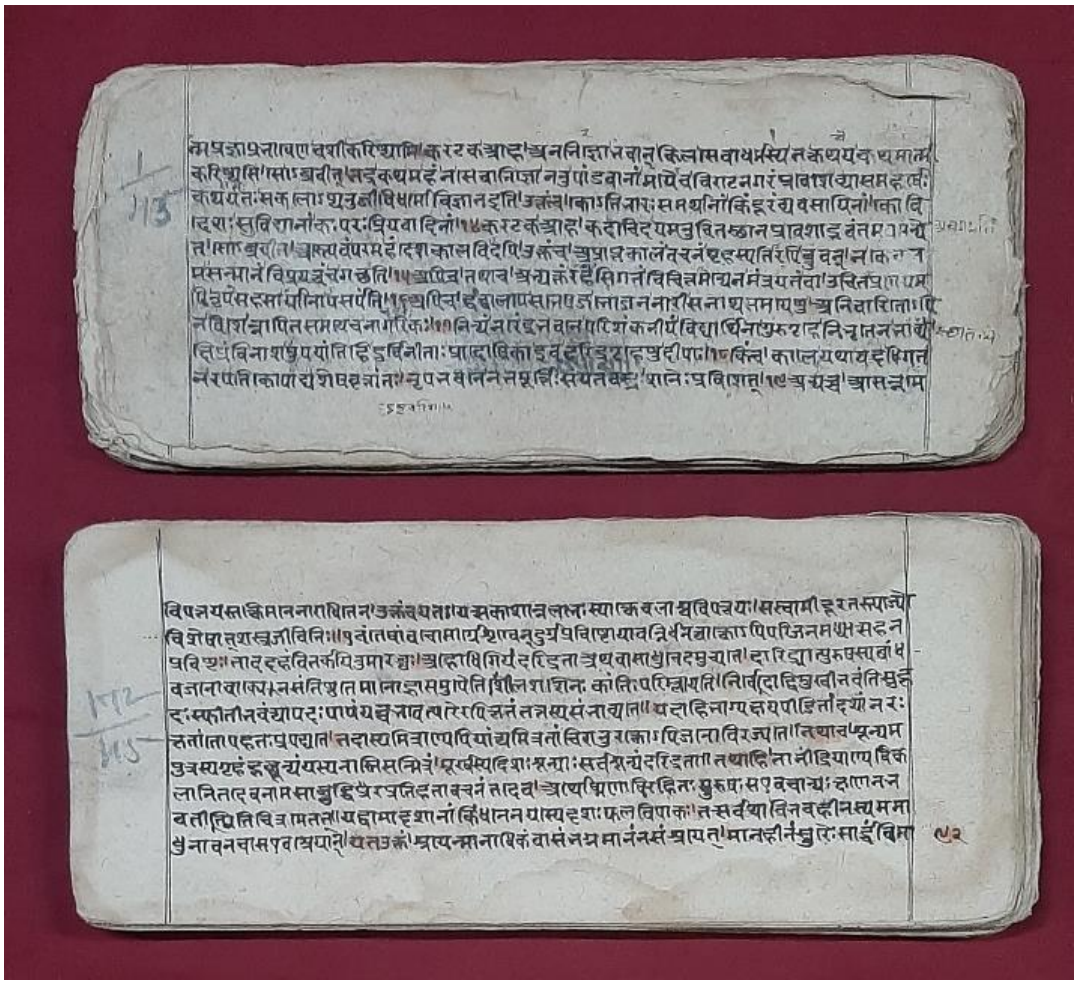
The 15th Century Manuscript of the *Pañcatantra* Fables



A PROPOSAL FOR
NOMINATION FOR UNESCO MEMORY OF THE WORLD ASIA PACIFIC REGIONAL REGISTER FOR CYCLE 2023-24

1. Title of Documentary Heritage Item or Collection (max 10 words)

The 15th Century Manuscript of the Pañcatantra Fables

2. Summary (max 200 words)

The Panchatantra is an ancient collection of fables in Sanskrit, estimated to be over 3,000 years old. One of its earliest preserved manuscript versions, missing only the first 7 pages, is housed at the renowned Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute (BORI) in Pune, India.

The manuscript's human, supernatural, and animal characters, along with cultural references, provide evidence that the tales originated in South Asia. Scholars have concluded this by analyzing various recensions and translations of the Panchatantra stories, which have proliferated globally since antiquity.

Placed within a frame story and composed in a combination of verse and prose, this documentary heritage is an example of the art of storytelling of the subcontinent and a significant contribution to ancient world literature. It is believed that the pundit Vishnusharma composed the Pañcatantra for unruly sons of a king who was anxious to educate them. The manuscript reveals that it is a textbook of artha 'worldly wisdom' or niti 'polity,' which is believed to be one of the three objects of human accomplishment (the other two being dharma 'religion or morally proper conduct' and kama 'love'), rather than being a book of 'moral stories,' as adaptations and abridged versions often project it to be.

3. Nominator/s Contact details

3.1 Name of nominator/s (person/s or organisation/s)

Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, Pune

3.2 Relationship to the nominated documentary heritage

Owner of the documentary heritage

3.3 Contact person/s

Shri Sudheer Vaishampayan
Honorary Secretary
Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute

3.4 Contact details

Name Shri Sudheer Vaishampayan	Address Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute 812, Shivaji Nagar, Law College Road, Pune-411004
Telephone +91-7796699822 +91 7263027523	Email info@boriindia.org, www.bori.ac.in

4 Declaration of Authority

I certify that I/we have the authority to nominate the documentary heritage described in this document to the Asia Pacific Regional Memory of the World Register. All nominators must sign here. (A signed support letter from the nominators' National Commissions is required when the nomination is from two or more Member States. See Section J in the Process document for more details)

Name	Position
Shri Sudheer Vaishampayan	Honorary Secretary
Address Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, 812, Shivajinagar, Law College Road, Pune-411004	Email info@boriindia.org, www.bori.ac.in

Signature/s of nominator/s

5. Legal Information

5.1 Owner/s of the documentary heritage (name and contact details, if different from the nominator/s)

The original copies of the 96 manuscripts placed here for nomination by IGNCA are housed and owned by the following institutes in India.

