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Literary review on strides of *Ayurveda* manuscript research and contemporary advances in manuscript studies in *Ayurveda* colleges of Kerala

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ABSTRACT

Manuscriptology, a branch of literary research is designated as a primordial one as it is concerned with the preservation of the past for the future. This involves a systematic study of collection, classification, preservation, transcription, translation, lower and higher criticism of manuscripts. Manuscripts are the documented version of orally transmitted treasures of various types of knowledge including *Ayurveda*. Until and unless *Ayurveda* scholars embark in the field of manuscriptology, especially in critical editions and publication of *Ayurveda* manuscripts, the enrichment of our science both in knowledge and pragmatic domain will remain an incomplete one. The online data revealed that only 2% of *Ayurveda* manuscripts are in the published sector. So it is the need of the hour to conduct manuscriptology works on *Ayurveda* manuscripts exemplifying India's cultural and knowledge heritage. This article will review the strides of manuscriptology along with a glimpse into the study of manuscripts done by *Ayurveda* colleges in Kerala. Eventually, all these works reveal the fact that further research on *Ayurveda* manuscripts is inevitable in contemporary knowledge-gathering settings.

Key words: *Ayurveda manuscript, Manuscriptology, Manuscript studies in college*

INTRODUCTION

Ayurveda - the science of life encompasses knowledge of both preventive and curative aspects since time immemorial. Those vast treasures of wisdom were transmitted from generation to generation verbally. A similar mechanism prevailed in other branches of knowledge too. Later on, all this knowledge, including philosophy, medicine, history, literature, astronomy etc., culminated in documentation. Such handwritten documents on palm leaves, birch barks, leather, clothes, metals, or any other materials having

significant scientific, historical, philosophical and aesthetic values are called manuscripts. According to the Antiquities and Art treasures Act 1972, antiquities include 'any manuscript, record or other document which is of scientific, historical, literary or aesthetic value and which has been in existence for not less than seventy-five years.^[1] So manuscripts are considered as antiquities.

Ayurveda Manuscripts explicit the ancient traditional knowledge gained by seers of *Ayurveda* based on practical experiences of many generations.^[2] Until and unless these are explored, we can't utilise the traditional knowledge for the well-being of the present and posterity. Furthermore, the authenticity of various treatises can be ascertained through manuscriptology. As *Ayurveda* is underway of renaissance there is a real need to protect, preserve, promote and propagate our medical heritage for a better future of the world. Even though *Ayurveda* manuscripts are available in various repositories, unfortunately medical scholars are unable to decipher the knowledge due to lack of awareness of different types of scripts. Despite Scholars having knowledge of scripts; decoding is a

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hectic task as these were written in a cryptic style. Lack of proper knowledge of obsolete scripts and manuscriptology techniques also restrained the scholars from performing research on manuscripts though they encapsulated all branches of knowledge which imparts the title Encyclopaedia of Science.

Despite many hurdles faced by *Ayurveda* Scholars during research on *Ayurveda* manuscripts, the *Samhitha* departments of *Ayurveda* colleges in Kerala are striving hard to attain the best outcome.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

To review on strides of *Ayurveda* manuscript research with a glimpse of manuscript works done by *Ayurveda* Colleges in Kerala.

METHODOLOGY

The information regarding Manuscriptology was collected from online resources and books. Data regarding the research works on *Ayurveda* manuscripts by the *Samhitha* departments of *Ayurveda* Colleges in Kerala were collected from the College website and the Head of department of respective Colleges.

