MANUSCRIPTOLOGY

Course Code: M23SN05DE
Discipline Specific Elective Course
Postgraduate Programme in
Sanskrit Language and Literature
Self Learning Material

SREENARAYANAGURU
OPEN UNIVERSITY

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The State University for Education, Training and Research in Blended Format, Kerala

SREENARAYANAGURU OPEN UNIVERSITY

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Mission

To be benchmarked as a model for conservation and dissemination of knowledge and skill on blended and virtual mode in education, training and research for normal, continuing, and adult learners.

Pathway

Access and Quality define Equity.

Manuscriptology

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Semester - IV

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(With Model Question Paper Sets)

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MANUSCRIPTOLOGY

Course Code: M23SN05DE
Semester- IV
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MA Sanskrit Language and Literature

SREENARAYANAGURU
OPEN UNIVERSITY

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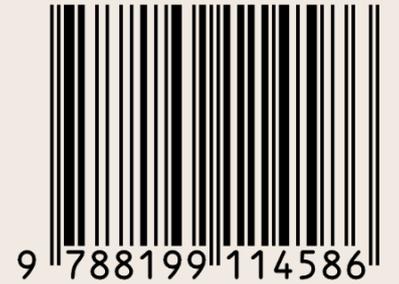Dr. Anfal M.
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Dear learner,

I extend my heartfelt greetings and profound enthusiasm as I warmly welcome you to Sreenarayanaguru Open University. Established in September 2020 as a state-led endeavour to promote higher education through open and distance learning modes, our institution was shaped by the guiding principle that access and quality are the cornerstones of equity. We have firmly resolved to uphold the highest standards of education, setting the benchmark and charting the course.

The courses offered by the Sreenarayanaguru Open University aim to strike a quality balance, ensuring students are equipped for both personal growth and professional excellence. The University embraces the widely acclaimed "blended format," a practical framework that harmoniously integrates Self-Learning Materials, Classroom Counseling, and Virtual modes, fostering a dynamic and enriching experience for both learners and instructors.

The University aims to offer you an engaging and thought-provoking educational journey. The postgraduate programme in Sanskrit offers a special mix of language and literature studies. While the programme covers various aspects of Sanskrit literature and provides the necessary credits, its main goal is to help learners better understand how different types of literature connect with society. We have also made sure to introduce learners to the newest developments in Sanskrit literature. This programme operates on this premise, and the Self Learning Material is designed to reflect this balanced approach.

Rest assured, the university's student support services will be at your disposal throughout your academic journey, readily available to address any concerns or grievances you may encounter. We encourage you to reach out to us freely regarding any matter about your academic programme. It is our sincere wish that you achieve the utmost success.

Warm regards.
Dr. Jagathy Raj V. P.   01-10-2025

Contents

BLOCK-01

Manuscriptology

History of Writing

Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of the unit, the learner will be able to:

❖ familiarise learners with the core writing techniques in ancient India, the process of emendation, and various methods of manuscript preservation

❖ understand Manuscriptology and its related interdisciplinary areas

❖ develop the skills of reading and writing ancient scripts

❖ know the history of writing

❖ understand different types and formats of inscriptions, the earliest Indian scripts, and the development of scripts in North India and South India

Background

Manuscriptology provides authentic records for tracing the cultural, social, political, and economic history of the people of a region or country. Written records are the best source materials for linguists to study the history of a language. The sound changes, alterations in grammatical structure, and the addition, loss, or change of forms for lexical items at different periods of language development are reflected in inscriptions and manuscripts.

It is to be borne in mind that further advancement of existing knowledge is possible through some rare and hitherto unknown manuscripts. For instance, such advancements have been made in subjects like Ayurveda, Architecture, Astronomy, and Mathematics. The changes over the years in customs, practices, and social attitudes of people can be significantly understood through the corpus provided by manuscripts.

Even in this modern age, manuscripts provide information for the advancement of knowledge. For example, previously unknown events in history may be revealed through the publication of manuscripts. A Malayalam commentary on the Arthasastra of Kautilya was of great help to Dr. Radha Kumud Mukherji when writing his book, Chandragupta Maurya and His Times. Similarly, the Aryamanjuśrīmūlakalpa, an 8th-century Buddhist work containing authentic historical details spanning fourteen centuries, was helpful to K. P. Jayswal in writing his book, Imperial History of India. Many unread and unpublished manuscripts may be useful for filling existing gaps in history or even for rewriting it. The same applies to manuscripts on technical literature such as Vaidyaka (Medicine), *Jyotisa* (Astronomy), *Silpaśāstra* (Architecture), and *Rasāyanaśāstra* (Chemistry). A considerable number of

hitherto unknown scientific principles or theories might be found in manuscripts, and the discovery of such manuscripts could facilitate further scientific discoveries or necessary amendments to existing theories.

In a country like India, Manuscriptology holds special significance when considering our glorious past and the invaluable contributions made by our forefathers in all fields of knowledge. Manuscripts are a major source for present-day Indians to realise our own cultural heritage.

Keywords

Manuscripts, inscriptions, historical, materials, different branches, epigraphs, cataloguing, Brahmi, Kharosthi.

Discussion

1.1.1 Manuscriptology

♦ A manuscript is a handwritten composition

A manuscript is a handwritten composition on paper, bark, cloth, metal, palm leaf, or any other material dating back at least seventy-five years that has significant scientific, historical, or aesthetic value. Lithographs and printed volumes are not considered manuscripts. Manuscripts are found in hundreds of different languages and scripts. Often, one language is written in several different scripts. For example, Sanskrit is written in Oriya script, Grantha script, Devanagari script, and many other scripts.

Manuscripts are distinct from historical records such as epigraphs on rocks, firmans, and revenue records, which provide direct information on events or processes in history. Manuscripts contain knowledge.

♦ Manuscriptology is the scientific study of manuscripts

The term 'manuscript' is derived from the Latin words 'manu' (hand) and 'scriptus' (to write), referring to something that is written by hand. In a broader sense, the term manuscript encompasses any document written or incised by hand, such as texts on materials like palm leaf, birch bark, paper, or inscriptions on rocks, pillars, pottery, and copper plates. Manuscriptology is the scientific study of manuscripts, alternatively known as manuscript studies. It is a field concerned with searching, collecting, cataloguing, preserving, transcribing, reading, collating, editing, and publishing manuscripts.

Though Manuscriptology is a separate discipline, it has a close affinity with many other subjects. In the preparation of manuscript

materials and their preservation and conservation, it depends on sciences like Chemistry, Physics, Biology, and even Information Technology. For writing and reading, it draws information from Palaeography. Regarding the collection of manuscripts, it requires fieldwork akin to that of the Social Sciences. However, the techniques used in this regard are similar to those adopted by Business Executives. In the arrangement of manuscripts in the stack room and their cataloguing, Manuscriptology is related to Library Science.

In the reading and editing of texts, knowledge of linguistic, literary, paleographic, historical, and cultural aspects is highly essential, thus linking it to subjects like Linguistics, Literature, Sociology, and History. Proper editing is only possible through a thorough understanding of the subject matter dealt with in the text. The Manuscriptologist who edits the text needs mastery over the subject concerned; otherwise, they seek the help of a subject expert. Therefore, regarding the subjects dealt with in manuscripts, Manuscriptology has connections to almost all branches of knowledge. In short, one cannot compartmentalise Manuscriptology as a discipline belonging to any one of the sciences or to subjects like arts, fine arts, language or literature. It is one of the very few branches of knowledge that has a wider relationship with numerous disciplines.

- Manuscriptology has connection to almost all branches of knowledge

1.1.2 History of Writing in Ancient India (Scripts)

Writing is one of the most important inventions ever made by human beings. The place and time of the origin of writing are matters of conjecture. As far as the time of origin is concerned, there is no conclusive evidence. However, writing may have originated sometime in the 8000s BCE. A wide variety of materials have been used by humankind in various parts of the world. For writing, different kinds of stone, metals like gold, silver, copper, lead, animal skins, bones, shells, leather, clay, wax, pottery, silk, cotton, wooden planks, bamboo, ivory, bark, leaves, linen, papyrus and paper have

- Writing is one of the most important inventions

The type of materials used for writing has influenced the form of scripts. The availability of material was the principal reason behind their use. The Chinese used bamboo and shells, the Mesopotamians used clay, and the Egyptians used papyrus. In India, the oldest evidence of writing materials as well as the earliest records of writing are the Indus seals discovered at the Indus sites. Pottery and metals were used during the period of the Indus Valley Civilisation, although clear evidence of writing in ancient India is available as early as the 5th century BCE.

The manuscripts currently available are generally not older than about 600 years due to the fragile nature of the materials used for writing. Although many manuscripts from earlier periods are yet to be identified, the history of writing can be easily traced from numerous inscriptions and epigraphs.

While almost all of them are dated, they are also available in large numbers almost continuously from the 3rd century BCE to the present day across various parts of the land, from Kashmir to Kanyaku mari.

The earliest positive evidence available for a full-fledged script is the inscriptions of Aśoka (3rd century BCE) found throughout the country. These inscriptions are primarily written in two scripts: Brāhmī and Kharoṣṭī. While those in Brāhmī are distributed across the country, those in Kharoṣṭī are restricted to

- The inscriptions are found to be written in two scripts in the main Brāhmī and Kharoṣṭī

1.1.3. Manuscript Studies in Other Languages

The manuscript heritage of India is unique in its linguistic and scriptural diversity. A lack of skill or expertise in these scripts among contemporary researchers has, however, posed a threat to the study and understanding of this textual heritage. Indian manuscripts are found in a variety of languages and scripts Newari, Gaudi, Tibetan, Kannada, Naskh, to name a few. Sadly, the number of people capable of reading such scripts is very limited. Consequently, these manuscripts are in danger of becoming extinct.

A script is a particular system or style of writing, comprehended as a symbolic representation of the sounds of a particular language. Since time immemorial, India has been multifaceted in terms of language, scripts, and culture. Hundreds of languages and dialects are spoken in different parts of the country even today. This has likely prompted Indian manuscripts to cover a wide range of themes.

The Eighth Schedule to the Constitution of India lists only 22 official languages of the Republic of India. Most Indian scripts have been used for writing. Seventy percent of manuscripts are in the Sanskrit language, while the other 30% are in languages such as Assamese, Bengali, Dogri, Gujarati, Hindi, Kannada, Kashmiri, Konkani, Maithili, Malayalam, Meithei/Manipuri, Marathi, Nepali, Newari/Nepal Bhasa, Odia, Punjabi, Tamil, Telugu, Urdu, Chakma, etc.

Summarised Overview

Manuscripts are handwritten compositions at least 75 years old, possessing significant scientific, historical, or aesthetic value, and are distinct from printed materials and historical records like epigraphs. Derived from Latin, the term encompasses any handwritten or incised document, such as those on palm leaf, bark, or paper. Manuscriptology is the scientific study of these invaluable documents, involving their discovery, collection, cataloguing, preservation, transcription, and publication. This interdisciplinary field draws upon sciences like chemistry, physics, biology, and information technology for material preparation and preservation, and relies on palaeography for reading and writing. It also shares methodologies with social sciences for collection and library science for arrangement and cataloguing. Furthermore, understanding linguistic, literary, paleo graphic, historical, and cultural aspects is crucial for reading and editing manuscripts, connecting manuscriptology to linguistics, literature, sociology, and history. Its significance lies in providing authentic records for cultural, social, political, and economic history, aiding linguists in studying language evolution, and offering opportunities for advancing existing knowledge, particularly in fields like Ayurveda, architecture, astronomy, and mathematics, by revealing new information or amending current theories. In India, with its rich cultural heritage, manuscripts are vital sources for understanding the past. The history of writing in India dates back to the Indus Valley Civilization, with the earliest widespread evidence of a full-fledged script being the Aśokan inscriptions from the 3rd century BCE, primarily in Brāhmī and Kharoṣṭhī. Despite the fragility of materials, which limits the age of available manuscripts to around 600 years, inscriptions provide a continuous record of writing. India's manuscript heritage is incredibly diverse, spanning hundreds of languages and scripts, with Sanskrit accounting for 70% of manuscripts. However, a lack of contemporary expertise in reading these various scripts, such as Newari, Gaudi, and Tibetan, poses a threat to the study and preservation of this rich textual heritage.

Assignment

1. Define "manuscriptology" and describe its primary objectives and activities.

2. Explain why knowledge of linguistic, literary, paleographic, historical, and cultural aspects is crucial for reading and editing manuscripts.

3. Elaborate on the significance of manuscriptology in tracing the cultural, social, political, and economic history of a region or country.

4. How do manuscripts contribute to the study of language history? Discuss the types of linguistic changes that can be observed through inscriptions and manuscripts.

5. Provide specific examples from the text to illustrate how rare and previously unknown manuscripts can lead to advancements in existing knowledge, particularly in fields like Ayurveda, Architecture, Astronomy and Mathematics.

6. Explain the role of manuscripts in advancing scientific knowledge and potentially amending existing theories. What kind of technical literature is mentioned in this context?

7. What is the "special significance" of manuscriptology in India, particularly when considering its historical context and cultural heritage?

8. Discuss the general history of writing materials in ancient India and other parts of the world, mentioning specific examples of materials used.

Suggested Reading

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1. R.G. Bhandarkar, Sri Santosh Mookerji, *The Origin of Indian Alphabet*, Silver Jubilee Vol. III, 1922.

2. Richard Salomon, *Indian Epigraphy,* Oxford University Press, 1998.

3. Ahmad Hasan Dani, *Indian Palaeography*, Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers Pvt Ltd, 1986.

Unit : 2

Earliest Indian Scripts - Language of Inscriptions

Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of the unit, the learner will be able to:

❖ familiarise learners with the core writing techniques in ancient India, the process of emendation, and various methods of preservation of manuscripts

❖ understand manuscriptology and its related interdisciplinary areas

❖ develop the skill of reading and writing ancient scripts

❖ understand different types and formats of inscriptions, the earliest Indian scripts, and the development of scripts in North India and South India

Background

The earliest known system of symbols in the Indian subcontinent is the Indus Script, associated with the Indus Valley Civilization (c. 2700-1900 BCE). However, this script remains undeciphered, and it is debated whether it represents a full writing system or proto-writing.

The first widely deciphered and historically significant scripts in India are:

◆ *Brahmi Script:* This script emerged around the 3rd century BCE and is considered the ancestor of most modern Indian scripts, including Devanagari, Tamil, Telugu, Kannada, Bengali, and Malayalam. The most famous examples of *Brahmi* inscriptions are the **Edicts of Ashoka** (3rd century BCE). *Brahmi* was generally written from left to right.

◆ *Kharosthi Script:* Contemporary to *Brahmi*, *Kharosthi* was primarily used in the northwestern regions of the Indian subcontinent (Gandhara, modern-day Afghanistan and Pakistan) from the 3rd century BCE to the 3rd century CE. It was written from right to left. Its decipherment was aided by bilingual coins of Indo-Greek kings that included both Greek and *Kharosthi* scripts.

Keywords

Inscription, Ashoka Shasanas, *Brahmi*, *Kharoshthi*, *Prakrit*, copper plate, Pallavas, Sanskrit, regional languages.

1.2.1 What is an inscription?

Simply put, any writing on a solid surface, such as seals, copper plates, temple walls, metals, wooden tablets, gravestones/memorial stones, pillars, rock surfaces, bricks, sculptures etc., is called an inscription. It is a textual record, much closer to the evidence of literary genre, that is also simultaneously an archaeological artefact constituting a part of the material culture of the time. Inscriptions have been a worldwide phenomenon throughout historical time, and this is true for the Indian subcontinent as well. Inscriptions are one of the most significant, authentic, reliable, and credible historical sources. The study of inscriptions is known as epigraphy, and that of the writing used in inscriptions is called palaeography.

- The study of inscriptions is known as epigraphy

1.2.2 Language of Inscriptions in India

Although Sanskrit is the oldest language in India, as evidenced by the Vedic literature, the language of the earliest written records, namely the Asokan edicts, is *Prakrit*. As mentioned earlier, since the Indus or Harappan script has not yet been successfully deciphered, we cannot determine the language of this script despite various views put forward by different scholars. In addition to *Prakrit*, the Asokan edicts are also written in Greek and Aramaic. One edict is written entirely in Greek script and language, while another is in both Greek and Aramaic. These are found in Skandar, Afghanistan, while a record in Aramaic script and language, attributed to Asoka, is located in Taxila (now in Pakistan). All the edicts of Asoka in the *Kharoshthi* and *Brahmi* scripts are written in the *Prakrit* language. Thus, it can be said that the original epigraphical language of India is Prakrit, with Sanskrit being used in inscriptions only at a later period. After the time of Asoka, the use of the Prakrit language continued in inscriptions for a few more centuries. In North India, Prakrit was replaced by Sanskrit by the end of the 3rd century A.D. while this transition occurred about a century later in South India. However, even before this period, some inscriptions, though written in Prakrit, were influenced by Sanskrit, while some records were entirely in Sanskrit. Even earlier, the Besnagar (Madhya Pradesh) pillar inscription of Heliodoras, an ambassador from the Indo-Greek king Antialkidas at the court of king Bhagabhadra of *Vidisa*, dating to the end of the 2nd century B.C., although written in *Prakrit*, exhibits some influence of Sanskrit. The Ghosundi stone inscription from Rajasthan, belonging to the latter half of the 1st century B.C. and of the time of king Sarvatata, is couched in Sanskrit. The Junagadh (Gujarat) inscrip-

- Sanskrit is the oldest language in India

tion of the Saka king Rudradaman, dated 150 A.D., is one of the earliest prose epigraphs, written in beautiful Sanskrit prose in the classical kavya style. From the eastern part of India comes the Ayodhya inscription of Dhanadeva (latter half of the 1st century B.C.), which is written in Sanskrit with slight influence from *Prakrit*. Inscriptions from a slightly later period (1st to 3rd century A.D.), such as the Kailvan (Bihar State) inscription, the inscriptions of *Kausambi*, and the Bandorgarh records, are written in Sanskrit with slight influence from Prakrit, although the later inscriptions of Bandorgarh are entirely in Sanskrit. From the fourth century onwards, the Guptas came to power at Pataliputra and became great patrons of the Sanskrit language and literature, leading Sanskrit to become the language of inscriptions. It was during this period that great poets like *Bhasa* and *Kalidasa* flourished.

In South India, *Prakrit* was used in inscriptions until the end of the 3rd century A.D., though a few records of the Ikshavakus of Nagarjunakonda employed Sanskrit. The inscription of *Yajna-satakarni* (2nd century A.D.) from Amaravati is considered to be the earliest Sanskrit inscription from Andhra Pradesh discovered so far. The earlier inscriptions (4th century A.D.) of the *Salankayanas* in the Telugu region are in *Prakrit*, while their later records (belonging to the 5th century A.D.) are written in Sanskrit. In the Kannada-speaking area, the Chandravalli inscription of Mayurasarman, regarded as the founder of the Kadamba dynasty of Karnataka, is written in Prakrit and is assigned to the 4th century A.D. However, all the later inscriptions of this dynasty are in Sanskrit. The early copper-plate inscriptions of the Pallavas of Kanchi, dating from the 4th century A.D., are written in Prakrit, which is why they are known as the Pallavas of the Prakrit charters as opposed to the Pallavas of the Sanskrit charters of a later period (5th and 6th century A.D.). This *Prakrit* is of a literary style. While the entire texts in the Mayidavolu and *Hirehadagali* plates are couched in Prakrit, their seals, however, are in Sanskrit. A mangala passage in the Hirehadagali plates is also in Sanskrit. Thus, both in the records of the Kannada-Telugu areas and in the Pallava charters of the early period, Prakrit prevailed until about the 4th century A.D. when it was replaced by Sanskrit. In the cave inscriptions of Tamil Nadu, the language of the southern *Brahmi* inscriptions, varying in dates from about the 2nd century B.C. to about the 2nd or 3rd century A.D. is said to be early Tamil.

As stated above, Prakrit was the language of the earliest inscriptions, namely those of Asoka, throughout the country and also for some time after the period of Asoka, with Sanskrit replacing *Prakrit* in inscriptions by about the end of the 3rd century A.D. in North India and by the end of the 4th century in South India. During this

◆ A mangala passage in the Hirehadagali plates is also in Sanskrit

intervening period, we encounter some records written in *Prakrit* influenced by Sanskrit in the earlier period and in Sanskrit influenced by *Prakrit* in the later period. In exceptional cases, some later inscriptions, such as the *Ghatiyala* inscription of *Pratihara Kakkuka* dated 862 A.D. are written in Prakrit. The Dhar (Madhya Pradesh) inscription from the time of Bhoja (c. 1000-55 A.D.) contains the text of the *Prakrit* poem *Kurmasataka,* ascribed to Bhoja. Some of the early inscriptions couched in Sanskrit (though sometimes with slight influence from Prakrit) include the Mathura inscription of Saka king Sodasa from the north, the Ghosundi record of Gajayana Sarvatata from western India, the Ayodhya epigraph of Dhanadeva from eastern India, and the Nagarjunakonda inscriptions of the Ikshavaku ruler *Ehuvala Santamula*. These records range in date from the latter half of the 1st century B.C. to the end of the 3rd century A.D. However, as already pointed out, the Junagadh inscription of Rudradaman, dated 150 A.D. is couched in beautiful Sanskrit prose of the kavya style. From the 4th century onwards, with the rise of the Guptas, Sanskrit became the predominant language of Indian epigraphs. It was adopted as the court language by the rulers of this dynasty, with some, like Samudragupta, being noted as proficient in it. Celebrated poets like Bhasa and Kalidasa flourished during the Gupta period, and the great epics Ramayana and Mahabharata, as well as the Puranas, are said to have assumed their final form during this time. The contemporary rulers of the Guptas in Central India and parts of the Deccan, such as *the Vakatakas*, *the Kadambas*, and the Gangas of Karnataka, along with the Pallavas in South India, also employed Sanskrit as the court language, as evidenced in their inscriptions. Regarding the *Salankayanas* in the Andhra region, while their earlier records (4th century A.D.) are written in *Prakrit*, the later ones (5th century A.D.) are in Sanskrit. Thus, Sanskrit became the epigraphic language of the country from the 4th century onwards, replacing *Prakrit.* The Talagunda pillar inscription from the time of the Kadamba king Santivarman (5th century A.D.), composed by poet Kubja, and the Aihole inscription of the Badami Chalukya king Pulikesin II (634 A.D.), composed by poet Ravikirti, are fine specimens of classical Sanskrit found in early inscriptions of Karnataka.

- ◆ Prakrit was the language of the earliest inscriptions

1.2.3 Regional Languages

Sanskrit continued to be the language of inscriptions across all parts of India until the late medieval period. Meanwhile, regional languages began to be used in inscriptions as well. We have already noted that the language of the cave inscriptions found in Tamil Nadu is considered to be an early form of Tamil and is thus the earliest Dravidian language used in inscriptions. At a later period, the copper-plate charters of the Pallavas, the Cholas, and the Pandyas were

written in both Sanskrit and Tamil, although some Pallava grants, such as the *Vunnaguruvayapalem* plates of *Pararnesvaravarman I* (7th century A.D.) and the Reyjru plates of Narasimhavarman II (8th century A.D.), are written entirely in Sanskrit. The *Kuram* plates of Pallava Paramesvaravarman and the Bahur plates of *Nripatunga-varman* (9th century A.D.) are written in both Sanskrit and Tamil. The larger Leiden plates of Chola king Rajaraja I (10th-11th century A.D.) are written partly in Sanskrit and partly in Tamil, while the smaller Leiden plates of Kulottunga I (11th-12th century A.D.) are written entirely in Tamil. While early Pandya inscriptions are composed partly in Sanskrit and partly in Tamil, the later records of the dynasty are written only in Tamil.

Next to Tamil, Kannada appears in inscriptions dating from around the 6th century A.D. The Halmidi (Belur Taluk, Shimoga District) inscriptions and the Vaishnava cave inscription at Badami (Bijapur District) in Karnataka are considered to be the earliest epigraphs written in Kannada. Although all the copperplate grants of the early Chalukyas of Badami are written in Sanskrit, most of their stone inscriptions, consisting of private records, are in Kannada. The same is true for the records of other imperial dynasties in Karnataka, such as the Rashtrakutas, the later Chalukyas, the Kalachuris, the Yadavas, and the Hoysalas, with a few exceptions. Thus, the British Museum plates of Rashtrakuta king Govinda III, dated saka 726 or 804 A.D., are written in Kannada. For a long time, this inscription was considered the earliest copper-plate grant in Kannada. However, a more recent discovery of another copper-plate grant belonging to the Alupa ruler Aluvarasa II at Belmannu in the South Kanara District of Karnataka has been assigned, on palaeographical grounds, to the 8th century A.D., making it the earliest copper-plate inscription in Kannada discovered so far. Many inscriptions are written partly in Sanskrit and partly in Kannada; even records composed solely in Kannada often include invocatory or benedictory verses at the beginning and imprecatory verses at the end in Sanskrit. It is also interesting to note that the inscription of Jinavallabha, brother of the famous Kannada poet Pampa, discovered a few years ago, is written in three languages: Sanskrit, Kannada, and Telugu.

The Telugu language is used in inscriptions dating from the 6th or 7th century A.D., with some Telugu place-names mentioned in earlier records. The Kalamalla inscription of Erikal-Muthuraju Dhanañjaya, assigned to the last quarter of the 6th century A.D. is considered the earliest record completely written in Telugu. This and other records of the Renandu Chola rulers from the Anantapur and Cuddapah districts of Andhra Pradesh provide some of the earliest stone inscriptions written in Telugu. The Madras Museum plates of

Ballayachoda, of the Telugu Choda family, belonging to the middle of the 9th century A.D., furnish the earliest copper-plate inscription written in Telugu.

It is only from the 15th century A.D. onwards that the Malayalam language appears in inscriptions, although earlier influences of Malayalam can be seen in a 13th-century Tamil inscription. The Attingal inscription of 1452 A.D. and the Tonnal inscription of 1474 A.D. are both written in Malayalam. Among the new Indo-Aryan languages used in inscriptions, Marathi appears in early records from the 11th century A.D., with the earliest epigraph in which this language is used being the Dive Agar copper-plate inscription dated saka 982 or 1060 A.D. Marathi became popular in the inscriptions of the Silaharas and the Yadavas of Devagiri in the Marathi-speaking area. The Oriya language begins to appear in inscriptions from the 13th century A.D. onwards, although the influence of this language in records written in Sanskrit appears as early as the 10th century A.D. Some copper-plate grants are written partly in Sanskrit and partly in Oriya, while the Veligalani grant of Gajapati king Kapilesvara (15th century A.D.) is written in Oriya, Sanskrit, and Telugu.

- ◆ The use of Hindi language is traced to 11th century A.D

The use of the Hindi language is traced to the 11th century A.D., based on a Jaina image inscription found at Shyopur in Madhya Pradesh. However, most other Hindi records, which also originate from the Madhya Pradesh region, belong to the medieval period of the 15th or 16th century A.D. Gujarati is used in records from the 15th century A.D. hailing from the Kathiawar region, while a few earlier inscriptions from the same area are written in Sanskrit and Gujarati. In the Bengali-speaking region, epigraphic records are primarily written in Sanskrit and seldom in Bengali. During the late medieval period, the copper plates of Tripura king Govindamanikya (15th century A.D.) are mainly written in Bengali.

Summarised Overview

The earliest symbolic system in India is the undeciphered Indus Script (2700-1900 BCE), with the first widely understood scripts being *Brahmi* and Kharosthi, emerging around the 3rd century BCE. *Brahmi*, written left-to-right, is the ancestor of most modern Indian scripts, famously seen in the Edicts of Ashoka. *Kharosthi*, written right-to-left, was prevalent in the northwest. An inscription is any writing on a solid surface, such as rocks or copper plates, serving as a vital and reliable historical source; its study is epigraphy, while the study of the writing itself is palaeography. Although Sanskrit is India's oldest language, the earliest inscriptions (Ashokan edicts) were predominantly in *Prakrit,* with some in Greek and Aramaic. Sanskrit gradually replaced Prakrit in inscriptions, becoming dominant in North India by the late 3rd century CE and in South India by the late 4th cen-

tury CE, particularly with Gupta patronage of Sanskrit. Subsequently, regional languages like Tamil (the earliest Dravidian language in inscriptions from the 2nd century BCE), Kannada (from the 6th century CE), Telugu (from the 6th-7th century CE), Malayalam

Assignment

1. What is the Indus Script, and what is its current status regarding decipherment?

2. Describe the *Brahmi* Script, including its emergence, significance as an ancestor script, and famous examples of its use.

3. Explain the *Kharosthi* Script, noting its period of use, geographical location, and writing direction.

4. How is an inscription uniquely both a textual record and an archaeological artifact?

5. What are the fields of study dedicated to inscriptions and the writing used within them?

6. Discuss the earliest language of written records in India, specifically focusing on the Ashokan edicts.

7. Explain the role of the Gupta period in the prominence of Sanskrit in Indian epigraphy.

8. When did the Kannada language begin to appear in inscriptions, and what are considered the earliest examples?

9. Describe the emergence of the Telugu language in inscriptions, identifying its earliest complete record.

10. When did the Malayalam language first appear in inscriptions? Mention any earlier influences of Malayalam noticed in Tamil inscriptions

Suggested Reading

1. Siva Ganesa Murthy, *Introduction to Manuscriptology*, Sarada Publications, New Delhi, 1996.

2. S.M. Katre, Introduction to Indian Textual Criticism, Bombay, 1941.

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Unit : 3

Development of Script in North India and South India

Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of the unit, the learner will be able to:

❖ familiarise learners with the core writing techniques in ancient India, the process of emendation, and various methods of manuscript preservation

❖ understand manuscriptology and its related interdisciplinary areas

❖ develop the skill of reading and writing ancient scripts

❖ understand different types and formats of inscriptions, the earliest Indian scripts, and the development of scripts in North India and South India

Background

Script is a set of visual symbols representing language, depending upon public convention. There is no inseparable relationship between language and script. One script can be used for writing several languages and vice versa. The most ancient scripts of India are Brāhmī and Kharoṣṭhī. Among these, Brāhmī is considered the mother of all later scripts of India. In early Jain works like Samavāyaṅgasutta (300 BCE) and Pannavaṇāsutta (168 BCE), this script is referred to as 'Bambhī'; subsequently, it might have been named Brāhmī. The Piprahwa Buddhist vase inscriptions of Basti district, Uttar Pradesh, and Badli inscriptions found in Ajmer district of Rajasthan, both belonging to the 5th century BCE, are the earliest inscriptions in Brāhmī so far obtained. Brāhmī had regional variation even at the time of Aśoka. The regional variation can be broadly classified into two major groups: Southern Brāhmī and Northern Brāhmī.

