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An overview on Manuscriptology

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ABSTRACT

Before invention of modern science the way of communication and transfer of knowledge was oral. All Vedic literatures were transmitted orally. Later on the oral transmissions had some limitations thus documentation of the knowledge has been started and those hand written documents are called as Manuscripts. Ayurveda, being a Upaveda has an extensive history which is evident through the available documented classics. Though Ayurveda is said to be descended in a genealogy of preceptor-student system orally, there are definite references of documented texts in the name of the preceptors as the title of the text. These manuscripts are written on various surfaces and with various writing materials. The science which deals with the detail study of these manuscripts is known as Manuscriptology. These are the rich sources of cultural and scientific knowledge thus it is and need of hour to preserve it.

Key words: Manuscripts, Manuscriptology, Critical Edition.

INTRODUCTION

Manuscripts are the treasures of wisdom and knowledge and have a rich cultural and scientific heritage. These are original documents or scripts written manually in different languages and on different materials like palm leaf, birch bark, cloth, paper etc. India has a rich collection of manuscripts among the countries of world. Among these, there are large numbers of unpublished manuscripts related to the field of medicine. Even the available manuscripts are not well preserved; hence there is a fear of losing some important facts hidden in these manuscripts. So

there is a need to work on these manuscripts in the direction of preservation, publication and digitalization. This is to be done not only on account of their historical importance, but also for its medical value and for the transfer of knowledge to the future generation.

DERIVATION

The word Manuscript is derived from Latin word Manuscriptus meaning writing by hand, where Manus is hand and Scriptus means to write.^[1]

DEFINITION

The Antiquities and Art Treasures Act, 1972 lays down the legal framework for custody of manuscripts. Antiquities, defined under the Act 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."^[2]

MANUSCRIPTOLOGY

Manuscriptology is defined as that branch of science which imparts training in reading and understanding of ancient manuscripts. It also specializes in

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procurement, preservation and documentation of various kinds of manuscripts.^[1]

Languages and Scripts

Most common language used in ancient manuscripts is Sanskrit. There are various other regional languages used in the manuscripts based on where it has been written. The most Ancient scripts used in the manuscripts are Brahmi, Kaharoshiti. There are manuscripts available in other scripts such as Manipuri, Modi, Nevari Devanagari, Kannada, Telugu, Tigalari.^{[1],[3]}

Physical Attributes

Physical attributes of a manuscript can be understood as;

- 1) Writing apparatus
- 2) Material for binding (रक्षण)

Writing surface (लेख्य) and instruments used for writing (लेखन) can be considered under the Writing apparatus.

लेख्य सामग्री - in ancient days various surfaces were used for documentation such as - Shilalekha (rock), Tamra patra (copper plate), Taada patra (palm leaf), Bhurja (birch bark), Wooden sheets, Animal skin.

लेखन सामग्री

- Stylus - hard and sharp
- Pens - soft and smooth tipped
- Brushes - for painting
- feathers of birds - quill
- Mashi / ink - dyes used to make letters darker

रक्षण सामग्री - In order to preserve the manuscripts it has been either Stitched Or by passing a cord the folios has been kept together. Palm leaf and birch bark cannot be stitched thus a cord is passes through it in order to keep the folios together and preserve it.^[1]

Resource

Extent

- India possesses more than 5 million manuscripts.
- Estimated 1 lakh manuscripts have been produced from 1500BC-1900AD out of which only 1/10th are traced.
- Among the available manuscripts only 2% are published.

Availability

- Sanskrit manuscripts are collected from more than 100 years in various institutions by Government and individual efforts.
- Many have published their descriptive catalogues.
- Check list of Sanskrit medical manuscripts by CCRAS-Revised Edition 2005.

Sources

There are various centers across the world which preserves the manuscripts and make it available for the researchers. Various institutions, State libraries, museums have their own projects under which they collect, preserve and study on manuscripts. Around 31 universities and research organizations; 17 private organizations; 22 institutions out of India; temples, ashrams, individuals have collected and preserve the manuscripts.

