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In studying manuscripts our attention is mainly directed to the text and subject-matter of the work copied. Paleography and the material of writing have also received some consideration. But details about owners and copyists as well as any other information about the manuscripts do not so far appear to have been given the consideration they so richly deserve. It is, however, found that they occasionally contain valuable and interesting bits of information about social and cultural history.

It is from these sources that we may form an idea about the high esteem in which manuscripts were held-about attempts that were made for the dissemination of learning through the multiplication 1 and presentation of manuscripts and about the state of education and culture in the country in general.<sup>2</sup> Curious sidelights are also incidentally thrown on important historical facts.3 The purpose of the present paper is to draw attention to this neglected aspect of manuscript-study. It does not claim to give an exhaustive treatment of the subject but aims at giving illustrative notes on some of the points with the hope that fuller treatment will be made by some other scholar.

Books were a rather rare commodity before the introduction of printing. Clearly they were not as easily accessible even with money as now. Ordinary people with a love of learning but with limited financial resources experienced great difficulties in securing books, owners as a rule, being very unwilling to part with them lest they should be lost or damaged.4 The time required and the hard labour involved in copying books can be very well imagined. Hence manuscripts of books were regarded as valuable treasures. We have it on record that at the time of Marhatta depredations in Bengal in the middle of the 18th century the people were fleeing with their children, the images of their tutelary deities as well as loads of manuscripts—the things which they considered to be their most valued possessions.5

<sup>1</sup> Well-to-do-persons often undertook to get many copies of important works prepared for the use of readers. It is reported that one had got hundreds of copies of the Kalpakiranāvālivivrii made evidently for this purpose (Prasastisamgraha, Ahmedabad, 1993 V.S., II, 879).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> Literacy and culture was not unknown among the masses. Manuscripts of popular works in the provincial languages copied by members of the lower classes are not rare. Female education does not seem to have been in as deplorable a condition not rare. Female education does not seem to have been in as deplorable a condition as is generally supposed to be. Manuscripts of even sanskrit works on different subjects are known to have been copied by and for ladies (R.A.S.B., i.e., Descriptive Catanogue of Sanskrit MSS. in the Royal Asiatic Society of Bengal, VIII, Introduction, p. xiii, Prasastisamgraha, II, 697, 698, 702, 695 of p. 197, 709, 734, 742, etc.)

3 One manuscript recording its date of copying states that it was copied in 1687 V.S. at a time when Gujarat was passing through very bad days of famine and pestilence vividly described by the copyist in a few verses (Prasastisamgraha, II, p. 198).

<sup>4</sup> Cf. The popular adage लेखनी पुस्तिका कान्ता परचस्त्राता गता। Of course, there were honourable exceptions and we have instances of manuscripts being copied for one's own use as well as for the use of others.

<sup>5</sup> Citracampu of Bāṇeśvara Vidyālankāra: धनजनभारमन्यरसञ्चारेरतिविसारिधीवतां ग्रहीतग्रहसाराम्बरभूषणभाजनानाम् चक्कावलम्बितलम्बालकसोलबासकानां महाधनानां

