



# Revival of National Mission for Manuscripts (NMM)

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## Why in News?

Recently, the Union **Ministry of Culture** is set to **revive and relaunch** the [National Mission for Manuscripts \(NMM\)](#).

## What are the Key Points of the Revived NMM?

- **National Manuscripts Authority:** The Union Ministry of Culture plans to form an autonomous body named **National Manuscripts Authority** under the Ministry of Culture.
  - **Presently**, NMM is a part of the [Indira Gandhi National Centre for Arts](#).
- **Achievements of NMM:** Between 2003-24, metadata of **52 lakh manuscripts** have been prepared, **over 3 lakh titles have been digitised** and **one-third** of them have been **uploaded**.
- **Concerns:** Only about **70,000 of the 1.3 lakh uploaded** manuscripts are accessible.
  - A significant **portion** of manuscripts is **privately owned**, with limited incentive for owners to make them publicly accessible.
- **Future Roadmap:**
  - Establishment of **university chairs** abroad in departments focusing on ancient **Indian studies**.
  - Suggestions for involving [Intellectual property rights \(IPRs\)](#) and **legal experts** to address issues related to the **sale of manuscripts abroad and private ownership**.
  - Emphasis on preserving **non-Brahmi** and lesser-known scripts.

## Manuscripts

- **Definition:** A manuscript is a **handwritten composition** created on materials such as **paper, bark, cloth, metal, or palm leaf**, and it must be **at least 75 years old**.
- **Exclusions:** **Lithographs** and printed volumes are **not** considered manuscripts.
- **Script Variability:** Often, one language is represented in **multiple scripts**. For instance, **Sanskrit** is written in scripts like **Oriya, Grantha, and Devanagari**.
- **Distinction from Historical Records:** Unlike historical records (e.g., **epigraphs, firmans, revenue records**), which document **historical events, manuscripts** primarily contain **knowledge** content.
  - Manuscripts provide knowledge on **philosophy, science, literature, and art**.
- **Historical Interest:** In the 18th century, the [Nawab of Awadh](#) presented an illuminated manuscript of the **Padshahnama** to **King George III of England**.
  - **Hiuen Tsang**, a 7th century Chinese traveller, took many **manuscripts back to China**.
- **British Interest:** **William Jones, C.P. Brown, John Leyden, Colin Mackenzie, Charles Wilkins, H.H. Wilson**, and **HT Colebrooke** played significant roles in studying and preserving Indian manuscripts.
- **Early Efforts in Cataloging:** Efforts to catalogue Indian manuscripts began as early as **1803** with the efforts of **HT Colebrooke, Asiatic Society of Bengal's** fourth president.

## What are the Key Facts About NMM?

- **About:** It is an initiative of the **Ministry of Culture** to preserve and document India's vast collection of manuscripts.
  - It was launched in **2003** to **uncover, document, conserve**, and make **accessible** India's vast manuscript heritage.
- **Implementing Bodies:** The **Department of Culture** is responsible for implementing the mission, while the **Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts (IGNCA)** serves as the nodal agency.
- **Objectives:** It is dedicated to **conserving manuscripts and disseminating** the knowledge contained in them, working toward its motto "**conserving the past for the future.**"
- **Scope and Collection:** India possesses an estimate of **five million manuscripts**, probably the **largest** collection in the **world**.
  - **70%** of manuscripts are in **Sanskrit**.

## UPSC Civil Services Examination, Previous Year Question (PYQ)

### **Prelims:**

**Q. With reference to Indian History, Alexander Rea, A. H. Longhurst, Robert Sewell, James Burgess and Walter Elliot were associated with (2023)**

- (a) archaeological excavations
- (b) establishment of English Press in Colonial India
- (c) establishment of Churches in Princely States
- (d) construction of railways in Colonial India

**Explanation: (a)**

**Q. Who among the following Mughal Emperors shifted emphasis from illustrated manuscripts to album and individual portrait? (2019)**

- (a) Humayun
- (b) Akbar
- (c) Jahangir
- (d) Shah Jahan

**Ans: (c)**