Keywords

Script, symbols, Brāhmī, Kharoṣṭhī, Andhra script, Dravidian script, Bihari script, Nagari script, Devanāgarī script.

1.3.1 Southern Brāhmī

The Brāhmī varieties found in the Deccan and the Southern regions of India belong to this group. It has two major sub-divisions: the Deccan variety and the Dravidian variety. The Deccan variety is also known as the Andhra script. Its period of existence is considered to be from the 2nd century BCE to the 1st century CE. It was prevalent in the Deccan and in a major part of Andhra Pradesh. The cave inscriptions of Nanaghat, Nasik, and Pitalkhora belong to the Deccan variety. The scripts used by the Śātavāhana and Pallava dynasties are also of this type. The Dravidian script has two sub-varieties: the Kalinga variety (Northern Dravidian) and the Tamil Cave Brāhmī (Southern Dravidian). The Kalinga type was used in the Kalinga region.

- The Deccan variety is also known as the Andhra script

The eastern variety of Gupta characters had two sub-divisions: the Western and the Eastern. The Western sub-variety developed into Siddhamātṛkā. Both Kaithi and Kutilalipi are developments from Siddhamātṛkā. The Bihari script, used by the Kayastha community, and the Bhojpuri characters originated from Kaithi. The origin of Nagari scripts was from Kutilalipi.

The Nagari scripts are classified into Eastern (Pūrva Nāgari), Western (Ardha Nāgari), Central (Devanāgarī), and Southern (Nandināgari). Yet another broad classification divides Nāgari scripts into Northern and Southern. In this classification, the Northern variety is Devanāgarī, and the Southern variety is Nandināgari. Rājasthāni, Mahājani, and Gujarati are related to Devanāgarī. Modi, the script of the Marathi language, has a close affinity with both Nandināgari and Devanāgarī.

Nandināgari, the Southern variety of Nagari, was in existence in Mysore and its adjacent regions. Newari (Nepali) and Old Bengali scripts originated from Proto-Bengali, which, in turn, was a development of the Eastern Gupta characters. Assamese, Oriya, Maithili, Manipuri, and modern Bengali scripts are developments from Old Bengali characters. The script of the Saurashtrian language (the language spoken by the Saurashtrian community found in Madurai, Virudhunagar, and Salem regions of Tamil Nadu) is also an offshoot of Northern Brāhmī.

- Southern variety is Nandināgari

According to the written evidence of the deciphered Indian scripts, Brāhmī comes first, having the earliest inscriptions found in India. The date of early Brāhmī inscriptions goes back to the 5th century

BCE. Kharoṣṭhī inscriptions come next in antiquity, with inscriptions from the 3rd century BCE. The language of early inscriptions was Prākṛt. Among the modern Indian languages, Tamil has the earliest inscriptions, the script used being Tamil Cave Brāhmī, the period of which ranges from the 2nd century BCE to the 3rd century CE. Vattezhuttu, the script of the Tamil language, might be next in antiquity regarding its use in inscriptions.

An epitaph found at Tirunātarkunru, belonging to the 4th century CE, is the earliest Vattezhuttu inscription. The origin of the Tamil script, according to Bühler, is in the 4th or 5th century CE, and Mahalingam states that two labels found in Tamil script in Tiruchirappally are of the 6th century CE. He states that a label in Grantha script obtained from Tiruchirappally is of the 5th century CE. The inscriptions in early Telugu-Kannada script are obtained from the 5th century onwards. Inscriptions in Neo-Indo Aryan language scripts are obtained from the 10th century onwards.

1.3.1.1 Brāhmī

Brāhmī is considered to be one of the most ancient scripts used in the Indian subcontinent. The earliest surviving records of the use of the Brāhmī script are found in the inscriptions of Aśoka (269 BCE to 232 BCE). He had his messages to his subjects written on rocks and pillars at various places in his empire. His inscriptions on the trade routes and at important Buddhist sites have provided us with evidence of a completely evolved alphabetical writing system in ancient India. Over time, with regional preferences and specialties, the script changed its form and developed into almost all modern Indian scripts.

1.3.1.2 Tamil

The earlier Tamil inscriptions were written in Brāhmī, Grantha, and Vattezhuttu scripts. Inscriptions after the 7th century CE contain Tamil characters similar to those currently in use. This prompted some scholars to argue that Vattezhuttu and Tamil scripts originated from Brāhmī scripts. This view has no solid basis, as one can see a copious description of Tamil scripts in Tolkāppiyam, which belongs to the 3rd century BCE. It is evident, therefore, that the Tamil language had a distinct script of its own even at that early period.

1.3.1.3. Kannada

One of the early scripts of South India evidenced from about 450 CE in Karnataka. Compared to Grantha, Nandināgari, and Telugu, Sanskrit manuscripts in Kannada script are small in number.

1.3.1.4 Grantha

This script was prevalent in the Tamil Nadu area from about the 7th century CE, but manuscripts date from the end of the 16th century. It has two varieties: (1) the 'square' hand found around Tanjore and (2) the 'round' hand of mostly Jains around Arcot and Madras. Grantha ran parallel to Tamil and was used in writing Sanskrit only, hence the name. The term appears in the 14th century.

1.3.1.5 Śārada

Originally, Śāradā appears around the 8th century CE. The earliest manuscript in this script, current in Jammu and Kashmir and North-Eastern Punjab, dates from the 11th-12th century.

1.3.1.6 Devanāgarī

This script developed fully by the 10th-11th centuries CE, and manuscripts also date from the same period. However, Devanāgarī is not confined to any one particular region; it is not regional. The origin of the name 'Nāgarī-lipi' is variously interpreted. Some argue that it is related to the Nāgalipi of the Lalitavistara. It is shown that, in Tibetan, it is called Kliu-Yeg, the script of the Nāga. Others relate it to the Nagara, the Gujarat Brahmins. The third and simpler explanation of the term as "writing used in cities" or "town script" seems more plausible. The words "Nagara" and "Nāgarika" may be compared with this. On this basis, the meaning of Nāgarī could be extended to signify 'cultured' or 'sophisticated'. Another point worthy of note here is that palm leaf manuscripts in Devanāgarī are very rare, perhaps one in ten thousand.

- ◆ Devanāgarī script developed fully by the 10th -11th centuries CE

1.3.1.7 Nepāli or Newāri

This script exists in Nepal and adjoining areas. Manuscripts are available from the 12th century. A manuscript dated 1063 CE deposited in the Bodleian Library, Oxford, is said to be the oldest.

1.3.1.8 Tigalāri

This script, employed mostly in coastal Karnataka—from Karwar to Kasargod—is a mixed one. It contains elements of Malayalam, Grantha, and Kannada in order of dominance. There is a large number of manuscripts, mostly in private possession; only a fraction has been acquired by modern libraries. Because this is found in manuscripts only, it has not come to the notice of palaeographers, who refer to it as Tuḷu or Tuḷu-Malayāḷam (Western Grantha). It has been evidenced since the 12th century.

1.3.1.9 Modi

This is the running hand of 'Balabodha', the Devanāgarī of Maharashtra, a survival of Southern Nāgarī. The documents avail-

able since the 13th century are all non-literary private correspondence and official records.

1.3.1.10 Nandināgari

The Nagari in South India developed into what is called Nandināgari. Why the script was called 'Nandi' is a matter of conjecture. This is evidenced since the Yadava-Hoysala period (13th century), and the frequency of its use grew during the Vijayanagara period. This script must have developed as a pen-style or stylus-style script and not as a chisel-style one. The absence of the horizontal top line is suitable for writing on palm leaves; otherwise, there was the possibility of the leaf splitting due to the line.

1.3.1.11 Telugu

This is the script employed in the Andhra Pradesh area. It is not easy to identify Telugu from Kannada in early palm leaves, but it is largely Telugu. This attitude can be observed in many of the Sanskrit texts printed in Karnataka in the last century and the early part of the present; they are in Telugu script. In fact, Kannada and Telugu branched off only around the 14th century, until which time they were one.

1.3.1.12 Maithili

Eastern Bihar (Tirhut) and western West Bengal form the location of this script. The Tirhuti variety was used for writing books, while a running hand, Kaithi, was used for non-literary purposes. The documents date from the 15th century.

1.3.1.13 Malayāḷam

Malayalam began to develop as a separate language from the 13th century onwards. It is the major language of Kerala and Lakshadweep. While the "Vattezhuthu Script" was used for Malayalam from the 9th century onwards, the modern script of the Malayalam language evolved from the "Grantha Script," which came into existence by the 16th century. Malayalam, one of the Dravidian languages, most likely originated as a split from Tamil in even more ancient times and became an independent language by the 9th

1.3.1.14 Odia

The Odia script is used for writing the Odia language, the official language of the Indian state of Odisha, as well as for a number of Dravidian and Munda minority languages spoken in that region. It is also used in Odisha for transcribing Sanskrit texts. The earliest inscriptions in the Odia language have been dated to 1051 AD and were written in the Kalinga script, from which modern Odia writing is derived. This script, current in Odisha, has two varieties according to its use: (1) that which was used to write on palm leaf manuscripts,

Brāhmaṇi, and (2) Karani, which was used for non-literary purposes by Karans.

1.3.1.15 Vanga or Bengali

This script is current in Bengal (both West and East) and fully developed by the 15th century. Assamese is a variety of Bengali, and Oriya and Maithili are related to this.

Summarised Overview

The development of Indian scripts primarily stems from Brāhmī, considered the mother of most later scripts, with its earliest inscriptions dating back to the 5th century BCE. Brāhmī diversified into Northern Brāhmī and Southern Brāhmī, each with distinct evolutionary paths. Northern Brāhmī gave rise to scripts like Siddhamātṛkā, which further led to Kaithi, Kutilalipi, and the various Nāgarī scripts (Eastern, Western, Central/Devanagari, Southern/Nandināgari), influencing regional scripts like Rajasthani, Mahajani, Gujarati, and Modi. From Eastern Gupta characters, Proto-Bengali emerged, leading to Newari, Old Bengali, Assamese, Oriya, Maithili, Manipuri, and modern Bengali. Southern Brāhmī, prevalent in the Deccan and Southern regions, split into the Deccan variety (used by Śātavāhanas and Pallavas) and the Dravidi variety (Kalinga and Tamil Cave Brāhmī). This lineage led to scripts like Grantha (c. 7th century CE), Kannada (c. 450 CE), Telugu (distinct from Kannada around the 14th century), Tigalāri (12th century, a blend of Malayalam, Grantha, and Kannada), and the modern Malayalam script (evolving from Grantha by the 16th century, though Vattezhuttu was used from the 9th century). Other regional scripts like Śāradā (8th century CE, Jammu and Kashmir), Nepali/Newāri (12th century), Modi (13th century, Maharashtra), Maithili (15th century, Eastern Bihar/Western West Bengal), and Odia (13th century) also developed over time, illustrating a rich and complex scriptural history across both North and South India

Assignment

1. How did the Brāhmī script diversify regionally even during Aśoka's time?

2. Explain the Southern Brāhmī group, including its geographical prevalence and its two main sub-divisions.

3. Describe the Drāvidi script as a sub-variety of Southern Brāhmī.

4. How did the eastern variety of Gupta characters contribute to the development of scripts in North India?

5. Detail the classification of Nāgarī scripts. Which scripts are related to Devanāgarī, and what is the relationship between Modi and both Nandināgari and Devanāgarī?

6. Where was Nandināgari prevalent, and during which historical periods did its use grow? What characteristic of this script made it suitable for writing on palm leaves?

7. From which script did Newari (Nepali) and Old Bengali scripts originate? List the modern scripts that developed from Old Bengali characters.

8. When were inscriptions in early Telugu-Kannada script obtained?

9. Describe the Grantha script, including its prevalence, varieties, and primary use.

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1. Siva Ganesa Murthy,*Introduction to Manuscriptology*, Sarada Publications, New Delhi, 1996.

2. S.M. Katre, Introduction to Indian Textual Criticism, Bombay, 1941.

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Unit : 4

Tools and Writing Materials for Manuscripts

Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of the unit, the learner will be able to:

❖ familiarise learners with the core writing techniques in ancient India, the process of emendation, and various methods of preservation of manuscripts

❖ interpret ancient documents within cultural and historical contexts

❖ develop the skill of reading and writing ancient scripts

❖ understand the various kinds of tools and writing materials for manuscripts

Background

The history of writing and writing materials has already been mentioned in the first unit. The creation of old manuscripts was a painstaking process, meticulously dependent on the tools and writing materials available to scribes. Far from the ease of modern printing, each surviving text is a testament to the ingenuity and dedication involved in transforming raw materials into enduring works. Understanding these ancient implements and substances offers a unique window into the daily lives of those who painstakingly copied, illuminated, and preserved knowledge across centuries, allowing us to appreciate the tactile reality behind the invaluable written heritage that has reached us today

Keywords

Writing tools, materials, stylus, brush, palm leaf, bhujapatra, kumbuki bark, sancipat, cloth, phalaka, metals, tulpat, paper, brass.

1.4.1 Writing Tools

Styluses, reeds, porcupine spines, strong quills from birds, etc., were used for writing manuscripts.

The instruments used for writing are termed writing tools. They are also known as writing instruments or writing aids. Styluses, reeds, porcupine spines, strong quills from birds, and suitable twigs from plants were used for writing manuscripts. At a later stage, pens were also introduced, especially for writing on paper. We can classify the instruments into three types:

i.   Those with hard and sharp tips to incise.

ii. Those with soft and smooth tips to write.

iii. Brushes or similar materials for painting.

The term "lekhanī," however, stands for any writing instrument and is as old as the Mahābhārata and the Rāmāyana. Even so, the verb "likhati" refers to scratching, engraving, writing, and includes painting too.

i.   The stylus for incising on palm leaves is called "kanṭaka," "lo-ha-kanṭaka," or "salākā." It is a rod made of iron, about 10-30 cm in length and with the thickness of a pencil. It tapers to one end and has a sharp tip. The other end is flat and sometimes decorated with jingles. The stylus could be made of gold, silver, copper, or brass and was either plain or ornamented. It was tipped with a steel point, which was sharpened from time to time on an oiled stone. The point came in four varieties besides the fine point, and the length of the stylus also varied. The choice depended on the type of work at hand—10 to 20 lines per page. The four points were: chatra (sun shade), patra (leaf), nāḷa (tube), and ganda (ball).

ii. The quill from a porcupine, bamboo twig, or lālada kaddi—a kind of reed (thin bamboo)—is used as a pen to write on birch-bark. It is called "Kunca" or "Vartikā." Wealthy households in Bengal employ the "Viṇāla" or "Khakra" reed, while in the North-West provinces, the reed or "lalamus" (kalam) is generally used.

iii. Kuncika, Maṣikuñcika, Tūlī or Tūlikā, Dūṣika, or Varti refers to a brush. Brushes are made from reeds, wood, iron, fibres, and hairs. Varṇaka or Varṇika is a small colour stick, usually white—a pencil used to draw letters on a board. Subandhu, Harisena, and Sri-harsa employ the term 'khaṭini' in the sense of chalk. Manahśilā consists of naturally available soft stones, such as pot-stone, used

◆ The stylus for incising on palm leaves is called "kanṭaka"

◆ Varṇa-Vartikā stands for coloured pencil

for writing. Varṇa-Vartikā stands for a coloured pencil. The affluent had golden coverings for their

1.4.2 Other Instruments and Materials

Instruments like rulers and compasses, or bow pens, are used to draw lines and circles while writing patterns and designs. To draw parallel lines on paper and birch-bark, a board is fixed with strings horizontally at equal distances. The paper to be ruled is placed over it and rubbed with a piece of cotton. This is called Rekhāpaṭṭi or Samāsapaṭi. A burnishing stone and conch or shell are useful for polishing. A cinture is employed to bore holes in palm leaves. A knife is also part of the kit.

> ◆ Kambī or Kamba is a kind of ruler

The pens are kept in a box with or without a cover. Sometimes, an ink-pot will have an attached pen-holder. The box for the ink-pot/s is often decorated. Manuscripts are also kept in decorated boxes. While reading, the manuscript is placed on a stand, a sort of low stool or frame called Vyasapīṭha (lipyāsana in Rāyapaseniyasutta). Bāṇa calls it Śaraśalākā-yantra, a frame about eighteen inches in height. Kambī or Kamba, mentioned earlier, is a kind of ruler. The word Kambī means a 'strip', which may refer to the strip of wood on either side of the bundle. Chisels, hammers, and similar materials are used for inscribing on stones, but these are not exclusive writing instruments. Ink, plant juices, black ashes, gall nut (ink nut) paste, and carbon are some of the many varieties of substances used for writing.

1.4.3 Writing Materials in Ancient India

Our ancestors recorded important events in their lives through pictures. These pictures can be found in caves such as Ajanta, Ellora, and Idakkal. Using sharpened materials, they drew pictures on the rocks inside the caves. Later, they inscribed scripts instead of pictures. Scholars argue that the first Indian script may be the Indus script. However, this script was not known to people until 1922, the year the Indus Valley, or Harappan, civilisation was excavated by the Punjab Province of British India. After 1922, scholars realised that a script existed, and they named it the Indus script. This script is inscribed on clay tablets and some types of metallic bodies.

Since that period, people have used different types of materials for writing. Palm leaves, Bhurjapatra, Kumbhika bark, Agarutvak, leather, cloth, Tulāpat, rock material, and paper are the popular writing materials used in India for preserving knowledge.

1.4.3.1 Palm Leaf

Palm leaves were one of the main and most popular writing materials in all South Asian countries, including India, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Myanmar, and Indonesia. Three species of palm trees are grown in India, and their botanical names are:

1. Corypha umbraculifera, (Gujarat and Rajasthan)
2. Corypha Faliera (Costal areas of South India)
3. Borassus Flabellifera (south India)

Traditionally, two kinds of palm leaves are used for writing: Palmyra palm leaves (Borassus flabellifer) and Fan palm leaves (Corypha umbraculifera). Tālapatra or Kharatāla and Tāli or Śrītāla in Sanskrit are known as Nuikkuppanai and Tāḷlippanai in Tamil, respectively, while in Malayalam they are referred to as Karimpana and Tāliyolappana. The leaves of Palmyra palm (Tālapatra) are thicker and their surface is rougher, making them suitable only for writing with a stylus.

The Fan palm leaves (Tālī) are relatively thinner, more flexible, and light-coloured, allowing for writing with a stylus and other writing aids. It is believed that the earliest among them used for writing is Tālī. Palmyra is found in all parts of India, but Tālīpatra is predominantly found in South India, especially in the regions of Palakkad and Malabar. The lifespan of a palm leaf manuscript is usually around five hundred years; however, with proper care, they can last much longer.

The processed palm leaves are prepared for writing using a metallic stylus made of iron. After writing, they are tied together with thread, sandwiched between two wooden blocks. In North India, the written letters are darkened with charcoal powder or leaf juice. After these processes, the codex is covered with cotton and stored in a place that is both wet and dry. To deter insects like bees, cardamom is added.

1.4.3.2 Bhūrjapatra

Bhūrjapatra, or Bhojapatra (birch bark), was one of the most popular writing materials used in North India. There are four varieties of Bhojapatra available: Yellow Birch (Betula lutea), mostly grown in England and Georgia; Black Birch (Betula lenta) from North America; White Birch (Betula papyrifera) from Northeast Canada; and Himalayan Silver Birch (Betula utilis) found in

The inner bark of this tree was used for writing in Himalayan regions, especially in Kashmir. The inner bark consists of several thin layers that are carefully separated; each layer is as thin as manifold

paper. The sheets are white or pinky-white on the outside and reddish on the inside. The bark is slowly dried, oil is applied to the surface, and then polishing is done by rubbing with a polishing stone to make it smooth.

The sheets are cut to the required size and written on. They peel off in thin layers and are flexible like paper, consisting of cellulose, lignin, natural gums, and essential oils. Holes are pierced in the centre of the birch bark sheet for a cord to pass through, keeping them together before wrapping between two wooden covers. Insect repellent properties are important for the dark iron, as fungus cannot easily attack the birch bark.

1.4.3.3 Kumbhuki Bark

The bark of the Kumbhi or Kumbhika tree (Careya arborea) is known as Kumbhi bark, a writing material used in ancient India. Kumbhika trees grow abundantly in the jungles of Orissa, making the popular use of Kumbhika prevalent in that region.

1.4.3.4 Agarutvak (Sancipat)

The agaru or Aguru or Aloe tree (Aquilaria agallocha) is a tall fragrant tree usually found in hilly areas, especially in Assam. In Assam, it is known as Sancī. Many manuscripts in Sancīpat have been discovered in Assam and are preserved in the Guwahati University Library. Agaru bark consists of cellulose and lignin and absorbs ink. The sheets are dried for many days before curing, seasoning, and polishing. This is followed by treatment with orpiment to make them immune to insects and rubbing with a conch shell to achieve a smooth finish. Painting is done using both organic and inorganic colours, with carbon and iron gall ink used as per the requirements of the manuscript, alongside a special ink called 'Sanci Mahī'. Agaru is also found in the forests of Kerala, where it is called Akil; however, there is no evidence of its use as a writing material in Malayalam.

◆ Agaru bark which consists of cellulose and lignin

1.4.3.5 Cloth

For writing purposes, a special type of cloth, specifically cotton cloth, was often used in India. Some Jain scriptures were found to be written on silk cloth. A type of cotton cloth was a popular writing material used in India for preserving knowledge.

Kadata or kadita was used for writing manuscripts in the Mysore region. Complete works were not copied onto cloth because it is not durable and is easily damaged. To make the surface smooth, a layer of rice or wheat pulp was spread on it, dried, and polished with a smooth stone.

1.4.3.6. Phalaka

Wooden planks were also used for writing documents. They have been employed for temporary writing for special purposes. As such, phalakam has come to mean signboard or name board.

1.4.3.7. Metals

Copper, gold, and silver are the most popular metals used for writing. A copper plate is called Tamra-paṭa, Tamra pattika, patra, phalaka, śāsanapatra, dānapatra, etc. The use of copper between the 6th and 15th centuries is quite frequent, with a growing frequency in South India. In the Jataka stories, it can be seen that gold plates (Suvanna patta) were used to preserve poetic verses and moral sayings. Writing on gold dates back to quite an early period, whereas writing on silver is rare; only a few instances have been discovered so far. Besides coins made of silver, some documents on silver sheets have been recovered from stupas at Bhattiprolu in Taxila.

1.4.3.8. Tulāpat

Tulāpat is a type of paper made from cotton. It was found to be used in Assam from the beginning of the 19th century. In some other regions, a paper-like writing material was made from torn cloth.

1.4.3.9. Stone

Stone and rock were also commonly used to record royal deeds, especially exploits and grants. The earliest known stone and rock edicts are those of Aśoka, found in various locations across the country. The cave temples and rock temples of different areas contain imperishable records on rocks.

1.4.3.10. Paper

Paper was invented by Tsai Lun in China in 105 CE and was introduced to India by Mughal rulers from Persia. Most official documents began to be written on paper during that period. The use of paper in the royal courts, along with its easy availability due to imports and its greater convenience for writing, led to its popularity across India, ultimately replacing other writing materials with the introduction of printing. Kākala, kākali, kakala, and saṇapatra are other words in Sanskrit for paper. The earliest paper manuscript now available is from Patna.

> ◆ Copper, gold and silver are the most popular metals used for writing

Summarised Overview

The creation of ancient manuscripts was a meticulous process relying on specialised writing tools and diverse materials. Writing tools included styluses (for incising on palm **leaves),** quills/reeds (for birch bark), and brushes (for painting), alongside instruments like rulers, compasses, and burnishing stones. Beyond tools, a wide array of materials served as canvases for knowledge preservation. Palm leaves were paramount, especially in South Asia, with varieties like Palmyra and Fan palm used depending on thickness and flexibility. In North India, Bhūrjapatra (birch bark) was popular, prized for its thin, flexible layers and insect-repellent properties. Other materials included Kumbhi bark (Orissa), Agarutvak (Sancipat in Assam), various types of cloth (cotton, silk), wooden planks (phalaka for temporary records), and metals like copper, gold, and, rarely, silver for official deeds and important verses. The most significant shift in writing materials came with the introduction of paper from China via Mughal rulers, which gradually replaced other materials due to its convenience and availability, especially after the advent of printing.

Assignment

1. Describe the stylus used for incising on palm leaves, including its common names, material, dimensions, and tip varieties.

2. What types of writing tools were used for writing on birch-bark?

3. Explain the function of brushes in manuscript creation, detailing what they were made of. What were "Varṇaka" or "Varṇika" and "khaṭini" used for?

4. Describe the common practices for storing pens, ink-pots, and manuscripts. What was a 'Vyasapītha' or 'lipyāsana', and what was its purpose?

5. Discuss palm leaves as a major writing material in South Asia.

6. Explain the use of Bhūrjapatra (Birch Bark) in North India, including its varieties and preparation process.

7. Discuss the use of cloth, metals (copper, gold, silver), Tulāpat, and stone as writing materials in ancient India.

Suggested Reading

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BLOCK-02

Paleography

Block Content

Unit 1: Collection of Manuscripts - Cataloguing and Preservation of Manuscripts

Unit 2: Major Manuscript Libraries

Unit 3: Paleography

Unit 4: Ancient Indian Scripts

Unit : 1 — Collection of Manuscripts - Cataloguing and Preservation of Manuscripts

Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of the unit, the learner will be able to:

❖ familiarise learners with the core writing techniques in ancient India, the process of emendation, and various methods of manuscript preservation

❖ understand different ways of cataloguing

❖ know various methods of preserving manuscripts

❖ develop the skills to preserve and curate manuscripts

Background

The collection, cataloguing, and preservation of manuscripts are critical endeavours that safeguard humanity's written heritage. Manuscripts, as unique handwritten documents, offer invaluable insights into historical, cultural, scientific, and religious developments across civilisations. In this unit, we will discuss how to collect manuscripts and how to catalogue and preserve them.

Keywords

Card catalogue, book form, sheaf form, call number, accession number, descriptive catalogue, catalogues catalogorum, new catalogus catalogorum, climatic, environment, air conditioning, deep freezing, fumigation

Discussion

2.1.1.Cataloguing

The concept of a library and the arrangement of manuscript contents is not new in India. We have seen earlier that there were huge libraries in ancient India. Surely, they must have had some sort of classification. Unfortunately, we do not have any records, and one

of them housed sacred scripture, which might suggest any record to that effect. There were three broad classifications. The counting of branches of knowledge as 2, 3, 4, 14, 18, or 64 speaks to the attempt to classify the field of learning. The Anukramaṇis and the Nighaṇṭus shed light on the idea of indexing and classification that the ancient people had. The Kośas (metrical dictionaries) have a system of classification, though of words. Some of them have a section in which the words are arranged in the alphabetical order of their final phoneme. There are a few palm-leaf manuscripts in the Oriental Research Institute, Mysore, which resemble Sanskrit-Kannada dictionaries in the modern sense, i.e. the words are arranged in the alphabetical order of the initial phoneme. The anthologies in Sanskrit literature provide evidence for the idea of subject-wise classification.

Let us briefly examine the process of preparing catalogues in a printed-books library and then discuss how far this process can work in a manuscripts library.

"A catalogue is a list of books in a particular library arranged according to a definite plan." Cataloguing presupposes classification. Modern printed books libraries have their own systems of classification. Those generally followed in India are the Colon Classification of Ranganathan and the Dewey Decimal System. Both have subject-wise classes - 27 and 10 heads respectively. The books in each class are arranged author-wise.

- ◆ A Catalogue is a list of books in a particular library

A master-record of every bibliographic item in the library, as and when acquired, is maintained. It is called the Accession Register. It provides a serial number called the Accession Number that identifies each and every item added to the library and records information in full about the date of accession, the author, etc., in the following order: (1) Date (of accession), (2) Accession Number, (3) Author, (4) Title, (5) Place of Publication, Publisher's name and address, (6) Year of publication, (7) Volume/Part (if any), (8) Size and Binding, (9) Source (of acquisition), (10) Cost, (11) Class, (12) Date of payment, (13) Remarks.

Incorporating the bibliographical details, catalogues are prepared according to the system of classification adopted. The catalogues enable the reader to look up his/her book and locate it in a very short time. The following entries are given in a catalogue: (1) Call Number, i.e. the Class Number and the Initial letters of the author's name, (2) Accession Number, (3) Author, (4) Title, (5) Publisher, (6) Date, (7) Volume or part, if any. Each book is given this information. In the case of titles that have no author (for example: a journal), the title itself is taken as the author. Normally, an Author Index and a Subject Index are prepared. The catalogue follows the classification of books on the shelf.

There are three modes of preparing these catalogues (Author and Subject) for the use of the reader: (1) Card Catalogue, (2) Book-form, and (3) Sheaf form.

There are three modes of preparing Catalogues

2.1.1.1. Card Catalogue

In this type of Catalogue, the information to be provided are typed or written on cards of uniform size and thickness. One card is prepared for each volume in the library. Cross-references, wherever necessary, are provided with separate cards (for example, a book by three authors will have three cards in the Author Index).

The advantages of this type are: (i) it is easy to consult; (ii) it is very flexible and can easily be manipulated without any hindrance to the system. Cards may be rearranged or replaced as and when needed. The system easily accommodates any number of additions (or deletions) at any frequency and grows with the library. Thus, it fully satisfies the 4th and 5th laws of Library Science enumerated by S.R. Ranganathan, namely, "Save the time of the reader; The Library is a growing organisation."

The disadvantages of the Card Catalogue are as follows: Since each volume has one card, sometimes two or three, the Catalogue will be extensive and stored in cabinets. Therefore, it cannot be moved from place to place. A separate space must be allocated within the library for it. Anyone who wishes to consult the Catalogue, even while in the library, must go to it. There is no possibility of taking the Catalogue home or consulting it at leisure outside the premises. Only those who use the library in person can benefit from this type of Catalogue.

2.1.1.2. Book Form

The required details are typed or printed (or written) one below the other on sheets and bound together in volumes. Cross-references are also provided in their order of sequence.

The advantages of this type of Catalogue are that several copies may be obtained at the same time without any appreciable loss of time. Copies could be kept in different sections of the library, so one need not go to a particular place to consult the Catalogue. It can be carried wherever one wishes. Even an outsider may gain an idea of the wealth of books in the library.

The disadvantage is that it ignores the 4th and 5th Laws of Library Science. It cannot accommodate any additions; only supplementary volumes are to be prepared at frequent intervals. This creates confusion and delays in consultation, as one has to go through several volumes. If supplements are not issued frequently but at intervals to avoid too many of them, then the reader will remain unaware of

- In the Card Catalogue, the information to be provided is typed or written on cards of uniform size and thickness

- The required details are typed or printed (or written) one below the other on sheets

recent acquisitions. It must be remembered that printed books are added to the library every day, and by the time the reader locates a book in the library, it may be too late.

