

## REVIEW ON MANUSCRIPTOLOGY

Anitta James<sup>1</sup>, G.N. Kannoli<sup>2</sup>, M.R. Sajjan Shetty<sup>3</sup>, Varun Rajpuria<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup>PG Scholar, <sup>2</sup>Assistant Professor, <sup>3</sup>HOD & Professor Department of Samhita Siddhanta, SVM Ayurveda Medical College and Hospital, Ilkal, Karnataka, India

<sup>4</sup>Assistant Professor, Department of Agada Tantra, Bharti Ayurveda Medical College and Hospital, Durg, Chhattisgarh, India

Email: [anittajames777@gmail.com](mailto:anittajames777@gmail.com)

### ABSTRACT

Literary research is the backbone and base of all types of research. It helps in enlightening of available resources and verifying the validity of the claims of previous research with the study of history, culture, ancient sciences, various languages and philosophy. It aims at collection, preservation, conservation and reconstruction of old scientific manuscripts, documents and even printed literature. Literary research is defined as the discussion of an existing data and development in a particular phenomenon. It involves deciphering, transcription, transliteration, translation and interpretation of available literary material and is of great importance in *Ayurveda* owing to the subject matter being scattered in many different books in different languages and in different places. Literary research helps in collecting information on a particular topic from different books and compiling them into a single copy which abundantly has all information on that particular topic. Manuscriptology is a main branch which comes under literary research. It is defined as that branch of science which imparts training in reading and understanding of ancient manuscripts. It is the systemic study of manuscripts dealing with collection, classification, preservation, lower criticism and upper criticism of manuscripts. This article is about manuscript, manuscriptology and its importance in *Ayurveda*.

**Keywords:** Manuscripts, Manuscriptology, *Adhara*, *Adheya*, Lower criticism, Higher criticism.

### INTRODUCTION

In ancient times, *Acharyas* and scholars recorded their ideas and observations in specially preserved leaves, clothes, bark of trees, papers etc. and even today these are considered as storehouse of age old knowledge and wisdom. The word Manuscript is made up of two words, manu and script. Manu means hand and script means writing. Thus according to 'Antiquities and Art Treasures Act' (1972), the word manuscript refers to a hand written document with scientific, historical, lit-

erary and aesthetic value which is at least seventy five years old<sup>1</sup>. Manuscripts are the valuable primary source of material for research in many fields of study including history, journalism, culture, anthropology, health science and literature<sup>2</sup>. Manuscripts are distinct from other literary material in several key ways especially in the way they are described, assessed, handled and evaluated. Manuscriptology is a branch of science which imparts training in reading and understanding

of ancient manuscripts and deals with collection, classification, preservation, lower criticism and upper criticism of manuscripts. It also specializes in procurement, preservation and documentation of various kinds of manuscripts.

## METHODS

### DEFINITION OF MANUSCRIPTOLOGY

Manuscriptology is a branch of science which imparts training in reading and understanding of ancient manuscripts and deals with collection, classification, preservation, lower criticism and upper criticism of manuscripts<sup>3</sup>.

### NEED FOR MANUSCRIPT STUDY

1. Since most of Indian knowledge is in the form of manuscripts, there is a strong need to preserve ancient knowledge and review the past<sup>4</sup>.
2. Through manuscriptology, addition of ancient knowledge to the current science is possible i.e. to contribute to the literary resources of various branches of science.
3. Manuscriptology will help in better understanding of principles related to Ayurveda.

### SOURCES FOR COLLECTION OF MANUSCRIPTS<sup>5</sup>

1. Various educational centres, *patasalas* and *ashrams*.
2. Old and local libraries.
3. Catalogues of Sanskrit medical manuscripts by CCRAS.
4. Famous traditional physicians and individuals.
5. Temples, museums and Jain collection.
6. Famous Ayurvedic physicians, university libraries and institutes.
7. Govt. Oriental manuscript libraries.
8. Asiatic society Calcutta and Bombay.
9. Catalogue of *Bharat Itihas Samshodhaka Mandal*, Pune.
10. *Sarasvati Mahal library*, Thanjavur.
11. *Kashi Sanskrit Vishwa Vidyalyaya*, Varanasi.
12. Oriental Research Institutes.

