

Role of Printing technology in unearthing the literature gone into oblivion



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Abstract

In India, the word of wisdom, shastra as well music has gone down to generations through the oral tradition. Then handwritten documents came into existence and these manuscripts also form the basis for the knowledge transfer to next generations. However, the oral tradition and the manuscripts have limitations of their own like distorted information and since very few copies of the manuscripts, there was a high possibility that they would disappear with the passage of time. The invention of printing technology is a boon to mankind in overcoming all these difficulties. Then a question comes up as to whether printing technology has any role in unearthing the literature of dance and music gone into oblivion. The research on this is necessary to underline the importance of transferring more and more manuscripts and the oral instructions in print format as well searching old, printed material to unearth the excellent literature which would enrich the classical dancers in theory and performance. The hypothesis is that printing technology has a very important role in achieving this objective. The research methodology is a case study with special focus on Pandit Lalanpiya's books and related material as well as the Sangeet Darpan published recently. The interview of Dr. Vidya Prakash Dikshit, Dr. Sunil Sunkara, study of books on Lalanpiya and his work is undertaken. The research led to the conclusion that printing technology has an immense role in unearthing the literature of Dance and Music, gone into oblivion. The introductory section of this paper encompasses a comprehensive introduction to the chosen topic, an identification of the existing research gap or problem within the field, a clear outline of the study's objectives, the formulation of hypotheses underpinning the research, and a discussion of the study's relevance in the broader context. Subsequently, the research methodology employed in this study is elaborated upon. Following this, the findings are presented and analysed, culminating in a well-structured conclusion. Additionally, a list of references is provided to acknowledge the sources used in this research.

Key Words :

Research Paper

Introduction

Sources of transfer of Knowledge are oral tradition; Murals, Cave carvings and paintings; manuscripts, printing, and digitised contents on Net.

Oral tradition—Ancient Indians, the Rishis, Sages developed special technique to recite, memorise and pass on the knowledge through Oral tradition. The Vedas, Upanishads, the Shruti, Smruti were passed to further generations through this Oral tradition. The importance of the tradition is underlined by many scholars in their work. The vedic texts were orally composed and transmitted, without the use of script, in an unbroken

line of transmission from teacher to student that was formalised early on. This ensured an impeccable textual transmission superior to classical texts of other culture; it is in fact, something like tape recording (Witzel, 68).

Murals, cave carvings, victory columns, temples, and inscriptions—They primarily served as mediums for preserving details of victories or the history of dynasties. But they were predominantly utilized for recording concise amounts of information and were seldom employed as a means of transmitting knowledge.

The Manuscripts—We find many manuscripts in India from time to time. Some are well preserved and some are junked. Numerous scholars, as well as their disciples,

dedicated themselves to producing commentaries and Samhitas, ensuring the continuity of India's rich storehouse of knowledge for subsequent generations.

Limitations of these sources

The oral tradition, despite being rooted in highly systematic approaches, can still be susceptible to the distortion of information over time, primarily due to its reliance on the capacity and memory of individuals. Additionally, interruptions in the transmission chain can occur, potentially leading to the loss of valuable knowledge.

The nature of murals, carvings, and inscriptions, among other forms of historical artifacts, limited their ability to convey extensive volumes of texts encompassing various fields such as sciences or philosophies.

Manuscripts composed on Bhurjapatra had a relatively short lifespan due to their delicate nature. Because these texts were handwritten, there were constraints on producing numerous copies. With limited quantities available, the risk of losing or deteriorating the manuscripts was always present, potentially leading to their damage or loss.

Invention of Printing Technology—This invention is the boon to mankind related to the knowledge preservation and transmission to further generation as it overcomes all the difficulties faced by all other above forms.

The print revolution started with the invention of the Gutenberg press invented by Johannes Gutenberg in England in the 1430s.

The print revolution generated a diverse array of printed materials in substantial quantities, making them more cost-effective and readily available to a broader audience. This played a crucial role in the dissemination of education and literacy, ultimately reaching a larger segment of the population and facilitating the transfer of knowledge to those in need.

Impact of Print Revolution in India

The advent of the print revolution left a profound mark on India, commencing in the 16th century in Goa and subsequently spreading to encompass every state and eventually reaching every major city in the country. Over the course of more than 500 years, this journey of the print revolution has exerted a significant influence on the lives of both past and contemporary citizens, leaving an indelible impact on various facets of society. This impact extends to religious, cultural, educational, musical, and vernacular press domains.