2.1.1.3. Sheaf Form

This provides the details of the books on slips of paper of convenient size and filed in volumes, thus combining the features of card form and book form.

Accordingly, it has the advantages of both forms. It is flexible and portable. However, there are disadvantages. The size of the paper cannot be as small as that of a card, which is sufficient for the entries. Additionally, the paper is too thin to withstand frequent use, necessitating the replacement of slips very often. In both cases, there is unnecessary wastage of paper, and paper slips cannot be stored in cabinets.

Taking all these factors into consideration, as well as the fact that the Catalogue is meant for the users of the library, the Card form is preferred over other forms and is being followed in all libraries, both Indian and foreign.

Now, we may examine these catalogues from the perspective of a Manuscript Library. To begin with, we may note the special features of a Manuscript Library: (1) The Fifth Law of Library Science has little relevance in a Manuscript Library, as the rate of growth is very low; (2) There is no comparison between the frequency of readers visiting a Printed Books Library and that of a Manuscript Library. Only specialised scholars utilise this library; in other words, the number of users is very limited and not restricted to any particular geographical area; (3) Manuscripts cannot be browsed near the shelves. One must sit in a designated area to consult a manuscript due to the nature of the manuscripts and the care required in handling them.

However, even in the Manuscript Library, it is necessary to maintain a Master Record Accession Register of all manuscript items (which might include charts, paintings with inscriptions, etc.) as they are acquired. The bibliographical details vary from those of printed books. Many Sanskrit works are known by their titles, although in some cases, the name of the author may be handed down through tradition. Some works, however, are anonymous. While preparing the Catalogue, one must be guided by the information provided in the manuscript. Therefore, the titles of manuscripts that are invariably found should be given preference. Obviously, there is no necessity for columns for publisher or year. On the other hand, the script, material, etc., must be noted. Thus, the items of an entry in the Accession Register for manuscripts are: (1) Date; (2) Accession Number; (3) Title; (4) Author; (5) Material; (6) Script; (7) Size (in centimetres);

(8) Number of leaves; (9) Number of lines per page and number of letters per line; (10) Extent (number of granthas and whether complete or not); (11) Condition of the manuscript and date, if any; (12) Evaluation; (13) Cost; (14) Class Number; (15) Source; (16) Purchase/Donation; (17) Remarks.

The materials and scripts of manuscripts, as discussed earlier, are varied. The size, number of leaves/pages, etc., provide an overview of the manuscripts. To calculate the extent of contents in a manuscript, the unit is a 'grantha', which consists of 32 letters. It is akin to referring to a paragraph in English as having a certain number of words. It also represents the number of syllables in a verse of the Anuṣṭup metre. The average number of letters per line multiplied by the number of lines per page and the number of pages, divided by 32, gives the number of granthas in a book. The condition—whether good, worm-eaten, mutilated, or very old—needs mention. The date, if available, should also be recorded. A scheme of evaluation is followed to determine the cost of a manuscript, which may differ from institution to institution. Broadly, the scheme is as follows: The manuscript of an unprinted work has more value than that of a printed work; if the printed book is out of print, then it is as good as not being in print. If a title under either of these two categories is new to the library, it has the maximum value assigned for that category. Naturally, it is a treasure if the title is unique in the manuscript world. The value decreases as the number of copies available in the library increases, with this distinction: while even a tenth copy of an unprinted work may be valuable, even a fifth copy of a printed work does not acquire any monetary value. For calculating the purchase price of a manuscript, the rate is fixed per 1,000 granthas under both categories. However, sometimes a library may have to purchase a manuscript by paying the price asked by the seller.

Regarding the Manuscript Catalogue, the following information should be provided for each manuscript: Title, author, class number, script, number of folios/pages, complete/incomplete, Remarks (for example: with commentary or with/without the original text in the case of commentary, as applicable).

2.1.2 Form of a Manuscript Catalogue

As noted earlier, a scholar visiting a Manuscript Library cannot browse the manuscripts near the shelves. Hence, there is no need for the classification of manuscripts on the shelf. Another, more important reason is that it is not practicable. Manuscripts must be classified on the shelf according to material rather than by subject. Paper manuscripts cannot be shelved with palm leaf manuscripts. Even among paper manuscripts, classification must be done according to size.

This aspect must receive preferential attention from the perspective of preservation. Often, a manuscript codex, particularly in palm leaf, may contain more than one title. Therefore, manuscripts cannot be arranged on the shelf according to title or subject. Consequently, the Catalogue order need not conform to the order of books on the shelf, or vice versa. One method of arrangement could be to classify manuscripts by material and size. This serial number under the category helps locate the manuscripts on the shelf easily. The category here is the material. Thus, the palm leaf manuscript bears a serial number preceded by, for example, P for palm leaf. Paper is usually classified into three sizes: hall foolscap (bound), foolscap quarter (bound), and loose sheets. Each of these will have a separate serial number preceded by, for example, PA, PB, and PC, respectively. A title index and a Tide Index arranged subject wise are to be prepared.

The Manuscripts Catalogue needs to be in the form of cards in the Library Register and also printed. A copy of a printed book available in one library is exactly the same as the copy of the book in another library. However, this is not true for manuscripts. Let alone copies in other libraries; the copies of a text found in one library may not be identical; each is "different" from the other. Hence, it is imperative that the Catalogues of all Manuscript Libraries must be available in all Manuscript Libraries and also to scholars and researchers in general. In other words, every Manuscript Library must issue its Catalogue in print. Since the rate of acquisition is very low, supplements may be issued from time to time, with a consolidated one issued after a few years. The perusal of several volumes does not create confusion because working with manuscripts requires a great amount of patience and care. However, this does not preclude a Librarian of a Manuscript Library from preparing a Card Catalogue for the use of scholars visiting that library.

2.1.2.1 Descriptive Catalogue

It is not sufficient for a Manuscript Library to merely print and make available its Catalogue—title-wise and subject-wise—to sister institutions worldwide. Manuscripts Catalogue work is not complete without the preparation of a Descriptive Catalogue.

A Descriptive Catalogue, as its very name suggests, is a catalogue that provides a description of the manuscripts so that a scholar referring to it may visualise them. An ordinary catalogue informs about the existence of a copy. A Descriptive Catalogue furnishes details. The Government of India, Department of Education, Sanskrit Section, Ministry of Human Resource Development, New Delhi, provides financial assistance to institutions to prepare and publish Descriptive Catalogues of the manuscripts in their possession and has prescribed the format as follows:

A Descriptive Catalogue consists of two parts: Part One gives the physical details of a manuscript, with titles arranged alphabetically under different subject headings. The order of the columns spread across two adjoining pages is: Call Number, Title, Author, Material, Size (in centimetres), Number of folios/pages, Number of lines per page, Number of letters per line, Extant (C/Inc.), Condition of the manuscript, and Remarks (Whether printed, etc.). Part Two shall contain extracts of the manuscript: (a) a few lines at the beginning, (b) a few lines at the end, just enough to compare two copies of the same work and identify them, and (c) the Colophon. If the Colophon at the end is not available, a Colophon from elsewhere in the copy is provided. If there is more than one copy of a work in the library, then the extracts may be taken from any of them, with only differences, if any, in other copies noted. The letter P is prefixed to the Call Number in Part One to indicate that extracts from that copy are given in Part Two. These extracts are necessary because they help differentiate a manuscript from its namesake and establish that one and the same work is known under different titles.

The Colophon generally gives the title of the work, its nature, the name of the author, sometimes including his titles, parentage, and patron's name, etc.

2.1.2.2 Catalogus Catalogorum (CC)

To facilitate reference to manuscript catalogues of various institutions worldwide, Theodor Aufrecht conceived and compiled, in Germany, A Catalogus Catalogorum, a catalogue of catalogues in three parts (Heidelberg, 1891; Bonn 1896; reprint 1962 by Franz Steiner Verlag SMBH, Wiesbaden). This was compiled from and provides references to manuscripts noted in the catalogues and lists of manuscripts available during his time. The Catalogus Catalogorum is an alphabetical register of names of authors and titles of works. Under an author, all works known under that name in the source material are listed. Under the title of a work, the author, if any, and the reference to the catalogues (volume number and page) wherein the work is mentioned are provided. This minimises the effort of scholars in determining whether any manuscript of a work is available and, if so, in which institution. References to commentaries and super-commentaries are also provided under the title entry.

- The Catalogus Catalogorum is an alphabetical register of names of authors and titles of works

Aufrecht's Catalogus Catalogorumhas many faulty entries, but the defect lies not in Aufrecht's magnificent labour but in the source material on which he relied. This was noted as far back as 1935, when more authentic catalogues and descriptive catalogues were available. Thus, a revision of the Catalogus Catalogorum was strongly felt by scholars.

2.1.2.3 New Catalogus Catalogorum (NCC)

In 1935, Dr A.C. Woolner, Vice-Chancellor of Punjab University, Lahore, wrote a letter to the University of Madras, proposing a revision of the Catalogus Catalogorum. The University considered and accepted the proposal. A committee, with M.M. S. Kuppuswami Sastri as editor-in-chief and Sri P.P.S. Sastry and Dr S. Kunhan Raja as members, was formed. The work commenced in November 1935. The first volume was published in 1949, after which there was a lull for about 15 years. In 1966, Volume II appeared under the editorship of Dr V. Raghavan. The first volume was also revised and issued in 1968. Dr C. Kunjunni Raja took over after Dr V. Raghavan retired. Now, Dr N. Veezhinathan shoulders the responsibility. So far, 12 volumes covering up to the end of the letter 'Pa' have been published (1966, 67, 68, 71, 73, 77, 1978, 1992; Volume I Rev. 1968).

- Buddhist, Jaina, and Prakrit works and authors are included in the New Catalogus Catalogorum

The method followed is essentially that of the Catalogus Catalogorum. However, Buddhist, Jaina, and Prakrit works and authors are also included in the New Catalogus Catalogorum. The additional information provided about the dates and lives of authors, along with bibliographical details in cases where the manuscript text is available in print, has enhanced the value of the NCC. However, efforts should be made to ensure that the pending volumes are published promptly.

The effort of scholars in pooling together the wealth of manuscripts for their preservation and use can be understood by the number of catalogues or lists published. Aufrecht based his CC on 98 catalogues/lists. Gidwani and Nawalani mention 500, Katre refers to 187 entries of catalogues, Raghavan lists 465, Pingue 325, and Pandurangi 200 entries. Janert, who speaks of 339+36 catalogues, is the most exhaustive regarding catalogues published. Prajapati has physically checked 337 catalogues and lists 632 catalogues in 25 libraries in Delhi, comprising 1,355 volumes covering 600,000 Sanskrit, Pali, and Prakrit manuscripts, and 170,000 manuscripts in other Indian languages. Out of 632 catalogues, 361 are those published in India; the other 271 have been published outside India.

2.1.3 Importance of Preservation of Manuscripts

Preservation of manuscripts is a technical topic for which a scientific background is necessary. It forms part of the broad field of conservation science in general and the conservation of old documents in particular. Mere knowledge of manuscripts is not enough for their proper preservation. The problems connected with the preservation of manuscripts are varied, and it is not possible to explore all the details of this issue here. In fact, the preservation of manuscripts can be effectively carried out only after obtaining on-the-job training.

Preservation is the general term used, but it encompasses conservation, reconstruction, restoration, and preventive conservation. The preservation of manuscripts has two main aspects: one is the proper storage of manuscripts, and the other is the use of preservation agents. In both cases, the materials used for writing the manuscripts and the polluting agents play a significant role.

Paper and palm leaf, the chief materials for writing books, deteriorate over time. The durability depends on the quality of the material and the care taken in preserving them. Thus, the care of manuscripts presupposes knowledge of the conditions that lead to their destruction. These conditions generally include time, fire, water, heat, dust, humidity, atmosphere, gases, fungi, insects, rodents, and, last but not least, human beings.

2.1.4 Causes of Destruction of Manuscripts

The causes of destruction of modern printed books apply to manuscripts as well. However, manuscripts require more attention than printed books due to the nature of the materials used, as each manuscript is unique and irreplaceable. Hence, each manuscript requires individual attention. Manuscripts must be protected from the adverse effects of environmental conditions, climatic fluctuations, pests, and human interference.

Water, fire, and wicked individuals are the primary enemies of books, as observed by the 10th-century critic Rajasekhara. The couplet usually written at the end of manuscripts exhorts one to protect them from oil, water, loose binding, and falling into wicked hands. A wicked person, a mūrkhā, has no respect for books and may even be envious of them. Hence, books may not be safe in such hands. In our tradition, the book is regarded as an object of worship, which underscores the need for care when handling manuscripts. It is well known that books are susceptible to fire. Water, if it soaks the pages, is dangerous, as is oil, which promotes the growth of fungi. If the binding is loose, the leaves are at risk of damage. Palm leaf bundles must also be bound tightly; otherwise, the edges of the leaves can become damaged.

2.1.4.1 Climatic Conditions

Manuscripts are affected by variations in humidity levels. If humidity is low, the leaves become brittle; high humidity encourages mould growth. Low humidity combined with heat is the greatest enemy of palm leaf manuscripts. Palm leaf is found to be four times as strong as wood or hand-made paper. While it loses strength due to age, this occurs only slightly. From the perspective of permanence, palm leaf is an excellent material for records, except for the fact that

its resistance to wear and tear is very poor.

2.1.4.2 Environment

Air poses hazards as a carrier of dust and chemical gases. Chemical gases are often undetectable and have adverse effects on ink and modern paper. Dust, though minute, threatens books by providing breeding grounds for worms and insects.

1. **Fungus:** Fungus, mildew, or mould are particles found in the air. While they settle on damp wood, paper, etc., they grow horizontally on the surface of the material and disfigure it. If fungus occurs between the leaves, they stick together and cannot be separated without damaging them.

2. **Insects:** There are more than a million varieties of insects documented by biologists, but only a few are harmful to books.

   a) Silverfish: The insect is so called because its form resembles that of a fish, tapering backwards and is silver-grey in colour. It bores holes in books and is fond of starch (used to smooth the writing surface), gum, and gelatin. Silverfish shun light, and their activity increases in darkness.

   b) Cockroach: Though this name applies to a group of insects known as Blattidae, it usually refers to one species, the black beetle. Three varieties are found in libraries throughout the world, especially in hot climates. It is a remarkable creature in that it can squeeze itself into very small crevices. While it can eat anything, it can live without food for days. It also disfigures books with its black excreta. Cockroaches are active in darkness.

   c) Bookworm: Though any worm in a book may be called a 'bookworm', it is more commonly applied to the larvae of various beetles. The beetle lays eggs on the edges of books. The larva moves into the book or palm leaf bundle, boring horizontally and vertically. Lyctus brunneus is another species that destroys books; it is called ghoon (ghuna) in India.

   d) Termites: Termites are usually referred to as white ants. Their colour ranges from pale yellow to dark brown. Termites are small in size, and their bodies are soft. Still, they are voracious eaters of cellulose. However, they are selective feeders. Thus, the damage inflicted by these insects need not be solely due to their eating; it may also result from the holes bored by them or from corrosion caused by moisture or bodily secretions.

   e) Wasps: Wasps do not feed on books. One variety bores holes in wood to build its nest. Another variety, called mud-wasp, builds mud nests that adhere tightly to surfaces. Books are lia-

ble to damage or disfigurement if these nests are built on their edges.

    f) Booklice: These are minute insects of the order Corrodentia that attack books. They are also called Psocids. There are also wood-boring beetles.

3. Rats: It is well known that rats attack manuscripts and books, reducing them to pieces. They can easily bore holes in brick walls and wooden cabinets.

4. Man-made problems: The damage caused by improper storage and careless handling is purely man-made. Manuscripts should not be dumped in piles. Suitable storage places must be selected. Each codex should be tightly tied to the extent needed. Both excessive loosening and excessive tightening can be injurious to manuscript materials.

2.1.5 Preservation techniques

In India, effective traditional methods for preserving manuscripts have existed. Since climatic conditions show regional variations, traditional preservation methods also exhibit corresponding variations depending on the region. Though these methods are now almost neglected, they are well-suited as they evolve according to the weather conditions of the respective areas. Additionally, the materials used for preservation are easily available locally.

If the floor and walls are neatly cement-plastered, there is no fear of termites. If the library is housed in an old building, one must be constantly vigilant to check every nook and corner periodically. To combat termites, almirahs should be kept at least 15 cm away from the ground, wall, and roof. Not only is this measure precautionary against termites, but it also contributes to the general cleanliness of the library and allows free air circulation. Manuscripts might be immersed in a slightly alkaline solution to reduce the acid content of the dried ink.

The methods utilised for the preservation of manuscripts can be classified into two types: traditional methods and modern methods.

2.1.5.1 Traditional Methods

The traditional way of storing manuscripts is in wooden or cane boxes and wooden almirahs. The folios of the manuscripts are tightly bound before being placed in the box to protect them from easy access by insects and worms. The codices are properly tied with upper and lower wooden plates (pieces of wooden planks). These wooden plates are the same size as the manuscripts and are generally made

- The traditional way of keeping manuscripts is in wooden or in cane boxes

from teak wood, jack wood, or neem wood. In rare instances, they may be made from ivory.

The wooden boxes in which the manuscripts are to be kept are generally made of teak wood, as it is not easily susceptible to termites and is more durable. These boxes have four stands to ensure that the bottom does not touch the floor. Turmeric powder is sprinkled around the stands. In some cases, each manuscript is kept in separate boxes specially designed for this purpose. Manuscripts are also protected from dust by covering them with silk cloth when kept in boxes. In some places, each manuscript bundle is wrapped in coloured cloth, usually red or blue. These coloured cloths, which have flaps that can be tied together, are made according to the size of the manuscripts. Red or blue cloths are used as they are thought to be unattractive to insects. Dried neem leaves are spread inside the boxes where the manuscripts are kept, and black pepper and camphor are also strewed inside. Black pepper is considered an effective material for absorbing moisture, while camphor protects manuscripts from fungus and insects. Though not very common, black cumin is sometimes used instead of black pepper. Similarly, dry tobacco leaves are used by some. Black cumin and dry tobacco leaves are not allowed to have direct contact with the manuscripts; hence, they are placed in small cloth bags called 'kizhi' in Malayalam before being placed in the box. In some cases, with regard to privately held manuscripts, the boxes are kept in 'Thattinpuram', usually near the kitchen area.

The palm leaf manuscripts are occasionally taken out from the boxes. The boxes are cleaned and placed in sunlight for a few hours. After removing dust particles by rubbing the leaves with a piece of soft cloth or by brushing each folio, they are oiled with lemongrass oil.

2.1.5.2 Modern Methods

Naphthalene balls or camphor may be kept with paper manuscripts, as they work against silverfish. The use of mercuric chloride (HC) is an older method. This chemical is not only highly poisonous but also persistent. A 5% solution of this is effective against the American cockroach. A less poisonous insecticide is ammonium thiocyanate (NH_4SCN) or potassium thiocyanate (KSCN). However, care must be taken to avoid iron. To combat mould on manuscripts, interleaves of tissue paper impregnated with thymol ($C_{10}H_{14}O$) and an insecticide are recommended. The chief techniques used in modern times for the preservation of manuscripts include air-conditioning, deep-freezing, moisture absorbents, photocopying, microfilming, digital archiving, and fumigation.

> ◆ The palm leaf manuscripts are taken out from the boxes occasionally

I. Air-conditioning

Maintaining a constant temperature prolongs the longevity of manuscripts. In India, where extreme climatic conditions exist, air-conditioning of libraries is highly essential. It significantly helps to reduce the problem of dust. Air-conditioned rooms are not conducive to the survival of many worms and insects. However, attention is required to ensure that air-conditioning is maintained throughout the day. Switching off the air conditioner for extended periods will adversely affect the manuscripts.

II. Deep-Freezing

When the temperature reaches freezing point or below, insects and worms cannot survive. Hence, documents that are to be preserved can be kept at freezing point. Since insecticides are not used in this method, it is non-toxic. For deep-freezing, a specially designed deep-freezer is employed. The books or manuscripts are placed inside polythene bags, which are tightly sealed. These loaded bags are placed on a trolley fitted for the freezer. After closing the lid, the deep-freezer is switched on. The loaded bags are kept inside the chamber for about three days. Afterward, the bags are removed from the freezer and left in the open air for a few hours to remove any dew on the outer surface of the polythene bags. The manuscripts are then taken out of the bags and placed in their original storage location.

> ◆ For deep-freezing, a specially designed deep-freezer is used

III. Moisture Absorbents

To protect manuscripts from moisture, various types of moisture absorbents are used. The chief among them are silica gel, anhydrous calcium chloride, and charcoal. Among all moisture absorbents, silica gel is the most efficient and is considered very safe. To reduce humidity in non-air-conditioned manuscript libraries, the use of moisture absorbents is highly suitable. Such absorbents can be placed in different parts of the room.

IV. Photocopying

Whatever care one takes, it may not be possible to preserve manuscripts forever. Hence, preservation of their contents becomes essential. Photocopying is used for preserving the contents of manuscripts. Having copies also serves as a preservation technique in the sense that these photocopies can be utilised for references and studies, allowing the original manuscripts to remain untouched. This helps in the safe protection of the original manuscripts.

V. Microfilming

With the help of a microfilm camera, manuscripts can be microfilmed, and when needed, they can be read through a microfilm reader. By using microfilms, frequent handling of the original manuscripts can be avoided. However, it should be noted that in the case of both photocopying and microfilming, the heat emitted can be injurious to

the manuscript material.

VI. **Digital Archiving**

The written lines of the manuscripts can be transferred to CD ROMs and, whenever necessary, can be read either from the computer screen or from their printout. For this purpose, computers with scanning facilities are used. Both palm leaf and paper manuscripts can be directly scanned with the help of a scanner.

VII. **Fumigation**

The manuscripts infested by mildew and insects may be subjected to fumigation in a specially prepared chamber. If the total height is about 180 cm, four to five shelves may be arranged at about 30 cm intervals, leaving more space below. In the middle of the lower cover plank, a round (7.5 cm diameter) hole may be cut, and a stainless-steel plate fixed there. The infested manuscripts are to be spread on the shelves. A glass plate containing the chemical Thymol (100–150 gm per one cubic metre) is kept on the steel plate. Under the steel plate, a vacuum electric bulb of 60 watts is made to burn for about four to five hours. The heat sublimates the chemical, and the vapours pass through the manuscripts above, destroying the insects. The manuscripts should be left in the chamber for two days, then cleaned and restored.

The use of chemicals may smudge carbon inks; therefore, proper precautions are necessary before subjecting the manuscripts to fumigation. Naphthalene ($C_{10}H_8$) can be used as a fumigant. It is a cheap and readily available insect repellent. In the Oriental Research Institute, Mysore, a special kind of oil, an Ayurvedic preparation, has been employed for about 40 years to keep the palm leaves in good condition. The sesame (tila) oil is treated with herbal juice and other insecticidal ingredients. The oil, when smeared thinly and evenly on both sides of the palm leaf with a brush, not only cleans the dirt off the palm leaf, making the letters legible, but also keeps the insects away and makes the leaf pliable.

2.1.6 Repair of Manuscripts

Manuscripts tend to be damaged, regardless of how careful one may be, due to frequent handling for study and research. Therefore, the periodic repair of manuscripts must be a priority in preservation. Torn pieces are to be carefully glued, and paper manuscripts in book form should be checked for mending injured bindings. Physical care of manuscripts must take precedence. Each manuscript must be given individual attention.

Worm-eaten sheets or leaves may also be given tissue paper support. Broken leaves, torn sheets, or gaps may be filled with blank

- A fumigation chamber is an air-tight almirah with shelves made of wire mesh and glass doors

- Periodic repair of manuscripts must be one of the items of preservation

leaves or hand-made paper sheets cut to the required size. This ensures uniformity in the size of sheets and prevents further mutilation. Manuscripts drenched in water should be dried under a fan. The leaves should be carefully separated and spread out for drying. They should not be exposed to sunlight or dried with an electric heater.

2.1.6.1. Lamination

Lamination is the process of enclosing each leaf or sheet in cellulose acetate

Lamination is the process of enclosing each leaf or sheet in cellulose acetate or polythene foil. Some also use chiffon for this purpose. There are now automatic machines that perform this work. Paintings and unique manuscripts should be laminated to prevent deterioration due to pests or climatic aberrations. However, experts note that lamination has its own limitations.

Both traditional and modern methods recognise the importance of manuscript care. The techniques adopted are almost the same. Once the causes of manuscript destruction are known, it becomes easier to look after them. Darkness should be avoided in areas where manuscripts are stored. The place must have sufficient light, but direct sunlight should not fall on the manuscripts. When artificial light is necessary, it must not produce heat. Shelves should be arranged to allow for free movement. Precautionary measures against fire, such as the installation of firefighting gadgets—extinguishers and smoke alarms—need to be undertaken. It is noteworthy that tests have shown that Indian paint is fire-resistant.

- The manuscripts, as well as the shelves, should be cleaned regularly

Dust must be controlled scrupulously. The manuscripts, as well as the shelves, should be cleaned regularly and frequently using a duster cloth. Dust should be wiped away rather than spread around. The red cloth of manuscript bundles should also be cleaned regularly. The floor of the stockroom should be wiped frequently with a wet cloth. With regard to palm leaf manuscripts, arrangements must be made to ensure that every bundle is cleaned, leaf by leaf, at least once a month. Each leaf should be wiped on both sides with a cloth. While wiping the leaf, care should be taken not to drag the hand back over it, as this may cause breakage; the hand should move from the centre outwards. Manuscripts, whether paper or palm leaf, may also be cleaned mechanically using vacuum cleaners. Any insects present will reveal themselves through this process.

Maintaining cleanliness goes a long way in controlling the menace of insects and fungi. The person in charge should always be vigilant. To control insects like silverfish, bookworms, and cockroaches, chemical insecticides may be used.

Summarised Overview

While ancient India had libraries with some form of classification, no specific records of these systems exist. However, evidence such as broad classifications in sacred texts, indexing efforts like Anukramanis and Nighantus, and subject-wise anthologies suggest an awareness of content organisation. Modern printed-book libraries, unlike manuscript libraries, typically use established systems like Colon Classification or Dewey Decimal and maintain an Accession Register for all acquisitions. Catalogues for printed books provide details such as call numbers, authors, and titles, and are presented as Card Catalogues (the most common due to flexibility), Book-form Catalogues (portable but hard to update), or Sheaf-form Catalogues (combining features but with durability issues). Manuscript libraries, however, have unique needs: slower growth, limited specialised users, and the inability to browse shelves due to preservation concerns. Their Accession Register includes specific details such as material, script, size, and condition, with "grantha" as a unit of measurement for content extent. Manuscript catalogues must be printed due to the unique nature of each copy, making a Descriptive Catalogue crucial, as it provides physical details and extracts to differentiate unique manuscripts. To centralise information on global manuscript holdings, Theodor Aufrecht compiled the Catalogus Catalogorum (CC), which was later revised into the ongoing New Catalogus Catalogorum (NCC) by the University of Madras to include Buddhist, Jaina, and Prakrit works and address earlier inaccuracies.

The preservation of manuscripts is a specialised field within conservation science, crucial for safeguarding irreplaceable historical documents. These fragile artifacts are vulnerable to numerous destructive agents, including environmental factors like humidity and temperature extremes, pollutants such as dust and chemical gases, and biological threats from fungi and various insects like silverfish, cockroaches, bookworms, termites, and booklice. Even human mishandling and negligence contribute significantly to their deterioration. Historically, India developed effective traditional methods of preservation, utilising materials like neem leaves, camphor, and specialised oils, and employing practices such as storing manuscripts in treated wooden boxes and periodic sunning. Modern techniques, conversely, involve air-conditioning, deep-freezing, moisture absorbents, and digitalisation through photocopying, microfilming, and digital archiving. Fumigation with chemicals like thymol or naphthalene is also used to combat insect and mildew infestations. Regardless of the method, constant vigilance, meticulous cleaning, and controlled environmental conditions are paramount to extending the lifespan of these invaluable records.

Assignment

1. How did ancient Indian scholars attempt to classify knowledge, and what evidence supports these early efforts in organization?

2. What is the primary purpose of a library catalogue, and what two major classification systems are commonly used in modern printed-books libraries in India?

3. What is an Accession Register, and what key information does it record for each item acquired by a library?

4. Describe the three main modes of preparing library catalogues for readers, and briefly explain one advantage and one disadvantage of the "Card Catalogue" system.

5. Why is it generally not practical to classify manuscripts on shelves by subject or title, and what alternative classification method is suggested for their physical arrangement?

6. What is a "Descriptive Catalogue" in the context of manuscripts, and what global initiative was undertaken by Theodor Aufrecht to create a comprehensive "Catalogue of Catalogues"?

7. What is the broad definition of "preservation" in the context of manuscripts, and what two main aspects does it encompass?

8. Explain how adverse climatic conditions, specifically variations in humidity and heat, can negatively impact both paper and palm-leaf manuscripts.

9. Describe at least three different types of insects mentioned in the text that are harmful to manuscripts, and explain how each causes damage.

10. What are some of the traditional methods of manuscript preservation practiced in India ?

11. Briefly explain modern methods of manuscript preservation

12. Describe the process of "fumigation" as a modern preservation technique for infested manuscripts, including the equipment and chemicals typically used, and any necessary precautions.

Suggested Reading

1. Siva Ganesa Murthy,*Introduction to Manuscriptology*, SaradaPublications, New Delhi, 1996.

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3. K.V. Sarma,*Some New Techniques in Collating Manuscripts and Editing Texts*, ,1965.

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Unit : 2

Major Manuscript Libraries

Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of the unit, the learner will be able to:

- ❖ familiarise learners with the core writing techniques in ancient India, the process of emendation, and various methods of manuscript preservation

- ❖ increase awareness of Manuscriptology and the major manuscript libraries in India and abroad

- ❖ present ancient literature to the world

- ❖ understand various methods of manuscript preservation

Background

Manuscript libraries worldwide serve as crucial custodians of written heritage, preserving unique historical, cultural, and scientific records that offer invaluable insights into human civilisation. These institutions play a vital role in making these precious documents accessible for scholarly research and public appreciation.

Keywords

Saraswathi Bhavan, Madras Govt. Oriental Manuscript Library, Nalanda, Valabhi, British Library.

