of Muslim parents belonging to different sects; his early teacher Abdul Latif was deeply impressed by *Sufi* mystic thought; his later advisors Shaikh Mubarak, Faizi and Abul Fazl were remarkably free of orthodox influences; he married Hindu princesses and extended due respect to their religious beliefs and rituals. He realized well that in a pluralistic religio-cultural milieu a policy of tolerance and acceptance of religious diversity was the best possible political course for a ruler. By a happy coincidence, the India of his days bore the strong imprint of the message of goodwill and religious harmony preached by the *Bhaktas* and *Sufis*.

At a different level, this was an age when India's overseas trade with Europe was on the rise. European - Portuguese followed by others - traders and travellers frequented the Indian coast. The Portuguese particularly had set up their colonies in some coastal cities with Goa as the headquarters of the 'Estado da India', even before the Mughals had set foot in India. They firmly believed in winning over converts to their faith and were more than keen to send a delegation of priests to Akbar's court when the latter showed interest in obtaining information about Christianity. Three Jesuit Missions visited Akbar's court at different points of time; the text under review was written during the period of the third Mission's stay at Agra.

We are all aware of Akbar's liberal, tolerant and assimilative outlook and conduct. The present work offers tangible and specific evidence to this effect. It is indeed remarkable that in an era dominated by orthodoxy and fanaticism and characterized by sectarian conflicts and violence, Akbar had the vision to consider different faiths with equal respect and had an equal desire to learn about all of them. This is why Akbar has rightly been called a person who had the courage and boldness to think beyond the temporal and spatial limits of his age.

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Sylheti Nagari: History of a Hidden Script

Utpal Das

During the National Survey of Manuscripts in Barak Valley of Assam, surveyors of the National Mission for Manuscripts came across three manuscripts and a few printed books of late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries written in a very unique script. This script, which is little known even to the residents of the valley and not known at all outside of it, is known as Sylheti Nagari. Upon further investigation, a hidden literary legacy unfolded. This article is the outcome of the investigations made by staff members of NMM's Manuscript Resource Centre, Gurucharan College, Silchar.

Sylheti Nagari, also known as Jalalavadi Nagari, is a confluence of Devnagari script, Bengali alphabets, and Persian-Arabic phonology or words. As may be deduced from its terminology, the script emerged in and around Sylhet, Cachar and in few parts of Mymensingh and Tripura in the medieval period and was employed in written and spoken form, mostly amongst the Muslim population.

In the terrain of predominant Bengali language and literature of medieval Bengal, silent emergence of a new script that rapidly gained popularity as a medium of literary expression in certain sections of general population had a great political significance. Though it is not known from whom and how this script originated, Sylheti Nagari was predominantly used by the Muslims and basically remained popular amongst the Muslims of Sylhet and Cachar. Wide-ranging biographical sketches of Hajrat Muhammad were written in this script, basically to spread Islam. But popular stories from Purana and other Hindu mythology were also written in this script; one such example is *Harivamsa* by Bhavananda.

Emergence

The genesis and evolution of Sylheti Nagari unfolds many trails of hypothetical schools of thought rendered by a few researchers who by

dint of extensive research and scholarship put forward their findings, each contradicting the other.

The advent of Islam in the eastern India took place during the eighth and ninth centuries through the Chittagong harbour. Before the advent of Muslims, Sylhet and its adjoining areas were inhabited by Hindus. Pir Shahjalal and Sikender Khan Ghazi defeated Gaur Govinda, the ruler of the last Hindu Kingdom of Sylhet, in 1303 A.D. The historical facts say that though Shahjalal had a political linkage, actually he was a Sufi saint and widely known as 'Pir Shahjalal'. Shahjalal lived in a place called Jalalavad near Sylhet and used to spread the message of Islam and the glory of Hajrat Muhammad's life to the masses. After Shahjalal, Sylhet was ruled for centuries by many Afghan, Pathan and Mughal rulers. Thus the socio-political scenario of the once Hindu Kingdom of Sylhet and its adjoining areas were completely changed. Many Hindu kings and the royal families were converted into Islam and the common people accepted Islam as well. So it was quite obvious to accept the fact that there was a constant inflow of foreign elements that made inroads into the prevailing written and spoken language of the common people.

As far as a group of researchers the nomenclature-Jalalavadi Nagari has been derived from the name of the place called Jalalavad where Pir Shahjalal used to live. Shahjalal might have adopted this Sylheti Nagari for the first time as a vehicle to spread his messages to the masses and to the newly converted Muslims. Considering the fact that it was hardly possible for the newly converted Muslims and the common populace to grasp Arabic or Perso-Arabic script, he might have intelligently used Perso-Arabic words along with prevailing Bengali language via already existing Devanagari script. In spite of using extensive Perso-Arabic phonetics, probably to attract the attention of

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X	𑒧	𑒛	𑒢	𑒡	𑒠
Y	आ	इ	उ	ए	औ
Z	ā	i	u	e	o

