



Conservation Of Manuscripts In Folk Medicines Of Assam: A Special Reference To Mayang Of Marigoan District.

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Abstract:

Folk or traditional systems of medicines always played an imperative role in global health care system. These types of medicines are still playing a vital role, basically in rural areas. Folk medicine can be explained as the diverse health practices and approaches, compiled knowledge, skills and practices related to animals, plants and mineral which are related to the beliefs, spiritual remedies, manual practice procedures and ancient indigenous experience that use to maintain health and comfort as well as to cure diagnose or prevent illness. Assam has also reach in traditional or Folk medicines used in treatment of human disease. Folk medicines are absolutely herbal collections by Ohjas/Bez/Kaviraj. Modern scientific word they also called patent holder.

From the pre-industrial era Assam and its kingdom mayang people depend upon Tranta-Mantra and Folk medicines. In the mayong area, there are so many valuable Trantra-Mantra, Folk medicines and Magic books in manuscripts and this types of manuscripts are the powerful medium for preservation of our literary, linguistic, artistic and cultural heritage and constitute our most precious national heritage as rare pieces of recorded knowledge.

Key word- Folk Medicines, Trantra-Mantra, Manuscripts, cultural heritage, Preservation

Introduction:

The manuscript carries out the cultural heritage of a country and paves as a mirror of human civilization. In the context of manuscripts in Assam, from the pre-industrial era Assam and its kingdom mayang people depend upon Tranta-Mantra and Folk medicines. In the mayong area, there are so many valuable Trantra-Mantra, Folk medicines and Magic books in manuscripts and this types of manuscripts are the powerful medium for preservation of our literary, linguistic, artistic and cultural heritage and constitute our most precious national heritage as rare pieces of recorded knowledge and reflects the richness of Assamese Folk cultural.

Mayong is situated at a distance of approximately 40 km from capital of Assam, Mayong known for its traditions of magical practices, the village is also popular site for visitors because of the Pobitora National Park, home to a number of one-horned rhinos. The history of Mayong is as enigmatic as the mystery associated with the magic and magical manuscripts.

Manuscript: It's meaning

Manuscripts are the explicit knowledge of our unknown ancestors. The word “manuscript” has been derived from the Medieval Latin word ‘Manus’ that means ‘by hand’ and ‘scriptus’-written. Thus the Latin term ‘manuscripts’ means “a document written with a person’s own hand”.

Before the invention of printing machine, all the written documents had to be both produced and reproduced by hand. Manuscripts, the handwritten documents are treated as the assets for a society. Manuscripts available in different forms reflect the background of the cultural heritage of a nation.

Types of manuscripts:

A manuscript, depending on its content matter, may be a holy relic and a prayer book for a priest, a primary source of information for a researcher, a rare artifact for the mass people and an archival item for an archivist

The art of writing was discovered for the transmission and physical conservation of knowledge across time and space, various materials like rock, clay tablet, metal plates etc. were first used as a writing surface.

Tools used in writing manuscripts.

By the 700 A.D. or earlier, the palm leaf was the most common writing medium widely used in Southeast Asia and India. A bronze made stylus, with a sharp point on one end for inscribing the letters and a flat blade on the other end for scraping the surface of the leaf smooth, was used to write on palm leaves. In India, especially in the northern part of India, brush was used as a writing tool.

Roman scribes used wooden tablets filled with wax. To write in the wax, Roman scribes used a stylus that was long and thin like a pen, but had a point on one end for writing, and a broad, flat area on the other end for erasing by smoothing the wax out.

For writing on papyrus, reed pen was used. These pens were lengths of reed cut to a point on one end and slit to facilitate the movement of ink. They had to be repeatedly dipped in ink, but this worked well enough that very similar pens made from different materials were used right up in to the 20th century, and are even used by some artists and calligraphers today.

Brush was also used as writing tools in the East, especially in China, where the paper was available early on. These brushes were thick, but tapered to a fine point and that is why the ancient Chinese writing is composed of sweeping strokes with both thick and thin lines.

To write on the parchment and vellum, a metal-tipped bone stylus or a thin piece of lead called a “plummet” was used to mark out faint guidelines. Various types of pens, including reed pens, and quill pens made from the flight feathers of large birds were used for writing on this medium.

Damages of manuscripts and their causes:

All this manuscript collections available in various materials have the common goal, i. e. to carry and record human knowledge and thought. But for various reasons, these valuable manuscripts have been destroyed. Though deterioration is a continuous and natural process, there are some root causes behind this deterioration. The main causes of deterioration of the manuscript are of two kinds. Internal and External cause.

Internal cause-

The internal deterioration is caused by the ingredients used for the physical composition of the material used in manuscript. The writing materials used in manuscripts are mainly of natural organic. These are lasting for a long period of time if these are kept in a normal and congenial environmental condition, these materials automatically become fragile and also the material is poor quality, the natural decay or will be faster.

