

The Gyan Bharatam Revamp

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Gyan Bharatam Mission: Reviving India's Manuscript Heritage for a Knowledge-Driven Future

Introduction

India, home to one of the world's oldest and richest knowledge traditions, is set to embark on a major national initiative to safeguard its civilisational heritage. On June 9, 2025, Prime Minister Narendra Modi will launch the revamped **National Manuscripts Mission**, now renamed as the **Gyan Bharatam Mission**. This mission marks a significant step toward digitising, conserving, and making accessible India's vast collection of ancient manuscripts.

The Gyan Bharatam Mission aims to create a structured, technologically advanced, and inclusive ecosystem to protect and promote India's intellectual legacy. With over **one crore manuscripts** scattered across the country in temples, libraries, private collections, and traditional institutions, this mission seeks to preserve knowledge that spans diverse fields including philosophy, science, medicine, literature, and spirituality.

Background: The National Manuscripts Mission (NMM)

The original **National Manuscripts Mission** (NMM) was launched in the year 2003 under the **Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts** (IGNCA). Its objective was to identify, document, and preserve India's manuscripts, many of which are centuries old and written on fragile materials such as palm leaves, birch bark, or handmade paper.

While the mission managed to create metadata for approximately **52 lakh manuscripts** and digitised about **3 lakh manuscripts**, only around **1.3 lakh** have been uploaded online. Of these, merely **70,000 manuscripts** are currently accessible to the public. One of the key challenges faced by the mission was the **absence of a comprehensive access policy**, especially for manuscripts held by **private collectors**, who own nearly **80 percent** of India's manuscript wealth. This limited public access to a vast reservoir of indigenous knowledge.

Moreover, institutional and operational constraints prevented the mission from achieving its full potential.

The Gyan Bharatam Revamp: A Renewed National Commitment

In the Union Budget 2025, the Government of India made a significant move by increasing the financial allocation for the manuscripts initiative from **Rs. 3.5 crore to Rs. 60 crore**. This substantial increase reflects the government's commitment to scaling up efforts and bringing modern technology and organisational efficiency into manuscript preservation.

The new **Gyan Bharatam Mission** has been designed to take a **comprehensive and strategic approach**, focusing on the following key areas:

- 1. Nationwide Survey and Documentation**

Conducting extensive surveys to locate and catalogue manuscripts stored across institutions, libraries, museums, religious trusts, and private households.

- 2. Digitisation and Conservation**

Digitising fragile manuscripts using high-resolution technology while ensuring preventive and curative conservation of old and delicate folios to prevent further deterioration.

- 3. Institutional Restructuring**

Establishing an **autonomous body** to oversee and implement the mission, separate from IGNCA. This independent structure is expected to bring greater agility, specialisation, and focused leadership.

- 4. Public Access and Copyright Policy**

Formulating a transparent and fair **access and copyright framework** to enable scholars, researchers, and the general public to benefit from these manuscripts. Special attention will be given to addressing the concerns of private collectors.

Addressing Long-standing Challenges

Over the past two decades, the National Manuscripts Mission made progress, but several issues have remained unresolved. The Gyan Bharatam Mission seeks to address these gaps through a more ambitious and integrated strategy:

- **Private Ownership:** Creating **incentive mechanisms** for private owners to share their manuscript collections with the national repository.
- **Low Awareness:** Launching awareness campaigns to educate the younger generation about India's rich manuscript tradition and its relevance to contemporary learning.
- **Digital Infrastructure:** Developing **centralised, open-access digital platforms** that allow scholars and citizens to access digitised manuscripts from anywhere.
- **Conservation Work:** Expanding the scope of conservation work. Already, **over 9 crore**

folios have undergone preventive or curative treatment, and the mission plans to build further on this foundation.

Strategic and Cultural Significance

The Gyan Bharatam Mission is more than a preservation project. It reflects a deeper civilisational effort to reclaim and revitalise India's indigenous systems of knowledge. This mission aligns with other national initiatives that focus on **language revitalisation, cultural pride, and educational reform**.

By reconnecting present and future generations with ancient wisdom, the mission contributes directly to India's broader vision of **Viksit Bharat** or **Developed India by 2047**. It also supports **Sustainable Development Goal 4** (SDG-4), which advocates inclusive and equitable quality education and lifelong learning opportunities.

Conclusion

The launch of the **Gyan Bharatam Mission** is a landmark moment in India's cultural and intellectual history. It represents a bold and visionary effort to bridge the gap between India's glorious past and its aspirational future. Through the digitisation and dissemination of ancient manuscripts, India is reclaiming its place as a global centre of knowledge and learning.

By investing in the preservation of its manuscript heritage, India is not only protecting its cultural identity but also opening new avenues for research, education, and innovation. The success of the Gyan Bharatam Mission will ensure that the voices of ancient Indian thinkers continue to inspire generations to come.

