

# Arabic Persian Research Institute, MAAPRI, Tonk: A Descriptive Study

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**Abstract—** *The oriental Arabic and Persian manuscripts written by the ancestors are a noteworthy contribution for the Indian Ocean of knowledge. This article explores the detail and analytic study of Maulana Abul Kalam Azad Arabic and Persian Research Institute (MAAPRI), Tonk, which is a world-famous institute of Arabic and Persian ancient manuscripts in Rajasthan state of India. This study elaborates all the institutional activities related to the collection development, preservation and conservation processes of manuscripts and all other institutional facilities and activities which are provided to visiting research scholars from all over the world. Also, this study provides information about the all-round development in the field of Arabic and Persian knowledge and research.*

**Indexed Terms--** *Arabic and Persian Manuscripts, (MAAPRI), Tonk, Molana Azad Arabic and Persian Research Institute (MAAPRI), Tonk, Manuscript, Preservation, Digitization*

## I. INTRODUCTION

The Molana Abul Kalam Azad Arabic-Persian Research Institute (MAAPRI), is located in Tonk district, Rajasthan. This research institute was established in the year 1978 by the Government of Rajasthan. In this institute, hand written texts collected by the Nawabs of Tonk, documents, linguistic literature and Urdu, Persian books and documents found in government records are collected. Here 'Alamgiri Quran Sharif' written by Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb and 'Quran-e-Kamal' prepared by Emperor Shah Jahan are preserved. The difficult words of the Qur'an are explained in the Alagriben manuscript. It was prepared 900 years ago by Mohammed bin Abdullah in Egypt.

The MAAPRI Institute is famous for a variety of historical documents and materials. Here scholars come from not only from India but also more than 50 countries including America, France, Italy, Canada, Africa, Afghanistan, Belgium, Israel, Japan, Austria, and Germany. Scholars come here for research and publish their work in English & Hindi.

## II. HISTORY AND ESTABLISHMENT OF THE INSTITUTE.

During the year 1867 AD, Mohammad Ali Khan, the third Nawab of Tonk, got the work of getting books written by the Adibs during his imprisonment in Banaras. Nawab Sahib invites scholars from time to time from the countries of West Asia, Iran, Iraq, Egypt, Arab Sultanates, different cities of the country and got books, religious historical books written and translated and collected many books. His son Rahim Khan brought that collection to Tonk. On December 4, 1978, as per the decision of the State Government, 'Arabic-Persian Research Institute' was established. There they said collections etc. were kept. The then Chief Minister Bhairon Singh Shekhawat and Founder Director Sahabzada Shokat Ali Khan had an important contribution in its establishment.

It is a matter of great pleasure that many dignitaries, scholars, administrative officials, orientologists, litterateurs and artists from India and abroad have been frequently visiting this institution of international repute and expressing their feelings and expressions about it. Those views are entered in the visitor register here.

Few of them cited their comments and views as follows.

- His Excellency Mr. Gyani Zail Singh, the then President of India visited the Institute on 20 April 1986 and his views are quoted in this quote: "I am

very happy to visit the Arabic and Persian Research Institute, Rajasthan, Tonk. It is a place of national unity and composite culture. Rajasthan government should feel proud for this. Two years ago I had also inspected "Khuda Bakhsh Oriental Library, Patna". There is no parallel to this but after inspecting this institute I came to the conclusion that it would have been a mistake if I had not visited this institute and the very important treasure of oriental studies. I take this opportunity to suggest that rare manuscripts should be translated into Urdu and Hindi so that people can be benefited."

