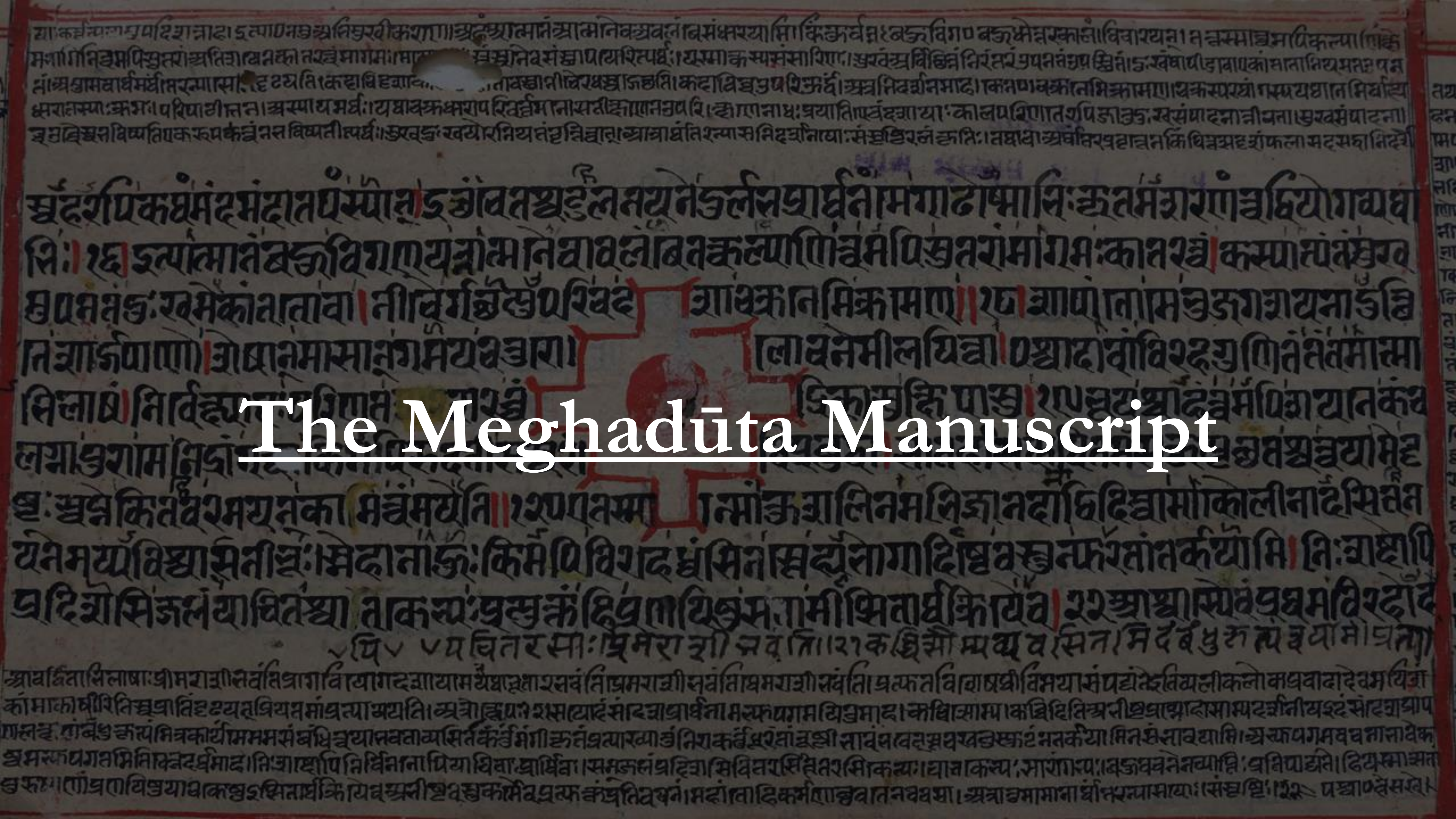


The Meghadūta Manuscript

[illegible]

सर्वदर्शिकथं मे दंभं दांतपस्योः | इत्थं वतस्थुडुलमयूनेडुलमपार्थनामभागाढोष्मासिःकुतमंशरणं त्वद्वियोगव्यथा

सि: | १४ | इत्यात्मानं बक्कविगलयन्नात्मनि वा वलीबतक्कल्याणिं त्वमपि सूतरां मागमः का तर त्वं | कस्यात्वं

मुवमङ्गः खमेकां नातावा | नीतुं र्मंत्छेत्यु परिवद शांबकान मिक्रमण || १५ | शाणं तां मे उर्गाशयनाउवि

तिशार्जणणा | शोत्रानमास्मानगमयं वउरा | लोचनेमीलयित्वा | उश्वादा वां विश्रद्धसुणितं तमात्मा

सिलाघं | निर्विद्याव: परिणम शास्त्रं उिकासुद्धि पास्तु | १६ | [illegible]

लयांशुरामनिद्रांगत किमे विरुद्धतीसमूत्रं | विपत्रहा | सांतदी संकुचितमे समकुस्त्तु तमश्रु त्वयामृद

ब्र: स्वजकितत्वं रमयतूंका मेत्वं मयैति || १७ || [illegible] न्मांकशालिनमलिज्ञान्मदांघिक्षिप्ता मांकालीनादसितं

यनमध्यं विश्वासितीत्रः मेदानांक: किमेवि श्रिशदधं समिनांसत्वं लागाक्षिष्ठवक्रन्फरितांतकर्पयामि | निःशाष्टापि

प्रदिशोसिंजलं याचितंश्या तां कस्यः प्रसक्तं क्षिवं लाधिशंसनामीभिनाघंकिक्रियेवं | २२ आश्वास्य त्वं प्रथमविरहादं

[illegible]

[illegible]

Folio a –
recto

[illegible]

