



The Importance of Descriptive Catalogue of Manuscripts and It's Methods of Preparation in Indian Knowledge System

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DOI : <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.15861938>

ARTICLE DETAILS

Research Paper

Accepted: 27-06-2025

Published: 10-07-2025

Keywords:

Descriptive Catalogue (DC), Manuscripts (mss), Manuscript (ms)

ABSTRACT

The present paper deals with the preparation of descriptive catalogue (DC) of manuscripts (mss) as it is a challenge now for the new scholars to prepare the DC. In 21st century it is burning subject for the mss readers. In manuscriptology preparation of DC is a technical subject as it is also important to read the DC and get the right information about the mss before study or edition work. There are various types of catalogue and DC is found from different mss repositories and institutions. So there is a need of uniform DC to prepare the total information in one DC for which this paper adopted a uniform format as prepared by the experts in latest

Introduction:

From the time immemorial, the Indian tradition flows through *śruti parampara*. In later period, the tradition of writing starts is known as *lekha paramparā*. In Indian tradition, ŚriGaṇeśaji is the first scribe. In this context, Manuscripts are the cultural repositories of our past civilization. Our ancient knowledge on sociology, science and techniques are found from the manuscripts (mss). The mss are divided in to three major parts, i.e. a) Literature, b) Science and c) Technology etc. The Literature mss are divided in to four major parts. These are like 1) Vedic literature (*Samhitā Brāhmaṇa, Āraṇyaka, Upaniṣada, Ṣaṭ Vedāṅgas* and *Dharmaśāstras*, e.g., *Manusmṛti, Yājñavalkya smṛti, Vaśiṣṭha smṛti* etc.), 2) Epics (*Rāmāyaṇa* and *Mahābhārata*), *Purāṇas* (the eighteen major *purāṇas*, eighteen *upapurāṇas* etc), 3) Classical Literatures (*Kāvya, Nāṭakas*, Historical literatures etc.), 4) Philosophical literature (all the



six systems of Indian philosophy and three systems of *nāstika* philosophy etc.). The Science mss are also divided into three major parts, i.e. *Āyurveda* (*manuṣyāyurveda*, *paśvāyurveda*, *vrkṣāyurveda* etc.), Mathematics (Vedic and *Jyotiṣa* etc.), Chemistry (*rasaśāstra*) etc.. The Technological mss are like, *Arthaśāstra* (mining chapters), Building technology (town planning, house building for both royal and common, temple building, art and architecture of buildings, form building technology of temple deities etc.) In this way, from different aspects of knowledge we have a largest repository of mss in our country.

When the system of modern catalogue starts in India?

Basically, the mss are found in both government and non-government institutions, i.e. Museums, Research centres, Colleges, Universities, Public libraries etc. in different parts of India. Except these, we can find the mss in different ancient *Maṭhas*, NGOs, and Individual custodies. Hence, in eighteenth century the study of mss starts a new epoch in India by the British Scholars. They discovered our cultural heritage from the dark to light. Sir William Jones, Jhon Beams, F. Maxmullar etc. were dedicated their life for the study of the mss. In this context, the roll of Asiatic Society is remarkable as per one for mss studies. They have collected mss from the individuals and classified them subject wise. From that period, the system of Cataloguing begins in India. The technique of cataloguing is now an important subject of research in manuscriptology.

The Importance of Catalogue:

The systematic arrangement of books of a library or a manuscript repository is known as cataloguing. According to K V Sharma, “catalogues are primarily list of a class of materials arranged in some convenient manner in order to enable any required item to be located and picked out easily for use.” It is also the primary stage of research in mss studies. Actually, the catalogue is an entrance for the manuscript researcher to enter in to the mss. The catalogue of mss is different from book catalogue. Books are arranged alphabetically according to their names or authors name. However, in the mss, it is not possible to arrange like books. Each one is different from another. This is a basic difference between books and mss catalogue.

In addition, a book contains the information of all important points, i.e. About the author, publication place, date, time of author, about the book, contents including size, shape, typography, illustration, indices, errors, wrong paging etc. which are same for all the copies of particular edition. However, in the case of ms, each one would have to be produced individually from physical status to



subject matter. Even though, one text contains two mss are found different in all respect. Each ms has its own physical characteristics, size and shape, line and letter differences. That is why any ms considered, as a separate identity itself, so has to be described or catalogued separately.

