KASHMIRI MARSIYA (ELEGY) MANUSCRIPTS: THE VALUABLE SOURCES FOR THE DISSEMINATION, RECONSTRUCTION AND SAFEGUARDING THE HISTORY AND CULTURE-IV

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ABSTRACT

Manuscripts are the links to the historical facts that will otherwise remain unknown to the world. They contain authentic information and facts about the social, political and cultural aspects of a nation. Therefore their intellectual value cannot be over emphasized. Many countries and nations are joining hands towards preserving such cultural assets by way of taking conservation and preservation measures including digitization and documentation.

Marsiya or Elegy has gained more importance after the Martyrdom of Imam Hussain (a.s) and his companions and household in Karbala. Marsiya has been since written and recited in order to mourning the tragic events of Karbala. Many Marsiya manuscripts are available in different languages written during different times by many great writers and poets like Persian, Arabic, Urdu, Balti, Punjabi and Kashmiri. These Marsiya manuscripts are being used to be recited at different occasions especially during the month of Muharram-ul-Haram. Many of these Marsiya manuscripts are at the verge of extinction owning to need of preservation and conservation. The study had identifying and documenting some of the Kashmiri Marsiya manuscripts.

Keywords: Marsiya, Elegy, Manuscripts, Shafa, Cure, Kashmir

INTRODUCTION

Culture is defined as knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society Chowdhury (2010). He further adds that heritage means “our legacy from the past, what we live with today and what 676we pass on to future generations”. Veltman (1997) says that Culture is concerned with the development of coherent viewpoints which bring a cumulative effect to otherwise isolated experiences of a group, making them feel special yet allowing others to have a parallel experience. Hence an Italian’s culture links them with Dante and Petrarch, and yet they can respect an Indian’s culture which links them with the Vedas and the Mahabharata. The vast and the rich Culture of India comes in many forms and shapes which urge people to play a central part to preserve their cultural heritage. Liew (2005) further adds that Culture provides links between the past, present and the future. Cultural information can bring communities together, as well as promoting the understanding of a culture and society. Jokilehto (1990) defined cultural heritage as the entire corpus of
material signs - either artistic or symbolic - handed on by the past to each culture and, therefore, to the whole of humankind. As a constituent part of the confirmation and enhancement of cultural identities, as a legacy belonging to all humankind, the cultural heritage gives each particular place its recognizable features and is the storehouse of human experience. The preservation and the presentation of the cultural heritage are therefore a corner-stone of any cultural policy. The cultural heritage thus should be considered both in time and in space.

Soualah and Hassoun (2011) say that Manuscripts are living witnesses to human civilization. They represent a real knowledge medium of a specific era. The access to these works is a real problem because of their fragility which limits handling; and because distant countries conserving them require travel for access. The medium of information storage has changed from clay tablets, palm leaves to paper and now to electronic and optical media. Ahmed (2009) points out that the traditional preservation method constitute of all form of direct actions aimed at the life expectancy of undamaged or damaged elements of manuscript like mechanical cleaning solvent cleaning etc. Machine made paper made of wood pulp containing harmful acidic ingredients that caused deterioration was used. Manuscripts, which contain centuries of accrued knowledge in such areas as philosophy, sciences, literature, arts and the pluralistic faith systems of India are more than just historical records. They represent the collective wisdom and experience of generations of thinkers. In fact the entire gamut of history is left unexplored or partially explored in manuscripts. Shafi (2004) says that many digital library initiatives focus on preserving various cultural heritages. Often, the initiatives comprise of various materials such as pictures, maps and paintings, and manuscripts are one of the materials included. Some Western and Indian digital library of manuscripts initiatives include MASTER (Manuscript Access Standards for Electronic Records), Oxford University Manuscripts, Medical Manuscripts in NLM, European Manuscript Server Initiative (EMSI), and Unesco Memory of World. Those projects have used photographic and digital methods to develop a full or partial archival copy of the manuscripts available on-line using different software with JPEG format for image processing in association with different metadata initiatives (as cited in Rifin & Zainab, 2007).

