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Palm leaf manuscripts inheritance of Odisha: A historical survey

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Introduction

Odisha was well-known as Kalinga, Kosala, Odra and Utkala during ancient days. Altogether these independent regions came under one administrative control which was known as Utkala and subsequently Orissa. The name of Utkala has been mentioned in Mahabharata, Ramayana and Puranas. The existence of Utkala as a kingdom is found in Kalidas's Raghuvamsa. It is stated that king Raghu after having crossed the river Kapisa reached the Utkala country and finally went to Kalinga. The earliest epigraphic evidence to Utkaladesa is found from the Midnapur plate of Somdatta which includes Dandabhukti within its jurisdiction¹. The plates record that while Sasanka was ruling the earth, his feudatory Maharaja Somadatta was governing the province of Dandabhukti adjoining the Utkala-desa. The Kelga plate 8 indicate s that Udyotakesari's son and successors of Yayati ruled about the 3rd quarter of eleventh century, made over Kosala to prince named Abhimanyu and was himself ruling over Utkala After the down-fall of the Matharas in Kalinga, the Gangas held the reins of administration in or about 626-7 A. D. They ruled for a long period of about five hundred years, when, at last, they extended their power as far as the Gafiga by sujugating Utkala in or about 1112 A. D. Afterwards, they shifted their capital from Kalinga-nagara (modern Mukhalingam) to VirSijasi-kataka (modern Cuttack) on the bank of the Mahanadi. In spite of the fact that the Ganga-kingdom had touched the banks of the Gang! In the north, there is no trace of any inscriptional record, relating to either Chodaganga or his sons, towards the north of the district of Purl. This mistery remains obscure as yet. A large number of Ganga- inscriptional are found in the temples of Driksharim, Sri Kurmam, Mnkhalinga, Nilakaqthesvara, Lingaraja and Markapdesvara, Except the last two which are in Orissa, the rest remain in the present Andhra and in the old Madras Province.

History of the Palmleaf Manuscripts of Odisha

Palmleaves as writing material was not only used in India but also in Sri Lanka and Thailand. However, it was very popular in India, particularly in Odisha because of the availability of good quality palm leaves for writing. It is difficult to date exactly the antiquity of palmleaf manuscripts of Odisha. However, we get the earliest evidence of an autographed Buddhist manuscript of Avatamsakasutra dated A.D. 795, sent by the Bhaumakara king Subhakaradeva of Wu-Cha (Odisha) to the Chinese emperor Te-Tsang. The palmleaf manuscript tradition continued in Odisha upto the 19th century. The rich tradition of Oriya palmleaf manuscripts came to limelight after the British occupation of Odisha in 1803. The British administrators showed their keen interest for the collection of palmleaf manuscripts and their publication. Andrew Sterling was the first scholar to mention regarding his collection of pothis in 1804. Rev. James Long visited in 1859 Odisha and surveyed the manuscripts which he published in the Asiatic Society of Bengal. Colonel Colin Mackenzie, the Surveyor General of India who collected a large number of manuscripts in South India with a missionary zeal sent Telugu and Tamil Pundits to Odisha in 1914 for collection of manuscripts. In 1920, Mackenzie himself visited Odisha and collected large number of manuscripts which are preserved in the Oriental Manuscript Library at Chennai. Among them, the most important and valuable manuscripts

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¹. Historical Geography and Dynastic History of Orissa - P.54

were transferred to the India Office Library, London. In the meantime, also large number of manuscripts were collected and sent to the Asiatic Librray, Calcutta. In this process, Odisha lost rich quantity of manuscripts for times to come.

In 1870s, when the Oriya language was going through the critical period for its survival, attempts were made for the collection of Oriya manuscripts and their publications. In this regard, Utkal Dipika and Oriya literary societies had played an important role for the publication of Oriya palmleaf manuscripts. For the first time John Beams, the then Collector of Balasore wrote an article on Kavya Rasa Kollola from the palmleaf manuscript and published in Indian Antiquity in 1872 for the English readers. Thereafter W.W. Hunter, Rajendralal Mitra, M.M. Chakravarty wrote many articles in Journal of Asiatic Society, Bengal on the Oriya language and literature. Even Hunter wrote History of Orissa on the basis of Madaḷa Panji, the palmleaf manuscript preserved in the Jagannath temple at Puri. In 1877, Oriya Talapatra Sahitya Udharana Company was formed under the presidentship of Babu Baidyanatha Pandita Rayabahadur. The main aim and objective of this company was to publish and sell all the Oriya palmleaf manuscripts. In the early part of 20th century, under the initiative of Artaballava Mohanty systematic attempts were made for the collection and editing of palmleaf manuscripts with the foundation of Prachi Samiti in 1924. In the Post-independence period mainly Odisha Sahitya Academy, Department of Culture, Government of Odisha and different universities of Odisha have continued the collection and publication work. Even some foreign scholars through research projects have published a number of palmleaf manuscripts.

