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Sucheta Mohanty
Ph.D. Research Scholar,
Department of Culture,
Utkal University of Culture,
Bhubaneswar, Odisha, India

Preservation and digitization of manuscript: A study

Sucheta Mohanty

Abstract

Preservation of ancient manuscripts and journal had been emerged as a great challenge. The book lovers and researches tried their level best to take all the steps to preserve the old treasures which were the sources of all types of knowledge. Now these problems have been solved by the growth and deployment of knowledge. Attempts have already been made to preserves all the precious treasure through digitization.

Keywords: library, pothis, digitization, bookbinding, printing technology, manuscript

Introduction

Library was the hub to spread knowledge. The concept of library was there in the time of the Vedic Ages where a large numbers of palm leaves were there for the available of the Vedic *rishies* who used to spread and assimilated knowledge. When there were no books library was there. We learn from history that the kings had their royal library where only manuscripts were there. History also says that the Mogul king Humayun died falling from his library steps while he was descending.

In past the library facilities were confined only for the royal family or for the litterateurs who used to get the royal patronage for creative activities. In Ashrams, different disciples were in the charge of library on the basis of routines. The disciples collecting palm leaves and buried them in the mud for years to prepare palmists. These palm leaves were very much strong and remained untouched by insects, white ants, and other external germs and climate. The writers scribbled the palm leaves in a pointed small iron rod called *Likhani*.

We find a large number of manuscripts made up of palms leaves in the temple premises in which the history and other records were kept by the priests. Generally these *Pothis* contains the records of the royal donation and subscription which came in different time by the different kings. It also recorded the most important religious functions in the temple premises. Sometimes these *Pothis* give some important historic information about some particular places in the location of the temples. These records were kept very naturally and scientifically in the temple premises and it was given the status of the deities of the temples. In some places like the North India the palm leaves were worshipped long with deities because the *Pothis* assimilate knowledge and spiritualism. Ancient *Pothis* only spread spiritualism which is the soul of Indians. Such mind set helped people to kept *Pothis* in proper place. It is meant they keep it in the room where the home deity was worshiped.

Jagannath temple in Odisha was built in the 11th century which has been preserving the *Madal Panji* since its inception made up of in the palm leaves. The preservation of the manuscripts was very scientific. *Madal Panjis* are huge in volumes, more big in size than that of a national library but its preservation is very systematic and having a system of catalogue. It recorded the history of the temple, all the important rites and rituals performed by different monarchs in different times, the visits of foreign kings and the incidents and accidents occurred in the temple premises. The visitors from different countries visited Puri to get a bird's eye view about the preservation and conservation of the manuscripts containing the history of the state and temple. It is said to have recorded the foreign attacks made to plunder the temples and its valuable wealth.

The modern books came to India by the Christian missionaries. They also brought printing machines to India to publish bibles and other Christian religious scriptures. In this way the books published in large numbers and were distributed among the people. The printing press in India in the early Eighteenth Century brought a mass revolution in knowledge.

Corresponding Author:
Sucheta Mohanty
Ph.D. Research Scholar,
Department of Culture,
Utkal University of Culture,
Bhubaneswar, Odisha, India

The literate people started reading for which they had to collect books and to keep them in a systematic ways in the shelves of their rooms. It was a mini library. It was not possible for a man to purchase books throughout his life to read; so the concept of modern library came to Europe in the later seventeenth century where public could read. This library concept was very helpful for the common people who could read the books of their choice in an easiest way. In this way common mass who could not afford to buy books were helped. There was a revolution of library in Europe. First a large numbers of library were set up in cities in competition basis. Then it was shifted to the educational institution. Oxford and Cambridge opened their libraries in the early Seventeenth Century after that all the educational institution in Europe had had their libraries in course of time.

India was the colony of England. For the Europeans in India library was both a fashion and sophistication as a result library had to be set up for the white people in India where the large numbers of white people were staying. First library was opened in the premises of church in India. It is recorded in the *History of India* written by Jagannath Patnaik that the first library of India was set up in Goa by the Portuguese. This library was also set up in the Church.

When a large number of libraries were set up in Europe, people think how to manage and preserve it in very systematic and scientific way so that the library could provide service for longer. As a practice of taking care of library and handling it effectively, a systematic and scientific device was formed and invented in course of time. It was designed as a management degree course in the European Universities. After such systematic study of managing and preserving library, it was helpful to provide effective and desired service to the people. The course also designed how to preserve books for longer. When a manuscript is handled and used by a lot of people in a very small span of life it is supposed to be depreciated and dog-eared. So the sophisticated gums are prepared to rebind them for specific use only. A large numbers of book binders receive training how to bind and rebind books so that the old books in the library could extend their life spans.

It is seen that the pretty old manuscripts in different libraries in European countries are kept in museums if that manuscripts were used by the great men in library. For example *The Bhagabat Geeta* which Mohandas Gandhi used read in South Africa has been kept in the museum of Kepttown Library. Such culture of preserving the books used by the great men is found only in the western countries. Such cultures are also found in India and in Odisha. The books used by Madhusudan Das has been preserved in the museum of Sailabal Women's College, Cuttack but these books made up of white paper started to be fossilized to dust. No scientific devises are used how to preserve the books so that our successors will get the opportunity of going through these rare things of history. A huge amount of public money is spent to preserve the swards, amours, and other weapons of Tipu Sultan and Shivaji but no such interest is shown to presser the rarest of the rare books by the government. So the rarest of the rare pretty old books are gradually tuned to dusts and the books which are kept in public libraries are gathering dust due to lack of care though all the preserving materials are amply available to them.

The old books are on the verge of going to dustbins due to massive lack of technical book binders. Young mass do not

prefer to be bookbinders as it is a lack-lusture job and it could not bring him minimum salary to survive.

In the era of post-modernism the importance of library has been increased but in a new form of digitalization. The digitalization of books has done a yeomen's service for the preservation of the old books and journals which were on the verge of decomposition. The Manmohan Library in Bhubaneswar has digitalized more than 1.30 lakh books. *The New Indian Express* in its booklet *Devi* published on October, 2021 brought to many hidden chapters of digitalization of library written by Anup Nayak in his article entitle as *Paradise for Book Lovers*. Nayak writes:

Manmohan Library is Odisha's first digital library with more than 1.30 digitalized pages of Odia literature. Located at Bhubaneswar, the library provides free access to literary works of eminent writers and boasts of a collection that comprise Odia magazines and newspapers published between 1850 to 1950. From the first available Odia magazine *Prabodha Chandrika* (1856) to the first regional newspaper *Utkal Deepika* (1866), the library has its all. It was set up by voluntary organization Srujanika, which works on digitalization of literary works and Kedarnath Gabesana, a socio-cultural association. (30)

Nayak provides the technology through which all the books and literary journals are to be digitalized soon. In this way all the old and precious books and earliest journals could be preserved without any hindrances. Really the technology has come forward to play a paramount role to publish, preserve and protect the old and the most precious gift of the great men i.e., knowledge in the form of digitalized books.

The various states governments also provide aids to preserve the oldest literary journals of their regional languages through digitalization which could be the precious gift for the book lovers and the researchers. Odish government also does the same things to preserve the ancient *Pothis* and citation which is the ancient sources of knowledge.

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