### NATURE OF MANUSCRIPTS

1. Palm leaf (*tala patra*)
2. Birch tree bark (*burja patra*)

3. Cotton cloth (*karpasa patra*)
4. Wooden planks (*kasta palaka*)
5. Copper plate (*tamra patra*)
6. Stone plate (*silā patra*)
7. Brick plate (*mriddika*)
8. Paper (*kagaz*)
9. Agar tree bark (*sanchi patra*)
10. Rock edicts (*silā lekha*)
11. Skin (*charma*)

### PRESERVATION OF MANUSCRIPTS<sup>6</sup>

#### Physical methods

1. Preservation in glass racks and wooden boards.
2. Exposure to sufficient sunlight and air circulation.
3. By using butter paper in between pages which are very old to prevent sticking of papers.

#### Chemical methods

1. Chemical treatment by fumigation chambers.
2. By thymol acid chloromate solution.
3. Pest control by DDT spray, 5% mercuric chloride solution.

#### Microfilming

#### Digitalization

1. By xeroxing.
2. By scanning.

### FACTORS THAT CAUSE DETERIORATION OF MANUSCRIPTS

1. Climatic condition – low humidity with heat destroys manuscripts.
2. Dust and atmospheric pollution.
3. Human carelessness.
4. Poor storage condition.
5. Pests like fungus, termites, ants, rats etc.

### ORDER OF DEVELOPMENT<sup>7</sup>

1. Oral transmission.
2. Writing on clay and rocks.
3. Palm leaves and tree barks.
4. Started to use paper.
5. Latest modern edition by computer.

### IMPORTANCE OF MANUSCRIPT

1. Manuscripts are proofs of our well-developed ancient sciences<sup>8</sup>. India possesses more than 5 million manuscripts making the largest repository of manuscripts in the world.

2. An estimated 10,000 manuscripts have been produced from 1500 A.D. - 1900 A.D., out of which 1/10<sup>th</sup> are traced.

3. Among lakhs of manuscripts related to *Ayurveda*, only 2% manuscripts are published.

#### PHYSICAL ATTRIBUTES OF A MANUSCRIPT

Manuscript has got two components<sup>9</sup>.

1. *Adheya* (Scripts) - The olden scripts are found in *Brahmi lipi* and *Kharoshti lipi*. *Brahmi lipi* later developed into two streams, *Devanagiri* in north and *Grantha* in south.

2. *Adhara* (Writing apparatus) – There are three components related to writing apparatus.

*Lekhya samagri* (Writing surface) – Includes rock edicts, writings done on stone plates, brick plates, copper plates, bark of trees, palm leaves, paper, cloth etc.

*Lekhana samagri* (Instruments used for writing) – Includes stylus, pen, brush etc.

*Rakshana samagri* (Materials used for binding) – The material used for binding the manuscripts.

#### STEPS FOR COLLECTION OF DATA, DIGITAL EDITION, TRANSLATION AND CRITICAL EDITION OF MANUSCRIPT.

1. Check the extent of availability of selected manuscripts in catalogues<sup>10</sup>.
2. Carry out portal and electronic correspondence to libraries.
3. By follow up, the data i.e. photocopy of manuscript or in digital form along with consent can be obtained.
4. Digital edition of manuscript can be done using photo manipulation software like Adobe Photoshop in which colour, background etc. needs to be done.
5. The collected manuscripts may be in different languages. Editing of manuscripts is impossible when it is in different languages. So translation should be done to a more understandable language so that more people can understand it.
6. Critical edition is done in two main ways namely lower criticism and higher criticism.
7. After critical edition, comes the publication of edited manuscript. Publishing is a kind of docu-

mentation to be used for further advancement in research.

#### LOWER CRITICISM

Lower criticism is done by four steps Heuristics, Collation, Emendation and Recension.

**Heuristics:** It means to find or to discover. It is the collection and analysis of all available evidences with respect to the text being edited.

**Collation:** Character by character comparison of two or more texts and to establish the relationship they bear to one another. Thus, collation is the process of comparison which gives rise to a set of variant readings for the text under consideration.

**Emendation:** A researcher suggest a reading as more possible to be close to the original on the basis of internal and external possibilities.

