

**DEVELOPMENT AND VALUE MAXIMISATION
OF
THE HERITAGE COLLECTION**

Activities of the Conservation Unit

CONSERVATION UNIT

History of the Lab

The conservation laboratory in Victoria Memorial Hall is one of the oldest conservation laboratories in India. It is famous for its pioneering work in the field of conservation of paper and metal objects. Its primary task is to look after the huge collection of V.M.H. and preserve the collection from deterioration. It caters also the conservation needs of various small museums in Bengal and North –Eastern states. It organizes national seminars on conservation and preservation of museum artifacts involving conservators of other institutions as well as from among the general public. The laboratory is equipped with hot-press laminator and polarizing microscope etc.

AREAS OF CONCERN AND WORK DONE

A. Conservation of Art works on Paper

- i) 116 objects (watercolour, engraving, print, etching, photographs) were conserved and housed in acid free folders.
- ii) Persian illustrated manuscripts, *Shahanamah Book II* –
(Continuing from 2005-06). Each of 12 sheets were deacidified, strip lined, guarded, and finally kept in acid free four-flapped box.
- iii) Persian illustrated manuscripts, the *Sikandarnamah* –
(Continuing from previous 2005-06). Each of remaining 110 sheets were deacidified, strip lined, guarded, and finally kept in acid free four- flapped box after total completion of conservation work.
- iv) Persian illustrated manuscripts, the *Diwan-e-hafiz-I* –
(Continuing from previous 2005-06). Each of remaining 214 sheets were deacidified, strip lined, guarded, and finally kept in acid free four- flapped box after total completion of conservation work.
- v) Conservation of Hyde's Report, Vol-14. Entire manuscript was fumigated and sterilized. Each of 150 sheets de-acidified, repaired and mended.



Inauguration of the National Seminar cum Workshop on "Care and Conservation of Textile objects"



Workshop on "Conservation of Photographic Material" coordinated by Shri A.S. Bisht



Workshop on "Care & Conservation of Textile Object" by Jennie Lightfoot, expert from U.K.

B. Conservation of Metal objects

Sixty five (65) number of arms and armours & coins were given necessary conservation treatment.

C. Conservation & binding of old rare books of the Library/ Archive

A total no. of 28 damaged books from library were conserved after repair and binding . One Visitors' book (40 pages) for Raj Bhavan was fabricated and handed over to Raj Bhavan, Kolkata.

D. Preventive conservation

Regular weekly visits were undertaken to the stores. Dusting, cleaning and general inspection of the artifacts were done.

Sri Indranil Ganguly, a group D employee, prepared seven Solander box using acid free board for storage of manuscripts, one Dia for Coin storage and ten folders with acid free paper for storage of paper objects. Apart from these, Sri Ganguly also helped the unit in typing reports, letters etc. on computer.

E. Seminar/Workshop

1. A National seminar cum workshop on "Conservation of Textile objects" was held at V.M.H. from 19th to 22nd February 2007. Experts who addressed the workshop were:

Shri. A.S.Bisht.

Dr. B. V. Kharbade.

Dr. V. Jeyaraj.

Ms. Jenny Lightfoot.

Prof. M.V.Nair.

Prof. I.K.Bhatnagar.

Dr. R.K.Mukherjee

2. A 2-day in-house seminar on "Preventive conservation of Textile objects" was held at V.M.H. on 25th & 27th November 2006. It was organized and addressed by Ms. J. Lightfoot, famous textile conservator from the U.K.
3. An in-house workshop on "Preservation and Conservation of photographic documents" was held at V.M.H. from 23rd – 29th July, 06. It was coordinated by Sri. A.S.Bisht, Ex- Chief Restorer, National Museum, New Delhi.

F. Participation in National Seminars

1. A paper was presented by Shri R. P.Savita, Shri Abhijit Bhawal and Shri Subhendu Banerjee on conservation of coins at a seminar entitled "Heritage of Samatata & Herikala Dynasty" held at Agartala, on 2nd – 3rd Sept.06.

2. Shri Abhijit Bhawal, Shri Subhendu Banerjee and Shri Subir Kr Dey attended a Seminar cum workshop entitled "Care of museum objects" held at Salar Jung Museum, Hyderabad from 12th – 14th July, 2006.
3. Shri Abhijit Bhawal and Shri Subhendu Banerjee attended the interactive session with the Scientists & Conservators at NRLC, Lucknow from 21st to 25th January 2007.

G. Routine Work

- (i) Pesticide treatment inside the Museum and stores continued on monthly basis.
- (ii) Treatment for rodent control was carried out bi- weekly.
- (iii) Continuous record of temperature and relative humidity was maintained in the galleries and stores.

H. Assistance to other organizations

1.
 - a) 42 artifacts of Raj Bhavan were given conservation treatment and returned to Raj Bhavan, Kolkata.
 - b) An old album containing 202+2 photographs received from the Raj Bhavan, Kolkata were detached from old acidic damaged folios, repaired, conserved, re-fixed on a new album consisting of acid free archival quality Kent paper. It was kept in acid free Solander box for preservation and storage.
2. Recorded the conservation status of the artifacts on display at the Nazrul Academy, Churulia, Burdwan.
3. A four-member team headed by Prof. C.Panda, Secretary & Curator, Victoria Memorial visited the record Room of Raj Bhavan, Kolkata on 24th April, 06 (Monday). Subsequently a report was submitted to Raj Bhavan.
4. 15 no. photographs were received from Raj Bhavan. These were dry cleaned and fumigated in fumigation chamber and returned to Doc. Unit.

I. Environmental Management Plan to Protect V.M. ,Kolkata

Shri Abhijit Bhawal rendered valuable assistance to

- (i) environmental management plan for Victoria memorial.
- (ii) the Scientists from NEERI monitoring air-quality
- (iii) NEERI Scientists on other matters