Marsiya / Marsiyas an Urdu-Persian poetry form that is recited normally on the death of a dear one. This art form was first originated in Iran where it was customary to recite Marsiya in order to commemorate and lament the death of Hazrat Hussein and 72 of his comrades during the siege of Karbala. Marsiya generally consists of six-line units, with a rhyming quatrains, and a couplet on a different rhyme reveals Indian Poetry (2009). The Marsiya, a form that usually details the seventh-century C.E. martyrdom of the Prophet of Islam’s grandson, Imam Husain A.S., has a reputation for being more complex and more erudite than other genres of the Shia Muslim mourning assembly; the majlis reveals Bard (n.d). Marsiya has its roots in Arabic and Persian literature. They are traditionally either recited by
Marsiya-Khwans or sung by a Marsiya-Soz at Shia mourning assemblies held during the month of Mohharum. Though its language draws heavily on Arabic and Persian vocabulary, the Urdu Marsiya is imbued with the color and flavor of the Indian subcontinent. The best of verses are exquisite cameos composed of images of local flora and fauna, drawing on local custom and tradition. In terms of emotional range the Marsiya swings between heroic displays of martial skill and tender descriptions of affection and bereavement between the high moral virtue of the people of the House of the Prophet and their ultimate vulnerability in the face of death and loss.

Thumri, Chaiti and Sohar (n.d.) About the glory of marsia

Husain (2010) says that If one extreme of the literature is Ghazal – the lyrics, then the other is Marsia – the epic. The Ghazal relates to Ramz– the allusions and the imagined, but the Marsia relates to the real episodes and its content is not all sweet narrate, but verbosity of battlefield description, pain, valour and chivalry. When a scene of Karbala is versified in the style of Marsia – the elegy is read with intone in the rising and falling voice – a generic cut and created to suit the descript, where every scene of Karbala depicted is articulated through unique and subtle wording of the Marsia. Hyder (2006) the idealmarsiya open with a Chehra, the section that leads the reader/listener into the subject of that particular marsiya through a verbal sketch of the description of a particular time of the day, the difficulties of travelling in a desert, or the praise of Allah (Hamd), Muhammad (Naat),or Ali and the Imams (Manqabat).

Problem

Manuscripts are one of the precious materials of our cultural heritage. They are valuable sources for the dissemination, reconstruction and safeguarding the history and culture. Manuscripts provide not only the most authentic witnesses to life in the medieval era, but also a record of what aspects of life were considered to be of sufficient importance to immortalize in the medium. Kashmiri Marsiya manuscripts have been written during different time periods almost from 600 years and contain rich and valuable information about the religion and the tragic events of martyrdom of Imam Hussain (a.s) and his companions in Karbala. The manuscripts are scattered and form the part of personal collection of many households of Marsiya writers and orators. Many of these Marsiya manuscripts are at the verge of extinction owning to need of preservation and conservation. The study makes an endeavor towards identifying, documenting some of the Kashmiri Marsiya manuscripts.

Scope

The scope of the study is confined to the identification, documentation of some of selected Kashmiri Marsiya manuscripts.

Objectives

1. To identify various Kashmiri Marsiya manuscripts.
2. To gather relevant information about selected titles.
3. To capture scanned images of selected manuscripts.
4. To document each Marsiya manuscript.

Methodology
For objective 1\textsuperscript{st} and 2\textsuperscript{nd} a survey was carried to various places including households of Marsiya writers and orators to identify various Marsiya titles and manuscripts. The information pertaining to each identified manuscript was gathered by consulting Marsiya knowing persons including writers, scribes and orators, besides few important books were consulted for the same.

For objective 3\textsuperscript{rd} high resolution scanner were used to digitize the manuscript by choose the best resolution for clarity and easy up and downloading procedures.
For objective 4\textsuperscript{th} MSWord 2003 was used to create documented files of manuscripts with associated metadata.