Name	Address
Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, Pune	Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute 812, Shivajinagar, Law College Road Pune, Maharashtra India P.O. 411004
Telephone 7263027523 - Dr. Shreenand Bapat (Registrar)	Email info@boriindia.org

5.2 Custodian/s of the documentary heritage (name and contact details if different from the owner/s)

Custodian/s of the documentary heritage are the same as owners.

5.3 Legal status

The manuscript is owned by the above-mentioned public institutions India. India's legal framework for preserving documentary heritage includes the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains Act, 1958, and the Indian Treasure Trove Act, 1878 (No. VI). The Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains Act empowers the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) to safeguard archaeological sites and monuments. Additionally, the National Archives Act, 1990, establishes the National Archives of India for the preservation of historical documents. The Copyright Act, 1957, governs the reproduction of copyrighted works, including manuscripts. These laws provide the foundation for heritage protection.

The Ministry of Culture oversees initiatives with the National Mission for Manuscripts (NMM) operating under the Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts (IGNCA). IGNCA is dedicated to preserving India's cultural traditions, including manuscripts, and NMM plays a vital role in comprehensive documentation and dissemination. Funding supports world-class preservation and conservation practices, enabling academic access while preserving cultural significance with strict permissions and approvals in place.

BORI houses this manuscript adhere to strict standards and regulations for their preservation. Protocols govern the movement and handling of manuscripts, with authorized officials being the only individuals allowed to do so. Each folio is meticulously documented both textually and photographically to ensure its integrity. Physical access to manuscripts, even for academic and research purposes, is granted only after due permissions and approvals from all concerned authorities, preserving the manuscripts' physical state and ensuring its security.

5.4 Accessibility

i. Physical Access

The physical copies of the manuscripts are available and can be accessed through the Honorable Secretary and Assistant Curator by the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute which houses them with permission from the competent authorities.

ii. Digital Access

The digital version of the manuscript can be accessed through the permission of the Honourable secretary of BORI, Pune and Head of the Kala Nidhi Division, IGNCA as IGNCA is the digital repository of the manuscript

5.5 Copyright status

Since the documentary heritage placed for nomination are ancient in nature, there is no copyright involved. However the copyright of the digital copies of the manuscripts lies with IGNCA, the nominator.