Oriya Palmleaf Manuscript - The Text

In Odisha mostly we find palmleaf manuscripts relating to Veda, Purana, Tantra, Ayurveda, Jyotisa Sastra and Kavyas. The texts of the manuscripts can be divided into four parts.16 They are (1) Mangala Charana or prayer to Gods and Goddesses, (2) the main theme or text, (3) the conclusion or end, (4) Pushpika or the colophon which is most important to know about the details of the author, date and place of composition. It provides" information about the writer or scribe who generally describe themselves as ignorant, not much knowledgeable and about their birth and family genealogy. Further, it provides personal details of the scribe, parents, teachers, the place and date of completion of manuscript. Sometimes the religious belief, socio-economic condition, contemporary political condition have been also mentioned.

Writing Materials - Palmleaves and Stylus

Since best quality of palmleaves are available in Odisha, they can be used directly for scribing. Palmleaves are processed through various techniques to make them fit for scribing. Traditionally people followed a lengthy process to make them smooth and durable for preservation. In this regard M.M. Chakravarty, a British colonial official at Jajpur in the 19th century has given an account of the preparation of plamleaf manuscript. He has mentioned that leaves of palmleaf of three to four months old are collected for processing. Then they were processed through three techniques known as balikasa, haldikasa and amani. In the balikasa process the leaves were buried under sand for a day with sprinkling of water over sand. After that the leaves further put into turmeric solution (haldikasa) and then were further put into sour boiled rice water (amani) for half an hour. These processes made the

leaves seasoned, elastic, durable and dark. After that they were exposed to the sun or air for drying. Then number of leaves required for a manuscript were selected and a hole was made on the top of the middle portion of boring through aphodani in which a thick thread (nadi) was inserted for binding the leaves. Two wooden covers (patali) are made to put them at the both ends of the manuscript for protection. The thread was of two to five feet long to wind the leaves for several times. When the leaves were ready for a manuscript the edges of the leaves are to be cut by a sharp iron instrument.

A graphic analysis of odisha palm leaf manuscripts

The language, used in this inscription, appears to be Oriya. It is one of the few inscriptions where Oriya-Prakrit had been adopted during that period. In the year of 1925 H.Krishna Sastri², the Government Epigraphist for India had admitted that the texts of the Oriya inscriptions were tentative for want of published inscriptions in that language and script and also scholars capable of handling them were few. Seems to be an Oriya expression for which means 'at the time of' a similar word is also used in Tamil.

This great tradition from about 10th Century A.D., as is evident from the epigraphic reference to Oriya language & Kutila script found in an inscribed sculpture of Jaina monk-Kumarasena discovered from Gandhi-bedha in Balasore district. They formed the treasure house of wisdom and knowledge on different aspects of Odisha history, culture, artistic & architectural legacy. Because of the easy availability of palmleaf in abundance in Odisha, the palmleaf manuscript culture became very popular through ages. It also becomes easy to scribe and engrave different subject matters with an iron stylus. The Oriya writing due to its round & linear shape, facilitated the growth and development of palmleaf manuscript writing & this tradition even continues till the present days.