The Vowels, X=Jalalavadi Nagari, Y=Devnagari Z=Roman

X	𑒧	𑒧𑒛	𑒧	𑒛	𑒠	𑒧	𑒛	𑒛	𑒛
Y	क	ख	ग	घ	च	छ	ज	झ	ट
Z	k-	kh-	g-	gh-	c-	ch-	j-	jh-	t-

X	𑒢	𑒛	𑒛	𑒧	𑒛	𑒧	𑒛	𑒛	𑒧
Y	ठ	ड	ढ	त	थ	द	ध	न	प
Z	th-	d-	dh-	t-	th-	d-	dh-	n-	p-

X	𑒧	𑒠	𑒛	𑒧	𑒧	𑒧	𑒧	𑒧	𑒧	𑒧
Y	फ	ब	भ	म	र	ल	व	श	ह	ॠ
Z	ph-	b-	bh-	m-	r-	l-	r-	ś-	h-	m

The Consonants, X=Jalalavadi Nagari, Y=Devnagari, Z=Roman

X	𑒧	𑒛	𑒢	𑒠	𑒛
Y	𑒧	𑒛	𑒢	𑒠	𑒛
Z	-ā sign	-i sign	-u sign	-e sign	-ai sign

The Vowel Signs, X=Jalalavadi Nagari, Y=Devnagari, Z=Roman

X	𑒧𑒛	𑒧𑒛	𑒧𑒛	𑒧𑒛	𑒧𑒛	𑒧𑒛	𑒧𑒛	𑒧𑒛
Y	क़	ख़	ग़	घ़	च़	छ़	ज़	झ़
Z	kk-	kt-	cch-	jj-	j-	tt-	nt-	nd-

X	𑒧𑒛	𑒧𑒛	𑒧𑒛	𑒧𑒛	𑒧𑒛	𑒧𑒛	𑒧𑒛	𑒧𑒛
Y	ब़	भ़	म़	ल़	व़	श़	ह़	ॠ
Z	bb-	mb-	mm-	ll-	śc-	śb-	sk-	st-

The Conjuncts, X=Jalalavadi Nagari, Y=Bengali, Z=Roman

(Source: Bhuiya, A.M. 2000. Jalalavadi Nagari- A Unique Script & Literature of Sylheti Bangla.)

the local populace and to make it more user friendly, the Jalalavadi Nagari was written from left to right unlike other Perso-Arabic languages.

There are other groups of researchers who have different thoughts about the origin of the script. Most of the Afghan or Pathan rulers who came to this part of India with their armies and aulias (Muslim preachers) were in fact migrated from northern and western provinces of India and it is obvious that most of them were Hindi

speaking. Owing to this fact it may be concluded that those Muslims were also conversant with Devanagari and Kaythi scripts. It might happen that they found the prevalent Bengali script tremendously complex and burdened with a large number of Sanskrit words to make them incomprehensible. Moreover, the spoken dialect of Sylhet was radically different from that of mainland Bengal. Probably, this is where the rulers felt the necessity to innovate an easy and



plain new script, which might help the new rulers in administration as well as in spreading Islam among the masses through literary works.

During a very short period of time, the Sylheti Nagari became popular amongst the common people, as it was easy to grasp by them than that of classical Bengali, which prevailed during that time in other parts of Bengal. Though Perso-Arabic words were extensively used, more of the pronunciations were made in local Sylheti-Kachari dialect. That is why, the scholars have observed a limited use of Perso-Arabic phonology in it.

Disappearance

The genesis of Sylheti Nagari can somewhat be compared with the genesis of Urdu of the western India. Initially, Urdu manifested amongst the Muslims of northwestern province where Hindi was written in Arabic character. In course of time, this style of writing was highly enriched by Perso-Arabic words and culminated as a distinct language and spread all over the territories of Muslim dominance. It seems that the Sylheti Nagari was also about to take the same course of development. But Sylheti Nagari's extension was greatly suffered probably due to the strong force of Bengali language and script. According to another view, the increasing popularity of Urdu among the Muslim population of the Sylhet district was also, to a great extent, responsible for the ill growth of Sylheti Nagari. In the words of Padmanath Bhattacharyya Vidyavinod, one of the great scholars of Sylhet and former Professor of Cotton College, Guwahati, "On one hand, there was the local dialect and on the other hand, Arabic, Persian and Urdu of the Muslims. Standing between these, Nagari (Sylheti Nagari) was sandwiched. It lost its lustre and became feeble and distorted".

The script lost its momentum and started decaying due to various socio-political upheavals in the region and eventually remained confined into the folios of a very few paper-made manuscripts in some families of present day Sylhet and Cachar.

The 'nearly archaic' script got a fresh bit of air in the advent of printing technology that appeared in India in the early nineteenth century, when a few scholars and publishers came forward to transform the hand written script into printed form. Amongst the forerunners was

Maulavi Abdul Karim of Sylhet, who modified the customary hand written script a little bit to make it suitable for the print. In and around 1947, a few printing presses such as the Sarada Press and the Islamia Press of Sylhet and the General Printing Press and the Hamidi Press of Calcutta undertook printing of books on Sylheti Nagari. But the drive did not last long, largely due to the partition of India in 1947, during which millions of people were displaced with huge loss of resources Ø human and intellectual.

Manuscripts in Sylheti Nagari

It is very difficult to find out old manuscripts of Sylheti Nagari prior to sixteenth-seventeenth century. The existing manuscripts are also very few in number and deteriorated in condition. The cause of non-availability of hand written manuscripts can be attributed mostly to the use of inferior paper quality. Other factors, such as environmental and biological, are also responsible. Here we can mention about Dr. Md. Abdul Musabbir Bhuiya, Head, Department of Arabic in Assam University, Silchar, who did stupendous work in the field of Sylheti Nagari for his Ph.D research and strived hard to search and collect manuscripts written in Sylheti Nagari Script. He even went to Bangladesh in search of this type of manuscripts and could collect a few of them. He could collect as many as twelve hand written manuscripts from Barak valley region of Assam and Bangladesh. Based on these hand written manuscripts and printed books found in Sylheti Nagari.