The scribes of the mss are found different personalities. Each scribe will have his own peculiarity in writing. For example, some scribes wrote the texts directly and some of them were prepared the pictures as per the descriptions of the text. Suppose one of the Oḍiā ms *Vṛndāvanakeḷi*, a mediaval *Vaiṣṇava* literature based on *bhāgavat rāsa-līlā*, copied by the one of the scribe. But another ms of that same text is copied with pictures by another scribe as per the description of the text. In the other hand, if one of the scribe mentioned the place and date of the author or the custodians of the ms in his colophon. By this way an editor can collect the information about the author. But may not available in another ms of the same text.

Types of Catalogue used for cataloguing the mss:

There are various types of catalogues used by the scholars. Generally, we are using **Card Index** for minimum knowledge of the mss. For a standard Card index, the minimum twelve following points are required, given below –

- | | |
|---------------------------------|--|
| 1. Title of the ms | 7. Substance of the ms |
| 2. Name of the Author | 8. Status of the ms (Complete/Incomplete) |
| 3. Date of the collection of ms | 9. Language of the ms (Original text and commentary/translation) |
| 4. Commentator/ Translator | 10. Script of the ms |
| 5. Name of the Commentary | 11. No. of folios/Pages |
| 6. General condition of the ms | 12. Subject of the ms |

The second type of catalogue is known as **Accession Register**. The master record of every bibliographic item in the library is called an accession register. We can use it as Alphabetical Register and list of the mss by title, author or subject. The preparation of this catalogue, minimum twenty following points are required, such as –

- | | |
|--------------------|---------------------------------------|
| 1. Title of the ms | 11. Size of the ms (length and width) |
|--------------------|---------------------------------------|



- | | |
|--|--|
| 2. Author of the ms | 12. Substance of the ms |
| 3. Commentary/ Translation | 13. Status of the ms (Complete/Incomplete) |
| 4. Commentator/ Translator | 14. Illustrations of the ms (Pictures, Diagrams etc.) |
| 5. Language of Commentary/ Translation | 15. Missing folios/Pages |
| 6. Script of the ms | 16. Condition of the ms (Good/damage/ worm eaten etc.) |
| 7. Date of the ms | 17. Subject of the ms |
| 8. Scribe of the ms | 18. Name of the Institution with address |
| 9. Bundle No./Ms No. | 19. Call No |
| 10. No. of folios/Pages | 20. Class No |

Thirdly, we are using Triennial Catalogue that is one type of changeable report collected once every three years. For example, we can find the Government Oriental Manuscript Library Centre, Chennai.

For the best understanding about ms, the **Descriptive Catalogue (DC)** is essential for the manuscript researcher. Before discussing the techniques of preparation of the *DC* we must know why it is essential for the scholars and who are the user of the *DC*. There are three types of scholars are using the *DC*, *i.e.* i. Editors of the texts, ii. Historians of literature and iii. Scholars of Culture. These three categories of people are using the *DC* according to their requirements. It means the *DC* must be contains all the information about the ms, by which a reader can easily enter in to the ms.

The most user of the *DC is* academic scholars engaged in critical editions of mss. For them *DC* is the primary source of knowledge. After gone through the *DC*, the editor will be able to know the physical condition of the ms, the information about the author, the place and date of the author, the different commentaries, language, script etc.

Like this, the Historians of literature would be interested more in the text than in the physical status. The author of the text, his time, place etc are the subject of research for the historians. That is why *DC* is an important source for them.



The Cultural scholars always trying to capture the knowledge of manuscripts than the text. The method of making the mss, the material used therefore, the form of writing, the colour used for pictures and diagrams, the cover page of the mss etc. are subject of research for the cultural viewer.

How to prepare a *DC*:

The above discussions can establish the significance of *DC*, in the field of the study of manuscriptology. It is one of the prominent and primary techniques to study the mss. For the preparation of the *DC* of mss, there are various methods adopted by different institutions. Gradually the method became more scientific and technical in nature. However, the present paper has tries to prepare a standard format of *DC* for mss by which a scholar of mss can easily understand the nature and scope of mss. It is needless to say that the *DC* is the mirror of the concern ms. That is why when a scholar going to prepare a *DC* he must be the first reader of the mss. For a standard *DC*, there are six major parts contains fifty-three points about one ms. Various information about the ms will be recorded in the *DC*.