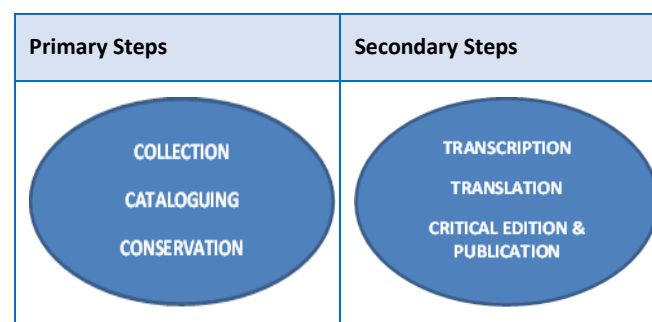
DISCUSSION

Review on the steps of *Ayurveda* manuscripts research

The Science of collecting, classifying, preserving and editing of manuscripts is termed as manuscriptology.^[3] In other words, it is the process of conservation of the past for the future. As manuscripts are the abodes of knowledge with rich cultural and scientific heritage its procurement along with preservation is considered as one of the most significant steps. Manuscripts written in various scripts are available in different institutions, palaces, libraries, temples, monasteries, traditional families etc., in India and abroad. In Kerala, a renowned house of *Ayurveda* many *Ayurveda* manuscripts are available in repositories like Oriental Research Institute and Manuscript Library Trivandrum, Government Sanskrit College, Tripunithura and even in private custodies. Detailed and accurate data about the number, extent and distribution of the medical manuscripts of India are not yet available. But 5

descriptive catalogues of medical manuscripts and a web-based electronic repository of *Ayurveda* manuscripts named AMAR^[4] (Ayush manuscripts advanced repository) are under the credit of CCRAS (Central Council for Research in Ayurvedic sciences) and NIIMH (National Centre of Indian Medical Heritage, Hyderabad). A well-planned research on *Ayurveda* manuscripts can be fulfilled through primary and secondary steps of manuscriptology.

Fig. 1



Primary Steps

While planning to conduct a research on *Ayurveda* manuscript, its procurement is crucial. Here G Jan Meulenbeld's "History of Indian Medical Literature", catalogues of various manuscript libraries, online catalogues of IGNCA (Indira Gandhi national centre of arts-ignca.gov.in/online-resource/manuscripts), CCRAS (niimh.nic.in/amar) etc can be utilized as primary data resources of *Ayurveda* manuscripts for knowing the unpublished one. After selecting the manuscript make sure it is complete, readable and handy through a systematic search of the following points including serial number, title of the work, name of the institute/Individual, accession or serial number given by the institute, status of publication, author and date, folios and size of manuscript, scripts and language, status of critical edition, complete/incomplete, condition and age of manuscript, name of scribe, any other remarks. A careful primary reading will reveal the significance of the selected manuscript.

The availability of extant copies of the selected manuscript needs to be searched by the researcher through a thorough expedition on various published catalogues available in India and abroad. Visitation, e-

mail and telephone correspondence should also be carried out with various manuscript preservation centres for availing copies of the manuscript with similar content and title. In search of manuscripts, visitations to both public and private repositories are inevitable as many libraries in India are on the pathway of publishing digitalized catalogues as well as many families are unaware of the value of owned manuscripts. The extant copies of manuscripts can be procured from the repositories with permission obtained duly from the concerned authorities.

New Catalogous Catalogorum (NCC) made these tasks much simpler as it is the world's first and largest National electronic database covers various aspects of more than 45 million manuscripts including title, commentary, language, subject, place of availability, number of page, illustration, scribe, date of working etc. Till now University of Madras published 42 volumes of catalogues and some volume under collaboration with National Mission for Manuscript^[5] (NMM). NMM is an autonomous organization under Ministry of Culture; Govt. of India launched in February 2003 to preserve and conserve the knowledge base as well as disseminate the content of manuscripts to scholars and people at large. Among various online catalogues, one named "Science texts in Sanskrit in manuscripts repositories of Kerala and Tamilnadu - K V Sarma, V Kutumba Sastry" covers nearly 400 repositories of both public and private.^[6] All these ventures not only foster scholars and researchers to dig into treasures of medical manuscripts but also mitigate the gap between sensitization and acquisition of medical manuscripts.

While dealing with the primary steps of *Ayurveda* Manuscriptology, the collection and conservation of manuscripts are very cardinal.

Conservation

Various manuscript conservation centres (MCCS), a part of NMM scattered from north to south including the Regional Conservation Centre, Trivandrum and Centre for Heritage Studies Hill Palace Museum, Trippunitura act as key centres for the conservation of manuscripts. Various detrimental factors including human factors like ignorance and carelessness, Natural

factors including natural calamities, environmental pollution, microbial attack etc., and Inherent factors such as the nature of writing surfaces, ink, or paint will result in the deterioration of collected manuscripts. The procured manuscripts should be conserved to avoid further deterioration for enhance life. This is done by using both preventive and curative conservation techniques. In preventive conservation, measures like microfilming, digitization, lamination, storing in an air conditioned rooms under optimum light etc., can be adopted to avoid further deterioration of collected manuscripts. Curative conservation takes measures such as fumigation, application of lemon oil etc., to stop active deterioration.

