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Research Strides in Manuscriptology for Ayurveda

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Abstract: *Ayurveda* being a science learnt, practiced and taught over generations is a discipline codified through centuries in written documents called manuscripts. Manuscripts on medicine ranges between 20,000–1,00,000 in number. A mere 2% of the available material from manuscripts is in printed form. Several treatment principles methods and medical formulations are yet to be discovered from the manuscripts for the present day needs. Therefore, a scientific protocol of research methodology for accessing and exploring this knowledge treasure is of immediate necessity. This article provides an alleyway towards the methodology in Medical Manuscriptology to be adopted by a scholar who intends to take up research in *Ayurveda* manuscripts.

Keywords: *Ayurveda*, Manuscriptology, Critical edition.

INTRODUCTION

Research in *Ayurveda* has been an institutional endeavour since it has intended to commercialize and globalize. Considering different facets of research, the design adopted for various researches in *Ayurveda* is mostly retrospective. This approach is based on the fact that a concept or an assumption stated in the authoritative texts of *Ayurveda* is reaffirmed by carrying out experimental or clinical trials. Carrying out such trails in samples and generalizing it to the population which in turn will help in validating the authoritative statements has been the tradition.

In this process, the scholar/investigator though succeeds in endorsing the explanation of authoritative statements, fails to provide the details of the authenticity and authority of the so called authoritative texts.

This makes the effort of the investigator inaccessible to the scientific world. In this juncture, the authenticity of the literary evidence when focused finds itself to be lost in inaccuracy. An inevitable urge to strengthen the literary evidences and comprehension of language for re-establishing the authenticity of the authoritative texts related to the science of *Ayurveda* is the need of the hour.

Hand written document by a person is called as *Manuscript*. 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." The systematic compilation, reading, understanding, interpretation and analysis of the thought hidden in these manuscripts is termed as Manuscriptology.

Manuscripts are expression of thoughts by a person or representative in scriptural form. It may be related to anything and everything; existing or non-existing; real or imaginary; hypothesis or proven facts. Therefore manuscripts include a wide range of documents ranging from simple story lines to coded forms of knowledge like the *Veda*. It encompasses itself in it all sciences, arts, politics, recreation and philosophy.

Ayurveda being a science learnt, practiced and taught over generations is not an exception to this. Several of these manuscripts are now in institutions such as Oriental Manuscript libraries, Indology research Institutions, Universities, Mutts and Archives; many still remain in private collections. Manuscripts on *Ayurveda* are also available in foreign libraries of countries like UK, France, Germany, USA and in Asian countries like Srilanka, Nepal, Burma, Bhutan, China and Thailand. No detailed and accurate data about the

number, extent and distribution of the Medical Manuscripts of India is available.

A scholar intending to take up research in Medical Manuscriptology should possess the following pre-requisites for accomplishing critical edition of an *Ayurveda* manuscript

- Proficiency in *Sanskrit* language
- Method of interpretation and analysis of *Sutras* in *AyurvedaSamhita*
- Basic principles of the science and its application in clinical practice.

With the vision and concern of preserving the science, the scholars of *Ayurveda* need to undertake pioneering and exhaustive programmes for the preservation of the Indian Medical heritage by getting 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 etc.,

Initiating a new arena in this sector, the governing body for *Ayurveda* education in India, the Central Council of Indian Medicine (CCIM) [2] has introduced fundamental manuscriptology in the syllabi of preliminary post-graduate studies of *Ayurveda*. Post-graduate speciality studies in *Ayurveda Samhita* also include comprehensive scholarship in critical edition and publication of *Ayurveda* manuscripts which has created a new trend in unearthing the little known aspects of *Ayurveda* especially prevalent during the medieval period.

As this sector of Manuscriptology is still on its way to be well introduced to the students and physicians of *Ayurveda*, it requires for a researcher to follow a definite methodology which avoids delay in initiating the actual research process and expedite the procedures related to critical edition.

The following strides can be adopted by an amateur in Medical Manuscriptology

RESEARCH MATERIAL

To carry out research in medical manuscripts, it is essential for the scholar to ensure as to what material to be selected for research. The Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts (IGNCA) paves way in this direction as it has published the list of unpublished *Ayurvedic* manuscripts [3] under its venture of survey of manuscripts in India. Selection of an appropriate unpublished title for research is essential to evade the possibility of replication of the same text or another text

under the same title. Selection of an unpublished manuscript is based on

- Demand for theoretical evidences in a particular subject
- Antiquity
- Rarity of the manuscript

Approaching the nearest Manuscript repository

Once a title of interest is selected, the researcher should find for the nearest manuscript library around his/ her place of work. The benefit of approaching the nearest Manuscript repository is that it facilitates access to the repository by establishing a good rapport with the authorities of the organization through local contacts. Also, region specific manuscripts play an important role as some of the manuscripts are based on cultural and social specifications of that particular place. Or, translations and modifications of the text suitable for the region is observed in the subject.