The print revolution played a crucial role in independence movement and promoting social reform movements and the same was well acclaimed. However not much is written about its role in maintaining and preserving the treaties or tikagranth related to musical industry or seldom is found about the literature gone into oblivion.

Research question

Whether printing technology have any role in literature of Dance and Music gone into oblivion.

Objective of the study

The research on this is necessary to underline the importance of transferring more and more manuscripts and the oral instructions in print format as well searching old, printed material to unearth the excellent literature.

Hypothesis

Printing technology plays a very important role in achieving this objective.

Relevance of study

If this archaic, medieval information and books become available to large no. of inquisitive classical dancers and researchers, it would enrich them in theory and performance.

Research methodology

The case study places particular emphasis on the works of Pandit Lalanpiya, including his books and related materials, as well as the publications of "Nruttasangraha" and Gaurisvara's "Sangit Darpanah". Furthermore, insights from interviews conducted with Dr. Vidya Prakash Dikshit, The Saraswat family and Dr. Sunil Sunkara, along with pertinent books and articles, have been incorporated into the study's analysis. A special reference is given to a book gone into oblivion and could not be revived due to absence of printed version of the same.

Analysis

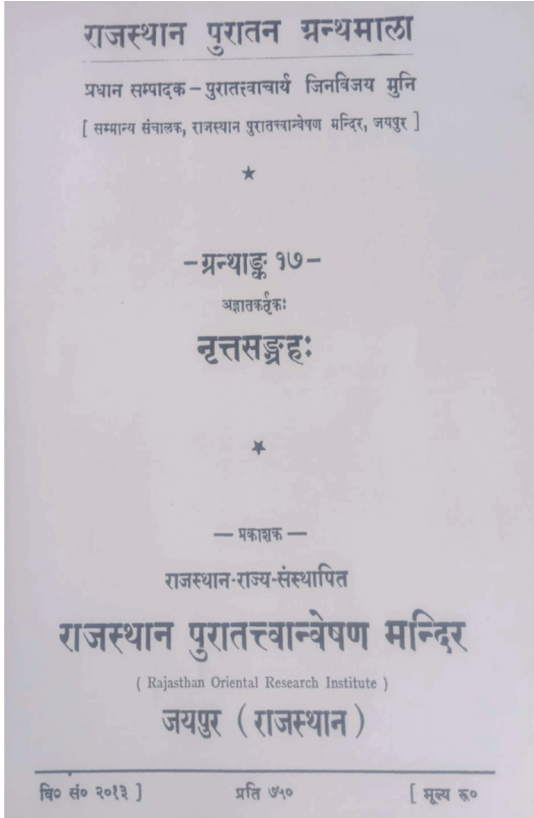
The analysis is conducted by assessing the significance of "Nruttasangraha" and "Sangeet Darpanah," which were previously unknown to the dance and music community. With the recent printing of these manuscripts, they have become accessible to both performers and researchers. The study aims to ascertain whether making these manuscripts available to a wider audience is beneficial or not.

The analysis is also done in respect of the books of Pandit Lalanpiya though printed but unavailable to the singers of Lalanpiya tradition for many years.



Nrittasangraha

A dilapidated and incomplete copy of 13 letters of this work is preserved in the collection of Gujarat Vidya Sabha, which has been available from a street vendor who sells waste paper - known as 'Gujri' - on the footpath of the market once a week in Ahmedabad. As informed by the editor Vidushi in her brief introduction - In this work, some important things related to dance and drama have been described, hence it has been considered appropriate to name it 'Nrittasangraha'.



In this small book, the form and types of some particularly popular dances have been described, which include the dance types of both the southern and northern regions of India. Main Dravid, Tailang and Karnat country popular folk of South-The dances, which are mainly performed with songs in the languages of those countries, have been described and the ones prevalent in Uttar Pradesh are mentioned in which songs in Sanskrit, Madhya Pradesh (modern Hindi) and Parsik i.e. Persian language are used. The form of a dance Jakkadi has also been described. The famous Dandaras has also been mentioned. In this way, in this short essay, the description of especially popular and famous types of dances in easy and simple Sanskrit will definitely prove to be entertaining and informative for the practitioners of the art (jinavijaya iv).