These days, a group of young scholars of Sylhet, a few publishers and the Sylhet Academy have come forward to reprint the earlier literature afresh for the promulgation of Sylheti Nagari. The survey of manuscripts under the National Mission for Manuscripts in the Barak Valley of Assam and its adjoining areas in 2005, threw new light on this nearly archaic script. Now we should realize that the learning of this script as well as the study of the manuscripts written in this script will unfold socio-religious history of a so called unexplored region. Sylheti Nagari is not merely a script, there lies memories of the lost world.

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Manuscriptology: An Inseparable Part of Higher Studies

Dilip Kumar Rana

The word 'manuscript' originates from two Latin words: *manu* and *scribere*. *Manu* means by hand and *scribere* or scriptum(s) means to write and thus manuscript means written by hand. The *American People's Encyclopaedia* states, "In archaeology, a manuscript is any early writing on stone, metal, wood, clay, linen, bark and leaves of trees and processed skin of animals such as goat, sheep and calves". To sum up, manuscript is a knowledge-based hand written composition on paper, palm-leaf, birch-bark, cloth, metal, or any other material that has significant scientific, historical, philosophical or aesthetic value. The word 'manuscriptology', a derivative of the word manuscript, refers to the scientific study of manuscripts.

Broadly speaking, the research areas covered by manuscriptology are: survey and cataloguing of manuscripts; collection of manuscripts; date coding; preparation of paper, palm-leaf and other materials; preparation of ink and stylus; study of the history of writing tradition; study of content style; transcription of scripts; development of scripts and alphabet through manuscripts; study of the lives of scribes; study of the methodologies of higher and lower criticisms; reconstruction of texts; translation and interpretation of texts; conservation of manuscripts; application of scientific methods for preservation and storage systems of manuscripts; preparing layouts of museum and archives and their construction for manuscript storage; scientific ways of handling different manuscripts; determining the branch of knowledge to which the content of a manuscript belongs; classification of subjects; ornamentation of manuscripts; study of illustration; writing and copying of manuscripts; description of auspicious and inauspicious applications of *haratala* and different types of correction of errors in addition to all the stages of critically editing the texts and some aspects of printing the texts.

Apart from the above mentioned topics, the study of diplomatic records (diplomas, documents, *farmans*, etc.), palaeography and epigraphy, numismatics, linguistics, astrology and astronomy, archaeology, study of literature, library science, history and history of manuscriptologists like G. Buhler, A.C. Burnell, M.A. Stein, Prof. V. Raghavan and others, research methodology and science of textual criticism play a major role in the study of manuscriptology.

Indian manuscripts are spread all over the country and abroad and are composed in several different languages such as Sanskrit, Pali, Prakrit, Urdu and Persian and regional languages. They are written in scripts such as Brahmi, Sarada, Modi, Newari, Grantha among others. Given India's linguistic diversity and sophistication, many documents are inaccessible because there is a dearth of scholars who have adequate knowledge of the old and obsolete languages and scripts. The number of scholars who can read, decipher, translate, take up research and interpret manuscripts is dwindling day by day. Manuscriptology courses are being taught in very few universities and other academic institutions. The students of ancient history sometimes read only a part of palaeography. In such a situation, it is crucial that capacity-building in terms of training in manuscriptology is taken up by the National Mission for Manuscripts (NMM) on a large scale.

NMM's Endeavour

The Mission seeks to address the problems of dwindling number of scholars and the unavailability of young scholars to take up manuscriptology, through -

- Organizing Primary Level Manuscriptology and Paleography courses of two-three weeks' duration in different parts of the country in collaboration with academic institutions and

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established Manuscript Resource Centres of the NMM.

- Organizing Refresher and Advanced Level courses for those who have already completed Primary Level course.
- Selecting the top few from amongst the successful candidates of the Advanced Level course to be affiliated with the Mission through MRC-s as Grade I and Grade II fellows. Grade I fellows are attached to MRC-s as senior scholars to work on transcribing, collating and critically editing selected manuscripts; while Grade II fellows are given the work of transcription and collation of select manuscripts.

Manuscriptology and Paleography Workshops

To promote the knowledge of ancient scripts and languages, and also to impart skills in transcribing, interpreting and critically editing manuscripts, the Mission has been organizing the manuscriptology and paleography workshops at regular intervals. These are held in different parts of the country in collaboration with MRCs or other reputed institutions. Designed as intensive workshops of two to three weeks' duration, they familiarise students with scripts prevalent in the local area where the particular workshop is organised, as well as ancient scripts such as Brahmi, Sarada, Grantha, Newari, Tigalari, Takari, Tibetan, Maithili, Kaithi, Medieval Bengali, Karani, Old Nagari, Nasq, Kufi, etc., in which large numbers of manuscripts are found everywhere. Trainees are given a clear perception in all aspects of manuscriptology such as collating, editing and indexing. In addition to that, they are trained in different aspects of conservation, especially preventive conservation such as brushing or dusting the manuscripts, handling of manuscripts, paper wrapping, thread binding, preparing mount board, shelving manuscripts, application of indigenous methods and protecting manuscripts from fire, water, etc. Preservation through modern technologies of digitization is also taught. The training is also given on how to locate and select the manuscripts for critical editing, how to catalogue the manuscripts, how to decode the dates, how to prepare the indexes, besides collation, preparation of critical apparatus, editing

manuscript et al. Selected and reputed resource persons teach and guide the students in the workshop.

