

## Rare Jain text declared world heritage document

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Unesco said the document is a universal message of friendship, global peace and unity with integrity. "It also describes historical facts and professes high moral and cultural values. The illustrations found in this manuscript are oldest specimens of miniature painting. These illustrations are beautifully drawn in multi-colour and are examples of a highly evolved style of painting. As these illustrations are rarest of rare, their preservation and protection is necessary for humanity. These are the best and oldest examples of miniature paintings while the story itself is of lasting value to humankind," Unesco added. India in its application to Unesco said the rare document is an example of the finest expression in the art of miniature paintings in manuscripts.

The ink used in the manuscript is gum lamp-black and white paint made from mineral silver. The manuscripts are owned by Lalbhai Dalpatbhai Institute of Indology. It was donated by late **Muni Punyavijayji** who had inherited it through family. The application said, "Such hereditary manuscripts are genuine especially if they belong to Jain monks...Muni Shri Punyavijayji was a Jain monk highly revered in his community and thus the authenticity of the manuscript is beyond doubt. The paper and ink of the document are a proof of its authenticity".

"This is the oldest (1397 CE) example of Jain miniature painting available in a text," the application added.

The Lalbhai Dalpatbhai Institute of Indology has a rich collection of nearly 75,000 rare manuscripts, including a substantial number received as gifts for preservation and custody. Many of these manuscripts are written on palm leaf, birch-bark (bhojpatra) and handmade paper. Some of the manuscripts are written in gold and silver inks and are full of multi-colour miniatures while some others are in black and white.

**Vasco da Gama's journal included in list of world's greatest documents:** A hand written journal of Vasco da Gama's first voyage to India, dating back to 1497-1499 that describes how he led the first fleet around Africa to India, arriving in Calicut and starting a maritime route from Portugal to India, changing the course of history of humankind has been included in the most prestigious list of the world's greatest documents.

Unesco's world heritage body has decided to

include this journal - the only copy of the voyage of Vasco da Gama in the Memory of the World Register 2013.

Although the journal is an anonymous work written by an eyewitness who accompanied the fleet and also took part in the expedition on land, Unesco said it provides testimony of the pioneer sea voyage to India, one of the defining moments that changed the course of history.

By the 15th century, this voyage was considered the first globalization process of the world. The journal also includes the first known list of Portuguese words and its correspondence into the Calicut language.

Interestingly, the application was submitted for inscription by Portugal. Although not written in a literary style, the journal describes the mishaps and its success of the voyage.

Unesco says because its author was attentive and because he participated in the voyage himself, readers are allowed to understand and feel the context and the environment of the voyage, experiencing and imagining every step described. "For this, it can be considered a literary work that is exciting and a pleasure to read," it says.

Unesco says the narrative style used in the Journal, the different events related, the dangerous situations described, treasurers, danger of death, diseases, contact with people on shore, the arrival to India, gifts, war equipment, animals, trees and plants, birds, hostages, titles and professions, food, musical and nautical instruments, precious stones, villages and difficult navigation situations constitute the uniqueness and irreplaceability of this manuscript as it allows future generations to get in touch with the context and situation of the voyage, at the time.

It describes the departure from Lisbon, the sailing difficulties encountered, the contact and sometimes the fights with people, the loss of vessels, all the difficulties, adventures of the voyage and the respective return to Portugal, leading the readers to a better understanding of the context of the successful and heroic, but at the same time risky and complex voyage of Vasco da Gama to India.

It also includes in the appendix a list of oriental kingdoms, including a short description of several of them; a list of goods that were of interest to Portuguese, and in some cases the reference to its value and a list of spice prices of Alexandria.

Unesco added "This manuscript is the only known contemporary copy

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The final blow came with Monday's announcement that visitors from countries such as India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Nigeria and Ghana will have to pay a bond of £3000 in addition to their visa fee after November. The policy will only affect those entering the UK on 6 months visitor visa and may be extended to work and student visas later on.

The cash bond will not be applicable to those below the age of 18 and the payment will be refunded if the visitor returned home within the time period specified by their visa.

Home Secretary **Theresa May** has tried to justify this discriminative step as an assurance that Britain's immigration system remains more selective, bringing down net migration from the hundreds of thousands to the tens of thousands, while still welcoming the brightest and the best to Britain.

May in a statement said, "We're planning a pilot that focuses on over-stayers and examines a couple of different ways of applying bonds. The pilot will apply to visitor visas, but if the scheme is successful we'd like to be able to apply it on an intelligence-led basis on any visa route and any country."

She added, "The pilot will be highly selective and focused on the highest risk applicants - we will not require all visitors from the selected pilot countries to pay a bond."



Nick Clegg

But the Liberal Democrats, especially Leader **Nick Clegg** said that although the principle of migrant bond has been agreed, the Lib Dems have not yet signed off details such as the value of bond or the countries involved. This reflects the confusion and disparity within the Coalition government.