- The then Vice President of India, His Excellency Mr. Mohamed Hidayatullah, visiting the Institute on 29th December, 1982, expressed his views as follows: "I was not only pleased but also amazed to see untold wealth and manuscripts of antiquity , So well preserved here. I hope scholars will take full advantage of this collection and bring them to the world. My congratulations and best wishes to the Director and his team.
- The then Governor of Rajasthan, His Excellency Shri O.P. Mehra visited the institute on 29th December, 1982 and left his mark in the following words:  
"It is a privilege to visit an institute of this caliber. The manuscripts available in the campus are not only good source material for scholars and researchers but also a heritage that can not only make Rajasthan and India proud but is unique in many ways.
- Honorable N.L. Tibrewal, former Chief Justice, High Court of Rajasthan, Jaipur while visiting this Institute on 24-3-99 summed up his sentiments in the following words: I had a longing desire to visit this institute. I had heard that the institute has a good collection of rare manuscripts and documents. Maintaining a collection of more than 19,000 rare manuscripts and documents would not have been possible without dedication and commitment. I am even happier to see that the institute is being managed by competent persons. The Director of the Institute is a dedicated person. I wish them great success.
- Madam Barbara D. Metcalf, Professor of South Asian History, University of California, Davis, CA

95616 USA visited the Institute on 10th August, 1990 and gave her views as below:

"It gives great pleasure to visit this renowned institution and to know about its outstanding role in preserving the heritage of oriental studies in India. We particularly enjoyed the demonstration of calligraphy. The library is clean, beautifully maintained and the elegant building is a pleasure to look at."

### III. WORK AND SERVICES OF MAAPRI, TONK

The work and services are running under the following categories as same as the direction of National Mission for Manuscripts (NMM) for all branches of Rajasthan Oriental Research Institute (RORI) of Rajasthan state:--

- A. Collection or Resources of MAAPRI- the MAAPRI, Tonk has a richest literary treasure in Arabic, Persian and Urdu was produced mainly in the Middle East and India from the seventh century AD to the nineteenth century AD. These are significant resources that are used by scholars, students, state administrators and religious leaders. They proclaim sophistication of the persons for whom they were originally penned –sultans, shahs, princes and members of the aristocracy.

Table No. 1 Resources and collection of manuscripts in MAAPRI

S.No. (I)	Manuscripts	No. of Items
1	Manuscripts of Khazinatul Makhtutat	8924
2	Manuscripts Xeroxed	233
3	Manuscripts transcribed	35
4	Manuscripts microfilmed	936
5	Musawwidat, Mubayyazat	18
6	Manuscripts DVT	2000
(II)	Baitul Hikmat (writings)	
1	Munshi Khana Huzuri	18,805
2	Adalat Shariyat	28,755
3	Adalat-e Diwani	8,015
4	Darbar-e Englishiya	4,358
5	Makhtutat Munshikhana Huzuri	1,182

6	Makhtutat Adalat-e Sharashareef	406
7	Makhtutat Adalat-e Diwani	269
8	Matbuat Adalat-e Sharashareef	985
9	Matbuat Munshikhana Huzuri	733
10	Matbuat Colectorate	1,710
(III)	Printed Books	
1	Reference Books	37,633
2	Reference Journals (Dar ur Rasail)	21,554
3	Calligraphy Panels and Artifacts	802
4	Katbat (with two cannon balls)	12
5	Faramin and Asanid	722
	Total collection of MAAPRI	13,8,087

There are a number of manuscripts and documents which have international repute and stands out for the very high quality of its illustrated and illuminated manuscripts scripted in the Arabic, Persian and the Urdu languages. It consist of 8,924 mss, 233 Xeroxed mss, 35 Transcribed mss, 936 Microfilmed mss, 18 Musawwidat, Mubayyazat, 37,633 reference books, 722 Farmin and Asanid, 17,980 reference journals (Dar ur Rasail), 786 Calligraphy panels and Artifacts, 12 Katbat and 65,000 judgment files of the Shariat records of the erstwhile Tonk state, supplemented by an assortment of other object, most notable which are coins, weights, and decorative calligraphic art called “Khat-i-Nakhoon” or the letters crafted by finger nails. The institute holds rare manuscripts of the Abbasid Caliphate and the Qutub Shahi dynasties from the royal libraries of Humanyun, Akbar, Jahangir, Shah Jahan and Aurangzeb and the later Mughals. Spacimen autographs, handwriting samples and seal impressions of Pre-Mughal sultans, princes and princesses and scholars, writers and commentators also from a part the collection. There are works of historical significance also which tell us to the political relations of Indian rulers with the nations of Central Asia and the Middle East.