Discussion

2.2.1. Manuscript Libraries in India and Abroad

- ◆ The Saraswati Bhavan Library of the Government Sanskrit College, Benaras

The Saraswati Bhavan Library of the Government Sanskrit College, Benaras (now Sampurnanand Sanskrit University), is the earliest modern manuscripts library in India. It was established in 1791 and had a journal, Pandita Patrikā, in which Sanskrit works were printed serially. Later, books were issued in the series Princess of Wales Sarasvati Bhavana Sanskrit Series.

Maharaja Serfoji of Tanjore (1798-1832) established a library in the modern sense, which the Madras Government recognised as a library in 1918. The Tanjore Palace Library was its nucleus. In 1857, the Ranvir Sanskrit Residential Institute was established in Jammu.

The Government Oriental Manuscripts Library (GOML), Madras, has been caring for manuscripts since 1870. The Adyar Library and Research Centre was founded in Madras in 1886.

◆ The Government of His Highness the Maharaja Chamaraja Odeyar, Mysore

The Government of His Highness the Maharaja Chamaraja Odeyar, Mysore, established the Government Oriental Library in Mysore in 1891, which included the Archaeological Section. Pt. A. Mahadeva Sastri was its first curator, followed by Dr. R. Shama Sastri of Arthaśastra fame. Publication work began early, in 1893. With the establishment of the University of Mysore in 1916, the administration of the library was transferred to the university. In 1943, the library was recognised as the Oriental Research Institute. In 1966, the Kannada manuscripts were transferred to the newly established (1964) Institute of Kannada Studies at the university.

In 1893, the Central Library, Baroda, started a section for Sanskrit manuscripts. By 1927, this section had developed enough to be renamed the Sayaji Rao Gaekwad Oriental Institute. Many rare texts have been published. The manuscripts collected by the Government of Bombay became the nucleus of the world-famous Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute in 1917, named after the great savant R.G. Bhandarkar. It has since been a well-known international centre for Sanskrit studies.

◆ The Maharaja's Palace Library in Thiruvanantha puram

Maharaja Svati Tirunal Rama Varma (1812-1827) developed the Maharaja's Palace Library in Thiruvananthapuram (Kerala). The Curator's Office established a library of manuscripts collected, which were amalgamated into the Oriental Manuscripts Library ushered in by Kerala University (1937). Sri Venkateswara University established an Oriental Research Institute in 1939. The Kuppuswami Sastri Research Institute, Madras, takes its name from the renowned scholar Mahamahopadhyaya S. Kuppuswami Sastri of Madras and came into existence in 1944.

There are many more universities, institutions, maths, and Jain Bhandaras where Sanskrit manuscripts have been collected. There are more than 300 libraries, both small and large, all over India.

2.2.2. General Awareness of Major Manuscript Libraries in Ancient India

From at least the fourth century BCE, mendicant groups, including Buddhists, Jains, and ājīvikas, whose vows included a peripatetic

lifestyle, were permitted to stay in one place for the three months of the rainy season. These monsoon sojourns evolved over the centuries into monastic institutions that included educational functions. New monastic centres of learning that became particularly famous included Nālandā (Bihar, from ca. 4th century-1200), Valabhī, Jagaddala (Bengal, ca. 1100-1200), Odantapurī (Bihar, from ca. 700), and Somapura (Rajshahi, Bangladesh, ca. 8th-12th centuries). Many of these institutions developed libraries. From the detailed descriptive accounts of the Chinese pilgrim Xuanzang (602-664), it has been estimated that there were at least 212,130 ordained monks involved in scholarship and education in the middle of the seventh century.

The figures for Jaina monks and institutions of the period are not as well known, but the Jainas too developed a large network of temple libraries for the use of peripatetic monks, and groups of Jaina monks were present at monasteries like Nalanda that are usually thought of as Buddhist. Many of the Buddhist monastic libraries were destroyed by the Islamic incursions of Muhammad Bakhtiar Khilji (d. 1205) and others, and medieval Buddhist manuscripts from India are very rare. Jaina libraries seem to have fared slightly better, although many libraries established by the twelfth-century kings Kumārapāla and Vastupāla in Patan are thought to have been destroyed during the Muslim conquests. However, many great Jaina library collections have survived to the present day. These include the Koba Tirth collection mentioned above, as well as the L.D. Institute in Ahmedabad, the Jñāna Bhandāra in Jaisalmer, the Hemacandra Jñāna Bhandāra in Pāṭan, and many others.

Libraries were often kept in semi-secret chambers or cellars, with access strictly limited to monks. The broad cultural and philosophical interests of Jaina scholars over the ages have meant that Jaina scribes also copied non-Jaina works in relative abundance. Jaina manuscript libraries today are of great importance not only for the history of Jainism itself but also for all aspects of early Indian cultural and literary history. Today, there are hundreds of major Indian manuscript libraries in India and scores abroad, especially in Europe and the USA. Some are the result of government collection policies, others are royal libraries created by former maharajas. Yet others are parts of religious endowments, schools, temples, and monasteries. Finally, there are many private collections.

2.2.3. Abroad

Of libraries in countries outside India, the most important are:

Denmark:1. Royal Library, Copenhagen.

France   : 2. Bibliotheque Nationale, Paris.

Germany: 3. Preussiche States bibliothek, Berlin.

           4. Universitats bibliothek, Leipzig.

           5. Staats bibliothek, Marburg.

           6. Bayerishe Staats bibliothek, Muenchen.

           7. Universitats bibliothek, Tuebingen

Great   8. British Library, London.

Britain : 9. India Office Library, London.

           10. Royal Asiatic Society, London.

           11. Bodleian Library, Oxford.

           12. India Institute, Oxford.

           13. Cambridge University Library, Cambridge.

Nepal   : 14. Darbar Library, Kathamandu.

Pakistan: 15.Punjab University Library, Lahore.

Sri Lanka:16. Museum Library, Colombo.

USSR   :17. Aziatasij Muzej Imperat, Akademii Nauk Petrograd.

We learn from Pandurangi's book that hundreds of manuscripts are yet to be catalogued in the Bodleian Library and libraries in Germany. It is fervently hoped that scholars will consider this and ensure that they are catalogued early. Since most of these manuscripts were the early collections of European Indologists, the collection might contain rare manuscripts. Who knows, there may be a manuscript of a work known only by name or a better manuscript that solves the textual problems of works like Nāṭya-Śāstra?

Though sufficient effort has been made to compile the available manuscript material in institutions where they can be adequately cared for, there are still manuscripts lying in private custody in various locations, and there can be no complacency regarding their collection on the part of the Manuscripts Libraries. However, the work of organising or co-ordinating the activities of various institutions—both government and private, as well as those aided—dealing with manuscripts, both in India and abroad, is yet to be undertaken. Prof. M. V. Sitaramaiah has rightly called for the establishment of a Central Manuscripts Library where microfilms of all Indian manuscripts may be preserved, along with the manuscripts that may be transferred to it. This is indeed a laudable idea but involves considerable expenditure. Furthermore, it may give rise to certain problems: whether 'all

manuscripts' means 'all copies' irrespective of value; for instance, several copies of vratas should be made, etc. However, to begin with, there could be a Central Manuscript Service from which scholars can obtain information on and/or a microfilm copy of a needed Indian manuscript, regardless of which library it is held in. This institution would thus be able to consolidate and co-ordinate the work being done in the field of manuscript studies worldwide.

In this context, the programme of work of the Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts, Department of Arts, New Delhi, must be noted. One of the Centre's main aims is to serve as a major resource centre for written, oral, and visual arts (Kalanidhi). It is intended to function as a reference library of national importance, catering to bibliographical, reference, referral, document supply, etc., in all branches of the humanities and arts.

Inspite of the fact that all our universities with facilities for research in Sanskrit have established Manuscript Libraries, there does not appear to be a clear idea about the nature of a Manuscript Library in the minds of the administrators. Before concluding this chapter, it may be worthwhile to glance at what library experts write about a modern manuscript library, even though there is a fundamental difference in the concept of a manuscript. A manuscript refers to anything written by hand; it may include personal correspondence, marginal notes on printed material, written essays, and so on. However, it is not necessarily limited to books, as it is understood in this text. Nevertheless, this difference may be overlooked for a moment, as the principles can be adapted to any type of Manuscripts Library.

A Manuscripts Library must be distinguished from an archive and a museum. An archive preserves the permanent records of a government institution; records of historical importance are preserved for future use, primarily for that institution. Its service to scholars is only incidental.

A museum may collect materials from various sources. Although the choice of materials is not restricted to any particular item and may include anything from pieces of pottery to a throne, there are still museums devoted to specific fields of knowledge. The general public benefits from a museum. In contrast, a Manuscripts Library acquires manuscripts and very rare books from any source, preserves them, and provides services to scholars and students.

A Manuscripts Library should be an independent institution; it must "not be part of a large general library system", as manuscripts cannot be cared for in the same way as printed books and should not be handled as such. The staff needs to be trained in manuscript

care. The person responsible for manuscript care "should know how to conduct research themselves so that they can appreciate the problems faced by visiting scholars". Additionally, the person "must be knowledgeable in the special techniques of caring for and cataloguing manuscripts". If this requirement cannot be met, one should refrain from establishing a Manuscripts Library.

♦ The primary function of a manuscript library is to serve scholarship

The primary function of a Manuscripts Library is to serve scholarship; therefore, it must provide adequate working space, decent lighting, reasonable working hours, sufficient aids to locate desired materials among the collection, and publish information about its holdings. No Manuscripts Library deserves to exist if it is unable to inform scholars of its resources. It must provide duplicating and reproduction services and should not discriminate among its users.

Summarised Overview

Manuscript libraries are vital global custodians of written heritage, preserving historical, cultural, and scientific records for scholarly research and public appreciation. In India, institutions like the Saraswati Bhavan Library (established in 1791), the Government Oriental Manuscripts Library (Madras, 1870), the Government Oriental Library (Mysore, 1891), and the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute (Pune, 1917) have played pivotal roles in collecting and preserving manuscripts. Ancient Indian monastic centres like Nalanda and Valabhi also housed significant libraries, though many Buddhist collections were lost to historical invasions. Jaina libraries, however, have fared better, with numerous collections surviving to this day. Internationally, major manuscript repositories include the British Library, Vatican Apostolic Library, Bibliothèque nationale de France, and Bodleian Library, among others. While extensive efforts have been made to catalogue existing collections, many manuscripts remain uncatalogued, particularly abroad and in private custody. There is a recognised need for a central manuscript service or library, as proposed by Prof. M.V. Sitaramaiah, to consolidate information and provide access to scholars globally, exemplified by the work of the Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts. Ultimately, a Manuscripts Library should be an independent entity, distinct from archives and museums, staffed by specially trained personnel who understand both manuscript care and scholarly research needs, with its primary function being to serve scholarship through adequate facilities, published information, and reproduction services.

Self-Assessment Questions

1. Describe the origins of modern manuscript libraries in India, highlighting the establishment and early activities of the Saraswati Bhavan Library and Maharaja Serfoji's Library.

2. How did ancient monastic institutions in India, particularly Buddhist and Jaina centers, contribute to the development of early libraries?

3. What are some of the major manuscript libraries located outside of India that hold significant collections?

4. Describe the role and aims of the Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts (IGNCA) in New Delhi concerning its function as a resource center for arts and humanities.

5. How does a "Manuscript Library" differ from an "archive" and a "museum" in terms of its purpose, the materials it collects, and its primary beneficiaries?

6. What essential qualifications and responsibilities should the person in charge of manuscript care possess to effectively serve visiting scholars and maintain the collection?

Suggested Reading

1. Siva Ganesa Murthy, *Introduction to Manuscriptology*, SaradaPublications, New Delhi, 1996.

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Unit : 3

Paleography

Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of the unit, the learner will be able to:

❖ familiarise learners with the core writing techniques in ancient India

❖ understand the interrelation of paleography and linguistics

❖ understand epigraphy or the study of inscriptions

❖ present ancient literature to the whole world

Background

Epigraphy, or the study of inscriptions, has a twofold approach. One aspect involves the ability to decipher the script, while the other relates to interpreting the language and contents of the epigraph. This brings us to the fields of paleography and linguistics. In Indian epigraphical studies, paleography occupies a supreme place since it is directly connected with the evolution and formation of letters. As India is known for its diversity in traditions, culture, language, and literature, script is no exception. Apart from deciphering and interpreting an inscription, an epigraphist is required to understand the subtle nuances associated with the development of various early scripts, right from Brahmi and its derivatives.

Keywords

Epigraphy, handwriting, formations of letters, Charles Wilkinson, James Prinsep, Epigraphia.

Discussion

2.3.1 Paleography

♦ Paleography is the study of ancient and historical handwriting

Paleography is the study of ancient and historical handwriting, including the evolution of writing systems and the decipherment of scripts. It is a crucial field for understanding historical documents

and inscriptions. Paleography is closely linked to epigraphy, which focuses on the study of inscriptions themselves.

Epigraphy, or the study of inscriptions, has a two-fold approach: the ability to decipher the script and the ability to interpret the language and contents of the epigraph. Palaeography is relevant in this respect as it is a subset of epigraphy, directly connected with the evolution and formation of letters. The term 'Palaeography' is derived from the Greek words 'Palaios' and 'Graphein' (meaning old and to write, respectively). It encompasses the study of ancient and historical handwriting, including the forms and processes of writing. The discipline of Palaeography consists of the practice of deciphering, reading, and dating historical manuscripts, as well as understanding the cultural context of writing, including the methods used to produce writing and books.

India also exhibits considerable diversity in scripts. Apart from the decipherment and interpretation of inscriptions, an epigraphist is required to understand the subtle nuances connected with the development of various early scripts, right from Brahmi and its derivatives.

- India too- exhibit considerable diversity in scripts

Writing may be thought of as a set of commonly accepted graphic signs used to represent communication; historical writing is a set of signs that represents a spoken language. Thus, a writing system is a set of visible or tactile signs used to represent units of language in a systematic way. True writing encodes the content of a linguistic utterance so that a reader can reconstruct, with a fair degree of accuracy, the exact nature of what has been written down; this is a later development.

The history of writing instruments, through which humans have recorded and conveyed thoughts, feelings, and grocery lists, is, in some ways, the history of civilization itself. Writing is thus regarded as the mark of civilisation.

2.3.2 Discovery of Indian Paleographical Studies

The establishment of the Asiatic Society in Calcutta in 1784 marks a very important landmark in Indological studies as a whole, particularly in epigraphical and Indian paleographical studies. That was a period when the entire Indian subcontinent was agog with archaeological and epigraphical activities. Prof. Dani observes that the history of the study of Indian Paleography falls into three distinct stages. The first stage involved the discovery of inscriptions and the decipherment of the script, which were brought to light during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. The first successful effort in that direction was made by Charles Wilkins in 1785 when he read the Badal Pillar inscription (Dinajpur District, East Pakistan) of the

- The first significant milestone was the discovery of inscriptions and the decipherment of the script

Pala King Narayanapala. In the same year, Pandit Radhakant Sharma read the Delhi Topra Pillar inscription of the Chahamana King Visaladeva. Again, Wilkins made efforts to decipher Maukhari inscriptions from the Barabar Hills, paving the way for him to tackle Gupta inscriptions. Another scholar who engaged in this task was James Tod, who collected a large number of inscriptions from Rajasthan, Central India, and Gujarat between 1818 and 1823. These inscriptions, which ranged from the 7th to 15th centuries A.D., were partially deciphered with the assistance of Yato Jnanachandra. Among the early paleographers who made efforts to prepare tables of letters was Babington in 1834, based on Sanskrit and Tamil inscriptions reported from Mammallapuram. Subsequently, Walter Elliot published an elaborate comparative table of the older forms of the Kannada alphabet in 1833. Another significant achievement during this period was the decipherment of Gupta and Maitrakas of Valabhi inscriptions.

2.3.2.1 James Prinsep

- James Prinsep the Father of Indian Epigraphy

With the presence of James Prinsep, the Father of Indian Epigraphy, in the field of epigraphical studies, a new era began, bringing revolutionary changes in the decipherment of inscriptions, especially older ones. The script found in bilingual coins from the northwestern regions of India and many rock and pillar inscriptions later proved to be of the great Mauryan King Asoka. For the first time, James Prinsep held the key to the decipherment of the Brahmi script. He was the first to realise the significance of his success and accordingly prepared a chart titled "Modifications of the Sanskrit Alphabet from 543 B.C. to A.D. 1200." Thus, with James Prinsep, the first stage of Indian Paleography closes, and the second stage begins.

2.3.3 Second Stage in Indian Paleographical Studies

Prinsep laid the foundation for the second stage. Indian paleography became a recognised study, and James Burgess defined it as the "study of the gradual modification of the alphabet in the course of time." A.C. Burnell deserves credit for producing the first book on the subject in 1874, "Elements of South Indian Paleography (From the 4th to the 14th Century A.D.)", which served as an introduction to the study of South Indian inscriptions and manuscripts. Almost concurrently, a Dutch scholar, K.F. Holle, was working in Southeast Asia and published a work in 1877, followed by Burgess in 1883.

The study of these scripts was greatly facilitated by the publication of copies of inscriptions in various specialised journals. In 1877, Cunningham published "Inscriptions of Asoka," and in 1888, J.F. Fleet produced his work on the Guptas and their contemporaries.

In 1894, a comprehensive book on Indian Paleography titled "Prachina Lipimala" was published in Hindi by G.H. Ojha. Subsequently, three German scholars made significant contributions to the study of Indian Paleography in the latter half of the nineteenth century. The first among them, Rudolf Hoermle, thoroughly analysed the Bower MS, and along with Fleet, paved the way for the study of regional scripts in North India. E. Hultzsch, through his edition of the South Indian inscriptions, served the cause of South Indian Paleography similarly. Later, Johan Georg Buhler published a standard work on the subject, "Indische Palaeographie," in 1896.

Thus, the main purpose of the scholars in the second stage was to produce as accurately as possible charts of the various writings from the original records. One remark made by Burgess in 1883 is worth citing: "As applied to Indian inscriptions, comparative paleography has as yet made but little progress towards scientific accuracy, and much still needs to be done before we can use the characters of different inscriptions with full confidence as a safe guide to chronology." A more scientific and clear approach can be seen in his work, as he himself remarks: "I have been able to illustrate most of the Indian alphabet by cuttings from facsimiles, instead of hand-drawn signs."

The motive of dating the ancient record or the monument on which it occurred, with the help of paleography, became a very important aspect for Indologists. In the absence of other means for reconstructing the chronology of ancient India, they discovered in paleography a handy time scale for that purpose. A change in letter forms was chiefly important as it marked a difference in time. Hence, they needed accurate copies of inscriptions belonging to rulers whose chronology was more or less ascertained by other synchronisms, and would then compare the styles of writing of these inscriptions to date the records of lesser-known or unknown rulers. It was on this basis that the terminology of periods was evolved. They were named after the dynasties, such as the Maurya, the Kushanas, the Guptas, the Chalukyas, etc. The main purpose again was to define more accurately the terminology already accepted, so that the differing scripts known from the inscriptions of the same ruler might be better explained. This was a significant step forward from the sedimentary conception held in the first stage.

2.3.4 Third Stage in Indian Paleographical Studies

The third stage in the study of Indian Paleography begins at the close of the nineteenth century when the Government of India started to issue regular volumes of "Epigraphia Indica." In these journals,

every edited inscription has introductory paragraphs dealing with its paleography.

Scripts" is another significant work from the same journal. During this time, Raj Bali Pandey wrote and published a book on Indian Paleography. A comprehensive book on the development of the Kharosthi script by C.C. Dasgupta was published in 1958.

Subsequently, Ahmad Hasan Dani wrote a book titled "Indian Paleography" in a comprehensive manner by incorporating all earlier research. As he puts it, "My particular approach to the study of Indian Paleography follows from my conception of writing as being a part of culture, and as I seek to discover a culture through the various traits seen in the available material contents." He further states, "As a paleographer, I am in quest of the traditions and the techniques that can better explain the development of characters in India, and thus pave the way to defining the particular cultures within which the styles operate."

Thus, Dani, with his new insight, has made an immense contribution to the field of Indian Paleographical studies.

Present Scenario of Paleographical Studies

Thanks to our predecessors, such as James Prinsep and other scholars, paleographical studies have been placed on a very strong foundation. Post-independent India has acquired a large number of inscriptions reported from different parts of the country, belonging to various dynasties and rulers; some of these are already known, while others are new. Therefore, there is a greater need to re-examine and review the earlier studies conducted by different scholars in light of the new material available. Compared to the vast amount of material available, the number of scholars who are seriously involved in paleographical studies is very few.

In recent years, the contributions of Prof. T.P. Verma have been immense. Not only has he contributed significantly, but he has also generated a line of scholars who have profoundly added to the study of Indian Paleography, particularly by focusing on specific dynasties or particular scripts, conducting thorough studies using a large number of inscriptions. As we have seen earlier, paleographers have worked on a vast canvas of Indian paleographical studies. Thus, there is a need to examine both micro and macro levels to enrich paleographical studies at all levels.

Summarised Overview

Paleography is the study of ancient and historical handwriting, crucial for deciphering and understanding historical documents. It is closely related to epigraphy, the study of inscriptions, with paleography focusing specifically on the evolution and formation of letters. In India, the study of paleography gained significant momentum with the establishment of the Asiatic Society in Calcutta in 1784. The field's development is categorised into three stages: the initial discovery and decipherment of scripts by figures like Charles Wilkins, followed by the groundbreaking work of James Prinsep, who unlocked the Brahmi script. The second stage saw the publication of comprehensive works by scholars such as A.C. Burnell and G.H. Ojha, focusing on accurate charts of various writings. The third stage, beginning in the late 19th century with publications like Epigraphia Indica and the work of scholars like Ahmad Hasan Dani, shifted towards understanding the cultural context and traditions behind script development. Today, despite a rich and growing body of inscriptions, there is a recognised need for more scholars to engage in detailed paleographical studies, both broadly and within specific segments of script development.

Assignment

1. What is paleography, what is its relationship to epigraphy ?

2. What significant event in 1784 marked a turning point for Indological, epigraphical, and Indian paleographical studies ?

3. Describe the "first stage" of Indian Paleographical studies, highlighting the initial efforts of Charles Wilkins and James Tod in deciphering scripts and collecting inscriptions.

4. Who is considered as the "Father of Indian Epigraphy," what was his groundbreaking contribution that ushered in a new era of epigraphical studies?

5. Explain the main objective of scholars during the "second stage" of Indian Paleographical studies, mentioning the key publications by A.C. Burnell and G.H. Ojha.

6. How did the motive for studying paleography shift during the second stage, particularly in relation to dating ancient records and monuments?

7. What marked the beginning of the "third stage" in the study of Indian Paleography, and what kind of information was included in published journals during this period?

8. Describe Ahmad Hasan Dani's unique approach to the study of Indian Paleography and how he conceptualized writing in relation to culture.

9. What is the current scenario of paleographical studies in post-independent India, particularly concerning the availability of new material and the number of active scholars?

Suggested Reading

1. Siva Ganesa Murthy, *Introduction to Manuscriptology*, Sarada Publications, New Delhi, 1996.

2. S.M. Katre, *Introduction to Indian Textual Criticism*, Bombay, 1941.

3. K.V. Sarma, *Some New Techniques in Collating Manuscripts and Editing Texts*, ,1965.

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2. Richard Salomon, *Indian Epigraphy*, Oxford University press ,1998

3. Ahmad Hasan Dani, *Indian Palaeography*, Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers Pvt, Ltd.1986

Unit : 4

Ancient Indian Scripts

Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of the unit, the learner will be able to:

- ❖ familiarise learners with the core writing techniques in ancient India

- ❖ interpret ancient documents within cultural and historical contexts

- ❖ develop the skill of reading and writing ancient scripts

- ❖ understand the types and formats of inscriptions, and the earliest Indian scripts

Background

Throughout the history of the Indian subcontinent, ancient Indian scripts have been utilised as writing systems. The Indian subcontinent is divided into several distinct linguistic groups, each with its own language and culture. Ancient Indians used a variety of scripts, most of which have common foundations. All Indian scripts are derived from Brahmi. Devanagari, Dravidian, and Grantha are the three primary script families. Sanskrit, Pali, and Hindi are just a few of the languages written in ancient Indian scripts. These languages are no longer widely spoken.

However, understanding these scripts is critical because they may teach valuable stories that were written in these languages but are no longer told. These tales are about gods and goddesses, culture, and Indian mythology. Except for Urdu, which is written in an Arabic alphabet, and Santhali, the majority of Indian languages are written in Brahmi-derived scripts such as Devanagari, Tamil, Telugu, Kannada, Odia, Eastern Nagari (Assamese/ Bengali), and so on. Here, we will provide a list of ancient Indian scripts and the types of ancient Indian scripts.

Keywords

Brahmi Script, Indus Script, Sarada Script, Kharosthi Script, Gupta Script, Kalinga Script, Grantha Script, Nagari Script, Devanagari Script, Vatteluttu Script, Kadamba Script, Tamil Script, Landa Script.

2.4.1 Types of Ancient Indian Scripts

During its countrywide survey, the People's Linguistic Survey of India, a privately held research institute in India, recorded over 66 distinct scripts and more than 780 languages in India, claiming to be the largest linguistic survey in the country.

Below is a list of some important ancient scripts of India.

- Brahmi Script
- Indus Script
- Sarada Script
- Kharosthi Script
- Gupta Script
- Kalinga Script
- Grantha Script
- Nagari Script
- Devanagari Script
- Vatteluttu Script
- Kadamba Script
- Tamil Script
- Landa Script

2.4.2 List of Ancient Indian Scripts with Description

2.4.2.1 Brahmi Script

- Most modern Indian scripts are descended from Brahmi

Most modern Indian scripts, such as Devanagari, Bengali, Tamil, and Malayalam, stem from Brahmi. Northern and Southern India developed into two distinct types, with the northern being more angular and the southern being more rounded. It was decoded by James Prinsep in 1837. The best examples can be found in Asoka's rock-cut edicts.

2.4.2.2 Indus Script

The Indus script (also called the Harappan ancient script) is a set of symbols established by the Indus Valley Civilisation in Harappa and Kot Diji. It refers to the script employed by the inhabitants of the Indus Valley Civilisation. It has yet to be decoded. It has been suggested that this script was the forerunner of the Brahmi script. This script is written in a Boustrophedon manner, with one line written from left to right and the subsequent line from right to left. Because most inscriptions featuring these symbols are so brief, it's impossible to determine whether they were part of a script used to record a language or if they even indicate a writing system. Despite several attempts, the script remains undecoded, but work is still underway. It was in use between 2700 and 1900 BCE.

2.4.2.3 Sarada Script

The Sarada or Sharada script belongs to the Brahmic family of scripts and is an abugida writing system. The script was widely used for writing Sanskrit and Kashmiri in the northwestern portions of the Indian subcontinent (in Kashmir and northern KPK) between the 8th and 12th centuries. It was a Gupta script with a Western influence. It developed into the Kashmiri and Gurmukhi scripts (which are currently used to write Punjabi). It might also be used to write Sanskrit. It is no longer widely used. Its usage was once more widespread, but it eventually became limited to Kashmir, where it is currently only used for religious purposes by the Kashmiri Pandit population.

> ◆ Sarada script was widely used for writing Sanskrit and Kashmiri

2.4.2.4 Kharosthi Script

The Kharosthi script, also written as Kharoshthi, was a Gandhari Prakrit and Sanskrit writing system used in Gandhara. It was also used in Central Asia. It was introduced during the middle of the 3rd century BCE, probably around the 4th century BCE, and continued in use until around the 3rd century CE in its homeland. It is a contemporary and sister script to Brahmi. It was written in a left-to-right direction. It was popular in North-Western India's Gandhara civilisation, and it is also known as the Gandhari Script. Inscriptions have been discovered in modern-day Afghanistan and Pakistan in the form of Buddhist texts.

2.4.2.5 Gupta Script

The Late Brahmi script is another name for it. During the Gupta dynasty, it was employed to write Sanskrit. It gave rise to the Sarada, Nagari, and Siddham scripts, which in turn led to India's most important scripts, such as Devanagari and Bengali. The Nagari, Sarada, and Siddham scripts descended from the Gupta script, which itself derived from Brahmi. Many of India's most significant scripts arose from these, including Devanagari (the most prevalent script for writ-

ing Sanskrit since the 19th century), the Gurmukhi script for Punjabi, the Bengali-Assamese script, and the Tibetan script.

2.4.2.6 Kalinga Script

Odisha was known as Kalinga in ancient times, and this script was used to write an early version of Oriya. It resembles the original Brahmi in appearance. Currently, the Oriya language utilises a script developed from the Bengali script.

2.4.2.7 Grantha Script

Brahmi is the origin of one of the earliest Southern scripts. It led to the formation of the Tamil and Malayalam scripts, which are used today to write both languages. It is also the forerunner of the Sinhala script used in Sri Lanka. Indian traders took a variation of Grantha, called Pallava, to Indonesia, where it influenced the creation of several South-East Asian scripts. It was termed Grantha because it was used in Tamil Nadu to write Sanskrit Granthas.

2.4.2.8 Nagari Script

It was a variation of the Gupta script from the East. It is a variant of the Devanagari script from the beginning. It spawned a multitude of other scripts, including Devanagari, Bengali, and Tibetan. Both Prakrit and Sanskrit were written using it.

2.4.2.9 Devanagari Script

It is currently the main script for printing standard Hindi, Marathi, and Nepali, as well as Santhali, Konkani, and a variety of other Indian languages. It is now used to write Sanskrit and is one of the world's most widely used writing systems. The name derives from the words Deva (God) and Nagari (city), implying that it is both holy and urbane or sophisticated.

◆ Devanagari Script is currently the main script for printing standard Hindi, Marathi, and Nepali

2.4.2.10 Vatteluttu Script

It is a script developed from Brahmi that was used in southern India. Tamil and Malayalam were written using it. It eliminated the unnecessary signs in Brahmi that were not needed for writing the Southern languages. Both Tamil and Malayalam have since adopted their Grantha-derived scripts.

2.4.2.11 Kadamba Script

It descends from Brahmi and represents the beginning of the Kannada script. It paved the way for the current Kannada and Telugu scripts. Sanskrit, Konkani, Kannada, and Marathi were all written using it.

2.4.2.12 Tamil Script

It is the script used to write Tamil in India and Sri Lanka. Grantha,

the Southern version of Brahmi, gave birth to it. It is a syllabic script rather than an alphabetic one. It is written from left to right.

2.4.2.13 Landa Script

During the 10th century, the Landa script evolved from Sarada. In Punjab, Sindh, Kashmir, and portions of Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, it was frequently utilised. Punjabi, Sindhi, Saraiki, Hindustani, Balochi, Pashto, Kashmiri, and various Punjabi dialects such as Pahari-Pothwari were all written with it.