In fact, a sort of sanctity came to be associated with manuscripts. On occasions like the Sarasvatī Pūjā or Vasanta Pañcamī day they are still ceremonially worshipped especially in Bengal. Worship is also offered to sacred books before they are recited on particular occasions. It may be mentioned that in these matters more sanctity is attached to manuscripts than to printed books. Making gifts of manuscripts was regarded as highly meritorious. Ballāla Sena (12th century) in the Purāṇadāna and Vidyādāna sections of his famous  $D\bar{a}nas\bar{a}gara$  as well as other later compilers of similar treatises quotes elaborate extracts from the sastras referring to the great merits accruing from the gifting of copies of Purāņas, the Rāmāyaṇa, the Mahābhārata, the Dharmasamhitās and the Vedāngas. Regular ceremonies are prescribed for copying and presenting manuscripts to temples as well as to pandits. The Jains laid special stress on the importance, from a religious standpoint, of copying and making gifts of manuscripts—gifts that were regarded as most efficacious of all religious acts (Praśastisamgraha, I, pp. 19, 27, 31, 38, 43, 46, 71). Consequently numerous libraries or bhandaras sprang up containing valuable stocks of manuscripts. Building up such libraries was considered to be conducive to religious merit (Prasastisamgraha, II, MS. No. 373) and many people presented manuscripts to them (*Ibid.*, No. 375, 380, 737.) The practice of giving away sacred books is known to this day.<sup>2</sup> It is gathered from statements recorded in a number of manuscripts that people with a religious bent of mind would get copies of works, generally religious texts, made by professional copyists and make gifts of them to monasteries and religious teachers with a view to earn spiritual blessings for themselves or for their relatives. The act of copying itself was regarded as a work capable of winning religious We have reference to a number of amateur copyists, incliding several ladies, who took upon themselves the task of copying books with this end in view (*Praéastisamgraha*, II, MS. No. 91, 213, 812). The necessity of multiplying copies of works from the mundane point of view is emphasized by Rajasekhara (10th century) in his Kavyq-Mīmāmsā (Chapter X). He instructs poets to make many copies of their works as soon as they are finished; for a solitary manuscript may be lost or damaged through one or other of many causes like water, fire, sale and even gift. If, however, different copies are in the hands of different learned men there is every likelihood of their being carefully preserved and studied. It is for this reason that a Bengali scholar, Gangādhara, who composed a commentary on the Mugdhabodha, notified in the press in July, 1838, offering a reward of five rupees to any scholar who would make out

यीवावज्ञानित्रशाज्ञयामशिज्ञानां दुर्वज्ञमज्ञाभारविविधशास्त्रपुस्त्रक्षयापचयिचनासन्नायज्ञजैरायां भूमिनिर्जरायाम्...विविधार्तनादेन मिथोऽनुवादेन च चभितमिव चमामण्डज्ञमभवत् १४॥

विषय्रजसुष्ठिमिष्कोर्गेषिनः क्वासि श्री इं करणवश्रातस्य स्थानपो वापि की दक्। ष्यनवरतमद्भारिक्षणो भावना का तदि हिनयतमेकं दानमेवास्य धर्मः ॥ ज्ञानाभयोपप्रदानभेदान्त्र विधा सर्वविदो वदिना । तचापि निर्वाणप्रकेदीपं सम्ज्ञानदानं प्रवरं वदिना ॥ का ज्ञानमान्तिमान्यतस्य तचाधुना पुस्तकमन्तरेण । न स्थादतः पुस्तकलेखनं दि श्राहस्य युक्तं नितरां विधातुम् ॥ न ते नरा दुर्गतिमाप्त्रविन च स्रुकतां नैव कहस्यभावम् । भवाश्यतां वृद्धिविद्यीनतां च ये लेखयन्ति दि जिनस्य वाक्यम् ॥

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> The Royal Asiatic Society of Bengal possesses a manuscript of the *Agnipurāna* which was presented after recital to a Brahmin Nārāyana by name in the year 1865 V.S. (R.A.S.B., V, 3735).

a copy of his work and take it. The author hoped that if the work would thus come to the notice of the scholars all errors and inaccuracies would be detected and corrected.1

Of course, professional copyists were given remuneration for their work and regular sale of manuscripts was also not unknown. It is interesting to study the rates of remuneration and the prices charged for particular manuscripts. Information available in this connection is scanty very few manuscripts giving necessary details in the matter. And I have not come across any very old manuscript containing any indication of its actual price or There are of course some old manuscripts referring to the fee for copying. existence of professional copyists who had occasionally to be paid large sums of money.<sup>2</sup> It would, however, appear that there was no fixed rate which was determined as usual by the degree of demand. Ward has noted the price and rate of copying as current in Calcutta in the beginning of the 19th century. According to him the price of written copies of the Mugdhabodha, if written with care, was about Rs.3. Inferior copies were sold at one rupee and a half. A written copy of the Amarakośa sold for Rupees three (A View of the History, Literature and Mythology of the Hindoos, Vol. I, p. 574, 577 f.n.). It is known that a copy of Pūjāri Goswamin's commentary on the Gitagovinda was sold for ten annas only in 1812 (R.A.S.B., VII, p. 134). It was in the first half of the 19th century that Pandit Isvara Chandra Vidyāsāgara acquired the following manuscripts at the prices noted against each:-

Kāvyādarśa (2,000 letters)

Māghatīkā of Kavivallabha Cakravarti 3 Rasamañjariprakāśa of Nāgeśa Bhatta (900 letters) Kirātatīkā of Mallinātha 4

Rupee one and a quarter. Rupees five. Annas eight. Rupees two and a half.

