



January 2025

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EDITORIAL NOTE

This month has been an exciting and productive period for The Kabikaj Foundation as we continue our mission to preserve and digitize rare books and manuscripts. One of the highlights of our work was the collection and preservation of rare editions of Munshi Nawal Kishore Publications, along with exquisite works on calligraphy and catalogues from Hyderabad's public libraries dating back to the 1970s. Many of these items were found in advanced states of deterioration, but with the use of meticulous cleaning, repair, and preservation techniques, we've been able to restore and safeguard these treasures for future generations.

In addition to rescuing books and manuscripts, we also extended our expertise to individuals, assisting two private collectors in cataloguing and preserving their personal libraries. This collaborative effort not only saved rare and valuable materials but also strengthened our community of preservation enthusiasts.

We are thrilled to announce the launch of The Kabikaj Foundation website and Instagram page! These platforms will allow us to share updates, showcase our archives, and connect with supporters like you. Whether you're interested in exploring our collection, donating rare books and manuscripts, or supporting our preservation efforts, these channels make it easier than ever to get involved.

Our work this month reinforces our commitment to preserving cultural heritage. If you know of any rare books or manuscripts in need of preservation or are considering donating such materials, we would love to hear from you. Together, we can continue to protect and celebrate the rich history these items represent.

In the following pages, we are excited to showcase six remarkable books and manuscripts from our latest work.

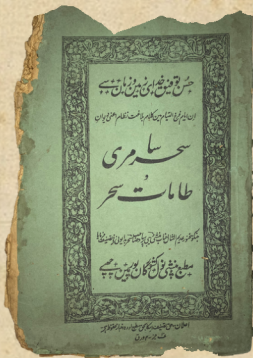
ABOUT US

Established in December 2021, The Kabikaj Foundation is dedicated to preserving and promoting rare books and manuscripts of literary, cultural, historical, academic, religious, and traditional significance. Inspired by the practice of inscribing "Ya Kabikaj" on books for protection in earlier times, our foundation seeks to safeguard these invaluable treasures from deterioration and loss.

We employ various preservation methods, including digitisation, to ensure these materials remain accessible both online and offline. Our mission is to support scholars and enthusiasts by providing access to these resources for research and personal exploration. We also assist individuals and organisations in cataloguing, preserving, and digitising their collections. Our team comprises a diverse group of scholars, historians, archivists, activists, students, and enthusiasts dedicated to safeguarding and celebrating the heritage found in these rare works. Additionally, we offer services to scholars, aiding their research through access to documents, translation, and analysis.

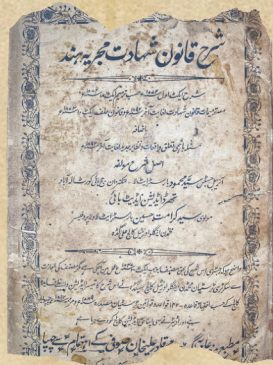


THIS MONTH'S FEATURED



Divan e Sahar Samri o Taamaat e Sahar

c. 1893/1311 | Urdu |
Munshi Debi Prasad
Sahar's Divan | Munshi
Munshi Nawal Kishore
Published



1872 Law of Evidence Act & its amendments 3rd ed.

c. 1893/1311 | Urdu |
Justice Syed Mahmood
s/o Sir Syed Ahmed Khan
| Mufeed e Aam, Agra
Published



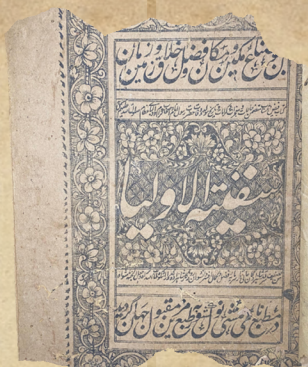
Dalayl al Khayrat mutarjim

c. 1887/1305 | Arabic,
Urdu | Dalayl al Khayraat
text with Urdu translation
| Nizami, Kanpur
Published



Ruq'at e Aalamgiri

c. 1911/1329 |
Letters of Aurangzeib |
Urdu |
As'sah ul Matabi',
Charkaman, Hyderabad
Deccan Published