If conserved manuscripts are available either in mechanized (photocopy) or digitalized form it become easy to handle manuscripts.

Secondary Steps

Next depicts the heart of manuscript works such as transcription, translation and critical edition with publication. During transcription, all writings are written as such on plain paper. This well helps to read manuscripts in a better way as direct reading is difficult. Intense care must be taken to avoid mistakes. In the translation step selected manuscript for research is usually translated into English language, the universally accepted one for global dissemination of knowledge. During critical edition reconstruction of a text based on close reading and detailed content analysis of available copies of manuscripts will be carried out. It is an attempt to establish the best text through a comparison of various versions by choosing a base manuscript that is most trustworthy and close to the author's intention. Critical edition is done in two phases: Lower and Higher criticism.

Lower Criticism

It is a process of selection of original reading that is close to the author's work based on evidence. It involves 3 Steps-

1. Heuristics

The word Heuristics simply means to find or to discover. Here methodological collections, analysis and study of evidence about manuscripts are done. This is

completed in 3 steps - siglum, collation and exploration of secondary evidence.

1.1 Siglum: It is a special identification mark given to the manuscript concerning certain characteristic features like the script, source of the codex and age of copy for easy capturing of manuscripts.^[7]

1.2 Collation: By this method comparison between letters of available copies of manuscripts can be performed easily. Usually, collation sheets have horizontal and vertical lines to get small grids or Excel sheets are used for writing each letter in a small column. This process is continued upto the completion of information concerning the manuscript produced in a single document. 2 or 4 lines of each copy of manuscript are written on a collation sheet or excel sheet for doing the comparison. This type of comparison leads to easy identification of scribal errors which occur knowingly or unknowingly.

1.3 Exploration of Secondary evidence: Secondary evidence entails all works that are closely and directly related to the manuscripts like commentaries, translations etc. These should be explored to acquire additional information regarding authorship, variants of reading etc.

2. Recension

It is a process of choosing a reading that is closer to the author's intention among variants of readings.

3. Emendation

If an editor is not satisfied with the available evidence or variant of readings that may not grammatically and metrically fit into the context then can suggest an emendation with utmost caution. These in turn necessitate the need for multidisciplinary collaborative research with linguistic experts.

Higher criticism

Here with dedicated intellectual perseverance, the researcher will try to analyse the style in which the author presents his work, the circumstances that made the author compose it, the life of the author and the influence of other authors, the language used, the literary aspects involved in the work, source of work

and the equipment used by the author. According to Giorgio Pasquali, the theorist of textual criticism, best editor will be the one who knows the work, its language, its time and the languages of its time, and at the same time, the time in which the manuscripts were produced.^[8]

Publication

This is the final step of manuscriptology. After lower or higher criticism, edited versions must be brought into the public domain through related online journals or any printed media for dissemination of knowledge which will augment both knowledge and pragmatic domains. But unfortunately, only 2% of manuscripts are available at the published level. Here the contributions of CCRAS are astounding. As on 2016, it has published about 39 works only based on *Ayurveda* manuscripts and rare books.^[9] At 2005 "Sanskrit Medical Manuscripts in India" by Rama Rao B, and from 2010 to 2013 Descriptive Catalogue of Medical Manuscripts, under the project "Survey, cataloguing and digitized inventory of medical manuscripts in eastern India", total 3 volumes as well as "Collection and Digitization of Medical Manuscripts from South India, Maharashtra and Madhya Pradesh, Descriptive Catalogue", total 2 parts were also great successful works done by CCRAS in the field of published *Ayurveda* manuscripts catalogues.

Glimpse on Ayurveda manuscript research done by Ayurveda Colleges of Kerala

Outreach programmes like seminars, workshops, exhibitions and publications done by NMM as a part of disseminating manuscriptology succeeded in prompting *Ayurveda* scholars in India and abroad to research on *Ayurveda* manuscripts. The inclusion of manuscriptology in the PG syllabus of *Ayurveda* and also various courses on *Ayurveda* manuscriptology offered by universities including National Institute of *Ayurveda*, Jaipur will pave the way for new horizon of research on *Ayurveda* manuscripts. *Ayurveda* Colleges in Kerala are also in the right avenue of research on manuscripts. Govt. *Ayurveda* College Trivandrum commenced its scientific pursuit of medical manuscriptology since 2015. Amrita School of

Ayurveda, Amritapuri took a step into manuscriptology from 2014 onwards and VPSV Kottakkal Ayurveda College from 2017 onwards.