ष्यंतंपथिकवनिताः प्रत्ययादाश्वसंत्यः। कः संनद्धे विरहविधुरां त्वय्युपेक्षेत जायां न स्यादन्योप्यहमिव
जनोयः पराधीनवृत्तिः॥८॥ मंदं मंदं नुदति पवन श्चानुकूलो यथा त्वां। वामश्चायं नदति मधुरं चातकस्ते स
गर्वः। गर्भाधानक्षणपरिचयान्नूनमाबद्ध मालाः। सेविष्यंते नयनसुभगं खे भवंतं बलाकाः
॥९॥ तां चावश्यं दिवसगणनातत्परामेक पत्नीमव्यापन्नामविहतगतिर्द्रक्ष्यसि भ्रातृजायां। आ
शाबंधः कुसुमसदृशं प्रायशो ह्यंगनानां। सद्यः पातिप्रणयिहृदयं विप्रयोगे रुणद्धि॥१०॥ कर्तुं यच्च प्र
भवति महीमुच्छिलींध्रामवंध्यां। तच्छ्रुत्वा ते श्रवण सुभगं गर्जितं मानसोत्काः। आ कैलासाद्बिस
किसलयच्छेदपाथेयवंतः॥ संपत्स्यंते नभसि भवतो राजहंसाः। सहायाः॥११॥ मार्गं तावच्छृ
णु कथयतस्त्वत्प्रयाणानुरूपं। संदेशं मे तदनु जलद श्रोष्यसि श्रोत्रपेयं। खिन्नः शिखरिषु पदं।

खिन्नः

[illegible]

Folio b – recto

×विधा×

[illegible]

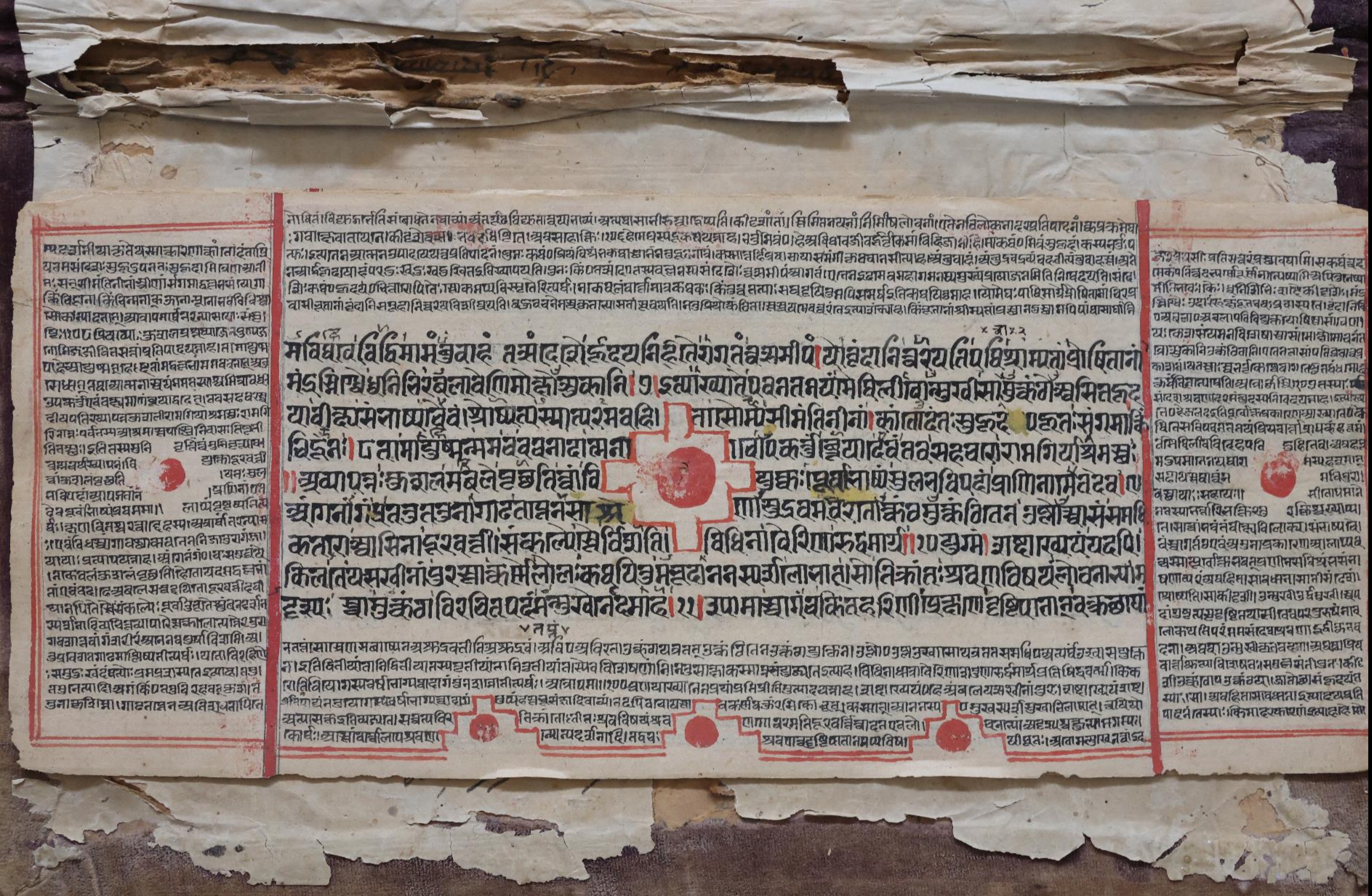
नस्यैगं तां सियत्र। श्रीणो शयरिलघुपयः श्रोतसां बोधसुद्यं ॥१२॥ श्राडः शृंगैहरति पद्वेनः क्लिष्टि
क्लिष्टैस्तुखे लीसिं। ह्रीश्रोश्रादंश्च किंतंध किंतं मुग्धं सिद्धांगनानिः॥ श्रौनादं स्माश्रसैसत्तितुलां उत्पा
तादस्तुखः खं। दिग्नागानां पथि पशिद्वंरतूंस्थू लक्ष्मांव लिपानू॥१३॥ श्राष्टछस्तु प्रिय सरव
मवृंदं गमालिंगद्धालं वंद्यः इंसांग। स्तुपतिपादैरंक्लितांमरवलास्तु। कालेश्वव
तिंतवातांथस्य संयोगामित्य। स्त्रिंदव क्लिष्टिशविरदडंस्तवातां बाष्पसृष्टे॥१४॥
रत्नछायांव्यतिकरश्ववाभृत्यामितस्तुरस्ता ढल्मीकाग्रोत्र्यसवतिधनुःखंडमाखंडलस्य। ये
नं रूपामवस्तुरक्षितरांकांतिमापत्स्यते न। वर्हीणाव स्फुरितरुचिनागोपवेषस्य विष्णोः॥१५॥ व्यायं केरुपि
फलैमितिभ्रूविकारानभिज्ञः प्रीतिस्निग्धैर्जनपदवधूलोचनैः पीयमानः सद्यः सीरोत्कषणसुरभि क्षेत्रमारु