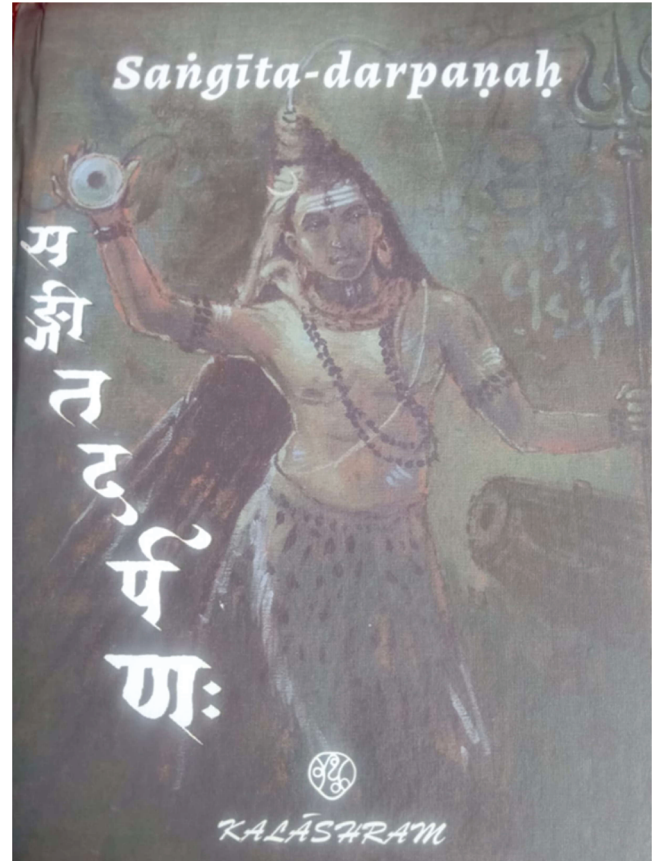
The printing of these 13 dilapidated pages unfolded the medieval dance style to new generation. Many of the verses show the structure of Kathak Tode, Paran, Aamad etc.

The importance is such that it has been included in the pre-course work of PhD in Centre of Advanced Research in Kathak at Sri Sri University, Cuttack.

Sangita-Darpanah

Dr. Sunil Sunkara in his audio message explained in brief the history of printing the Scribe/manuscript. He stated that the manuscript was made available to Pandit Birju Maharajji by his aunt, wife of late pandit Lachhu Maharaj ji. He further stated that original Sanskrit verses were translated in Hindi as well as English to facilitate the study of the same by musicians and dancers of all classical forms.

The lone Scribe/manuscript safeguarded for two centuries by Padma Vibhushan Pandit Birju Maharaj and his ancestors. "Thus, the current work, the Sangita-darpana attributed to Gaurisvara is codex unicus, i.e., so far as the current knowledge goes, there seem to be no other recensions (editions and scribal copies) of the manuscript available," (Bharadwaj xxvi). It consists of 200 folios with 172 verses.



The manuscript is a scribal copy and hence dating of original work is hard to fix. The scribal is dated at and around 1790CE.

The importance is for the entire musical fraternity i.e. singing, instrumental and dance as it covers description of Raga, Talas, Ganas, Swaramala, Vadya, Nritya and Nayika Bhed.

Very important is the description of Solah Anga based on Talas. Rather this alone crosses the barriers of all classical forms of dance.

By printing this handwritten Scribe/manuscript, an invaluable contribution has been made to the entire field of music. Given that the manuscript was the sole existing copy, it is quite alarming to contemplate the possibility that the dance community could have lost access to this valuable information if it had been misplaced or damaged.

The search of Pandit Lalanpiya books

Pandit Lalanpiya (1856-1926) was a highly esteemed poet, musician, musicologist, singer, and Kathakar. He is renowned as one of the foremost thumri writers in the Bol-bant tradition. His extensive body of work includes poetry across various genres such as thumari, khyal, Dadara, Tappa, hori, and Kajari, found in numerous books. Among these, "Lalansagar" stands out as his most significant publication, with its second edition released in 1927. This pivotal work comprises 1345 compositions, predominantly focusing on thumris.

In Farrukhabad, his birthplace and workplace, singers have carried on the tradition of singing his Bol-Bant Thumris which were received by them through oral tradition specially through shri Shyamsunder Gaud, the 3rd generation singer of Lalanpiya tradition.

Shri Omprakash Mishra 'Kanchan' in his book 'Panchal Gandharva Lalanpiya', explains that right from his childhood he was listening to Lalanpiya written thumris as well started learning the same (Atmakathya).

