

**A Brief Account of the Workshop on**  
**Manuscriptology and Palaeography**  
**(14.3. – 29.3.2012)**

A two weeks' workshop on Manuscriptology and Palaeography was organized jointly by Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts, Eastern Regional Centre, Varanasi and Dept. of Sanskrit, B.H.U. at Parshvanath Vidyapeeth, Karaundi, Varanasi. In this programme apart from the academic staff of IGNCA, Varanasi, approximately fifty-six external members, belonging to Sanskrit Dept and S.V.D.V. of B.H.U., Sampurnananda Sanskrit University and M.G. Kashi Vidyapeeth participated to learn Ancient Indian Scripts and Principles of Text Editing.

The inaugural programme of the workshop started with chanting of Vedic hymns by the participants of the workshop. In the holy atmosphere sanctified by the resonance of benediction Prof. K.D. Tripathi, Advisor, IGNCA, ERC, Varanasi felicitated the dignitaries and delivered welcome address to the assembled guests. Dr. V.S. Shukla, Head, Kalakosha Division, IGNCA, New Delhi introduced the outline of the workshop in a brief note. The chief-guest Prof. B.M. Shukla, former V.C. Gorakhpur University in his address remarked that manuscripts are priceless treasure of our country. He emphasized on the proper maintenance and conservation of this treasure. In this context, he focused on the pertinence of teaching different scripts like Grantha, Newari, Gaudī etc. for the in-depth study of Mss. especially for the task of editing. Prof. S.L. Jain, as a guest of Honour discussed the importance of organizing workshop on Manuscriptology and Palaeography not only for the proper maintenance of important texts but also for the revival and reconstruction of our cultural heritage. Prof. G.C. Tripathi in his presidential address discussed the relevance of this type of workshop and

necessity of teaching ancient scripts to edit important texts on polity, Medicine, Astrology and Śilpasāstra for the reconstruction of cultural history of India. The inaugural programme ended with vote of thanks extended by Prof. Manulata Sharma, Head, Dept. of Sanskrit, B.H.U.

Because of an emergency situation, the site of workshop was shifted to Jnana Pravaha on 15th March. The main activities of the workshop may be described/presented under two heads, (1) Practical lesson on Scripts viz. Grantha, Newari, Gaudī etc. and its practice session, and (2) A series of lectures on the Principles of Editing Texts of Various disciplines. On the one hand, three vital scripts viz. Grantha, Gaudī and Newari were taught by expert teachers. Prof. V.V. Jaddipal from Tirupati joined this programme to teach Grantha. Prof. Ratna Basu and Dr. Srabani Chakrabarty from Kolkata taught Gaudī and Newari. Apart from teaching the graphics of Gaudi, Newari and Grantha, they gave rich lectures on these subjects in which they explained (1) Historical Background, (2) Origin and (3) Development of these scripts, (4) their special characteristics, (5) Varieties of tools and (6) Method of Preparing Model Texts by using the Mss. of different scripts.

Another fact of this workshop was a series of lectures on the Principles and steps of Editing Texts. The workshop opened with a couple of lectures delivered by Dr. V.S. Shukla who in his detailed speech at first presented a short sketch of the history of Manuscriptology. In his words, in spite of being a Latin terminology, Manuscriptology was not an entire new concept in India. As because it is derived from the Latin word *manus* meaning hand and *scriptum* meaning to write, the whole word stands for a class of document which is totally hand-written. In his lecture Dr. Shukla remarked that Manuscriptology is the intellectual preservation of knowledge, in the form of manuscripts (the written texts). In order to describe the history of Manuscriptology, he discussed so far as, earliest record of written document in India is concerned it may not be wrong to refer to that clay tablet traced in the Boghazkoi of Asia Minor on which

name of Mittani king and names of three gods of Hindu Pantheon (Mitra, Varuṇa and Nasatya) were written in Hittite language. In course of his lecture Dr. Shukla discussed the language and script of Mss. and development of various things which were started to be used as writing materials (viz. palm-leaf, metal plate, stone, wooden plank, skin, hand-made paper etc.). In the second part of his language he concentrated on the contribution of pioneer scholars like MaxMüller, Bower, MMP. Haraprasad Shastri, R.L. Mitra, V.S. Sukthankar etc. Dr. Shukla also discussed the earliest and most important Mss. collection of India and abroad, where he informed the participants about the history of Gilgit Collection, Bower Collection and Bakshali Collection of Mss.