[illegible]

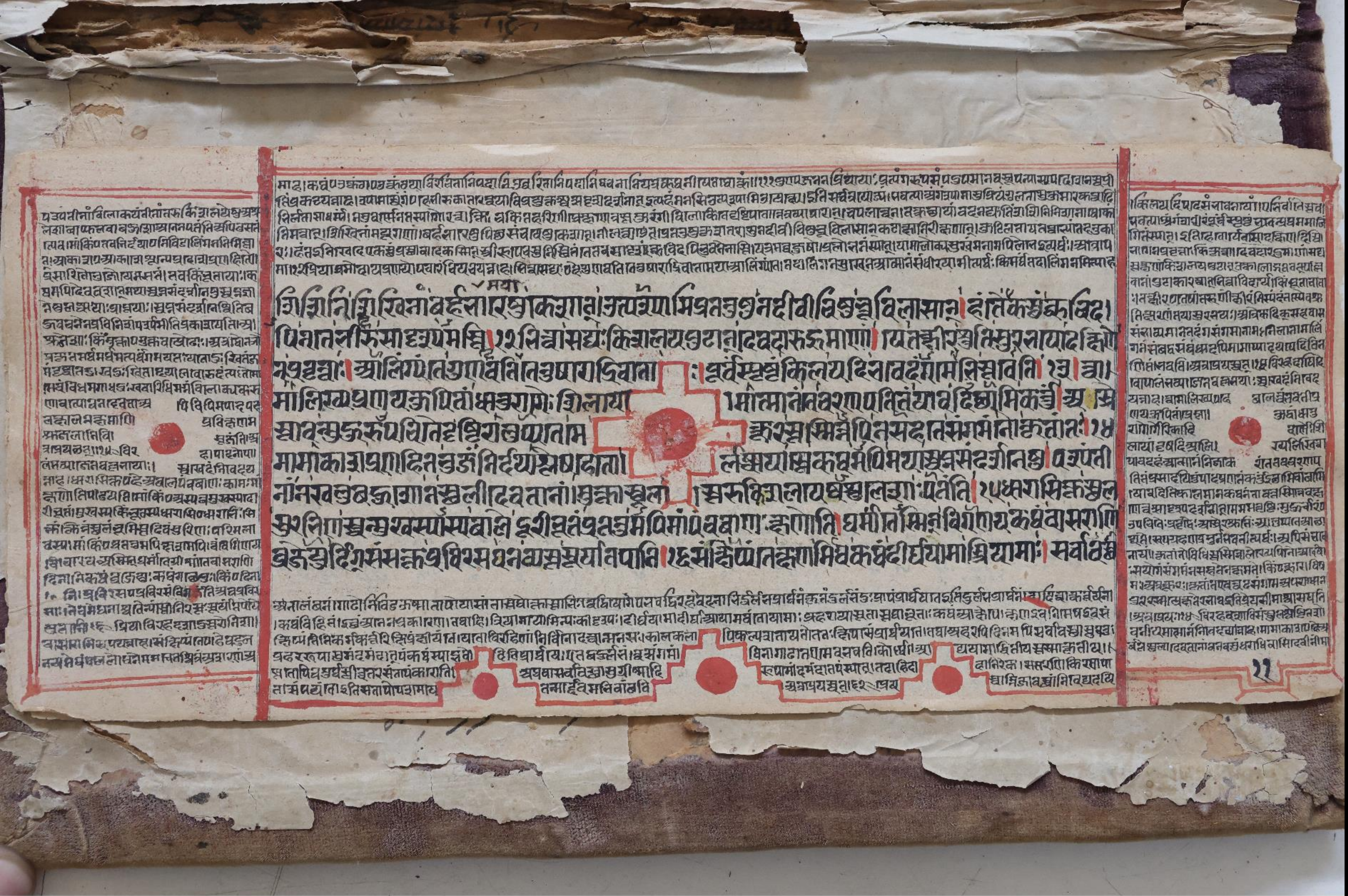
[illegible]

२

Folio c – recto



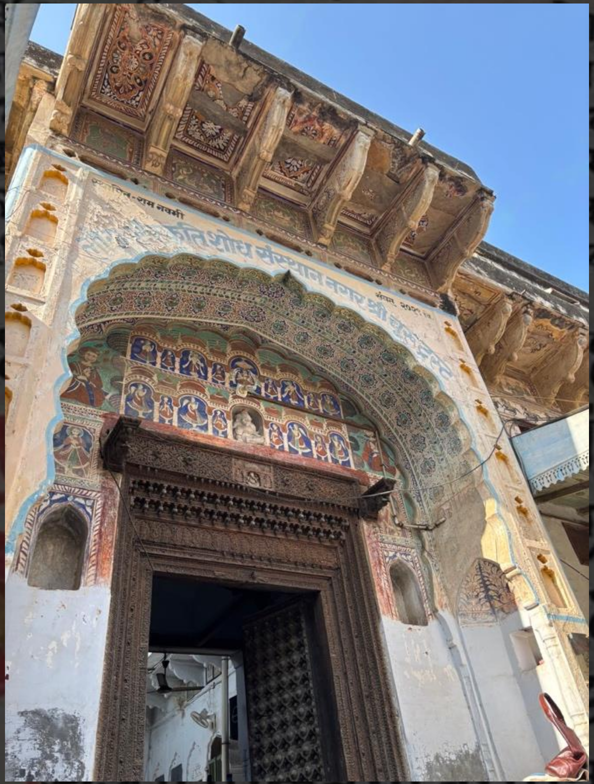
Folio d – recto



Folio e – recto

Provenance: Nagar Shree Archives

Community Archives – people take voluntary terns to serve/work at the archives.