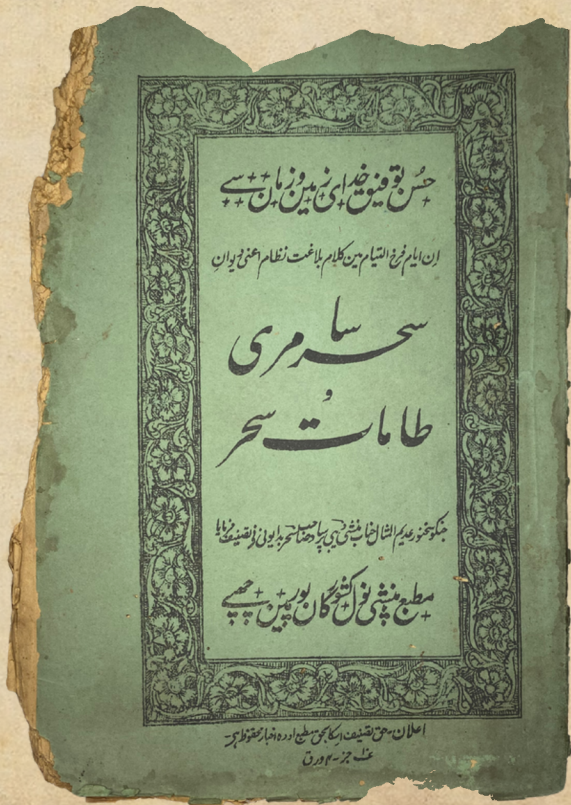
Safeenat ul Auliya

c. 1884/1301 |
Dara Shikoh | Persian |
As'sah ul Matabi',
Charkaman, Hyderabad
Deccan Published



Mathnavi Maanvi

c. 1900/1317 |
Maulana Rumi | Persian |
Munshi Nawal Kishore,
Lucknow Published



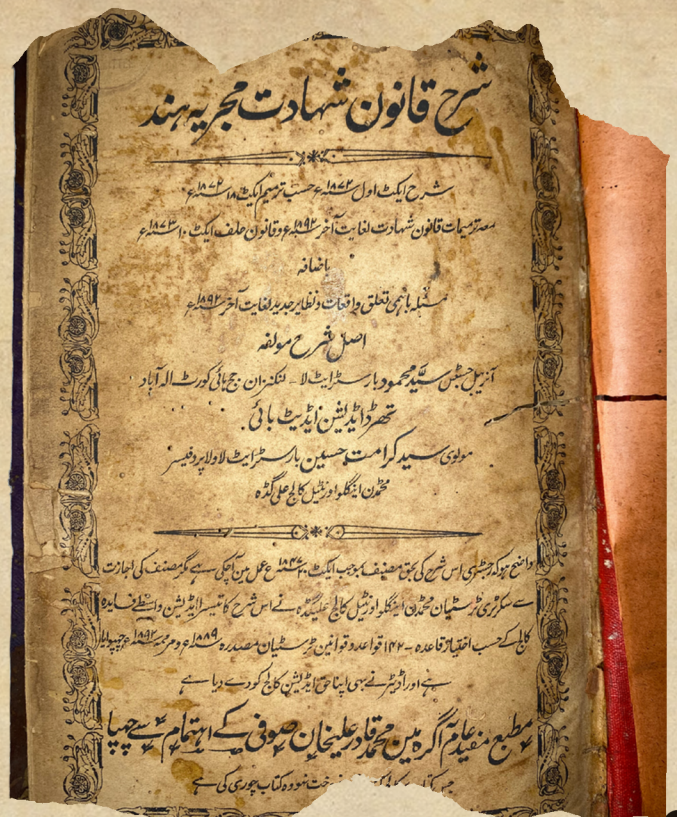
DIVAN E SAHAR SAMRI O TAAMAAT E SAHAR

This is a *divan* (poetry compilation) of the 19th century Urdu poet - Munshi Debi Prasad, known by his nom-de-plume 'Sahar Badayuni' - a Sub-deputy Inspector in Madras. The book is in good condition, though the corners of all its pages have been damaged by termites. Fortunately, the text remains entirely intact and legible. The divan comprises 164 folios, and combines two of his anthologies: the first spanning 120 folios and the second 44 folios. The final folios of both sections include chronograms marking the year of publication, one of which was written by Munshi Bhagwan Dayaal Aaqil, an associate of the Munshi Nawal Kishore publishing house.

1872 LAW OF EVIDENCE ACT & ITS AMENDMENTS 3RD ED.

This is the third edition of Justice Syed Mahmood's (1850–1903) Urdu translation of the 1872 Indian Evidence Act, along with subsequent amendments, published in 1876. The 400+ folios book is in good condition, with only minimal termite damage on the first cover page and the last few folios, leaving all the text intact and readable. This edition also includes Shajrahs (literally "trees")—which unfold into larger charts, illustrating various types of evidence and other legal concepts.