Advanced Level Course on Manuscriptology and Paleography

To give intensive training, the Mission has been organising advanced courses on manuscriptology and paleography. About fifty students from among the participants of manuscriptology courses are selected for advanced course on manuscriptology and paleography. The Advanced Level course is conducted on select scripts along with practical training on transcription, collation and critical editing, preservation and conservation. In the course, the training is given on preparation of standard critical edition, lower and higher criticism, canons of textual criticism, scribal errors, methods of collations, handling of critical apparatus, acceptance of variant readings, methods of standard editing, history and origin of alphabets in different scripts and languages, deciphering the texts and transcribing for critical editing. Three such courses of one and half months to two months' duration have been conducted so far. The faculty has consisted of the senior scholars in the country representing different disciplines in manuscriptology.

Gurukula System as Third Level Course

This programme directly relates to the research and publication agenda of the Mission and seeks to promote manuscriptology by providing fellowships to young scholars. Emanating out of the advanced course on manuscriptology, this scheme seeks to identify about thirty young scholars, choosing the best talent from the courses. Out of them, ten (five from conducted courses and five from universities) would be Grade I Fellows, who will be attached simultaneously to an MRC and to a senior scholar (*guru*) in manuscriptology with fellowship of rupees twelve thousand per month for twelve to fifteen months and a one-time contingency grant of rupees thirty thousand. Each of the selected scholars is engaged to select, transcribe, collate and critically edit a manuscript under the strict supervision of the senior scholar. The scholars have to reside at respective centres with the *gurus* (teachers). When the critical editing is over, if found satisfactory, the text can be considered by the Mission for publication.

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A folio from *Parshwanath Charitra* on Palm-leaf, preserved at L.D. Institute of Indology, Ahmedabad

Twenty students (ten from conducted courses and ten from universities), who are accepted as Grade II Fellows are entrusted with the task of transcribing four to five important manuscripts into more accessible scripts and languages. The chosen texts should be unpublished and rare with scientific, aesthetic or historical value. Each scholar is required to choose at least three to five different texts with a total of about two thousand five hundred to three thousand folios, and collate important texts under the supervision of a senior scholar (*guru*). Such a scholar is required to work for twelve to fifteen months, with a fellowship of rupees eight thousand per month. These schemes are designed to ensure the creation of a new generation of manuscriptologists. A sum of honorarium of rupees five thousand is given to each guru.

The Mission has already organized nine Basic Level workshops in different parts of the country and trained about five hundred students, who are engaged in research work in universities or associated with Manuscript Resource Centres of the NMM. From among the successful candidates of Primary Level course, eighty were selected for Advanced Level course and trained accordingly during the two Advanced Level courses conducted by the Mission. Again, from these students, fifteen have been selected for the Gurukula Programme and engaged in six Gurukula Centres established across the country. Fifteen more scholars from different universities are scheduled to join the Gurukula Centres shortly. In the current year, the Mission seeks to conduct eight more Primary Level workshops on manuscriptology and paleography.

Manuscriptology in Academic Institutions

As a part of our endeavour we requested the UGC authorities and the Vice Chancellors of

different universities to initiate manuscriptology and paleography courses in universities at three possible levels: six month certificate course, one year diploma course and two year advanced diploma course or regular master's degree.

If this kind of programme is taken up by universities with the initiative coming from the apex body, the University Grants Commission, it would be much more effective and would ensure that the manuscript wealth of India does not lie unnoticed or unused.

To promote the importance of manuscriptology at the universities, courses could be introduced in regular Bachelor's, Master's and M. Phil. programmes. We also have requested the UGC authorities and the vice chancellors to create some posts like Curator (incharge of manuscript section or repository), Conservator and Conservation Assistant (responsible for the conservation work), Scribe (who will transcribe the texts from one script to another), Manuscript Assistant (responsible for cataloguing, collating and searching references and to help curator), Manuscript Editor (responsible for critical editing works) and Preservation Officer (responsible for microfilming, digitization and other preservation works) apart from teaching staff.

This course of study can not be developed and students will not take interest in further study unless this is not attached with the employment and profession. Manuscriptology as a separate study group should be allowed by the UGC for NET candidates as a regular subject. We feel that courses such as this will provide the right platform for students from a variety of fields, be it sciences or humanities, to explore the knowledge in manuscripts. Further, this will certainly add value to their academic credentials. In many universities abroad, this scientific



