

Ayurveda Manuscripts - Need of preservation and exploration for mankind



Āyurveda has enjoyed a continuous process of scientific development and not a mere mechanical process. The different facts gathered by the seekers over the time gradually evolved into an organized version as science of life. These scientific observations and experiences were checked and re-checked by the successive generations of scholars in their own way in the light of new data, to arrive at more scientific and reliable conclusions. The science as shared by ancient scholars was very popular in those days. Before the invention of modern methods of documentation, knowledge sharing was done through oral tradition only. Gradually, the importance of documentation was recognized and materials used for the same include rock, metal plates, leaves, etc. This journey suffered a great set back during the colonial period and mid-20th century after merging of numbers of princely states into Indian union. Enormous manuscripts were displaced, destroyed (partial or complete) or lost during these periods. These scattered and untouched manuscripts are still to be recovered. Huge number of manuscripts especially Ayurveda manuscripts were written and preserved by different Rajas, Maharajas and Maharanas.

Manuscripts on medicine roughly have been estimated to be ranged between 20,000 – 1,00,000. Several of these are now in institutions such as Oriental Manuscripts Libraries, Indological Research Institutions, Universities, Mutts & Archives, foreign libraries and many are still in private collections. When a manuscript is lost the work is permanently lost for future generations. The manuscripts are ancient documents and so, are very prone for damage. This fact requires an immediate and fervid attempt for their preservation. In the ancient times the preservation methods were only their manual copying but now these are well advanced like preservation of the original versions from insects and other damaging agents, photo copying, microfilming and digitalization etc. Besides hand written material on palm leaves, barks and paper, inscriptions on rocks and metal surface can also be called Manuscripts as they were also hand written. Manuscriptology is study of Manuscripts. It deals with all the endeavors from possession and preservation to publication of the manuscript. The information regarding collected manuscripts should be displayed in the form of catalogues. Prolific knowledge is preserved in the form of manuscripts which has a potential to take the mankind various years ahead in terms of scientific advancement. The conservation and availability of this ancient wisdom in the public domain will enrich the literary wealth, open the new areas for contemplation for the scholars and also will change the dynamics of current research work. The work is concerned with the possession of the manuscript from the potential sources, their conservation, making digital prints, criticism and publication so that the work could be laid in public domain. The future prospects includes the training programs in manuscriptology keeping in vision to prepare more trained personnel who can take this field as a full time carrier and the work can be enhanced nationwide.

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