



A REVIEW ON TEXTUAL CRITICISM IN AYURVEDA

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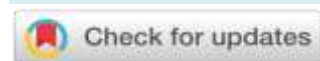
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ABSTRACT

The improvisation of a text happens only through its text criticism. Every new edition of a text tries to rectify any mistakes in the previous edition. As the number of editions increases, the clarity and quality of the content advances. In the case of ancient manuscripts composed of an author and reproduced the same matter by scribes of different specialisations or disciplines, some scribes even copied without knowing any idea of the subject dealt with merely for payment. Hence, analysing the variants produced through copying should be considered with attention and should be critically edited to reach nearer to the original work. Their justification of the author can be done, and the proper knowledge of the book can be assured for the scholars and readers. Textual criticism is the only way to find the originality of a book written years ago.

Keywords: edition, scribe, textual criticism

INTRODUCTION

The transmission of knowledge started from Sruti parambra, or oral tradition, and further it evolved through lekhana parambara, or the transmission of

knowledge from one generation to another through writings. The traditional knowledge systems of India, like Ayurveda, are primarily transmitted in this way

by writing in palm leaves, birch bark, etc., as their scribes have yet to do technology for mass production of these writings manual copying. This led to errors in the copies, knowingly or unknowingly. By applying text criticism to the variants of the original text, the original text can be authenticated.

Objectives

1. To study the concept of Textual criticism.
2. To study the application of Textual criticism in Ayurveda.

Review of literature

Textual criticism is the study of a literary work that aims to establish the original text or a critical literature study, emphasising a close reading and analysis of the text¹. Textual criticism provides the principles for scholarly editing of cultural heritage texts. In the Western world, collecting, tending, and preserving records was first instituted in the Hellenistic period. The subsequent Christian ages were long oblivious to the Hellenistic textual discipline. Instead, the scriptoria of the proliferating centres of medieval learning were ruled by the pragmatics of the copyist. Scribes interpreted texts as they copied them, and as they did so, they often compared variant source document exemplars and, in the process, altered texts in transmission.²

What's the need for textual criticism?

The process of textual criticism seeks to explain how each variant may have entered the text, either by accident (duplication or omission) or intention (harmonization or censorship), as scribes or supervisors transmitted the original author's text by copying it.³ This helps the readers and scholars of the specific field access authentic knowledge. Higher criticism is also a part of the critical edition. Still, it focuses more on the background of the text and the specificity of writing in terms of methods, motives, social-cultural background, etc. Also known as historical criticism, it is a branch of criticism investigating the origins of ancient texts to understand "the world behind the text".⁴ Higher criticism is divided into sub-categories, including primarily source criticism, form criticism, and redaction criticism. Texts are written by an author and are copied and recopied by scribes to pre-

serve the knowledge for the next generation and vast fraternity through handwritten format as there was a lack of printing technology. These scribes may or may not be expert scholars on the subject in which the text is being copied. Many Scribes copied the text as they were paid well. In history, different types of scribes can be seen as Kayastha, Rajakiya, Sasakiya etc and the purpose of their copying also can be considered distinct.

Types of copying :

Direct copying: as the same script as the original manuscript

Intercopying: from one script to another.

Errors in copying/ scribal errors

- Addition
- Deletion
- Substitution
- Orthographic misinterpretation
- Transposition

These errors can also lead to variations in the texts.

The Bharatiya gyana parambara is transmitted through the oral tradition and developed through hand-written documents called manuscripts. "Any manuscript, record or other document which is of scientific, historical, literary or aesthetic value and which has existed for not less than seventy-five years."⁵

For making it popular the copies have been written by the disciples or the copyists. Due to several reasons these create differences in the texts leading to the variants of original work.

Factors result in Pathbheda ⁶

1. scribal errors: it is the errors made by scribes during copying.
2. Intentional changes
3. Oral transmission
4. Different textual traditions
5. Cultural and historical context
6. Copyists' personal preferences
7. Accidental damage or deterioration

The justification for Pathbheda is textual criticism. It is a labourer's work that includes the collection variants finding the mother manuscripts comparisons through collation and arriving at the nearer text to the

original one. Nilakantha, the renowned commentator of the Mahabharata, towards the beginning of the commentary, says having collected several manuscripts from different regions, deciding upon the best reading and following the text of my teachers, I commence the commentary. ⁷From this, it is clear that for proper commentary composition, the best version of the original text is needed again to indicate the relevance of textual criticism.

Steps involved in Textual criticism.

- Scientific understanding of the original compendium
- Assessing the originality of the work
- Identifying and collecting its variants
- Redemption of the text
- Preserving its original meaning

In Ayurveda, the compendium written years back in palm leaf, birch bark, etc, by different scholars of that era and got copied from time to time by various copyists and is elaborated and explained by commentators for humanity. This process of transcription leads to several errors, knowingly or unknowingly. Even the commentators try to clarify this through the commentaries; the variants of the original text can cause dilemmas among the readers about the originality of the text. Here comes the relevance of textual criticism in Ayurveda literature.