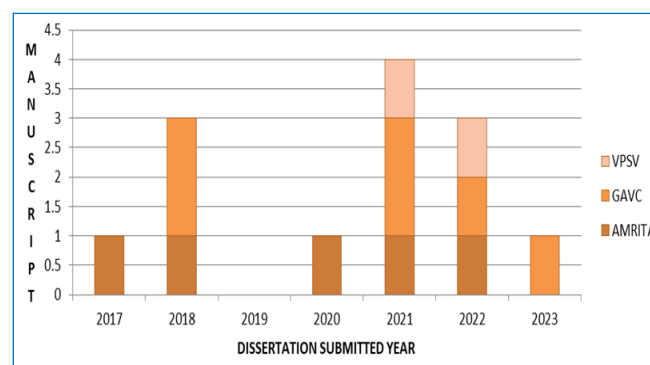
Table 1: Manuscript works done by Ayurveda Colleges of Kerala

Dissertation Submitted Year	Govt. Ayurveda College Trivandrum	Amrita School of Ayurveda, Amritapuri	VPSV Kottakkal Ayurveda College
2017		Transcription, Translation and critical Notes on Manuscript "Marma Cikitsa"	
2018	"Chikitsasaara" - Critical Edition of Manuscript with English Translation	Transcription, Translation and Critical analysis of the Manuscripts "Arsacikitsa"	
2019	NA	NA	NA
2020	"Sutra Sthanasanjivani" - Critical edition of Manuscript with English Translation	Transcription, Translation and Critical notes on Manuscript "Vikritivijnana Samkshepam" -	
2021	1. "Govindadasot savam" - Critical edition of Manuscript 2. "Upakramakanda of Beshajapaddhati" - Critical edition of Manuscript with English Translation	Transcription, Translation and Critical analysis of Manuscript "Haridharitham" -	An exploratory study on Manuscript titled "Vishamochnam" and its comparison with Brihatrayi and Vishavaidya Jyotsnika
2022	"Rogavicharakhanda, Beshajavikalpakhanda and	Transcription Translation and Critical Analysis	An exploratory study on Manuscript

	kriyabhedakhandanda of the Manuscript Beshajapddhati" Critical edition of Manuscript with English Translation	on Manuscript "Cikitsanjanam"	titled "Dehathile Marma Viparam" and its comparison with Pratyekarmarirdesa chapter of Susruta samhitha sarira sthana
2023	Critical edition and English translation of first three chapters of the manuscript 'Prayogasarott arapadalam'		

From the available data, it is clear that Ayurveda Colleges of Kerala has completed 13 manuscript works as on date and further works are progressing.

Fig. 2: Bar diagram representing the no. of manuscripts submitted during each year by Ayurveda Colleges of Kerala from 2017 to 2023.



Although all these manuscripts are critically edited a few of them have been published till now. This throws a big challenging question in front of the Ayurveda community in terms of the delayed publication of outcomes, which will enrich various sectors like pharmacy, clinics, pharmacognosy etc. However, the entire dissertation works are stored in concerned college libraries as well as in Kerala University of Health & Science (KUHS).

CONCLUSION

Collection, conservation and digitized cataloguing of manuscripts done by enormous repositories and conservation centres scattered across India and the World reflect the slogan of NMM “conservation of past for future” and provide great access to research scholars. Critically edited medical manuscripts which were written in various scripts and publication of these in various languages for global acceptance are the exemplars of systematic methods of research on manuscripts fulfilled by eminent scholars of CCRAS and NIIMH. So far *Ayurveda* Colleges in Kerala completed 13 manuscript works and others are underway. Sensitization and publication of critically edited *Ayurveda* manuscripts can be propagated through multidisciplinary collaborative research as it requires meticulous efforts of subject, linguistic and other experts. This will pave the way to a new horizon of research on *Ayurveda* manuscripts.

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