Sub-Scripts of Landa Script

a) Multani Script

Multani is a Brahmic script that originated in Punjab's Multan area. It was used to write the Saraiki language, which is commonly regarded as a dialect of Western Punjabi. The script was utilised for everyday writing as well as commercial purposes. Multani is one of four Landa scripts whose use was codified for literary activity and printing beyond the mercantile realm; the others being Gurmukhi, Khojki, and Khudawadi.

b) Mahajani Script

Mahajani is a Landa commercial script that was traditionally used to write Marwari, Hindi, and Punjabi accounts and financial documents. It is written from left to right and is a Brahmic script. The Hindi word for 'bankers,' also known as 'sarrafi' or 'kothival,' is Mahajani (merchant).

c) Khojki Script

Khojki is a script that was once predominantly used by the Khoja people of Sindh. The Persian word khoje, meaning "master" or "lord," is the source of the name "Khojki." It was largely used to record Isma'ili religious material as well as a few writings from hidden Twelver sects. The Landa script is one of two used for liturgy, the other being the Gurmukhi alphabet.

Ancient Indian scripts encompass 66 different scripts and more than 780 languages in India. The important scripts of ancient India are covered in this article. Devanagari, Dravidian, and Grantha are the three primary script families. Sanskrit, Pali, and Hindi are only a few of the languages written in these scripts. The majority of Indian languages are written in Brahmi-derived scripts.

• Multani is a Brahmic script that originated in Punjab's Multan area

• Ancient Indian scripts have 66 different scripts and more than 780 languages in India

Summarised Overview

Ancient Indian scripts represent a rich and diverse part of the subcontinent's linguistic history, with most deriving from the foundational Brahmi script. While India boasts over 66 distinct scripts and 780 languages, key ancient script families include Devanagari, Dravidian, and Grantha. These scripts were used for languages like Sanskrit, Pali, and Hindi, and while they may not be widely spoken today, they hold invaluable historical and cultural narratives. Notable ancient scripts discussed include the still-undeciphered Indus script, the Northwest Indian Sarada and Kharosthi scripts, the influential Gupta script (ancestor to many modern Indian scripts), and regional scripts like Kalinga, Grantha, Nagari, Vatteluttu, Kadamba, and Tamil. Additionally, the Landa script family, with its sub-scripts like Multani, Mahajani, and Khojki, served various commercial and religious purposes in northern and western India. Understanding these scripts is crucial for accessing the profound historical and mythological knowledge they preserve

Assignment

1. What is the common origin of most Indian scripts, and what are the three primary script families derived from it?

2. Describe the Brahmi script, including its significance.

3. What is the Indus script, what is known about its usage, and what is its current status regarding decipherment?

4. Explain the Sarada script's origins and its historical usage, particularly noting its influence on other scripts and its current limited use.

5. What is the Kharosthi script, where was it predominantly used, and what type of texts have been found written in it?

6. Discuss the Gupta script's importance, detailing its relationship to Brahmi and the significant scripts that evolved from it.

7. Describe the Grantha script, including its origin, the modern Indian and Sri Lankan scripts it influenced, and the meaning behind its name.

8. Name and briefly describe three sub-scripts of the Landa script, mentioning their historical usage and any unique characteristics.

Suggested Reading

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2. S.M. Katre, *Introduction to Indian Textual Criticism*, Bombay, 1941.

3. K.V. Sarma, *Some New Techniques in Collating Manuscripts and Editing Texts*, ,1965.

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BLOCK-03

Textual Criticism

Block Content

Unit 1: Preparation of Collation Sheets

Unit 2: Process of Emendation

Unit 3: Lower Criticism and Higher Criticism

Unit 4: Necessity of Critical Edition

Unit : 1

Preparation of Collation Sheets

Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of the unit, the learner will be able to:

❖ define and state the purpose of a collation sheet

❖ outline the general steps for preparing a collation sheet

❖ explain the role and best practices of transcription in collation

❖ identify and justify criteria for selecting a base manuscript for collation

❖ distinguish between a base manuscript and alternative methodologies in textual analysis

Background

The vast body of ancient Sanskrit literature, transmitted through centuries of oral tradition and manual copying, faces significant challenges from textual variants, errors, and interpolations found in its numerous manuscripts. To address these issues, textual criticism (Pāṭhasamālocanā) provides a scientific method for reconstructing authentic texts, beginning with the crucial physical preservation and restoration of these often fragile manuscripts. The ultimate goal is the creation of critical editions, which are scholarly reconstructions of texts based on rigorous comparative analysis, striving to recover the author's original words. Within this critical editing process, the collation sheet is an indispensable tool, systematically recording all textual variations across different manuscript versions. This detailed documentation allows scholars to meticulously analyse relationships and make informed decisions, ensuring the authenticity and reliability of the reconstructed Sanskrit texts for future generations.

Keywords

Textual criticism, collation sheet, collation, transcription, siglum.

Discussion

Textual criticism (पाठसमालोचना) is the scientific and systematic study of manuscripts and textual variants, with the aim of reconstructing the most authentic and original form of a Sanskrit text.

Textual criticism in Sanskrit is the scholarly discipline of examining and evaluating different manuscript versions of a text to reconstruct the most authentic version possible. Given that many ancient Sanskrit works were transmitted orally for centuries before being committed to writing, and then copied by hand over millennia, variations, errors, and interpolations inevitably crept into the manuscripts. Textual criticism aims to identify these variants and, through rigorous analysis, produce a "critical edition" that is as close as possible to the author's original intent.

The process of Sanskrit textual criticism generally involves:

1. Heuristics (collection of manuscripts)
2. Recension (collation and classification)
3. Emendation (correction)
4. Preparation of the critical edition

The second step, 'Recension', involves the comparative analysis of the collected manuscripts to identify similarities, differences, patterns of errors, and regional or script-based variations. Collation and genealogical classification of manuscripts are the two major tasks involved in this process.

A collation sheet is one of the primary tools used to examine and evaluate different manuscript versions of a text to reconstruct the most authentic version possible.

3.1.1 What is a Collation Sheet?

A collation sheet is a comparative chart or table used by textual critics to systematically record variant readings found in different manuscripts of a single text. This document, often a specially prepared form or a spreadsheet, is used to systematically record these differences. It allows a textual critic to analyse the relationships between manuscripts and work towards establishing the most accurate or critical edition of a text.

3.1.1.1 Purpose of Collation Sheet

- To compare multiple manuscripts or editions.
- To document textual variations (differences in words, phrases, spelling, or order).

- To assist in determining the most likely original reading.

- To preserve the integrity and historical development of a text.

3.1.2 Preparation of Collation Sheets

The general process for preparing a collation sheet involves:

a. **Transcription:** The first step is to create a clean, legible transcript of the base manuscript, which is the version of the text you will be comparing all others against. This is often done in a stitched notebook, with a wide margin left for notes.

- Preparation-Transcription, Creating a Grid, Recording Variants, Add Additional Information

b. **Creating a Grid:** A common method is to create a grid with horizontal and vertical lines, wide enough for a single letter in each cell. The base manuscript's text is written across the top row.

c. **Recording Variants:** Subsequent rows are used for each manuscript being compared. The "siglum" (an identification mark) of each manuscript is written on the left side of the row. As you read through the text, you note any deviations from the base text in the appropriate cell.

d. **Add Additional Information:** The sheet should also have a place to record additional information, such as the chapter and verse numbers, lacunae (gaps in the text), characteristics of the scribe, and other physical details of the manuscript.

The goal of a collation sheet is to provide a comprehensive record of all variations, making it easier to see patterns and relationships among the manuscripts being studied.

3.1.2.1 Transcription

Transcription is the process of creating a written copy of a manuscript. This is typically the first step in the critical editing process. The transcription should be as accurate as possible, reproducing the text exactly as it appears in the manuscript, including any unique spellings, abbreviations, or errors. It is this transcribed copy that is then used for collation, where it is compared against other manuscripts to identify variations. This is necessary because the original documents are often difficult to read due to handwriting styles, abbreviations, damage, or fading.

- Transcription is the process of creating a written copy of a manuscript.

1. Purpose of Transcription

The primary goal of transcription is to make the manuscript's text accessible for scholarly analysis. By converting the handwritten script into a standardised, readable format, scholars can then more easily compare it with other manuscripts, a process known as collation. This allows them to identify and document all textual variations.

Transcription as a Paleographical Exercise

Transcription is not just about reading; it's a form of paleography, the study of ancient writing. The transcriber must be an expert in the specific historical script and language of the manuscript to correctly interpret every character, including ligatures, abbreviations, and unique letterforms.

2. Making the "Base" Manuscript

The initial transcription is often made from a manuscript that is chosen as the "base text" for a critical edition. This becomes the reference point against which all other versions of the text will be collated.

The "base manuscript" (also called a "copy text" or "control text") - मूलकृतिः is a single manuscript selected by an editor as the foundational text for a critical edition. It serves as the primary document to be transcribed and then collated against other manuscripts.

4. Selection of a Base Manuscript

The selection of a base manuscript is a crucial decision and is typically based on several criteria, with the goal of choosing the manuscript that is likely to be closest to the author's original work. These criteria should consider the following characteristics:

a. **Age:** Older manuscripts are often preferred because they are closer to the original text and have had less time to accumulate scribal errors.

b. **Reliability:** The manuscript's overall quality and the known habits of its scribe are considered. The work of a careful, professional scribe is generally preferred over that of a careless one.

c. **Genealogy:** When the relationships between manuscripts are known (a "stemma"), a manuscript that is a direct ancestor of a large number of other manuscripts, or one that is closer to the reconstructed "archetype" (the earliest lost manuscript from which all surviving copies descend), is often chosen.

d. **Completeness:** A manuscript that contains a complete or more complete version of the text may be chosen over a fragmentary one.

However, the selection of a base manuscript is not a universally agreed-upon method. Some scholars use a method called "eclecticism," which does not rely on a single base manuscript but instead chooses the most probable reading from all available manuscripts on a case-by-case basis. Others use a "stemmatic" approach, which focuses on creating a family tree of manuscripts to determine the most reliable readings.

e. **The Transcriber's Role:** The transcriber's job is to be a neutral conduit, reproducing the text exactly as it is, without making any corrections or interpretations. Any illegible words, gaps in the text (lacunae), or additions by later hands are meticulously noted. The final transcription serves as the raw data for all subsequent analysis.

f. **From Transcription to Collation:** Once the transcription of the base text is complete, the transcriber (or another scholar) will use this copy to begin the collation process. The collation sheet, a comparative chart, is used to record every single variant reading found when comparing the base text to other manuscripts.

3.1.3 Naming Manuscripts in Textual Criticism: The Use of Sigla

> ◆ scholars assign sigla (singular: siglum)—abbreviations or symbols

In textual criticism, naming manuscripts is a fundamental step. To ensure clarity, consistency, and efficiency in reference, scholars assign sigla (singular: siglum)—abbreviations or symbols that identify each manuscript in the critical apparatus.

Purpose of Sigla

- **Conciseness** – Avoids long descriptive titles by using short references.

- **Clarity** – Prevents confusion when citing variants across manuscripts.

- **Systematization** – Provides a structured framework for collation and analysis.

Common Practices in Assigning Sigla

Capital Letters (A, B, C, D...)

- Widely used for primary manuscripts.

- Often, the earliest, most reliable, or genealogically central manuscript is designated *A*.

- Others follow sequentially (B, C, D…).

Example: Four major witnesses might be labelled A, B, C, D.

Lowercase Letters (a, b, c, d...)

- Used for less significant manuscripts, fragments, or secondary traditions.

- May also indicate descendants of a primary manuscript.

Superscripts and Subscripts (A^1, A^2, B_1, etc.)

- Distinguish recensions, copies of the same archetype, or different parts of a manuscript.
- *Example:* A^2 for a later copy of manuscript A^1.

Geographical or Library Abbreviations

- Sigla may reflect provenance or current location.
- *Example:* K = Kashmir, P = Pune, C = Cambridge.
- Often combined with numbers (e.g., P1, KSS).

Collection Numbers or Shelfmarks

- Incorporate institutional cataloguing systems.
- *Example:* OI.123 = Oriental Institute, manuscript no. 123.

Greek Letters (α, β, γ...)

- Typically denote **hypothetical archetypes** or intermediary lost sources in a stemma, rather than actual manuscripts.

Numbers

- Rarely used alone but often paired with letters.
- *Example:* A1, B2.
- May also identify printed editions (e.g., "BORI CE" = Critical Edition of the *Mahābhārata* by BORI).

Principles for Establishing a Siglum System

- **Consistency** – Apply the chosen system throughout the edition.
- **Clarity** – Avoid similar-looking sigla that may cause confusion.
- **Documentation** – Every critical edition must include:
  a. Full manuscript descriptions (origin, date, script, shelf mark).
  b. A complete explanation of the sigla system.
- **Genealogical Awareness** – Where manuscript relationships are known, sigla may reflect them. Groupings can highlight descent from a common ancestor.

  For example: Mahābhārata Critical Edition (BORI)

> - Principles for Establishing a Siglum System

The Mahābhārata Critical Edition (BORI, Pune) handled over 1,400 manuscripts across diverse recensions. To maintain order, editors developed a structured siglum system:

- **Northern Recension**

I. K = Kashmiri

   a. N = Nepali

   b. S = Úâradâ (Sarada script)

   c. D = Devanâgarî

   d. Each further numbered (K1, K2, N1, N2…).

- Southern Recension

II. T = Telugu

   a. G = Grantha

   b. M = Malayalam

   c. Again numbered (T1, G2, M5…).

- **Fragments and Printed Editions**

   a. Special symbols or abbreviations.

> - A well-constructed siglum system is thus essential for any critical edition

This systematic approach allowed scholars to manage an immense textual tradition with clarity. The assignment of sigla is not arbitrary; it is a strategic editorial choice that streamlines reference, makes textual comparisons transparent, and communicates the editor's judgment about manuscript relationships.

A well-constructed siglum system is thus essential for any critical edition, serving as the backbone of its critical apparatus.

Summarised Overview

Sanskrit Textual Criticism (Pāṭhasamālocanā) is the scientific method for reconstructing the most authentic versions of ancient Sanskrit texts, which often contain variants due to oral transmission and manual copying. The process systematically moves from manuscript collection and comparative analysis (Recension) to correction and critical edition preparation. Central to this is the collation sheet, an essential tool for meticulously documenting textual variations among manuscripts. This involves transcribing a "base manuscript" and then comparing all other versions against it, guiding scholars in making informed decisions to restore the author's original text

Assignment

1. Explain the function and structure of a collation sheet.
2. Discuss the importance of transcription in the textual criticism process.
3. Analyse the relationship between manuscript restoration and the creation of a critical edition.
4. Evaluate the statement: "The selection of a base manuscript is the most crucial decision in preparing a critical edition."

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Unit : 2

Process of Emendation

Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of the unit, the learner will be able to:

❖ define emendation and justify its necessity

❖ explain the principles guiding emendation decisions

❖ differentiate types of readings and emendations

❖ analyse the challenges and ethical considerations in emendation

❖ compare different methodological approaches to emendation

Background

Emendation is the third step in manuscript studies, following the collection of manuscripts (Heuristics) and their comparison (Recension). It is used when none of the available readings in the manuscripts seem correct, even if several copies survive. This occurs when the text appears ungrammatical, broken in meter, or makes little sense in its context. The editor then looks closely for mistakes, noting missing parts (lacunae) and distinguishing small slips from larger, deliberate changes. To rectify the passage, the editor adheres to specific rules, such as retaining the harder reading, considering the author's usual style, and recognising common scribal errors. Any correction must also fit the context, adhere to grammar, maintain the meter, and align with historical facts. If no manuscript provides a satisfactory version, the editor may cautiously propose a new reading as a conjecture. Every change must be clearly explained in the notes, and the rejected versions must also be recorded. The process is challenging because judgment can be subjective, editors may alter too much, and sometimes the evidence is too weak. Ultimately, emendation is the careful effort to repair a damaged text so that it comes closer to what the author likely wrote.

Keywords

Emendation, Manuscriptology, Textual Criticism, Corrupt (reading/text), Intrinsic Probability, Extrinsic Probability, Conjectural Emendation, Codices (Manuscripts), Transmitted Reading, Recension.

Emendation, the third critical step in Manuscriptology following Heuristics (manuscript collection) and Recension (collation and classification), involves correcting textual readings where all available manuscripts present a corrupt, unintelligible, or demonstrably inferior version of what the author likely wrote. It is a crucial and often delicate stage where the textual critic endeavours to restore the original text based on accumulated evidence.

3.2.1 Need for Emendation

An editor frequently encounters passages where none of the existing manuscript readings appear satisfactory as the author's original composition. This challenge can arise even with a codex unicus (a single surviving manuscript) or in cases with multiple copies. The necessity for emendation becomes apparent when all variants prove inadequate—whether they are contextually meaningless, grammatically incorrect, metrically defective, or otherwise unsuitable. In such situations, the editor proposes a plausible alternative reading to restore sense, clarity, and coherence.

- a codex unicus - a single surviving manuscript

3.2.1.1 Basis for Emendation: The Role of the Editor

The fundamental purpose of textual criticism is to restore a text to its original form as accurately as possible, with the evidence provided by the manuscripts serving as the foundation. The editor's critical role begins when manuscripts present diverging variants. To judge the suitability of a reading within its context, the editor must formulate specific tests. The primary parameters for these tests are:

- The editor's critical role begins when manuscripts present diverging variants.

1. The author's unique diction (style and vocabulary).
2. The mutual relation of various readings from an orthographical and linguistic perspective.

3.2.2 Problematic Transmitted Readings

Even a reading on which all codices agree (the transmitted reading) or one supported by both codices and external testimonies (the traditional reading) can sometimes be nonsensical. Such readings might lead to glaring contradictions, resist grammatical explanation, involve needless repetition, cause metrical difficulties, or show a disjunction in the thought sequence. Occasionally, no two sources even preserve the same reading. While the transmitted reading at least offers documentary support, the latter scenario necessitates a difficult selection process.

3.2.3 The Suggestion of a Conjectural Emendation

In these challenging situations, the editor may suggest an emendation or a correction. This proposed alternative must satisfy both intrinsic and extrinsic probabilities.

- Intrinsic Probability (Internal): The suggested reading must fit the context, align with the author's known diction, and meet metrical conditions if the text is verse. It concerns the internal coherence and plausibility within the text itself.

- Extrinsic Probability (External): This requires the proposed reading to show a clear transcriptional or documentary relationship with the existing manuscript readings. In other words, the editor must be able to explain how the original reading, after being corrupted, could plausibly have resulted in the forms preserved in the manuscripts. This is considered "external" because it refers to the mode of writing and the copyist's actions, rather than the author's original intent. For example, a scribe might have mis-written saṅkhyā when the exemplar had -śayyā.

These tests are applied to doubtful variants. When a new reading is suggested that does not originate from any existing manuscript but is proposed by the critic, it is termed a conjectural emendation. This arises not from mere doubt but from the fact that none of the transmitted readings adequately satisfy the context. It is crucial to remember, however, that a conjectural emendation is inherently a hypothesis and cannot be treated as the absolute original with certainty.

3.2.4 The Demands and Challenges of Emendation

Emendation is a formidable task demanding extensive knowledge of the author's vocabulary, a profound understanding of the language (grammar, poetics), and deep familiarity with the specific subject matter. The textual critic must also be well-versed in various scripts and relevant lexicons. This process requires thorough and careful deliberation.

Despite its inherent difficulties, there is a risk of editors making corrections too readily. Scholars like Sukthankar have cautioned against precipitous emendation, advocating that if an interpretation of the existing evidence is possible, it should be prioritised over directly altering the text. An editor should only proceed with emendation when there is clear and unanimous testimony from all codices indicating a textual corruption.

3.2.5 Two Schools of Thought on Emendation

Regarding the practical application of emendation, two distinct schools of thought exist:

1. The Conservative School ("Scientific Interpretation"): Adherents of this school advocate a cautious approach. They prefer to interpret potentially problematic readings, even if they appear unacceptable, rather than altering them. Their focus is on preserving the transmitted text unless corruption is absolutely undeniable.

2. The Interventionist School: This school argues that if a passage is genuinely corrupted and no acceptable reading is available, emendation is not just permissible but critical. They believe that failing to correct an unusable passage can lead to a meaningless text or severe misinterpretation. They contend that even if a proposed emendation cannot be proven to be the definitive original, it can serve as a valuable "stop-gap" until more conclusive evidence emerges.

In conclusion, emendation stands as a rigorous and indispensable stage in Manuscriptology, acting as the ultimate recourse when all manuscript evidence presents corrupt or unsatisfactory readings. It demands profound scholarly expertise in language, authorial style, and textual history, guided by the dual principles of intrinsic and extrinsic probability. While acknowledging the inherent risks of subjectivity and differing scholarly approaches—from conservative interpretation to necessary conjectural intervention—the careful and justified emendation by a textual critic is paramount. This meticulous process ensures that, despite the complexities of textual transmission, the edited text strives as closely as possible to restore the author's original intent, thereby preserving the integrity and meaning of ancient works for future generations.

Summarised Overview

Emendation is the crucial third step in studying old manuscripts, where editors fix parts of a text that are corrupted or don't make sense in all the available copies. This often happens when no existing reading fits the context, grammar, or poetic rhythm. The editor's job is to suggest a new, logical reading, guided by the author's style and how scribes typically made errors. This new suggestion must feel right within the text (intrinsic probability) and also make sense with how the mistake might have happened (extrinsic probability). When a totally new reading is proposed because no manuscript offers a good one, it's called a conjectural emendation, which is always a reasoned guess. It's a challenging task that needs deep knowledge, and scholars debate whether to be cautious and interpret problematic readings or to boldly correct them to ensure the text remains meaningful.

Assignment

1. Define Emendation within the broader context of Manuscriptology.

2. Analyse the editor's role in determining the need for emendation.

3. Differentiate between a "transmitted reading" and a "traditional reading."

4. Explain the concepts of "intrinsic probability" and "extrinsic probability" in the context of proposing an emendation.

5. What is a "conjectural emendation," and under what specific circumstances would a textual critic resort to it?

6. Evaluate the "Demands and Challenges of Emendation."

7. Compare and contrast the two "Schools of Thought on Emendation."

Suggested Reading

1. Pandya, Vijay. *Sanskrit Textual Criticism*, Parimal Publication Pvt. Ltd, 2013.

2. Katre, S. M. *Introduction To Indian Textual Criticism*, Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, Poona, 1954.

3. Murthy, Shivaganesha R. S., *Introduction to Manuscriptology*, Cambridge University Press, 1996.

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1. Vaidya, P. L. (General Editor). *The Mahābhārata: For the First Time Critically Edited*. Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute (BORI), Poona, 1919-1966 (19 volumes).

2. Raghavan, V. (General Editor). *The Rāmāyaṇa of Vālmīki: Critically Edited*. Oriental Institute, Baroda, 1960-1975.

3. Sukthankar, V. S. *On the Meaning of the Mahābhārata*. The Asiatic Society, Bombay, 1957.

4. Shastri, Satya Vrat. *A Critical Study of the Commentaries on the Ṛgveda*. Sanskrit Pustak Bhandar, 1960.

5. https://www.britannica.com/art/collation

Lower Criticism and Higher Criticism

Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of the unit, the learner will be able to:

❖ understand textual criticism and distinguish between Lower Criticism and Higher Criticism

❖ explain the stages of Lower Criticism—Heuristics, Recensio, and Emendatio—and their roles in collecting, collating, and correcting manuscripts

❖ apply methods for manuscript analysis, including the use of sigla, collation of variants, and evaluation of manuscript reliability

❖ utilise secondary sources like commentaries, translations, anthologies, quotations, adaptations, and parallel versions to support textual reconstruction

❖ integrate Lower and Higher Criticism to critically assess a text's authenticity, meaning, historical context, and literary value

Background

For thousands of years, stories, poems, religious texts, and scientific ideas in India, especially those in Sanskrit, weren't printed in books like today. Instead, they were passed down by people memorising them and telling them to others, or by hand-copying them onto palm leaves or other writing material. Many small changes could occur during the writing or rewriting process. A scribe might accidentally skip a word, misspell something, or even add their own thoughts to the text. Over centuries, these small changes multiplied, creating many different versions of the same work, sometimes with significant differences. Because of this, when scholars today want to study these ancient texts, they can't just pick one copy and assume it's perfect. They need special tools and careful methods to sort through all the variations, find the most accurate words, and understand the true meaning and history behind them. That's where Lower and Higher Criticism come in—they are essential for bringing these ancient voices clearly into the modern world.

Keywords

Lower Criticism, Higher Criticism, Textual Criticism, Heuristics, Recensio, Emendatio, Siglum, Collation

A manuscript has been copied by hand over hundreds or even thousands of years. Each copy might have little mistakes, changes, or even new parts added in. That's the challenge scholars face with old Indian writings, especially Sanskrit texts. To determine what the original author really wrote and what the text truly means, they use two main approaches: Lower Criticism and Higher Criticism. Lower Criticism is like being a detective, carefully finding and comparing all the old copies to get the exact words right. Higher Criticism is like being a historian and literary critic, trying to understand who wrote it, when, why, and what larger story it tells. This chapter will explain how both of these important methods work together to help us understand India's amazing ancient books.

3.3.1 Lower Criticism

Lower Criticism involves the meticulous, mechanical work of assessing textual variants to reconstruct the most authentic form of a text. It is typically distinguished into three stages: (i) Heuristics, (ii) Recensio, and (iii) Emendatio. Some scholars combine heuristics with recension, but a three-stage model provides a more comprehensive picture.

3.3.1.1 Heuristics: The Collection of Manuscripts

As the final text is arrived at after a critical evaluation of available data, it is necessary to methodically gather all relevant material. This requires knowledge of the availability of such material. When preparing a critical edition, one must consult the *New Catalogus Catalogorum* and note the libraries where copies of the text are deposited. Entries under known alternative titles of the work (e.g., *Meghasandeśa* for *Meghadūta*, or *Sahṛdayāloka* for *Dhvanyāloka*) should also be checked.

Commentaries, works that might contain references to the text, and other related materials must also be noted. Descriptive catalogues should be consulted to compare the beginning and end details of copies with similar titles. Ultimately, the originals of all available copies, or their mechanised copies (like microfilm or xerox), should be collected.

3.3.2 Recension: Collation and Classification of Manuscripts

1. **The Recension Process:** Recension, the first stage of Lower Criticism, involves the methodical collection and analysis of all

- Lower Criticism is like being a detective

- Higher Criticism is like being a historian and literary critic

evidence regarding the text's readings. This includes forming a genealogical pedigree of the codices (manuscripts) to understand their relationships, paving the way for subsequent stages. The second part of recension calls for the critical acumen of the editor. At this point, the editor has a table of various readings and other information gathered from the codices and testimonia. It is also possible to ascertain the mutual relations of the codices. The primary problem then is to choose, from among the variants, a reading which might have been intended by the author or one nearest to it, thus formulating a recension. The editor must carefully and open-mindedly interpret and weigh all the presented evidence.

2. **Critical Study of Manuscripts:** Each copy of the work should be thoroughly studied from the perspective of its orthographic peculiarities and scribal stylistics. This helps determine the trustworthiness of the codices. By studying individual copies, evidence is gathered and considered for constituting the text. The text tradition, down to single letters, must be observed and studied. This encourages the editor to discover the original or near-original readings, not only in the extant codices but also in commentaries, anthologies, and allied works. Variants must be compared for agreement and disagreement. In short, for collation, readings should be recorded methodically. The manuscript appearing most trustworthy should be taken as the basis, and its readings should be collated with the readings of other copies.

3. **Siglum: Naming Manuscripts for Critical Reference:** To identify a specific manuscript, each consulted codex is assigned an identification mark, called a siglum (plural: sigla). A simple method uses capital Roman letters (A, B, C, etc.) or Indian alphabets (क, ख, etc.). A more sophisticated approach uses a symbol to indicate better codices or names the codex after its script (e.g., D(evanāgarī), G(rantha), O(riya)). Sigla should refer to the source of the codex (e.g., M(adras), Ar(rah), My(sore), B(aroda)). If multiple codices are from the same source, numerical figures can be used (e.g., D1, D2, D3 for three Devanāgarī codices). Sometimes, the age of the copy is included (e.g., K^{13} for a Kashmiri codex of the 13th century; C^{13*} for a Calcutta codex circa 13th century if the date is doubtful). It may be necessary to postulate non-extant manuscripts to explain codex relationships, with sigla using lowercase Roman or Greek letters with an asterisk (e.g., a*, b*, α*, β*). Sukthankar, for instance, classified Mahābhārata codices by script with a serial number (e.g., D1, D4, G1, G8). An editor can also form sigla indicating both source and script (e.g., Mt Md for Madras Telugu script, Mt Dn for Madras Devanāgarī script).

4. **Collation: The Comparative Recording Process:** Readings are noted for collation. When comparing, for example, three codices, the text of one (preferably the better one) is copied onto sheets with sufficient margins and line spacing. This copy is then compared word by word with the other two manuscripts. Any divergence is recorded in the nearest margin or above the relevant part. Each such entry must be documented with the siglum of the manuscript. Variants of each codex can be entered in different coloured inks. Simple variations, erasures, interlinear additions, marginal additions, blank spaces, etc., are all noted, and convenient abbreviations may be used.

3.3.3 Emendation: Correcting the Text

Emendation is the third crucial step after Heuristics and Recensio. It involves correcting readings where all available manuscripts present a version deemed corrupt, unintelligible, or demonstrably inferior to what the author likely wrote. This is a critical, often delicate, stage where the textual critic endeavours to restore the text based on accumulated evidence.

1. **Identifying the Need for Emendation:** Editors often find passages where no available manuscript reading appears satisfactory as the author's original. This can occur with a single surviving manuscript (*codex unicus*) or with multiple copies. The need for emendation becomes apparent when all variants are inadequate—contextually meaningless, grammatically incorrect, metrically defective, or otherwise unsuitable. In such situations, the editor proposes a plausible alternative to restore sense, clarity, and coherence.

2. **Basis for Emendation: The Editor's Role:** The fundamental purpose of textual criticism is to restore a text to its original form as far as possible, based on manuscript evidence. The editor's role begins when manuscripts present diverging variants. Tests are formulated to judge the suitability of a reading, primarily based on the author's diction and the orthographical/linguistic relationship between readings.

3. **Problematic Transmitted Readings:** Even a reading on which all codices agree (the transmitted reading) or one supported by both codices and external testimonies (the traditional reading) may sometimes make no sense. It might lead to contradictions, resist grammatical explanation, involve needless repetition, cause metrical difficulty, or show a disjunction in thought. Sometimes, no sources preserve the same reading. While the transmitted reading offers documentary support, other cases become issues of selection.

