

A DESCRIPTIVE CATALOGUE OF THE HINDI MANUSCRIPTS IN THE LIBRARY OF THE WELLCOME INSTITUTE FOR THE HISTORY OF MEDICINE. By PETER FRIEDLANDER. pp. 606, illus. in col. and bl. & wh. London, The Wellcome Institute for the History of Medicine, 1996.

The publication of a descriptive catalogue of Hindi manuscripts is an important and rare event, the more so when the collection has the richness of the Wellcome Institute's holdings. The appearance of this handsome, A4-format catalogue is therefore something of a milestone in Hindi studies, not to say in Indology generally. The collection houses some 650 Hindi MSS, many of which contain more than one work, and the catalogue lists 830 titles, ranging in date from the early sixteenth to the twentieth centuries. While nearly a quarter of the texts reflect the Wellcome's specialisation in medicine (including veterinary medicine – there are some superbly illustrated equine works), the range of subject matter is wide and includes a particularly rich seam of Hindu and Jain literature, and of astrology. Dr Friedlander's concise and informative introduction traces the history of the collection and directs the reader's attention to some of its highlights: the eleven copies of the earliest Hindi medicinal work, Nainasukha's *Vaidya manotsava* (A.D. 1592), the eight copies of Rāmacanda's *Rāma-*vinoda** (1663), and “a fine illustrated copy of the *Rāma-carita-mānasa* by Tulasidāsa which may have been made for the king of Banaras” (p. 13); Jainologists are directed towards a copy of the *Samayasāra-nāṭaka* of Banārasidāsa, made only twelve years after its composition. The main section of the catalogue comprises chapters on medicine, veterinary medicine, astrology, Kāmasāstra, tantra, “Hindu literature”, “Jain literature”, literary works, miscellaneous, and “composite manuscripts”. In nearly all cases the description of a MS includes cited passages from the beginning and end of the text, including colophon where appropriate, the transcriptions being in finely printed Devanāgarī. It is not clear why some shorter MSS are denied this useful treatment. The physical production of the book, with some exceptions to be noted below, is very elegant and clear, making the catalogue a pleasure to use.

No single cataloguer could hope to be equally at home in all the various genres, subjects and dialects represented here, and the task of collating, identifying, transcribing and analysing such a wide range of material is a very real challenge. Inevitably, a certain number of errors will slip through the net and/or survive the scrutiny of editing in any enterprise on this scale. Unfortunately, such errors are rather too frequent in this catalogue: perusal of the book for review (hardly constituting a methodical proof-reading exercise) has left well in excess of 300 corrections marked in the margins. Many of these mistakes are simple inconsistencies between the text titles as they appear in Devanāgarī and roman respectively: item 640, whose Devanāgarī title as given should transliterate as *Ikaviṣa prakāri pūjā*, manages no less than five errors of transliteration, and though extreme, this is no isolated example. There is an extraordinary number of discrepancies between the *Samvat* dates stated in the MS descriptions and the colophons cited beneath them: item 6 is described as “dated *Samvat* 1898” while the colophon reads 1998, and similar discrepancies of dating follow in items 24, 55, 115, 119, 137, 201, 213, 240, 260, 306, 387, 393, 535, 590, 603, 611, 624, 633, 668, 771 and 772 (even this may not be a complete list). Unless a *Śaka* date offers corroboration, one does not know whether to believe (either) the *Samvat* date from the transcribed colophon or the computed common era equivalent (“nominally the *Vikrama Samvat* year minus 57”, p. 15) from the MS description. The reader's faith in the accuracy of the transcription is further eroded by the frequent and all-too-obvious literals: “Parvāti” appears on pp. 179 and 188, “Nāla” on pp. 323 and 352; ṛṣi sometimes appears as ṛiṣi, and even as “Riṣa” in the title of item 641; use of the umlaut to designate “initial vowel forms of *a*, *i*, *u*, when used in medial positions” (p. 6) is highly erratic (and redundant when following a long vowel as in *nāikā*, p. 423); Hindi editorial glosses printed within round brackets in the transcribed examples (in a system apparently left unexplained in the introduction) are often inaccurately written (e.g. “अक्षर मिट गए” in item 69, and the spelling “रचनाकर” for “रचनाकार” *passim*).