The cataloguer must write the information in Roman script with diacritical marks, along with the original script like Devanāgarī, including regional languages. If the ms is in Sanskrit language, it should be written in *prātipadika* form (*mūla*) or without *vibhakti* in the standard catalogue format for greater comprehension i.e. ‘*Gītagovinda*’ not ‘*Gītagovindaḥ*’ or ‘*Gītagovindam*’ or ‘*Gītagovindamu*’ or ‘*Gītagovind*’ etc. If any type of variation comes in regional or national languages, the cataloguer mention it in the remarks. The regional variations of pronunciation and writing letters such as *ba* → *va*, *Śa* → *Sa*, *ta* → *tha*, *ya* → *ja*, *kṣa* → *kha*, *la* → *ḷa* etc. should be avoided. The National Mission for Manuscripts has standardized the cataloguing format of fields and subjects, diacritical marks in Roman, Arabic/ Persian scripts. However, for the preparation of a *DC*, these following points are given below –

A. Introductory:

1. Sl. No.,
2. State code,
3. Institution/Individual with address,
4. Accession No.,
- Bundle No,
5. Source of Collection,
7. Date of collection.

B. Technical:

1. Title of the Text
2. Other title (if any)
8. Commentary/ Translation (if any)
9. Language of the Commentary/ Translation



- | | |
|-----------------------------|--|
| 3. Name of the Author | 10. Name of the Commentator/ Translator |
| 4. Author`s date | 11. Name of the reviser (if any) |
| 5. Subject matter of the ms | 12. Date of Commentator/ Translator/ Reviser |
| 6. Language of the text | 13. Name of the Scribe |
| 7. Script of the ms | 14. Scribe`s place and date |

C. Textual:

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1. Beginning lines of Scribe | 6. Ending lines of Scribe |
| 2. Beginning lines of Author | 7. Colophon |
| 3. Beginning lines of Commentator/
Translator | 8. Chapterization/ Section |
| 4. Ending lines of Author | 9. Complete/ Incomplete |
| 5. Ending lines of Commentator/
Translator | 10. Remarks
(Observation of the scholar on manuscript) |

D. Physical:

1. Material (Palm leaf/ Birch bark/ Paper/ Bamboo/ Others any)
2. Size in centimeter (Indian) (Length & Width)
3. No. of folios/ pages
4. Lines per page
5. Letters per line
6. Any diagram/ pictures/ others if any
7. Missing folios
8. Condition (Good/ Worm eaten/ Damage/ Partly damaged)



(The scholar must be mention the actual condition in details)

E. Catalogue:

- | | |
|-----------------------------------|--|
| 1. Title of the Catalogue | 5. Code/ MS. No. |
| 2. Editor/ Publisher (in details) | 6. Any other information like transliteration into |
| 3. Year of publication | Regional/ Devanāgarī etc. |
| 4. Volume/ Part | 7. If so Register/ Book and Sl. No./ Code No. |

F. Publication status:

- | | |
|--|-------------------------|
| 1. Already published (in language) | 5. Publisher |
| 2. Presently available or out of print | 6. Year of Publication |
| 3. Editor | 7. Place of Publication |
| 4. Translation/ Translator | |

The above points may be able to prepare an up to date *DC* of ms, this is the observation of the author. Hence, the above points will be discussing in brief. Before coming to the ms, in the **introductory** part, the scholar first mentions the date of cataloguing. How many mss are catalogued must be recorded with serial number, i.e. 1, 2, 3 ... etc. The name of the state or the code if any will be mention with the detail postal address with e-mail and contact no. If that is an institution, there may be used the accession number, that has to be mention along with the bundle number. Because, sometimes we find in one bundle there are two and more mss are keeping together. Weather that ms is the personal property of the individual/ Institution owner or where it collected, that address has been include with the date of collection of the ms.

The second part is deals with the **technical** study of the ms. In this part the scholar first mention the title of the text. The title of the text is mentioned in the register or catalogue of the institution. But in the case of individual repository, the scholar may find the name from the beginning of the ms, the left corner of the first folio, after the salutation of the scribe, at the end of the chapter, from the colophon etc. If the ms is incomplete the scholar may find from the end of the chapter or from the colophon. Otherwise, he may collects some ślokas from the ms and consult with the experts of concerned person for clarity.