Interestingly, the European scholars were greatly attracted to study the Oriya palmleaf manuscript collections during the nineteenth century. Rev J. Long published the first research article in the Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal and subsequently scholars like Col. Makenji, Sir John Beams, the-then Collector of Balasore, R. L. Mitra, M. M. Chakravarti, H. P. Shastri and Prof. Macdonel etc. contributed significantly to the study and research of palmleaf manuscript tradition of Odisha which threw a flood of new light on the manifold aspects of variegated and glowing Odisha Culture. After Odisha became a separate province in 1936, a series of serendipities & reconnaissance works were taken up to prepare a list of palmleaf manuscripts found preserved under different agencies through the help of local Pandits and as many as 15 thousand titles were recorded out of which 11 thousand are now available in Odisha State Museum. Education Department, Govt. of Orissa thereafter, collected a large variety of palmleaf manuscripts with the initiative of Prof. G. S. Dash & Prof. N. Banerji with the assistance of Prachi Samiti under the banner of newly founded Ravenshaw college Museum. Scholars like Padmasree Paramananda Acharya, Purna Chandra Rath & Kedarnath Mohapatra contributed enormously in their official and individual capacity to the enrichment of palmleaf manuscript collection. When the Ravenshaw College Museum was shifted to Bhubaneswar during 1947- 48 Sri P. Acharya the - then

². Preface to the V volume of the South Indian Inscriptions in 1925

Superintendent of Odisha State Museum & K. N. Mohapatra the - then curator of Manuscripts opened a separate section of manuscripts in the Museum.

This has now proliferated into an institution of international reputation with about 40 thousand manuscripts comprising 6 sections, Manuscripts have been classified under 27 subjects namely:

1. Veda, 2. Tantra, 3. Jyotisha, 4. Dharmasastra, 5. Ayurveda, 6. Ganita, 7. Silpasastra, 8. Samgita, 9. Abhidhana, 10. Vyakarana, 11. Sanskrit Purana, 12. Sanskrit Kavya, 13. Alamkara, 14. Bengali (Sanskrit), 15. Bengali, 16. Devanagari, 17. Oriya Purana, 18. Oriya Kavya, 19. Oriya Prose, 20. Oriya Historical Literature, 21. Sanskrit Paper Manuscripts, 22. Oriya Paper Manuscripts, 23. Arabic Manuscripts, 24. Darsana Manuscripts, 25. Telugu manuscripts, 26. Copied Manuscripts and 27. Illustrated Manuscripts.

Manuscript collection center

Simultaneously Sambalpur University, Berhampur University and Utkal University have opened their manuscript collections. Dr. N. K. Sahu organised a palmleaf manuscript section in Sambalpur. This has developed into a palmleaf manuscript library of Sambalpur University which has in its collection manuscripts covering a wide range of subjects. They are Veda, Grammer, Tantra, Astronomy, Medicine, Religion, Philosophy, Alankara, Epics, Puranas etc. Among these the illustrated palmleaf of Bhagavata has evoked great interest from the scholars and Indologists of India and abroad as well. Berhampur University has also a number of rare collections of manuscripts including that of renowned poet Upendra Bhanja. Many private organisations like Raghunandan Library at Puri, Banchhanidhi Library, Nayagarh, Saintala College, District Bolangir & Veshaja Patel College of Duduka, Sundargarh, Titilagarh College, Titilagarh, Individual collection of Sri Jitmitra Singh Deo, Khariar, Dileswar Patel of Kantapali, Dist. Jharsuguda, Dr. M. K. Misra of Kalahandi and Sri D. Pattnaik of Bhubaneswar have housed different varieties of palmleaf manuscripts. In the arena of Indian philosophy, Oriya palmleaf manuscript writers have carved out a permanent niche for themselves. Since the advent of Buddhism, philosophers like Dharmakirti, Kavidindima, Jivadevacharya, Acharya Narsimha Vajpeyi, Gaudiya philosopher Baldev Vidyabhusan, Indrabhuti, Laxmikara etc. have contributed greatly in this field of study. Oriya dictionaries that were composed in Odisha such as Trikanda Sesha and Haravali of Purusottama Dev and Medini Kosha of Medini Kara have received wide recognition in India since early medieval times.

The Vedic manuscript collection of Odisha State Museum are not that large as because people are orthodox in nature and reluctant to part with their traditional individual collections because till date people of Odisha perform Vedic rites & rituals as per the diction of Vedic manuscripts. Therefore, unlike Bengal, Vedic palmleaf manuscripts are found in plenty in almost every Oriya house. Some manuscripts of Yajurveda & Atharvaveda have been brought from Midnapur district of West Bengal, Characters of these manuscripts are Oriya in content & nature which hints that originally they had been written by Oriya pandits & script writers. It is also a known fact that Midnapur region was part of Odisha till ancient times. M. M. Shastri has mentioned the names of great Pandits like Jalesvara Misra, Bhaskara Parivrajaka and Haladhara who wrote valuable commentaries on the Vedic works. Late Pandit D. N. Bhattacharya, an erudite scholar of