Churu: Sekhawati (named after a dialect) region of Rajasthan state of India

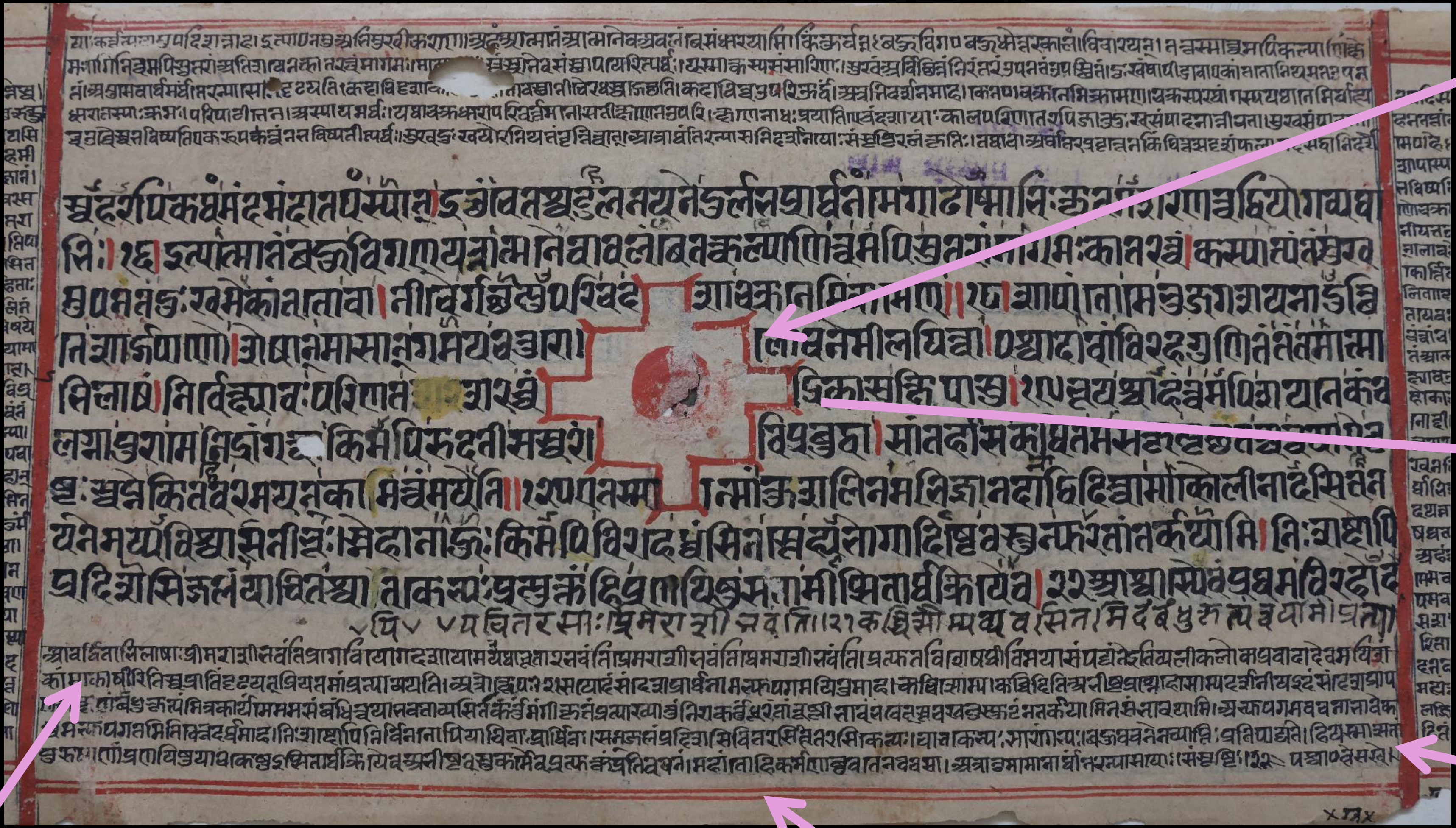
My fragment – catalogued on a post it!

बाताँ ही चालै
हिन्दी-अनुवाद
बात-कलश

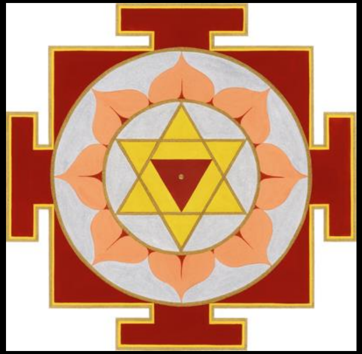
What is the manuscript?

- Translates to “Cloud Messenger”
- Handwritten edition of Kālidāsa’s classical Sanskrit poem, accompanied by a detailed vernacular commentary titled *Saraswati Shringaar* by Shri Sthir Deven
- Composed during 634 AD
- A *Yaksha* or nature deity begs a passing cloud to carry a message across the subcontinent to his grieving consort in the fabled city of Alakā.

Physicality of the manuscript



Chakra (wheel): Two deductions can be made here: (1) We know this is an entire verse on a singular page (2) south Asian scribal practice of mapping cosmos onto the manuscript. Interesting because north India and Western India – observations exist.

