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Ancient Manuscripts of Rajasthan: A Study on Kota Archive

(कोटा संग्रहालय)

Dr. Archana Pathak¹, Dr. Shesh Mishra²

¹Department of Design, Banasthali Vidyapith, Rajasthan ²Central Library, Banasthali Vidyapith, Rajasthan

Abstract

Manuscript is a big source of knowledge for our future generations. Many libraries and institutions have preserved these perishable materials as a valuable thing for research and knowledge, which is very important for the cultural and historical ethos of our nation. The large amount of manuscripts preserved in the research institutes in Rajasthan state are a good evidence of richness of Rajasthani culture, traditions and knowledge. The large artistic paintings on cloth, miniature paintings, many forms which are scribed on Tad Patras (plant leaves), Bhoj patras (birch bark of tree) Charmpatras (leather sheets), Wooden panels, cloth manuscripts known as "Kharha" and most of the paper manuscripts with illustrations in different styles are available here and denote the specialty of Rajasthani literature.

Due to several factors, these valuable written materials are getting destroyed gradually, therefore preservation techniques are being used for these materials to save first in physical form and then in digital version. This paper highlights the collection, development, types of manuscript materials and preservation policies used by kota Sangrahalaya, Rajasthan, under the supervision of NMM and Rajasthan Oriental institute, Jodhpur. It also highlights the working status of the National Mission for manuscripts and summarizes the preservation status in the state of Rajasthan in India.

Key words: Manuscripts, (पाण्डुलिपियाँ), Indian Manuscript (भारतीय पाण्डुलिपि), Preservation (पाण्डुलिपि संरक्षण), National Mission for Manuscripts (NMM), (राष्ट्रीय पाण्डुलिपि मिशन), India, Rajasthan Oriental Research Institute (RORI), (राजस्थान पाण्डुलिपि संस्थान), Kota Sngrahalaya (कोटा संग्रहालय)

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1. Introduction

Indian civilization is a collection of many cultures, customs, languages and many types of arts. Our temples are not only places of worship but also galleries of beautiful forms and figures, where myths are as important as theory. Ancient memories are full of cherished forms, stories, mythological beings that are real in many different ways. It is a fine example of Indian architecture. In India, people enrich their lives with festivals which celebrate events from the lives of our mythic gods and goddess, and they improve their knowledge as forms, texts and many types of diagrams, paintings, architectures and learned discourses etc. Our ancestors have described beautiful thoughts such as viz "Nirvikalp" (निर्विकल्प) (without thought constructs) and "Nirguna" (निर्गुण) (without attributes), the "Savikalp" (सविकल्प) (with



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thought constructs) and "Saguna" (सगुण) (with attributes) in the manuscripts . The "Arupa" (अरूप) (devoid of form) and "Rupa" (रूप) (withform), "Nirakar" (निराकार) (the formless) and "Sakar" (साकार) (with form) "Avyakta" (अव्यक्त) (unmanifest) and "Vyakta" (व्यक्त) (the manifest) and seen & unseen, an idea and image, melodies and lyrics are all mythological thoughts which were originated naturally by the contemplation of our ancestors in seclusion. These ideas passed from one generation to another through manuscripts in India. Our manuscripts, paintings and sculptures are true evidence of these thoughts and images. In the Kota Oriental Research Institute, there are several manuscripts related to our mythological thoughts and are preserved here. (**Ref. Book Akriti to sanskriti**)

At present India is the seventh largest country in the world and has achieved all round socio-economic, cultural progress due to this rich cultural heritage preserved in these manuscripts. It has witnessed the flowering of a multifaceted national consciousness in the last 66 years of its Independence. During this period attempts were made not only to make our future safe and secure, but also to rejuvenate our proud tradition and culture of the past. (India 2015)

2. Manuscripts – Definition

Handwritten documents are known as manuscripts and the word is derived from Latin language where "Manu" means hand and "Script" means written symbol, thus any handwritten document can be called manuscript. The ancient manuscripts are also known from antiquity which describe our civilization and are related to our ancient world. (www.wikipeadia.in)

Before the invention of printing technology, all the documents which were written in the form of plant barks, leaves, wood, metal, cloth or any other available material in the ancient era that have cultural, aesthetic, historical and scientific value are known as manuscripts.

