Report of Training Programme

On

Conservation of Manuscripts and Archival Material

Held on

October 10-14, 2016-10-26

At

Maulana Azad Library, Aligarh Muslim University, Aligarh
Introduction

The collaboration of Heritage Cell and Maulana Azad Library gave a great opportunity to all the people concerned with conservation. The joint efforts of these two departments of Aligarh Muslim University in the form of a training programme on Conservation of Manuscripts and Archival Material enabled the trainees to learn basic conservation techniques and familiarize with material and equipment employed in paper conservation.

Location and period of the Training Programme

The training programme was held at the Cultural Hall, Maulana Azad Library, Aligarh Muslim University, Aligarh from October 10, 2016 to October 14, 2016. The training team arrived at the venue one day before, i.e. on October 9, 2016, in order to meet for fine-tuning of the agenda and coordination of facilitation.

Organizing Team

The members of the organizing team were:

- Ar. Mohammad Farhan Fazli (Convener, Heritage Cell, Aligarh Muslim University)
- Dr. Nabi Hasan (University Librarian, Maulana Azad Library, Aligarh Muslim University)

Faculty

Faculty members from Aligarh Muslim University and outside were invited to give lectures and train the trainees on different aspects of conservation of manuscripts and archival material:

- Mr. Lalit Kumar Pathak (Paper Conservator, New Delhi)
- Mr. Azfar Ahmad (Director, Heritage Associates, New Delhi)

Heritage Committee Members

- Lt. Gen. Zameer Uddin Shah (Vice Chancellor, Aligarh Muslim University - Chairman)
- Prof. Sufiyan Beg (Principal, Zakir Hussain College, Aligarh Muslim University)
- Dr. Sabih Akhtar (Dept. of Civil Engineering, Aligarh Muslim University)
- Mr. M. Khalid Hasan (Dept. of Architecture, Aligarh Muslim University)

Workshop participation

The workshop attracted participants from the campus as well as from outside. A total of twenty five (25) participants from different subjects and departments participated in the
training programme. Professionals, research scholars and students attended the workshop with great zeal and enthusiasm.

**Teaching Methodology**

- Power point presentations
- Practical demonstrations
- Open Discussions

**Workshop programme**

**Day 1**

**Opening**

The training programme commenced with the registration of participants and distribution of kit. The opening of the programme was done with a welcome address by Ar. Mohammad Farhan Fazli, who spoke on the initiatives and works of the Heritage Cell towards conservation of Jama Masjid and other heritage buildings in Aligarh Muslim University. This was followed by an opening speech by Dr. Nabi Hasan, who introduced the participants with the rich manuscripts collection preserved and conserved by Maulana Azad Library.
Afterwards, Prof. Sufiyan Beg, Dr. Sabih Akhtar and Mr. M. Khalid Hasan were invited to speak on the theme of the training programme. All the speakers of the training programme enlightened the participants with different aspects and issues of conservation of manuscripts and archival materials.

Mr. Lalit Kumar Pathak was then invited to train the participants with the basics of paper conservation. Through his power point presentations, he presented the history of paper and anatomy of book and proceeded with the explanation of the concepts of conservation, preventive conservation, curative conservation and restoration. He further illustrated the causes of deterioration of paper materials and the journey of a damaged book from its entry to conservation laboratory to its display or storage. Furthermore, tools and chemicals used in conservation were listed and provided by him to the participants to perform the practical work.

The participants were trained in tape removal from the paper with the help of acetone.

The participants were given newspaper pages with lost corners through which they were trained to repair lost parts of the paper.
Second day was started with the making of wheat starch paste with wheat flour (maida) and distilled water. While preparing wheat starch paste, Mr. Lalit Kumar Pathak also discussed about other adhesives and their properties, merits and demerits.

Before conducting any conservation treatment, it is mandatory to check the acidity of paper and the solubility of the ink used on the paper. Mr. Lalit Pathak demonstrated the methods of checking the acidity of paper and the solubility of ink through different chemicals and pH strips and the participants were given to do the same practically.

The participants were given an opportunity to undergo conservation treatment of an old film poster under the guidance of Mr. Lalit Kumar Pathak. Each participant was given an opportunity to get involved in treating different aspects of the poster.

The dust was cleaned and the deposition was removed from the poster using a blunt brush.

Tapes were removed from the poster with the help of acetone

The old support was removed and the tear and lost parts were repaired

The poster was fixed to a new support prepared by the participants
On the third day of the training programme, Mr. Lalit Kumar Pathak demonstrated the methods of treating old and brittle paper, which included deacidification and tissue paper lamination. He also presented the method of making report of the whole conservation treatment.

