

IMPORTANCE OF MANUSCRIPTS IN PRESENT ERA

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ABSTRACT

Communications is essential for human existence which can be conducted by oral and written traditions. *Ayurveda* is an ancient science which has both oral and written traditions for dissemination of knowledge. Manuscriptology is the scientific and structural study of handwritten documents credited with fair antiquity. Treasures of the wisdom has passed from generation to generation by oral tradition and then written on different plant leaves and other materials. Paper usage became popular by the end of 13th century AD, till then various other materials were used for transferring knowledge. They are sources of cultural heritage and history. Their proper preservation is mandatory. Rich collections of manuscript are found in temples, religious institutions, libraries, monasteries, wealthy households, *Brahmin* families and palaces. Surveys require large labor, manpower and time. In the past years, many manuscripts were identified by surveys and preserved for further used. Nowadays apart from publication of manuscripts, these are being digitized also.

Key words: Manuscripts, Ayurveda, Preservation, Cultural heritage, Pandulipi, Cataloguing.

INTRODUCTION

Literal meaning of manuscript is handwritten document. According to Antiquities and Art Treasures Act

1972, manuscript is a handwritten document of science, historical, literary or aesthetic values which is

at least 75 years old. The science of study of manuscript is known as manuscriptology. In Hindi, it is known as *Pandulipi Vigyan*. This is a part of literary research. In old manuscripts, two types of script (*lipi*) are found- *Bramhi lipi* and *Kharoshti lipi*. *Bramhi lipi* is further developed into two streams- *Devanagari lipi* in north India and *Kharoshti lipi* in south India. The purpose of study of manuscript is preserving the ancient knowledge and reviving the past. The materials required for manuscript writing were *Lekhya Samagri* (Writing Surface) and *Lekhan Samagri* (Writing Instrument). *Shilalekha* (Rock Edits), *Tamra Patra* (Copper Plates), *Taal Patra* (Palm Leaf), *Bhurja Patra* (Birch Bark), *Sanchipat* (Agaru Bark) and paper, etc. were writing surfaces. Stylus, Pens, Brushes and Ink were writing instruments. Ink of different colours were used for different purposes, e.g., black colour for writing, yellow colour for correction, red colour for chapters and sections and gold or silver colour for drawing borders. Understanding the importance of manuscripts, Government of India started many works regarding this. Ministry of Ayush, Government of India provides funds for extramural research in manuscriptology. There are many Manuscript Conservation Centers (MCC) and Manuscript Resource Centers (MRC) across the country. National Institute of Indian Medical Heritage (NIIMH), Hyderabad is a regional institute of CCRAS, New Delhi which works for manuscriptology and another literary research. Many works regarding conservation, publication and digitization of manuscripts are going on by the government. Despite of these so many works, many thousands of manuscripts are unpublished till now. There is a big need to work in this field now.

REVIEW

Manuscriptology¹ is a Part of Literary Research. Manuscriptology means the science of collecting, classifying preserving and editing manuscript. The oldest Script (*lipi*) found in manuscripts are *Brahmi lipi*² and *Kharoshti lipi*. Manuscript writing materials are.

1. *Lekhya Samagri* – Writing surface
2. *Lekhan Samagari* – Writing instrument
3. *Rakshana Samagri* – Binding materials

1. *Lekhya Samagri*³
 - Shila lekhan* (Rock edits)
 - Tamra patra* (copper plates)
 - Taal patra* (palm leaf)
 - Bhurja patra* (Birch bark)
 - Sanchapat* (Agaru bark)
2. *Lekhanasamagri*⁴: Stylus is the hard and sharp instrument used to incise manuscript. Dyes are used to make the letters on a palm leaf darker. After incising palm leaf with stylus, the dye is smeared over the letters to make it clear. After using stylus, carbon powder with gun and sugar was smeared over the manuscript. Reed pen, quill feathers of birds and spine of porcupine were used as pen. Ink or *masi* made up of carbon black mixed with gum or gingelly oil, extract from plants, turmeric, ashes of coconut, sesame oil, silver and iron sulphates were used. *Haratala* (yellow arsenic) was used for removing unwanted letters or errors.
3. *Rakshana Samagri*⁵: On the basis of binding, there are two types of manuscripts - stitched and unstitched. *Taal patra* and *Bhurja Patra* cannot be stitched, so a cord is passed through them after creating holes for binding purpose. Paper or leaves were kept on laps or a wooden stand. Letters were scribed near each other without any stop or break. Sufficient margin and space were maintained. Artistic designs were made on folios. In Odisha, the manuscripts were made in the shape of sword, fish, rat, garland.

