

verge getting disintegrated owing to natural calamities and human negligence.

The Institute of Asian Studies alone is holding around one hundred rare Tamil folk ballads engraved on palm-leaves. Similarly there are a number of folk ballads in Kerala, Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh written in Malayalam, Kannada and Telugu respectively. Such manuscripts are also existing in abundance in many of the north Indian tongues.

The present national seminar aims at making a survey of the folk ballads available in manuscripts in various Indian languages along with a critical evaluation of their contributions to the composite culture of India.

There shall be twenty papers tentatively on such ballads to be presented during the proposed three day National Seminar along with a key-note address and a valedictory address.

Among them, ten papers shall cover the ballads in Tamilnadu, Andhra Pradesh, Kerala and Karnataka. The other ten will cover the ballads of Maharashtra, West Bengal, Odisha, Punjab, Gujarat and the other geographical regions where ballads are available in palm-leaf and other Manuscripts. The National Seminar will also cover the ballads available in Hindi and Sanskrit.

We do hope that this effort will bring to lime light a rich corpus of Indian literature, a fertile genre of the Indian rural folk which are ignored or neglected by most our scholars. This will be a great resource for the enrichment of our knowledge about



Folk literatures, especially the ballads, are mainly preserved in oral tradition and they have been transmitted from generation to generation through mouth and ear. These ballads are migratory in character as they travel from place to place with the itinerant performers or bards- they are dynamic in nature as they grow vibrantly through the ages. In this sense, they can be described as Literature of Growth, a growing organism. They can be termed as collective poems since they echo the collective voice and the collective personality of the groups or clans which they represent. Consequently, they are not individual products and hence they have no individual authorship. They have mostly ascribed authors and not real authors. When they are documented in palm-leaf, paper or any other medium they become fossilised versions and the growth of that particular version is arrested.

In Indian languages, folk ballads are recited or sung by the itinerant performers or bards with the accompaniment of different simple musical instruments, either with a percussion drum or a stringed instrument. They are sung during temple festivals popularly known as *Kodai* or similar other occasions. At the same time, the performers keep with them a documented or written version of the same narrative poetry prepared by their master or lead singer usually called *Vāttiyār* (teacher) in Tamil. Even though they improvise the story in their own way, the main material is in the form of a text, mostly in palm-leaf or recently in paper.

Such folk ballads are long narrative poems and



Indian culture as a whole.

We are happy to invite scholars from various parts of India to participate and present research papers on this important theme. We are planning to bring out the research papers in a handy volume.

We request the scholars to submit the abstract of their papers in about one page to the address and e-mail ID given below on or before 15<sup>th</sup> January 2016. Paper presenters will be given T.A and accommodation facilities in addition to remuneration as per our norms. We look forward to your kind participation in this unique programme.



National Mission for Manuscripts



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they are sung by the narrator and a group of other singers before the village audience with the accompaniment of rural music instruments which vary from one linguistic community to another. Some of these songs are sung by groups of singers with the narrator as the lead singer. Many of these ballads are written in South India in Palm-leaf Manuscripts. Usually they are classified very broadly as

#### **Social ballads**

#### **Historical ballads and**

#### **Mythical / devotional ballads**

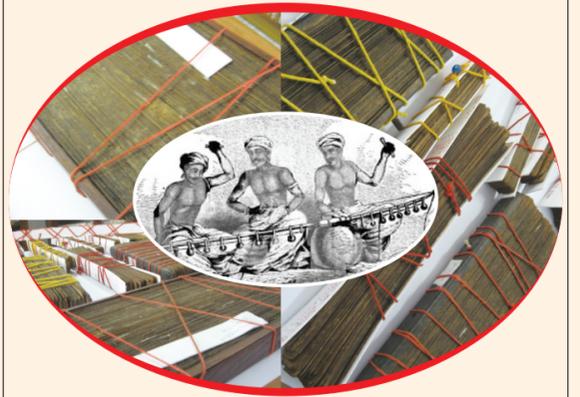
We have large number of social ballads in Indian languages and they are indeed cultural documents of our rural life with all its variety, complexity and diversity. They form basic documents for reconstructing the cultural history of India as a whole. Since most of these materials are not available in printed form or in electronic version, they are not accessible to our historians and scholars who base their research mainly on printed material. These ballads deal with the various aspects of the lifestyle of the rural India mostly with its agricultural backdrop.

The historical ballads speak about local heroes who fought for the welfare of their linguistic or cultural groups and became martyrs for a noble cause. They are worshipped as clan deities or guardian deities by the social group from which they emerge. Such local heroes are deified and their hagiographies provide us with rich historical material - most of which are not made best use of in our so-called texts on political history. The historical



## **National Seminar on Folk Ballads in Indian Languages Available in Palm- leaf and other Manuscripts**

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**Organized by**

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*jointly with the*

**National Mission for Manuscripts**



ballads provide rich informations for constructing our history on well founded data hitherto neglected by our academicians.

The mythical ballads take us to another world - a world of religion with a number of local deities and different varieties of rituals as conceived and observed by the rural folk.

In Tamil language there are more than 200 ballads in palm-leaf manuscripts among which only a few numbers have been published with English translation by the Institute of Asian Studies. Among them **The Elder Brother's Story** translated into English by the reputed Canadian Anthropologist Prof. Brenda Beck in two volumes is very significant. The other title **The First Freedom Fighter** deals with a very important historical episode about the fight between the British rulers and a Tamil chieftain namely Pulitivan. The **Bandid Brothers** deals with a very unique historical event of 18<sup>th</sup> century. **A Tale of Romance** is a nativised version of the story of Sakuntala with local flavor quite different from the work of Kalidasa. **The story of Rama** is a local version of the Rama story in two volumes. Till date, the Institute of Asian Studies has published around 20 such important folk ballads along with their English version. Most of them are narrated even today in the villages with the accompaniment of various local musical instruments.

These ballads are the basic material for the reconstruction of the social history of our country mainly during 15<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup> century. They are engraved in fragile palm-leaves and most of them are on the