Bengal was fortunate to get a complete of manuscript of the Paippalada Sakha of the Atharva Veda from Jagannathpur in the District of Puri which was not available in any other part of India. A few kandas of this unique Vedic work have been published so far. There are a number of these manuscripts in our collection containing different archas (chapters). There are three manuscripts containing Sayana's Bhasya on the Kanvasamhita of which one is complete in twenty one chapters of its second part of Bhasya. Our collection is not enriched by the acquisition of the manuscripts of different Brahmanas of the Yajurveda Upanisads, Tapinis and Angirasakalpa of the Atharvaveda, some of which are as yet unknown to the scholars. Orissa was a popular Centre of Tantric cult from 6th century A.D. Baladeva Rath & Gaurahari Parichha etc. contributed enormously to the Oriya Literary enthusiasm of this era. Their activities inspired a number of followers to compose more creative compositions in the field of art & literature. They are Pitambar Deva's Akhila Ratha Chintamani, Kesava Ratha's Ananga Ragini, Anuraga kalpalata of Shyamasundar Deva, Haravati of Ramachandra Pattnaik, Anuragavati of Padmanabha etc. In addition to these we find a number of lesser known writers like Madhavi Dasi, Rani Mohan Kumari, Rani Kshirod Mali, Krishnapriya Jema, Sivapriya Dei, Kalpalata Jema, Madhuri Dasi, Achuta Jema and host of others. We find a good number of palmleaf manuscripts of historical prose and translation works. Oriya scholars have also contributed to Bengali & Hindi manuscript composition. Among the Bengali works to have been composed by Oriya poets are -

Krishnalila of Ramachandra Pattanaik, Manasamangal of Dwarika Dasa, Govardhan Utsava of Gourachandra Parichha, Basanta Rasa of Pindika Srichandan, Dolarasa of Natabar Dasa, Navanuraga of Shyamabandhu Pattnaik, Ganga Mahatmya of Jagannath Dasa.

In Hindi literary works

Brajaboli gita of Ramananda Pattnaik, Jayachandrika & Kosalananda of Prahallad Dube, Gundicha Vije of Brajanath and poems of many other poets. Besides we also find palmleaf manuscripts written in Telugu, Tamil, Sarada, Newari, and Persian & Urdu.

Odisha State Museum

Odisha State Museum is an institute of tremendous international effloresces. In 1932 this organization originated in the buildings of Ravenshaw College, Cuttack. By Government notification, it was renamed State Museum and was shifted to Brahmananda building in old Bhubaneswar in 1945-46. From there, it came to Patel hall in 1950 and then to the building near High School of Unit-I. In December 27th, 1957 Dr Rajendra Prasad, the first President of India laid the foundation of the present Museum building under the leadership of Dr. H. K. Mahatab. In 1960, the great Institution was finally shifted to the present building. Initially it was part of education department. In 1958 it was handed over to the Cultural Affairs Department.

State Museum is exceedingly rich in palm leaf manuscript heritage. More than thirty seven thousand palm leaf manuscripts categorized into twenty seven sections namely - Veda, Tantra, Jyotisha, Dharmasastra, Ayurveda, Ganita, Silpasastra, Samgita, Abhidhana, Vyakarana, Sanskrit Purana, Sanskrit Kavya, Alamkara, Bengali (Sanskrit), Bengali, Devanagari, Oriya Purana, Oriya Kavya, Oriya Prose, Oriya Historical Literature, Sanskrit paper manuscripts, Oriya paper manuscripts, Arabic manuscripts, Darsana manuscripts,

Telugu manuscripts, Copied manuscripts and Illustrated manuscripts have been preserved.

The manuscript gallery of Odisha State Museum is now adorned with such rare palm leaf manuscripts collection. Sarala Dasa, the writer of Mahabharatin Oriya has contributed a number of works of eminence like Saptakanda Ramayana, Chandi Purana, Valmiki Ramayana, Malasri Janana & Mahalaxmi Vrata etc. These manuscripts are now found in the collection of State Museum.

