

INDIGENOUS METHOD OF MANUSCRIPT CONSERVATION

Vinay Kumar Mishra,
Asst. Conservator,
Patna Museum, Bihar.

Abstract: Manuscripts are important library materials. To preserve or conserve such manuscripts village people or the traditional conservators have been applying different types of materials and methods. The paper reflects such indigenous method of manuscript conservation.

Introduction: Manuscripts are not only the reading material but also the heritage materials as well as historical evidences. In the era of computer, the use of manuscripts as reading material may not be required, but for research and to conserve our civilization, we must keep the manuscript as it is. Our country people have been following different type of traditional techniques to save or conserve the manuscripts from insects, micro-organisms, light, heat etc. because of which we still have lakhs of Sanchipat, Talpat, Bhojpat, Tulapat 'Pothi', or paper manuscripts in various parts of our county.

The factors effecting the manuscripts:

1. **Micro-Organism** : Bacteria and fungus are very damaging to the manuscripts. Fungus damage the material, creates stains and discolour the letters. These grow in 65% humidity and 24⁰-30⁰C temperature. Bacteria also damage the leaves by creating colonies on the surface area.
2. **Insects:** The insects like silver fish, book-worm, book lice, cockroach, termite etc. take the manuscript as their food and shelter. These insects may damage the manuscripts totally.
3. **Heat and light:** High temperature (>36⁰) and high humid condition is affective for the manuscripts.
4. **Human handling:** Human handling is also one of the important factor of damaging the manuscripts. Insincere careless handling also cause damage to the manuscripts use of indigenous materials against damaging factors as follows –

Turmeric : Turmeric is used against micro-organisms and insects. The dry powder of turmeric is used for the purpose of conservation. But this turmeric should be dried in the cultivated field itself.

Black cumin : The powder of black cumin is mixed with clove oil and polished on the outer surface of the manuscripts to control pest.

Cinnamon : Powder of cinnamon is used against micro-organism and insect.

Clove oil : Clove oil mixed with turmeric, black cumin, cinnamon and polished on the manuscripts to control insects.

Neem leaves: Sheded dryeed neem leaves are kept inside cloth bundle and then put in the corners of almirah of the manuscript against the insects.

Eucalyptus oil:- It is also known as nilgiri oil. It is polished on the manuscripts to control insects. Eucalyptus leaves are also used to control insect.

Apart from all these, black piper, Ajoaine, Snake skin, kapur, Aswagandha leaf, tobacco leaf, flower of gutidabadi, kumkum fruit etc. are also used against insects and micro-organisms.

It is to be mentioned that, use of the conservation method have some norms. We cannot use these materials directly to the objects. Because, due to the action of its chemical properties, the objects may be damaged or the letters may be extinct. So, when we go to use those materials from the point of conservation are must keep in mind it's proper process of use. Materials which are used against insects or rodents, we have to keep it in such way so that it cannot attach with the manuscript. We have to keep those materials nearby, but not on the objects.

In case of the palmleaf, Sanchipat, Bhojleaf manuscript. We can use the mixture of turmeric, black cumin, cinnamon powder and clove oil mixture on the surface of the cover board of the manuscript or side by the manuscript with the help of a cloth. The fragrance of this mixture is intolerable for the insects, fungus and some of the bacteria, and thus it help the manuscript from bio-deterioration.

We can use some chemicals like Para-Dichlorobenzene, thymol, naphthalene etc. for preventive conservation. But, it is better to use the indigenous materials, because these are eco friendly, no side effects may occur by these materials and the same time these are not so costly. The materials are locally available which can be easily collected by the village people.

Conclusion:

We must use less amount of chemicals or materials for conservation of manuscripts as per as possible. We should keep the manuscripts in such way so that, it get its required light and moisture.

For conservation of manuscript, public awareness is very much important. We should keep in our mind that the manuscripts are the creation of the for-fathers and these are the result of their hard labour conservation of manuscript is one kind of offering of great respect to our for fathers.