



UNIQUE JOURNAL OF AYURVEDIC AND HERBAL MEDICINES

Available online: www.ujconline.net

Review Article

BASICS OF MANUSCRIPTOLOGY

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Received 29-12-2015; Revised 28-01-2016; Accepted 27-02-2016

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ABSTRACT

Manuscripts are the hand written or manually written original documents. Thousands of years ago when printing technology was not available, knowledge or information was stored by writing it on leaves or barks of specific plants. The science of studying manuscripts is known as manuscriptology. **A country's pride resides in its culture and heritage. It is evident from the richness of archeology, monuments, arts & crafts including manuscripts. Hence, it is granted a top place of honor to the science of manuscriptology.** These are the basic historical evidence and have great research value. It is estimated that India possesses more than five million manuscripts, making the largest repository of manuscript wealth in the world. AYUSH department, under the government of India consider the different steps in manuscriptology e.g. collection, conservation, cataloguing, translation, critical edition and publication of manuscripts as important aspects of literary research in Ayurveda. To perform this work there is need of collaboration of various scholars of Ayurveda and languages like Sanskrit along with many trained people and experts in this field. Several treatment methods and medical formulations are yet to be discovered from the manuscripts. A large number of manuscripts are in a precarious state and are in danger of getting irretrievably lost. These are available in personal possessions of some people who even unaware of its importance. So it is our duty to preserve these knowledge and make it available to the world.

Keywords: Manuscripts, Cataloguing, Critical edition, Heuristics, Recension, Emendation.

INTRODUCTION

The word Manuscript is originated from a Latin word *Manu scriptus*, which means written by hand. Here Manu means hand and scriptus means to write¹. The treasure of the wisdom has come down from generation to generation by oral tradition, and then written on different plant leaves and now it is the era of digitalization². Manuscripts are found in every part of the world where human beings put their thoughts and experiences into a written form³ the science of study of manuscripts is known as Manuscriptology. India has largest collection of Manuscripts in world.

DEFINITION OF MANUSCRIPT

A handwritten document which has scientific, historical, literary or aesthetic value can be considered as a manuscript⁴. These are available in different scripts and written on variety of forms. Communication is essential for human existence. Our ancestors communicated their thoughts, words and ideas through the media of writing, painting or inscribing in different surfaces, these are nothing but the manuscripts.

SYNONYMS OF MANUSCRIPT:

Codex, document, text, script, handwriting⁵.

SCRIPT USED IN ANCIENT TIME:

There are number of scripts available throughout the world and the common scripts are as follows.

1 .Vatteluthu 2.Tamil 3.Grantha 4.Sarada 5.Nandinagari 6.Tigalari 7.Devanagari

INSCRIPTION MATERIALS:

Inner bark of Bhurja-patra (Birch barks), aguru bark, Metals like gold, silver etc, Inscriptions on rocks, metals, palm leaf, paper etc.

INSTRUMENTS:

Feathers, Brush, Pen, Stylus

THE PROCESS OF TRANSMISSION OF KNOWLEDGE

In ancient India knowledge spread verbally through the word of mouth from the teacher to the disciple, hence it was called *Shruti*. But with the discovery of scripts, written records gradually replaced the verbal transmission of thought⁶.

Papers were also used by them in the later stages and made into *pustaka*. In the twenty-first century with the help of computers we are carrying and conveying knowledge.

STEPS OF MANUSCRIPTOLOGY

The science of study of manuscript is known as Manuscriptology. There are two steps involved in it, i.e. Primary and Secondary steps. Primary step includes collection, conservation and cataloguing of manuscripts. Wherein secondary step, it contains transcription, translation, critical edition and publication.

A. Primary steps

i. Collection:

Collection of maximum number of manuscripts scattered all over the world forms the first requisite in manuscriptology. Manuscripts are huge oceans of knowledge containing innumerable pearls of principles and information. These are available in personal possessions of some people who even unaware of its importance.⁷

Basic dangers to a manuscript collection:

The dangers to a manuscript collection can be termed as factors of deterioration. These factors can be categorized as human factors and natural factors. The biggest danger to collections is the human factor, as humans can destroy entire collections by their inaction as well as by their wrong actions. Alternatively, humans can also be the biggest protectors of manuscripts if they take correct action³.