4. **The Suggestion of a Conjectural Emendation:** In these challenging situations, the editor may suggest an emendation, a correction. This proposed alternative must satisfy both intrinsic and extrinsic probabilities:

A. Intrinsic Probability (Internal): The suggested reading must fit the context, suit the author's diction, and meet metrical conditions if in verse.

B. Extrinsic Probability (External): The reading must show a transcriptional or documentary relation with existing readings. This means explaining how the original corrupted into the forms preserved in manuscripts (e.g., *saṅkhyā* instead of *-śayyā* due to scribal error). This is external as it refers to scribal work, not the author.

These tests apply to doubtful variants. When a new reading is suggested *not* from any existing manuscript but proposed by the critic, it is a conjectural emendation. This arises from the lack of satisfactory transmitted readings, not mere doubt. However, a conjectural emendation is a hypothesis and cannot be treated as the absolute original with certainty.

5. **Demands and Challenges of Emendation:** Emendation is a formidable task requiring extensive knowledge of the author's vocabulary, a profound understanding of the language (grammar, poetics), and deep familiarity with the subject matter, as well as various scripts and relevant lexicons. It demands thorough and careful deliberation. Despite difficulties, editors may be tempted to make corrections too readily. Sukthankar cautioned against "precipitous emendation," advocating that interpretation should be prioritised if possible, and emendation only undertaken with clear, unanimous testimony of corruption from all codices.

6. **Two Schools of Thought on Emendation:** There are two distinct schools regarding emendation:

A. The Conservative School ("Scientific Interpretation"): Advocates a cautious approach, preferring to interpret potentially problematic readings rather than altering them, focusing on preserving the transmitted text.

B. The Interventionist School: Argues that if a passage is genuinely corrupted and no acceptable reading exists, emendation is critical. They believe failing to correct an unusable passage leads to meaninglessness or misinterpretation, and a proposed emendation can serve as a valuable "stop-gap."

3.3.4 Secondary Sources of Evidence

Beyond direct manuscript evidence, other materials, known as testimonia, provide valuable external or indirect evidence for a critical appraisal. These include works that are closely related to the text or contain quotations from it.

3.3.4.1 Commentaries

Almost every significant Sanskrit text has commentaries, often numerous. Most are older than available codices and reflect readings accepted in their time. Though commentaries are also transmitted, their adopted readings are rarely corrupted. Commentators often discuss variants, adding to our knowledge. For example, Devarājayajvan on Nighaṇṭu-Nirukta highlights the value of commentaries, noting the chaotic state of Nighaṇṭu-Nirukta codices and the difficulty of its early interpretation.

♦ every significant Sanskrit text has commentaries

3.3.4.2 Translations

Ancient translations into other languages (e.g., Pañcatantra, Upaniṣads, Buddhist works, Mahābhārata, Rāmāyaṇa into regional Indian languages) can be valuable secondary sources, especially if their date is closer to the original. For instance, the Chinese translation of Aśvaghoṣa's *Buddhacarita* (683 B.C.E.) revealed 28 cantos, while only 13 were in the Sanskrit original. An editor might use a translation to reconstruct a lost part of the original, as seen with Vidwan R. Ramasastri's retranslation of a Tamil version to complete a *Śivaparibhaṣā* edition.

♦ translations into other languages

3.3.4.3 Anthologies (Florilegia)

Compilations of quotations, sayings, poems (*kośas*), or essays are common. These collections often preserve individual verses (*muktaka*) from various poets, arranged thematically. Even if the author is unknown (e.g., *kasyāpi*), anthologies can provide evidence, sometimes preserving earlier readings. For example, Vallabhadeva's *Subhāṣitāvali* preserved verses from *Dṛṣṭānta-śataka*, and its critical edition (by P. Peterson) makes it a trustworthy source for comparison. Conversely, a compiler's original sources can be useful for critically editing an anthology, as seen with Basava-bhūpāla's *Śivatattvaratnākara*.

3.3.4.4 Quotations

Direct quotations from allied works, acknowledged or not, are valuable for appraising readings. The reading in a quotation reflects the views accepted in the context of the quoting work. Examples include:

1. Someœvara's *Saṅketa* on *Kāvyaprakāśa* citing *Vakroktijīvita*.

2. Nandi-sûtra providing corrections to *Arthasāstra*.

3. Krishnamoorthy's use of *Kalpalatāviveka* in revising *Dhvany-aloka*.

4. Bhaṭṭoji Dīkṣita's *Siddhānta-Kaumudī* citing poets and critiquing grammatical forms.

5. Hemacandra quoting Abhinavagupta on *Nāṭya-Śāstra*.

3.3.4.5 Obvious Imitations

Many works are clear imitations of others, sometimes acknowledged (e.g., most *gīta-kāvyas* modelled on *Gīta-govinda*).

3.3.4.6 Epitomes and Adaptations

Paraphrases or abridgments of larger works aid textual criticism. For example, Kṣemendra's *Bhārata-mañjarī* (an abridgment of the Mahābhārata) was consulted for the Kashmiri recension. Jinasena's *Pārśvābhyudaya* adapts *Meghadūta*, using its fourth *pāda* for its own, providing evidence for the original order and number of *Meghadūta* stanzas.

3.3.4.7 Parallel Versions

Texts like the Purāṇas, often orally transmitted, have numerous episodes (*upākhyāna*) and glorifications (*māhātmyas*), leading to parallel versions. The Śakuntalā episode in the Mahābhārata, for instance, has a parallel in the Padmapurāṇa.

3.3.5 Higher Criticism: Context and Interpretation

Higher Criticism is not directly connected with the selection of readings (which is Lower Criticism) but concerns itself with a text and its contents as a whole. Because it probes the author's sources and influences, rather than just the genuineness of a particular text, it is called higher criticism. It cannot strictly be spoken of as a single stage, as it begins with the selection of a text for editing and continues throughout the editorial work. Its completion follows the finalisation of recension, and from this perspective, it may be conceded as the fourth stage.

Lower Criticism involves much mechanical work: recording, comparing, collation, and so on. Higher Criticism, in contrast, assesses the author's work including style, language, literary aspects, sources, the author's life, influences, circumstances of composition, the situation in which the work was written, the influence of earlier writers on the author, the author's influence on later writers, the contribution of

the author to the field, determining the place and value of the work, its popularity, and other allied issues. Tackling these questions requires critical acumen, appreciation, and a thorough grasp of the history of the particular branch of learning, in addition to a good understanding of every line of the text. With this comprehensive background, Lower Criticism too will be smooth and yield optimum results.

3.3.5.1 Focus

Higher Criticism focuses on the following:

◆ **Authorship:** Who wrote the text? Were there multiple authors? (e.g., documentary hypothesis for the Pentateuch).

◆ **Date of Composition:** When was the text written?

◆ **Place of Composition:** Where was it written?

◆ **Historical Context:** What were the historical, social, political, and cultural circumstances surrounding its creation?

◆ **Literary Forms/Genres:** What kind of literature is it (e.g., history, poetry, law, myth, prophecy)?

◆ **Sources:** Did the author use earlier sources? How were these sources compiled or edited?

◆ **Purpose/Intent:** Why was the text written? What message was it trying to convey?

◆ **Redaction History:** How was the text edited and developed over time?

3.3.5.2 Methodology

◆ **Source Criticism:** Analyzing the text to identify and reconstruct its underlying sources.

◆ **Form Criticism:** Classifying texts by their literary genres or "forms" and analysing the typical settings in life (Sitz im Leben) in which they originated.

◆ **Redaction Criticism:** Studying how authors or editors (redactors) shaped and adapted traditional materials to convey their own theological or literary purposes.

◆ **Historical Criticism:** Evaluating the historical reliability of the text and its claims against external historical evidence.

◆ **Literary Criticism:** Analysing the text's narrative structure, character development, themes, and stylistic features.

Analogy: If a text is like a building, Higher Criticism asks: Who designed it? When was it built? What materials did they use? What was its original purpose, and how has it been modified over time?

Higher Criticism need not necessarily follow the editing of a work; any person can independently study these aspects of a work once it is in print. However, an editor of a critical edition is in a better position to perform a critical appraisal, having completed an exhaustive study of the text through Lower Criticism.

3.3.6 Relationship Between Lower and Higher Criticism:

- ◆ **Sequential Dependence:** Lower Criticism generally *precedes* Higher Criticism. One must first establish the most reliable text (what the author actually wrote) before one can meaningfully analyse its authorship, sources, or historical context. Studying a corrupt text would lead to flawed conclusions in Higher Criticism.

◆ Sequential Dependence & Mutual Informing

- ◆ **Mutual Informing:** While sequential, they are not entirely separate. Insights from Higher Criticism (e.g., knowledge of an author's historical context or literary style) can sometimes inform decisions in Lower Criticism regarding preferred variant readings or likely emendations. Conversely, a critically established text from Lower Criticism provides the solid foundation upon which all Higher Criticism must build.

In summary, Lower Criticism aims to get the words right, while Higher Criticism aims to understand the context, meaning, and history *behind* those words. Both are essential for a comprehensive scholarly understanding of ancient texts.

Summarised Overview

Sanskrit texts were transmitted orally or through hand-copied manuscripts, often accumulating errors, omissions, or additions over centuries. To study them accurately, scholars use textual criticism, divided into Lower Criticism and Higher Criticism. Lower Criticism aims to establish the authentic text through three stages: Heuristics (collecting manuscripts, commentaries, and catalogues), Recensio (collating and classifying variants, using sigla for reference), and Emendatio (correcting corrupt readings based on context, style, meter, and manuscript relationships, including conjectural emendations). Secondary sources such as commentaries, translations, anthologies, quotations, adaptations, and par-

allel versions further support textual reconstruction. Higher Criticism, in contrast, analyses the text as a whole, examining authorship, date, historical and cultural context, literary form, sources, style, and purpose, using methods like source, form, redaction, historical, and literary criticism. Lower Criticism provides the reliable text that forms the foundation for Higher Criticism, while insights from Higher Criticism can inform editorial decisions in Lower Criticism. Together, they ensure the text's words are accurate and its meaning, context, and significance are fully understood.

Assignment

1. Define textual criticism and explain its importance in studying ancient Sanskrit texts.

2. Differentiate between Lower Criticism and Higher Criticism.

3. What are the three stages of Lower Criticism? Briefly describe each.

4. Explain the role of sigla in manuscript studies.

5. Name at least three types of secondary sources used in textual reconstruction.

6. Discuss the process of collation and recension in Lower Criticism with examples.

7. Explain the challenges of emendation and the difference between conservative and interventionist approaches.

8. Describe the methods and focus areas of Higher Criticism in understanding ancient texts.

9. How do Lower and Higher Criticism complement each other in producing a critical edition of a text?

10. Choose a Sanskrit text you are familiar with and propose how you would apply Lower and Higher Criticism to study it.

11. Discuss how translations, anthologies, or parallel versions can help in reconstructing a lost or corrupt portion of a text.

Suggested Reading

1. Pandya, Vijay. *Sanskrit Textual Criticism*. Parimal Publication Pvt. Ltd, 2013.

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3. Sukthankar, V. S. *On the Meaning of the Mahābhārata*. The Asiatic Society, Bombay, 1957.

4. Shastri, Satya Vrat. *A Critical Study of the Commentaries on the Ṛgveda*. Sanskrit Pustak Bhandar, 1960.

Unit : 4

Necessity of Critical Edition

Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of the unit, the learner will be able to:

❖ explain the meaning and purpose of a critical edition in textual scholarship

❖ identify the need for preparing a critical edition when dealing with multiple manuscripts or variant readings

❖ understand the methods used to collate and evaluate manuscript evidence

❖ recognise the challenges faced by editors in reconstructing an author's original text

❖ appreciate the importance of critical editions in preserving literary, historical, and cultural heritage

Background

The manuscripts were copied and transmitted over centuries. During this process, scribes introduced accidental errors, omissions, and deliberate changes. As a result, different manuscripts of the same work may contain variations in words, sentences, or even entire sections. A critical edition aims to reconstruct the text as closely as possible to the author's original composition by comparing all available manuscripts, versions, and citations. This involves careful collation of sources, identification of scribal errors, and reasoned selection of readings. Sometimes, editors encounter passages where none of the available manuscripts seem to preserve the exact original. In such cases, critical reasoning, linguistic analysis, and contextual understanding are used to propose an emended reading. The necessity of a critical edition arises from the responsibility to present a text that is not merely a copy of a single manuscript but the most reliable and authentic representation of the author's work. Without such editions, readers and scholars would be forced to rely on incomplete or corrupted versions of important literary, religious, and philosophical texts. Critical editions ensure that the intellectual and cultural value of a work is preserved for future generations.

Keywords

Critical Edition, Textual Transmission, Variant Readings, Critical Apparatus, Authentic Text, Textual Corruption, Scholarly Reliability, Cultural Preservation

- The preparation of a critical edition is one of the most essential tasks in the study of ancient texts.

The preparation of a critical edition is one of the most essential tasks in the study of ancient texts. Many works of antiquity have reached us not through a single, flawless manuscript, but through numerous handwritten copies, each of which may contain errors, omissions, or intentional changes made by scribes. Over centuries, such variations can accumulate, leaving us with versions that differ widely from the author's original composition. In some cases, only a single manuscript survives, while in others dozens of copies exist, each carrying its own unique readings. This situation makes it difficult to identify with certainty what the author actually wrote. A critical edition seeks to overcome this problem by carefully comparing all available manuscripts and related sources.

The necessity of a Critical Edition stems directly from the inherent problems of textual transmission over time, especially for ancient texts that predate mechanical printing. It is not merely a preference but often a scholarly imperative for several crucial reasons:

3.4.1 To Establish the Most Authentic Text:

- **Combating Corruption:** Ancient texts, transmitted orally and then copied by hand over centuries, inevitably accumulate errors (scribal mistakes, omissions, additions, misinterpretations) and interpolations (intentional additions by later hands). A critical edition systematically identifies and corrects these corruptions.

- **Recovering Original Intent:** The ultimate goal is to present a text as close as possible to what the author originally wrote, thus enabling readers to understand the author's true message, style, and literary artistry without the distortion of later interventions.

To Establish the Most Authentic Text

3.4.2 To Provide a Reliable Foundation for Scholarship:

- **Accurate Study:** All subsequent academic work—linguistic analysis, philosophical interpretation, historical research, literary criticism, and translation—depends on having a reliable text. Studying a corrupt or uncritical text can lead to fundamentally flawed conclusions.

- **Standard Reference:** A critical edition serves as the authoritative standard for reference. When scholars cite a text, they should

ideally be citing a critical edition, ensuring everyone is discussing the same words.

- ◆ **Avoiding Fragmentation:** Without critical editions, scholars would constantly be forced to consult multiple, often contradictory, manuscripts, leading to inefficient and inconsistent research.

3.4.3 To Document Textual History and Variants:

- ◆ **Transparency:** A good critical edition includes a "critical apparatus" that documents all significant variant readings from the collated manuscripts. This transparency allows scholars to see the evidence the editor considered and to evaluate the editor's choices.

- ◆ **Understanding Transmission:** The apparatus also provides invaluable data for understanding the historical transmission of the text, including the evolution of different manuscript traditions, regional variations, and how the text was received and adapted over time. It illuminates the "life" of the text after its initial composition.

3.4.4 To Preserve Cultural Heritage:

- ◆ **Safeguarding against Loss:** Many ancient manuscripts are fragile, decaying, or susceptible to loss. A critical edition, by carefully transcribing and analysing their content, helps preserve the intellectual content of these manuscripts even if the physical artefacts themselves eventually perish.

- ◆ **Accessibility:** By making a standardised, reliable text available (often in print or digital form), critical editions make ancient works accessible to a wider audience of scholars and enthusiasts who may not have access to original manuscripts or the expertise to decipher them.

Preserving Cultural Heritage

3.4.5 To Facilitate Comparative Studies:

- ◆ When comparing different works by the same author or works from the same period or literary tradition, having critically established texts for each is essential to draw accurate comparisons and conclusions about influences, common themes, and unique contributions.

A critical edition is far more than an editorial exercise; it is a cornerstone of modern scholarship. By moving a text from the realm of

uncertain and often contradictory manuscript traditions into a state of scholarly reliability, the critical edition provides a stable platform for research, interpretation, and cultural preservation. It ensures that the wisdom, artistry, and history embedded in ancient works can be studied, understood, and appreciated in their most authentic form. Without such editions, our engagement with the past would remain clouded by uncertainty, and the intellectual heritage of humanity would be at greater risk of distortion or loss

Summarised Overview

A critical edition is a carefully prepared version of a text that reconstructs the most authentic form of an ancient work by comparing all available manuscripts and recording their variations. Because handwritten copies often contain errors, omissions, or deliberate changes, a critical edition is necessary to correct corruptions, recover the author's original intent, and provide a reliable foundation for scholarship. It serves as an authoritative reference for study, preserves the cultural heritage of fragile manuscripts, and includes a critical apparatus that transparently documents variant readings and the history of the text's transmission. By ensuring accuracy, accessibility, and consistency, a critical edition safeguards the intellectual and literary value of ancient works for future generations

Assignment

1. What are some common causes of textual corruption in ancient manuscripts?

2. Why is a critical apparatus important in a critical edition?

3. How does a critical edition help preserve cultural heritage?

4. What role does a critical edition play in facilitating comparative literary studies?

5. Discuss the necessity of a critical edition in reconstructing the most authentic text of an ancient work.

6. Explain how a critical edition provides a reliable foundation for scholarship and academic research.

7. Evaluate the importance of documenting textual variants for understanding the history of a text.

8. "A critical edition is not just a text but a record of its transmission." Examine this statement with reference to the functions of a critical apparatus.

9. Imagine you are editing a Sanskrit manuscript with several variant readings. What steps would you follow to decide the most authentic version?

10. Compare the challenges faced in preparing a critical edition of a text with a codex unicus (single surviving manuscript) versus a text with multiple manuscripts.

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BLOCK-04

Edition

Block Content

Scribe and Scribal Errors

Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of the unit, the learner will be able to:

❖ familiarise learners with the core writing techniques ofancient India, the process of emendation, and various methods of preservation ofmanuscripts

❖ develop the skill of reading and writing ancient script.

❖ understand different types and formats of inscriptions

❖ understand scribe and scribal errors in the manuscripts

Background

The vast and rich literary and intellectual heritage of India, spanning millennia, has been primarily transmitted through a staggering number of manuscripts written on materials like palm-leaf and birch bark. These manuscripts are the primary sources for studying fields from philosophy and religion to science and literature. At the heart of this transmission process lies the figure of the scribe (often called *lipi-kara*, *lekha-ka*, or *śās-tri*), the individual responsible for manually copying texts across generations. They acted as crucial intermediaries, ensuring the survival and proliferation of knowledge, often in the absence of centralised printing.

However, the very act of manual copying is inherently susceptible to human error. Scribal errors—mistakes introduced during the transcription process—are an unavoidable and pervasive feature of Indian manuscript culture. Understanding the nature, classification, and impact of these errors is fundamental to the discipline of textual criticism (or *pāṭha-śod-hana*). These mistakes, which can range from simple omissions and substitutions of letters or words to more complex interpolations and transpositions of larger passages, significantly alter the textual tradition. Consequently, a critical evaluation of a manuscript tradition must systematically account for the scribe's role, their environment, their level of competence, and the specific types of errors they were prone to make to recover the author's original intended text (*mūla-pāṭha*). This introduction will explore the indispensable role of the scribe and delve into the typology and significance of the errors they introduced, which profoundly shaped the textual landscape of Indian literature.

Discussion

4.1.1 Scribe

- The scribe is a professional copyist who copies a manuscript

The scribe is a professional copyist who copies a manuscript or document for others. Lipikara, lipikāra, and lekhaka are the Sanskrit terms. The professional document-writers today have maintained the age-old profession against many odds due to the advent of typewriters. Government offices in the past had official scribes (as there are typists today). They were called Karanika, Kayastha, Rāja-lekhaka, and Rāja-lipikāra. There was Akṣapatalika or Divirapati, the keeper of records. Kautilya lays down the qualifications of such scribes.

- Most scribes have declared themselves at the end.

It is indeed a pity that we do not always have the names of the scribes who have helped keep the torch of learning burning bright to this day. Most scribes have declared themselves at the end by giving their names, the date on which the copying was completed, the patron or the person for whom the copy was made, the source of the example, and so on. Mostly, only a few of these details are furnished. Often, the scribe's name is mentioned at the end of copper plates. Copying is indeed a very strenuous job. Usually, at the end, the scribe craves the indulgence of the readers to bear with any possible scribal errors and to take utmost care of the copy, as it has been the result of strenuous labour on his part.

- A scribe's job is, it must be remembered, mostly mechanical

A scribe's job is, it must be remembered, mostly mechanical. He need not compose a work; he is expected to copy a text fairly and correctly. He may be compared to a modern typist or a typesetter in a printing press. A compositor or a typist composes or types from the author's copy. A proofreader checks the matter set in types. If there are errors, i.e. if the composed matter is not true to the original in any part, corrections are introduced; a typed copy may be revised; thus, the copy is set right. A scribe too may have before him the author's copy or a copy of it made by a person like himself. However, this work may or may not be subject to revision with reference to its exemplar. Thus, it is possible that his errors may remain in the new copy without being corrected. A copy made out of such a copy in similar circumstances contains not only the possible errors freshly committed but also the errors of the earlier one.

scribe is prone to visual and psychological errors while copying, and each scribe has his own idiosyncrasies. That handwriting is highly individualistic is well known. In fact, handwriting has been the subject of serious study, and it is said to be an index to one's traits. Even as the mode of writing differs from person to person, particular types of errors can be associated with each scribe. Therefore, what is required of a scribe is faithfulness and carefulness. A scribe must cultivate honesty more than scholarship.

Howsoever utmost care one might take, there are chances of failure, as it is a manual effort going on for a good length of time and calls for physical strength, such as vigilant eyes and the ability to sit still continuously, as well as mental calmness. Thus, the manual reproduction of a book will have its defects, and we can have gradations in the trustworthiness of a copy depending upon the fidelity of the scribe manifested therein. However, scribal errors also occur due to the imperfect knowledge of the script of the exemplar.

No hard and fast rule can be prescribed to identify a trustworthy scribe. One has to make a thorough study of the manuscripts for the purpose. As an example, one or two points can be made here: The scribe who makes kundalas (circles) around letters and thus indicates his doubt or inability to decipher the same in his original may be taken as more trustworthy. Similarly, a scribe whose copy contains blank spaces for one or more letters in a line may be considered honest in leaving out the lacunae or those letters that are not decipherable in his original, thus avoiding the temptation of making up the lacunae himself. Similarly, careful and systematic writing may be distinguished from haphazard writing.

4.1.2 Qualifications of a Scribe

The prime qualifications of a scribe were a legible hand, correct lettering, and attractive writing. The Nandipurāṇa specifies that his writing should be śubham, ślakṣṇam, and ramyam ca (quoted by Hemādri in his Caturvargacintāmaṇī). The Hayaśīrṣapāñcarātra requires his lettering to be uniform and thick: samśirṣaih sumāmsalaih (2.31.10). The same text adds on the manner of his writing:

नातिकृशैर्नातिदीर्घैर्ह्रस्वदीर्घादिलक्षितैः ।

सम्पूर्णावयवैर्मात्राबिन्दुसंयोगलक्षितैः ॥(2.31.11).

The letters should not be too broad or too thin, the short and long vowel signs marked properly, all parts of the letters inscribed fully, and the dots and conjunctions marked clearly. The Matsyapurāṇa has this to say about the writing of a good scribe:

शीर्षोपेतान् सुसम्पूर्णान् शुभश्रेणीगतान् समान् ।

अक्षरान् वै लिखेद्यस्तुलेखकः स वरः स्मृतः॥ (Quoted in Viramitrodaya)

With proper upper strokes, fully outlined, in straight rows and equal-sized—he who inscribes syllables in this manner is a master scribe.

However, a good hand alone did not make a good scribe. For correct decipherment from an original or proper understanding from dictation, he had to be well-read in the different disciplines. To gaze for long at an original manuscript or to ask for a repetition during dictation did not augur well for a good scribe. Chanakya specifies:

सकृदुक्तगृहीतार्थो लघुहस्तो जिताक्षरः।

सर्वशास्त्रसमालोकी प्रकृष्टो नाम लेखकः॥ (Canakyasangraha.)

A scribe had to know the metres and be a poet himself so as to understand and transcribe. He should have the sagacity to decipher smudged writing and reconstruct minor omissions in the archetype. This qualification is specified in the Vahni Purāṇa, which says:

तथा सम्पूजयेद् वत्स लेखकं शास्त्रपारगम्।

छन्दोलक्षणतत्त्वज्ञं सत्कविं मधुरस्वरम्॥

प्रणष्टं स्मरति ग्रन्थं श्रेष्ठं पुस्तकलेखकम्। (Quoted by Hemādri in Dānakhanda)

The Garuda Purāṇa demands qualities of both the head and the heart when it says:

मेधावी वाक्पटुः प्राज्ञः सत्यवादी जितेन्द्रियः।

सर्वशास्त्रसमालोकी ह्येषः साधुः स लेखकः॥ (Quoted in Viramitrodaya)

4.1.3 Scribal Errors

Scribal errors are an inherent challenge in the study and critical editing of Sanskrit manuscripts. Because Sanskrit texts were transmitted over centuries by hand-copying, often in different regions and scripts, a variety of errors, both intentional and unintentional, crept into the tradition. These errors can significantly alter the meaning of a text, and identifying and correcting them is a key task of textual criticism.

Here are some of the most common types of scribal errors found in Sanskrit manuscripts:

1. **Omission (lopa):** This is one of the most frequent mechanical errors. It involves the accidental deletion of a letter, word, line, or even a whole paragraph. This can be caused by a lapse in concentration, mental fatigue, or the scribe's eye skipping from one word or phrase to a similar one on the next line.

2. **Addition (adhika):** This is the insertion of extraneous material into the text. This can be unintentional, such as the accidental repetition of a word or line (*dittography*). It can also be intentional, where a scribe, who may be a scholar, adds a word or phrase for clarification or to fill what they perceive as an omission. Sometimes a scribe might incorporate marginal notes from the source manuscript into the main body of the new copy.

3. **Substitution (paṭhabheda):** This involves replacing one word or letter with another. This can be unintentional, often due to:

   ◆ **Orthographic Confusion:** Mistakes caused by the similarity of letters or symbols in the script being used. For example, a scribe might confuse similar-looking letters or misinterpret a *visarga* (final 'h' sound) or an *anusvāra* (nasal sound).

   ◆ **Homophony:** A scribe who is copying a text by ear might confuse words that sound similar but have different meanings.

   ◆ **Synonym Substitution:** A scribe might replace a less-familiar word with a more common synonym.

   ◆ **Harmonization:** A scribe might alter a word or phrase to make it conform to a more familiar or parallel passage found elsewhere in the same text or in a related work.

4. **Transposition (sthanasthapana):** This is the changing of the relative order of words, phrases, or even entire verses. While often a minor error that may not drastically change the meaning, it can still corrupt the original author's intended rhythm or emphasis. The interchange of adjacent words is a common form of this error.

5. **Voluntary Alterations:** These are not simple mistakes but conscious changes made by the scribe. The motivations can be varied:

   ◆ **Correcting perceived errors:** A scribe might "correct" a reading they believe is wrong, even if it is the author's original word.

   ◆ **Modernization:** Substituting old spellings or grammatical forms with new ones.

   ◆ **Regional variations:** Introducing words or spellings that are common in the scribe's own dialect or region.

   ◆ **Filling in gaps:** Consciously adding words to a text that they perceive as incomplete or difficult to understand.

The study of these errors is central to the field of textual criticism, a discipline that aims to reconstruct the original text of an author

by comparing and analysing multiple surviving manuscripts. By recognising and classifying these errors, scholars can more accurately determine the most authentic reading and create a "critical edition" of a text that is as close as possible to the author's original work.

Summarised Overview

The scribe (Sanskrit: *lipikara*, *lekhaka*), the professional copyist, was central to preserving India's textual tradition— a profession continued today by document-writers despite modern technology. Historically, government offices employed official scribes like the *Karanika* or *Rāja-lekhaka*. A scribe's job was largely mechanical—copying an exemplar (source copy) faithfully—and often lacked the subsequent revision process available to modern typists or compositors, meaning their scribal errors (visual or psychological) were easily propagated. Scribes, whose names and details are sometimes preserved in a text's end-note (*colophon*), often requested the reader's indulgence for any mistakes due to the strenuous nature of the work. Trustworthiness in a scribe could be gauged by their honesty in marking lacunae or doubtful letters. The qualifications for an ideal scribe, as laid down in ancient texts like the *Matsyapurāna* and *Cāṇakya-sangraha*, went beyond a legible and attractive hand (e.g., *śubham ślakṣṇam ramyam ca*); they also required scholarship—including knowledge of different disciplines, metres, and the ability to correctly decipher smudged texts and reconstruct omissions—along with mental qualities like calmness, honesty, and self-control.

Scribal errors are an inevitable challenge in the study of Sanskrit manuscripts, which were manually copied and transmitted over centuries. Identifying and correcting these errors is the core task of textual criticism. The mistakes fall into several common categories: Omission (*lopa*), which is the accidental deletion of text due to fatigue or eye-skip; Addition (*adhika*), the insertion of extraneous material, sometimes intentional for clarification or sometimes unintentional repetition (dittography); and Substitution (*paṭhabheda*), where one reading is replaced by another due to orthographic confusion, similar-sounding words (homophony), or the use of synonyms. Other errors include Transposition (*sthanasthapana*), which is the change in the order of words or phrases, and Voluntary Alterations, which are conscious changes by a scribe to 'correct' perceived errors, modernise the text, or incorporate regional variations. By recognising and classifying these errors, scholars can compare multiple manuscripts to determine the most authentic reading and establish a critical edition of the original text.

Assignment

1. What were the Sanskrit terms for a professional scribe, and what roles did official scribes hold in ancient government offices?

2. What information did scribes typically include in the colophon (end-note) of a manuscript, and why did they often request the reader's indulgence?

3. Why did scribal errors easily propagate and accumulate across successive copies, and what types of errors was a scribe prone to commit?

4. According to ancient Indian texts, what were the primary physical and technical qualifications of a good scribe regarding handwriting?

5. Beyond having a good hand, what scholarly and moral qualifications did texts like the *Cāṇakya-sangraha* and *Garuda Purāna* demand of an ideal scribe?

6. What are the four primary categories of scribal errors (with Sanskrit terms) that challenge the critical study of Sanskrit manuscripts?