The Home Affairs Select Committee has called the move as extremely discriminatory and has now decided to question Ms May on July 16.

Chairman of the com-

of the report of the first voyage of Vasco da Gama to India, whose journey apart from being one of the greatest pieces of European seamanship of that time, acted as a catalyst for a series of events that would change the world".

The application

## Migrant bond proposal denounced



Keith Vaz

mittee **Rt Hon Keith Vaz MP** demanded a full explanation and said, "The home secretary's plans for bonds for visitors from certain countries are unfair and discriminatory. We will question the home secretary on the pilot when she appears before the Home Affairs Committee on the 16th July 2013."

According to Vaz, the move "flies in the face of Prime Minister David Cameron's intention to attract the brightest and best to Britain and sends out the wrong message to the countries concerned". "The plans could potentially alienate already settled communities in the UK," he said.

The home office said that the bond will only apply to "high risk individuals" who are "most liable to stay back" after the expiry of their visa. But when asked for information on potential over-stayers, they refused to divulge the profile of the typical "high risk individual".

Vaz said, "there are a number of holes in the home secretary's pilot. If this is to be workable she must have a proper consultation. She said she wants to deter over-stayers, yet with the mess that is E-Borders there is currently no way to monitor if people actually leave the country. The bond level of £3000 is completely unrealistic. If somebody was determined to work here illegally this could be earned back in a matter of months." A report by the Home Affairs Committee found that the already existing backlog of applications for visas will take 24 years to clear by the UK Border Agency.

**Lord Navnit Dholakia**, the Deputy Leader of the Lib Dem party in a Parliamentary debate raised the same question to Lord Taylor of Holbeach, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Home Office. He asked "How do we ensure that there is no bias in the way decisions are taken, emphasising the problems

that many families have faced when applying for a family visa?"

Indian business groups and would be tourists also responded with outrage to this pilot programme. They have claimed that this decision runs the risk of diplomatic backlash especially after the promises made by Cameron during his recent visit to India.

Affluent Indians who have regular vacations in London, to escape India's intolerable summer, have



Lord Dholakia

bitterly resented this direct assumption that India is full of potential illegal immigrants, who are waiting to overstay their UK tourist visa.

India's middle class has always been a very interesting tourism market, as the Financial Times has reported. Figures have fluctuated but the numbers visiting UK from India has risen from 200,000 in 2003 to 340,000 in 2012.

Angry tweets from Indians have made point reference to Britain's two centuries of colonial rule over India and suggested that New Delhi impose a reciprocal programme for British visitors.

The Confederation of Indian Industry in a statement told Asian Voice, "The suggested changes are not only discriminatory they are also against the 'special relationship' publicised by the UK government. We share UK's concern on illegal immigration but surely there are other more effective and non-discriminatory ways to put a check on it."

The industry in India is disappointed by the way the immigration rules in UK have been repeatedly changing over the last few years. CII strongly feels that such blanket rules for visas will negatively affect not only businesses, especially small businesses, it will also further bring down the number of students going to UK for higher studies and affect the tourism inflow from India to UK. This will also not help the cause of early

conclusion of EU-India FTA, for which both the parties are committed."

**Mr Anwar Hasan**, Co-



Anwar Hasan

Chair, CII India Business Forum UK and Director Tata Ltd said, "...While we understand the UK's right to manage migration, we look with concern at this pilot, which has the potential to introduce a new and discriminatory element obstacle to contacts between India and the UK which both Governments have repeatedly said that they want to encourage. We urge the British Government to act with great caution, and to ensure that no new measures affect the exchanges between our countries, particularly business and education, which are so strongly in our mutual interest. As in every other area of public policy, business needs fair rules of the game implemented with consistency."

Executive Director of the HSMP (Highly Skilled Migrant Programme) forum, **Amit Kapadia**, told Asian Voice, "I find it very discriminatory that only nationals of African and Asian countries are being targeted. We are also concerned that the government may go ahead to apply the financial bond scheme for all kinds of visas at a later date."

"The government has already introduced income thresholds in July 2012 for immigrants who intend to sponsor their spouse or parent to the UK. It is well known that the people falling foul of these changes will be ethnic minorities, as they are the ones who are usually on lower incomes due to discrimination in employment opportunities. These new changes mean the bond money would make it even more difficult for immigrants to invite their family members to visit them in the UK on temporary basis. This government seems to be very persistent in making non-European immigrants lives difficult in order to achieve their political goals."

## Hemant Lakhani passes away

Hemant Lakhani passed away on 19th June 2013 at Springfield Medical Centre, Missouri, USA. He suffered from a massive heart attack. Hemant Lakhani was earlier found guilty and sentenced to long prison for 'alleged' terrorist activities. Prior to that he was living in London and was a businessman. Our deepest sympathies to his wife Kusum Lakhani and family.