For ex: The *Sanskrit* text of *Kalyanakaraka* by *Acharya Ugraditya* (10th C AD) is available as translation of the same text in *Kannada* language '*Karnataka Kalyanakaraka*' by *Jagaddala Somanatha* (15th C AD) which varies in several aspects[4].

In such cases, the researcher needs to have the skill of reading and interpreting the script and language of the manuscript available or can seek help from a linguist well versed in the regional language and script as well. According to the suitability and time constraints, a researcher can select one or more manuscripts if available related to the selected title.

The selection is ought to be based on:

- Completeness of the Manuscript
- Volume
- Physical condition
- Clarity of script
- Minimal scribal errors
- Lucidity of language
- Grammar

Catalogue search

After one or more manuscripts of the relative title is selected, the researcher should start finding the availability of the extant of copies available concerning the said manuscript elsewhere. For this, the scholar has to refer different descriptive catalogues published by different manuscript libraries/ repositories in India and abroad.

The foremost index especially related to *Sanskrit* manuscripts to be referred is the catalogue of catalogues – New Catalogous Catalogorum (NCC)[5]. The NCC provides a comprehensive list of all the

manuscripts available all over the world for a given title.

The digital library of India⁶, an initiative of the Indian Institute of science has constructed an online database of published as well as unpublished titles available in different libraries and repositories. Some catalogues are also available from the official website of Archaeological survey of India (ASI)[7].

Many libraries in India which house a huge collection of manuscripts have not yet published the catalogues. Therefore, personal visit to oriental libraries/Mutts, religious institutions/ temples should be carried out by the researcher based on the aspects like

- The religion to which the author of the text belongs to
- Place of the author
- Related contemporary personalities
- Region in which the text or the author of the text was known to be popular

The National Mission of Manuscripts (NMM)[8] details the important manuscript repositories all over India with their contact details which can be a guide for the researcher to reach the resource.

Collection of Manuscripts

A manuscript traced to be related to the research title from a manuscript repository can be sought by requesting the Curator/ librarian of the Institute for the Original manuscript to look at the condition of the Manuscripts and consider for inclusion into the study. If the physical condition of the manuscript is good and the script is clear for its readability, it can be borrowed in mechanized form (photocopy) with due permission from the curator or authorities of the library. The most common and advanced technique used nowadays is to get a digitalized scan of the manuscript which is converted into digital images after which it can be modified or altered for better readability.

Collation of Manuscripts

Collation is the process of collecting all the information concerning the text in one document. The divergence found between this text and other codices are recorded in the nearest margin or between the lines. Not only simple variations but erasures, interlinear additions, addition in the margin, blank spaces must also be duly noted. Collations should be done in a specially prepared collation sheet. On the left side and against a row the siglum of the codex compared is written. Some space may be left on the right to write any other relevant information

Critical edition

Critical editing is an important step in preserving the quality of texts in manuscripts. Recension is prepared by comparing a text with its sources to maintain the authenticity of the text. (Recension is an editorial revision of a literary work based on critical examination of the text and the sources used) [9]. When a manuscriptologist finds variants in the texts he looks carefully for the factors that account for why and how the variants were introduced.

Charaka Samhita- An exemplar of critical edition

The *Caraka samhita*, one of the most ancient and comprehensive treatise on Indian medicine credited to *Acharya Caraka* is considered as a redaction of the earlier work *Agnivesha Tantra* (1000 BC). The current *Caraka Samhita* that is available is itself a redacted form authored by *Dridhabala*, a *Kashmiri pandit* belonging to of 4th C AD. Besides editing the original text, *Dridhabala* also reconstructed the last two sections of the text which was previously lost.

Some of the notable commentaries of *Caraka samhita* are; the *Caraka tatparya tika* or *Ayurveda dipika* written by *Cakrapanidatta* (1066 AD); *Caraka Nyasa* by *Bhattara Harishchandra* (6th C AD); *Nirantarapadavyakhya* by *Jejjata* (8th C AD) and *Caraka tatvapradipika* by *Shivadasa Sen* (1460 AD). More recent commentaries on this book are the *Narasimha Kavirajas' Caraka tatvaprakasha* and *Gangadhara Kaviratnas' Jalpalkataru* of the 18th C AD[10]. These commentaries not only serve as annotations for better learning and understanding of the text, but also provides comprehensive details of the critical recensions done based on different arche-types available, emendations, interpolations, orthographic corrections, variant bearers and variants included. This helps the reader to recognise the historical background of the author, socio-cultural circumstances, linguistic distinctiveness prevalent during the authors' time and most importantly the authenticity of the text pertaining to the concerned science.

Critical study

Critical study refers to a careful analysis with a tendency to review the facts or views established already. This aims at establishing genuineness and authenticity of the views and the facts through different types of examination and verifications. This also involves evaluation of the content and test of the validity of the sources. An attempt is made here to seek the true import and reliability of the work under criticism.

