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Scope of Manuscriptology in Ayurveda

Anusha Baburaj¹, Resmi B.²

¹Post Graduate Scholar, ²Associate professor, Department of Samhita & Siddhant, Government Ayurveda College, Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala, INDIA.

ABSTRACT

Manuscriptology is the scientific or structural study of handwritten document credited with fair antiquity. Not even 5% of the available manuscripts in our country have been brought into limelight. National manuscript mission's study reveals the fact that, more than 20000 Ayurvedic manuscripts are identified but still unexplored. Here lies an extensive scope for *Ayurveda* in the field of Manuscriptology. As no complete catalogue of Indian medical manuscripts are available till date, the treasure of knowledge which lie hidden in oriental libraries and private custodies can be brought into mainstream by the well-organized steps of Manuscriptology - collection, conservation, cataloguing, transcription, translation, critical edition and publication. Of late, it is observed that some of the Ayurvedic scholars are involving in manuscript studies and institutions are supporting the preservation of ancient knowledge, but such works aims at a level of individual study rather than an organized one. Collaboration of various scholars of *Ayurveda* and languages like Sanskrit along with many experts in this field should be brought together to accomplish the task of publication of manuscripts. Only 2% of medical manuscripts are in printed form, so initiation should be taken up for the conservation, cataloguing, critical edition, and publication of Ayurvedic manuscripts which will open a new way for further activities in research area of *Ayurveda* including effective clinical researches.

Key words: Manuscript, Transcription, Translation, Critical edition.

INTRODUCTION

Manuscriptology/Paleography/Codicology is the scientific or structural study of handwritten document credited with fair antiquity. Manuscripts are primary data sources as they are closest to the original work as possible to be. The term Manuscript is originated from a Latin word Manuscriptus, which means written by hand. Here Manus means hand and scriptus means to write.^[1] According to Antiquities and Art Treasures Act manuscript is a "Hand written document of Scientific, historical, literary or of

aesthetic value which is at least 75 years old".^[2]

Written in different Indian languages manuscripts are preserved all over the country in different institutions, libraries, monasteries, temples and in several private collections. It is estimated that India possesses more than 5 million manuscripts, making it the world's largest repository of manuscript wealth in the world.^[3] Because of the popularity of *Ayurveda* in Kerala, many manuscripts related with this discipline are preserved in Kerala, where majority of them belong to private custody.

Address for correspondence:

Dr. Anusha Baburaj

Post Graduate Scholar, Department of Samhita & Siddhant, Government Ayurveda College, Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala, INDIA.

E-mail: anusha110594@gmail.com

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Need of Manuscript study

The dimensions of knowledge in manuscripts include *Siddhanta* (principles), *Shatra* (the science) and *Vyavahara* (the application). The need for manuscript study is to preserve the ancient knowledge and to revive the past. It also helps for the better understanding of the principles and also contributes to the literary richness of the science. Most of the *Ayurveda* manuscripts are written in Sanskrit language so slight difference in reading will make a lot of difference in interpretation. Thus, the critical edition

of all the available copies will open a new horizon in the Ayurvedic field.

Vision

Vision is to create networks of people from Ayurvedic field to contribute to Manuscriptology.

Mission

To preserve and publish works from *Ayurveda* to contribute for literary richness of the science.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Various information regarding Manuscriptology in *Ayurveda* are compiled from different textbooks, articles and publications regarding the topic. Analysis of data done by giving significance to future need and scope of Ayurvedic Manuscriptology.

MANUSCRIPTOLOGY

The science of collecting, classifying, preserving and editing of manuscripts is termed as manuscriptology. The science of Manuscriptology is the inspection of the past within the purview of present knowledge for the future research.

Steps in Manuscriptology

Primary

▪ Collection

There are innumerable manuscripts dispersed in several parts of India. The collection of maximum number of manuscripts scattered throughout the world becomes the primary requisite of Manuscriptology. Some common types of collections are academic collections, ritual worship collections, private collections, trust, museums, research institutions, archives, etc. General awareness on manuscripts can be given to the public so that a lay man who have them in possession can offer them to appropriate collection agencies.