I am noting here the price of another manuscript in the Vangiya Sahitya Parishat which quotes its price:—

Bengali version of the Rāmāyaṇa by Kṛttivāsa, dated 1218 B.S. (1817 A.D.) (VSP manuscript No. 2574) Rupees five.

There are some manuscripts which do not record the exact prices but only refer to the transactions of sale or exchange. Thus we are told how even a vedic manuscript was purchased by one Vaidyanātha on payment of money and that one Upādhyāya was witness in the matter.<sup>5</sup> A manuscript of the *Prabodhacandrodaya* was exchanged for a copy of a work presumably of the name of *Rasāmṛtasindhu*.<sup>6</sup> The acquisition by money of two Jain manuscripts in 1343 and 1351 V.S. is referred to in the Prasastisamgraha (I, 161, 153).

(MS. dated 1352 V.S.—Praśastisamgraha, I, 32.) श्रीमत पद्मचरित्रं बद्धना दविषेन लेखियिलेदम्॥ (Ibid., I. 63.)

<sup>1</sup> B. N. Banerji, Samvādpatre Sekāler Kathā, Vol. II (2nd edition), p. 164.

<sup>2</sup> पुस्तकानि तु सिख्यने से सर्वे स्वयंतिनः।

<sup>3</sup> The MS. of 10,000 letters was copied in 1218 B.S. (1817 A.D.) for rupees fifteen.
4 The manuscript was copied in 1736 S.E. (1814 A.D.) at a cost of rupees seven. The Vidyasagara Collection of Manuscripts is now deposited in the Vangiya Sahitya Parisat of Calcutta.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> R.A.S.B., II, 514. 6 R.A.S.B., VII, p. 254.

As regards the rate of copying, Ward gives it as one rupee or twelve annas for every 32,000 letters in the beginning of the 19th century (op. cit., p. 599). In his opinion the rate was very high as the charges for copying big works like the Mahābhārata would be exorbitant. R. L. Mitra puts it at rupees four for 1,000 ślokas in the sixties of the last century (Proceedings of the Asiatic Society of Bengal, 1869, p. 133).

I quote below the rates of copying as found in some manuscripts:-

Padmapurāņa (Pātālakhaṇḍa) (R.A.S.B., V, 3474) ... Rupees seven. Kulārṇavatantra (R.A.S.B., VII, p. 48) ... Rupee one.

Kālikāmangala, a Bengali work, by Kṛṣṇarāma Dāsa, was copied in 1159 B.S. (1752 A.D.) for rupees two and two pieces of cloth.— (R.A.S.B., IX, 322.)

In 1714 a copy of Bengali Mahābhārata was made on condition that the copyist would be honourably maintained for life with food. He was also given some fee in cash and an annual grant.—(S. Sen, Baṅgla Sāhityer Itihāsa, Vol. I, 2nd edition, p. 465, f.n. 4.)

A Bengali version of the Rāmāyaṇa (four Kāṇḍas) was copied for rupees, seven in cash together with a promised presentation of cloth, napkin and sweets.—(VSP, MS. No. 303, Chittaranjan Collection.)

Bengali version of the Mahābhārata (Virāṭaparva) was copied for one rupee in 1110 B.S. (1703 A.D.).—(Descr. Cat. Beng. MSS. Cal. Univ., Vol. III, p. 572.)

Bengali version of the Māhābhārata (Śāntiparva) was copied for only thirteen annas in 1253 B.S. (1846 A.D.).—(*Ibid.*, p. 717.)

It must, however, be confessed that the profession of a coptist was never considered to be honourable in society. The sale of learning in every form was deprecated at all times. There are definite records to show that when the printing press came to be introduced it was not deemed proper to get books printed and sell them. As a matter of fact copies of costly publications like the Rāmāyaṇa, the Māhābhārata, the Sabdakalpadruma and the Bhāgavata were distributed free among learned pandits by a number of wealthy landlords of Bengal who published the works at considerable expense in the 19th century.