External cause-

The external deterioration of the writing materials is caused by the atmospheric condition, environmental pollution, and the damages by fungus and insects, heats, light etc. The cause of external deterioration of manuscript can be classified into various agents. This are Physical agent Biological agent, Chemical agent, Human factor.

Manuscripts and their Conservation:

Conservation of manuscripts means the systematic action on damaged or undamaged manuscripts for increasing their lifespan. The main objective of manuscript conservation is to ensure the availability of information on manuscripts in usable form for as long as possible. It also implies the survival of the physical medium of the manuscript in its original form.

Preventive conservation:

The preventive conservation ensures reduced the deterioration rate of manuscripts and prolongs the usable life of a manuscript. The preventive conservation is known as preservation. It is generally applied to undamaged manuscripts. It encompasses all the direct and indirect measures that keep them protected from various deteriorating factors. It mainly aims to reduce the future risk of deterioration. These activities are mainly designed for minimizing or controlling the physical, chemical, biological and other deterioration factors. For the preventive measure, the following steps can be taken.

- Proper storage area
- Controlling of temperature and humidity
- Controlling of light
- Air pollution
- Protection of dirt and dust
- Protection against insects and fungi
- Curative conservation:
- Cleaning of manuscripts

Repairing of manuscripts:

Hand repairing is another curative measure taken for the conservation of manuscripts. In mending the manuscripts by hand process, special types of table and tools are used in mending section. But before repairing these, the quality of the ink used in preparation of the manuscripts should be checked. If the ink is permanent, then, the mender can apply ordinary water on the manuscript sheet and then keep a piece of chiffon on one side and the same process can be applied on the other sides of the leaves and also, the personnel engaged in this work must be well trained.

➤ Fumigation

Fumigation is another curative measure mainly against insect that deteriorates manuscripts. Fumigation helps in destroying the insect and their eggs, which they lay in the holes created by them in the manuscripts. The Vacuum fumigation is effective method of elimination of the dangerous insects of the manuscripts.

➤ Lamination

Lamination is one of the methods of curative conservation of manuscripts. Lamination is the technique where each folio of manuscript is taken in between two laminating agents and thus protecting it from all external enemies as well as makes it physically strong enough to preserve for a long time.

Impact of information and communication technology on manuscript conservation

Now the modern science and technology has influenced on the conservation of the manuscript collection also. With the development in the field of science and technology, the following techniques are developed as the method of manuscript conservation.

➤ Microfilming of manuscripts

Microfilming is a well established technology for conservation of the document as well as the manuscripts. Microfilm is an alternative arrangement through which one can store a set of thousands of manuscripts in a small microfilm cabinet. (Singh, 2006")

➤ Digitization

Digitization means the process of converting analog item to digital one i.e. generally to binary code 0 and this process is a standardized, organized and available scientific system, which can help in preserving and accessing the manuscripts as well as other documents. Digitization has also some limitations; moreover, the CD and DVDs used for storing the digital surrogate do not last for a long period of time. Now emphasis is given on microfilming of the digitized copies of manuscripts for their long term archiving.

Preventive conservation of manuscripts in Mayong

Mayong play a vital role in preservation and conservation of manuscripts in mayong. On september 27of 2022 an exhibition was organized at Mayong higher secondary school to celebrate World Tourism day. The exhibition contained artifacts and manuscripts collection from different villages in around the mayong area. A large part of the objects displayed came from the personal collection. Most of Manuscripts are in the Assamese languages in kaitheli scripts.

The Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage (INTACH) to create awareness among the public for preservation of the cultural heritage of India. The Assam chapter of INTACH is taking steps to conserve,

document list and digitize the rare and precious Sanchi manuscripts lying in a precarious condition, throughout the state. Around three hundred of manuscripts are completed digitizing in Mayong area. Preservation the old manuscripts black magic of mayong in collaboration with a German organization called Gerda Henkel Stiftung.

Conclusion:

The manuscript collection is organized and managed mainly for the benefit of the users. Manuscripts are generally most useful when they are available for use rather than stored in locked box. But along with their access, the physical preservation and protection of the manuscripts should also be taken care.

Now the manuscript repositories give importance on use and access to the manuscript as well as their preservation. Different repositories attached to library, museums, research organizations provide different services to the users, some of them are free and some are fee based. The manuscript section is generally used by a selected and special type of users. In case of giving a particular manuscript to the user, the physical condition, content and completeness of such manuscript should be checked both in the time of issue and return. These are allowed to use in the library premise only.

Some repositories do not allow the users to use and handle the original manuscripts due to their and fragile physical condition. The database of digitized manuscripts is a solution in this regard. Now different libraries sell the digitized version of their manuscripts stored in CD/DVDs.

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