He established Oriya as a rich language in the 15th century A.D. Mahabharata of Krishna Singh, Purusottam Dasa, Jagannath Das and Kapileswar Nanda are also some of the prize collections of the manuscript section. Mahabharata & Ramayana became very popular in Odisha as they were written in Oriya languages & script due to the initiative of Balaram Dasa, Maheswar Dasa, Kirshna Chandra Rajendra, Kesava Tripathi and Purusottam Dasa. The Madala Panji, the temple chronicle of Puri written in palm leaf is a storehouse of knowledge which needs a thorough and separate study. Bhagavata Purana was translated by Jagannath Das and has become the Bible of Oriya people. He completed this work in the Jagannath temple before the advent of Sree Chaitanya in Puri. His mastery over Sanskrit literature enabled him to translate this work into a very lucid and simple style.

The works Bhagavata Lahari, Harivamsa, Padmapurana by Achyutananda & the works of Mahadeva Dasa, Haladhara Dasa, Nilambara Dasa, Pitambara Dasa are also a few unique acquisition of the section.

Historical value poetic compositions like Jagannath Charitamruta, Chaitanya Charitamruta & Bhaktamala, Copies of Veda, Tantra, Dharmashastra, Jyotisha, Vyakarana, Kavya, Alankara etc. have enriched the manuscript legacy of Odisha.

They have been written in Sanskrit language with provincial Oriya script. A few notable works in these fields are mentioned below for reference of researchers & tourists. 1. Vedartha Praveshatika or Sayana Bhashya of Yajurveda, 2. Paippalada Samhita of Atharvaveda, 3. Brahmanas according to Kanva Sakha or Yajurveda, 4. Jnanavalli Tantra, 5. Durga Janana Dipika, 6. Bhubaneswari Prakasa, 7. Tarini Kulasudha Tarangini, 8. Bhasvati, 9. Kritya Kaumudi, 10. Vaisvanaresti Paddhati, 11. Vidyakara Padhati, 12. Nityacharadipa, 13. Vajjalakarika, 14. Prakriyasara, 15. Sarasidhanta Samagraha, 16. Anyopadesasataka, 17. Abdaduta, 18. Gitagovinda, 19. Gundicha Champu, 20. Bhakti Bhagavatamahakavyam, 21. Bharatamrita Mahakavyam, 22. Manimala Natika, 23. Rukmini Parinaya, 24. Raghavayadaviyamahakavya, 25. Kavya Prakasa Vivarana, 26. Sahityabhusana, 27. Gita prakasa, 28. Sangitanarayana, 29. Sangitakalpalata.

Charles Fabri remarks that those who carved the masterpieces of sculpture in the 9th, 10th & 11th century A.D. must have been also able to carve lovely pictures on their palm leaf manuscripts. Unfortunately we do not find any specimen prior to the 15th century A.D. As palm leaf manuscripts are perishable, the earlier paintings & engravings must have been obliterated. However, we find lively specimen from 15th century A.D. onwards as reported by Prof. Ganguly. Thus the history of the incised drawings on palm leaf manuscripts goes back to a definite datum line. Difference between stylus incised line drawings and color paintings is enormous. They seem to belong to two worlds even if one recognizes the elements of hieratic drawings, the ready-made formula for eyes, hands, lips etc. of the line drawings being re-employed as a basis for paintings. He has referred to the live leaves of a palm leaf manuscript by one Lokanath Dasa now found in the Raghunandan Library, Puri.

Illustration Manuscripts

What is the state of illustrated palm leaf manuscripts ? However minuscule palm leaf engraving is in these days of pen and paper, the practice is still prevalent, especially in villages. At the Odisha State Museum in Bhubaneswar and also at several other places, one may find old palm leaf manuscripts, including a number of illustrated ones. Orissa, over the centuries, had the tradition of illustrating palm leaf manuscripts which made the works of Oriya bards visually appealing. Since the height of palm leaf is less, miniature illustrations or paintings are made on them. Several palm leaf manuscripts from Odisha are available in European and American museums. Scholars like Joanna Williams and Dinanath Pathy have detailed in their books (The Two-Headed Deer and Traditional Paintings of Odisha respectively) how museums and connoisseurs abroad possess colorful palm leaf manuscripts. But surprisingly, majority of the illustrated manuscripts are of poet Upendra Bhanja who belonged to the late 17th century A.D. No wonder the palm leaf illustrators found the works of Upendra Bhanja fascinating with his idiomatic wizardry and romantic preoccupation.