7. Explain the difference between unintentional and intentional errors within the category of *Addition* (*adhika*), providing a specific example of the unintentional type.

8. What is *Substitution* (*paṭhabheda*), and what are three distinct causes for this error that relate to visual form, sound, or context?

9. How does the error of *Omission* (*lopa*) typically occur, and what is its effect on the text?

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Unit : 2   Causes of Errors and Various Readings

Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of the unit, the learner will be able to:

❖ familiarise learners with the core writing techniques in ancient India, the process of emendation, and various methods of preservation

❖ develop the skill of reading and writing ancient scripts

❖ understand different types and formats of inscriptions

❖ understand the causes of errors and various readings

Background

Scribal errors are an inevitable challenge in the study of Sanskrit manuscripts, which were manually copied and transmitted over centuries. Identifying and correcting these errors is the core task of textual criticism. The mistakes fall into several common categories: Omission (*lopa*), which is the accidental deletion of text due to fatigue or eye-skip; Addition (*adhika*), the insertion of extraneous material, sometimes intentional for clarification or sometimes unintentional repetition (dittography); and Substitution (*paṭhabheda*), where one reading is replaced by another due to orthographic confusion, similar-sounding words (homophony), or the use of synonyms. Other errors include Transposition (*sthanasthapana*), which is the change in the order of words or phrases, and Voluntary Alterations, which are conscious changes made by a scribe to 'correct' perceived errors, modernise the text, or incorporate regional variations. By recognising and classifying these errors, scholars can compare multiple manuscripts to determine the most authentic reading and establish a critical edition of the original text.

Different manuscripts of a text possess various readings due to several reasons. We are discussing the causes of errors and various readings in this unit.

Keywords

variant reading, original reading, Causes of Errors, neat writing, haphazard, Deletion, Addition, Substitution, and Transference.

4.2.1 Various Readings

Different manuscripts of a text possess various readings due to several reasons. Even the most reliable scribe may make mistakes, thus a copy can differ from the exemplar by a line here or there. This difference grows inversely to the scribe's degree of fidelity. It also depends, to some extent, on the distance of the copy from the archetype and the popularity of the work; the greater the distance, the greater the possibility of divergence. The popularity of a work will naturally occasion the production of a large number of copies, most of which may not be by competent or professional hands.

- Different manuscripts of a text possess various readings

However, it must be accepted that the scribes may not be responsible for all the variants. It is possible that authors may have revised their work after some time. Since neither the revision nor the original is dated, there is no way to differentiate when the copy is separated from the author in space or time.

Each individual has their own idiosyncrasies, and these are reflected in their writing patterns as well. Hence, each copy comes to have its own peculiarities. In other words, each extant copy of a text will be more or less at variance with another. The divergence may be in the form of addition, deletion, substitution, or interchange of a letter, word, sentence, etc., up to a paragraph. The form or version of a given passage or its part in a particular text is called reading (*pātha*). When two copies of a text vary in their reading, one reading is referred to as the variant of the other. Such divergences are generally called various readings or *variae lectiones*.

When there is a variant reading, either of them may possibly be the original reading. Hence, one reading is a corruption of the other; it is also possible that both of them may be corruptions of a third lost reading. In other words, all various readings may be called corruptions or errors. These terms here have both literal and figurative meanings. Literally, they refer to all those scribal errors, like a jumble of letters making no sense or those writings which are grammatically untenable. Figuratively, it includes all deviations from the 'original reading' or the reading of the exemplar. When one of the variants comes to be accepted, the others are termed corruptions. For example, in *Rājasekharacarita*, we have:

- all various readings may be called corruptions or errors.

T: kāvyam vā syān no ya-.

N: kāvyam vā na syād ya-.

If T is accepted, N is a corruption. It is necessary to repeat that corruption or error has nothing to do with a reading being intrinsically unsound but refers to the swerving from the original. That is, when a scribe transcribes something different from his exemplar, he is deemed to have erred; though his writing may be grammatically 'correct', it is 'corrupted'.

4.2.2 Causes of Errors

If we examine the handwritings in manuscripts as well as the epigraphs, we find two distinct styles:

1. systematic, uniform, legible, and neat writing.
2. haphazard, illegible, and poor writing.

This leads to the possibility that there were two distinct circumstances in which copying was done:

1. open, licensed, or protected; and
2. covert, unlicensed, or unprotected.

In the former instance, the copy was made under the supervision of some authority, or a professional scribe did the job for a bona fide customer, and there was no secrecy about it. Thus, there was no haste or any sort of pressure or apprehension on the part of the scribe. In the latter case, the scribe, professional or not, carried out the work clandestinely. For some reason, certain individuals guard their manuscripts zealously, allowing no one to copy them. Naturally, a very interested person might try to copy them even stealthily.

This makes the scribe perform his job in an environment not conducive to the work, such as poor lighting, haste, or apprehension; attention cannot be focused on orthography. The remarks of H. Loders regarding the orthography of a copper plate charter, that "the badness of orthography is a common badge of all forged grants," apply equally to manuscripts. However, in the case of manuscripts, the doubt of clandestine activity is limited to certain parts where one copy differs from another.

Curiously, there are references to the prevalence of clandestine copying; it is not mere imagination. *Rajasekarasūri* recounts an anecdote about a scholar, Harihara, in his *Prabandhakośa*. Once, Harihara was asked by *Vastupala* about a book he had in his hand. Harihara replied that it was a rare copy of Sriharsa's *Naiṣadhiya-carita* and that he could lend it for a night. *Vastupala*, who received the book, had a copy prepared overnight, which he found wrapped in an old thread and old dirty cloth. The next morning, while returning the copy to Harihara, *Vastupala* mentioned that he remembered a copy of it in his library. At his orders, the copy was brought after some time.

- ◆ Causes of Errors

Harihara found that it was indeed a copy of *Naiṣadha*, but he could guess it was the handiwork of *Vastupala* himself.

The Jain Bhandar at Mudabıdri has a rare manuscript, a 9th-century copy of the Prakrit work *Dhavala*. The authorities of the Bhandar guarded the copy carefully, not allowing anybody even to handle it. The efforts of Jain scholars to get it printed went in vain. However, the scholars were eventually able to persuade the authorities to permit a transcription to be made and preserved in the Bhandar itself, because there were only a few scholars who could decipher the script—9th-century Kannada. It was arranged for the copyist to make another copy, which was smuggled out. Later, *Dhavala* was published, but the scholars who edited the smuggled copy were not satisfied with their work.

The scribe transcribing in such illicit circumstances cannot ensure correctness because the work cannot be conducted with a composed mind. There is no possibility of even taking a second look at the copy, let alone comparing it with the exemplar.

There is another circumstance in which various readings are generated almost without the scribe's knowledge. We have seen how manuscripts get conflated. A wealthy person going on a pilgrimage may take his literary friends with him. *Bana*, for instance, himself a gifted poet, went to various places with a circle of friends, among whom was a *pustaka vachaka* and a *lekhaka* (calligraphist). Surely, they carried with them the material for exhibiting their art whenever they were called upon to do so. In other words, they carried their books with them. When the reader came across a copy of a work in his possession, he naturally went through it. He might note in the margin of his personal copy the differences that appealed to him. When this copy becomes the exemplar, then the marginal notations may become part of the text, or the notations may be substituted for a part of the text.

When even an honest scribe writing in a normal situation is subject to commit errors, it is unnecessary to reiterate that errors abound if the scribe is not very faithful and careful. Corruptions creep in for two reasons, as observed before: visual and psychological. Again, corruptions may be either involuntarily or voluntarily committed. In other words, the errors may be accidental or deliberate.

- visual and psychological

Because it is the human mind and effort that are involved in copying, it is not possible to enumerate exhaustively the causes of the accidental errors or the motives for the deliberate ones. Based on the study of Latin manuscripts, scholars like Jebb, Hall, and Lindsay have specified certain types of errors.

4.2.3 Types of Errors

Broadly speaking, there can be only four major types of errors, regardless of their causes:

a. Deletion

b. Addition

c. Substitution

d. Transference

These may pertain to a letter, a word, a line/sentence, or a paragraph.

4.2.3.1 Deletion or Omission

This is mostly a mechanical error. Generally, no scribe voluntarily omits any word or passage. There are deliberate omissions, but they are mostly restricted to works like Purāṇas, where sectarian views find a place among the contents, which are by and large miscellaneous. In copies of such works, it is possible for a scribe with a particular orientation to omit passages that are not palatable to them.

(i) Simple omission

Due to oversight, and more due to the carelessness or negligence of the scribe, there occurs the omission of a letter, a word, or even a line.

Examples:

1. *Ye mad visa-väsinah for ye mad viṣaya-väsinah*. (D6, A5. Ramayana, 1.2.8)

2. *upacarmatram bhakti. t omitted in between*. (Ka, Kha Dhvanyäloka, p.28)

3. *kṣoda-kṣamatva for -kṣamatattva.* (Ga. Dhvanyaloka, p.4)

(ii) Omission of serifs

The vowel signs that are put above and below the letters are called serifs. Those of ifi, elo, ailau, u, to, and t are sometimes omitted.

Examples:

1. kinta yä for kintu ya. (N. Kapphiṇābhyudaya, 6.3a)

2. subhravah for subhrupah (D 14. Ramayana).

3. vätäšanā for vātaśona. (D 34. Ramayana).

(iii) Haplography

When the same or similar phonemes occur in a series, one or two of them tend to be dropped. This is called haplography. Words between two words having similar phonemes are often dropped along

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◆ Omission is mostly a mechanical error.

with one of the similar phonemes. Such an error is called tele-haplography. It is possible for the scribe to jump to a line further off instead of going to the very next line if those lines began or ended with the same phonemes, thus skipping one or several lines.

Examples:

1. *prada hanumat for pradahatu hanumat*-(B 192, B 351 ORI. Mahendra-vijaya-dima. 1.1)

2. *gurvakṣaram tadbhavanāmśakeṣu* tadbhavanam omitted in between. (P, 404, ORI. Utpala-parimala, ch.97)

3. *śaraśaśivakṛta*- for šara-śaśi-śiva-krta-(ibid. ch.101).

Katre speaks of the omission of seemingly unimportant words.

4.2.3.2 Addition

We find additions in a text ranging from a letter to a whole chapter. Such additions may occur not only accidentally or mechanically but also voluntarily or deliberately. The intentional insertions are termed interpolation. This term usually has a derogatory connotation, as it implies meddling with the text. Such interpolations must be undetectable. This is particularly true for texts with straightforward language. Works like the Puranas and the Mahabharata are often considered in this context. Not only is the language uncomplicated, but the versification does not require any sophistication. The varied contents make it easy to insert passages that cannot be detected.

Insertions or interpolations may be found in other works as well. However, not all insertions deserve to be condemned in this manner. The addition of letters may aim to provide a readable and comprehensible text when the exemplar was in a poor condition—mutilated, torn, worm-eaten, or worn out. Some conscientious scribes have marked their insertions by encircling them. Although there is only a reference to such practice in literature, no evidence has been reported so far. Rāmabhadra-dīkṣita mentions this in his Patanjali-carita:

vaṭadru-parṇa-sthita-varna-melenād

athaiva bhāṣyam nikhilam patañjaleh;

lilekha vatsakṣata-durgrahākṣare

sthale kvacit kundalanām akalpayat...

vatsa-kṣatam sa pitskundalitam yathāvat buddhyakalayya lipi-jälakam antarantah...

Some have confessed that they have added their own compositions. Bhūṣana-Bhatta, son of Bana, is one such individual. He writes that he thought of continuing and completing the Kādambarī, which his father could not finish:

yāte divam pitari tad-vacasaiva sārdham vicchedam apa bhuvi yas tu kathā-prabandhah; duhkham satam tad-asamāpti-kṛtam vilokya prārabdha eṣa ca mayā na kavitva-darpāt.

One Dāsa-śarmā, son of Manju, declares that he filled the lacunae caused by overuse, etc., in Sankhyāyana-Śrauta-sūtra-bhāsya:

bhāṣyakāra-giram yatra vinaṣṭam lekhanādinā;

akṣaram tad dāsaśarmā mañju-sūnur akalpayat.

The unintentional or involuntary additions are mostly instances of dittography, involving the repetition of single letters, etc.

Examples:

1. agre pradarśayiṣyate for agre darśayiṣyate. (Ga. Dhvanyaloka, p.12)

2. samādhir ity ākhyāyate for samādhir ākhyāyate. (Ka. Kāvyālankāra-sūtra, 3.1.18)

3. Sometimes marginalia get inadvertently incorporated into the text:

Examples:

1. *kāvyalakṣma-vidhāyibhiḥ bhaṭṭodbhataprabhṛtibhiḥ for kāvyal-akṣma-vidhāyibhiḥ (MB. Dhvanyaloka, 1.4. p.6)*

2. *bhatlodbhataprabhṛtibhiḥ tato neha for tato neha. (Ga Ibid.)*

3. *jīvanti-śveta-girikarnikā-muṣkaka- for jīvanti-śveta-muṣka-ka-(Gha.uṣkaka- (Gha. Arthaśāstra p.44. śveta and giri-karṇikā are synonyms).*

Sometimes addition is resorted to in order to improve the reading for easier understanding.

Examples:

1. *matipravivekān for matipravekān (Ka etc. Arthaśāstra, p.36)*

2. *kūpas tu tṛṣām hanti for kūpas tu tṛṣam hanti (Mys. Dṛṣḷāntaśa-taka 13)*

3. *tatparyeṇa artha-prakāśanam for tatparyeṇa prakāśanam. (Gha. Dhvanyaloka, p. 28.)*

Devotion and convention may cause unnecessary additions:

1. *abhipsitārtha... tasmai (śrī)gaṇādhipataye namah.*

2. *kāyena (śrīman) nārāyaṇāyeti samarpayāmi.*

4.2.3.3 Substitution

Substitution is mostly an intentional error. The intention may be wanton, i.e., a substitution for which there can be no valid explana-

tion, or it may be to resolve a difficulty in reading, either because the reading is faulty or because it has an unusual word or form and is therefore mistaken as faulty.

Examples:

1. *vyavahitam for vyavasthitam.* (Gha. Dhvanyaloka 3.33 p.204)

2. *yena brūmah for tena brūmah.* (Ga. ibid. 1.12)

3. *nadīnadānām for nadīnadāni* (M. Kapphiṇābhyudaya, 18.44 a)

Substitution can also occur semi-voluntarily. A synonym may be substituted for a frequently occurring word:

Examples:

1. *mahārāja, janādhipa, narādhipa; muni, rsi* these synonyms (Mahābhārata). are mutually substituted.

2. *madhya-daśanāgra- for-madhya-radanāgra-*(P. 404 Utpalapari-mala, ch.95)

3. *kaiścit pathyamānah ślokah nācāryakrtah* for *kvacid drśyamānaś ślokah etc.* (ibid., ch.82)

Substitution may result from false recollection. When one is copying certain phrases, similar phrases from another part of the same text or from an entirely different text may be recalled, leading to the writing of words that follow the phrase in that context.

Examples:

1. *pranamya paramam jyotih vāmanena* is copied as *pranamya paramātmānam...* (Ka. Kavyālaṁkārasūtra-Vrtti, 1.1.1)

2. *rātrāv atra vivāhamandaptale* for *rātrāv atra vihara-mandapa-tale* (Ka. Kāvyälankara-sūtra-urtti 1.2.13,ill.)

3. *na lokāntara-niṣthā-* for *na lokāvayavanisthā-(Siddhāntakaumu-di,* 6286.3.69)

Substitution is also employed to avoid archaisms and other textual difficulties.

Examples:

1. *naiko munir yasya* for *naiko rṣir yasya.* (hiatus between -o and is avoided).

2. The hyper-metric line *vinatām viṣaṇṇavadanām* has the v.l: *vi-natām dinavadanām; viṣanṇavadanām kadrüh; viṣanṇarūpām kadrüh.* (Mahābhārata, 1.20; Sukthankar, (1933). p.xciii)

4.2.3.4 Orthographic Confusion

When a copyist conversant with one script and familiar with an-other copies from either of them to the other, the scribe is liable to

commit certain errors due to confusion of letters. The orthographic similarities cause this semi-voluntary error.

For example, the editor of Kapphiṇābhyudaya notes that there are many instances of confusion in Oriya script. "anga" may be written as "amśa" (6.47c), "rāga" as "rāsa" (14.2a), "gaja" as "gada" (3.33c), and "bala" as "nala" (5.2a).

Katre notes that there are such similarities between Sāradā and Devanāgarī scripts, such as between "m" and "s," "u" and "t," "ṣ" and "th" (so "tathā" becomes "uṣǎ"), etc.

In Nandināgarī, there is the possibility of confusion: "para" can be mistaken for "pha" and vice versa; "śva," "sva," and "kha,"

e.g., *khagati* and *svagati* for *śvagati* (Pb, W. Vrttaratnākara, 3.36).

The Devanagari used by Jains, as observed by Katre, is peculiar in that there is a frequent interchange between "c," "v," and "b," as well as "tth" and "cch," etc.

4.2.3.5 Transposition (Anagramatism)

Phonemes and words may be transposed involuntarily. This may also be done voluntarily to guard against the possibility of metanalysis.

Examples:

1. *jñāne na cānyo* becomes *jñāne ca nānyo.* (Mt. Md. Mahāvīracarita. 3.37d)

2. *trayatām vo pra...do madhuripoh nakhāh* for *trāyatām vo madhuripoh pra...do nnakhah*. (Ga. Dhvanyāloka, 1.1)

The editor must patiently examine the various readings and consider their relative appropriateness from the perspectives of orthography and context. The principle of interpretation should be adopted: sthitasya gatiś cintanīyā. Moreover, the various readings have, surprisingly, a primary role in ascertaining the codices.

> ◆ The principle of interpretation should be adopted

Summarised Overview

Variant readings in manuscripts arise from several causes, with even reliable scribes making accidental errors such as omissions or insertions. The degree of difference between copies is inversely proportional to the scribe's fidelity and increases with the distance from the archetype and the work's popularity, which leads to less professional copying. While scribes are a major source of variants—through accidental or deliberate errors like additions, deletions, substitutions, or interchanging text—authors' revisions can also cause differences. The environment of copying, whether supervised and unhurried or clan-

destine and rushed (as illustrated by anecdotes of covert copying), significantly impacts the quality, with clandestine work often leading to greater errors. Furthermore, marginal notes or conflations from different texts, made by a reader and later incorporated by a scribe, contribute to textual divergence. Ultimately, a variant reading, called *varia lectio* (or *pātha*), is often termed a corruption or error—not necessarily implying that the reading is intrinsically unsound, but that it deviates from the original reading or exemplar.

Textual errors can be broadly classified into four types: Deletion (Omission), Addition (Interpolation), Substitution, and Transposition. These can affect a manuscript from a single letter to a paragraph, occurring either accidentally or deliberately. Deletion is primarily mechanical (simple omission, omission of serifs) but can also be deliberate (sectarian omissions) and includes haplography (dropping repeated or similar phonemes/lines). Addition can be accidental (dittography, incorporation of marginalia) or intentional (interpolation), which is often derogatory but sometimes done to repair damaged text or complete a work. Substitution is often intentional (wanton, solving textual difficulties, avoiding archaisms) or semi-voluntary (substituting synonyms, resulting from false recollection). Orthographic confusion is a semi-voluntary type of error, arising from the similarity between letters across different scripts. Finally, transposition (anagramatism) involves involuntarily switching the order of phonemes or words. Ultimately, editors must use careful interpretation and context to assess these various readings and determine the original text.

Assignment

1. What is a "reading" (*pātha*) in the context of textual criticism, and how does it relate to a "variant reading" (*varia lectio*)?

2. What two main non-scribal factors influence the degree of divergence between a manuscript copy and the original archetype?

3. In textual criticism, what is the figurative definition of a "corruption" or "error," and how does it differ from the literal definition?

4. Besides scribal errors, what is one other major cause of variation that the text suggests might be difficult to distinguish from scribal variants?

5. What are the two distinct circumstances under which copying was done, and how did the "covert" circumstance affect the quality of the manuscript?

6. How can a reader's personal copy lead to the generation of "various readings" almost without the knowledge of the next scribe?

7. What four broad types of mechanical errors (divergence forms) are possible in a manuscript, according to the text?

8. What are the four major types of errors found in manuscripts?

9. What is the difference between an involuntary (accidental) and a voluntary (deliberate) error in a manuscript?

10. What are the three specific categories of *Deletion* or *Omission* mentioned in the text?

Suggested Reading

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1. R.G. Bhandarkar, Sri Santosh Mookerji, *The Origin of Indian Alphabet,* Silver Jubilee Vol. III, 1922.

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Unit : 3

Editing of Texts

Background

The task of editing Indian manuscript texts is a scholarly endeavour of immense historical and cultural significance, presenting a unique set of methodological challenges. Indian manuscript traditions, encompassing a vast array of languages, scripts, and subject matter—from Vedic and philosophical treatises to sophisticated *kāvya* (poetry) and technical literature—are characterised by their rich diversity and complexity. Unlike Western stemmatic criticism, which seeks to reconstruct a single archetype, the textual criticism of Indian works often contends with multiple recensions. The frequent use of the stemma codicum (family trees of manuscripts) is complicated by horizontal transmission (cross-pollination of readings) and by an emphasis on vṛtti (commentary) traditions. This introductory paragraph outlines the fundamental considerations and specialised approaches necessary for meticulously preparing a critical edition of an Indian manuscript, ensuring the resulting text accurately reflects its lineage and authentic textual history

Keywords

Critical edition, recensions, apparutus, pedigree, sigla, emendato, various versions, critical text

4.3.1 Essential Steps in Text Editing

We have seen, in general, how a text must be edited critically based on the evidence taken from the extant manuscripts of the text and the *testimonia* appertaining thereto, as well as how the critical recension must be arrived at. Once all the extant manuscripts of the text have been located, it is the editor's duty to secure them. If that is not possible, the editor should obtain rotographs, microfilm, or photocopies of the manuscripts for the editorial work. In the case of manual transcripts, the editor should personally compare the transcript with the original, if possible, and rectify any scribal or other errors due to the personality of the transcriber. We have already observed how this personality of the scribe intrudes upon our understanding at every step and how we must get behind him to arrive at his 'copy.' From such material, his collation will commence, leading, step by step, to a deep study of the manuscripts, the determination of their peculiarities and genealogical relationships, and a judgement on their relative trustworthiness, the constitution of the critical recension, and the restoration of the text to its original form wherever possible. In the present unit, practical hints will be provided regarding the essentials of a critical edition.

- practical hints will be given regarding the things which are essential in a critical edition.

4.3.2 The Editor's Task Presenting and Justifying the Critical Apparatus

The Introduction must begin with a description of the critical apparatus utilised by the editor for this work. First, a general account of the manuscripts should be presented, detailing the number of extant manuscripts known, the number of manuscripts actually examined for the critical recension, and the number fully or partially collated, along with the reasons for selecting the manuscripts that were collated. All independent available manuscripts should be used, except those derived from extant manuscripts.

The choice of the critical apparatus will depend on several considerations, such as the scripts in which the manuscripts are transcribed, the places from which they originate, the relative age of the manuscripts, and any discrepant types within a version in preference to similar types. All these reasons that affect the choice of the critical apparatus should be stated clearly and briefly in this general account.

- the scripts in which the manuscripts are transcribed

editor should then briefly indicate the classification of the manuscripts into recensions and versions as determined by his collations. According to this classification, he should provide a list of the manu-

scripts forming the critical apparatus. The list will begin, under each recension and version, with a siglum or abbreviated sign for the manuscript by which the editor denotes its readings in his apparatus criticus, along with details of the place of deposit, the name of the library, the identification number it bears in the catalogue of that library, and its date, if available.

4.3.3 Assigning Sigla and Providing Detailed External Description of Manuscripts

While assigning the siglum to a manuscript, the editor should avoid using arbitrary signs. The siglum should have some characteristic that reminds us of the manuscript for which it stands in the critical apparatus; this may relate to the place from which it originates, or, in cases where a text has been preserved in more than one script, the name of the script may indicate the manuscript. When there are multiple manuscripts in a given script or from the same place, numerals placed below the abbreviation (sublinear or inferior) may indicate them individually. Thus, G1, G2, G3, and G4 will indicate manuscripts written in the Grantha character if the symbol refers to the script, or manuscripts from Gwalior if the reference is to the place of deposit. The combination of the alphabetical symbol and numerals can be made systematic by assigning to the numerals, in ascending order, an increasing degree of impurity in the manuscripts represented by them; thus, G_1 will be superior to G_2, and this again to G_3 and so on.

Now begins a detailed account of the manuscripts in the order indicated in the list provided above. This account will give the siglum, followed by the place of deposit, the name of the library, the pressmark of the library, the number of folios, the number of lines in each folio, the number of letters in each line, the material on which it is written, and the style of its handwriting.

This external description also takes into account the orthographical peculiarities of the manuscript, the nature and condition of the manuscript, the existence of marginalia and interlinear corrections, idiosyncrasies in the numbering of the folios, the number of sections, lacunae (if any), etc. The beginning and end of the text should also be noted, along with any intermediate colophons that provide information about the history of its transmission. Additionally, the name of the patron at whose instance the manuscript may have been transcribed, the name of the scribe, the place of transcription, and the date of transcription or of the 'copy' should be included whenever circumstances permit the editor to obtain this information. If the manuscript bears a title or titles, this should also be indicated in

the detailed account. When discussing the style of writing, the editor should specify whether the manuscript is in one uniform handwriting or whether several 'hands' are evident. Similarly, regarding the additions or corrections entered in the margin or between the lines, it should be noted that corrections made in the first hand are of different (and of much greater) value than those made by a second hand. All such information that helps the reader to visualise the condition and value of the manuscript for critical purposes should be recorded here.

4.3.4 Manuscript Evaluation Stemma Codicum and Recensional Analysis

In the case of manuscripts that have been eliminated, the reasons for such elimination must be stated. Similarly, when manuscripts are partially collated, the editor should indicate the places where such collation begins and ends in the detailed account of each manuscript.

Another important feature that should be included in this detailed account is a judgement regarding the trustworthiness of the manuscript.

- Many manuscripts contain praœastis

Many manuscripts contain praśastis written by the transcriber at the beginning of some sections of the work. While they often contain historical information, they are not relevant to the text itself and should be indicated in the detailed account rather than in the critical apparatus.

When partial collations have been presented, there should be a table showing the manuscripts collated for different portions of the text, so that the critical reader may have easy access to this information when studying the constituted text and the notes of the critical apparatus. Being tabular in form, this reference is made easy and saves the reader a lot of unnecessary trouble.

- the editor should give detailed information of the testimonia

After the manuscripts have been described in detail, the editor should provide detailed information about the testimonia that are available, such as ancient commentaries, epitomes, adaptations, and florilegia, which have been utilised for the study of the text.

The relationship of the manuscripts, as expressed in a genealogy, should now be represented, if possible, in the form of a pedigree or stemma codicum. A method should be adopted here to indicate lines of transmission between non-extant codices whose existence can be assumed at some time based on the evidence presented by the extant manuscripts, so that these can be separated from the lines of transmission of definitively known manuscripts, whether extant or non-extant. The simplest way is to indicate the former by a series of dots and the latter by continuous straight lines.

The non-extant manuscripts—those that are no longer in existence but whose existence at some time in the past must be assumed in order to explain the relationship between the extant manuscripts—should be indicated either by Greek letters (α, β, γ, ...) or by starred letters (A*, B*, C*, a*, b*, c*). The latter method corresponds to the starred forms used in linguistics to explain the relationship between cognate vocables and may therefore be adopted. Where practicable, the editor should indicate the probable or exact recorded date of his manuscripts by numerals added at the top of the sigla used to indicate them, representing the centuries of the Christian era. Thus, M11 will indicate that the manuscript designated by the siglum M is dated somewhere within the eleventh century; similarly, K13-14 will indicate that the period to which K belongs lies somewhere between the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries A.D. If the dates cannot be given exactly on definite evidence, but the lower limit can be ascertained by extrinsic evidence, this limit may be similarly indicated by an asterisk attached to the numeral (thus KXIII*).

Immediately after the pedigree mentioned above, an explanation of the sigla used in the pedigree should be given, preceding a discussion surveying the recensions and their versions.

an explanation of the sigla used in the pedigree should be given

In such a critical survey, the editor should indicate the main agreements and differences between the recensions and follow this up with a similar treatment of the versions belonging to each recension. If there is a received text that has been normalised, and which is generally called the 'vulgate', the editor should also indicate the main differences between the recensions and the vulgate. As the recensions differentiate from each other by the uniformity of their divergent readings and by discrepancies that are numerous and multifarious, these deviations should be classified and indicated in the introduction. For it is on such a basis that the recensions are postulated by the editor, and the critical reader should have before him the findings of the editor, which should be well documented.

After dealing with the recensions, the editor's next task is to estimate the character and mutual relations of the various versions and their manuscripts. The indications here must be as detailed as possible to justify his classification of the manuscript material, with the affinities and deviations between individual manuscripts of given versions properly discussed with evidence drawn from the edition. Where sub-recensions exist between the recension and its splitting up into several versions, the sub-recension must be studied in equally great detail, and the results of the investigation placed before the reader. The editor should remember that he is giving a sampling of his far more detailed investigation and therefore take care in select-

- ◆ editor's next task is to estimate the character and mutual relations of the various versions

ing his examples, which should be both typical and important. Thus, he should not only demonstrate the community of source between two manuscripts or two versions, but also establish on incontrovertible grounds that one is not merely a copy of the other but is independent within that particular strand of the transmission. Similarly, if conflated manuscripts exist in the different versions, instances of such conflation must be pointed out.

4.3.5 The Editor's Rationale: Textual Constitution, Diacritical Signs and the Critical Apparatus

So far, the editor has merely stated his judgment on the nature of the manuscript material utilized by him and their relative trustworthiness concerning the constitution of the text. He should now deal with the critical principles he has followed in the constitution of the text with special reference to the material before him. This part of his work is in no sense a textbook on textual criticism, but merely the application of general principles with special reference to the case under consideration. If he deviates from the well-established classical principles of criticism, he should indicate the nature of his material that is responsible for such a departure. If there are difficulties in their application, he should indicate them. Having evaluated the manuscripts he has utilised, he should state the manner in which he has constituted the text. If he has emended the 'transmitted text' so reached, he should indicate the reasons that have led him to 'conjecture' the original reading. If there are interpolations of a lengthy nature, the editor should discuss them in the introduction, specifically indicating his reasons for not including them within the text. Short interpolations need not be specially discussed.

- Short interpolations need not be specially discussed.

If there are other editions of the text besides his, the editor should discuss them, indicating their limitations in light of the material he has himself utilised. He should, in other words, evaluate them impartially.