Next speaker was Prof. G.C. Tripathi, who opened before the participants another dimension of Manuscriptology. At first he defined the term 'Manuscriptology', as a system of retrieving hand-written treasures of India and making it a part of study, Prof. Tripathi in his detailed lecture discussed various denominations of Mss. (viz. *grantha*, *pustaka*, *pāṇḍulipi*, *māṭṛkā*) and justification of these names. Gradually he proceeded to discuss the development of various writing materials and the process of making those things usable (e.g. process of making palm-leaf as pages and process of making inks). He also discussed the beginning of writing tradition in India. Although it is widely accepted that Vedas were preserved totally under Oral transmission and (2) approximately up to the time of Pāṇini (i.e. 7th – 4th Cent B.C.) writing system was not prevalent and (3) not a single pre-Aśokan Mss. (i.e. before 300 B.C.) can be traced till date. Still, seeing (a) the enormous volume of Vedas, its systematic composition and accent system, (b) the methodical division of voluminous works like *Aṣṭādhyāyī* into chapters and sub-chapters rouses the question, was the system (esp. Pāṇini's *Aṣṭādhyāyī*) entirely oral?

According to him probably there was some device which at that time also, was not widely accepted and in course of time became obsolete. Prof. Tripathi referred to Greek commander Nearchus (datable to 320 – 300

B.C.) who in his report mentioned that people of India knew the process of making writing materials from cotton and he described the same in his report; although paper came from papyrus, use of which was prevalent in Egypt, the ancient Misr.

Prof. Tripathi in course of his lecture discussed the available source-places of Manuscripts. Then he switched over his discussion to (a) the history of Indian scripts and (b) existence of 64 scripts names of which were prevalent since the time of *Lalitavistara*. Later on, he told when and how Nāgarī script was evolved in India, He also focused on its different shapes (viz. square, triangular and round) and their reasons. As because the word *nagara* means fort (*kilā*, *parakoṭā*) which was normally square shaped, hence, the residents of the place were called *nāgara* and the script used by them was known as *nāgarī*. Because of the use of different types of pen normally square-shaped *nāgarī*, which was prevalent in Northern India became triangular (because of the use of iron stylus) in Southern India and in the Eastern Region (i.e. Bengal, Orissa and Assam) it became round-shaped.

Prof. Tripathi also discussed how copies were made from the Mss. the system of giving remuneration to the copyists and their rate etc.

Prof. T.P. Verma in his two lectures discussed (1) Manuscriptology from Earliest times up to 12th Century and (2) Introduction to Indian Palaeography through power-point presentation. Prof. S.R. Dubey in his lectures explained (1) Origin and Development of Brāhmī Script and (2) Development of Later Scripts.

Prof. S.L. Jain in his elaborated talk gave (1) a general Introduction to the History of Jain Literature, (2) Description of vast Mss. Collection in the custody of PVRI and (3) Their Special Features, varieties of materials etc.

MM Prof. Reva Prasad Dwivedi in his two lectures discussed the Problems of Editing commentaries on Poetics. In course of his lecture Prof. Dwivedi

described type of difficulties and challenges which an editor has to face during his work.

Prof. R.C. Pandey in his illuminating talks explained vast literature of Jyotiṣa and importance of technical terms used therein. He also described how to use glossaries at the time of editing Jyotiṣa texts. In the second part of his lecture Prof. Pandeya discussed the difficulties of editing Jyotiṣa texts.

Prof. C.M. Neelakandhan from Kerala delivered four lectures in which he gave (1) Practical lesson on Malayalam Scripts, (2) How to Transcribe a Mss. from Malayalam into Nāgara Scripts (it was a period of practical work of transcription). (3) Vast Mss. collection lying scattered on libraries of Kerala which remain unattended, unlisted, uncatalogued till date; because those are written in Malayali Script. But those may be treated as a vast mine before the Researchers. His last lecture was on (4) the peculiarities of Sanskrit Texts of Kerala Tradition.

Dr. V.V. Jaddipal from Tirupati taught the participants Origin and Development of Grantha Script. Along with lecture he showed the students the evolution of the graphics of Grantha alphabets and he made them to practice decipherment and transcription from the fragments of Mss. of Grantha Script. Apart from this practical working session Prof. Jaddipal gave two /three illuminated talks on (1) The Evolution and Development of Grantha Script, (2) its popularity in India and South-East Asia and (3) How to Transcribe Mss. from Grantha to Nāgarī Script.

Prof. B.B. Chaubey from Hoshiarpur delivered four lectures on (1) The History of vast Vedic Literature, (2) Peculiarities of Vedic Commentarial Texts, (3) Techniques of Editing Vedic Commentaries Critically and (4) Importance of the knowledge of Grammar and allied subjects for an editor.