**Recension:** It is the process of choosing among the variants i.e., process of choosing the best which is original or closer to the author's intension. It can also be described as critical revision of the text, review of the text or edited version.

#### HIGHER CRITICISM

It involves the assessment of author's original work and it involves the following aspects.

1. The style in which the author presents his work.
2. The situation in which the work was composed.
3. The circumstances that made the author to compose it.
4. Life of author and influence of other authors.
5. The language used.
6. Literary aspects involved in the work.
7. Source of work.
8. The equipment used by the author.

#### UNDERSTANDING AYURVEDIC MANUSCRIPTS

*Ayurveda* being an age old science is believed to be recollected by Lord Brahma, who in turn passed it over to Daksha Prajapati, Aswini Kumaras, Lord Indra, Atreya and finally Agnivesa etc.<sup>11</sup> Thus, the main means of passing the divine science was mainly from the mouth of *Gurus* to the ear of the *Shishya* i.e. Oral transmission. Later, the extraordinarily brilliant *Shishyas* made an effort in preserving this knowledge

and compiled their own works in the form of writing and inscriptions in different surfaces. Some of such compilations mentioned in the book '*Pratyakshasharira*' include *Agnivesa Samhita*, *Bhela Samhita*, *Kasyapa Samhita*, *Harita Samhita*, *Parasara Samhita*, *Gopurarakshitatantram*, *Patanjala Samhita*, *Arogyamanjari*, *Nimitantram*, *Kankayantantram*, *Nagarjunatantram etc.*<sup>12</sup> Knowledge of *Ayurveda* available at the present era is derived from such sources. Thus changing the history Of *Ayurveda* from Oral to textual based knowledge useful for all generations.

The earliest manuscripts of *Ayurveda* is the Bower Manuscripts (3<sup>rd</sup> century A.D.), traced in 1890 by British Lieutenant Bower from Kuchiar in Chinese Turkistan.<sup>13</sup> The main organization for manuscript collection in India is National Mission for Manuscripts (NMM)- an autonomous organization under Ministry of Culture, Govt. Of India, which was initiated in February 2003. It creates bibliographic databases and is involved in conservation and preservation of manuscripts. IPGT & RA, Jamnagar provides accessibility of *Ayurvedic* Manuscripts online. Other than these, many other Oriental libraries and research institutes are also working across India for preservation and conservation of Manuscripts. Other centres include Library of Tibetan Works and Archives (HP), Kashi Sanskrit Visvavidyalaya (Varanasi), Sarasvati Mahal Library (Thanjavur), Oriental Research Institute Library (Trivandrum, Vadodara, Chennai). Visiting each and every library all around India is not an easy task for the scholars. 'Sanskrit Medical Manuscripts' in India published for CCRAS by Dr. Rama Rao is an option for such scholars where one can get reference regarding the libraries in India where the copies of Manuscripts are available. Indira Gandhi National Centre for Arts (New Delhi, Bangalore) have collection of digitalized copies of Manuscripts collected from various libraries all around India.

All these organizations and agencies helps in identifying, cataloguing and preserving the unidentified manuscripts. Acharya Yadavji Trikamji and Acharya P.V. Sharma are some among the most eminent scholars who worked in the field of *Ayurvedic* Manuscriptology. They have edited and published a lot of books

which are being used by scholars even today. Thus, manuscriptology helps in exposing the hidden knowledge mentioned in the manuscripts and help in strengthening the literary base of *Ayurveda*.

## CONCLUSION

The manuscript wealth of India is estimated at around five million and is perhaps the largest collection in the world. Humans are the biggest danger to the Manuscripts by their inaction and carelessness, but are also the biggest protectors if they take correct action. Hence, it is the duty of every individual to protect and preserve it. The main aims should be to create a database of Manuscripts, to catalogue, conserve, preserve and digitalize it. The collection and classification of research data is important to the individual or institution involved in research activity of any area. Manuscriptology is actually the process of listening to the pulse of our past. The knowledge available in manuscripts can benefit future generation. Hence, there exists a strong need to make public interest on manuscriptology by organizing exhibitions and workshops so as to make public aware about preserving and exploring manuscripts as there is existence of innumerable manuscripts yet to be explored and to uphold the rich heritage of our nation.

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