Need of Textual Criticism in Ayurveda

1. Many Unpublished Manuscripts: India possesses more than 5 million manuscripts, making it the largest repository of manuscripts wealth in the world. An estimated 100,000 manuscripts have been produced from 1500 BC to 1900 AD, of which only 1/10 are traced. Only 2% of manuscripts have been published among the total Ayurveda literature.⁸ These publications include critically edited and published simple transcriptions. Hence, the focus on this manuscript with a critical edition is required.

2. Justification for the authors' original work: By proper textual criticism, the author's work can be authenticated, thereby gaining a better understanding of Ayurveda principles.

Editions on Ancient textbooks of Ayurveda

One of the more excellent trios of Ayurveda Caraka samhita, first and foremost written by Agnivesa as Agnivesa tantra, the pratisamskarana of the tantra done by caraka he is known as the redactor of the tantra, and the text got popularised as Caraka samhita. It can be stated that the Caraka samhita was initially composed by Agnivesa in 1000 B, C Revised by Acharya Caraka in 3-2 nd century AD, and redacted by Dridhabala in the 4th century AD. Dridabala completed the 41 chapters, which were lost or left unfinished by Caraka, but also re-edited the entire book.⁹ This text can be edited further to rectify the disparagement, if any. Compared to the other contemporary sciences, these editions are less in number. Commentators helped to rectify these errors by elaborating on the content of the original work by providing.

3. word-division (Padaccheda), 2. Stating the meaning of the words (Padarthokti), 3. Analysis of grammatical compounds (Vigraha), 4. Constructing the sentences (Vakyayojana), 5. Solving problems (Akepusamadhana).

4. From this, a good commentator also acts as an editor.

A proper textual criticism goes through three stages- Heuristics, Recension and Emendation.

Heuristics: In this stage, the collection, analysis and finding of evidence concerning the text. The text arrives after a critical evaluation of the available data. Hence, it is necessary to put together all the material available methodically. This, in turn, requires knowledge of the availability of the material.

Heuristics include three stages-

□ **Si-glum:** It is the identification mark given to the various manuscripts taken for critical edition using numbers, letters. Etc. The siglum could be based on the script, the source of the codex, the age of the copy or a combination of any of these. The several codices consulted are given an identification mark to identify the reading as of a particular codex. It is called siglum. A straightforward mode would be to name the codices A, B, C, etc., or use the Indian alphabets Ka Kha Ga Gha, etc. For example, a manuscript variant collected from GOML Chennai can be noted as A.

A manuscript collected from the Oriental Research Institute & Manuscript Library, Kariavattom, University of Kerala, Trivandrum (TVM) can be noted as B.

□ **Collation**– It is the process of collecting all the information concerning the text in a single document by using a collation sheet. The following method may be adopted when there are three codices to work on. The text in one of the codices, selected as better than either of the two, is copied on sheets of paper. Sufficient margin is left on either side of the page. Or the lines may have enough space in between. This copy compares word for word with the other two manuscripts.

Secondary Sources of Evidence- All works are directly and closely related to the text on hand, but the source manuscripts are secondary sources of evidence. They are the commentaries and translations. Etc.

Recension: from all the collected variants, the editor has to arrive at the nearer version of the original text by recension. It can be called the critical revision of the text itself.

Emendation: even after going thoroughly through the variants, if the editor is not satisfied with the available texts by giving valid suggestions, he can correct the text, which is known as an emendation.

DISCUSSION

Textual criticism is a labour process that starts from collecting scattered variants of the original manuscripts, its collation and word-to-word letter-to-letter analysis and finding out the best nearer word to that of the original text and revision if needed. After the textual criticism, higher or historical criticism of the exact text can also be done, and as most of the Ayurveda texts are composed in Sanskrit language, the translation of the text to another language which are more familiar to people will ensure again the wide acceptability of the compendium. Textual criticism of

Ayurveda manuscripts can contribute to the science's Academic proficiency and literary richness.

For proper text edition, scholars must have a command of the Sanskrit language; the subject dealt in the manuscript palaeography and caligraphy of the specific script used to write Sanskrit text. As a part of research in Ayurveda or any academic research, textual criticism should be developed as mainstream research.

CONCLUSION

Through textual criticism, the authentication of the work as that of the author can be achieved, thereby contributing to the originality of the literature concerned. In Ayurveda, only a few books have been editions, and many texts still need to be edited, including manuscripts that still need to be published. Evaluation and analysis of the variants of different texts, their criticism and editions should be central to literary research in the Ayurveda fraternity.

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