

TRADITIONAL METHOD OF CONSERVATION OF SANCHIPAT IN ASSAM

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Before the advent of paper, people used to communicate by speech and hearing. After the advancement of civilization, people started expressing their views by drawing or writing on wood, rocks, metals, clay etc. then the age come when people started using Manuscripts as a written process of communication.

The meaning of the term Manuscripts is man-u-script i.e. made by hand. Manuscripts are of various types such as - Sanchipat, Talpat (palm-leaf), Bhoja-Patra, Skins of animals etc. In Assam, Sanchipats are used for writing and keeping records. Even today also it is used but, basically for ritualistic and artistic purpose only.

Sanchipat manuscripts are the foundation of knowledge. To expand the knowledge of the Sanchipats for our future generation it is our duty to conserve these old documents.

There are two types of conservation –

- (1) Preventive conservation.
- (2) Curative conservation.

We can divide another two types of conservation of Manuscripts. They are as follows –

- (a) Traditional Method/ Indigenous Method.
- (b) Chemical Method/ Scientific Method.

Here, the traditional Methods of conservation of Sanchipats in Assam will be discussed.

In Assam, conservation of Sanchipat was done mostly by two processes. THEY ARE–

- (a) The chang-ghar treatment.
- (b) The Herbal treatment.

(a) The chang-ghar treatment :-

In ancient time, in Assam the people who preserved Sanchipats applied a special type of treatment on them. They used to keep these Sanchipats on the roofs of the cooking-house. The smoke which was produced at the time of cooking helped the manuscripts to get rid from the attack of fungus, humidity, insect etc. Generally they keep the Sanchipats in wooden boxes. Apart from wooden boxes, they also used starch free red cloth to wrap these valuable documents.

(b) Herbal treatment :- Apart from chang-ghar treatment several herbs are also used by the people of Assam for conservation. Herbal products were easily available and they protected the Sanchipats from insects, termites, humidity etc. The herbs which are easily available in Assam and which are used for the conservation of Sanchipats are as follows -

(a) Neem – leaf = Neem-leafs are regarded as air purifier. People used Neem leafs in the stocks of the Sanchipats. When Neem-leafs get dry the preservators keep them near the sides of the Manuscripts to protect them from Insects.

(b) Turmeric-powder = It is used on the sides of the Sanchipats to protect from the Insects/ Fungus etc.

(c) Block-Piper :- The powder of the Black-Piper is used to save Manuscripts from the attack of Insects. Usually insects are not familiar with he smell of this powder.

(d) Clove :- The smell of clove is very strong. Clove was used for the protection of Sanchipats specially to reduce the insect attack.

(e) Ginger and Camphor :- The paste of ginger is a useful medicine for the Manuscripts. It protects our valuable documents from insects attack. Again the pieces of Camphor is used to prevent the Sanchipats from cockroaches.

(f) Eucalyptus and Chitronela oil :- Eucalyptus and Chitronela oil are very useful for Sanchipats. It is used on the four sides of the Manuscripts.

(g) Sandal oil :- Sandal oil is very useful for the Sanchipats. It prevents.

(h) Ajueine :- Ajueine is very useful gift of nature for Sanchipats. From ancient time Ajueine is used to save Manuscripts.

(i) Leaf of Tulsi and Tobacco:- Leaf of Tulsi and Tobacco is used to increase the longevity of the Sanchipats. The paste of Tulsi is very effective on the Sanchipats from fungicides and insecticides.

(j) Leafes of Merigold, Pudina and Lemon grass :- These are the productes of herbs and most effective for the Sanchipat manuscript conservation.

We can use 'Hing', a herb to protect Sanchipats from termites. Usually, termites make their tunnel from the earth and gradually they move inside the Manuscripts. Hing is mixed with the water and spread it on the soil and save the Manuscripts from the termites.

Actually we can't directly use all the products on the Sanchipats. Only some oils can be used directly on the Sanchipats. As scientific method of conservation it is not common to all at that time, therefore the people of Assam preferred, the traditional methods. One of the most traditional system of conservation of Sanchipat is the use of sun light heat. In ancient time people did not used direct sunlight on the Sanchipats, they dried them in shadow and make the documents free from fungus, dust, insects etc. however, this process is done now-a-days also, specially in the month of 'Bhada'(July-August).

The indigenous method of Sanchipats manuscript conservation still preferred by the people of Assam. Indigenous methods has several advantages like–

- (1) The materials which are used in indigenous method of conservation in Sanchipats is easily available everywhere.
- (2) No side effects has been found in these method. As well as on.

Therefore in a nutshell, we can suggest that traditional method is preferable for the Sanchipats conservation.