The participants were then given an opportunity to implement the demonstrated methods practically through the project of conservation of an old book assigned to them.

The participants were divided into four groups of 5-6 members. The groups were divided homogeneously with each group having at least one professional (conservator), one research scholar and one student from each department.

The groups were provided one table each with all chemicals, tools and equipments to work upon.

Each group was given an old book to conserve. They were also asked to prepare a report of the conservation treatment.

The participants started the work with the analysis of the book. They analysed the condition of the book wrote the book details and the book condition in the report.

Photographs of the present book condition were clicked by the group members.
The proposed treatment was discussed among the group members and noted down in the report. The groups then proceeded towards the implementation of the actual conservation treatment.

The book pages were unbinded and the pagination was done.

Dust and deposition was removed from the book pages by the participants with the help of soft brush.

The acidity of the book pages and the solubility of the ink was checked with the help of pH strips.

All the members of the group then went for the deacidification process. The pages were covered with malinex from both sides and were immersed in the solution prepared for deacidification. After twenty minutes the pages were cleaned in lime water and put on the bloating paper to absorb excess moisture.

The members of the group then started the work of tissue paper lamination. The pages of the book were divided among the group members to carry out the process. Wheat starch paste was applied on a big table and a wet teralene cloth was fixed to it. The pages of the book were laminated with the help of tissue paper, malinex and wheat starch paste. These pages were fixed to the teralene cloth with the help of wheat starch paste. The pages were then left to dry on the respective tables of the groups.

**Day 4**
The participants continued the project work on the fourth day of the training programme. The terelene cloth was slowly detached from the table and the pages were cut in equal sizes.

The participants were then trained the binding method by the binder invited by the organizers of the training programme.

Photography and report making was done at every step of the conservation

The project and the report was successfully submitted by all the groups.

The training programme was then continued by Mr. Lalit Kumar Pathak, who demonstrated the bleaching of faded paper to the participants.

He further trained the participants to adopt the method of encapsulation for the documents which are hard to give conservation treatment because of brittleness.

The training programme was further proceeded by the powerpoint presentation by Mr. Azfar Ahmad, who introduced the participants with the Archival Heritage of the world.

Day 5

Closing

The fifth day of the training programme was the closing day. The Vice- Chancellor of Aligarh Muslim University Lt. Gen. Zameer Uddin Shah was invited to encourage the work of the participants done during the training programme. Moreover, experienced personalities in the
field of manuscripts like Ex-Director of Khuda Bakhsh Oriental Public Library were present in the workshop to boost up the morale of the participants in the field of conservation. The day was started with a welcome address to the distinguished guests by Arch. Farhan Fazli. This was followed by a power point presentation by Dr. Ata Khursheed, Assistant Librarian, Aligarh Muslim University, who presented the traditional methods of conservation and the myths related to conservation in the society.

The organizers presented the full video of the training programme on the projector to the Vice Chancellor and other distinguished guests. They were then directed towards the conservation work performed by the participants. The work of the participants was appreciated by all the guests. The Vice Chancellor congratulated the organizers, faculty members and the participants for the successful completion of the training programme.

He appreciated the works of the Heritage cell towards conservation of heritage buildings in the campus and Maulana Azad Library for the conservation of manuscripts housed by it.

He also asked the University Librarian to take efforts in the direction of managing and conserving the manuscripts housed in different departments of the university campus.

The feedback on the training programme was received by the participants. The participants were very happy and thankful to the Heritage Cell and Maulana Azad Library for providing such a great platform for their overall development in the field.

Certificates of participation were then awarded to each of the participants by Lt. Gen. Zameer Uddin Shah (Vice Chancellor, Aligarh Muslim University) and Dr. Abid Raza Bedar (Ex-Director, Khuda Bakhsh Oriental Public Library)

**Key Points of the Training Programme**

- The training programme was a determined attempt of the Heritage Cell and Maulana Azad Library to train the students and research scholars in different skills involved in conservation and to strengthen the skills of the professionals already working on conservation.

- The medium of instruction used in the training programme was both English and Urdu so that all the participants feel comfortable in understanding the concepts and practicals.

- Tea breaks provided a healthy environment to the participants for discussions.

- Organizers were present throughout the training programme to provide minute to minute guidance and support and to provide encouragement at every point of time during the training programme.