Our handwritten manuscripts of the olden times are certainly the precious gift of our ancestors. They are our sacred national heritage at the same time. As such, to see that they are duly conserved and that the rich knowledge contained therein reaches out to the masses is our first priority.

3. Special features of Manuscripts

Indian manuscripts are the richest collection in the world, with an estimated ten million ancient written documents that provide information about the existence of different civilizations and the cultural affluence of the nation. These manuscripts, written in various Indian languages, have many characteristics including plurality of ideas, scientific, artistic, cultural and philosophical aspects. These manuscripts are spread throughout the country in various monasteries, temples, libraries, museums, individuals and many private institutional repositories and are known as oriental or ancient manuscripts. In fact, India probably has the oldest and largest collection of manuscripts in the world. (Sahoo and others)

There are different types of manuscripts in different sizes and shapes. In ancient times natural products such as **clay tablets**, **stones**, **rocks**, **tree bark**, **leaves and cloth**, **papyrus and parchment** materials were used as writing materials; Handmade paper manuscripts, machine-made paper manuscripts and **Than-kas** were used after the invention of the paper material. **Tree based materials like bark and leaves** are mostly used in three types namely-

- a. Birch bark manuscripts
- b. palm leaf manuscripts



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C. Hansi-Pata (Sanchi-Pata) Manuscripts

4. Rajasthan State- Origin and development, and its initiatives for collection of Manuscripts

Before the independence from British Raj, the state of Rajasthan was the largest princely state in India and was known as Rajputana or a martial community state. The history of Rajasthan dates back to prehistoric times from 3,000 to 1,000 BC. Its culture was similar to that of the Indus Valley Civilization. Apart from the Rajputana community, the Chauhans, the Guhilas of Mewar, etc. controlled the fortunes of the warring tribes from the seventh century onwards and by the 12th century they became a royal power. It is the seventh largest state by population and covers the northern part of 342,239 square kilometers or 10.4% of the total geographical area of India.

As a result, this historically famous state has arisen from places like Marwar, Jaipur, Bundi, Kota, Bharatpur and Alwar etc. The Rajasthan plateau is divided into six regions in respect of their dialects, which are known as Marwar, Mewat, Shekhawati, Dhundar, Hadauti and Malwa.

- 1. Marwar region- Badmer, Jodhpur, Pali, Jalore and Nagaur districts of Rajasthan province come under it. This region is partly located in the Thar Desert in the west of the Rajasthan province.
- **2. Mewat region** lies in between Delhi-Jaipur-Agra. In simple words Mewat region consists of Nuh district, eastern part of Alwar district and western part of Bharatpur district.
- **3. Shekhawati region** comprising the districts of Jhunjhunu, Sikar, Churu and Jaipur. It is located in North Rajasthan and bounded on the northwest by the Bikaner region, on the northeast by Haryana, on the east by Mewat, on the southeast by Dhundhar, on the south by Ajmer, and on the southwest by the Marwar region. Its area is 13784 square kilometers.
- **4. Dhundhar region** -Jaipur, Dausa, Sawai Madhopur, Tonk and the northern part of Karauli District of Rajasthan province come under it. This is a western part of the state and has great historical value in the Rajasthan province.
- **5. Hadoti region** it comprises Bundi, Baran, Jhalawar and Kota districts of Rajasthan province. It was the Princely state of the Hadoti region. It is the western part of India and was once called the Bundi Kingdom.
- **6. Malwa Region** -It comprises some parts of Rajasthan districts such as Jhalawar and parts of Kota, Banswara and Pratapgarh. Malwa region is surrounded in the North-east by the Hadoti region of Rajasthan, in the North-west by the Mewar region. Malwa region is totally a central part of India and spreads and occupies an area of the three states like, western part of Madhya Paradesh, South eastern part of Rajastha and Gujrat-Vagad region in the west.

Kota Sngrahalay [Rajasthan Oriental Research Institute, KOTA District] has several manuscripts and paintings related to all these six regions. All paintings, illustrations revels their regional specialty like Marwar, Shekhavati paintings, Hadoti paintings, illustrations of Dhundhar regions etc.