6. Details of the Nominated Documentary Heritage

The 15th Century Manuscript of the Pañcatantra Fables

6.2 Type of documentary heritage

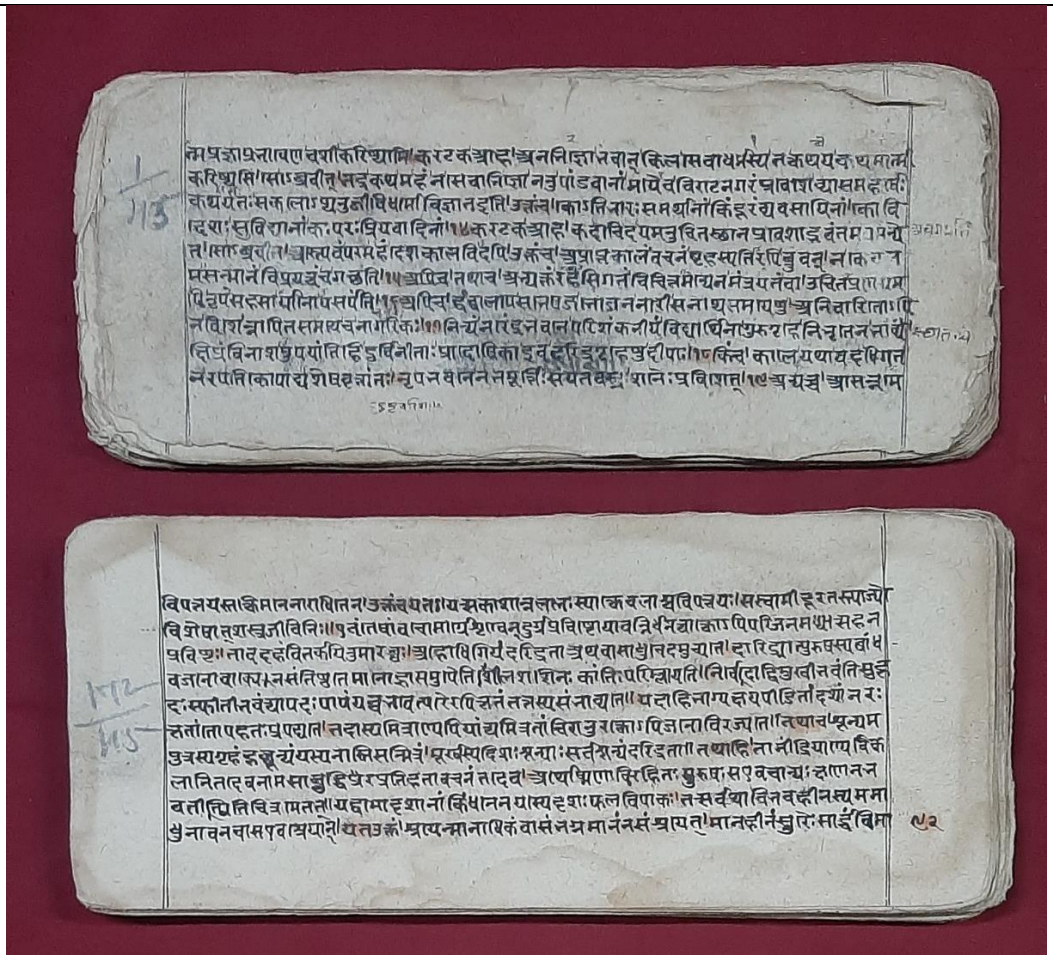
Paper Manuscript

6.3 Catalogue or registration details

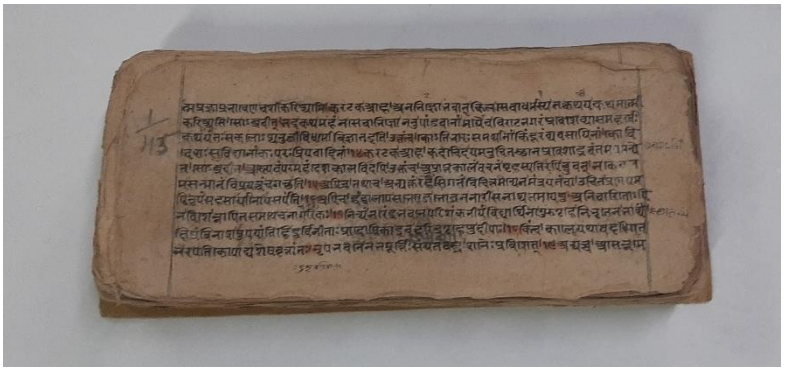
Roll No.	**BIR**
Title Hindi	पञ्चतन्त्र
Author/Comm.	Viṣṇu Śarmā
Title English	Pañcatantra
Place	Pune, India
Institutional manuscript holder	**BORI**
Folios	Folios 173; L 10, W 36
Missing Folios	**Unknown**
Size	11 5/8 x 5
Material	Paper
Comp./ Incomplete	Almost complete
Contents	Handwriting legible and uniform. -Original rec. no. 1273
Language	**Sanskrit**
Script	**Devanagri**
Original Mss. No.	
Year/Date	Saṁvat 1468 (1411 CE)
Record No.	BI6570

6.4 Images of the documentary heritage.

1. Pune BORI library, Image of the original manuscript of Panchatantra from the library. *Image courtesy: Pune BORI Library. Picture shared by Shri Shreenand L. Bapat*



2. Pune BORI library, An image of the shelves where all manuscripts are kept safely and numbered for access. Pune BORI library, Image of one of the wooden cupboard shelves.
Image courtesy: Pune BORI Library. Picture shared by Shri Shreenand L. Bapat



3. Pune BORI library, An image of the manuscript page.
Image courtesy: Pune BORI Library. Picture shared by Shri Shreenand L. Bapat

6.5 History/Origin/Background/Provenance

The *Pañcatantra* is a collection of ancient fables originating in the Indian subcontinent around 1200 BCE. An extraordinary example of Sanskrit literature, they are found inscribed on paper, palm leaves, and wooden manuscripts in various libraries and archives across India. When one traces the provenance of ancient Indian manuscripts one finds that they are housed in libraries of Indian institutes of great repute and age. These are institutes that were either under the ownership of the Princely states or were managed by the British Indian administration. Upon India's independence, the Institutes were transferred to State governments or the Central Government. The authenticity of the documents housed in these institutions can be corroborated by tracing the lineage of these institutions and how they were managed. These institutes have conservation divisions with trained staff who can make a professional assessment of the authenticity of manuscripts and can detect counterfeits.

The Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute (BORI) in Pune, which owns 29 paper manuscripts of the *Pañcatantra* Fables, was founded on July 6, 1917. The Institute is a public organization registered under Act XXI 1860 (a Public Trust). It is partially supported by annual earmarked grants from the Maharashtra Government.. This collection has material in several languages and scripts, including Sanskrit, Prakrit, Classical, Asian, and European languages, and various regional languages of India. The Institute also hosts a Manuscripts Resource and Conservation Centre under the auspices of the National Mission for Manuscripts, a project of the Ministry of Culture of the Government of India.

Having crossed a centenary of its existence, the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute is heading towards a second glorious century in academics. The Institute was founded in the year 1917 in the name of Sir Ramakrishna Gopal Bhandarkar, a pioneering scholar of ancient Indian history and culture. The founder members of the Institute included Lokmanya Tilak, N. C. Kelkar, Sir J. J. Modi, Bhavanrao Pant-Pratinidhi, Chief of the Aundh Princely State.

Alongwith the 17,000 manuscripts transferred to the Institute by the then Bombay Presidency Government, the Institute holds all 28,000 valuable manuscripts on all subjects of ancient life. Scholars and common people from all over the world benefit from our services on that behalf. UNESCO have nominated the Ṛgveda manuscripts from our collection in their Memory of the World register. Besides there, the National Mission for Manuscripts have declared five of our manuscripts as Vijñānanidhi. We are an active Manuscripts Resource and Conservation Centre under the NMM since its inception in 2003.

In 1866, the Government of Bombay Presidency started their activity of collection of manuscripts from western and northern parts of India. This activity continued till 1916. The manuscripts were placed at the Elphinstone College, Mumbai, wherefrom they were shifted to the Deccan College, Pune, and further transferred to the Bhandarkar Institute (us) in 1923. Thus, we are the custodians of the manuscripts for the last 101 years.