Review of Related Literature
Culture is that invisible bond, which ties the people of a community together. Hofstede (2001) says that Culture could be defined as a collective programming of the mind that distinguishes the members of one human group from another (as cited in Hakala, Latti& Sandberg, 2011). Zuraidah while studying Culture says that culture forms everyday lives of the people. The colorful cultures are evident in not only the music, dances, games, the many art forms and past times, but also in the values, beliefs and norms (as cited in Manaf and Ismail, 2010). Chowdhury (2010) defines Culture as knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society. He further adds that heritage means” our legacy from the past, what we live with today and what we pass on to future generations”. Liew (2005) adds that Culture provides links between the past, present and the future. Cultural information can bring communities together, as well as promoting the understanding of a culture and society. Veltman (1997) explains that Culture is concerned with the development of coherent viewpoints which bring a Cumulative effect to otherwise isolated experiences of a group, making them feel special yet allowing others to have a parallel experience. Hence an Italian’s culture links them with Dante and Petrarch, and yet they can respect an Indian’s culture which links them with the Vedas and the Mahabharata. UNESCO says that Cultural heritage is the legacy of physical artifacts and intangible attributes of a group or society that are inherited from past generations, maintained in the present and bestowed for the benefit of future generations. Cultural heritage is based on the aspects of our past that we cherish, want to keep and pass on to future generations and outside world. Cultural heritage manifests itself in diverse forms, from mega-structures, like pyramids, medieval cities, monastic complexes and museums, to languages and dialects, songs, art, folk stories, customs, practices and dances. However, Jokilehto (1990) suggests that cultural heritage should be considered both in time and in space. First, it
no longer stops at the dawn of the nineteenth century but now also embraces the records left behind by the twentieth century. Second, the aim is not only to preserve increasingly numerous items of cultural property but also to safeguard complexes which go far beyond single large monuments or individual buildings.

The preservation of cultural heritage is central to protecting a sense of who we are a meaningful reference in our culturally diverse world. **Ekwelem, Okafor and Ukwoma (2011)** states that “preservation of cultural heritage resources is essential to sustainable development. It recognizes the importance of cultural continuity and of human history in nourishing social cohesion, a sense of self, of belonging, and of place in a context within which to understand the past and to contemplate the future”. **Maltesh, Lahkar and Gajakose (2007)** says that Culture is preserved through verbal and written forms on subjects like songs, stories, epics, novels, poems, philosophical treatises, manuals, performances etc. **Williams (2001)** states that preservation of cultural heritage resources is very important to the development of the various cultures. It is a witness of where we have come from and where we are (as cited in Ekwelem, Okafor and Ukwoma, 2011). **Conway (1990)** adds further that the purpose of preservation is to protect information of enduring value for access by present and future generations (as cited in Hedstrom, 1997). **Ramana (2005)** says that Preservation of traditional materials became more successful and systematic after libraries and archives integrated preservation into overall planning. **Manaf and Ismail (2010)** further adds that these institutions provide their respective communities with scientific, creative and cultural heritage resources. **Day (1997)** is among the earliest authors to discuss the importance of recording technological context for digital preservation. He suggested that Dublin Core elements could be used to preserve details (e.g., migration, encoding) about the technical context of digital materials. Furthermore he suggests that the metadata recorded for each instance would make it possible to discover how to accurately manipulate and display digital materials (as cited in Beaudoin, 2012). In recent decades, many major libraries and archives established formal preservation programs for traditional materials in paper, microform, photographic, and to a lesser degree audio-visual formats observes (Hedstrom, 1997). **Liu (1999)** says that in a changing society, the lack of funds and experienced librarians and the need to preserve precious historic and cultural heritage is particularly challenging. In order to resolve this difficult situation, networking and co-operation between libraries, archives and information departments is vital. (Nazir and Bhat, 2014); (Nazir, 2014) the manuscript has beautifully discussed various concepts of the Marsiya in all the four parts in an ordered manner.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Manuscript No</th>
<th>16</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Title</td>
<td>Shafa (Cure)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Author</td>
<td>Khawaja Bakir</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date of manuscript</td>
<td>1993</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date of content</td>
<td>1200 Hijri</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language</td>
<td>Kashmiri</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical description</td>
<td>Length= 21.5cm, Breadth=17.5cm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Script</td>
<td>Perso- Arabic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Origin</td>
<td>Kashmir</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Material used</td>
<td>Paper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scribe</td>
<td>Mulla Abdul Raheem</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orator</td>
<td>Ali Mohammad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. of folios</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. of stanzas</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Annotation /Notes**