Rajasthan region has always been acclaimed for courage and chivalry. Rajasthan had, since the days of yore, been the principal centre of Indian culture, with the result countless literary works in Sanskrit, Prakrit, Apabhransh, Rajasthani, Hindi and other languages came to be created here. It is a matter of



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regret, however, that much of the said literature has been destroyed due to negligence, or the environmental effects. The richness of Indian thoughts and ideas on all subjects of life, a lot of it has gone away even to the foreign countries and scholars there have studied and published it too. At the foreign places like India Office Library, London, Bibliotheca National Institute, Paris, Priyusis Statue Bibliothek, Berlin University etc and in India, National Library of Kolkata, Pune, Mumbai, Patna, Ahmadabad, Kashi and so on. Rajasthan's literature is available in a plentiful quantity and a part of it stands published too.

5. Establishment of Rajasthan Oriental Research Institute [RORI]

Preservation and Conservation of manuscript work has been going on since ancient times but most of the documents/manuscripts were found in poor condition, so a national level effort was needed to preserve our valuable heritage for postarity. The first initiative was taken by IGNCA (Indira Gandhi National Center for Arts) and NMM (National Mission for Manuscripts) at the national, regional and local level in collaboration with institutions and repositories in all parts of the country. The establishment of NMM in 2003, under the supervision of the Ministry of Culture, Government of India, led to a detailed plan to meet this challenge of locating and documenting manuscripts in India and abroad as well. To fulfill the above objective, NMM has established 57 Manuscript Resource Centers (MRC-s) across the country, of which 31 MRCs are presently functional, followed by establishment of 33 Manuscript Partner Centers (MPC-s) and 50 Manuscript Conservation Centers (MCC-s) were set up across the country out of which only 30 MCC-s are currently functioning.

Rajasthan is the center for literature from ancient times. The rulers and common people both have done commendable work in this direction. Lots of Manuscript museums were established by the rulers in their capitals for the preservation of important treasures of ancient literature and artifects. A number of known places in Rajasthan state like Jaipur, Alwar, Bikaner, Jodhpur, Udaipur, jaisalmer, Bubdi, Kota are found in the renewed state museums and libraries including the important Sanskrit, Hindi and Rajasthani literature. In this region almost all the literary work had been done by the Jains and Brahmans of Rajasthan who had diligently served for it. Copies of the texts was made by eminent writers for the promotion of ancient literature, and it's made available for the people in the museums, institutions and libraries also. The texts are available in different forms like Tad patra, cloth and paper. The paper texts are mostly available in all museums and research institutions. There are various types of paintings found in different regions of Rajasthan state, which show the literary, cultural, and artistic richness of this region. In this direction the Rajasthan state government established the Rajasthan Oriental Research Institute as a big depository and preservation center of manuscripts. In the year 1954 the first main branch office was established in Jaipur for collection and preservation of manuscripts which was then shifted to Jodhpur in 1958.

In the year 1950, the Government of India established a Sanskrit Board [Sanskrit Mandal office] for collecting valuable writing materials from all over Rajasthan state which were in the custody of previous rulers, nobles, temples, Jain Upsaras, individual scholars and pundit.. In 1954, the Government dissolved this Sanskrit Board and set up a new separate department in its place under the name 'Prachya Vidya Pratishthan' at Jaipur. In 1958, the main office was shifted to Jodhpur and was known as Rajasthan Oriental Research Institute under the project of NMM. Apart from these, other six branch- institutes



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were established and directed by the head office Jodhpur. These are known with the name of RORI Jaipur, Alwar, Bharatpur, Bikaner, Kota and Udaipur branches. The RORI branches are working together under the direction of head office and their in-charge Senior Research Assistant with adequate staff members and help of local academicians.

6. Objectives of the study

The present study is primarily intended to trace out an overall picture of the Kota Sangrahalaya. Besides, it also includes the working status of procuring manuscripts, their preservation, organization and digitization in the Rajasthan Oriental Research Institute, Kota branch. The manuscripts are collected from all around Hadoti region.

The following objectives are included for this study

- 1. To explore the status of ancient manuscript collection in the Kota region of Rajasthan..
- 2. To find out the procurement policy adopted for receiving the manuscripts by Kota Sangrahalay, RORI
- 3. To study the numbers, types and shapes of available manuscripts.
- 4. To study the language and scripts used in the manuscripts.
- 5. To examine working status, collection, development, and preservation of manuscripts along with all round development of the Institute

7. Kota Sangrahalya - An important branch of Rajasthan Oriental Research Institutes, (RORI):-

According to information given by the Research Assistant of Kota Sangrhalaya, in his own words:

"Before the establishment of Kota branch, the collection of manuscripts known as Saraswati Bhandar was housed in a Garha Palace House till 1961. In 1962 it was made RORI branch of Kota district. With the support of the Government of Rajasthan and the good initiative of its Senior Research Assistant, Khyali Ram Meena, keeping in mind the objective of doing good for the collection and conservation work of manuscripts, it was decided to construct a new building for this Institute."