The said manuscript of Pañcatantra (190/1879-80) was collected under the above-mentioned scheme by Dr. Georg Buehler from somewhere in Gujarat or Rajasthan. The exact provenance of the manuscript is unknown since Dr. Buehler left for Vienna in 1880 to assume professorship there. He has not published the report of this collection as he did for the previous ones. No archival documents about the provenance are available.

6.6 Bibliography

Works by foreign scholars

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3. Edgerton, Franklin. *The Pañcatantra Reconstructed (Vol.1: Text and Critical Apparatus, Vol.2: Introduction and Translation.* New Haven, Connecticut: American Oriental Series Volumes 2–3. 1924.
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8. Waldau, Paul, and Kimberley Christine Patton, eds. *A communion of subjects: Animals in religion, science, and ethics.* Columbia University Press, 2006.

Works by Indian Scholars

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4. Chandra, Rajan. *Viṣṇu Śarma: The Pañcatantra*, London: Penguin Books, ISBN 978-0-14-045520-5 (reprint: 1995) (Translation based on Hertel manuscript.). 1993.
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7. Paraba, Kāśīnātha Pāṇḍuraṅga. ed. *The Pañchatantraka of Vishṇusarman*. Tukârâm Jâvjî. 1896.
8. Roy, Nilanjana. The Panchatantra: The ancient ‘viral memes’ still with us. URL: https://www.bbc.com/culture/article/20180517-the-panchatantra-the-ancient-viral-memes-still-with-us
9. Shastri, Guru Prasad. *Pañcatantra with the commentary Abhinavarajalaxmi*. Benares: Bhargava Pustakalaya. (Text with Sanskrit commentary). 1935.
10. Shayamacharan Pandey. *Pañcatantra m*. Vārāṇasī: Motilal Banarsidass. 1975.
11. Upadhyaya, K.D. “A General Survey of Indian Folk Tales”. Midwest Folklore. Indiana University Press. 1960-1961.

6.7 Names, qualifications and contact details of experts

Name	Qualifications	Address
[redacted]	- B.A. (Honours) [redacted] University of Oxford, where [redacted] studied Sanskrit, Pali and Indian religions - Ph.D. from the University of Pennsylvania [redacted] for a	[redacted] [redacted] Chair Emeritus in the Humanities [redacted] University of Texas Austin, TX [redacted]

	thesis containing the critical edition and translation of Yadava Prakasa's *Yatidharmaprakasa*	[redacted]
Name [redacted]	Qualifications : - M.A., Ph.D. (English). Professor of English, Department of English, Faculty of Arts, The Maharaja Sayajirao University of Baroda, Vadodara, Gujarat , India.	[redacted]
Name [redacted]	Qualifications - B.E. degree in mechanical engineering from UVCE - MSc (Engineering) degree in metallurgy from IISc - pursued research in materials science and metallurgy - MA degree in Sanskrit - D. Litt in Kannada, which was awarded by Hampi University for [redacted] thesis on the art of *Avadhana* in Kannada.	[redacted]

I certify that the above-named experts have given their written permission for their names and contact details to be used in connection with this nomination to the Memory of the World Asia Pacific Regional Register.

Signature

Secretary
Bhandarkar O. R. Institute
Pune - 411004 (India)

BHANDARKAR O. R. INSTITUTE
POONA
411 004

Sudheer Vaishampayan
Date : 12.04.2024

7. Authenticity and Integrity

7.1 Authenticity and Integrity

The manuscript of the *Pañcatantra* is a collection translated from the original fables which are estimated to be over 3000 years and are lost in time. It is one of the earliest preserved versions of the Sanskrit text in the custody of reputed Indian institutions with the capacity to determine their authenticity and to preserve them for posterity.

The manuscript is housed at BORI alongside thousands of manuscripts passed down over the centuries from one ruler/administrator to another. The manuscript is missing pages 1-7, rest is complete. This can be categorised under almost complete category.

They have conservation divisions with experts who can determine if a manuscript is forged or a replica. Further, the catalogues in the libraries where the manuscripts are safeguarded and preserved have details on each manuscript, including when they were composed. the *Pañcatantra* manuscript which is in good condition is digitized, while others are in the process of being digitized. All the manuscripts in this collection have been digitized.

There is proof that the manuscript is not corrupted from the original version of the Fables. Therefore, there is uniformity in the tales and a connection to the original fables which have been passed down over the years. The fables captured in the documentary heritage are quintessentially South Asian in terms of the human characters in the stories, the positive and negative connotations associated with the anthropomorphic characters, the lifestyle, and cultural references.

This conclusion by scholars is based on analyses of various recensions, geographical features, and animals described in the stories. However, it is the human, supernatural, and animal characters in the stories in the manuscripts and the connotations they have that stand as evidence that the stories are historically from the Indian subcontinent. For instance, *Brahmins* in the stories are a reference to people belonging to a particular caste in the caste hierarchy of South Asian Hindu social structure. *Yakshas* are supernatural beings mentioned in Hindu, Jain, and Buddhist texts. Animals like mongooses, elephants, tigers, lions, and camels are together found only in the South Asian subcontinent.

The manuscripts of the Panchatantra, considering the antiquity of the fables, are found housed in other libraries around the world too. There are illustrated versions of the *Pañcatantra* manuscripts, for instance, in the custody of the Philadelphia Museum of Art as part of its Stella Kramrisch Collection. There are also illustrated depictions – categorised as paintings – of scenes from the *Pañcatantra* stories in possession of the National Museum of India. These and information on these are available for public access on the National Portal and Digital Repository for Museums of India. Many of these, from the 1700s, are paintings on paper found in Rajasthan. Many other manuscripts of the *Pañcatantra* fables can be found in the Indian Office Library in London, UK, and the Tehran Museum of Contemporary Art in Iran, and in Tibet, and Japan.