They are illustrations of Ushaparinaya text and their date has been assigned to the 18th century. Such erotic illustrations find in other private collections also. In Ushaparinaya compositions, male figures are found wearing typical Mughul tang pajama. i.e. tight fitting leggings. In another illustration we find 4 palm leaves from a Ramayana manuscript in the collection of Sadasiva Rath Sharma. All the men were found wearing tight Mughul trousers and belted coats, and Marathis turbans. The females wear blouses and sari. Sita seems to have put on a ghaghara, choli, orni that is skirt blouse & handkerchief. The Odisha State Museum has obtained a good collection of such illustrated manuscripts some of which are in display. The subjects are mostly derived from Ramayana, Mahabharata and Bhagabata Purana. In many cases temple styles, gods and godlings are also found. The most interesting is one Kandarpa Ratha illustrated over a bunch of palm leaves cut to size and stitched together horizontally in a rectangular shape. Enchanting and impressive maidens are intricately arranged to form the chariot with Radha & Krishna in embrace placed at this centre. Another most important treasure of the section is the Gita Govinda. The illustrations of the Gitagovinda are prolific. The popularity of the theme, its mode of lyricism, romanticism and erotic flavour have inspired artists to illustrate it in all its conceivable renderings. The plates are palm leaf size and every plate contains about 17 lines on each side.

Musical texts in palm leaf manuscript

The Oriya poets have experiment the use of music in a traditional Sanskrit lyric. This indicates that music was prevalent in the country prior to Jayadeva. Gitagovinda with its vast dramatic depictions can boast to be the most efflorescent Krishnakavya of Odisha. The title masterpiece starts with the words of Nanda:

“meghair meduram ambaram vana-bhuvah shyāmās tamāla-drumair

naktaā bhérur ayaà tvam eva tad imaà rādhe gāhaà prāpaya
itthaà nanda-nideçataç calitayoū praty-adhva-kuija-drumaà
rādha-mādhavayor jayanti yamunā-küle rahaū-kelayau”³

³. Sri Jayadeva Gitagovinda ch-1

The corresponding English translation verse is:

The sky is thick with clouds; the forest area is dark with the tamala trees; the night frightens him (Krishna); Oh Radha! You take him home; this is the command from Nanda. But, Radha and Madhava stray to the tree on the banks of river Yamuna, and their secret love sport prevails.

From the style of collection of this text, it is believed that Southern Odisha and Puri were the main centers of this musical culture where regular musical performance along with textual discussions was being held. From the days of Bharatmuni, Odisha had a special style of music. The Natya Shastra of Bharat has given special importance to the Udra style of music. It is an irony that old Sanskrit scripts dealing with music are not available in Odisha. Such texts generally belong to late medieval times. They include Samgita Kaumodi, Gitaprakash, Samgita Kalpalata, Samgita Narayana and Natyamanorama etc.

Odisha, the land of temples and shrines has also received the prolific impress of palmleaf manuscript art diction. However, few texts are now available among which Bhuvanpradipa occupies a conspicuous position. N. K. Bose refers to some of the palmleaf manuscripts and says that they are written with an iron stylus. In the Bhuvana-pradipa we find description of temples, altars, and similar structure. There is no reference to secular architecture. Hence the word Bhuvanpradipa may be taken to mean the lamp which sheds light on the characteristics of the abode of the Gods. We do not find names of artists who constructed the colossal temples of Bhubaneswar, Puri and Konark but in the Bhuvanpradipa there is reference to Pingla, the artist and Ahidhar the carpenter, along with information regarding parting dues of each functionary at the end of the ceremony of the construction of the temple, which reads that the Brahmin who will perform Japa will get his dues equivalent to the astrologer. Many manuscripts are found uncared in the villages which are in a state of decay & destruction. They are the depository of our cultural heritage and should be restored by popular drive through various institutions and individuals dedicated to the cause of saving the extinct palm leaf manuscript heritage of Odisha.

The precious palm leaf manuscripts of the Museum deserve special mention. It is ascertained from records that 37,273 manuscripts have been collected out of which fifty two manuscripts have been published. Ten descriptive catalogues of manuscripts, five alphabetical catalogues and one alphabetical catalogue of authors have been made.

The manuscript section comprises twenty seven sections such as:- Veda, Tantra, Darsana, Historical records, Silpa Sastra, Abhidhana, and Ayurveda etc.

