ABSTRACT

BUDDHIST MANUSCRIPTS WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO ARUNACHAL PRADESH: UTILISATION, RESTORATION AND DIGITISATION

KEY WORDS: Manuscripts; Digitisation; Restoration; Buddhist Manuscripts

The present study focuses on the Buddhist manuscripts which are available in a number of *Mahāyan-Vajrāyan* as well as *Therāvad* monasteries. Some collections are also noticed in private possession in Tawang, Bomdilla, Dirang, Kalktang, Chowkham and Namsai area. A majority of the *Mahāyan* Buddhist manuscripts are confined to the districts of Tawang, West Kameng and Upper Siang. *Therāvad* Buddhist manuscripts are noticed only in the districts Lohit and Changlang. Primarily due to their geographical proximity to Tibet and China, the spread of Buddhism in these districts got a major boost in the post-1959 period after the Dalai Lama exiled to India, and for a brief period stationed at Tawang. In this context it can be mentioned that a number of Buddhist manuscripts of Tibet were brought to Arunachal by exiled Tibetan monks.

Manuscripts are rich sources of information on tradition, history and culture. These are ought to be preserved organised and disseminated to make them available to the world at large. Ultimately, this heritage is part of the memory of the whole world. The western countries have taken a lead in starting digital initiatives to preserve the manuscripts but such initiatives in India are either poorly organised or in primitive stage of development. These rich treasures of our country distributed in private and public institutions in variety of medias such as parchment, vellum, palm leaves and paper, languages scripts, collection sizes and in different conditions. India has the largest collection of manuscripts in the world. They are spread all over the country and also abroad in different libraries, academic institutions,

museums, temples and monasteries and in private collections. The rich manuscript wealth of India today faces a threat of survival. India has possibly lost a vast amount of this wealth. Sufficient information on them is not available today. Among the existing collection, most of them are in a state of decay and damage. Only a very small portion of collection has been surveyed and documented properly. Experts fear that almost all the manuscripts collection will perish in the near future due to decay, and wear and tear. The invaluable heritage of India in the form of manuscripts has to be documented, preserved and made accessible to us and to succeeding generations. The sincere effort has been made to visit and survey available *Mahayāna* Buddhist Manuscripts in Monpa and Sherdukpen areas. Main and important monasteries (*Gonpās*) have been covered, surveyed and documented about the numbers and the conditions of manuscripts. Due to paucity of time and geographical conditions small monasteries and individual collection of manuscripts are not been able to cover. The rich collection of Theravada Buddhist Manuscripts also been covered from available sources. All most all the villages have a Viharas, Buddhist Stupas and other minor structures such as Kuti, temple, rest houses in this area are the main hub and source of rare sacred books as well as manuscripts in a very pathetic condition. Besides the Preparation of Manuscripts Technique has been discussed in brief.

The methodology for the research topic involves extensive field survey, along with a closer scrutiny of the available manuscripts; surveying, photograph and video graph of the manuscripts. With the help of unstructured interviews more information were gathered about location and content of the manuscripts. For documentation the National Mission of Manuscripts carries out the methodologies used in a long and effort-intensive process, the documentation of manuscripts through various means. The four important methods such are i) Survey and Post-Survey; ii) Manuscript Resource Centres (MRCs); iii) Manuscript Partner Centres (MPCs); iv) National Informatics Centre (NIC) and Indira Gandhi National Centre

for the Arts (IGNCA). Information format for the data collection employed by the Mission and its partner institutes standardised so that the information made available on the Internet is uniform, as complete as possible and there is no scope for confusion. Questionnaire, CAT-CAT, Manus (data form) has been used. Since this data form is time tested which include all the questions related to data collection for each manuscripts. The software for cataloguing and systematic digitisation process used in this effort by the Mission, developed by National Informatics Centre (NIC), is *Manus Granthavali*. It updated frequently and has undergone several modifications with the addition of new fields and the possibility of multiple subject entries for a single manuscript. *Manus Granthavali* based on the Dublin Core Metadata Standards that are globally accepted and used in libraries everywhere.

A plan is proposed to digitisation of Buddhist manuscripts of Arunachal Pradesh towards the end of this thesis. Different aspects regarding digitisation have been identified including technical aspects. In order to have international acceptance, Dublin core is suggested for the metadata creation. Easy and frequent access from any location of the sources is the present requirement and digitisation is the only way to satisfy. Subsequently, preservation of manuscripts in physical form adopting scientific process is also another issue.

The present study is made on all these pertinent points systematically.