8. Primary criteria:

8.1 Historical Significance

The *Pañcatantra* is one of the greatest texts of world literature, comparable only to the Bible in terms of global circulation, diffusion and antiquity. Its impact on the traditions of verbal and visual story-telling is significant in terms of didactic animal narratives and frame-structure. These are primary sources for several kinds of essential cultural histories. Therefore, the manuscript is in renowned Indian institutions - The Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, Pune.

The contents of the documentary heritage map the literary history of Asia and Europe. Apart from being a map of the culture, lifestyle, ethos, and morals of the South Asian subcontinent, the *Pañcatantra* is timeless and universal in terms of the themes they deal with. Further, while the contents of the manuscripts help trace the history of the cultural and moral values of the South Asian subcontinent, they are an excellent tool for understanding the general ethical principles that guide human behaviour.

The *Pañcatantra* is estimated to have been composed between 1200 BCE and 300 CE. Vishnusharma, who is acknowledged as the author in the Introduction of the work, is argued by *Pañcatantra* scholars, to have been born in what is modern-day Kashmir. Even though the *Pañcatantra*'s original texts are long lost, the tales have been preserved through multiple comments and recensions. Not only have the Fables travelled through the Asia-Pacific Region, they have travelled across the globe, either as multiple translations, or adaptations. The work has been translated over two hundred times in over 50 languages. Of these languages, three-fourth are extra-Indian. As early as the eleventh century this work reached Europe, and before 1600 it existed in Greek, Latin, Spanish, Italian, German, English, Old Slavonic, Czech, and possibly other Slavonic languages. There were at least 20 English translations of it available even before 1888. In France, at least eleven *Pañcatantra* tales are included in the work of Jean de La Fontaine. Many works of modern literature can be traced back to the *Pañcatantra,* either directly or indirectly, including those of William Shakespeare, Geoffrey Chaucer, John Gower, and Giovanni Boccaccio. The 6th century *Kalīla wa Demna* is the Persian and Arabic adaptation of the *Pañcatantra.* The *Hitopadesha* by Narayana, Durgasimha's Kannada translation from 1031 AD, Purnabhadra's recension from 1199 AD, and Franklin Edgerton's 1924 reconstruction of the original *Pañcatantra's* Sanskrit text are among the most prominent versions of the Panchatantra.

The fact that the *Pañcatantra* moved to Persia, Arabia, Greece, and Europe proves that it had an unmatched influence on early scholars. The migration of the *Pañcatantra* from the Indian subcontinent to the rest of Asia and the world is as fascinating a story as the *Pañcatantra* itself. The first translation was as early as around 570 CE into Pahlavi (Middle Persian) by Burzoy, the court physician to the Emperor of Iran Khosru I Anushiravan. All subsequent pre-modern western translations are derived directly or indirectly from this Pahlavi version, which is now lost. Rudaki rendered Burzoy's writing into Persian verse. The Pahlavi version was retranslated into Old Syriac by Buda Abdul Inu around 570 C. E., of which only a single defective version of the manuscript exists under the title *Kalīla wa Demna*, from the names of the two jackal ministers in Book I. Around

750 CE, Abdullah Ibn al-Muqaffa utilised Burzoy's Pahlavi translation of the *Pañcatantra* as the Arabic *Kalila wa Dimna*. All later western translations go back to this Arabic version, only some of which will be noted here. The Arabic was translated into Syriac in the 10th or 11th century and into Greek in the 11th century. From the Greek we have the Latin, German and Slavonic translations. A *Pañcatantra* version was translated into Greek in the eleventh century AD by Simeon, the son of Seth. The Arabic was also translated into Persian, into Spanish around 1251 CE, and in the 12th century into Hebrew by Rabbi Joel. This Hebrew version was translated into Latin by John of Capua sometime between 1263 and 1278 C. E as *Liber Kelilae et Dimnae*, *Directorium vitae humanae*, which was printed in 1480. This Latin rendering was the first *Pañcatantra* version to be printed, sometime around 1480 CE, and became well known throughout mediaeval Europe. "Das Buch der byspel der alten wysen" was the title used by Anthonius Von Pforr in his translation into German in the year 1483 AD. This title was also used in the translations into Danish, Icelandic, and Dutch. It was translated into Spanish in the year 1493 and into Italian by Agnolo Firenzuola in the year 1546. It was retranslated into Italian by Doni as *La Moral Philosophie* and printed in 1552 CE, and it was Doni's version that was translated into English by Sir Thomas North in 1570 CE under the title *The Morall Philosophie of Doni*. This was the *Pañcatantra*'s initial translation into English. The *Pañcatantra* stories were almost entirely included in the 1938 reprint of the incomplete first edition. Due to this, the *Pañcatantra* gained popularity in the West and in mediaeval Europe.

8.2 Form and Style Significance

The manuscripts placed here for nomination is originally written in Sanskrit. It is handwritten on on paper. Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, Pune has a collection of about 30 Pañcatantra manuscripts in Devanagari and Sarada scripts. Most of these are catalogued. If this manuscript is nominated as documentary heritage in the MOWCAP register it will be possible to add other extant manuscripts to the collection later as well.

The *Pañcatantra,* a world-renowned ancient collection of fables from the Indian subcontinent, has been worked over again and again. It has been translated, expanded, abstracted, turned into verse, retold in prose, and has even been adapted for drama and television. The aesthetic beauty of the form and style of the extant manuscripts is not, however, always captured in these.