Most of the cases, one text contains different names, e.g. Nidāna grantha has another name Mādhava nidāna, Rāvaṇa vadha text known as Bhaṭṭi kāvya, Śiśupāla vadham known as Māgha kāvyam, Cikitsārṇava known as Viswanātha cikitsā etc. That title also mention by the scholar in the *DC*. The name of the Author is mentioned in the beginning of the ms, on the left corner of the first page, in the end of the chapter or in the beginning of the commentary or translation, in the colophon etc. Sometimes the other title also denotes the author's name. The time of the author will be mention in the register or catalogue of the institution, from the history of the concern literature, or by the consultancy with the experts of concerned subject he collected. The subject matter of the ms must be mention by the scholar. The language of the original text and the script used for writing must be mention in the *DC*. For instance, the text *Paryāya Mukṭāvali*, a lexicon of Ayurvedic science written in Sanskrit language, but script used Oḍiā. That should be clarify by the scholar in his data sheet. Again if there is any commentary available in the ms, must be distinguish by the scholar. Suppose the ms *Mādhavakara Nidāna* written by Mādhava Kara. On that text the famous commentary *Madhukoṣa* was written by one of the scholar, this type of ms will clarify by the scholar carefully. The person is responsible for interpreting the intellectual content of a text; Author of the commentary, also known as *ṭikākāra*, *ṭikākarttā*, *bhāṣyakarttā*, *vṛttikāra* etc. In addition, the language of the commentary must be mention clearly. If there is a translation of the text (may be in same language or in regional language), the cataloguer has to classify whether that is a translation or commentary and who is the translator, his time and place etc. will be mention in the record sheet. If the information is not available, tries to collect the information. Otherwise, mention that the information is not available. If that is a famous work, must be undergoing the catalogue of publication or contact with the experts of that field. In past, the royal mss were revised by the scholars after the preparation by the scribe. If there were any mistake, the reviser was correcting the portion and sometimes mentioned his name and place. If the ms contain this type of information, must be recorded by the scholar. Again, the important point is to discover the name of the scribe from the ms and mention in the *DC*. The name of the scribe will be found from the colophon. For example, ***Bāluṅkeśvara Sāhu***, *jāti teli, grāma ragaḍi ṅka dvārā pothi lekhāgalā, ehā bharata mohāpātraṅkara*. In other manuscripts, *sana 1316 sāla tulāmāsa di 22 na budhavāra beḷa uṭhāṅī samayare e guruśāstra sāmṗūrṇa hoilā. badhi grāmare lekha śrī fakira caraṇa dāsa mou - khuṅṭā barajudāsāṅka putra e postaka*. From the above two examples we can find the name of the scribe and the owner of the ms. In addition to the second example, the time and place of the scribe is available for the cataloguer to include in his *DC*. If the information is not available in the ms, the register or catalogue must be check by the scholar. These are the technical



information about the manuscript by which a scholar can easily understand the address of the mss from the *DC*.

The third part is deals with the **textual** information of the ms. This is the main part of the *DC*, by which a scholar can comprehend the nature and scope of the ms. Each ms must begins with the scribe`s line. Before beginning of the text, the scribe writes a *maṅgalācaraṇa* for the sweet ending of the ms. This line has to be mention by the cataloguer with original version. Sometimes due to the ignorance or any other reason, the scribe wrote the wrong pronounciation. For example, *śrī gaṇasāe namaḥ* (original scribe`s line) → *śrī gaṇeśāya namaḥ* (correct version), *śri acyutānanda govinde nāmuccāraṇa bhiṣajā //*

biśvasi sakala roga satya satyamudāmiti // (original version of scribe)

The original version is, *acyutānanda-govinda-nāmoccāraṇa bheṣajam /*

naśyanti sakalā rogāḥ satyam satyam vadāmi te //

However, the cataloguer has to mention the original version of the scribe, by which a scholar can able to know the nature of the ms. In the remarks point the observer can mention the correct version. After that the beginning lines of the author has to be mention. Sometimes the author himself written the ms, at that time he was the scribe and author himself. But most of the mss are written or copied by the scribe, at that time the author`s line is very important for the *DC* reader. For example, one of the ms called *Vaidyakaḷpataru* is a famous *Āyurveda* ms kept in Odisha State Museum. Here the Author is Kapileśvara Miśra wrote his text with this lines,

praṇamāmi surajyeṣṭham sarvalokam pitāmaham/

dhanvantarī divodāsam suśrutam ca mahīpatim //

āyurvedavidāsamyak matāndhalokya yatnataḥ

karomyabhīṣṭa phaladam vaidyakalpataru śubham //

From the above lines, the cataloguer can collect the name of the text and author of the text for his information. Sometimes there are various commentaries are found on the original text. The different names for a commentary are, *ṭikā*, *ṭippanī*, *ṭippanīkā*, *avachuri*, *bhāṣya*, *vṛtti*, *bhāṣā ṭikā* etc. At that time, the beginning lines of the commentary must be mention, by which the reader-scholar will able to know



the importance of the commentary and will keep interest for editing if it is not published. If there is any translation found of that text, the beginning lines of translation must be write in the *DC*.