It has Palm leaf, Bamboo leaf, Handmade paper, Old paper, Ivory manuscripts, Bhurja bark, Manuscript, Kumbhi bark manuscripts, Garland shaped, Fanshaped, Fish shaped, Sword shaped, Rat and Parrot shaped varieties of manuscripts & different types of stylus are displayed in the section.

Three hundred sixty six illustrated manuscripts of coloured and monochrome variety are found. Important variety such as manuscripts of Gita Govinda of Kali Charan Pattnaik, the Usha harana, Ushavilasa etc. and different varieties of cover design of palmleaf manuscripts are in the collection.

Scientific conservation of palm leaf manuscripts

As many as seven thousand manuscripts have been conserved scientifically and manually by way of dry and wet cleaning filling of holes made by worms, use of preservative chemicals & reining of invisible writing of manuscripts. A microfilming

unit is functioning in this section since 1985-86 with the donation of Ford Foundation. One thousand seven hundred ninety eight palm leaf manuscripts have been microfilmed up to date. It is worth mentioning that even today palm leaf is used for recording horoscope (Jataka) of new born babies. For invitation to God, it is also used. In 15th century A.D. the palm leaf tradition has reached pinnacle of excellence with wide distribution.

Engraving and painting on palm leaf is very ancient art style of Odisha. Origin of this art form marked the beginning of dissemination of written version. It is, therefore, part of our literary tradition. With the munificence of Odisha rulers, illustrated manuscripts reached climax of excellence vindicating the ancient nomenclature of Utkal i.e. "land of art of exuberance and efflorescence". Even to this day, the glorious tradition thrives in the work of handicraft artisans of Odisha. The art form comprises inscribed letters and paintings of various designs. Such a piece of work is a befitting item for presentation as memento or Souvenir.

It is encouraging that Government of India has recently launched National Mission for Manuscripts for documentation preservation and dissemination of the manuscript heritage of the country. In Odisha in this Project up till now more than eighty thousand manuscripts have been documented and disseminated in addition to the 40,000 collection of Odisha State Museum.

The National Mission for Manuscripts seeks to develop a holistic approach in locating, documenting, protecting and making accessible the significant information of the manuscript heritage of India. This challenging task is carried out through wide networking with institutions and scholars across the country and abroad who have manuscript holdings and interest in their preserves. The NMM has identified some of the most prominent institutions across the country with considerable manuscript holdings and has designated them as Manuscript Resource Centre (MRC). Indira Gandhi National Centre for Arts, New Delhi has been identified as the National Nodal Agency and Odisha State Museum; Bhubaneswar has been designated as the MRC to carry out the survey and listing work of manuscripts in Odisha. Keeping in view the above, MRC/OSM is organizing different Awareness Campaigns, Workshops to popularize the mission work and to document manuscripts. Donation from individual & institution are accepted free of cost for organization of Central Manuscript Library by NMM at IGNSA, New Delhi. A conservation unit is now established for the chemical treatment of the mss. Under the supervision of INTACH.

e-Pothi

e-Pothi an online manuscript cataloguing system here on 29-Sept-2014. The e-Pothi initiative will help promote Odisha's culture among the people and researcher at large. This digitized version of the manuscripts have been prepared and put online by the state Culture Department with the help of National Informatics Centre (NIC), Odisha. Around 40,000 palm leaf manuscripts preserved at the museum would be available online on the museum's website.

The state museum has 27 sections of palm leaf manuscripts relating to Veda, Tantra, Purana, Ayurveda, Jyotisha Sastra, Shilpasastra, Ganita (Mathematics), Grammar, Geeta Govinda and others. The rare manuscripts would be available on <http://www.odishamuseum.nic.in>

The manuscripts written in Odia script available in the places out of Odisha are:

1. Asiatic Society, Calcutta

2. Sampurnanada Sanskrit University, Varanasi
3. Banaras Hindu University, Varanasi
4. Government Oriental Manuscripts Library, Chennai
5. Adyar Library and Research Centre, Chennai
6. Saraswati Mahal Library, Tanjavur
7. National Museum, Calcutta
8. Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, Pune
9. Vrindavan Research Institute, Vrindavan
10. Maharaj Sayaji Rao Library, Baroda
11. Odia Department, Shantiniketan, Vishvabharati

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