University / Institute	Course
1. Jawaharlal Nehru University, Delhi	M.A.
2. Sri Lalbahadur Shastri Rashtriya Sanskrit Vidyapith	M.A., Certificate
3. University of Pune, Pune	Certificate, Diploma
4. Tamil University, Thanjavur	Diploma
5. Osmania University, Hyderabad	P.G. Diploma
6. University of Hampi, Hampi	M.A., M. Phil.
7. University of Madras, Chennai	Diploma
8. University of Mysore, Mysore	M.A., P.G. Diploma
9. The Institute of Asian Studies, Chennai	Diploma
10. Dr. Bhim Rao Ambedkar University	M.A.
11. University of Kerala, Thiruvananthapuram	As elective subject in M.A. M. Phil.
12. Madurai Kamraj University, Madurai	M.A.
13. Bangalore University, Bangalore	M.A.
14. Rashtriya Sanskrit Vidyapith, Tirupati	M.A., M. Phil.
15. K.J. Somaiya Center of Buddhist Studies, Mumbai	Diploma
16. Sree Sankaracharya University of Sanskrit, Keladi	M. Phil.
17. Sri H. S. Gour University, Sagar	Certificate
18. University of Rajasthan, Jaipur	M.A. Diploma
19. Rashtriya Sanskrit Sansthan, New Delhi	Diploma
20. University of Bombay, Mumbai	Certificate/Diploma in Persian mss. study
21. Jadavpur University, Kolkata	Diploma
22. University of Calcutta, Kolkata	M. Phil.

subject group is being taught as a regular subject.

It is worthy to mention here that recently a number of universities have come up with good response and introduced the course on manuscriptology and paleography. Students are also showing interest to study this subject after completing their graduation or post graduation. The course on manuscriptology and paleography has been introduced in different levels in the following universities and academic institutions: Apart from these universities, some other universities have introduced Bachelor's Degree in Library and Manuscriptology course of one year duration. The introduction of this course in the programme of higher studies is a great challenge for the young generation. A perceptible knowledge in manuscriptology will equip them with necessary skills to proceed with the study of manuscripts on different subject groups and different branches of knowledge system in Indian tradition. As a result, the new generation will

witness the emergence of a cluster of accomplished specialists with the skills that are necessary for independent archival research with original historical documents.

Dilip Kumar Rana is Assistant Director, National Mission for Manuscripts

Answers to the Quiz

1. One thousand eight hundred *slokas* and twelve *skandhas*
2. Guru Arjan Dev, the fifth Guru
3. Between twenty and twenty five degrees centigrade
4. Indica
5. Bharatmuni
6. Seven
7. Latin
8. Champu
9. *Akshasukta*
10. V. Raghavan

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Turfan Sanskrit Manuscripts: An Overview

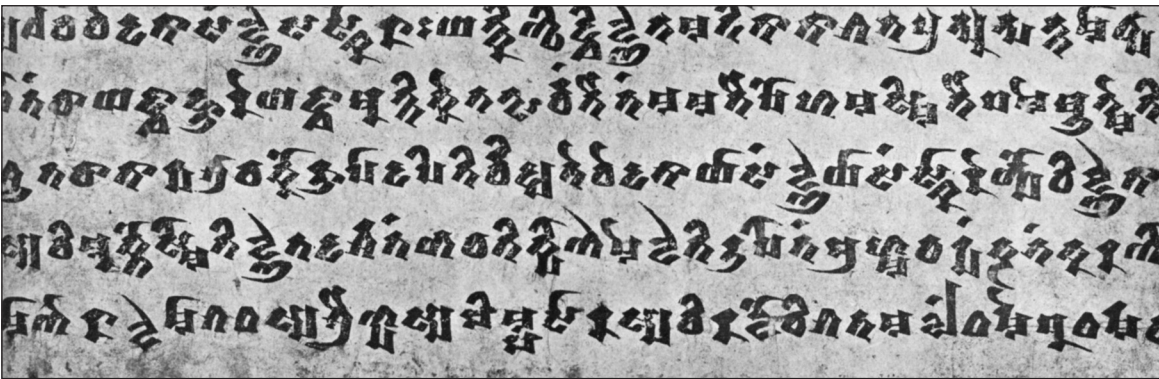
Satkari Mukhopadhyaya

Turfan or Tulufan, as called in Chinese, is an oasis in the Sinkiang region of the Chinese Turkistan. Located between forty degree north and forty three degree north latitudes and eighty eight degree east and ninety degree east longitudes, the Turfan oasis and its adjacent areas are famous for their archaeological sites. For many centuries this region has been drawing the attention of explorers. Throughout late nineteenth century and early twentieth century, there have been many explorations to the Turfan oasis from Russia, Finland, Germany, Japan and China, leading the discovery and discourse around some excellent art and manuscript collections. Though we call the manuscripts the Turfan collection, it is significant to remember that all the manuscripts were not discovered in one place. They were found in a number of sites in and around Turfan Oasis - Tumsuq, Kuca region, Sorcuq, Turfan Oasis. The Turfan manuscript collection is unique not only in its bulk, but also in the use of a variety of languages, scripts and subjects. They belong to three religious traditions, viz, Buddhist, Manichaeon and Christian (in particular Nestorian Christian).

The sheer range of the languages and scripts used in these manuscripts is commendable. The manuscripts are written in nineteen languages and eighteen scripts. It is interesting to note that

at times one language is written in several scripts. The following table will show the distribution of languages and scripts in the Turfan collection:

	Languages	Scripts
1	Greek	Greek
2	Hebrew	Hebrew
3	Syriac	Nestorian
4	Sogdian	Sogdian, Manichaea, Nestorian
5	Parthian	Manichaeon, Sogdian, Ruic
6	Middle Persian	Manichaeon, Sogdian, Runic, Pahlavi
7	New Persian	Hebrew, Manichaeon, Nestorian, Arabic
8	Bactrian	Hepthalic
9	Khotanese	Brahmi
10	Tumsukian	Brahmi
11	Sanskrit	Brahmi, Pala
12	Prakrit	Brahmi, Kharosthi
13	Tokharian A	Brahmi
14	Tokharian B	Manichaeon, Br_hmi
15	Old Turki	Manichaeon, Sogdan, Uigur, Runic, Pahlavi, Arabic, Tibetan, Phags-pa, Brahmi
16	Mongolian	Phags-pa, Mongolian, Brahmi
17	Chinese	Sogdian, Uigur, Tibetan, Chinese