The manuscript entitled “Shafa” means cure is written by Khawaja Bakir in kashmiri language during 1200 Hijri. The author has discussed all the four parts of this marsiya in an ordered manner.
In the Hamd part author praises Allah. He says that Allah is enough for universe. Allah is the master and most merciful who cures, benefits and eliminates ill fate. He delivers justice and is always merciful to his followers. He is ever forgiving.

In the Naat part author praises Prophet Mohammad (s.a.w). He says Allah send Prophet Mohammad (s.a.w) as the blessing for the entire universe and for the betterment of humanity. Prophet Mohammad (s.a.w) is a blessing for whole humanity and will save the Ummah from the hellfire.

In the manaqabat part author praises Imam Ali. He says imam ali is “Mushkil Kusha” which means he eases our difficulties and problems.

Once Fatima Zahra (s.a) was very ill. She got cure by his son imam Hussain by touching his hands because imam Hussain (a.s) was also the cure for all humanity. But in karbala these cure giving hands were brutally cut off in karbala by shimr(la).
سوزه دلیم و روی علیه عالیکار، نرخ‌کاری بی‌خانپایی سوزه جهان سازی بزرگ‌تری دوام خویم توانسته‌ایم. در اینجا، سازی بزرگ‌تری خویم توانسته‌ایم.

در اینجا، سازی بزرگ‌تری خویم توانسته‌ایم.
که می‌خواهیم به‌صورت دوباره و با کمک دوستان و شوالیه‌های نزدیک و اکنون و در حال حاضر، به‌روزرسانی و بهبود این موضوعات انجام دهیم. شکسته و نابودی که ایستاده نگه‌داری می‌کنیم، برای پاک‌سازی و تضعیف زنگ‌های دیگری از طرف نمی‌دهد.

بنابراین، ملت‌های خالق و استحکام دار، می‌توانند با پرداختن به این موضوع و به‌روزرسانی کردن این ادعا، به‌سوی بهبود و پیشرفت بروده و پا به راه‌های جدیدی بروده و با کمک‌های دوستان و شوالیه‌های نزدیک، این موضوعات را به‌روزرسانی و تضعیف کنند.
سیاهی‌های و نوبت‌ها بین گره‌های زیر نیکو زیسته‌های دارای دنیا نا‌خوبینه بوده‌اند. در کنار این تغییرات، همچنین برخی از گره‌های دیده‌شده در صفحات نوری، نیز باعث شده و گیره‌هایی در برخی از این صفحات نوری، نیز باعث شده‌اند.
CONCLUSION

Kashmiri Marsiya has been written during different time periods by some great writers especially from more than 600 years. These Marsiya manuscripts form a part of collection of households of some renowned Marsiya writers, scribes and orators and can be found in deteriorated form and not much attention has been paid towards their safeguarding and preservation.

With the changes in times especially the changing modes of accessing information these manuscripts has either remained a part of personal collection with less or no attention. We will be losing this important cultural asset if appropriate steps are not taken for their preservation and conservation.

Libraries and information centres have transformed their activities towards preservation of such cultural assets and are world over involved in such endeavors. With the advent of open access software and digital libraries these things have become possible with less financial implications. Open source Software is an important tool to build the digital library collections. The digital library of Marsiya manuscripts is a step towards finding opportunities and methods of digitized such valuable cultural assets. It is also suggests that wider user oriented programs by libraries and archival institutions need to be put in place in order to convince the common masses for making their personal collections available for digitization of long term preservation.

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