Like the imprecatory verses in land grants there were imprecatory verses at the end of manuscripts throwing interesting light on the value and importance of manuscripts. The date and authorship of the verses are not known. Some of them occur in fairly old manuacripts. The first half of the most popular of these verses यथादृष्टं तथालिखितं लेखको नास्तिदोधकः occurs in a manuscript from Nepal stated to have been copied in N.S. 217 (1097 A.D.). The expression लेखको नास्तिदोधकः is quoted by Purusottamadeva (circa 10th-12th century) in his Bhāṣāvṛtti (II.2.24). Only a very few of these verses, presumably the older ones, have attained celebrity being found in manuscripts of different parts of the country-in some cases in translated versions in later Indian languages. They were specially composed for the purpose at different times by different people including not unlikely some of the copyists themselves. It may, however, be noted that the main themes of the verses are identical, their principal object is laying emphasis on the importance of manuscripts. It will be interesting to collect the verses from manuscripts scattered over various places. They have so far received scant attention at the hands of scholars engaged in the study of MSS. I am placing before the world of scholars a bird's-eye view of the verses. It is expected that this will be followed by a thorough

and systematic study by other workers.

The verses may be divided into four classes in view of the subject-matter of their contents. One class of these verses speaks very harsh words about people who would feel tempted to steal books. All sorts of curses are heaped on them. Vulgar insinuations are made about their birth and parentage. A few verses falling under this class are quoted below. Prose lines are found in Bengali MSS. containing various curses and vulgar insinuations.

एक्तकं हरते यक्त काणो दुःखी भवेद्गरः। म्टतः खर्गं न गच्छेत्त पितरं नरकं नयेत्॥

(MS. dated 1689 S.E.—Calcutta Sans. Coll. Cat., V, 76.)

चर्जितं भूरिकरेन एक्तकं यच मेऽनघ। इर्तुमिच्हति यः पापी तस्य वंग्रचयो भवेत्॥

(Tanjore Catalogue, XVIII, 14585, R.A.S.B., VIII, 6062 where the second foot runs पुस्तकं लिखितं मया.)

चौर्येश नौला विषमेव सुक्षा ।

पिचा च गूथं सह नारकी स्थात् ॥ (R.A.S.B., VII, 5589.)

स्थातमनो स्थपकारायोपकाराय परस्य च ।

इदं हरति यो मूडक्तस्य तातः पश्रुर्षुवम् ॥ (R.A.S.B., VII, 4975.)

यत्नेन लिखितं चेदं यस्रोरयति प्रक्तकम् ।

श्रूकरी तस्य माता च पिता तस्य च ग्रद्भः ॥

(R.A.S.B. MS. No. 5204.)

The second class of verses contains appeals for the proper preservation of these fragile objects. MSS. were required to be carefully looked after like one's own children though they were to be tightly bound up like enemies. Incidental reference is made in these verses to the hard labour involved in the work of copying. A general appeal in prose is found recorded in an old MS. of the 12th century in the following words:—

पुक्तकिमदं रचाणीयं प्रश्चित्र्जिनैः संप्रोधनीयं रचाणीयं च सर्वप्रमादेश्यः। (MS. dated 1145 A.D.—R.A.S.B., III, 1924.)

A few verses of this class are noted below :---

उदकानलचौरेभ्यो मूघकेभ्यस्त्रथैव च। रच्चगौया प्रयत्नेन यस्मात् कन्टेन लिख्यते॥

> (Praśastisamgraha, I, MS. No. 142— MS. dated 1293 V.S., 108—MS. dated 1384 V.S.)

तैलाद्र चे ज्जलाद्र चोद् र चो च्छि थिलबन्धनात्। मूर्खं हक्ते न दातव्यमेवं वदति प्रक्तकम्॥

> (Praśastisamgraha, II, MS. No. 740. It also occurs in MSS. No. 154, 200, 637, 666.)