At present this institute is running under its new building at Braja Vilas Palace, Kota and directed by Senior Research Assistant RORI, Jodhpur with two staff members of Kota branch. The work and services are running under following categories in consonance with all other RORI branches.

7.1 Collection of Manuscripts: This branch came into existence with the 4815 manuscripts which were donated by Saraswati Bhandar. During the princely times the Hada rulers of Kota encouraged the scholars and literary writers to write and collect ancient manuscripts. Maharao Durjan Singh ji of Kota state (1780-1813 AD) was a scholar of Sanskrit language. Along with other subjects, he got several works of Vallabh Sampradaya written —in the same way; Saraswati Bhandar got considerable encouragement even in the period of Maharao Kishor Singh and Maharao Ummed Singhji. Therefore, today hundreds of manuscripts are stored in Palaces, Temples, Mosques, Mathas and personal collections too. Despite the limited resources of the Institute, the manuscript survey work was done faster by the Kota Branch and the collection numbers were increasing from 4835 handwritten works to



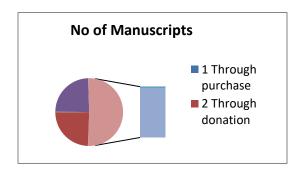
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6060 works that were transferred from other places. At present the Institute has got a big collection of **total 9966** manuscripts not only from Hadoti region, but also from all over Rajasthan.

7.2 Manuscripts survey work (Granth survekshan yojana): With the help of Government and the guidance of head office, Jodhpur, the manuscripts survey work are done successfully by the institute from time to time. Almost all the manuscripts are surveyed from local libraries, Sanghralayas and other Tahsil places near Kota District by the Institute.

Table 1. Sources of obtaining the manuscripts in Kota Sngrahalaya, Rajasthan

S. No.	Sources of obtaining the manuscripts	No of Manuscripts
1	Through purchase	20
2	Through donation	4815
3	Assigned curators	76
4	Through libraries	4835
5	Institutional repositories	202
6	Other local investigators	18
	Total Manuscripts =	9966



7.3 Manuscripts available in different types of materials, shapes, languages & scripts: There are many types of manuscripts are available on different subjects which are Ved, Purana, Upnishads, Sutra, Nyaya, Yoga, Jyotisha, Ayurveda, Kamshastra, Sbhashit, Kosh, Tantra-Mantra, Vyakrana, Strotra, Shalihotra, and the writings of saints etc. All these manuscripts collection are beautifully written on paper, cloth and tad patra (Birch bark) materials. The handmade **writing Ink (Mashi)** was used to write



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for the manuscripts in black, red, bright yellow, green, blue, brown, and other bright colors used in this region. Thus after 500-600 years these writings are visible in their original conditions with full brightness.

A Tad Patra (Palm Leaves) manuscript with 168 folios is available in Telugu language, a 600 years old 'Durga Saptshati' manuscript is available in Bhoj Patra (Birch bark) with Golden Ink. A 'Survasabad' Manuscript is available in cloth material, an eight (8) feet long 'Kharda Granth- "Arji Satguru Kavitta sachitra Kharda" manuscript and a very small 4.3*2.4 c.m. "Santdasji ki Vani" manuscript is also available in this Institute. A very old manuscript "Vrahdarnyaka Bhashya Vartika" written in Vikram Samvat 1488 and Shak Samvat 1354, in Sanskrit Language and from 1460, Shak Samvat "Shat Panchashika" manuscripts is available here. Many manuscripts are available on 'Naaty Shastra, Ayurved such as "Taladhyaya", "Raghadhaya" "Chark Samhita", "Vaidya Vilas" etc. are very valuable for our research purposes. Many foreign researchers have come from Canada, Germany, Israel, France, Belgium, Japan, America and Austria, and have completed their research work here.