Method of critical editing

Broadly two methods of editing are adopted

- Presenting the text as close as possible to the original work

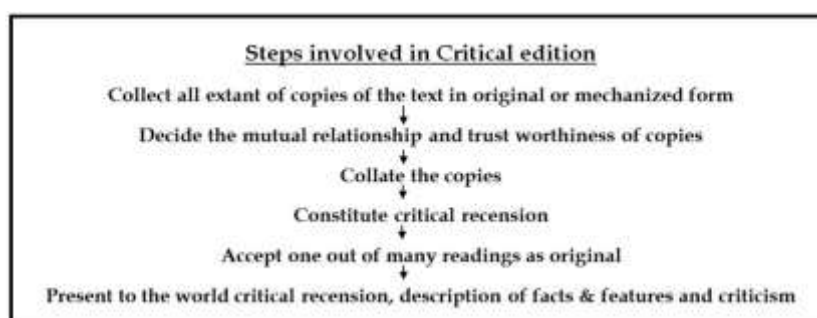
- Editing the text taking into consideration the question of author ship, date of author, influence of other works in the field that could have influenced the author etc.

Rules for critical edition

A universal system cannot be proposed for critical edition. However an editor can follow a broad procedure based on his experience, knowledge and available evidence.

- If there are variations among the archetype then transcriptional and intrinsic probabilities should be considered.
- If the transmitted reading is extremely bad and there are no testimonials to support it, then the editor should suggest an emendation with at most caution.

- Several facts such as the source, the catalogue number, material size, number of folios, number of lines per page, number of letters per line, extent, condition, missing leaves, date and name of scribe if available and features of codex that the editor may feel to be useful should be mentioned.
- Orthographic peculiarities, style of writing, erasures and other mode of correction.
- Testimonials such as number of commentaries known and available, number of commentaries utilized in editing, translation if available should be noted with details.
- The editor should indicate whether the text is being edited for first time or not and the need for the present edition should be mentioned [11].



Ayurveda dipika- An example of critical edition of a medical text

Ayurveda Dipika or *Carakatatparya Tika* written by *Acharya Cakrapanidatta* (1006AD) is a classic example of how variants were resolved during critical edition of an ancient text. The author *Cakrapanidatta* acknowledges the presence of two lineages namely the *Kashmiri* lineage and the *Saindhava Patha* lineages of the original *Caraka samhita* text. The internal evidence in the commentary of *Cakrapanidatta* shows that he consulted a lot of commentary literature by his predecessors like *Bhasadatta*, *Swamidasa*, *Ashadha varma*, *Brahmadeva*, *Bhattara Harishchandra*, *Jejjata* and *Bhitadanta* while writing his commentary.

“*Kechit vakshyante yaha iti pathati tatrapi hetugrabhaha vyakhyeyaha C.ci.1/43.*” He quotes the variant readings as *purvapaksha* to indicate that his readings are more appropriate. *Cakrapanidatta* used the popularity of a reading or *Prasiddhi* among the physicians as the benchmark and rejected some of the readings that were not used extensively (*kechit patanti – vyadhinaam-rutu ahoratra niyamadi shloka chatustayam etadapi naati prasiddham C.ci.30/308*). He also points out that this method of selection was used by many other scholars of his time (*athyarthamityadi prayojayet ityanto grantha arshatve savivadaha C.ci.30/283-289*) and thus establishes the authoritativeness (*arshatva*) of a reading.

Scribal errors are pointed out in *Ayurveda Dipika*. It refers to an instance where some portions from *Harita samhita* were written in the main text of *Caraka samhita* due to scribal oversight (*pramaada*) (“*prayah sarvam tiktam ityadistu grantho haaritiyaha, iha kenapi pramadallikhitaha su.27/4*”)[12].

Presentation of constituent text

Critical apparatus

While constituting a text only one reading is accepted while others are rejected. Those that are rejected are called critical apparatus. They should also be presented as footnotes on the same pages on which the related text appears. If the editor comes across a new Ms, he should mention the new reading at the end for the benefit of others with a superscript.

Indexes

- Alphabetical list of all the words in the text
- List of technical terms
- Words peculiar to the text
- Peculiar or ungrammatical words
- Borrowed words
- Names cited
- Title of work cited
- Citation or quotation
- Stanzas

- Topics in general

CONCLUSION

Ancient literary evidences are the true markers of authenticity of a science. It upholds the genuineness of the theoretical foundations used in pragmatic applications for the benefit of mankind. Such documentations demand revival and promotion for its notability. This would help in not only establishing the science in the literary scenario but also would pave way for strengthening the legitimate conceptions of the discipline. Similar revival is essential for the science of *Ayurveda* as well which intends globalization.

Better standards for education, higher level of teaching, publication of a higher volume of reference literature in the field, stronger defence of herbal pharmacopoeia and more clinical research are the urgent needs for the advancement of this field. Training of personnel in specific area of Medical Manuscriptology and establishment of organisations that will help the spread of the knowledge should be under taken as war like urgency to preserve our own ancient intellectual source of knowledge. General awareness and their importance should be impressed upon public so that lay men who have manuscripts in their possession should come forward and offer them to appropriate collective agencies that can put them to good use.

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