भग्नप्रक्षतियोवः क्तव्यवृष्टिरघोमुखः। कष्टेन लिखितं युद्धं यत्नेन प्रतिपालय॥

Variants:—° ग्रीवं, ° मुखं, लिखति, भ्रास्त्रं, परिपालचेत्।

(R.A.S.B., VIII, 6114, Praéastisamgraha I, MS. No. 111 (dated 1306 V.S.); II, MS. No. 666, Lakshman Svarup's Introduction to Nighantu, p. 33; Descr. Cat. Tanjore Library, I, p. 270.)

अनिवसविवतेविज्ञिखनमान्यहस्ता-

नववसननिवासाददन्तरायाददोव्यम्॥

(New Indian Antiquary, July 1938, p. 250, f.n. 4-)

सम्भूष्यं सदपत्यवत् परकराद रच्यस सचीचवत्

संग्रोध्यं त्रियाताङ्गवत् प्रतिदिनं वीच्यस्य सन्मित्रवत् । वध्यं (न्थः?) वध्यवदण्राणं दृढगुणैः सार्यं हरेर्नामवत् नैवं सीदति प्रसानं विल कराप्येतद् गुरूणां वत्तः॥

> (R.A.S.B., II, 306, Descr. Cat. Tanjore Library, I, p. 255, II, p. 22, N.I.A., July 1938, p. 250, f.n. 4.)

In this connection reference may be made to the prayers for the long life of the manuscripts.

ष्पर्केन्दुमारहले यावद योमश्रीकार्यकुरहले। राजतत्तावदेवास्तु प्रस्तिका खस्तिशालिनी॥

(Praśastisamgraha, I, 13 (1498 V.S.).)

यावद्योमसरोवरे विलसतो विश्वोपकारेक्या

सम्मन्नाचिताम्बजीवकलिते श्रीराजद्यंसाविष्ट ।

च्यज्ञानप्रसरान्धकारविधुरे विश्वपदीपोपम-

स्तावन्नन्दतु पुस्तकोऽयमनिग्रं संवाच्यमानो बुधैः॥

(Praśastisamgraha, I. 24, 47.)

Variants:—°तः पद्मदयालक्षृतौ ज्योतिर्जालजटालनिर्मलजले, °निकरप्रध्यंस-दीपोपम°, श्राख्यायमानो।

यावस्ववणसमुद्रो यावद्मन्त्रचमाखितो मेरः। यावचन्द्रादित्यो तावदिदं पुस्तकं जयतु॥

> (R.A.S.B., VIII, 6140, Prasastisamgraha, II, 1082.)

यावन्मेरकरे गभक्तिकटके ध्वक्तेऽय पिन्याङ्गना । तावन्नन्दतु पुक्तकः सुगुरुभिर्याख्यायमानो बुधैः॥

(Praśastisaṃgraha, I, 14 (1308 V.S.).)

यावन्मेरं प्रतपति रविद्यीतते यावदिन्दु-

र्यावद्वायुः स्मुरति गगने तारकाः सन्ति यावत्। -

यावद् भूमिः प्रवह्नति पयः सागरे यावदेतत्

तावव्रन्याद गुणिभिरिनम् एक्तकं वाचमानम्॥

(Praśastisamgraha, I, 16.)

The third class of verses containing apologetic statements regarding errors of copying is perhaps the oldest and most popular.

यथा दृष्टं तथा लिखितं लेखके नास्ति दूषणम्। भौमखापि रणे भक्तो सुनीनाच्च मतिभनः॥

(R.A.S.B., VIII, 6110)

Variant :-- लेखको नास्तिदोषकः।

यादृभ्रं पुक्तके दृष्टं तादृभ्रं लिखितं मया। यदि शुद्धमशुद्धं वा मम दोषो न दीयते॥

(Prasastisamgraha, I, MS. No. 17 (dated 1306 V.S.), 18 (1383 V.S.), 20 (1480 V.S.), 22 (1318 V.S.), 92 (1306 V.S.), 111 (1306 V.S.).)

करकतमपराधं चान्तुमर्चन्त सन्तः

(R.A.S.B., II, 318, Praśastisaṃgraha, II, No. 746.)

