

Thanjavur's Sarasvati Mahal Library declared a library of historical and cultural importance

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The State government has declared the Thanjavur Maharaja Serfoji's Sarasvati Mahal Library and Research Centre as a library of historical and cultural importance, and has classified it as an aided library under the Tamil Nadu Public Libraries Rules, 1950.

The grants to the library would have to be used for research and publications, conservation of manuscripts, library/museum upkeep, preservation and digitisation of manuscripts, and administration, according to a notification by the School Education Department.



Today, the library is a veritable treasure trove with a collection of over 81,400 books and 47,500 palm leaf and paper manuscripts.

Tucked away inside the Thanjavur Palace, Sarasvati Mahal Library is a repository of palm leaf/paper manuscripts and books in Tamil, Sanskrit, Marathi, Telugu, Hindi, English, French, German, and Italian. It is regarded as one of the greatest Oriental manuscript libraries in the

world, and is among the oldest libraries in Asia.

It is believed that the library began acquiring collections in the 16th Century under the Nayak rulers of Thanjavur (1535-1675 CE), and these were expanded by the Marathas. Though successive Maratha kings maintained the library, Ra-

ja Serfoji II (1798-1832), a bibliophile, was chiefly responsible for shaping it.

Today, the library is a veritable treasure trove with a collection of over 81,400 books and 47,500 palm leaf and paper manuscripts. The Raja's impressive personal collection of 4,530 books also forms part of the library.

The scripts used on the palm leaves are in Grantha, Devanagari, Nandinagari, Telugu, Malayalam, Kannada, and Odiya. The Tamil manuscripts include rare commentaries on Sangam works; unpublished portions of classics; Saivite, Vaishnavite, and Jain works; and medicinal works of exceptional value.