Whenever possible, the editor should then refer to the known history of the author and the text, the different works attributed to him, and the evaluation of the literary merits of the author, including his peculiarities and idiosyncrasies. As we have not dealt with the problem of higher criticism, we shall not indicate here the methods that may be employed to separate the sources the author has utilised. However, what the editor may do is indicate the parallel versions existing at the proper place in the critical apparatus and provide their conspectus in the introduction. The editor should particularly take pains to collect all references made by his author to known or unknown authorities found in the text, including the names of authors and works, and any other information of historical importance, such

- the editor should then refer to the known history of the author and the text

as dynastic names and names of individual rulers, that may be found scattered throughout the text. Citations by his author should be traced as far as possible, and the results of such tracing indicated in the introduction. Similarly, if his text has been commented upon, the editor should provide a brief history of these commentators and evaluate their commentaries for an understanding of the text. The editor is also expected to deal with his text from a literary perspective, furnishing a short but critical account and estimate of the author's contribution to the particular type of literature and his place within it, including the influences that have moulded his thought and expression and his own influence on the subsequent age.

With respect to the text itself, many methods have been employed by different editors in printing such critical recensions. No definite rules can be laid down here to indicate the varying nature of the text as constituted, expressed in the four categories: accepted, doubtfully accepted, doubtfully rejected, and rejected. Whatever system the editor adopts, he should clearly indicate it in his list of abbreviations and diacritical signs. The general practice has been to indicate conjectural emendation by an asterisk preceding the conjectured emendation. Regarding other matters, the practice seems to fluctuate. Paul MAAS suggests the following symbols for definite types: conjectural additions are to be indicated by the signs < >, with the matter added conjecturally placed within them; conjectural athetisation through double square brackets [ ]; completion of mechanical damages through square brackets; and false localised corruptions through a dagger (†). The difference between < > and the square brackets is important; the first indicates that the establishment of the lacuna depends upon surmise, and the second indicates that an attested lacuna is filled out, intrinsically agreeing with the surrounding text. It is also used in cases where the tradition expressly attests that there was a lacuna in its exemplar. EDGERTON, in his romanised Pañcatantra Reconstructed, employs italics for parts of the text that are not verbally certain, while he uses parentheses ( ) to enclose parts that may not have been in the original, even in a general sense. SUKTHANKAR employs a wavy line under the text when it is less than certain, and an asterisk (*) for a conjectural emendation.

>

Since the text has been constituted based on the evidence of all versions of each recension, and in each case supported by the balance of probabilities, all important deviations in the manuscripts should be noted in the critical apparatus. This allows every critical reader to have access to the entire material needed for controlling and correcting the constituted text, where necessary. It is akin to the verdict given by a judge, supported by all the evidence collected in court,

pro et contra; but just as different judges may interpret the evidence differently, so too may critical readers, who may be as qualified as the editor but lack the opportunity to record the evidence. They may either confirm or differ from the readings established by the editor. As the critical edition is primarily addressed to such readers, it is the editor's duty to record all significant deviations in the manuscripts in the critical notes appended to the text. Thus, beneath the text, the following should be shown in a series:

1. The total of deviations from the archetype, as far as they are not already indicated in the text itself.

2. The rejected variants along with the scribe's mistakes, not to show that they do not contribute to settling the text, but to inform the reader that at this point the text does not revert to the archetype, but only to a lower stratum in the transmission

3. The sub-variants, in cases where they do not agree with each other or with the major variants.

4. Common readings from multiple variant bearers.

Short interpolations from individual manuscripts or groups of manuscripts should also be included in the critical notes, with longer ones reserved for an appendix. The appendix may also contain shorter interpolations or additional passages for which the evidence rests only on one manuscript or on a very small and insignificant group of manuscripts. The location of such additional passages within the text should also be indicated in the footnotes of the critical apparatus. Thus, the apparatus criticus, along with the appendix containing the larger additions and interpolations, will provide the entire manuscript material available for the constitution of the text, and the editor's task concerning the critical recension is now complete. He has provided all relevant information about his material in the introduction and the principles employed in the constitution of the text; and in the critical edition, besides the constituted text, indicating exactly the balance of probabilities in each individual case, he has an apparatus criticus where the entire manuscript material is well digested and presented according to definite principles. The critical reader will now have before him all the significant material on which he can either agree with the constituted text of the editor or constitute it himself, in light of his experience and based on the material presented here.

- the duty of the editor to record all the important deviations in the manuscripts

4.3.6 The role of Lower Criticism, Supplimentary Material and Rditing Modern and Complex Texts

We now come to another aspect of critical editing that does not strictly fall under textual criticism but is nevertheless essential for

either lexical study or stylistics. Among the appendices and indices that the editor may provide, there ought to be:

1. an index of all the pädas of the verse part of his text, regardless of whether the text is found in the constituted part, the critical apparatus, or the appendix containing the longer additions.

2. an index verborum of all unusual words, if a complete index verborum is not practicable.

3. an index of all the words found in the text and the critical apparatus, with references given to only one or two occurrences.

4. all historical and geographical information contained within the text, including a complete index of proper names.

There should also be a concordance of the various printed editions of the text already in existence, so that references to this edition may easily be converted to those of another edition. All of these are necessary corollaries of critical editing of texts.

If there are parallel versions in other texts, the editor will need to consider them in a separate appendix and correlate the evidence within them. The actual interpretation of these versions forms part of higher criticism and is therefore left out of consideration in the present work.

We have addressed what may be termed the 'lower criticism' of the text (German Niedere Textkritik or French critique verbale), limiting ourselves to Heuristics, Recensio, and Emendatio. The subject of higher criticism may perhaps be better explored in a separate work, as conditions in India, thus far, are not conducive to its study in the absence of exact chronology on one hand and intensive study of specific periods of literature on the other.

One last point may be added regarding different methods of presenting the critical apparatus: some prefer to provide this apparatus immediately on the same page, with the constituted text appearing on the upper half and the critical apparatus occupying the lower half; others place the apparatus at the end of the volume as 'variant readings.' Strict scholarship regarding the critical apparatus slightly differs from merely presenting variant readings. However, in any case, it is beneficial for the reader to have all the material used for the constitution of the text on the same page where the text is printed. This method has been uniformly

There is one scenario that we have not considered here. When the autograph of the author and its copy (whether immediate or intermediate) are not widely separated in time, and this copy happens to be the best surviving manuscript of the text, the best course would be to print it with minimal changes, correcting only the obvious and

unavoidable clerical errors, and indicate the deviations of other important manuscripts in the critical apparatus. This approach has limited validity and applies to works of authors who lived within the last seven or eight hundred years. It is said that a copy of the Jnaneśvarī, made by the disciple of Saccidānanda Bābā, the original amanuensis of Jñānadeva, exists in the Saka year 1272 (1350 A.D.), within 60 years of the autograph itself. In the absence of other pre-Ekanath manuscripts of this work, the only course open for a critical editor is to print the text of this codex, correcting only obvious clerical errors, and record in the critical notes the variants from all other dated manuscripts of the text, along with the more important copies that are not dated but appear old. If an even earlier copy of the text is discovered and found to be superior to this codex upon comparison, our task will then be to adopt the text of the earlier codex and authenticate it with the help of the second codex, recording all the variants as before in the critical notes. In the case of authors who lived after 1200 A.D., the problem of textual criticism is not as significant, and the method adopted here may be followed, provided the time difference between our oldest and best manuscript and the autograph is not great. Texts with a religious flavour often undergo considerable changes during transmission, and the method indicated here will not apply to them. For instance, the work of Līlāśuka Bilvamangala exists in two recensions, and it is not possible to establish his text by authenticating the readings of the best surviving manuscripts due to systematic conflation occurring over a significant period. In such cases, the regular process of Heuristics, Recensio, and Emendatio must be employed. In the case of some minor works, there may be only two or three manuscripts in existence, greatly simplifying the problem of critical recension. If only one recension is evident, the best manuscript will be taken as the norm, and its readings authenticated with the help of the remaining manuscripts. If there are two recensions, the genealogical method will yield the critical text.

The main difficulty of textual criticism arises when the editor deals with non-Vedic texts such as the Epics and the Purāṇas, as there will be a large number of versions and sub-recensions, wherein conflation has occurred over ages. The best model for such an edition is the Critical Edition of the Mahābhārata undertaken by the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute of Poona. No editor undertaking similar work on the Purāṇas or other equally difficult texts can afford to neglect the principles and methods employed and perfected by Sukthankar in his critical edition of the Adiparvan.

- ◆ The main difficulty of textual criticism will come when the editor deals with non-Vedic texts

Summarised Overview

The process of critically editing a text involves locating and securing all extant manuscripts and testimonia (such as commentaries or epitomes) to serve as the critical apparatus. The editor's Introduction must begin with a detailed description of this apparatus, including the number of manuscripts examined, those fully or partially collated, and the justification for their selection, noting that only independent manuscripts should be used. The editor must then classify the manuscripts into recensions and versions, assign each an informative siglum (abbreviated sign), and provide a detailed account for every manuscript, covering its external features, historical information (scribe, date, patron), orthographic peculiarities, and a judgment of its trustworthiness. Non-extant but assumed intermediate manuscripts should be indicated in the stemma codicum (genealogical tree) using Greek or starred letters, with the pedigree followed by a critical survey discussing the main agreements and differences between recensions and versions. The Introduction must conclude by clearly stating the critical principles followed in constituting the text, justifying any emendations or deviations from classical methods, and evaluating any prior editions and the author's literary context. Finally, the published critical edition presents the constituted text using clear diacritical signs for editorial judgments (such as asterisks for conjectures), accompanied by a comprehensive critical apparatus at the bottom, which records all significant rejected variants and sub-variants, along with any shorter interpolations, ensuring that the reader has access to all the textual evidence necessary to verify the editor's work.

Assignment

1. What is the editor's primary duty concerning the extant manuscripts once they are located?

2. What steps must the editor take to prepare a manual transcript for collation?

3. What essential information must the Introduction begin with regarding the critical apparatus?

4. What considerations guide the editor's choice of the critical apparatus (the manuscripts to be used)?

5. What specific details must be included in the list of manuscripts for each recension/version?

6. What principle should the editor follow when assigning a siglum to a manuscript, and how can numerals be used?

7. What external physical details about a manuscript must be included in the detailed account?

8. Why and where should information about the patron, scribe, place, or date of transcription be recorded?

9. How should the editor deal with manuscripts that were ultimately eliminated or only partially collated?

10. How should the genealogical relationship of the manuscripts be represented, and what is the convention for indicating non-extant codices?

11. What is the editor's primary responsibility in the Critical Survey section regarding recensions and versions?

12. What four types of deviations and information must be included in the Critical Apparatus (footnotes) below the constituted text?

Suggested Reading

1. Siva Ganesa Murthy, *Introduction to Manuscriptology*, Sarada Publications, New Delhi, 1996.

2. S.M. Katre, Introduction to Indian Textual Criticism, Bombay, 1941.

3. K.V. Sarma*, Some New Techniques in Collating Manuscripts and Editing Texts*, ,1965.

4. S.R. Sarma*, Writing Materials in Ancient India*, Vivek Publications, Aligarh, 1950

Reference

1. R.G. Bhandarkar, Sri Santosh Mookerji ,*The origin of Indian Alphabet,* Silver JubileeVol. III, 1922.

2. Richard Salomon*, Indian Epigraphy*,Oxford University press ,1998

3. Ahmad Hasan Dani ,*Indian Palaeography*, Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers Pvt,Ltd.1986

Critical Edition

Unit : 4

Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of the unit, the learner will be able to:

❖ analyse the complex textual history of a work by interpreting the critical apparatus

❖ evaluate the authenticity and reliability of a text's different versions by applying principles of textual criticism

❖ demonstrate advanced research competence by tracing the textual lineage of a work

Background

A critical edition is a scholarly, meticulously edited version of a text, carefully prepared by systematically comparing all available manuscripts and commentaries to ensure accuracy, authenticity, and preservation. In the context of ancient Indian literature, which was often transmitted orally for centuries before being written down, the goal is not to reconstruct a single, hypothetical "original text" or Urtext. Instead, the objective is to reconstruct the text's entire history and establish a "constituted text" that represents the most coherent and historically reliable version based on the evidence. The process of creating a critical edition, known as textual criticism, is traditionally divided into two main stages: Lower Criticism and Higher Criticism.

This adapted methodology, often called "Indian Textual Criticism," was pioneered by scholars for monumental projects that faced the unique challenges of India's manuscript tradition, which is characterised by a vast volume of documents and multiple, equally valid recensions.

Keywords

Poona Critical Edition, Mahabharata, Oriental Institute in Baroda Critical Edition of the Ramayana, challenges, variant readings, debates, criticisms, and conceptual refinements.

The critical editing of Indian manuscripts is a scholarly discipline dedicated to reconstructing and preserving ancient texts. It delineates the foundational principles of textual criticism, a methodology adapted from Western philology to address the unique challenges of India's fluid, oral, and multi-script traditions. The analysis focuses on the landmark Poona Critical Edition of the Mahabharata and the Oriental Institute in Baroda Critical Edition of the Ramayana, examining its monumental scale, key scholarly architects, and the profound academic and ideological debates that surround it, particularly concerning the relationship between the Northern and Southern recensions.

- reconstructing and preserving ancient texts.

4.4.1 The Fluidity of the Textual Tradition

The practice of creating a critical edition of an Indian manuscript is a meticulous scholarly endeavour aimed at reconstructing a text as closely as possible to its author's original or earliest traceable form. This process is not a simple transcription but a sophisticated form of literary reconstruction, serving to clarify existing confusions and misinterpretations that have accumulated over centuries. A critical edition is thus presented as a scholarly hypothesis, substantiated by an exhaustive analysis of all available "witnesses" or manuscripts.

A defining characteristic of ancient Indian knowledge is its primary reliance on oral transmission, a system revered as the Śruti Parampara or Lekhana Parampara. This oral tradition, particularly for sacred texts like the Vedas, was considered highly authoritative and was believed to be a safeguard against corruption. The shift to writing was a secondary, later development, with the earliest surviving Hindu Sanskrit manuscripts dating to the ninth century CE. This long period of oral transmission, followed by scribal copying on perishable materials like palm leaves and birch bark, created fertile ground for textual variations known as pāṭhabheda or "variant readings."

- the Œruti Parampara or Lekhana Parampara

4.4.2 Unique Challenges of Indian Manuscriptology

The transmission of Indian texts was far from a passive process; it was a dynamic and complex act prone to both unintentional errors and deliberate changes. Scribes, as the human intermediaries, introduced a range of mistakes, including deletions, additions, substitutions, and orthographic confusions. More significantly, there was a widespread tradition in India of lesser-known poets and authors ascribing their own work to famous writers to gain prestige and status.

This practice led to a "fluctuating epic tradition" rather than a fixed, rigid text, as seen in the vast differences among Mahabharata manuscripts. Furthermore, the geographical and linguistic diversity of the Indian subcontinent resulted in manuscripts being written in a multitude of regional scripts, many of which are now obsolete, requiring highly specialised knowledge to decipher. This regional variation also led to the development of distinct recensions (versions) of the same text, such as the Northern and Southern recensions of the Mahabharata and Ramayana. The inherent impermanence of materials like palm leaves and birch bark in India's climate means that most surviving manuscripts are much later than the texts' original composition, with the oldest extant Sanskrit manuscripts dating to the ninth century CE. This chronological gap and the scarcity of early sources make the task of textual reconstruction immensely difficult.

- Scribes, as the human intermediaries

4.4.3 The Poona Critical Edition of the Mahabharata

The Critical Edition of the Mahabharata stands as a monumental achievement in the history of global scholarship. The project was formally initiated in 1919 at the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute (BORI) in Pune, an institution founded just two years earlier. The intellectual impetus for the work had been growing for years, with Professor Moriz Winternitz formally expressing the need for such an edition at the 11th International Congress of Orientalists.

- V.S. Sukthankar serving as the first General Editor.

The masterwork was guided by a team of eminent scholars, with V.S. Sukthankar serving as the first General Editor. Sukthankar was widely acclaimed for his "colossal scholarship, vast patience, and critical acumen of the highest type." Other key editors who contributed to the project's success included S.K. Belvalkar and S.K. De.

The scale of the undertaking was unprecedented. The project took 47 years to complete, from 1919 to 1966. It involved consulting a staggering 1,259 manuscripts sourced from various libraries and private collections across the country. The final output was a 19-volume set spanning over 15,000 pages and containing more than 89,000 verses in its constituted text. A cornerstone of the entire project was Sukthankar's comprehensive Prolegomena, which detailed the meticulous methodology and materials used, providing a transparent foundation for the work. The project was celebrated worldwide, receiving wide acclaim from scholars and eminent personalities, including A.L. Basham and Dr. Sarvapalli Radhakrishnan, who released the final edition in 1966.

4.4.4 Other Notable Critical Editions

The success and methodology of the Poona Critical Edition served as a model for subsequent projects. Following a similar model, the Oriental Institute in Baroda undertook a critical edition of the Ramayana, sifting through an estimated 2,000 manuscripts. The project ran from 1951 to 1975 and resulted in a text that, like the BORI Mahabharata, is now considered the scholarly standard. More recent endeavours, such as the Skandapurana Project, demonstrate that this work continues today. Initiated in the early 1990s, this international project not only aims to reconstruct the text but also seeks to trace its historical and regional evolution to better understand the development of religious communities in early medieval India. Beyond the epics, critical editions are deemed necessary for a wide range of texts, including those on Ayurveda, where a slight difference in reading can drastically alter the interpretation of meaning.

4.4.5 Debates, Criticisms, and Conceptual Refinements

The BORI Critical Edition of the Mahabharata has been a subject of continuous scholarly debate, particularly concerning its treatment of the epic's major recensions. The text of the Mahabharata has been transmitted through two main traditions: the Northern recension (found in manuscripts from Gujarat, Kashmir, Nepal, etc.) and the Southern recension (from Kerala, Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu). The BORI editors' core methodological principle was to include only those verses that were common to both recensions, on the assumption that such readings are less likely to be later interpolations.

This approach has generated strong counterarguments. Some scholars contend that the Southern recension could be more authentic, citing South India's historical isolation from foreign invasions that affected the North, which may have limited the scope for textual interpolations. The Southern recension also contains unique and culturally significant narratives, such as a full description of Karna's failure at Draupadi's svayamvara and a more explicit account of Krishna's direct intervention to save Draupadi from disrobing. Additionally, the Southern recension's close kinship with the ancient Javanese recension is seen as supporting its claim to greater authenticity.

However, the BORI editors, in their extensive analysis, generally found the Northern recension manuscripts to be older and more structurally consistent with each other. They categorised the Southern recension as an editio ornatio—an "ornate text" that contained a

Margin notes:

- the Oriental Institute in Baroda undertook a critical edition of the Ramayana

- Debates, Criticisms, and Conceptual Refinements

- the Northern recension manuscripts to be older and more structurally consistent with each other

greater number of systematic additions, leading to its significantly larger bulk. The final constituted text, while having consulted Southern manuscripts, largely excluded these unique narratives because they were not corroborated by the Northern versions, a point that remains a key source of ongoing debate among scholars.

4.4.6 The Debate over the Urtext and a "Normative Redaction"

Beyond the issue of recensions, the BORI edition has faced more fundamental scholarly criticisms. Scholars like Andreas Bigger and Reinhold Grünendahl have argued that the BORI's constituted text does not represent a true Urtext or an early archetype. They instead contend that it is merely a "normative redaction," a written version created at a late stage from a fluid oral tradition. They have also raised concerns that extensive "contamination" (the cross-pollination of manuscripts) makes a true critical edition unachievable.

In their work, Philology and Criticism, Vishwa Adluri and Joydeep Bagchee systematically challenge these critiques. They contend that critics like Bigger rely on flawed assumptions and circular reasoning. Adluri and Bagchee argue that Sukthankar's methodology was not a blind application of Western principles but a careful assimilation of neo-Lachmannian criticism tailored to defend the integrity and philosophical significance of the transmitted text.

♦ Sukthankar's methodology was not a blind application of Western principles

A deeper understanding of this debate reveals that it is not purely technical but is rooted in larger intellectual and ideological frameworks. Adluri and Bagchee link the critiques of the BORI edition to a "neo-Protestant theology" that they claim privileges the "realia" (the historical conditions of a text's creation) over its philosophical and spiritual meaning. They further connect these critiques to the biased racial and nationalist views of some German Indologists. This demonstrates that the project of critical editing, while presented as a "scientific" and objective discipline, is often deeply embedded in the historical and cultural biases of its practitioners.

♦ deeply embedded in the historical and cultural biases of its practitioners.

This scholarly controversy also illuminates a crucial tension between academic rigor and popular tradition. The BORI project's central methodology of removing "interpolations"—verses and passages not found in a critical mass of manuscripts—resulted in a shorter, "skeletal" version of the epic. While this version is considered more "accurate" and "crisper" for scholars, it omits many popular and well-known stories that the lay reader grew up with, such as the Ganesh-Vyasa episode or Draupadi's prayer. This creates a paradox where the most "scientific" version of the text is not the most "familiar" or culturally complete, highlighting the divergence

between an academically reconstructed text and a living, evolving cultural tradition.

4.4.7 The Transformative Academic Impact

The legacy of critical editions, particularly the BORI Mahabharata, is profound and multifaceted. For the first time, a stable, reliable, and standardised base text was established. This singular achievement provided a firm foundation for the entire field of Indology and Indian historical studies. With a dependable text in hand, scholars like D.D. Kosambi were able to use textual criticism as a cornerstone for a new, materialist approach to Indian history. This new methodology allowed him to break away from the static, elite-focused historical framework of earlier scholarship and ground his analysis in social and material conditions.

Furthermore, critically edited texts provide an authoritative source for the study of Indian philosophy and religion. The availability of these scientifically reconstructed texts offers a powerful counter-argument to early Western criticisms that Indian thought, being rooted in religious and practical concerns, does not qualify as "philosophy" in the Western sense. By providing a verifiable text, critical editions enable a deeper engagement with the intellectual and philosophical depth of works like the Vedas, Upanishads, and the Bhagavad Gita.

The field of Indian manuscriptology is now entering a new phase defined by technology and a renewed focus on preservation. BORI has already made its critically constituted text available on CD-ROM and has future plans to digitise the critical apparatus and cultural index. This transition from monumental, physical print volumes to digital media signifies a profound shift, democratizing access to this knowledge in a way that was previously unimaginable. It will allow scholars and enthusiasts worldwide to access and analyse the vast body of textual variants, enabling new forms of data-driven research.

However, despite these technological advancements, the human element of deep expertise remains non-negotiable for the field's survival. The BORI's original work was a testament to the painstaking manual labour required to collate thousands of manuscripts. This is a skill set that cannot be fully automated. The ability to decipher obsolete scripts like Newari and Sharada is a rare talent that requires dedicated training. The IGNCA has been working to train a new generation of scholars in these very skills to ensure that the work of critical editing can continue. The future of this discipline thus depends on a harmonious blend of both technological innovation and a continued commitment to traditional, humanistic training, ensuring that the ancient knowledge preserved in these texts can be studied and understood for generations to come.

- ◆ textual criticism as a cornerstone for a new, materialist approach to Indian history.

- ◆ technology and a renewed focus on preservation.

- ◆ The IGNCA has been working to train a new generation of scholars

Summarised Overview

The critical editing of ancient Indian manuscripts, spearheaded by monumental efforts like the Poona Critical Edition of the Mahabharata (1919-1966) and the Baroda edition of the Ramayana, is a rigorous scholarly discipline aimed at reconstructing the earliest traceable form of these texts. This process is complex due to India's fluid, oral-based knowledge tradition (Śruti Parampara), the introduction of numerous textual variants (pāṭhabheda) over centuries of scribal copying on perishable materials, and the existence of distinct regional recensions (Northern and Southern). The BORI Mahabharata project, which involved collating 1,259 manuscripts over 47 years to produce a 19-volume text of over 89,000 verses, established a key methodology: prioritising verses common to both Northern and Southern traditions. This methodology remains a subject of intense academic debate, with critics arguing the resulting text is merely a "normative redaction" rather than a true Urtext, while defenders assert it is a robust scholarly reconstruction. The legacy of these critical editions is a standardised base text that has profoundly impacted Indology and Indian historical studies, a foundation that is now being preserved and democratized through digitalisation, yet still requiring the rare, specialised human expertise to decipher ancient scripts.

Assignment

1. What is the fundamental goal of creating a critical edition of an Indian manuscript?

2. What are the two primary traditions of textual transmission in ancient India, and what was the considered authority?

3. What two major human and material factors contributed to the prevalence of pāṭhabheda (variant readings) in Indian texts?

4. What were the three key milestones (start year, end year, and final volume count) of the Poona Critical Edition of the Mahabharata?

5. What specific scholarly achievement is attributed to V.S. Sukthankar as the first General Editor of the BORI project?

6. Which two major regional versions of the Mahabharata and Ramayana formed the basis of the critical edition debates?

7. What was the core methodological principle the BORI editors used to decide which verses to include in the constituted text?

8. What is the main argument put forth by scholars who contend that the Southern recension might be more authentic than the Northern one?

9. What is the key difference between an Urtext (true original) and a "normative redaction," according to critics of the BORI edition?

10. How does the "skeletal" version of the epic created by the BORI edition create a paradox regarding the text's cultural status?

11. How did the BORI Critical Edition of the Mahabharata transform the field of Indology and historical studies?

12. What is the current challenge facing the future of Indian manuscriptology, despite technological advancements like digitisation?

Suggested Reading

1. Siva Ganesa Murthy, *Introduction to Manuscriptology*, Sarada Publications, New Delhi, 1996.

2. S.M. Katre, Introduction to Indian Textual Criticism, Bombay, 1941.

3. K.V. Sarma, *Some New Techniques in Collating Manuscripts and Editing Texts*, ,1965.

4. S.R. Sarma, *Writing Materials in Ancient India*, Vivek Publications, Aligarh, 1950

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2. Richard Salomon, *Indian Epigraphy*,Oxford University press ,1998

3. Ahmad Hasan Dani, *Indian Palaeography*, Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers Pvt,Ltd.1986

QP CODE: ....

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Model Question Paper Set- A

FORTH SEMESTER M.A. SANSKRIT LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE EXAMINATIONS
DISCIPLINE SPECIFIC ELECTIVE COURSE - 05
M23SN05DE - MANUSCRIPTOLOGY
(CBCS- PG)
2023-24 - Admission Onwards

Time: 3 Hours

Max Marks: 70

SECTION- A

I.   Answer any *five* of the following questions in one or two sentences each. Each question carries 2 marks.   **(5× 2=10)**

1. What is manuscriptology?

2. What are some of the major manuscript libraries located outside of India ?

3. How did the Brahmi script diversify regionally even during Asoka's time ?

4. Write about Tamil script.

5. What is Card Catalogue?

6. Name at least three types of secondary sources used in textual reconstruction.

7. What is Heuristics?

8. What are the four major types of errors found in manuscripts?

SECTION –B

II.   Answer any *six* of the following questions in half a page each. Each question carries 5 marks.   (6 × 5=30)

9. Describe the Brahmi Script, including its emergence, significance as an ancestor script

10. What is the significance of manuscriptology in India, particularly when considering its historical context and cultural heritage?

11. Describe the Drâvidi script as a sub-variety of Southern Brâhmî.

12. Describe the "first stage" of Indian Paleographical studies, highlighting the initial efforts of Charles Wilkins and James Tod in deciphering scripts and collecting inscriptions.

13. Explain the function and structure of a collation sheet

14. Analyze the editor's role in determining the need for emendation.

15. Explain specific scholarly achievement is attributed to V.S. Sukthankar as the first General Editor of the BORI project?

16. Explain the Kharosthi Script, noting its period of use, geographical location, and writing direction.

17. Discuss palm leaves as a major writing material in South Asia.

18. What is the editor's primary responsibility in the Critical Survey section regarding recensions and versions?

SECTION – C

III. Answer any *two* of the following questions in two pages each. Each question carries 15 marks. (2×15=30)

19. Describe the three main modes of preparing library catalogues for readers, and briefly explain one advantage and one disadvantage of the "Card Catalogue" system.

20. What are the three stages of Lower Criticism? Briefly describe each.

21. Briefly explain modern methods of manuscript preservation

22. Explain the history of writing

SREENARAYANAGURU OPEN UNIVERSITY

QP CODE: ....   Reg. No : ....
                                          Name : ……................

Model Question Paper Set- B

FORTH SEMESTER M.A. SANSKRIT LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE EXAMINATIONS
DISCIPLINE SPECIFIC ELECTIVE COURSE - 05
M23SN05DE - MANUSCRIPTOLOGY
(CBCS- PG)
2023-24 - Admission Onwards

Time: 3 Hours   Max Marks: 70

SECTION- A

I.   **Answer any *five* of the following questions in one or two sentences each. Each question carries 2 marks.**   **(5× 2=10)**

1. What is an inscription ?

2. What types of writing tools were used for writing on birch-bark?

3. What is a catalogue ?

4. What essential qualifications and responsibilities should the person in charge of manuscript care possess ?

5. What is Sarada Script ?

6. How does a critical edition help preserve cultural heritage?

7. What is Palaeography?

8. Which are the important ancient scripts of India ?

SECTION –B

II. **Answer any *six* of the following questions in half a page each. Each question carries 5 marks.**   (6 × 5=30)

9. Explain the role of the Gupta period in the prominence of Sanskrit in Indian epigraphy.

10. Explain writing tools were used for writing on manuscripts?

11. Explain the Kharosthi Script, noting its period of use, geographical location, and writing direction.

12. Explain the use of Bhūrjapatra (Birch Bark) in North India, including its varieties and preparation process.

13. Discuss the Gupta script's importance, detailing its relationship to Brahmi and the

significant scripts that evolved from it.

14. Discuss the importance of transcription in the textual criticism process .

15. Define Emendation within the broader context of Manuscriptology.

16. Describe the methods and focus areas of Higher Criticism in understanding ancient texts.

17. What is the current challenge facing the future of Indian manuscriptology, despite technological advancements like digitization?

18. Discuss the major manuscript libraries in India and their contributions.

SECTION – C

III. Answer any *two* of the following questions in two pages each. Each question carries 15 marks. (2×15=30)

19. Explain the Southern Brāhmī group, including its geographical prevalence and its two main sub-divisions.

20. Explain the two primary traditions of textual transmission in Ancient India

21. Describe the process of "fumigation" as a modern preservation technique for infested manuscripts, including the equipment and chemicals typically used, and any necessary precautions.

22. Discuss about Scribal errors and causes of errors in writing manuscripts

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