The situation of the various collections received from other sangralayas and some private collections preserved at RORI, Kota in terms of their number is as under:-

Table 2. Various collections of Kota, RORI

S. No.	Various collections of Kota, RORI	No. of Manuscripts
1	Saraswati Bhandar & Kota Sanghralaya	4490
2	Chandrakant Sarola Sanghralaya	1249
3	Rajkiya Sanghralaya, Jhalawar	1482
4	Shri Govindhan Vyas, Jhalawar	230
5	Shri Kani Ram ji Mahant, Kota,	101
6	Pt. Shyam Sundar Shastri Kota	297
7	Rajguru Pdt. Nityanandji, Jhalawar	138



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8	Pdt. Ram Nivas Sharma, Kota	82
9	Shri Dinkar Pathak, Kota	463
10	Shri Maulik Chand Ji Shastri, Bundi	281
Total M	lanuscripts received from collections =	8813

Table 3. Manuscripts available in different -types of Materials, shapes, Languages & Scripts

S. No.	Materials	Languages	Script	No. of Manuscripts
1	Birch bark	Sanskrit	Devnagari	1
2	Cloth	Sanskrit / Prakrit	Sharda / Devnagari	2
3	Metal plate	Sanskrit / Prakrit	Sharda / Devnagari	1
4	Palm Leaves	Sanskrit	Devnagari	2
5	Wood	Rajasthani	Devnagari	1
6	Engravings			10
7	Handmade Paper folios	Sanskrit/Prakrit/Ra jasthani/Hindi, Persian, Urdu, Bangla, Marathi, Guajarati, Telugu	Devnagari/ Sharda, South Indian, Aliyamani	9866



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8	Pictures / Paintings	Sanskrit/Prakrit/Ra jasthani/Hindi	Devnagari/ Sharda/South Indian	24
9	Drawings/ Maps/ Illustrations	English	Roman	59
Total =	Materials= 9	Languages = 11	Scripts = 5	9966





Palm Leaves

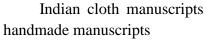
Engraving





Sanskrit Manuscript







Wood based scroll for putting in

S. No.	Shapes
1	Chitra-Bandh
2	Scroll
3	Gandi- (Rectangular shape)
4	Gutkha
5	Miniature paintings
6	Mushti
7	Mystical- Diagrams
8	Smput Phalk



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Handmade paper Manuscript (Kalpsutra Mahavira Manuscript)

Rajasthan-Miniature Painting

- **7.4 Editing and publication**: For the help of researchers, a good collection of manuscripts, their editing and publication work is also attempted at this branch by their Senior Research Assistant. Many translation works are done in Hindi and other local languages and published by the Institute. Till the end of the year 2018, total three (3) catalogues were published by the Institute, in which two (2) catalogues were published on Sanskrit-Prakrit language and one (1) was published on Hindi-Rajasthani language for the researchers who want to know about the vast literature available on different subjects. One more Sanskrit-Prakrit Catalogue publication work is running in the Institute for the rest of the works.
- **7.5 Reference Library**: There is a separate library as a reference cell which is available for researchers comprising 1500 books. The manuscripts' digital copy is also provided in the CD/DVD format by the Institute.

Table 4. Catalogues publication

S. No.	Catalogue Publication	Published in Print and digitized form	Complete in Printing form	Ongoing	Catalogue
1	Sanskrit -Prakrit Language	3	0	1	4
2	Hindi - Rajasthani Language	0	2	0	2

7.6 National seminars and exhibitions: Seminars and exhibitions are conducted from time to time by the Institute to increase the interest of local and national communities and researchers coming from foreign countries.



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7.7 Manuscript Conservation Cell (Granth-Samrakshak Prakoshtha): The preservation material may be in the form of heritage material and handmade written documents. Several factors which lead to deterioration of manuscripts such as light, humidity, dust, environmental pollution, fire, water, fluctuations in temperature and relative humidity, natural calamities, physical handling and insects are directly attached to manuscripts or other materials. All these factors often lead to degeneration and decay of the manuscripts and pose a great challenge to their preservation. This preservation process has two types; one is preventive preservation and the second is curative preservation. In the preventive preservation process, the written materials are preserved from environmental conditions by the curative techniques by the use of chemicals that prevent them from fragility and deterioration. In curative preservation, using chemical treatment like fumigation chambers, Thymol, Chloromate solutions are used to protect the manuscripts under decay.