The remarkable collection of Quran manuscripts and books on Islamic thought ie., *Qasas ul-Ambia*, *Hillayat ul Nabi Shahihul Bukhari*, *Kafaf ur Raa*, provide a focus to the displays with Naskh style of calligraphy.

According to the recent information from some reliable sources this institute has known biggest Quran Sharif of the world entered in the Guinness book. Russia has been awarded a Guinness world record certificate for being the world biggest Quran Sharif. The information as follows-

- Afghanistan- size-length- 7 feet, width- 5 feet
- Russian Republic Tatarstan- size- 1.5 meters by 2 meters
- Russia- - size- 150 \* 200 cm.



Figure no. 1 H.E. Gyani Zail Singh Ji the Then President of India Perusing Manuscripts in the Institute



Figure no. 2 The Rajasthan MAAPRI, Tonk, India feels pride to exhibit the world's biggest hand written Quran Sharif

**B. Manuscript procurement process through donation and survey work:**

With the guidance of Government and Jodhpur Institute, the survey work of manuscripts has been successfully carried out by the Institute from time to time. Almost all the manuscripts have been surveyed, in which the collection work has been completed by visiting all the local libraries, museums and other district, tehsil **level** places in the entire Rajasthan region and other states and it is still going on.

**C. Manuscript preservation procedures:**

The Institute has good manuscripts conservation and preservation cell and work has been done. The Rajasthan state government provides the grants for scientifically preservation of the manuscripts and digitization of manuscripts work respectively. There three types of deterioration factors are main cause of deterioration of the handwritten manuscripts. In which, first is environmental pollution like humidity, dust, fire and fluctuations of temperature are effective cause for deterioration of old manuscripts; second is types of insects which are damaged the originality of manuscripts; third is physical handling and unknowingness of utility or importance of manuscripts therefore preservation and conservation work is very important for saving the valuable oriental knowledge available in these manuscripts and the requirement of a well managed centre is very essential to preserve manuscripts for next generation. There are two types of preservation techniques are prescribed by National Mission for Manuscripts (NMM) for protection of manuscripts like preventive preservation and curative preservation. The first preventive process is used related to protect the written materials from environmental conditions and deterioration of materials and by the second curative techniques is chemical solutions are used for Chemical treatment like fumigation chambers, Thymol, and Chloromate solutions are using to protect the manuscripts from insects and other various natural things are also used to protect the manuscripts like turmeric, Neem Leaves, car cumin, oregano etc. Binding and lamination are also used for the fragile and tattering books, manuscripts and magazines received in donation, is done with chemical treatment for the long life and protection of materials for the best use and study.

**D. Microfilming:**

This work has been done for some very rare and fragile conditions manuscripts. Total 930 manuscripts are microfilmed presently. In future it will be done according to the manuscript's requirements and the direction of RORI main Branch Jodhpur.

**E. Digitization procedures:**

Digitization work start after completion of preservation for the long term of protection of manuscript. Almost all manuscripts are digitized and this work is done continuously according to receiving of the manuscripts in the institutes by the help of Jodhpur institute. Total 8924 manuscripts are digitized presently and the data is available on the website of Rajasthan Oriental Research Institute (RORI). Digitization is a unique and prodigious project primarily in India, with a uniquely extensive archive, a curious blend of oriental science, manuscriptology and Indology. At present the digitization, computerization and the construction of Baitul Hikmat work is in progress in the MAAPRI.

**F. Reference Library:**

There is a rich library for researchers having One Lakh and Twenty Thousand books on different subjects in which are mostly donated and in a very few of them are by purchased. The manuscripts digital copy is provided in the CD/DVD forms by the institute. There is major drawback in this institute that no sufficient staff for providing services to researchers.