A close literary assessment of the *Pañcatantra* manuscripts reveals that this text is not merely a collection of fables for children. They are a practical guide to *niti* (Trans. ethics). They exemplify the art of wise and intelligent living, living with common sense and cleverness. They can also be understood to be a treatise on politics and government. This is the well-known reading of the *Pañcatantra*, given that it is considered to have been composed for three foolish and unruly sons of a king to teach them the ways of the world. This could be why the *Pañcatantra* often ends up being misunderstood to just be children's literature. And this assumption is often solidified by translations and adaptations that primarily cater to a young audience. Extant manuscripts of the Panchatantra, as the ones placed for nomination here, dispel this myth. The Sanskrit extant texts prove that the *Pañcatantra* is a more complex and well-thought treatise. Keeping with its aim to be a lesson in *artha* 'wordly wisdom' and *niti* 'polity', it is divided into five parts. These are the following.

1. The Falling out of Friends – This part has lessons on how friends may be lost and friendships broken. It is the story of the lion, the bull, and their budding friendship, which is ruined by a wicked and greedy jackal.

2. The Gaining of Friends – This part is about how friends may be made and friendships gained. Vishusharma notes that even without wealth or money, one may accomplish ones aims with the help of friends, if one is clever, wise and learned. This is how the crow, the mouse, the turtle, and the deer do so.
3. Causing Discard – the third part of the lessons from Vishnusharma to the princes is about deceit and friendship and one's peace. One must not trust someone who used to once be an enemy but suddenly transforms into a friend. This is narrated in the form of the tale of the owls whose cave was set on fire by the crow who professed friendship while once being their enemy.
4. The Loss of Gains – the fourth part of the lessons is on gain and loss. One who is foolishly led by others and does not use his own judgement loses all his gains, while one who keeps to his senses even in danger, and thinks calmly, rides over the most difficult of situations. This is narrated via the story of the crocodile who was fooled by the clever monkey who escaped with his life.
5. Unconsidered Actions – The last part is on actions taken without thought to their consequences. One should not do anything without first understanding what they are about to do and without first examining the practical aspects of their action. The story of the foolish barber, who does none of this, is what entails all the other stories that impart this lesson.

As Rohini Chowdhury, the translator of the 2017 version of the *Pañcatantra* into English notes, in the *Pañcatantra* one narrative begins inside another, with often embedding being three stories deep, in the manner of a series of Matrushka dolls. For instance, "the Story of the Weaver and the Yaksha" is embedded in "The Story of the Man with the Wheel upon His Head," which in turn is embedded in "The Story of the Brahmin's Wife and the Mongoose." This again is part of Part 5 of the Panchatantra, "Unconsidered Actions". This is where the extant copies of the documentary heritage placed for nomination stand out. They retain this recursive narration style of the fables, unlike copies and adaptations of it.

There is also a clever literary device used in the creation of the characters in the stories. Recall that most characters of the *Pañcatantra are* animals. Interestingly, the characters are given Sanskrit names that as Chowdhury puts it "highlight certain aspects of their appearance or behaviour, or give insights into their nature." Pingalaka is a lion whose name means 'one who is red–gold', rightly named for his fiery coat. Dantila is the jeweler. His name means 'one who has big and projecting teeth' and this instantly generates a vivid image of the man. Chaturaka is a jackal whose name in Sanskrit means 'one who is sly and cunning', as is the general connotation associated with foxes and jackals in South Asia. Even a bedbug is a character in the *Pañcatantra*. Agnimukha means 'fire-mouth', an apt description of the way it feels when one is bitten by a bedbug.

8.3. Social, Community or Spiritual Significance

The *Pañcatantra* holds a special significance in the upbringing of children in South Asian society. Being characteristic of the lineage of storytelling of an ancient civilization, South Asian children, especially those in India, grow up being narrated stories from the *Pañcatantra* and also themselves reading abridged versions of this classic. It is the high social and community relevance they hold that has resulted in them being translated into multiple languages over the centuries. So sought after have been the contents of the manuscripts that translations have been commissioned by emperors in India

and Persia over the centuries. Elaborate illustrated paintings depicting the vivid scenes from the manuscripts have also been commissioned by rulers. In fact, owing to the lessons they impart on living life wisely and morally, it is unsurprising that abridged translations of the Fables are found in State commissioned school textbooks in India. Note that the oldest translation of the *Pañcatantra* is from 500 CE, while the latest is from as recent as 2017 CE, meaning that the *Pañcatantra* fables have proved to be timeless. This makes its manuscripts valuable and worthy of inscription in the MOWCAP register, which seeks to include documentary heritage of public relevance.

9. Regional Significance: Comparative criteria

There do not exist any duplicates or other similar examples of the item or collection already registered in any of the UNESCO MOW registers. However, there are translations of it and works inspired by it across the world, proving its national, regional, and international repute and significance.

The *Pañcatantra* is over 3000 years old and unlike many ancient texts has not been lying in obscurity. It has been translated over 200 times in more than 50 languages. It is therefore unsurprising that there are myriad similarities between the *Pañcatantra* and other literary works found across the world. The *Pañcatantra* being retranslated repeatedly has naturally resulted in its versions being quite different from the original, so much so that the masses do not recognise that the work is originally from the Indian subcontinent. The trope of showing the mirror to princes is popular within the Indian and Middle-Eastern storytelling tradition, and it is easy to forget that it is the *Pañcatantra* that is the original source and influence on all other renditions of such stories. A close study of the names and the contents of the stories reveal that works are named after characters from one or another fable within the *Pañcatantra* frame stories. The *Pañcatantra* is known by myriad names in Asia, depending on the language it was translated into and who commissioned the translation. In the Indian subcontinent the thirteenth century *Hitopdesa* (Lit. good advice) by Narayana is a well-known version of the Panchatantra, but the *Pañcatantra* predates it and is therefore established as its predecessor and influence.