The hard-hearted pointing out of such frequent errors (and there are many others!) must be balanced by an enthusiastic welcome for and brief analysis of the information that the various entries yield. While each entry opens with a physical description of the MS in an appropriately standard pattern, the criteria for deciding what does and does not get a mention in the broader discussion of the work are necessarily subjective and flexible. Many entries gives useful cross-references to related texts, MSS, or scribes, or to standard histories of the literature. Chronograms are sometimes interpreted silently, sometimes spelt out (the interpretation in item 783 of the formula *saśi rasa vāra saśi* as yielding “1691”, seems problematic and merits discussion). After many large helpings of esoterica, the reader shares the cataloguer’s evident relief in noting how the *Yoga-kṣema* (item 808), a twentieth-century MS, urges its reader to “always get to the station to buy the tickets ten minutes before the train comes”. In many entries, descriptions have a somewhat arid feel, redolent of nineteenth-century scholarship which had so much less historical information to hand: “It is an anthology of devotional Hindu verses mostly addressed to Rāma and Sītā” seems an unnecessarily general and bland comment on a text as well known as Tulasidāsa’s *Vinaya patrikā* (item 413), and a MS whose contents are readily identifiable, even from the brief citations given, as relating to the sixteenth-century poet Hita Harivaṃśa, is inadequately described by the words “Its subject matter is Kṛṣṇa *bhakti*” (item 504). The scholarly accuracy and register expected in reference works of this kind lapses occasionally: “thoughts about the night of the new moon” will not do for *Amāvāsyādi vicāra* (item 228), and the expression “side a” (item 650) describes a gramophone record, not a MS folio.

The various appendices include indexes for authors, titles, commentaries, scribes, topographical references, chronology, and illustrations in works. Errors of transcription or of transliteration in the main part of the catalogue are usually transferred intact to the indexes, whose alphabetical sequence they inevitably disturb; but other spontaneous errors of ordering also creep in here, and items 361, 366, 673, 189, 650, 600, 696, 783, 435–6, 369, 707, 522, 465 and 716 are all out of sequence in the title index. Other indexes also show errors: in particular, syllables consisting of consonant + vocalic *r* often appear at the *end* of the consonant + vowel sequence (*kr°* follows *kau°* etc.); even the topographical index (Appendix V), which follows English alphabet order, is not fully correct. There is no system of cross-references, such as might usefully have referred from *mākhanacora* to *māṣanacora*, or from *bhogula* to *bhūgola*.

The indexes are followed by lists of illustrations, library concordances and references to provenance of the MSS. Two sections of illustrations, printed on art paper, complete the catalogue. Firstly there are some fifty pages of monochrome illustrations; these are substantially reduced (an average size being about two inches square) though many are still just about legible with a powerful magnifying glass. Such scrutiny, in the case of those few illustrations which show first and last folios and thus allow comparison with the citations earlier in the catalogue, indicates that fears for accuracy of transcription are not wholly unjustified (e.g. in item 338); and several illustrations are printed back to front (items 395 ff. 114a and 292b; 403 f.1a; 404 f.1b; 718 f.1a; 844 ff. 62b, 65b, 69b, 74b, 118b and 171a). All 11 extant folios of item 194, an incomplete illustrated *Śālihotra* of unknown authorship, are reproduced here; but folio numbers are not given in the caption, which is identical for each folio. The last sixteen pages bear magnificently printed colour plates, a few of which repeat (and correct the aspect of) certain of the monochrome illustrations.

The catalogue is clearly the product of great and enthusiastic industry, and has many excellent features. It is a pity that more care was not taken – especially in the editing and proof-reading stage – to ensure the accuracy demanded by a work of this kind.

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