▪ Conservation

The procedures used to rescue manuscripts or increasing the life of the manuscript can be termed as conservation. If not handled with due care, they are

subject to physical damage and decay. Every manuscript has different style of preservation.

a) Preventive conservation: Reducing future risks of damage is termed as preventive conservation. Various methods like Regular inspection of the manuscripts, microfilming, photocopying, lamination, digitization, storing in air conditioned rooms under optimum light (under 40 Lux) etc. can be used for the purpose of conservation of manuscripts.

b) Curative conservation: Means stopping active deterioration within the manuscript is termed as curative conservation. For example, Fumigation, apply lemon grass oil, lamp black, repairing holes in the manuscript, re-inking, edge mending etc.

▪ Cataloguing

Process of classifying and arranging objects in a specific manner is termed as cataloguing. Cataloguing helps the reader to locate the manuscript easily in a very short period. Cataloguing is a prime step in Manuscriptology to make the manuscripts easily available to the research community. Catalog of Catalogues or New Catalogues Catalogorum (NCC) is a comprehensive compendium of manuscripts that are available all over the world that lists the manuscripts under name of the author and title of work. One of the major drawbacks of the old and new Catalogues Catalogorum is that the information is not widely accessible.^[4]

Secondary

Secondary steps include transcription, translation, critical edition and publication.

Methods for scientific study of *Ayurveda* manuscripts

Transcription

Transcription is the method of writing the text as it to a plain paper. Reading the manuscript at first hand is very difficult. So, transcription will help the person to scrutinize the manuscript in a better way. Manuscripts are available in various languages and one can note down it in the same language

Translation

It is the process of transforming the words of one language to another. The necessity of translation in present day life is more emphasized in the country. By this a person from another place and culture can easily understand our ancient systems and knowledge.

Critical edition

Editing of the work means reconstructing the text, nearest to the author's autograph work based on all available evidences regarding the original manuscript. Here one has to select a manuscript first, after that using various sources, he/she has to collect maximum number of copies of the selected manuscript, then have to do the accepted reading, should constitute recension and collate all the copies.^[5]

Critical edition means close reading and detail analysis of the selected text. The final objective of textual criticism is the production of a critically edited manuscript which can be used for future researches. This contains a text most closely resembling the original work, which is accompanied by an apparatus criticus.^[6]

Methods of critical edition

It includes 2 methods,

- Lower criticism
- Higher criticism

Publication

It is the final step of Manuscriptology. It is a very discouraging fact that only 2% of the available material from medical manuscripts are in the printed form. For a manuscript to be published, first and foremost thing to be done is the selection of a manuscript, then identifying the language in which it is written, arranging them in the proper sequence, emendation and critical edition. And eventually, after all the process of editing publishing the manuscript with the assistance of print media or internet.

One of the biggest and most pioneering projects to create a database of all Indian manuscripts within the

country and abroad is National manuscript mission (NMM). The National Database of Manuscripts, Kriti Sampada is available on the internet through the Mission's website. Objectives of national manuscript mission include the Collection and conservation of manuscripts along with the motto 'Conserve the past for future'. The Mission receives data on manuscripts from three different sources;

- Excellence as heritage
- Contribution to India's intellectual history
- Vulnerability

The Mission in addition, compiling a database of all printed catalogues of Indian manuscripts. So far, more than 2500 catalogues have been documented.^[7]

DISCUSSION**Scope of Manuscriptology in Ayurveda**

The purpose of collection and conservation of manuscripts are served by numerous manuscript libraries in the country. The availability of particular *Ayurveda* manuscript can be single many a times. Hence, if the available manuscript is not in good condition, the critical edition could be difficult, so proper preservation of manuscript is important to protect it from damage. Procuring a manuscript copy few years ago was really challenging. But now the scenario has changed a lot. Now, procuring the copies through online is the easiest way and saves a lot of time. For eg: accessibility of Ayurvedic manuscripts available in I.P.G.T & R.A can be done through the website – www.ayurvedamanuscripts.com. Following collection of manuscript, the procedures such as transcription, translation, critical edition can be done with the help of linguistic experts like Sanskrit scholars or in a group to enhance the quality of work. Digitization of manuscript copies is also a type of conservation and preservation. But for transmission of knowledge, theoretical and practical utility is very much required, so beyond mere digitization, critical edition need to be done.

