

Synopsis of

A rare window to Islamic Studies in India

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The origin of the Andhra Pradesh Government Oriental Manuscript Library and Research Institute (OML) goes back to more than hundred years ago, to 1891. It was founded during the period of VI Nizam. The library was established with thousands of manuscripts, donated by the nobility of Hyderabad. It was one of the most important repositories of Islamic learning in India. After the formation of the Andhra Pradesh State, the Asafiah Library was re-designated as Andhra Pradesh Oriental Manuscripts Library and Research Institute, for the better management of the collection of manuscripts and their preservation and also to provide special facilities and services to the Scholars.

The entire collection of OML comprises of manuscripts on palm leaf, skin and paper in 16 languages, such as Arabic, Persian, Urdu, Pishto, Sanskrit, Telugu, Kannada, Marathi, Hindi, Oriya and Sindhi Languages. These Manuscripts are related to forty seven subjects, such as Quran and Quranic exegesis, Hadis, Fiqah, History, Tib; Unani Medicine and Arabic, Persian, Urdu Dictionaries. There are many Persian, Arabic and Urdu illustrated manuscripts with rare artistic excellence and some of them are specimens of exceptionally brilliant calligraphy.

The Institute now, is one of the most important Islamic Manuscripts Library in South India, which has twenty six thousand manuscripts. The library in its large collection has 6,367 manuscripts in Arabic, 8,915 in Persian and the remaining manuscripts are in Urdu, Turki, Pishto and other oriental and Indian languages. These manuscripts provide glimpses into medieval history, Tasawuf, Persian and Urdu Poetry. Infact it is a vast treasure trove of Islamic manuscripts and a virtual window to all aspects of Islamic Studies.

One of the rare manuscripts is the gilded Quran calligraphed by Yaquat Al Mustasimi, who was the famous calligrapher, in the court of last Abbasid Caliph, the Colophon shows that this Holy Quran was written in 1247 A.D. The Quran has

official seals of two kings, one of Mohammed Qutub Shah of Qutub Shahi dynasty the other of Moghal emperor Mohammed Shah. The other important manuscript is Muktasar-ul-Kafi, which is the oldest manuscript in the collections of the MOL. It was compiled in 417 H/1027 A.D., more than thousand years ago, in an early Arabic script.

National Mission for Manuscripts (NMM), an important organization for the preservation of manuscripts in India, Department of Culture, Government of India, has recognized this Institute as Manuscripts Resource Centre. As a part of MOU with NMM a state wide survey was conducted in 2006 and found a total number of 2.63 lakh manuscripts in A.P.

The Oriental Manuscripts Library is a Government Institution. All the rules and regulations, regarding copyright and providing photo copies of the text to the scholars are framed by the concerned ministry. According to the rules of the library scholars have to first register with OML, and should request for photo copy of the manuscript. Generally, full text of the manuscript may not be considered. He will get only 50% to 70% of the text of the manuscript, depending on the rarity, condition of manuscript and genuineness of the scholar, he would get it in the form of photo copy or digital CD, whatsoever is requested by the scholar. The cost will be nominally charged on per page basis.

Rates for Foreign Scholars:

1. Photocopy charges for 10 pages – A4 size @ One Dollar
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If the scholar intends to publish the full text of the manuscript, he will be permitted to publish the full text after careful consideration and assessing his capacities. In this regard, we have to understand that the copyrights of all the manuscripts are legally rested with the library. So the scholar, is requested to edit the book and write a scholarly introduction, he either can publish the book himself or submit the edited version for publication to the OML. If the scholar himself

publishing the book, should prominently acknowledge the source, that is OML and to provide 50 to 100 copies of the published book, to the library.

The OML is actively reorganizing its collection, all the manuscripts in the library are being digitalized, so far, more than ten thousand manuscripts have already been scanned and digitalized, the entire collection will be ready with in few months.

Descriptive catalogues of Sanskrit, Telugu and Urdu manuscripts are available in printed form, the Arabic and Persian descriptive catalogues are under preparation. In the course of time, the details of entire collection of the library, will be available on web.