Author and Scribe

Author- author is a person who actually composed the matter. e.g *Kalidasa* is an author of *Aabhigyanashakuntalam*.

Scribe⁶ – scribe is a person who writes the manuscripts. He was also known as writer or copyist. He has key position in the preparing of manuscripts. His own peculiarities and habits would naturally influence the writing of manuscript.

Scribal errors⁷

Any variation in the content of original author and the reproduced content by the scribe is called as scribal error. Scribal errors can be broadly classified

as omission (deletion), addition, substitution and transposition.

Deletion: deletion of a certain letter/ word/ line or a paragraph during the process of scribing. e.g., द्वितीयोऽध्यायः in place of द्वितीयोऽध्यायः

शब्दादीनामशस्तानाम स्त्रीविवर्जिताम् in place of शब्दादीनामशस्तानामगम्यं स्त्रीविवर्जिताम्।

मलानामूर्द्धाधः प्रवृत्तिः। in place of मलानामूर्द्धाधः प्रवृत्तिः।

Addition: Addition refers to the insertion of a new word/ paragraph in a phase by the scribe. This can be intentional or unintentional. Learned scribes are responsible for intentional additions. Unintentional addition can take place by repeating a whole line or paragraph. Three types of additions may be found: dittography – writing a syllable, word or phrase unnecessary twice, contamination – inserting extraneous material from elsewhere on the page and insertion – which reflects scribes attempts to improve what they believed to be a defective text - although this does not mean that they were necessarily right. A spiritual scribe may add devotional words like *sri*, *om* to begin a page or a chapter which is originally missing.e.g. Addition of contraindications during shishira ritu in Charak Samhita.

कटुतिक्तकषायाणि वातलानि लघूनि च । वर्जयेदन्नपानानि शिशिरे शीतलानि च ॥ Commentator Chakrapani mentioned that the verse is not accepted as original.

(केचिदत्रासेव्यप्रतिपादकं ग्रन्थं पठन्ति, स त्वनार्थः)⁸

In *Ayushkamyamadhya* of Ashtanga Hridaya, classification of Vyadhi is mentioned in few manuscripts, probably due to addition error.⁹

(साध्योऽसाध्य इति व्याधिर्द्विधा, तौ तु पुनर्द्विधा ।

सुसाध्यः कृच्छ्रसाध्यश्च, याप्यो यश्चानुपक्रमः ॥)

Substitution: substitution refer to replacement of a word with another word. It can be both intentional and unintentional. e.g.

Conjuncts are written in wrong sequential order in majority of the cases, like

- वह्नि – वन्हे
- ष्ण, कृ is written in different way
- व्ह scribed as ह्व

- Majority of the instances only 'छ' is scribed in place of च्छ like गच्छति- गच्छति.
- प्रंग is written in place of प्रसङ्गः चुतः is written in place of च्युतः
- वे is written in place of ब , like वलं-बलं
- अग्लानि in place of ग्लानि
- शिता is written in place of सिता

Transposition¹⁰: it is an involuntary positional variation of script. Usually, interchange of adjacent words is observed. Though transposition is a part of scribal error, the meaning of the sentence does not change in *Sanskrit*.

When a scribe copies information from one script to another, certain errors are introduced due to confusion of letters. This is known as orthographic:

Steps of Manuscriptology

1. Collection
2. Conservation
3. Cataloging
4. Transcription
5. Translation
6. Critical edition
7. Publication

1. Collection¹¹: Manuscripts are scattered all over the world. They can be collected from museums, old libraries, temples, institutes and common people also.

