
Manuscripts Mission Workshop



(L-R) Mr. Lakhon Pal, Dr. B.B. Choubey, Prof. N.R. Shetty and Dr. Sampat Narayanan

IGNCA, hosted a one-day conference in connection with the National Manuscripts Mission (NMM) to discuss various issues relating to the progress of the task of the Mission. The workshop was attended by manuscriptologists, scholars from libraries, subject scholars and technical experts from all over the country.

Prof.N.R.Shetty, Member Secretary IGNCA, initiated discussions by giving details of the work done by IGNCA in the area of microfilming manuscripts during the past 12 years. He emphasized on the need to adopt the latest available technology of digitization. He also said young scholars should be trained to read manuscripts, especially rare scripts like Grantha, Modi, Sharada etc. Prof. Shetty also urged scholars to devise methods for imparting training in the preparation of Descriptive Catalogues, which would facilitate the process of publication of manuscripts.

Manuscripts are cultural source materials. Therefore, Prof. Shetty said they must be treated on par with archaeological monuments. He advocated the creation of a National Register of Manuscripts as part of the National Manuscripts Mission.

Prof. B.B. Choubey, Former Director, VVBIS & IS, Punjab University, shared his experience in identifying, editing and publishing manuscripts. Prof. K.E. Govindan, Dean, Faculty of Darsanas, Rashtriya Sanskrit Vidyapeeth, Tirupati said each manuscript had its own peculiarities. They must be procured without going into the merits and demerits of each of them, he said.

Dr.K.D. Sharma, from the Central Council for Research in Ayurveda & Siddha underscored the need to give priority to rare and unique manuscripts in preservation and publication. In the Council, a scientific advisory committee plays a vital role in deciding these matters, he said. Mr Lakhon Pal, Director, Department of Culture wanted the task of preparing the National Register of Manuscripts to be taken up immediately as a time-bound programme. He said this register should be prepared within eight months of the next financial year. He said there was need to keep manuscripts in the microform. A sub-committee of Prof. B.B. Choubey, Prof. Dharmadhikari and Dr. Radhey Shyam Shastri was set up to suggest improvements in the format of the microform prepared by the National Archives and IGNCA.

While Dr. Promod Mehra, Asst. Director, National Archives of India advised caution in the purchase of manuscripts, Dr. Shastri from Bhogilal Leherchand Research Institute said manuscripts in foreign custody and private hands also must be procured. Mr. Sanjay Goel, IGNCA made a presentation about the advantages of adopting Digital technology in manuscript preservation and research. At the conclusion a set of recommendations were drawn to be

forwarded to the Ministry of Culture. They include (i) taking up the task of compilation of the directory (register) of manuscripts immediately, (ii) field investigators to be identified for the purpose and given training in filling up the questionnaire to be finalized by the sub-committee, (iii) data collected to be computerized at the source, wherever possible and (iv) scholars to work on the project to be identified by the nodal agencies already appointed.