- Saraswati Bhawan Library of Govt Sanskrit College, Banaras is the oldest source of manuscripts.
- Oriental Research Institute, Mysore - 66000 Ms
- Adyar Library and Research Institute, Madras - 18600 Ms
- Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, Pune
- Saraswati Mahal Library, Thanjavur - 50000 Ms
- Raghunath Temple Library of Maharaja of Jammu and Kashmir.
- Sayaji Rao Gaikwad Oriental Institute, Baroda.
- Asiatic Society, Calcutta.

- British Library, Dept of Oriental Manuscripts, London.^[3]

Example Sources and Available Manuscripts

Sources	Available Manuscripts
Oriental Research Institute, Mysore	Chikitsarnava Vaidyadarpana Nadi Nirnaya Nadi Vijnana etc.
Saraswathi Mahal Library, Thanjavur	Dhanwantari Vilas Chikitsa Kalika Dhanwantari Sara Nidhi etc.
Anand Ashram Samsthana, Pune	Nidana Manjari Pathyapathya Nighantu etc.
Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, Pune	Astadasasamskara Astangahrdaya
Oxford	Abhrakavidhi Ajirnamanjari Anjananidana Arogyachintamani etc.
Cambridge University Library	Asvayurveda Carakasamhita Rasaraja Rasendrachudamani etc.
British Library	Abhinavamadhava Arishtasataka etc.

Online Resources

- <http://indianmanuscripts.com/ayurveda-manuscripts>

- www.ayurvedamanuscripts.com/
- www.namami.gov.in/
- <http://www.muktabodha.org/>
- <https://cikitsa.blogspot.in/>

Steps in Manuscriptology

Following steps to be followed in manuscriptology:

Primary	Secondary
1. Collection	1. Transcription
2. Conservation	2. Critical edition
3. Cataloguing	3. Translation
	4. Publication

Primary Steps

1) Collection

Collection of manuscripts from various sources is the first step in manuscriptology. Letter correspondence or visitation to the center where the manuscript is preserved is to be done. Later the original copy of manuscript is to be done Manual duplication / photo copying / Digital photography / imaging.^[4]

2) Conservation

- To save and enhancing the life of manuscripts it is necessary to preserve them in a proper manner.
- Threats in preserving manuscripts - various conditions can damage the manuscripts.
 - Climate
 - Dust, atmospheric pollution
 - Human carelessness
 - Poor storage condition
 - Pests - fungus, bookworms, termites, rats.

Preservation

Traditional Method

- Use of cord and wooden board for binding
- Air tight wooden boxes

- Use of silk cloth
- Vacha, Karpoora, Ashwagandha kept in the boxes

Latest Methods

- Air condition room, fresh air, low moisture.
- Place should be pest controlled, regular DDT spray, fumigation, naphthaline balls etc.
- Glass/ aluminium racks.
- Latest modern techniques - Lamination photocopying, scanning etc.^[1]

3) Cataloguing

The process of classifying and arranging objects or data in an order is termed as cataloging. For cataloging it is necessary to carry out the - regional / state survey for proper information of available manuscripts. Cataloging helps researchers and viewer;

- Easy search in short period Ex. Nighantu
- One can search all available manuscripts.

Catalog can be prepared in 3 types –

- Card
- Book
- Sheet

Information included in catalog is -

- Serial number
- Date
- Accession no.
- Title
- Author etc.
- Arranged and stored according to nature size etc.
- Title index should be prepared based on title/ author/ subject wise

Descriptive catalogue - prepared by libraries

2 sections – 1) General information

2) Summary of manuscript^{[1],[5]}

Secondary Steps

1) Transcription

Transcription is writing the text as it is to a plain paper in same script. This helps the person to read in a better way and so also there will be conservation of knowledge. Later it can be converted to desired script.

2) Critical edition

Critical edition is the close reading and detail analysis of manuscript on the basis of evidences. Textual criticism is a branch of textual scholarship, philology, and of literary criticism that is concerned with the identification of textual variants, or different versions, of either manuscripts or of printed books. Critical edition provides a better understanding of the creation and historical transmission of the text and its variants.