Syed Mahmood, the first Muslim High Court judge during the British Raj (1887–1893), aided his father, Sir Syed Ahmed Khan, in founding the Muhammadan Anglo-Oriental College, now Aligarh Muslim University. The 1872 Indian Evidence Act codified common law evidence rules into a structured code.





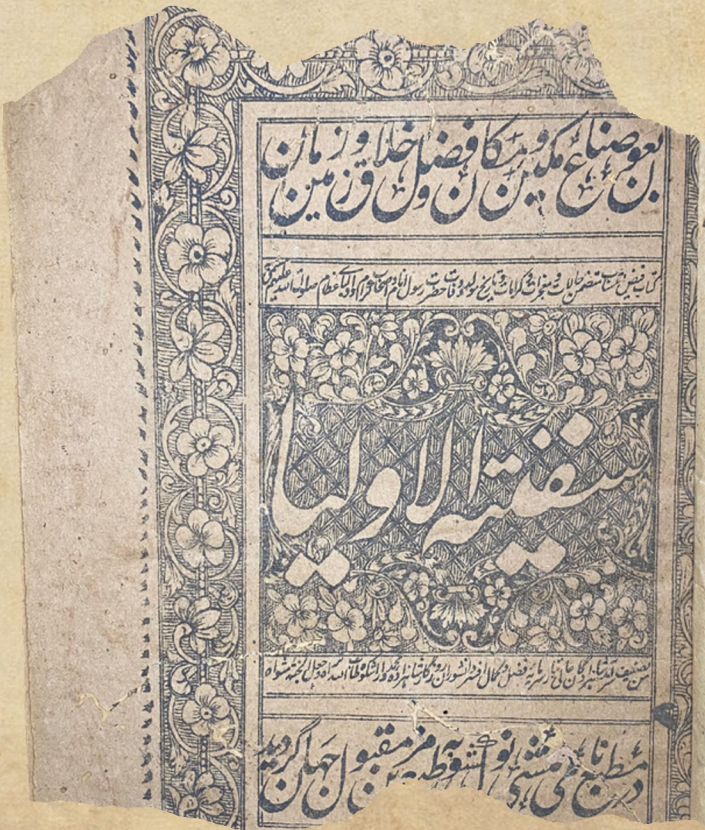
DALAYL AL KHAYRAT MUTARJIM

This late 19th-century book comprises 192 folios, with 20 additional handwritten folios by a previous owner. The Arabic text is paired with Urdu translations after each line. The final folios discuss variations (riwayahs) in the Arabic text, notably the Riwayah of Muhammad Maghrabi and Ali Hariri, and include a sanad by Maulana Muhammad Shakoor, linking the text to Moroccan Shadhili scholar Muhammad al-Jazuli (d. 1465 AD). The extra folios feature handwritten prayers, litanies, and taweez. Aside from minor tears, the book is in good condition.

RUQ'AAT E AALAMGIRI

This early 20th-century publication comprises 78 folios of Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb's letters in Urdu. The text is fully readable, and the book is in good overall condition despite visible signs of aging. A former owner added a protective cover, and there are minor termite bites at the corners of a few folios. These letters provide a glimpse into Aurangzeb's administrative policies, personal beliefs, and the socio-political conditions of his time. Known for their concise and eloquent style, the letters reflect the emperor's adherence to Islamic principles and his pragmatic approach to governance. The collection is considered an important historical document, shedding light on the inner workings of the Mughal court and the personality of one of its most controversial rulers.





SAFEENAT UL AULIYA

This publication, consisting of 218 folios, was released in 1884 by Nawal Kishore Publications. The overall condition is good, though some folios show minor termite damage at the margins and between the text. Despite this, the text remains fully readable and the book is in good condition overall. Safeenat ul Auliya (The Ship of Saints) is a renowned work by Dara Shikoh (1615–1659), the eldest son of the Mughal Emperor Shah Jahan. Written in Persian, it is a biographical compilation that offers a detailed account of the lives and spiritual journeys of prominent Sufi saints.

MASNAVI E MAULVI E MAANVI

The book is in good overall condition, comprising 637 folios. This is the 1900 printed edition of the Persian Masnavi by Maulana Jalaluddin Rumi (1207–1273), originally published in 1874 by Munshi Nawal Kishore, Lucknow. It includes all six dafātir, along with the index and content pages. The text features some explanatory notes in the margins. This edition is the latest addition to our collection of both Munshi Nawal Kishore publications and Maulana Rumi's Masnavis, which will be presented in our upcoming newsletters.