Human factors:

- Carelessness.
- Ignorance
- Public apathy

Natural factors:

- Fire, water, natural calamities, Insect attack, microbiological attack, dust, environmental pollution and light, fluctuations in temperature and relative humidity.³

Inherent factors:

- The ink or paint used to write may cause damage to the manuscripts.

ii. Conservation:

The methods used to save manuscripts or enhancing the life of the manuscript can be termed as conservation. If not preserved properly they are subject to physical damage and decay. Every manuscripts have different style of preservation.

a) Preventive conservation:

Reducing future risks of deterioration can be termed as preventive conservation. Various methods like Regular inspection of the manuscripts, microfilming, photocopying, lamination, digitization etc. can be used.

b) Curative conservation:

Means stopping active deterioration in the manuscript(s) can be termed as curative conservation. For example, Fumigation, apply lemon grass oil, lamp black etc

Conservation techniques in different types of manuscripts:

Coins: Need & importance:

Ancient coins brought light the names of many kings ruled in Andhra namely Gobada, Narana etc. These are discovered from the Kotalingala coins in the Karimnagar district of Andhra⁸.

Traditional Asian techniques: Different types of metals are used to make coins and to preserve it we can use a mixture of

HNO₃-20%+ H₂SO₄-5%+ H₂O-75%, Put for half an hour and then clean it.

Western techniques: Sill all coins in air tight well pack with the all proper information as weight, size, value, period, metal using, etc³.

Palm leaf manuscripts: Need & importance:

Palm leaves of talipot or talipat (*Corypha umbraculifera*, *C. taliera*) and palmyra (*Borassus flabellifer*) were common writing surfaces in ancient India. The Buddhist Canon was written on palm-leaves and we got this reference from the life of Yuan Chwang. The oldest palm-leaf manuscript was found in Sikiang, China⁹.

Traditional Asian techniques: Use lemon grass oil, citronella oil for clearing words and then we can read it easily. Apply lampblack and it also helpful for easy reading. Usually to fasten the manuscripts, holes are punched on the leaves and cords are passed through them. These are then placed in between two stiff flat wooden boards having the same type of holes for passing the cords. The wooden boards press the leaves from both the sides, prevent curling at the edges and chipping by abrasion¹⁰. The manuscripts were wrapped in yellow or red cotton cloth.

Western techniques: Use of A.C. rooms to preserve the palm leaf manuscripts.

Paper manuscripts: Need & importance:

The word 'paper' comes from the Latin word *Papyrus*, invented in 109 A.D. by China. In India, handmade paper manuscripts were used commonly in the 18th century¹¹. Papers help us to keep the knowledge in book form.

Traditional Asian techniques: Clean the paper with soft brush then apply pesticides to all sides of paper use tress paper (Japani tissue paper) and transparent cloth (Irani cloth) for lamination.³ Traditional herbal pesticides like turmeric powder, snake slough etc are used as a repellent to insects

Western techniques: With the using of Leaf caster machine and reinforcement of banana tissue culture pins RS. 7 required for each page of manuscript.³

Modern concept of preservation:

Awakened by the alarming rate of destruction of manuscripts, modern devices and techniques are being developed and utilized. The World Wide Web holds millions of websites and the Internet is the market place for research, teaching, expression, publication and communication of information.¹²

Manuscript conservation centers

The National Mission for Manuscripts (NMM) was established in February 2003, by the Ministry of Tourism and Culture, Government of India aimed to locate, document, and preserve these manuscripts. In order to connect India's past with its future, its memory with its aspirations.¹² At present, the Mission has a network of 34 MCCs across the country which are the following.¹³

iii. Cataloguing:

It is the process of classifying and arranging objects in a particular order. A catalog helps the reader to locate the manuscript easily in a short time. Cataloguing is an important method of making the manuscripts easily accessible for the research community. Catalog of Catalogues or New Catalogues Catalogorum (NCC) is a comprehensive compendium of all the manuscripts that are available all over

the world that lists the manuscripts under name of the author and title of work. One of the greatest drawbacks of the old and

new Catalogus Catalogorum is that the information is not widely available¹⁴.

Table 1: Names of manuscript conservation centers

NORTH
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Central Institute of Buddhist Studies, Leh • Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts (IGNCA), New Delhi • Department of Language and Culture, Shimla • The Himalayan Society for Heritage and Art Conservation, Nainital • Vrindavan Research Institute, Vrindavan • Rampur Raza Library, Rampur • Nagarjuna Buddhist Foundation, Gorakhpur • Indian Conservation Institute, Lucknow • Visweshvarananda Biswabandhu Institute of Sanskrit and Indological Studies, Hoshiarpur • Central Library, Banaras Hindu University, Banaras
SOUTH
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oriental Research Institute, Sri Venkateswara University, Tirupati • Salar Jung Museum, Hyderabad • INTACH Chitrakala Parishath Art Conservation Centre, Bangalore • Tamil Nadu Government Museum, Chennai • Karnataka State Archives, Bangalore • Tanjore Maharaja Serfoji's Saraswati Mahal Library, Thanjavur • Centre for Heritage Studies Hill Palace Museum, Thripunithura • Regional Conservation Laboratory, Thiruvananthapuram
EAST
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SARASVATI, Bhadrak • Khuda Bakhsh Oriental Public Library, Patna • Sri Dev Kumar Jain Oriental research Institute, Arrah • Manuscript Library, University of Calcutta, Kolkata • INTACH Orissa Art Conservation Centre, Bhubaneswar • AITIHYA, Bhubaneswar • Sambalpur University, Burla, Orissa • Krishna Kanta Handiqui Library, Gauhati University, Guwahati • Manipur State Archives, Imphal • Tawang Monastery, Tawang
WEST
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rajasthan Oriental Research Institute, Jodhpur • Mahaveer Digamber Jain Pandulipi Samrakshan Kendra, Jaipur, Rajasthan • Lalbhai Dalpatbhai Institute of Indology, Ahmedabad • Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute (BORI), Pune
CENTRAL
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scindia Oriental Research Institute (SORI), Ujjain