He was never able to find written thumris except that of few handwritten ones by his Guru Shri Shyamsunder Gaud. The linguistic richness and the conceptual thinking of Lalanpiya always created thrust in him to learn more of his thumris.

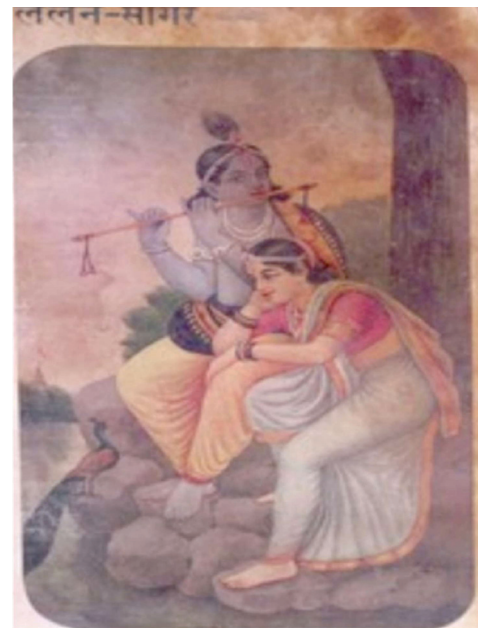
He found Lalanagar at a stall of book vendor who was selling old books and the search led to Naval Kishor Printing Press, Luckow- the printers of Pandit Lalanpiya books, where few more books were found.

Dr. Vidya Prakash Dikshit in his Interview explained that after the availability of book, the wordings in few

cases which were distorted could get corrected as well as singers could experiment with new and earlier not heard of thumris. (Dixit) The senior most singer of Lalanpiya tradition, Sushree Pushpalata Rastogi in her interview stated that the book Lalansagar provides wide range of compositions for Kathak dancers and it would enrich the performance of them. (Rastogi)

Rather after the search of these books, many are now loaded on in digital media.

As a Kathak dancer, I had the opportunity to pioneer the exploration of his thumris, incorporating unconventional talas and themes in a groundbreaking program titled 'Lalan Lalitya.' This unique performance took place at the Dwarakadhish temple in the Raigad district of Maharashtra, on the eve of the celebration of Dhanteras. This was the 1st dance performance in the known history except that of shri Baburam Kathak who was disciple of Pandit Bindadin Maharaj (Gupta, 56).



The importance of printing technology is underlined in this case that since many copies might have been printed in 1927, at least one could get traced after a gap of more than 50 years.



Had it been in Manuscript only, there would have been a very scarce chance of locating it.

Taladhyayi

A book 'Taladhyayi' referred by Pandit Lalanpiya in chapter 'Lalan Shiromanika' of his book 'Lalan Sagar' is written by Munindra Muni in 1101 AD in which 360 Talas were explained(30).

Lalanpiya ji stated that since the manuscript was infested by termites, he made the scribal and destroyed the original in his possession.

After the visit and interview on 7th February 2022 with his descendants Shri. Suresh and Shri. Bipin Saraswat and enquiring with the singers in Farrukhabad, it was learnt that the manuscript by Lalanpiya is not traceable. (Saraswat)

Lalanpiyajji had written compositions based on the Talas given in the Taladhyayi by Munindra Muni. The musicians interested in singing, researching, or performing dance on these compositions desperately need the original book from which the base of Tals was taken.

In the absence of the book and since no Thekas of Tals were given by Lalanpiya which were originally taken from Taladhyayi, new Thekas of these Tals need to be created. It is also not known whether any further guidance or elaboration was available in the book 'Taladhyayi'.

Had it been PRINTED with more copies, the same would have been available today.

Conclusion

The research led to the conclusion that printing technology has an immense role in unearthing the literature of Dance and Music, gone into oblivion.

A dilapidated and incomplete copy of 13 letters of Nruttasangraha is now printed and is now part of course

material for research scholars in the university.

A single scribe of the manuscript of Sangeet Darpanah is now maintained and available to every musician and dancer only because the same is printed.

Few books of pandit Lalanpiya printed approx. 90 years before ranging from 1901 to 1927(2nd edition of Lalan Sagar) can get traced only because printed copies are always in large numbers.

In the absence of printing, few books are though known could not be traced at all.

Even in this modern era where digital media is prevalent, printed materials still hold significant value and continue to be preferred by many, highlighting the enduring importance of printing technology. It is the printed material which normally forms the base for loading information on digital media.

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