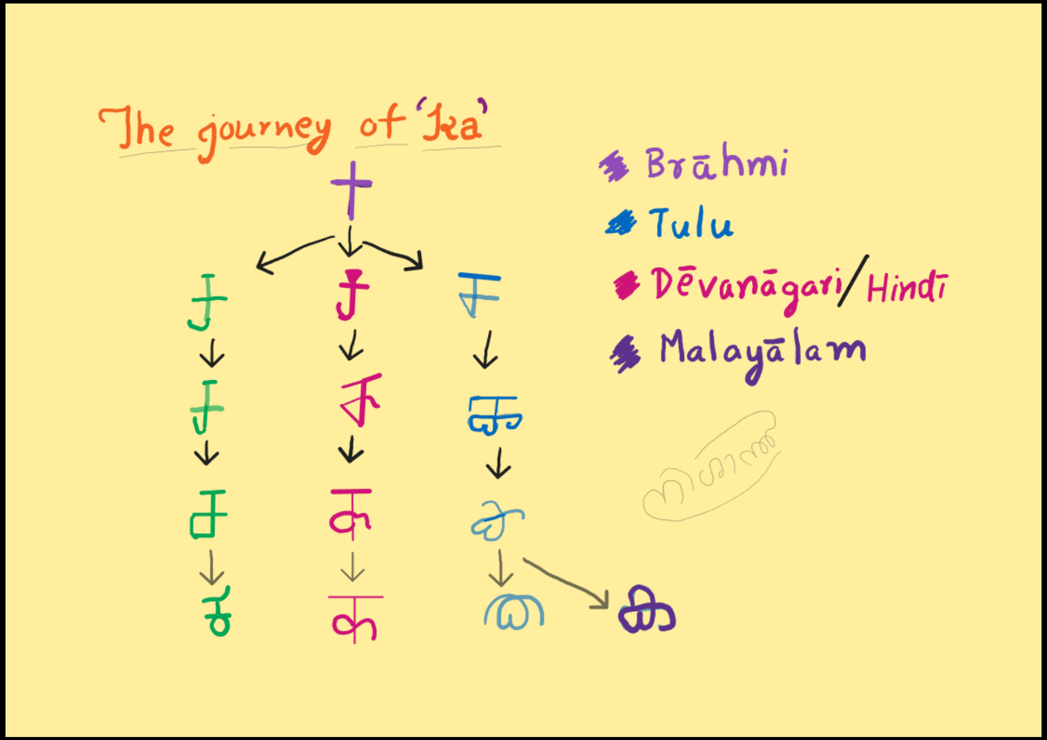


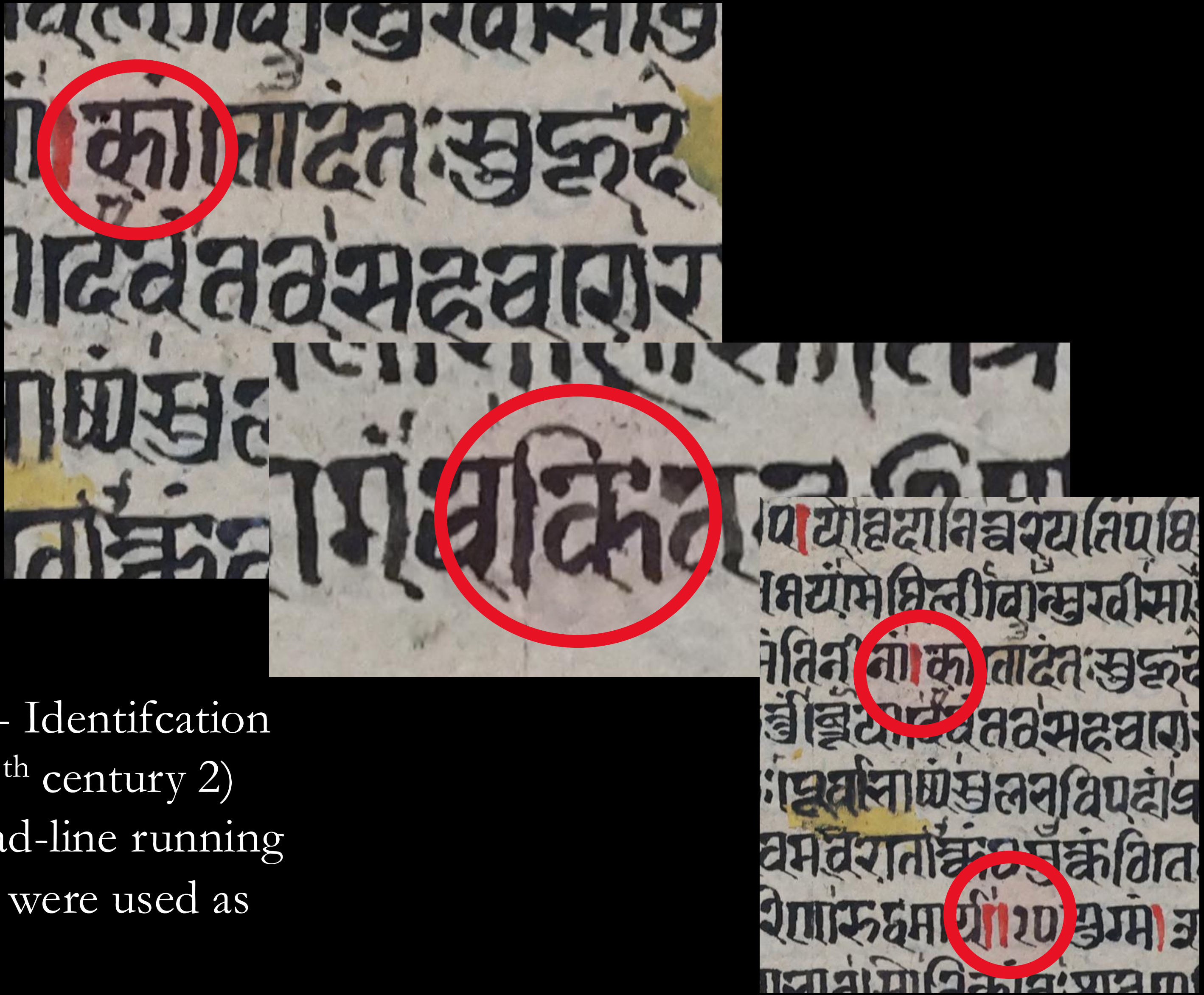
This *could* be rag paper

Commentary in a smaller script. Indicative of scholastic purpose.