There have been extremely popular abundant Ayurvedic literatures in Kerala since very long time.

The geography of Kerala, which helped to avert the attacks of foreign forces also contributed to the preservation on the rich collection of manuscripts in Kerala. Due to this our traditional knowledges are well preserved in the form of manuscripts compared to northern states. Even though not very extensive, a survey of the 'Science Texts in Manuscript repositories of Kerala and Tamilnadu' was carried out by the late Dr. K.V Sharma and he identified 1,286 Ayurveda manuscripts in Kerala. Among these, 586 are independent works and the rest of them were commentaries. Even the approximate statistics is not known, it is note-worthy that total number of Ayurvedic manuscripts may be larger still in private repositories especially in the family of traditional Vaidyas. So there lies an extensive scope for critical edition of *Ayurveda* manuscripts belonging to Kerala. Among Ayurveda manuscripts found in Kerala some of them require special attention. They include *Vakyapradipika* by *Alathur Parameshwaran Nambi*, *Kairali* commentary for the *Uttarasthana* of *Astanga Hridaya* by *Planthol Moosad*, *Sararthadarpana* commentary by *Kaikkulangara Ramavariyar*, the *Sutikamritam* and *Arunodayam* commentaries by *Kayikkara Govindan Vaidyar*, the *Vasudeviya* commentary by C.K Vasudeva Sarma, Malayalam translation of the *Sutrasthana* by *Kesavan Embranthiri*, the *Sarabodhini* commentary by *Kochusankaran Vaidyan* etc.^[8]

Higher criticism of critical edition, a branch of literary criticism investigates the origins of ancient texts in order to understand 'the world behind the text' which will reveal the abundant data in manuscript. The primary goal of higher criticism is to ascertain the texts primitive or original meaning in its original historical context. Highlighting the place of the author, valuing the contribution of the work on hand, assessing the nature and situation of work, understanding the personality of the author, date and other works of the author, commentaries of the work, critique of the work, customs and traditions of the place, contemporary authors of the time period, implied meaning of the text etc are possible by the process of critical edition. Scripts in Manuscriptology

are a particular system or style of writing. 70% of Indian manuscripts are written in Sanskrit language. The linguistics part of Manuscriptology is the scientific and historical study of languages which will help to study the script, to understand the language, to understand the grammatical structure, words, syntax and style of writing of the concerned text. Here comes the importance of an Ayurvedic scholar in the role of critical edition, where the proper decoding of the manuscript can be done by the one who is having proper knowledge of the science. The language helps to understand the area of manuscript and the time period in which it is written. Also, the manuscript study will provide exploration of history and culture of the place through which socio-economic, political, cultural, and religious life will get revealed. There are manuscripts studies which opened up many new vistas of research and have led to the discovery of several historical facts hitherto unknown. Sushruta Samhita which is formed from recension of recensions (a step in lower criticism- critical examination and restoration of the text to the original form as far as possible) by Nagarjuna. Nagarjuna's time period is 4th century BC and so it is said by scholars that the original text must be written at least two century before to have a warrant recension.