2. Conservation¹²: The methods used to save manuscripts or enhancing the life of the manuscripts can be termed as conservation. Manuscripts should be protected from oil (Fire), water and loose binding. These should not be placed in the hands of careless persons. There are many factors causing deterioration of manuscripts. Low humidity with heat is the main enemy of manuscripts. Dust and atmospheric pollution, human carelessness, poor storage conditions, pest (Fungus, Bookworms, Termites, Wasps, Rats etc.) are other factors which cause deterioration of manuscripts. Conservation techniques for manuscripts are as follows-

Ancient methods

- *Dhupana* with *Nimba*, *Haridra*, *Karanja*, *Nirgundi* etc were done to get rid of insects.

- Using *Nimba patra*, peacock feather, *sarpa nirmuka* etc in between the papers.
- Keeping in air tightened wooden boxes.
- Vacha and Karpoora tied in a small piece of cloth and kept in the boxes (To protect from dust, insects, humidity etc).
- Use of silk cloth for wrapping as its protection from bookworms.
- Sufficient light and proper ventilation.

Modern methods

- Air-conditioned room with moderate humidity.
- Pest control by chemicals like DDT, Naphthalene, 5% mercuric chloride solution etc. Naphthalene balls and Special oils – Acts as insect repellents.
- Lamination, Photocopy Digitization by scanning with minimum 600 dpi.
- Very old and torn manuscripts can be damaged by the heat generated during scanning. Therefore, optoelectronic equipment should be used for cold digitization.
- Ministry of AYUSH provides funds for extramural research in Manuscriptology.
- National Mission for Manuscripts (NMM) was established in February 2003 by Ministry of Tourism and Culture, Government of India. It is also known as NAMAMI and its moto is conserving the past for the future. It conducts workshops and seminars in manuscriptology. It has many manuscripts conservation Centre's (MCC) and Manuscript Resource Centre's (MRC) across the country.

3. Cataloguing¹³

Cataloguing is a process of classifying and arranging materials in a particular order. By Cataloguing, the manuscripts become easily accessible to researcher. Catalogue of catalogues or new catalogues. Catalogorum is a comprehensive compendium of all the manuscripts that are available all over the world which are listed under name of the author and title of work.

4. **Transcription:** Transcription is writing the text as it is on a plain paper. It is very diffi-

cult to read manuscript directly. Therefore, Transcription is done to read and edit the manuscript easily.

5. Translation: Manuscript should be translated in other languages because everyone doesn't understand the language of manuscript. By translation, manuscript becomes understandable to all.

6. Critical edition: Editing is reconstructing the text, nearest to the author's thought on the basis of evidence. Critical edition means detail analysis of a particular text. It includes two methods-

Lower criticism

Higher criticism.

Lower criticism¹⁴: presenting the text as close as possible to the original work on the basis of available material.

Heuristics – Heuristics means to find or to discover. This is collection and analysis of available evidence regarding the text. Siglum (special identification mark given on the manuscript) should be based on source of the manuscript and age of the manuscript. E.g – K12 may indicate a codex from Kashmir of 12th century. C14 may indicate a codex from calculus of 14th century. Ancient manuscript books are known as codex.

Collation – Collation means to compare critically. This is a process of comparison which gives rise to a set of variant readings for the text under consideration. Collection of all information regarding the text is done on collation sheet or excel sheet.

Emendation – Editor suggestion which is closer to author's intension.

Recension – Process of choosing variant which is the closest to author's intension.

Higher Criticism– Assessment of author's work style, language of work and source of work. Life of author and circumstances in which work was completed.

7. **Publication:** This is last step of manuscriptology. Manuscript should be published as books to study others.

CONCLUSION

Manuscripts are the unique proof of our well-developed ancient sciences. It is an educational and cultural wealth of India. These are important sources of traditional knowledge. The literatures about various subjects are scattered all over India. There are various different versions of the same text at different places and according to different readings about the same topic are seen. Since most of the Indian knowledge is in the form of manuscripts, there is a strong need to preserve ancient knowledge and revive the past. Through manuscriptology, addition of information to the current stock of science is possible. Even after many efforts, many thousands of manuscripts are unpublished till now. NIIMH Hyderabad should train the Ayurvedic doctors at large scale and try to publish these manuscripts by the trained *Ayurvedic* doctors. Manuscripts should be kept in the digital form also to avoid the damage.

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