Like the beginning lines, the ending lines of the author, commentator, translator and scribe will be mention in the *DC*. Because, the complete or incompleteness of the ms will be known from these lines. In addition, some other informations like, the date and place of author, commentator, translator and scribe will be captured by same. For example, *iti kapileśvara vaidyaśekhara kṛta vaidyakalpataru swapnanidarśano nāma unaviṃśa stavaka*. This is the ending line of the author. From the above line, one can get the information of the chapters. Means total nineteen chapters are in that ms and chapters are known as *stavaka*. That has to be mention in the Chapterization point by the *DC* maker. The most important point of the *DC* is the colophon of the ms. Colophon is the key of the ms editing. For instance, we may take the same ms *Vaidya-kalpataru, lekhanakāra śrī baluṅkeśvara sāhoo, jāti teli, bhāyā ragāḍi, sana 1342 sāla, kanyā diḅna, śukravāra grantha samāpta / e grantha bharata mohāpātraṅkara, grāma ragāḍi, bāṅkī, jille kaṭaka. e pothi je cori kari neva tāra sāta puruṣa ahinarkare paḍiva. lekhanakāra doṣa na dhariba, śuddha aśuddha purāi gāiva*. This very line is indication the completeness of the ms along with the ownership on the ms. The archaic of the ms will be know from the colophon. By the way, the cataloguer will furnish the Chapterization with the sub chapters if available. If the content will found from beginning of the ms, the chapters and subchapter will be identify very easily, otherwise he must gone through the ms, search every page for collecting the data. In the remarks point, the own observation of the cataloguer on that particular ms will be write clearly and truly. Any type of doubts, suggestions he may arise in that point. Any peculiarities or importance of that ms should be mention for the research scholar.

The fourth part of the *DC* is **Physical** study of the ms. The cataloguer furnish the material of that ms, either it is palm leaf, birch bark, paper (handmade or other made), bamboo leaf or any other. Sometimes we can find ivory mss, copper mss, iron mss or brass etc. That has to be mention in the *DC*. The length and width of the ms is very important one. Because in one repository there are various mss are available relating to the same subject. For the variant readings of the subject, the information of size of that ms is very essential. The estimate of size must be in centimeters by Indian scale. Numbers of folio in the ms, numbers of page in the ms will be count properly by the *DC* maker. Because, the pages may be vary from the folios. The scribe may be leave one folio or page without writing. At that case, we must give the details about the writing folios and pages. The lines per page and letter per line will be count, by which the future editor will estimate the time for the edition or transliteration. If any pictures or diagrams



found in the ms must have to furnish in the remark as well as count the pages and mention in the column. Because in the astrological mss we can able to see the diagrams, in the veterinary mss we can see the pictures of animals like cows, horses, bullocks and elephants etc. In the literature mss the description of the subject matter in picture form are available in the mss. That is why the information of these section is very important for *DC*. If any folio not found in the ms, that has to be informed in the *DC*. The condition of the ms is an important cause for future study. Therefore, the cataloguer clearly mentions the condition, either it is worm eaten, damaged or partly damaged.

The fifth part of the *DC* is the **Catalogue** status of the ms. Sometimes the institutions were published their information catalogue for the handling of that mss repository. That may be published or unpublished but a cataloguer can get much information from that source. Due to this, we must include the source of information. That old catalogue is the container of primary conditions of that mss. If the catalogue is published, then the title of the catalogue, the editor, publisher, year of publication, volume/part (if the institution is a huge repository of mss, then the catalogues prepared subject wise), code used for the ms, sl. no. of that ms along with other information found must be mention in that part. Either the ms is transliterated in to regional or Devanāgarī language must be furnish with the book no. and code no.

The last part of the *DC* is known as **Publication** status of the ms. if the ms is published or not, if published either it is critically edited or only copied from the ms form to printed form or translated etc. to be mentioned in this part. Sometimes one text published from different publication division that has to be mentioned in details by the cataloguer. The availability of the book is more important for the critical study of the manuscript.

In the conclusion, we can say that *DC* is a gateway to the study of manuscriptology. It is needless to say that the technique of preparation a scientific *DC* is more important like the critical study of the mss. In our country there are various types of *DCs* are found for study. The present paper has tries to prepare an uniformity for all the mss repositories by which all the scholars of universe will benefit for manuscript study.

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