A folio from the *Chatusparisatsutra* in North Turkistanese Brahmi (B) VI

Kriti Rakshana



- 18 Tungutese Tungutese
19 Tibetan Uigur, Tibetan

The Sanskrit manuscripts in the Turfan collection are written in Brahmi script and its different variations. In total there are twelve types of Brahmi which are listed below:

- I. Kushana Brahmi
- II. Indian Brahmi
- II. Turkistanese Brahmi
- IV. Early Turkistanese Brahmi
- V. North Turkistanese Brahmi-A
- VI. North Turkistanese Brahmi-B
- VII. South Turkistanese Brahmi
- SI. Brahmi of Gilgit-Bamiyan Type
- SII. Sarada Script
- SIII. Pala Script
- SN. Special Type of Brahmi
- SV. South Indian Script

(The specimen of all the above types may be seen in the plates published in *Sanskrithandschriften aus den Turfanfunden*, Parts 1-8. An analytical study with tables of these scripts is there in Lore Aander, *Palagaphisches zu den Sanskrithandschriften des Berliner Turfan-sammlung*, Wiesbaden, 1968)

The Turfan Sanskrit manuscripts are in the possession of the Berlin-Brandenburgische Akademik der Wissenschaften and preserved in the Staatsbibliothek, Berlin.

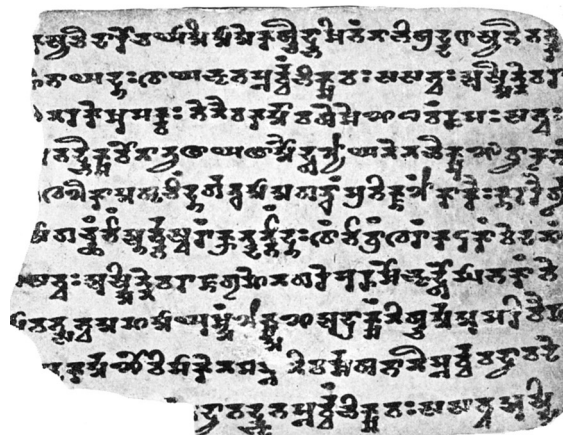
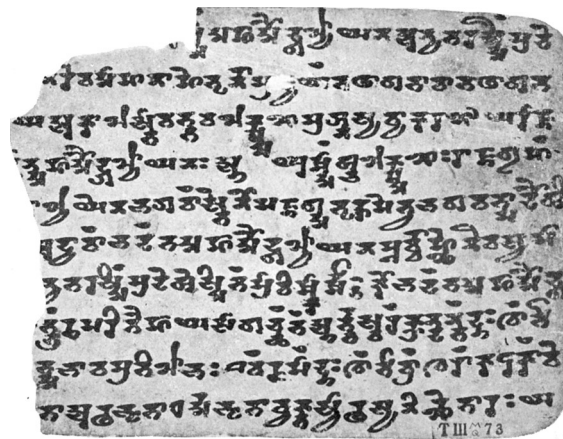
Explorations of the Turfan Manuscripts

Russia, it is believed, had been the pioneer in exploring the Sinkiang region. The earliest expedition was started by the botanist Johann Albert Regel of St. Petersburg in 1879. Regel's successors carried on several expeditions till 1915 and collected a large number of artifacts.

However, it was Sergei Federovich Oldenburg, another Russian explorer, who during his second expedition (1914-1915) explored Dunhuang and made his greatest discovery of ten thousand well preserved manuscripts from a cave. These manuscripts are now preserved in the Oriental Institute, a branch of the Russian Academy of Sciences in St. Petersburg. Among others, the Finish expedition deserves special mention. Finish Baron Carl Gustav-Mannerheim, in course of his military and intelligence assignments, visited Turfan and adjacent areas in 1902-1914. At that time Finland was, of course, a part of the Russian Empire. He acquired quite a good number of manuscripts in fragments. They are

mostly in Chinese, Uigur and Tibetan languages; some in Sogdian and one in middle Persian. The middle Persian text has been published by N. Sims-Williams and H. Helen (*Studia Orientalia*, 51:13, Helsinki 1980, pp. 1-11). Mannerheim's manuscripts are in the possession of the Finno-Ugrian Society and preserved in the Helsinki University Library.

It was, however, the German explorers, who under the auspices of the Museum fuer Voelkerkunde in Berlin (Berlin Ethnological Museum), led four expeditions to Sinkiang. They visited the Turfan Oasis and a few adjacent areas, such as Kucha, Qurashahr and Tumshuq. The four German expeditions spanned from November 1902 to February 1914, leading to the unearthing of some of the most exquisite manuscript collections and wall paintings. The details of the four expeditions are as follows:



Folios from *Samyuktagama* in Kushana Brahmi Script, Discovered in Qizil

Kriti Rakshana



1. November 1902 - March 1903, Leader: Prof. Albert Gruenwedel, Route: Kulja-Urumci-Turfan Oasis (Quco, Bezeklik, Sangim, Toyuk). The achievements of the first German expedition may be summed up as
 (i) Survey of the archaeological sites in the area;
 (ii) Reproduction of wall paintings;
 (iii) Collection of manuscript fragments either digging up from the ruins or buying from the local people. Most important of these manuscripts are Middle Iranian texts in Manichaean script, Iranian and old Turkish texts in Sogdian and Uigur scripts and fragments of manuscripts in Brahmi script.

