

Speech of Hon'ble Governor for the inauguration ceremony of a centre for Manuscript Conservation in collaboration with Heritage Conservation Society of Assam and National Manuscript Mission, Govt.of India. At Jalukbari, Guwahati on 8th Dec., 2018

A very good morning to all of you present here. Hon'ble Education Minister Sri Siddhartha Bhattacharya ji, Chief Advisor of Heritage Conservation Society of Assam Himanshu Shekhar Das ji, President of Asom Satra Mahasabha Sri Jitendra Nath Pradhani ji, Principal of the college Binita Bhagawati ji distinguished members of the faculty, staff and students of the College, Media friends, ladies and gentlemen.

I am indeed very happy to be with you here today and at the same time I am glad to be able to inaugurate the centre for Manuscript Conservation which has been set up by K.K.Handique Govt. Sanskrit college in collaboration with Heritage Conservation Society of Assam and National Manuscript Mission, Govt. of India.

I am told that K.K.Handique Govt. Sanskrit college had requested the Heritage Conservation Society, Assam (HeCSA) on being informed about the large repository of valuable Manuscripts in Sanskrit, Brajawali, Pali, Assamese and Sachitra written on various materials both Organic and Inorganic in different parts of Assam and North East Region which at present are not scientifically restored and digitally preserved. Thus, the National Mission for Manuscript under the Ministry of Tourism and Culture has decided for a centre of

Manuscript Conservation in this college in collaboration with Heritage Conservation Society, Assam (HeCSA).

The vast manuscript wealth of India contains the 'memory of the world'. Featuring hundreds of themes, India's manuscripts represent sophisticated ideas and the most timeless of pursuits – of capturing ideas through language. It is said that a people's spoken and written language is their most important cultural attribute. In India, over thousands of years, manuscripts have been written in a vast number of languages and each in itself embodies her history. Today, thousands of manuscripts lie neglected in institutions and homes around the country, in urgent need of conservation.

Manuscripts in India have a long tradition that was produced in all part of our country in different languages and in scripts. These manuscripts were regarded as rare commodities, produced with hard labour and cost. A sense of religious sanctity and reverence were associated with them and they were worshipped like holy relics, which are now stored in different temples, madrasas, museums, universities as well as in personal custody etc. In Assam, the Satra institutes are the major custodian of the rare manuscripts, though some are preserved in different places, such as in temples, madrasas, museums, and universities. In ancient Assam, the bark of Agar was used to write on, which is locally called Sanchipat. It is a unique writing material only used in Assam. In the middle of 15th century, Srimanta Sankaradeva and his disciple Madhabdeva, along with their

other disciples initiated Vaisnava renaissance in Assam. They spread the fragrance of Vaisnava faith among the masses, by written different dramas, Bargeet, Geet, poem etc. mainly on Sanchipat, tulapat etc. These manuscripts have still a great role in the Vaisnava Society as well as in Assamese literature, which are now treated as the cultural heritage of the nation. It is a matter of pride for us that two manuscripts of Assam i.e. Chitra Bhagabata and Ratnamala Byakaran, written on Sanchipat have been selected as the National Treasure of India by the central government of India.

I believe, preservation and conservation of manuscripts is very important because manuscripts are the mighty source of earlier information regarding social, religious, historical, cultural, medical etc. In present day context due to different reasons like mishandling of the manuscripts by the people, dust and atmospheric pollution and disasters like flood, fire, earthquake etc. the manuscripts are getting damaged. In view of this a scientific preservation and conservation is required and I hope the newly inaugurated centre will take care of the scientific preservation of the manuscript in the region.

I firmly believe that as custodians, curators, conservators or employees of an institution which deals with manuscripts, one should take proper care of our rich heritage i.e., manuscripts. As scholars and students also, it is your duty to take care of manuscripts as they are a source of knowledge. For the common man too the Constitution of India states, under Fundamental Duties in Article 51A, "It shall be the

duty of every citizen of India to value and preserve the rich heritage of our composite culture". I also urge upon the college to arrange awareness programme in different places of Assam on the importance of manuscript preservation.

I once again, convey my best wishes to everybody associated with K.K.Handique Govt. Sanskrit college on this occasion. I wish the centre which I have just inaugurated serves the purpose for which it has been created.

JAI HIND