Prof. Kamelesh Datta Tripathi delivered his lecture "How the Manuscriptology is helpful to the Oral tradition of India". As both the

currents were running in parallel and equally popular in our country since hoary past, therefore only the Prayogaśāstras can make a bridge between them. In course of his lecture Prof. Tripathi emphasized on the Necessity of Studying Prayogaśāstras (viz. Mīmāṃsā, Āyurveda, Jyotiṣa and especially Nāṭyaśāstra). In this context he described on the Peculiarities of Various Recensions of Nāṭyaśāstra and its practical aspects presented in different regions of country gleaned from the vast material available in the manuscript of Nāṭyaśāstra and its commentaries, which become a tough challenge before the editor during his work.

Prof. Y.K. Mishra delivered two lectures on (1) The Existence of the Writing Tradition in Ancient India and (2) Importance of the Study of Vedic Accents, and how to use them in the task of editing. Prof. Rajaram Shukla delivered a lecture on the Problems of an Editor in the task of editing Philosophical texts.

Prof. R.C. Panda gave a lecture on the Importance of Grammatical Knowledge for being an editor with special reference to *kāraka* and *samāsa* rules. In the second part of his lecture he discussed varieties of errors, crept in Mss. very often and the means to detect and correct those errors.

Dr. Sadashiv Dwivedi in his detailed speech shared his own difficulties during his task of editing *Śṛṅgāra Prakāśa*. He also discussed the Guiding Principles of Editing texts of Sāhityaśāstra.

Dr. S. Chattopadhyay in his lecture discussed the Problems of Editing texts of Śilpa Śāstra with special reference to *Śilparatnakośa*.

Prof. Manulata Sharma delivered a lecture on Varieties of Errors crept in the Mss. as well as in the printed books.

Prof. Jitendrabhai Shah from Ahmadabad delivered four lectures on (1) History of Jain Mss. and their available source places, (2) History of Jain Literature, its various branches, Authors/Exponents, (3) Problems of

Editing Jain texts, and (4) Connotation of different indicatory marks (*śaṅketa*) used in the Mss. and means of determining the date of Mss. with the aid of these marks.

Prof. Vasant Kumar Bhatt, from Gujrat University, Ahmadabad delivered a series of lectures with the aid of slide show and power point presentation on (1) Various facets of Lower Criticism, (2) Different stages of Lower Criticism, (3) How to determine pedigree of texts and prepare genealogical tree of Mss. and (4) Principles of Higher Criticism with special reference to the Bhagavadgītā, Uttararāmacarita and Bengali Recension of Abhijñāna Śākuntalam.

Prof. Sripada Subrahmaniam from Hyderabad gave two/three lectures on the Necessity of Studying Grammar for an editor and Difficulties of Editing a text of Grammar.

The workshop ended with a valedictory function on 29th March, 2012 in the gracious presence of Prof. Bishwanath Bhattacharya, former Dean & Head, Dept. of Sanskrit, Faculty of Arts, B.H.U, Dr. Neelkantha Purushottam Joshi Hon'y. Ācārya, Jñāna-Pravāha and Dr. V.S. Shukla, Head, Kalakosha Division, IGNCA, New Delhi. The programme started with Vedic chanting by one of the participants of workshop. Prof. Manulata Sharma, Head, Dept. of Sanskrit, B.H.U. felicitated the dignitaries and delivered Welcome Address to the guests. Prof. K.D. Tripathi, Advisor, IGNCA, ERC, Varanasi presented a brief account of the activities of workshop before the dignitaries. Certificates were distributed among the participants by Dr. N.P. Joshi.

As a chief-guest of the function Prof. Bishwanath Bhattacharya emphasized on the necessity of the study of Inscription, Palaeography and Manuscriptology for the reconstruction of cultural History of India. He also opined that these subjects should be included in the regular curriculum of University-courses, so that the students can be well-acquainted with these subjects before undertaking their Research Work.

Dr. N.P. Joshi in his blessing note invoked the participants to carry forward the painstaking yet glorious responsibility of this reconstruction of Cultural History of our country. Dr. V.S. Shukla in his presidential address discussed the pertinence of organizing this type of workshop. He expressed his hope that talents of future generation will spring forth from this workshop. The programme ended with vote of thanks rendered by Prof. Kamalesh Datta Tripathi. The academic activities of entire workshop were coordinated by Dr. Pranati Ghosal.

Pranati Ghosal