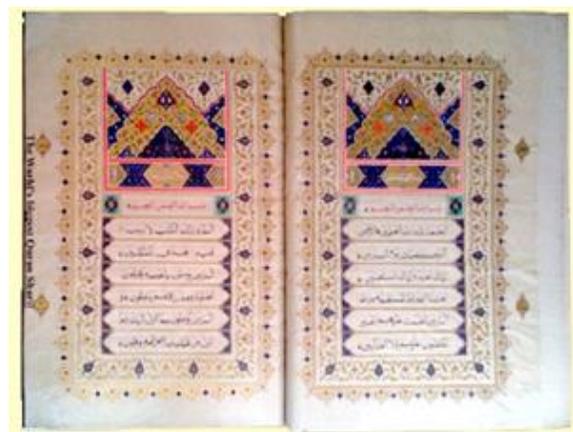


Figure no. 3 Digitization of Oriental Manuscripts

**G. Publications -The institute published all collections, original works include:**

edited and translated manuscripts on subjects relating to the holy Quran as (al –Hadis, at-Tajwid, al-Qirat, and at-Tafsir), Islamic Jurisprudence, traditions of Islam, Malfuzat (writings) of the saints, classical literature, philosophy, lexicography, historiography, topography, geography, epistolography, theology, medicine, math, etymology, astrology, astronomy, syntax and other sciences etc.

H. Catalogue and Other publications

MAAPRI has a very good collection of catalogue in the form of print, digital and combination of both. There are several catalogues published in Hindi and English languages related to Arabic, Persian and Urdu manuscripts along with some translation, journal and other publications. The details are as follows:-

Table No. 2 Publication work of the Institute

A. Publications: catalogue publications

S. No.	Catalogue Publications	Published in Print form	Published in Print & Digital form	Total
1	Sanskrit - Prakrit Language Catalogue		3	3
2	Hindi - Rajasthani Language Catalogue	3		3
3	Catalogue of Arabic Manuscripts	3		3
4	Descriptive Catalogue of Persian Manuscripts	3		3
5	Khazana ul Makhtutat (Descriptive Catalogue of Arabic, Persian & Urdu Manuscripts in Urdu)-	6		6
	Total =	15	3	18

B. Publications: Translation works from other languages

S. No.	Translation works from other languages	No. of Translations
1	Hindi Language	10
2	English	14
3	Arabic	3
4	Persian	6
5	Urdu	66
6	Multilingual	9
	Total =	108

C. Publications: Journals, Writings and others publications

S. No.	Other publications	No.
8	Fatawa Adalat-i-Shara Sharif, Tonk	27
9	Research Journal-Total Published Volumes	28
	Total	55

D. Total Publications of MAAPRI

S. No.	Publications of MAAPRI	Total
1	Catalogue Publications	18
2	Translation works from other languages	108
3	Writings, Journals & Other publications	55
	Total Publications of MAAPRI	181

Table 2 reveals that there are total 181 publications are available in the institute and continue running the work on time to time related to different aspects of research. These publications are very valuable for Indian and foreign readers, authors and researchers etc.

I. Research Facilities: -

The main aims and objectives of establishment of MAAPRI was to collect all Arabic and Persian original sources of historical and cultural importance available in Rajasthan or pertaining to Rajasthan; and to promote and cultivate the research activities in this area along with execute the knowledge within the manuscripts regarding this the institute has been provided best research facilities to their researchers

and those who are coming from the foreign countries. The institute provides printed reference books, old magazines, Xeroxed copies and the important record of Munshi Khana Huzuri and that of Shara Sharif to their researchers and learned persons too.

It contains 17,980 old magazines of 570 types. Recently the Institute has got a very important collection including periodicals of 1971 from the personal library of Late Chand Bihari Lal Sabah. Inspired by this donation, SB-Advocate, donated two almirahs along with some more reference books to this institution.