2. September 1904 - December 1905, Leader: Dr. Albert von Le Coq, Route: Urumci-Turfan Oasis (Qoso, Yarkhoto), Kasghar. The findings of the second German expedition may be divided into two groups:
 (i) Art objects - Buddhist wall paintings of very high quality and good number. They were removed from the Bezeklik caves and brought to Berlin in perfect state of preservation;
 (ii) Manuscripts - quite a large number of manuscripts in fragments were found and brought to Berlin. Many of them were discovered from a library in ruin in Qocho and many others from Sangim, Toyuq and Yarkhoto. From ancient Christian site of Pang near Bulayiq and Hami, manuscripts in Syriac, old Turkish, middle and new Persian, Sogdian, etc. were collected.

3. December 1905 - June 1907, Leader: Prof. Gruenwedel, Route: Kasghar, Tumsuq, Qizil, Kusa, Kumtura, Turfan Oasis, Urumci, Hami, Toyug. Among the results of the Third Expedition, besides the art objects, mention must be made of the Indian manuscripts and manuscripts in the languages called Tokharian A and Tokharian B which were found in the Oasis of Qarashahr. During the expedition, some Buddhist Sanskrit and Buddhist Sogdian manuscripts were collected. From Muiutuq, a good number of Manichaean and other manuscripts were collected.

4. January 1913 - February 1914, Leader: Albert von Le Coq, Route: Kashghar, Kucha, Qizil, Kiris, Simsim, Qumtura, Tumsuq. During the fourth expedition many wall

paintings were removed and brought to Berlin. Many Iranian and other texts were also collected.

Documentation of Turfan Sanskrit Manuscripts: Past and Challenges

The Germans took up a coordinated project for documenting all the oriental manuscripts in Germany. The output of this project is being published in the volumes under the series *Verzeichnis der Orientalischen Handschriften in Deutschland*. The documentation of Turfan Sanskrit manuscripts forms a part of this project named *Sanskrithandschriften aus den Turfanfunden*. So far eight parts of this catalogue have been published. These have been compiled and edited by noted German Orientalists Ernst Waldsmidt, Walter Clawiter, Lore Sander-Holzman and Heinz Bechert. It has already been mentioned that all the Sanskrit manuscripts discovered in Central Asia and brought over to Berlin are in fragmented condition. Some of the fragments are nothing but small pieces. It is, therefore, a formidable task to document all these fragments by deciphering the texts contained therein. It is not very easy to decipher the texts that are written in a variety of Brahmi characters and identify them by collating and comparing with parallel or similar texts. Up to the end of the seventh volume, as many as 1799 fragments have been documented.

The format of the documentation is also unique, which may be considered to be a model for descriptive documentation of manuscripts. Each entry in the catalogue contains the following elements:

- (1) material information (paper, palm leaf, etc.),
- (2) format, (3) measurements, (4) number of folios or pages, (5) script, (6) provenance
- (7) expedition during which the particular manuscript was discovered (for example, Third Turfan Expedition), (8) extracts (or even complete text in cases of relatively small fragments), (9) critical notes and variants, and
- (10) if published, bibliographical details of the publication. Each volume of the Catalogue contains quite a few plates showing photographs of original folios of the manuscripts. The scripts are named as per the classification of scripts in Lore Sander's *Palaeographie*.

Significance of Turfan Manuscripts

The Turfan manuscripts form a vital portion of



the Sanskrit works on Buddhism. It is a widespread misconception that the entire religious-philosophical literature of Buddhism is written in Pali. In fact, Pali is the language of the canonical and post-canonical literature of the Theravadi Buddhist sect. Other sects of Buddhism, such as the Hinayana and the Mahayana, which prevailed in Northern India and in second century onwards proceeded up to the central Asian countries, used classical Sanskrit and sometimes Sanskrit mixed with Prakrit (now-a-days called Hybrid Buddhist Sanskrit). The Buddhist Sanskrit literature, canonical and non-canonical, was however, vast and much of this vast Sanskrit literature had been translated into Tibetan since eighth century AD and Chinese since second century AD. Tuhoku Catalogue (a complete catalogue of the Tibetan Buddhist canon), Bkahlgyur and Bstan-hgyur, edited by Hakuja Ui, Sndai (Japan), Tohoku Imperial University, 1934, records four thousand five hundred sixty nine such translations and Nanjio Catalogue (a catalogue of the Chinese translation of the Buddhist Tripitaka: Sacred Canon of the of the Buddhists in China and Japan/ Bunyiu Nanjio, Oxford, 1883) records one thousand six hundred sixty two translations.

Most of the manuscripts of Sanskrit works had been stored in libraries of renowned viharas, such as Nalanda, Vikramshila, Udantapura, which had been destroyed by repeated invasions in this area. A few survivals of this literature are:

1. *Mahayanasutras*, *Vajrayana* works, poetical compositions, etc., preserved in Nepal
2. Original Sanskrit manuscripts preserved in the Sholu Monastery of Tibet, photographs of some of which were brought to India by Mahapandita Rahul Sankrityayan
3. Texts discovered in the Gilgit region, known as Gilgit Buddhist manuscripts, containing *inter alia* important Buddhist texts such as the *Samadhirajasutra* and the *Mulasarvastivadavinayavastu*
4. The Turfan Sanskrit texts.

