

MLIS/1/CT/02

Unit 2: PRESERVATION OF NON-PRINT MATERIALS



Manuscripts

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INTRODUCTION

Preservation and conservation of library heritage are very important as it could be related to social, economic, political, historical, law or religious and could be used for future purpose. Preservation and conservation of library heritage are vital so that other generations can take advantage of it. The knowledge was preserved in both oral and written form for the future generations. Manuscripts are the original sources of human history available on various kinds of media like stones, clay tablets, palm leaves, metal leaves, barks, animal skin, cloth, paper, etc. Manuscripts are life-blood of history.

- In India, writing was done on walls, foot steps and pillars of temples, stones, bricks, metal sheets, silk and cotton cloths, wooden boards, terracotta boards, bamboo chips, birch bark , leaves of palm tree, etc
- The word manuscript is derived from the Latin language ‘manu’ meaning ‘by hand’ and ‘scribere’ meaning ‘to write’
- any book or document written by hand is called manuscripts
- According to the indian government there are 3 types of manuscrits
 1. Palm leaves
 2. Brich bark
 3. Paper

Palm leaf

Before the advent of paper, palm leaves were mostly used for writing in South Asian countries, particularly, the whole of India.

A number of palm leaf manuscripts are available in various libraries in India. The leaves of palm trees were used as writing material because palm tree grew abundantly in India and South Asian countries. Palm leaves were the cheapest and the most easily available material for writing. More over, palm leaves have a reasonably long life and high durability, provided they are treated well and are maintained carefully.

► Processing of Palm leaves

Palm leaves need to be processed in special manner in order to make them fit for writing. Several processing methods prevailed in the country. At some places palm leaves were first dried, next boiled or soaked in water, again dried, and finally polished with stones or conch shells and cut to the proper size. In some parts of South India, fresh leaves were dried in the shade and then gingili oil was applied to make the surface smooth. In other areas of South India, the tender palm leaves were hung for several days in kitchen where smoke was emitted. Afterwards the leaves were cleaned and used for writing. In Orrisa after giving smoke treatment to palm leaves in the kitchen and cleaning them, turmeric paste was applied and later on were used for writing.



BIRCH BARK MANUSCRIPTS

- ▶ In India, before the advent of paper some times in the 10th century birch bark was used for writing purpose. The use of birch bark was continued till the Mughal period Birch bark is composed of several layers, each of which is very thin, almost like a tissue paper. It is normally a very light teak brown in color on one side and brownish white on the other.
- ▶ **Processing of Birch-Bark**

The birch is a moderate-sized, deciduous tree growing to a height of about 4600 m (14000ft.) in the Himalayas. The inner bark of the tree was used for writing. For removing the bark from the tree, two circular incisions were made quite through the bark several feet from each other. Two vertical incisions were then made on opposite sides of the tree after which a wooden wedge was introduced by which the bark was easily detached.¹³ The bark was dried after being peeled off from the tree. Oil was then applied over it and it was polished. Finally, it was cut to a suitable size and kept between two wooden covers for protection.



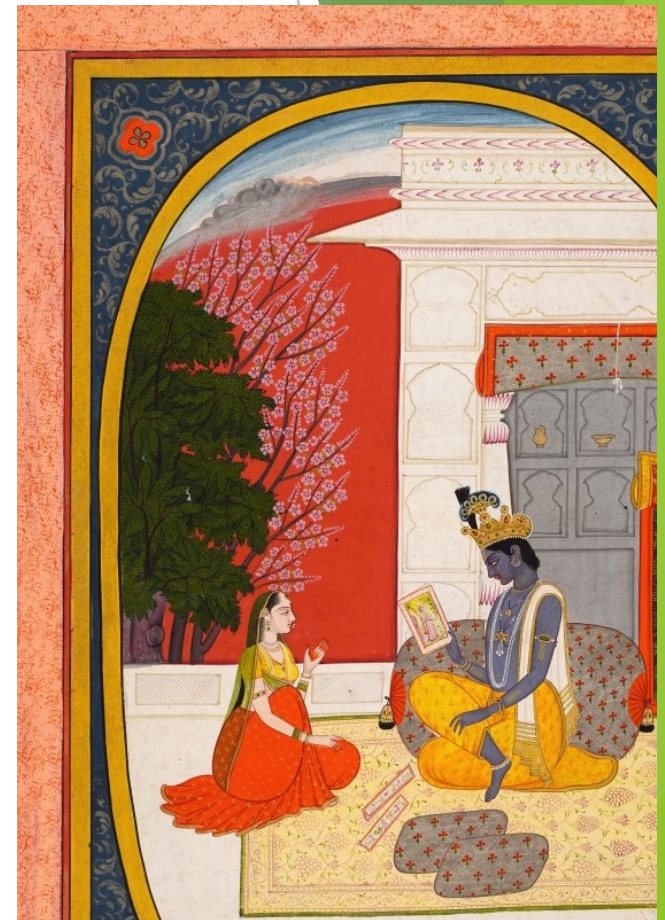
► PAPER MANUSCRIPTS

- It is difficult to point out the exact period when paper became known in India, but it is widely believed that it happened sometime in the 10th century or 11th century. Paper after its introduction in India soon became the most popular carrier for writing. The use of paper brought a great revolution in the art of writing. There were two techniques of paper making:

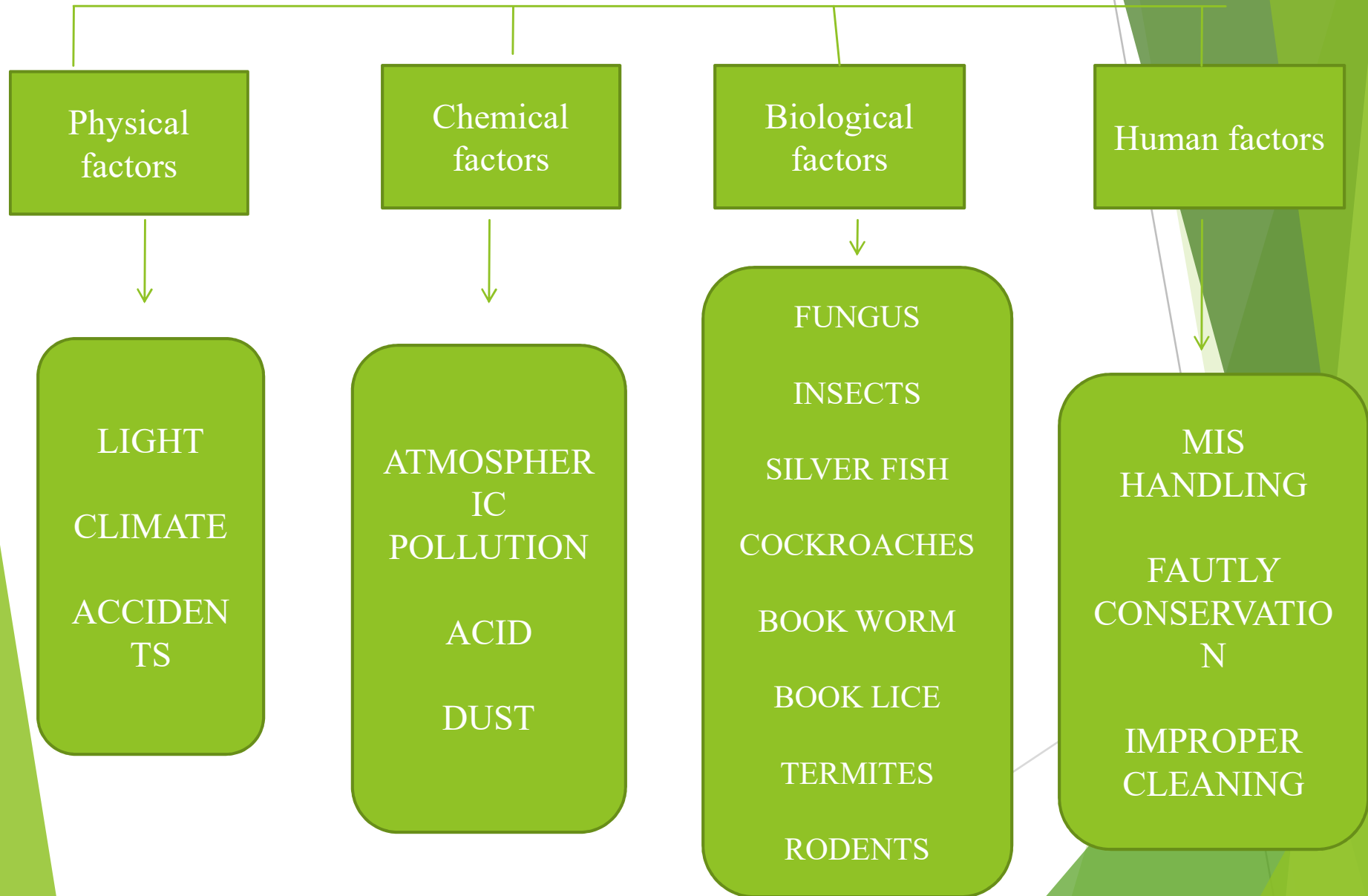
- Handmade process
- Machine made process

Paper Making Process

- The main material used for the paper making is cellulose. In early days, the important raw materials were cotton, mulberry, reeds and bamboo, flax, jute, etc. All the different materials were purified and made into pulp by chemical or mechanical means. After the pulp was ready it was thoroughly washed with fresh water. It was then suspended in water filled in small tank or tub and scooped out in the form of sheets with the help of moulds which were of several types like woven mould, laid mould, metal wire mould. After removal from the mould the sheets were allowed to dry.



DETERIORATION OF MANUSCRIPTS



CONCLUSION

- ▶ The art of preservation is as old as human civilization itself. Our forefathers had judiciously selected the basic materials for writing. Plants and their products have been recognized and used since ancient times as insect repellent and as preservatives to safeguard the manuscripts. We have been gradually shifting from our inherited natural methods to the world of synthetic chemicals by deploying more and more funds and infrastructure, etc. Now the world of document preservation is gradually becoming more and more technology oriented. Reformatting is of key importance when the original manuscripts are crumbling and turning to dust. Preservation through microfilming has the advantage of long life while digitization provides widespread access. Digitization and microfilming as a means of preservation of the manuscripts are discussed in the next chapter entitled Digitization of Manuscripts.

Reference:-

1. shodhganga.inflibnet.ac.in
2. Google (for image)