**J. Dar-ur-Rasail:-**

A separate cell named Dar-ur-Rasail was established in the year 1996 to collect old Magazines /periodicals.

Table No. 3 Number of PhD Scholars came from the National Universities for completed their research work in the year from

S. No.	Number of PhD Scholars from the National Universities	No. of Researchers	Research completed in the year from
1	University of Rajasthan, Jaipur	18	1970-2021
2	M.D.S. University, Ajmer	19	1992-2021
3	M.L. Sukhariya University, Udaipur	5	1992-2011
4	Jamia Milliyya University, New Delhi	1	1992
5	Delhi University, New Delhi	1	2002
6	Jawahar Lal Nehru University, New Delhi	1	2001-2022
7	Aligarh Muslim University, Aligarh (U.P.)	1	2021-2022
8	Ahilya Bai University, Indore (M.P.)	1	1999
9	Barkatullah University, Bhopal (M.P.)	4	1999-2008
10	Institutional Research scholars are doing their research work	13	2021-2022

S. No.	M. Phil Scholars	No. of Researchers	Research completed in the year from
1	University of Rajasthan, Jaipur	6	2007, 2022-
2	Kota University	2	2010

The institute is open in all days in a year from 9.30 am. To 6.00 pm. for rendering services to their readers. Moreover, a good number of registered Ph.D. Scholars of various renowned national and international Universities is benefitted by utilizing the source material of this Institute. More than 68 scholars have

already been awarded the degree of Ph.D. by the aforesaid Universities and about 25Scholars are doing their works presently. The analyses of the research work are describing with the table no 3.

Table no. 4 Number of PhD Scholars comes from the Foreign Universities

S. No.	Name of Countries	No. of Scholars
1	Afghanistan	1
2	Africa	1
3	Angola	1

S. No.	Name of Countries	No. of Scholars
22	Malawi	1
23	Madagascar	1
24	Malaysia	1

4	Australia	3
5	Bahrain	1
6	Bangladesh	4
7	Bhutan	1
8	Canada	1
9	Egypt	1
10	Ethiopia	1
11	France	3
12	Germany	1
13	Indonesia	1
14	Iran	2
15	Iraq	1
16	Jeddah	1
17	Jordan- Amman	1
18	Kathmandu	1
19	Kuwait	2
20	Liana	1
21	London	3

25	Nairobi	1
26	Nepal	1
27	New York	3
28	Oman	1
29	Pakistan	5
30	Riyadh	1
31	Saffron Walden	2
32	Saudi. Arabia	4
33	South Africa	4
34	Sudan	2
35	Switzerland	1
36	Tanzania	1
37	U.K.	1
38	U.S.A.	7
39	U.S.S.R	1
40	Vietnam	1
41	Vienna	1
42	West Africa	2
43	Zambia	1

Table no 4 reveals that there are total 74 scholars who came from 43 countries to complete their research work in different fields.

#### IV. VARIOUS ACTIVITIES OF THE INSTITUTE

- i. Document delivery services to researchers: Institute provides remotely document delivery services (Xerox copies) to the researchers of India and abroad, which is very commendable work of the institute. The 52 scholars, benefitted by the source materials preserved here and received Ph.D. degree by the different universities. While 13 research scholars are getting advantages. Also provided the correspondence help the scholars for completing their wanting research materials, is the permanent and valuable activity of the Institute.
- ii. Scholarship/Fellowship: Institutes offers two types of fellowship: - 1<sup>st</sup> under the name of Nawab Mohd. Ali Khan amount Rs.1800 per month and 2<sup>nd</sup> is Nawab Amir ud-Daulah Scholarship Scheme amount Rs. 400 per month to 4 scholars each,

scholars who are registered in any University established by law in India or traditional scholars, who do their research on the basis of protected source material in this institute.