In the Kota branch, the manuscripts conservation and preservation work has been done right from the inception of the institute. The budget is provided by the head office Jodhpur, for purchasing of chemicals, tissue papers and other preservation material to the Institute for the scientific preservation of the manuscripts.

Conservation: It's very important and main process after the reception of manuscripts. They use handmade papers, simple tissue and banana tissue papers for mending of manuscripts. The branch also used acid free mount boards and polythene bags for preserving manuscripts. Pigments and seashell lime powder is used for protecting them from humidification and pigmentation of manuscripts. Antifungal agents such as Thymol are used for protection from fungal infection.

- **7.8 Staffing** RORI, Kota branch has a good collection of manuscripts and is running under the direction of one Senior Research Assistant, one Technician (is on contingency post), one Clerk and one peon, while there are four posts lying vacant. So the best skilled personnel and technicians are still required in the branch.
- **7.9 Microfilming**: This work is not being done presently but in future it will be done according to the direction of RORI main Branch Jodhpur.
- **7.10 Digitization**: Various preventive preservation methods and photocopying of documents may not only damage the originals, but can preserve them only for a few decades. The invention of scanners has revolutionized the input of data to computer media. At present the high definition film scanner is used to digitize the manuscript as an image, though it's an expensive method. Digitization is a digital version of any information and accessibility is possible at any remote location with internet facility and can be stored in the hard disk of a computer. It is the best use of Information Technology for accessing information at any level, at any place. Therefore, a document which is written in any form, can be transformed into a digital version with any electronic device and can be easily preserved, accessed at any remote area and shared at any level. All these processes come under the process of digitization. With this process the documents are stored in image form in large files. Lots of documents are easily stored in a small disc and are easily accessible. In the RORI, Kota Sngrahalaya, almost all of the works are digitized continuously in accordance with the reception of manuscripts. All works related to



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digitization such as digitization procedures, data storage medium, accessing & managing works being performed under the supervision of RORO and instructions of National Mission for Manuscript.

In the first and second phases of its existence, the emphasis was on house-to-house surveys to locate the manuscript stores and detailed documentation through post-survey process. Presently, NMM is engaged in detailed documentation of Manuscripts in India by maintaining a National Catalogue of Manuscripts. Contact list regarding data of 3.4 million manuscripts is already available on NMM website https://www.namami.gov.in/. This electronic catalogue provides detailed information on manuscripts such as institutions, religions, cultures and institutional, as well as private collections across the country.

8. Conclusion

The large amount of manuscripts preserved in the research institutes in Rajasthan state are a good evidence of richness of Rajasthani culture, traditions and literary heritage. The Rajasthan Oriental Research Institute, Jodhpur and its seven branches are the eminent institutes for preservation and digitization activities in the state of Rajasthan. A large number of valuable oriental manuscripts are stored, preserved and digitized for future generations in all RORI's seven branches. Huge amount of manuscripts are found from religious and scholarly families that are rich in their own manuscript collections in the Kota –Hadoti region.

The Kota Archve, (Sngrahalay) (RORI, Kota) is also an eminent institute for the preservation of ancient manuscripts. The collection of ancient literature represents the role of best contribution of various religious sects, kings and individuals that are immersed in preserving the manuscripts. Sanskrit, Prakrit, Persian, Arabic, Urdu, Turkish are the main Indic languages of our past.

Head office RORI, Jodhpur provides funds for purchasing basic tools and equipment to branch institutes according to their requirements. Fifty (50) Irons and twenty (20) wooden Almirah are placed in good condition and are sufficient for their valuable collections. The wooden almirah is good for manuscript preservation as well as the fumigation process. Preservation of manuscript works have been continued from ancient times but most of the documents were found in deteriorating conditions, therefore necessary efforts are needed for the preservation of our valuables for posterity. So the door to door surveying, documentation and digital preservation is necessary action for preserving them for next generations. At present the Kota Sngrahalay doing and serving a very commendable job for collection and preservation of precious ancient manuscripts. Kota branch faces some problems like lack of skilled personnel on permanent basis, well- ventilated and tidy rooms that are needed for long term preservation of manuscripts in good conditions. Therefore RORI, Jodhpur (Head Office) releases the funds and manpower to Kota Sngrahalaya from time to time.

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