A complete verse with this as the fourth foot is found in the Tanjore Catalogue (Vol. I, p. 464). It runs:—

सरभसकरवेगभ्यस्वर्णातिदोधे यदिष्ठ भवति शास्त्रे प्रस्तके इस्तदोधात्। सकलमपि क्रतान्तं सद्गुणस्राधिकामाः करकतमपराधं स्नन्तुमर्चन्ति सन्तः॥

> इच लिखितमशुद्धं शुद्धमेवं न दूष्यं निजञ्जतमपराधं चान्तुमर्चेन्ति सन्तः।

(N.I.A Int. 1028 p. 250, f.n. 4.)

यदत्तरं परिश्वष्टं मात्राष्ट्रीनश्च यद्भवेत्। त्तन्तव्यं तद् बुधैः सर्वे कस्य न स्खलते मनः॥

(Prasastisamgraha, I, No. 4 (dated 1334 V.S.).)

खदृष्टदोषाद स्पृतिविश्वमाद वा यदर्थे ही नं लिखितं मयात्र । तदार्थवर्येः परिश्रोधनीयं कोपो न कार्यः खलु लेखकाय ॥

Variants:—इस्तस्य दोषाद् मितिविश्वमाच यितिस्त्रिट्र्नं लिखितं मयेइ, व्यूनातिरिक्तं, तत्सर्वमाये, दोषो न देयः खलु लेखकस्य, प्रायेण मुद्धान्ति हि ये लिखन्ति॥

(Prasastisamgraha, II, No. 525, 1261, Descr. Cat. Tanjore Library, I, p. 22; IV, p. 2368.)

Several more verses of a similar type are found in MSS. described in the Tanjore Catalogue (I, p. 22; V, p. 2554) as also in a MS. of the Subhā-sitasuradruma a verse from the colophon of which is quoted on the last page of Prof. Kosambi's edition of Satakatrayādi-subhāsitasamgraha in the Singhi Jain Series. I am indebted to Dr. V. Raghavan of the Madras University for drawing my attention to these verses along with some other verses found in the Tanjore Catalogue.

The fourth class of verses seeks the well-being of all including readers,

copyists and owners of MSS.

श्चितमस्तु सर्वजगतः परिचतिनरता भवन्तु भूतगणाः । दोषाः प्रयान्तु नाग्नं सर्वेत्र सुखीभवतु लोकः॥

> (Praśastisamgraha, I, No. 15 (dated 1221 V.S.), 23 (1299 V.S.), 154 (1326 V.S.).)

मङ्गलं लेखकानां च पाठकानां च मङ्गलम् । मङ्गलं सर्वलोकानां भूमिभूपतिमङ्गलम् ॥

Variant:--- मङ्गलं सर्वजन्तृनां मङ्गलं सर्वेमङ्गलम्। 💆

(Praśastisamgraka, II, No. 1118, 1137, 1228, 1255, Lakshman Svarup's Introduction to Nighantu, p. 37.)

श्रीरस्त सर्वजगतां श्रीरस्त लेखने मृथि। श्रीरस्त लिखितं यस्य तस्य क्षणाप्रसादतः॥

(Sāhitya Pariṣat Patrikā, 34, 162-3.)

The great importance attached to MSS., particularly the sanctity associated with them, had one baneful effect in adversely affecting the critical spirit of the people. The people at large would blindly accept as infallible whatever was found in MSS. They would be reluctant to question their

veracity and instances are not lacking where inaccurate readings, evidently due to copyist's error, have been accepted resulting in curiously wrong interpretations. An ā of akṣārālavaṇāṣinaḥ-syuh in a sūtra of the Āśva-lāyanagrhyasūtra (IV. 5. 2) was somehow missed in the text of the Śuddhitattva of Raghunandana and commentators had not the least hesitation in accepting akṣāralavaṇa as the correct reading and endowing it with a special sense. It is indeed a relief in these circumstances to meet with cases where copyist's errors are recognized and propriety of readings found in MSS. discussed on strictly logical grounds. Instances are met with in different works though they have not as yet been collected and properly studied. Prof. P. K. Gode referred to a number of them from the works of Hemādri and Ānandatīrtha¹. I have come upon a good number in a Smṛti work of Govindānanda of Bengal (15th century) which I propose to deal with in a separate paper.



<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Textual criticism in the Thirteenth Century, A. C. Woolner Commemoration Volume, pp. 106-08.