By doing critical edition of manuscripts many new formulations and drugs will get recognized based on the place and time of author. For instance, a critical study of *Paryayamuktavali*, a *Nighantu* of Odisha has explored many new drugs and synonyms which are not mentioned in other *Nighantus* prior existed to *Paryayamuktavali*.^[9] Similarly, many manuscripts in Kerala like *Vishanarayaniya* by Narayana, Vasudeva's *Yogasarasangraha* etc. found to explain different kinds of unique preparations which need to be explored. Since the classical textbooks of Ayurveda are written centuries ago, the main practical difficulty is the availability or identification of drugs mentioned in them. So, the critical edition will open a new horizon, Eg; manuscript found in Kerala can have the plants which are easily available in the concerned place which will make the availability of the plant and preparation of formulation more effortless and

thereby will contribute to the clinical practice. Also, the critical edition of manuscripts helps to give clarity to an existing concept and the terminologies which are not clear, will get clarified in a better way. By doing so, it will help the upcoming generation to easily grasp the ideas with less effort. It is required to critically analyze a given text to know it better and this becomes important in case of *Ayurveda* textbooks. We can find many *Pathabhedas* in our textbooks. So by proper critical edition the uncertainty existing in many areas of our textbooks can be clarified. The critical study of all the available copies will open a new horizon in the *Ayurvedic* field. There are many topics covered under *Ayurveda* including its eight branches and other branches like *Vruksha Ayurveda* and *Pashu Ayurveda* and so on which are still in the form of manuscripts. Such unpublished literature can be published because they contain practical implication dealing with human life.^[10]

Only 10-11% of available Ayurvedic manuscripts are processed till now. There are very less people from *Ayurveda* fraternity who work in this field, but a lot of work is to be done in critical edition of *Ayurveda* manuscripts. The National mission for Manuscripts (NMM) is the first consolidated national effort for reclaiming India's inheritance of knowledge contained in the vast treasure of manuscripts.^[11] The mission conducts various training courses on Manuscriptology and paleography along with outreach programs which include public lectures and seminars. The NMM has taken the initiative to nominate Indian manuscripts for inclusion in UNESCO's Memory of the world register which provide recognition to the most valuable documentary heritage of the world and facilitates its preservation and universal access to it by which there will be an extensive scope of Manuscriptology in the upcoming years. Also, TKDL (traditional knowledge digital library) is an initiative of AYUSH to collaborate, elucidate and translate traditional manuscripts, where it has taken initiation of project on *Ayurveda* from Kerala manuscripts. Apart from surveying and documenting these manuscripts, some of the institutions like Oriental Research Institute & manuscript library, *Karyavattam*,

Kottakkal Aryavaidyasala, Government Sanskrit college, Tripunithura etc. has shown keen interest in preservation and publication of manuscripts. The *Ayurveda* manuscripts published by the Oriental Research Institute and manuscripts library, Thiruvananthapuram include; *Hridayapriya*, *Matangalila*, *Ashtangahridaya*, *Jwaraniraya* etc. in Sanskrit and *Vaidyamanjari*, *Tantrayuktivichara*, *Ashvachikitsa*, *Rasavaisheshikam*, *Ashtanga Sarabhasha* etc. in Malayalam.

CONCLUSION

Manuscripts are the primary data sources as they are closest to the original work as possible to be, hence, to utilize this for the science they need to be processed. The field of Manuscriptology need to be properly utilized in *Ayurveda* for the betterment of science. NMM has opened various opportunities for upcoming studies in the area of Manuscriptology by conducting various training courses and outreach programs. Higher criticism will help to decode abundant information regarding manuscript including the place of the author, value of contribution of the work on hand, personality of the author, date and other works of the author, commentaries of the work, critique of the work, contemporary authors of the time period etc. Transcription and translation can be done with the help of linguistics experts like Sanskrit scholars, where as critical edition can be best done by an *Ayurveda* scholar who is the subject expert. By critical edition many new formulations may get revealed along with clarity of concepts which may help to understand the science in a better way. Apart from manuscript studies on individual level, it should be well organized institutional and state level studies, involving experts from various fields also incorporating the advanced technologies into it. It is the need of the hour to convert the knowledge of manuscript into such a form that, it can be conveyed to the global community. As a part of propagation, general awareness on manuscript can be given to the public and further effective research projects can be launched which will immensely help to preserve the knowledge in manuscript for the future generation.

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