Among various northern sects of Buddhism, the Sarvastivada and its reformed form Mulasarvastivada had once been very popular and vibrant sects of Buddhism which penetrated China and West Turkistan. Both these sects had their own canons containing the *Vinaya-pitaka*

and the *Sutra-pitaka*. The *Sutra-pitaka* books of the Sarvastivada were known as *Dirghagama*, *Madhyamagama*, *Samyuktagama*, *Ekottaragama* and *Kshudrakagama*. These texts had been known, before Turfan discovery, only through their Chinese translations. The Turfan manuscripts contain many parts, though in fragmented condition, of these canonical works in original Sanskrit.

The most important text discovered in Central Asia is the *Udanavarga*, believed to be a part of the *Sutra-pitaka*. *Udanavarga* is the parallel text of the Pali *Dhammapada*, though longer than the latter. The *Dhammapada* has twenty six chapters whereas the *Udanavarga* has thirty three chapters. *Udanavarga* is a compilation of *Buddhavachanas* (sayings of the Buddha); the compilation is ascribed to Bhiksu Dharmatrata of the first century AD. The edition of the text, prepared by Franz Bernherd (1931-1971) consulting various fragments discovered in different places, is a model of critical scholarship in the field of Buddhist textual studies. Mention can also be made of the *Varnarha- varnastotra* of Matricheta, the *Karmavachana* and the *Mahaparinirvanasutra* of the Mulasarvastivadins. All these so far believed to have been lost and hence forgotten; Sanskrit Buddhist texts have come to light through the Turfan expeditions.

Turfan Sanskrit manuscripts are, beyond doubt, of Indian origin and if not, then also they are very much related to Indian history, religion and culture. It is important that digitisation projects for these manuscript collections be undertaken, which would preserve for India significant fragments of her cultural heritage.

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If you have any queries or comments on any article or would like to tell us what you think about *Kriti Rakshana*, do let us know at director.namami@nic.in, or at Publications Division, NMM, No. 5, Rajendra Prasad Road, New Delhi – 110001. *Kriti Rakshana* is also available online and may be downloaded from www.namami.nic.in.

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The Word is Sacred: Sacred is the Word Exhibiting Indian Manuscripts at the Frankfurt Book Fair

Vaibhav Chauhan

An exhibition of manuscripts brings forth multiple expressions of a nation into focus – its history, its thought, its imagination, and not the least, its will to preserve for posterity the many creative impulses of bygone ages. It is with this understanding that the Mission set forth organizing an exhibition of Indian manuscripts, a richly textured collection of words, images and artifacts, embodying the written heritage of the Indian subcontinent. Displayed in this exhibition are manuscripts from all corners of India, from a wide range of repositories – textual and visual engagements representing various knowledge systems of the past. The ultimate aim is to bring to the spectators these treatises not for their knowledge value alone, but the art, stylistics and ‘culture’ that went into the creation, preservation and celebration of the ‘word’.

The knowledge heritage of India has been an integral part of the discourse in the West in the eighteenth and the

Flow of the Exhibition

The exhibition develops around six different cores, spanning different aspects of a manuscript, material, process, knowledge, purpose, stylistics and poetics

- ◆ **From Clay to Copper**
An overview of the materials/surfaces on which texts were written: clay, bamboo leaves, metal, palm-leaf, birch-bark, ivory, textile etc.
- ◆ **The Making of a Manuscript**
Different objects used in the making of a manuscript, especially writing instruments, inkpots, lamps, book-rests, bindings, samples of papers, palm-leaf, birch-bark etc.
- ◆ **Fields of Learning**
The range of objects covered in simple looking manuscripts: religion/philosophy/ mathematics/ *arthashastra*/ astronomy/ astrology/ *kamashastra*/ cosmology/ medicine/ botany/ literary works/ calligraphy etc.
- ◆ **Veneration, Submission, Worship**
Majuli installation, Dasam Granth, Quran scrolls, piles of manuscripts as used in *Saraswati/ guru puja*
- ◆ **Word and Image**
Mostly illustrated manuscripts: *Kalpasutra*, *Razmnama*, *Rasamanjari*, *Sangrahani Sutra*, *Mysore Ramayana* etc.
- ◆ **Royal Commands and Humble Offerings**
Farmans, grants, *pandas' pothis* etc.

nineteenth centuries, Germany being one of the foremost countries to have engaged with the cultural heritage of India. This history makes this exhibition more significant, a return, so to say, to the knowledge cultures of India's past.

The Exhibition of Indian manuscripts at the celebrated Frankfurt Book Fair (where India is the ‘Guest of Honour’ this year) features about hundred manuscripts from fourteen repositories across the country is one of the first of its kind to be held in Germany. The Exhibition titled The Word is Sacred: Sacred is the Word will be held at the Museum fuer Angewandte Kunst in Frankfurt, Germany from 1 October 2006 to 7 January 2007. A three month long event, the exhibition is the first of its kind, since it is for the first time that an exhibition exclusively on Indian manuscripts is being held outside India.

*Vaibhav Chauhan is
Conservator, NMM and
Co-coordinator of the
Exhibition*

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