Red Pigment – vermillion or lac-based ink

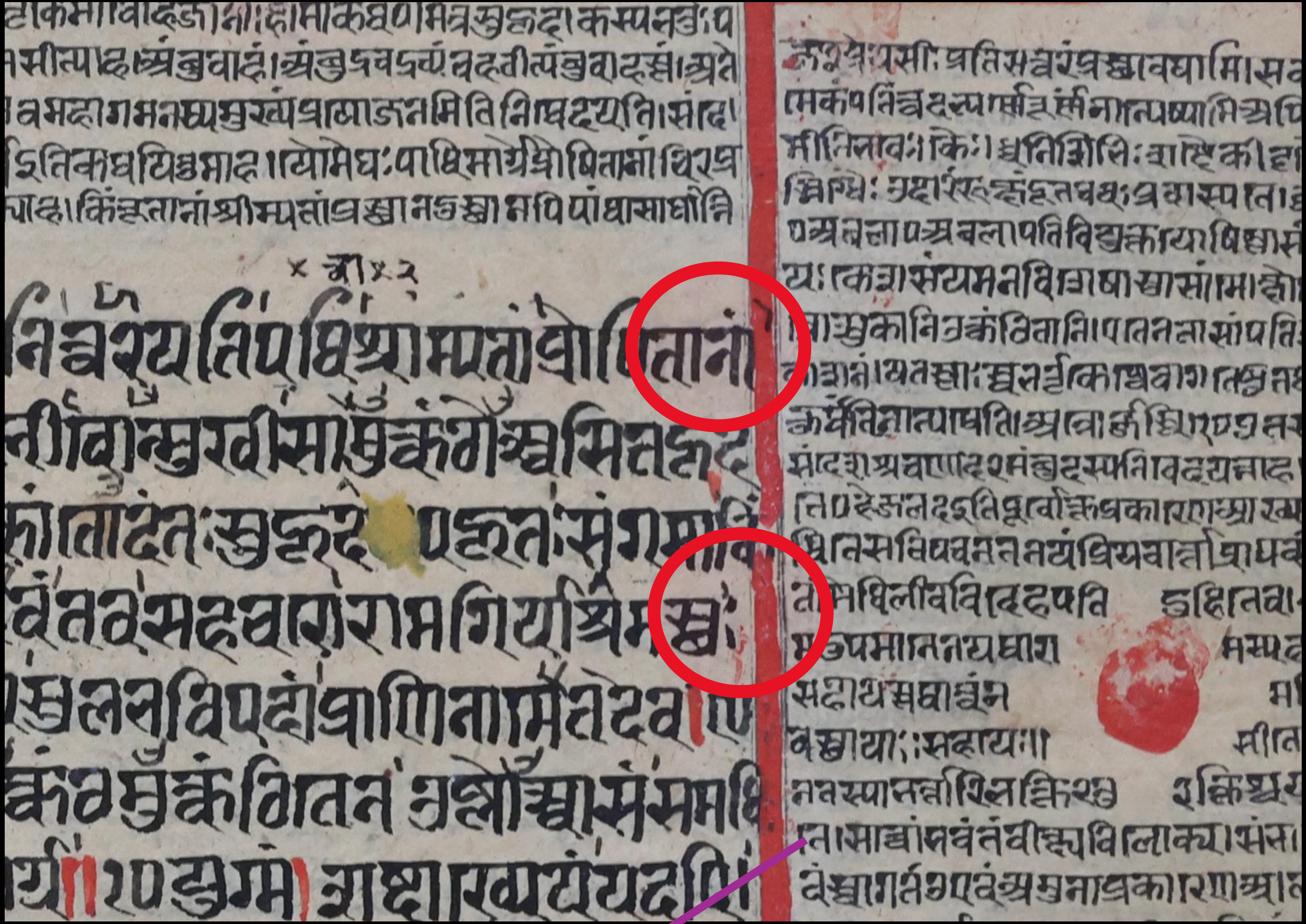
Dating the fragment(s) – Script Analysis





From this, we can tell – 1) Devanagari Script - Identifcation of the 'ka' which was characteristic of post 11th century 2) Presence of the shirorekhā (the horizontal head-line running through words). 3) Line marks (Danda) which were used as verse delimiters.

Dating the fragment(s) – Language Analysis

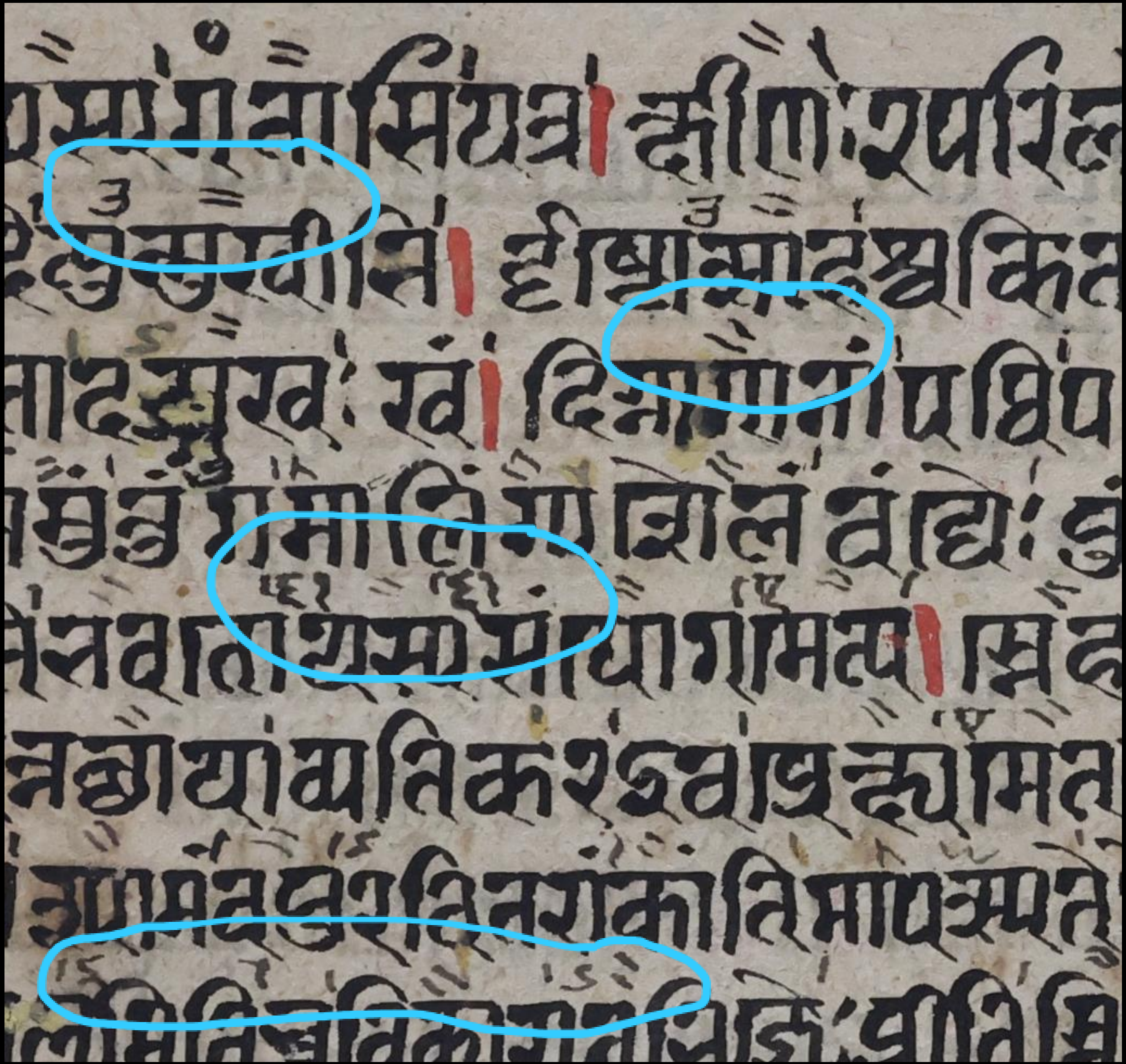


1) Final consonants are dropped
Sanskrit retains final consonants like -ḥ or -s:
Here: We see forms ending in -aṁ, -ṇa, or just open syllables, suggesting loss of visarga or final –s, classic Prakrit behaviour.

