

# Redefining Preservation–Applying Traditional Techniques to Conserve with Special Reference to R Shamashastry Edited Arthashastra Manuscript

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**Abstract --** This paper explores the immediate need for conserving rare manuscripts. India is a land of historical and cultural diversity and is known as the harbinger of manuscript writing, documentation, conservation and preservation. Countless number of written documents popularly known as manuscripts are housed in Manuscript Conservation Centres and Archival Museums across India. The oriental research institute of Mysore (ORI) is one such institution which has conserved nearly seventy thousand manuscripts. One such rare manuscript is the document of Kautilya's Arthashastra rediscovered by Sanskrit scholar R Shama Shastry and published in 1909. This manuscript was handed over to the ORI by a Sanskrit scholar from Tanjore. Scholar R. Shama Shastry published this manuscript and the publication of this manuscript influenced the Indian heritage and reflected on the political thoughts in India since 3rd Century BC. India was heralded as a birth place of several economic and administrative strategies. The authorities of the institute take extra care in preserving manuscripts but still the document which is 450 years old is deteriorating. The condition of the manuscript is causing concern and the issues relating to modern conservation techniques are being questioned. The academicians and custodians of conservation are reviewing traditional Indian methods of conservation. The manuscript needs to be protected along the lines of ancient Indian conservation methodology and evade losing this rarest manuscript.

**Indexed Terms -** R. Shamashastry , Arthashastra manuscript , Oriental research institute , traditional methods of conservation , new methods, challenges

## I. INTRODUCTION

Manuscripts have been considered as the store house of Indian knowledge system. They represent the traditional legacy of academic brilliance & maturity of writing procedure. Indian scholastic achievements are reflections of Indian pedagogic superiority. Indian antiquity is replete with eventful written

methodologies. The ancient Indian wrote down precious documents besides they preserved it as well. The National Mission for Manuscripts-The National Mission for Manuscripts was established in 2003 by the government of India as a motivated project of the Tourism & culture Ministry It was hailed as a premier Institution determined to conserve great Indian historical heritage. It was institutionalized with twin mottoes of unearthing manuscripts & preserving manuscripts. The Ministry of Tourism and Culture, Government of India, established the National Mission for Manuscripts in February 2003 as an ambitious five-year project with the specific objectives of locating, documenting, conserving and disseminating the knowledge content of India's manuscripts.

1.	Monitoring and controlling temperature and relative humidity inside the conservation area/ archive premises
2.	Limiting light
3.	Filtering air to reduce air pollution and removing pollutants from archives storage areas
4.	Protecting archives from water damage
5.	Inhibiting mould growth
6.	Reducing attractions for insects or rodents
7.	Protecting records from mishandling or abuse

Preservation include activities including

1. Conducting a preservation survey to assess the present state of care of records and archives
2. Maintaining environmental conditions suitable to the material stored
3. Providing accurate and detailed means of access to avoid over handling of archival

4. Storing material properly
5. Transferring
6. Accessioning selected records

## II. CHALLENGES

The ORI which is a repository of rare and unique manuscripts uses modern methods of conservation including fumigation & oiling in preserving manuscripts. The rare manuscript of Kautilyan Arthashastra is nearly 450 years old manuscript is in dismal state. The leaf of the manuscript is peeling off and documents is suffering from over fumigation and alternative conservation support. A manuscript can be conserved for nearly 700 years as experts say. Manuscript experts in Manuscriptology warn that the conserving this invaluable manuscript needs extra care and alternative methods of preserving.

## III. ORI NEEDS FIRE SAFETY VAULTS

This manuscript is covered in a piece of cloth and is kept in an almirah. The two greatest short circuit incidents were raising concern about fire safety methods. Two times in 1996 and 1998 there was a cause for concern with short circuit inside the ORI premises. The ORI which holds the manuscript has no appropriate fire safety vaults & there is a need for fire safety chambers inside the ORI. A fumigation machine to protect invaluable manuscripts from fungus, algae and insects was donated by the Ford foundation but sadly this machine is not properly working.

## IV. ORI NEEDS AUTONOMY

If autonomy is given to this institution, then the ORI can manage its administrative and financial affairs. The poor funds allocated for maintenance and management of the ORI by the Government of Karnataka and the University of Mysore is also one of the biggest disadvantages.

## V. ORI NEEDS RESERVE OF CONSERVATORS

Creating a reserve pool of conservators and taking their services can be very supportive. ORI is flooded with visitors during Dasara season and during summer

vacations. It will be supportive if a reserve pool of conservators are ready for service and create awareness about visitor's responsibilities inside a conservation hall. The problems of maintenance care and preservation is very important and needs to be addressed clearly. A trained pool of conservators can be a handy solution.

## VI. ROLE OF GENERAL PUBLIC CUSTODIANS OF CONSERVATION

Archivists and archaeologists understand the general needs of conservation chambers, but general public do not have knowledge about agents which cause deterioration of manuscripts. Hence the following general awareness needs to be provided for general public so that they can harm the records

1. A cool room relatively dry with temperature about 35% relative humidity,
2. clean, and stable environment it is mentioned that archivists generally need to avoid attics, basements, and other locations with high risk of leaks and environmental extremes.
3. Minimal exposure to all kinds of light.
4. No exposure to direct or intense light
5. Distance from radiators and vents
6. Supportive protective enclosures
7. Unfolded and flat or rolled storage for oversized records and manuscripts
8. Individual/isolated storage of acidic papers to prevent acids from migrating into the other works on paper

Ancient Indians were well versed in management of old manuscripts. Rare Herbs and natural oils were used in ancient India to preserve manuscripts. Ancient Indians were aware of the biological growth as one of the severe problems which supported deterioration of the manuscripts. They used only natural materials to upkeep manuscripts.

But today with the advance in technology, several Modern pest control processes applied for conservation of manuscripts are drastic and highly toxic. Hence there is a need to reevaluate the traditional methods of conservation. There is a need to review the traditional Indian methods along with new scientific methods and review the nature of deterioration. The traditional Indian methods of

conservation was non-chemical hence the longer life for manuscripts were guaranteed. But today the use of chemicals is considered as a first preference. But there is a need to reevaluate tradition Indian knowledge system

#### VII. THE ROLE OF THE NATIONAL CONSERVATION RESEARCH LABORATORY ( NCRL)

The National Conservation Research Laboratory (NCRL) Mysore is conducting several researches on traditional methods of conservation. With the use of simple and natural herbs documents were protected for centuries. Evaluation of different methods of laminating paper is being researched at the National Conservation Research Laboratory (NCRL).

#### VIII. CONCLUSION

Evolving simple methods of mass de-acidification of manuscripts is researched to be an important technique. Besides individual will power is very much needed in management of manuscripts. Each citizen of India holds the responsibility of keeping the national treasures as important and he holds responsibility of not causing any damage to such national treasures. He is also responsible for alarming others who cause damage deliberately or unintentionally. The basic responsibilities of custodians of manuscript conservation centers is very important because unless and until custodians become individually responsible for each rare manuscript, the very document would tear away to pieces thus causing damage to rich cultural heritage of India. At the same time there is a need to augment research in reassessing traditional Indian methods of conservation of manuscripts and adopt the applications in the light of modern techniques. There is a danger of losing our cultural heritage if focus is not prioritized.

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