B. Secondary steps:

I. Transcription:

Means to write the text as it is to a plain paper. Reading manuscript directly is very difficult. So it helps the person to read in a better way. Manuscripts are available in different languages and one can copy it in the same language. If the original is in Malayalam, then transcribe it in Malayalam, if it is in Sanskrit copy it in Sanskrit language

ii. Translation:

It is the process of converting the words of one language to another. The need for translation in present day life is more

emphasized in the country and one should keep in pace with time by keeping the developments in the world around. Due to this step, the person who is from another place and culture can easily understand our ancient systems and knowledge.

iii. Critical edition:

Editing of the work means reconstructing the text, nearest to the author's autograph work on the basis of evidences. Critical edition means close reading and detail analysis of a particular text. Critical edition is an ancient concept in India. VedaVyasa, the compiler of Vedas and Puranas, can be considered as the first critical editor¹⁴.

Method of critical edition:

It includes 2 methods:-lower criticism and higher criticism. Even though a universal system cannot be proposed for editing a manuscript an editor can follow a broad procedure based on his experience and available evidence.¹⁴

a) Lower criticism:

It is a process that goes towards the selection of original reading based on evidences. It goes through 3 stages-Heuristics, Recension and Emendation.

1.Heuristics: The word meaning of Heuristics is to find or to discover. It is a process of methodological collection, analysis and study of evidences with respect to the text.¹⁴

Heuristics includes 3 stages:

1.1. Siglum-

It is the special identification mark given to the manuscript .The siglum could be based on the script, the source of the codex, age of the copy, or a combination of any of these. For example: K12 may indicate a codex from Kashmir belonging to 12th century, C14 may mean the codex is from Calcutta and belonging to 14th century.

1.2. Collation:

Collation is the process of collecting all the information concerning the text in one document .It should be done in a specially prepared collation sheet .Nowadays one can use the excel sheets.

Table 2: Blank Excel Sheet

In this sheet one can write the letters in each block .A most trustworthy codex is taken as the base and that is written in the first row of squares, one letter in each square .On the left side and against a row the siglum of the codex compared is written .By this method the relationship between the different codices could be identified.

1.3. Secondary sources of evidences:

All works that are directly and closely related to the text on hand but not the source manuscripts are called secondary source manuscript is called secondary sources of evidence. They are commentaries, translations etc

2. Recension:

Recension means critical revision of the text. It is the process of choosing among the variants of a reading which is closer to the author’s intension.

3. Emendation:

Word meaning is correct the text. It is the suggestion given by the editor if he is not satisfied with the evidence available to prove that the text was originally written by the author.

b) Higher criticism:

After lower criticism one can go for higher criticism. Here we are assessing the period and peculiarities of the author. Higher criticism probes the following: the style ,the language, the literary aspects, sources of the work ,life of the author, the circumstances that made the author to compose the work, the situation at which the work was composed, influence of other writers in the field ,influence of the author on other writers in the field ,the reason for the popularity of the work etc. It needs good command on the subject and should be able to think in lines of the author.

iv. Publication:

It is the last step of Manuscriptology. It is a very sad fact that only 2% of the available material from medical manuscripts are in the printed form. So we can definitely say literary research work is not an easy task.

CONCLUSION

Manuscriptology is the process that listen the pulse of our past. Manuscripts constitute our most precious national heritage as rare pieces of recorded knowledge. These manuscripts are the powerful medium for preservation of our literary, linguistic, artistic and cultural heritage. So study of manuscripts is an important aspect in present era.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

We acknowledge Dr. Akhilesh Shukla, Assistant professor, Dept. of Samhita, Sanskrit and Siddhanta, Amrita School of Ayurveda, Kollam for the help during the preparation of the article as well as for the suggestions to improve the article.

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Source of support: Nil, Conflict of interest: None Declared