- iii. Diploma Course: Presently, in view of the shortage of Arabic, Persian and Urdu scholars, the Institute is running one year Diploma Course in Manuscriptology since 1998-1999 with the approval of Government of Rajasthan in which intake is ten students. And they get Rs. 500 per month honorarium.
- iv. Graphic designs training course: Another one year graphic designs training course of Urdu Calligraphy Graphic Designing and this course is running since 2001 for the students under the Graphic Designing Scheme sponsored by National Council for Promotion of Urdu Language, Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India. In the institute, 25 students getting one year training of Urdu Calligraphy and Graphic Designing course every year.
- v. One Year Computer Diploma Course: Under the scheme sponsored by NCPUL New Delhi, 80 students are admitted in one year diploma course

to learn Computer Application and Multilingual (DTP) Urdu from the year 1999-2000. At present 15th batch is under training. 610 students have obtained diploma after completing the course. More than half of the students got jobs educational institutions and private companies.

- vi. Arabic Course of the institute: The scheme of two year functional Arabic course sponsored by NCPUL, New Delhi is running since 2004. Under this scheme 225 students are getting benefitted. At present total 25 students is taking training under this scheme.
- vii. Organization of seminars and exhibitions in the Institute: Seminars and exhibitions are conducted on time to time by the institute to increase the interest of local communities' and researchers of India and foreign countries.
- viii. Nawwab Muhammad Ali Khan Art Gallery: In 2003, Institute organized a very artistic Art gallery for the users to aware about the collection of MAAPRI. This section includes and represented old and beautiful calligraphy artifacts, art designed on Namda, photography, collection of some old and late stamps from India and many foreign countries, calligraphy art designed on human hair, representation of lentil beans, sesame and rice also, the art of calligraphy and decorative calligraphy was written and designed inside a transparent glass bottle, a collection of some old coins. These presentations grab the attention of any visitor and researchers too.
- ix. Display Hall: Institute also established a display hall for their users. It contains and represents very rare and informative manuscripts collections like the manuscripts are artistically ornamented with gold, enamel and lapislazuli work; some of them also have royal seals, autographs and handwritings of some experienced scholars in a very artistic manner. No doubt that the provision of this display hall to safely display extremely important and rare manuscripts since the inception of the Institute is a boon so that special visitors, scholars can view this priceless collection.
- x. Guest house: As another milestone, the Government of Rajasthan constructed a scholar guest house next to the new building of the Directorate to provide accommodation and facilities at concessional rates to the research scholars.

xi. Participation in national and international book fairs: At present in the direction of Dr. Saulat Ali Khan (Director of MAAPRI, Tonk, Rajasthan), Institute participated in book fairs held at different cities of the India and abroad. Showcased and sold the translations of ancient writings, and printed books to the readers.

- xii. Instructions /Guiding facilities: Institute provided the symbolic and meaningful presentation of the Institute's aims, objectives and achievements, through the exhibitions and art gallery of the institute and also organizing exhibitions on the different special day or occasions' in the year on time to time. An exhibition was organized on the eve of the Golden Jubilee of India's Independence and the Golden Jubilee Celebrations of the formation of Rajasthan. In the context of future planning of the institute, the construction work of "The Tonk Museum" is being done in the campus of the institute at a cost of Rs 7.55 crore,
- xiii. Awards and facilitations: In the new scheme of awards and facilitation, the Institute has awarded Rs 10,000 to four scholars of Arabic, Persian, Urdu and History in recognition of their outstanding research work from the year 2013-14 and continues the publication of valuable unprinted manuscripts, which are bringing light to the name of the country in the world.

## CONCLUSION

Maulana Abul Kalam Azad Arabic Persian Research Institute, Tonk (MAAPRI) has a good collection of manuscripts and other important documents from its existence and is doing very valuable work in the research field. It has numerous amounts of documents in the form of writings, manuscripts and printed & non-printed books, which are very helpful for everyone's interest and knowledge. Thus we can say that in the present time the institute is doing very informative work and well managed in their work. We should be proud for this institutional work for a good preservation of our posterity.

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