2) What does this tell us about the date and/place?

- Popularly copied in scriptoriums – 14th – 18th century
- Prakrit & Devanagri – western India

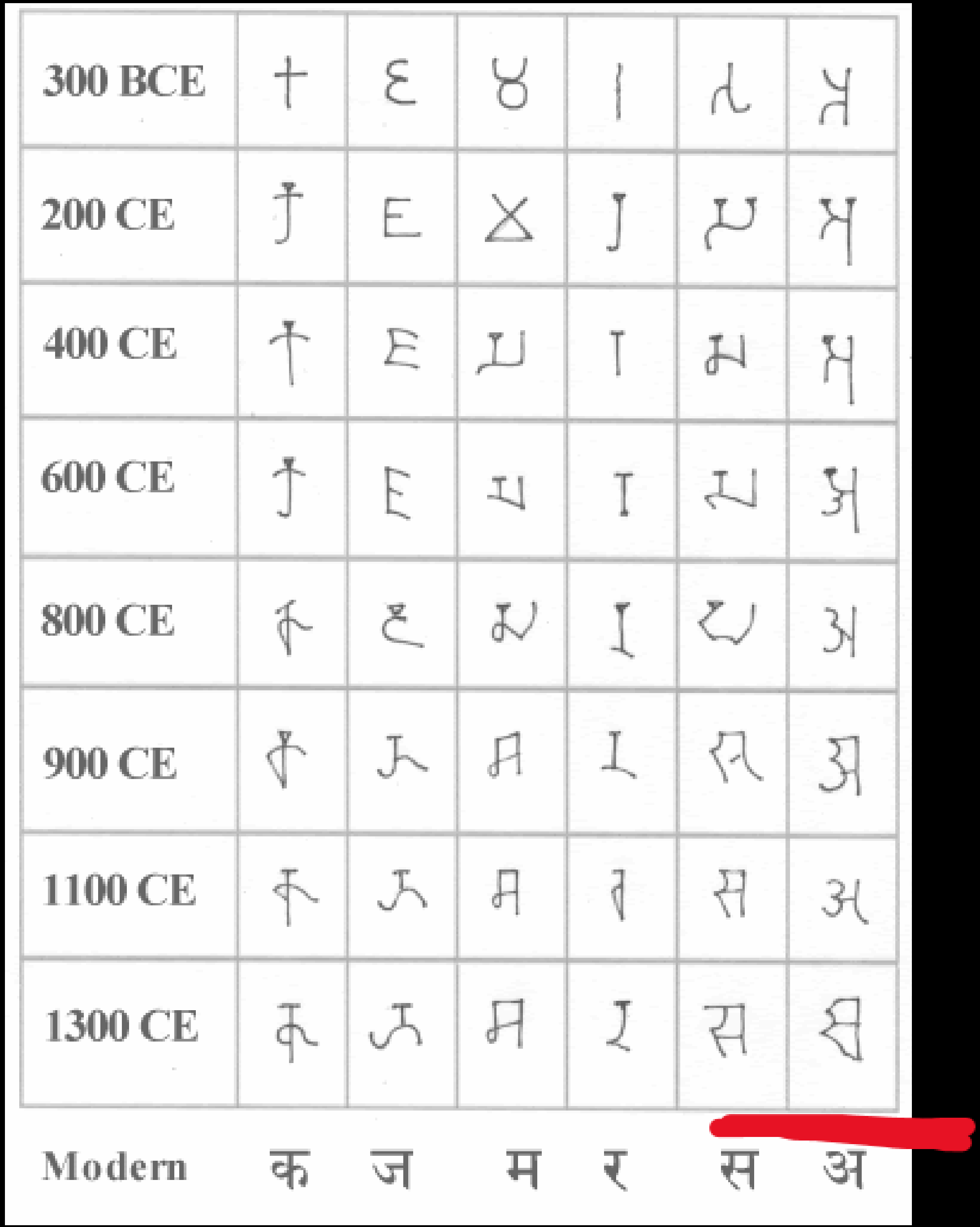
Commentary: largely also follows the same script/language pattern. But more cursive – maybe different scribe? Or someone assigned as a commentator?



Diagonal marks which are metric markers used in poetry manuscripts.

Guides for

- Reciting poetic meter where each slanted stroke corresponds to a syllabic unit or beat.
- Mandākrāntā meter -- this meter has a fixed 17-syllable line with a specific long-short syllable pattern.



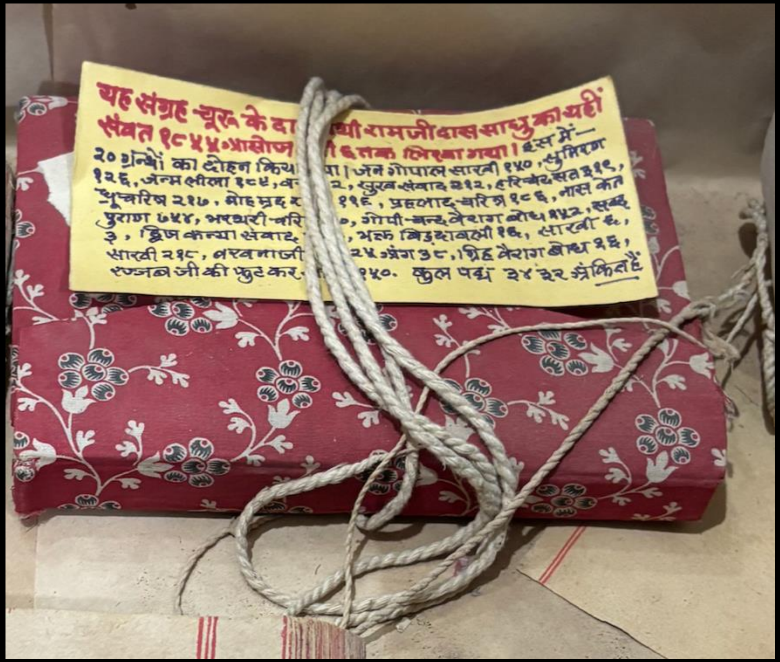
Concluding comments about the date and place:

- Devanagari script with Prakrit Dialect/Language
- Strong horizontal stroke = post-12th century Devnagari
- Angular forms of character: aligns with western Indian scribal styles – between 15th to 18th century
- Letter spacing – suggests its late 15th century, early 16th century
- Handmade paper: widespread use after the 14th century
- Use of punctuation's I and II – formalised by ~15th century

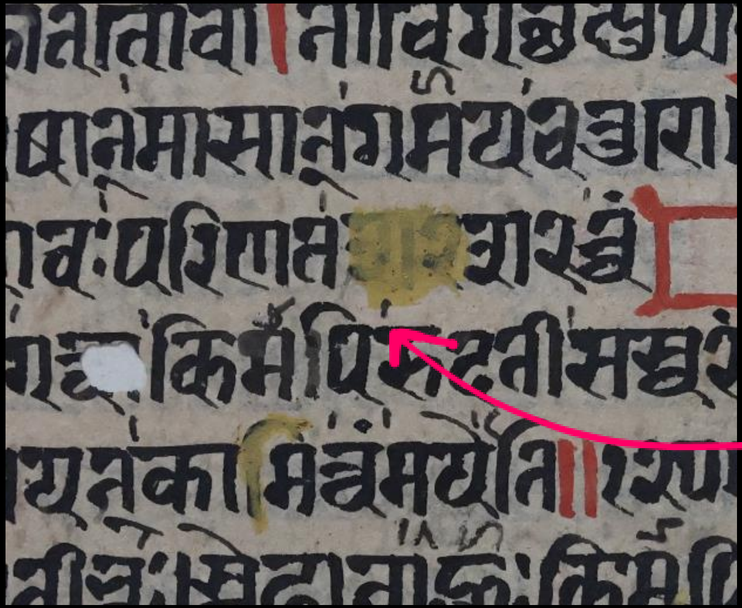
= approximation 1490s-1540s

- I was able to find info about the commentary: titled Saraswati Shringaar by Shri Sthir
- Commentary style – typical of Gujrat/Rajasthan – further narrowed it down to Nagar or Marwar traditions (because of scribe name)

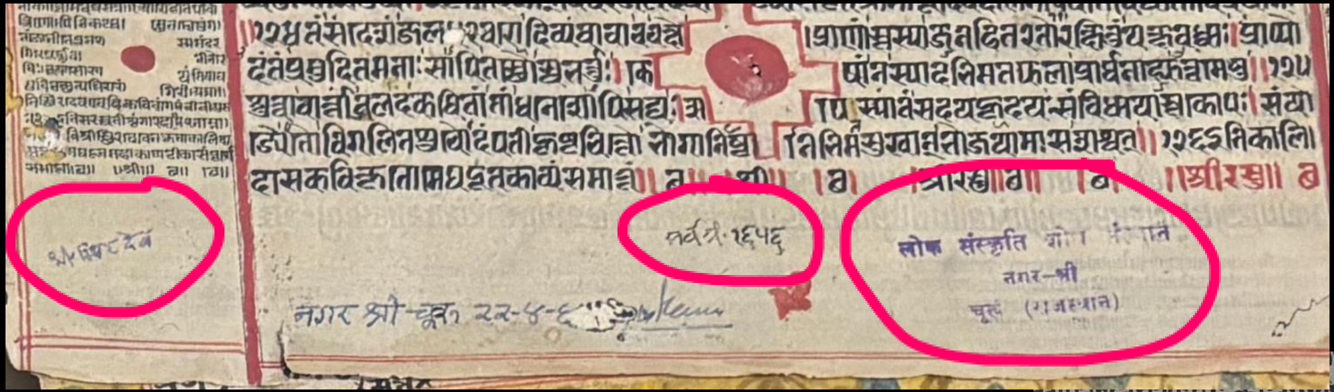
Afterlife of the Manuscript

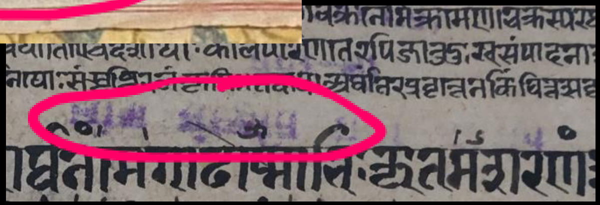


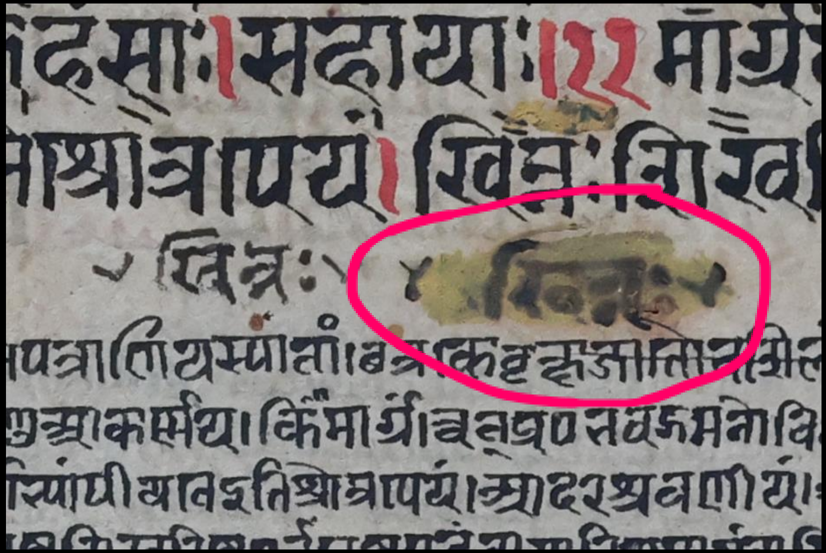
Binding type of the manuscript



Turmeric based pigment used for corrections







Key takeaways and aims for the future!

1) Structured Lens to decipher and unpack the manuscript
    1) Go beyond your own culture
2) Helped to to ask more focused questions such as How did it move? Why was it reused?
3) Afterlife of the manuscript – helped expand my focus from circulation and reinterpretation to reuse and recontextualisation
4) IIIF/Fragmentarium/Digital Scriptorium etc – importance of collaborative reconstruction and learning, globally contextualising local manuscripts