Some other translations into Arabic and Persian – many commissioned by emperors and having beautiful illustrations – are the following: *Kalila Damna*, *Kartac Damnak, Anwar-i Sohayli*, *Ayar-e-Danish*, *Alam Khana Danish*, *Daber Danish*, *Humayun Nama*, *Negar Danish*, *Javidan Khird*, *Akhlaq Asasi*, *Gulshan Ara*, *Dastanhi Hakim bed Pai*, *Muratul-Mulk* and *Barhaman*. Apart from Persian and Arabic, the *Pañcatantra* was also translated into several other languages as it travelled East and West. It was translated into Eastern Turkish, Ethiopic and Malay. *Stephanites kai Ichnelates* was the first Greek translation and *Directorium Humane Vitae* (Directory of Human Life) the first Latin one. The German translation of the *Pañcatantra* was one of the first books to be published after the Bible. The *Pañcatantra* is so influential a text that a translation of it by Franklin Edgerton was published in 1965 as The Panchatantra, an edition for the general reader on the recommendtions of UNESCO. It was accepted in the Indian Translation Series of the UNESCO.

Beyond the translations themselves, the *Pañcatantra* influenced Arabic and European narrative literature of the Middle Ages, most notably *The Arabian Nights* and La Fontaine, who in the second edition of his Fables (1678 C. E.) states expressly that much of his new material was derived from the Indian sage Pilpay – perhaps a corruption of the Sanskrit Vidyāpati ('Lord of Learning') or of the common Brahmin title Vājapeyi. Franklin Edgerton has traced several individual *Pañcatantra* stories, often much transformed, to Western folk traditions. One notable example of such a story is the tale of the Brahmin, Mongoose, and Snake, which is the frame story of Book V.

The characters here came to be transformed into a knight, dog, and wolf in a Welsh folk tale, specifically Prince Llewellyn and his dog Gelert as told in William R. Spencer's ballad Bedd Gellert. In the Welsh version the dog killed a wolf that was trying to attack his master's child and was killed in turn by the master; seeing the dog's bloody mouth, the man thought that it had eaten the child. Edgerton has traced this adaptation to the Arabic version that turned the Brahmin into a priest or monk and the mongoose, an unfamiliar animal outside Asia, into a weasel. In the Arabic collection of stories Sindibad, which gained great popularity throughout Europe under the name Seven Sages of Rome, the priest becomes a knight and the weasel a dog. It appears that as it entered the popular folklore of Wales the snake was changed into a wolf, a more natural opponent of a dog, and we have the common Welsh proverb about hasty action: 'You will regret it like the man who killed his dog'.

What makes the *Pañcatantra* manuscripts stand out, despite their many translations, adaptations, retranlations, retellings in various languages, is the fact that their contents prove that they have originated in the Indian subcontinent. The Sanskrit names of the characters, used quite literally by the author, the animals in the stories, the landscape, and the social and cultural references are a clear giveaway. People in every culture give human characteristics to animals. But these qualities vary from culture to culture. In English, for instance, the owl is considered wise, in India evil and unlucky. The animals of the *Pañcatantra* conform to the ideas held about them in the Indian subcontinent. Elephants are noble and proud, herons deceitful and cruel, jackals greedy and cunny, lions arrogant and fooled easily by a weaker, more intelligent animal. Oxes are loyal, a dog is unclean and greedy and a cobra is dangerous and untrustworthy.

In India, the *Pañcatantra* has been adapted multiple times into several languages for television and drama. Some of the latest are mentioned below.

Sl. No.	Weblink	Production House/TV Channel	Language	Telecast date
1	https://www.etvwin.com/serials/panchatantram	ETV WIN	Telugu	13/05/18 - 31/08/2020
2	https://youtu.be/n7JfhMIesfQ	JUNIORS ETV	Telugu	20/08/2020
3	https://www.imdb.com/title/tt14734464/?ref_=ext_shr_lnk	AMIYA PATNAIK	Oriya	22/03/2021

		PRODUCTIONS		
4	https://www.epicon.in/tv-shows/epicpedia/season-1/ep-8-panchatantra-part-1	EPIC DIGITAL ORIGINALS	Hindi	No information
5	https://youtu.be/jutaxap6Ye0	PEBBLES LIVE	English	06/11/2016
6	https://youtu.be/bstZv-Baou8	EAGLE HOME ENTERTAINMENT – Doordarshan	Hindi	23/08/2021

9.1 Uniqueness or Rarity

The manuscript placed here for nomination is one the oldest manuscripts of Panchatantra and its rare feature is that it is in an almost complete form, with only 7 folios missing. The script is Devnagari and the language is Sanskrit. It has been securely preserved in BORI, Pune for more than 100 years.

10 Gender

These ancient texts are valuable in the study of representation of gender in ancient South Asia because they reveal the roles and constructs of masculinities, femininities, and other genders in the society and cultures of those times. Though these narratives are ancient and difficult to situate historically, an analysis of these fables can throw light upon the gendered imagination and social logic at work in those times. Thus, these texts are invaluable repositories for reconstructing and recovering the diverse cultural histories of gendered imaginaries across the world.

11. Statement of Significance

The manuscripts placed here for inclusion into the MOWCAP register is handwritten on paper, in Sanskrit which was written in 1411 CE.

