

CCRAS-NIIMH Signs MoU with Sevadhi Museum and Indological Research Institute for Digitization of Medical Manuscripts

MoU to Support Preservation and Documentation of Kerala's Medical Heritage

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In a significant step towards the preservation, documentation and wider accessibility of India's traditional medical knowledge heritage, the National Institute of Indian Medical Heritage (NIIMH), Hyderabad, under the Central Council for Research in Ayurvedic Sciences (CCRAS), Ministry of Ayush, Government of India, has entered into a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Sevadhi Museum & Indological Research Institute (SEMIRI), Kumaranalloor, Kottayam, Kerala, for the systematic digitization and preparation of a descriptive catalogue of its collection of medical manuscripts.

SEMIRI, run by the Kumaranalloor Ooranma Devaswom, has preserved a vast collection of more than 30,000 manuscripts, including temple records. The MoU marks an important collaborative initiative to safeguard valuable manuscript resources associated with the rich medical and intellectual traditions of Kerala.

The manuscript collection preserved by the institution contains rare and historically significant works relating to Ayurveda and allied areas of traditional knowledge. Many of these manuscripts constitute important sources for understanding the evolution of medical thought, therapeutic practices, materia medica, diagnostic concepts and scholarly traditions in the Indian knowledge system.

Under the collaborative framework, CCRAS-NIIMH will provide technical and scholarly expertise for the digitization of the manuscripts and preparation of their descriptive catalogue, covering hundreds of medical manuscripts. The digitization component will facilitate the creation of high-quality digital copies, thereby contributing to the long-term preservation of the manuscripts and reducing the need for repeated physical handling of fragile and historically valuable materials.

A key component of the initiative will be the preparation of a comprehensive descriptive catalogue. The catalogue will document essential bibliographic and manuscriptological information, including title, author, subject, script, language, material, physical dimensions, folio details, condition, provenance and other relevant characteristics, wherever available, as per the format of the Ayush Manuscripts Advanced Repository. Such systematic documentation will enhance the discoverability of the manuscripts and provide scholars and researchers with reliable information for identifying and accessing relevant primary sources for future research.

The initiative assumes particular significance in the context of the Gyan Bharatam Mission and the Government of India's broader efforts towards the preservation, digitization and dissemination of India's manuscript heritage. Medical manuscripts form an important component of this heritage, representing

centuries of accumulated knowledge transmitted through generations of scholars and practitioners.

The collaboration will also strengthen institutional cooperation in the fields of manuscriptology, textual studies, digital preservation and Ayurvedic literary research. The resulting digital resources and descriptive catalogues are expected to support researchers, academicians, historians of medicine and scholars engaged in the study of Ayurveda and Indian Knowledge Systems.

Speaking on the occasion, Prof. Vaidya Rabinarayan Acharya, Director General, CCRAS, stated that preservation of medical manuscripts is not merely an archival exercise but an essential component of safeguarding India's intellectual heritage. He emphasized that systematic digitization and scholarly documentation would help ensure that rare sources of traditional medical knowledge remain preserved and accessible for future generations, while facilitating evidence-based research and critical study of classical texts.

Dr. C.S. Unni, President, SEMIRI, stressed the importance of the collaboration in bringing out the vast heritage of Kerala, particularly that of the Kumaranalloor and Kottayam region. Dr. Goli Penchala Prasad, Head, CCRAS-NIIMH, spoke on the challenges and the way forward for manuscriptology, especially in the context of Ayurveda.

The event witnessed the participation of several prominent figures, including Dr. S. Rajendu, Curator, SEMIRI; Dr. Santosh S. Mane, Research Officer (Ayurveda); and Dr. Rakesh Narayanan, Research Officer (Ayurveda), CCRAS, New Delhi, along with other key officers representing the Kumaranalloor Ooranma Devaswom.

A specialized expert team from CCRAS-National Institute of Indian Medical Heritage (NIIMH), Hyderabad, operating under the framework of the Collection, Digitization and Cataloguing of AYUSH Manuscripts and Rare Books project of the Institute, has also initiated meticulous on-site digitization of the manuscripts.

The MoU reflects the commitment of CCRAS and the Ministry of Ayush towards strengthening the scientific documentation, preservation and dissemination of India's traditional medical knowledge, while promoting collaboration with institutions and manuscript repositories possessing valuable collections.

The collaboration is expected to contribute to the creation of a structured and accessible knowledge resource that will support future research, critical editions, scholarly publications and other initiatives aimed at bringing India's manuscript heritage into contemporary academic and research ecosystems.

The National Institute of Indian Medical Heritage (NIIMH), Hyderabad, is a specialized institute under CCRAS, Ministry of Ayush, Government of India, dedicated to research, documentation and preservation of the historical and literary heritage of Indian systems of medicine. Its activities include literary research, documentation of medical manuscripts, textual studies, digitization and development of resources for the study of India's medical heritage.

The Sevadhi Museum and Indological Research Institute, located in Kumaranalloor, Kottayam, is a heritage and research facility dedicated to preserving the cultural, social and administrative history of Central Travancore. It is owned and managed by the Kumaranalloor Ooranma Devaswom, the traditional governing body of the historic Kumaranalloor Devi Temple.







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