THE NAWAL KISHORE PRESS



Munshi Nawal Kishore (1836–1895)

The Nawal Kishore Press, established in 1858 by Munshi Nawal Kishore in Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh, stands as one of the most significant publishing houses in Indian history, playing a transformative role in the literary and cultural landscape of the subcontinent during the 19th and early 20th centuries. Renowned for its prolific output and scholarly approach, the press was instrumental in disseminating a vast array of works in multiple languages, including Urdu, Persian, Arabic, Hindi, and Sanskrit, thus bridging the gap between diverse linguistic and cultural communities. Munshi Nawal Kishore, often referred to as the "Caxton of India," envisioned his press as a platform to preserve and promote classical literature while fostering the production of new works. The press produced an extraordinary range of publications, from religious texts, poetry, and classical literature to scientific treatises and contemporary writings, ensuring its relevance across a wide spectrum of readers. One of its most remarkable contributions was the publication of rare and ancient manuscripts, many of which were edited and printed for the first time, making invaluable texts accessible to scholars and the general public alike. Among its most celebrated projects was the printing of the Quran, which the press approached with great care, employing skilled calligraphers and editors to ensure accuracy and aesthetic quality. Similarly, it produced significant editions of Persian and Arabic classics, including works by Rumi, Saadi, and Hafiz, alongside Indian epics and texts like the Ramayana and Mahabharata in multiple languages. The Nawal Kishore Press was not just a centre for printing but also a hub of intellectual and cultural activity, attracting a diverse group of scholars, writers, and poets who collaborated on its publications. Its commitment to quality and innovation was evident in its adoption of advanced printing techniques and its dedication to beautifully designed books, often featuring intricate calligraphy and ornate bindings. The press also played a vital role in promoting women's education and literature, publishing works specifically aimed at female readers, a pioneering effort in a largely patriarchal society. During its peak, the press had a wide distribution network that extended across India and beyond, reaching as far as Central Asia, the Middle East, and Southeast Asia, thereby cementing its reputation as a global centre of publishing excellence. However, the decline of the princely states, changes in patronage, and the rise of new publishing houses eventually led to a reduction in its influence. Despite these challenges, the legacy of the Nawal Kishore Press endures as a symbol of intellectual curiosity, cultural preservation, and the power of the printed word. Its vast catalogue of publications continues to be a resource for scholars and a testament to the transformative role of printing in the modern history of South Asia. Munshi Nawal Kishore's vision and dedication left an indelible mark on the literary and cultural fabric of India, making his press a cornerstone of the subcontinent's publishing heritage. We are currently working on several surviving publications from the press, which will be showcased in the upcoming newsletters.



SOME GLIMPSES FROM THIS MONTH



Aiden Reilly, a student of history and psychology from University of South Carolina, scanning some Persian Divans



Past few weeks were spent cleaning and sorting the surviving collection of Hz. Riyasat Ali Taaj (1930-1999)



We acquired several racks to store the catalogued and digitised books securely.



Sibghat & Riasath going through the collections of Abul Kalam Azad Oriental Research Institute's Library, Public Gardens, Hyd



HELP & SUPPORT US

We rely on the generosity of supporters like you to sustain our mission of preserving and promoting rare books and manuscripts. Your monetary donations play a vital role in funding our preservation efforts, while contributions of essential equipment and supplies help us restore and digitize these cultural treasures. Additionally, we offer specialized services such as reading and translating rare Persian and Urdu works, as well as preserving and repairing such collections. You can also support us by spreading the word about our work, following and sharing our updates on social media, or donating rare books, manuscripts, and editions in need of care, repair, and digitization. Every contribution, no matter how small, strengthens our ability to protect and celebrate these invaluable pieces of history for future generations. Thank you for being an integral part of this journey!

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THANK YOU

This month's achievements have been made possible through the generous donations of Mr. Hazrat Tana Shah and Ms. Gori Begum Saheba.

We also extend our heartfelt gratitude to our dedicated team members who volunteered in December: Abdul Aleem, Aiden Reilly, Nadeem Baig, Zakariya Sharfuddin, and Sumaiyah Ahmaren. Their exceptional efforts were instrumental in our progress. Abdul Aleem contributed by identifying rare calligraphic works and cataloguing them, Aiden assisted with document scanning, while Zakariya and Nadeem supported logistics, operations, and the digitisation of over 100 documents.

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