The *Pañcatantra* is arranged in a story-within-a-story fashion in five parts. Each part teaches one valuable lesson in living a wise and sensible life. They are thus of high social value, being valuable to children's education. In India, the stories have been passed down orally from generation to generation, with grandparents narrating the stories to children. In modern times they have been adapted for television, radio, and the stage, for consumption by the masses. The stories have been abridged for children's books and school textbooks. They are so immensely popular among children

that publication houses in India ensure that *Pañcatantra* versions, even illustrated ones, remain affordable. Abridged versions can be found for less than a dollar.

The fables crossed the borders of the Indian subcontinent centuries ago. So sought after and popular are its contents that it has been translated 200 times in over 50 languages over the centuries and continues to be translated. Rulers have commissioned its translation, including elaborately illustrated copies. In 570 CE, Borzuya, the chief minister to the Persian king came to India in search of a legendary herb that held the Elixir of Life and was reputed to resurrect the dead. This was a futile exercise. Borzuya finally met a philosopher who told him that the elixir was a book, one of virtuous writings and wisdom. As Chandra Ranjan, a translator of the *Pañcatantra* puts it, "The high mountains were the wise and learned men of lofty intellect; the trees and herbs their virtuous writings and the wisdom extracted from these writings the Elixir of Life that revived the dead intelligence." Such was the reverence for the *Pañcatantra*. This is unchanged even after over 2500 years. Therefore, while the character names, the animals, the setting, and the socio-cultural references reveal the *Pañcatantra*'s Indian origins, it is the universal appeal of the contents of the tales that have resulted in the text becoming timeless. Even UNESCO has a translation of the *Pañcatantra* from 1965 – *The Pañcatantra* by Franklin Edgerton – in its Indian Translation Series.

The copies of the original fables are valuable to historians, scholars of literature, linguists, and the masses in and outside India. Apart from being valuable for non-comparative study, they can be used to compare ancient translations and versions of the *Pañcatantra* in other languages. They are also composed in ancient languages and written in ancient scripts of the Indian subcontinent, making them worthy of inscription as heritage documents. Adding them to the MOWCAP Register will help them gain greater accessibility, help provide resources for their expansion and conservation, and help deal with the challenges that such archives typically face in the Global South. When contemporary cultural realities are forcing humanity to forget its past, preserving and promoting this inherited cultural wealth is extremely crucial.

12 Risk Assessment

12.1 Condition

Overall Condition: Good

Cover/Binding: Cloth cover, cardboards, no binding
Pages: Overall good, edges of folios in the beginning and the end are worn, no damage to the matter, no discoloration, old water/humidity stains on some folios, old oil stain on some folios, no tears or creases.
Completeness: Almost Complete – Folios 1-7 are missing.
Ink/Writing: Text fully legible, no smudging except on the central part of the first folio
Decorations: No decoration. Highlighting with red pigment in the textual matter.
Water Damage/Mold: Old water/humidity stains on some folios in the beginning. No other damage
Insect Damage: None.
Fragility: Not fragile though old
Acidity and Stability of the Paper: pH 5.5-6 which is in normal range. The paper is stable.
No signs of previous restoration or conservation

12.2 Threat/Risk

There is no threat to the nominated manuscript. The management plan (Section 13) further explain how risks are averted and mitigated.

13 Management Plan

Preservation:

Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute (BORI), situated 15 meters above the river level of River Mutha in Pune, prioritizes manuscript preservation through strategic mechanisms. The institute has a conservation lab supervised by a conservator for necessary manuscript conservation. An assistant curator oversees the collection, with various registers maintaining significant manuscript information, including movement and accession records. Thorough photo documentation precedes and follows any conservation efforts, ensuring meticulous preservation practices. Regular workshops, conducted by organizations like the National Mission for Manuscripts, INTACH (Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage), and NRLC Lucknow (National Research Laboratory for Conservation of Cultural Property), enhance staff expertise. Manuscripts undergo bi-monthly inspections to assess condition and conservation needs. Physical access to manuscripts is restricted and requires written permission from the Honorary Secretary or Assistant Curator.

Storage:

The storage area, free from pests and biological threats, ensures manuscript safety. Adequate lighting and ideal humidity and temperature within the building, with 70 cm thick walls and 28 feet high ceilings, optimize manuscript preservation. Daily housekeeping maintains cleanliness and optimal storage conditions.

Security:

Security guards provide 24x7 surveillance and there is also constant CCTV surveillance, ensuring protection against unauthorized access or theft. Fire safety systems, in compliance with fire audit recommendations, enhance disaster preparedness. Pune's seismic stability and ground-level construction minimize earthquake risks, safeguarding manuscripts and the building's structural integrity.

BORI's management plan integrates advanced conservation practices, stringent access controls, and comprehensive security measures to ensure manuscript safety and long-term preservation. By leveraging its strategic location, climate-regulating infrastructure, and dedicated staff, BORI upholds its commitment to preserving India's cultural heritage.

14 Consultation with Stakeholders

For the Manuscripts of the Pañcatantra Fables, IGNCA conducted a comprehensive stakeholder consultation and reached out to the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute. IGNCA collaborated with BORI to digitize manuscripts for its digital repositories and consulted scholars specializing in this field. The Brainstorming Session held on 20th June, 2023 with various stakeholders helped identify the most valuable documentary heritage of India and provided crucial insights, ensuring the nomination accurately represents the cultural context, provenance, and scholarly significance while aligning with preservation efforts, their cooperation regarding the preservation and access of these manuscripts is assured.

15 Other Information to Support the Nomination

No other information is provided to support this nomination.

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