- There are methods includes in critical edition - 1) Lower criticism and 2) Higher criticism

3) Translation

Translation is a process of converting the words from one language to the another, which provides easy and better understanding of the ancient knowledge.

4) Publication

- Publication is the last step in manuscriptology. After detail study of any manuscript it is made available in the easily understandable script and languages. This provides transfer and preservation of ancient knowledge.^{[3],[5]}
- Among available manuscripts there are around only 2% manuscripts are published. For example^[1]

Published	Unpublished
Ayurveda Sutrani	Ayurvedagama
Paryay pada Manjari	Madhavachikitsa
Vaidya samhita saarnava	Nadi shastra sangraha

Amarakosha	Rasavatara
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Critical Edition

Lower Criticism

Lower criticism is selection of original reading based on evidences. Lower criticism includes -

3 stages of lower criticism

1. Heuristics
 - a. Siglum
 - b. Collation
 - c. Secondary sources of evidences
2. Recension
3. Emendation

1) Heuristics

- Heuristics literally means to find or to discover. It is the process of methodological collection, analysis and study of evidences. This includes three steps -

a) Siglum

- Siglum is the special identification mark given to each selected copy of manuscript. This is given based on script or age of copy or name of author etc. e.g. – K12 – Kashmir, 12th century

b) Collation

Collation is collection of all information concerning the text in one document. It is done on special sheet or an excel sheet. The specific order is followed to record the information as the most trust worthy codex is recorded in the first row of a sheet. Left side siglum of compared codex is mentioned. This provides the easy view to compare between various copies of the manuscript.

c) Secondary sources of evidences

- At this step all works directly related to the manuscript are collected and referred for the detail study of manuscript. e.g. - commentaries

2) Recension

- Recension is the process of choosing among the variants of a reading. Such a recension that is formulated after elaborate examination is called a critical recension.

3) Emendation

- Emendation is the suggestions or comments given by the editor. By which the text presented may be understood properly and easily. Utmost care should be excised while resorting to emendation.

Higher Criticism

The higher criticism involves an assessment of the author's work. In which there is a detail study of writing style, about the life of author, the circumstances that made the author compose the work etc.^[3]

Steps in Manuscriptology

- Collect all extant of copies of the text in original / mechanized form
- Decide the mutual relationship and trust worthiness of copies
- Collate the copies
- Constitute critical recension
- Accept one out of many readings as original
- Present to the world critical recension, description of facts and features and criticism

DISCUSSION

Criteria

Any document which is handwritten cannot be names as a manuscript. Document to be called as manuscript should fall under few criteria such as it should have scientific, historical, literary or aesthetic value, it should not be less than seventy-five years.

Significance of material used

The material used in the preparation of any manuscript has its particular significance. The various

pictures / images - illustration on stones, animal skin, bark or leaves of trees indicate the antiquity.

Problems while reading

The era when documentation started, the materials used for it was not developed. While using stylus, once the matter is written it cannot be erased thus the scribed keeps it as it is and write further. There may be over writing due to surface or the stylus. Thus there may be difficulty in reading and understanding the meaning. Repetition of words may lead to different meaning. There may be damage due to any factors or while preserving the content may get damage which causes the difficulty in reading of manuscripts.

Requirements for scholars to work on any manuscript

The scholar who is seeking of work on any manuscript should have few requirements like one should have proficiency in language of which the manuscript is. One should know the methods of interpretation and analysis of Sutras in Ayurveda Samhita. One should the basic principles of science and its application.

Researcher should be trained in the following tasks:

- Cataloguing - Physical and e-cataloguing of Manuscripts
- Digital Library of Medical Manuscripts
- Critical edition of Medical Manuscripts
- Publication of unpublished/important medical manuscripts with translations

CONCLUSION

Ancient literary evidences are the true markers of authenticity of a science. Such documentations demand revival and promotion for its notability. Similar revival is essential for the science of Ayurveda as well which intends globalization. Training of personnel in specific area of Manuscriptology and establishment of organisations will help the spread of the knowledge. General awareness and their importance should be impressed upon public and the research scholars.

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