

Government of Madras.

EDUCATIONAL DEPARTMENT.

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G.O. No. 743, 13th August 1913.

Sanskrit manuscripts.

Recording office-notes about the relaxation of rules regarding the removal of — from the Government Oriental Manuscripts and Tanjore Palace libraries.

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GOVERNMENT OF MADRAS.
EDUCATIONAL DEPARTMENT.

Order—No. 743, Educational, dated 13th August 1913.

Recorded.

(True Extract.)

W. FRANCIS,
Ag. Secretary to Government.

EDUCATIONAL DEPARTMENT.

NOTES CONNECTED WITH G.O. No. 743, EDUCATIONAL,
DATED 13TH AUGUST 1913.

[SUBJECT.—*Professor Macdonell's demi-official letter about the relaxation of the rules in regard to the removal of Sanskrit manuscripts from the Government Oriental Manuscripts and the Tanjore Palace Libraries.*]

Letter—from Professor A. A. MACDONELL, 107, Banbury Road, Oxford.
To—the Secretary to the Government of Madras, Educational Department.
Dated—the 27th June 1913.

Having heard from Mr. Lionel Davidson a few days ago that the last of the widows of the Raja of Tanjore had died not long ago, I hasten to write and ask what is likely to happen to the very large and valuable collection of Sanskrit manuscripts in the Palace Library there. When I was at Tanjore in 1907 I spent several days in examining the collection. I understood from Mr. Bedford, with whom I was staying, that there was some prospect of the Government buying the manuscripts after the death of the two widows who were then living. I wrote a memorandum on the collection at the time, giving an estimate of its value. All Sanskrit scholars would be glad to hear that this fine collection (at one time certainly the largest and best in India) had not been allowed to be dispersed, especially as there is a fine catalogue of it by the late A. C. Burnell, I.C.S. In connexion with this question I venture to ask whether there is any chance of the rule being relaxed that no manuscripts in the Madras University Oriental Library may be lent to University Libraries in Europe for the use of scholars. They would be perfectly safe there (it is quite a different thing sending out manuscripts to India), and it is the practice of University Libraries in England (except the British Museum) and on the continent to lend manuscripts to other libraries (but not to private individuals). Otherwise the large collections of Sanskrit manuscripts in Indian libraries remain almost useless to European scholars, who as a rule make the best use of them. Several scholars whom I know have suffered from this rule, and it is a positive obstacle to the advance of Sanskrit scholarship. I hope in any case if the Tanjore Library is purchased by the Government, the rule will not be made applicable to that collection. I know that several valuable manuscripts from it were formerly borrowed by scholars in Europe, much to the advantage of Sanskrit studies.

Note on paragraph 1.

The request in paragraph 2, coming from such an authority as Professor Macdonell, needs careful consideration.

W. FRANCIS—14-7-13.

Paragraph 1 of Professor Macdonell's letter.—Please see the notes printed as appendix to the notes to G.O. No. 218, Political, dated 7th May 1909, to paragraph 5 of Mr. Wood's letter on page 4 of G.O. No. 65, Political, dated 6th February 1913, and to paragraph 4 of office-note on page 6, and to the Chief Secretary's and His Excellency's notes on page 11 of the notes to the latter Government Order. The Tanjore Palace Library is now in charge of the Receiver. The Government are likely

Professor Macdonell may be so informed.

W. FRANCIS—2-8-13.

to acquire it eventually. For the present they are awaiting the results of a law suit instituted by the rival competitors for the estate. It is understood that the decision of the suit will take time.

2. Paragraph 2 of Professor Macdonell's letter.—It is a standing rule in this Presidency that originals of manuscripts should not be taken out of the libraries in which they are placed, but that every facility should be given for their being copied on the spot. This rule has been in force since 1878 and except in a very few cases * has been strictly adhered to. The rule applies not only to the manuscripts in the Government Oriental Manuscripts Library but also to those in the Tanjore Palace Library; and accordingly several applications for originals of manuscripts in the two libraries have recently been refused, copies being furnished if so desired by the applicants on payment of cost. Attention is, in this connection, solicited to paragraph 2 of the Secretary of State's Despatch No. 1, Public (Records), dated 15th March 1912, in which he requested that an application from Professor Lauman of the Harvard University for certain Sanskrit manuscripts in the Government Oriental Manuscripts Library should be treated exceptionally in

Despatch No. 4, Educational, dated 8th November 1899.

Despatch No. 1, Educational, dated 28th January 1908.

Despatch No. 2, Educational, dated 11th May 1909.

Letter No. 2911-1, dated 30th November 1911, on page 16 of G.O. No. 1026, Educational, dated 22nd November 1912.

* Cf. G.O. No. 370, Educational, dated 12th June 1907.

G.O. No. 317, Educational, dated 29th April 1908.

G.O. Nos. 148-9, Educational, dated 15th March 1911.

G.O. No. 850, Educational, dated 23rd September 1912.

G.O. No. 1026, Educational, dated 22nd November 1912.

Vide file connected with Letter No. 3283-1, dated 10th December 1912.

University for certain Sanskrit manuscripts Library should be treated exceptionally in

† [Not those asked for, but other manuscripts on the same subject].

Vide Letter No. 3283-1, dated 10th December 1912, in the linked file.

3. The rule prohibiting the removal of manuscripts from libraries was apparently introduced with a view to prevent loss or damage of manuscripts in transit. From the Secretary of State's despatch referred to in the foregoing paragraph it appears that a considerable number of manuscripts are transmitted quite safely through the India Office by the other administrations in India. It may also be pointed out in this connection that on two occasions in 1908 and 1910 the India Office lent some of the manuscripts in its library to one S. P. V. Ranganathaswami of Vizagapatnam on condition that the Madras Government held themselves responsible for their safe custody and return to the India Office—please see G.Os. No. 316, Educational, dated 14th December 1908, and No. 429, Educational, dated 22nd July 1910. Attention is also solicited to Sir George Forbes' note on pages 2 and 3 of notes to G.O. No. 618-A, Educational, dated 31st August 1908, in which he remarked that what we "want are scholars to come forward to examine the numerous manuscripts and 'eviscerate what is of value in them' and that 'the manuscripts are collected to be used by scholars and not to be looked away in charge of a bureau, idle and 'useless.'"

4. In these circumstances it is for consideration whether, as desired by Professor Macdonell, the practice of the University Libraries in England and on the continent may be followed here and the rule relaxed in favour of the *University Libraries* in Europe and America (but not in favour of private individual) provided—

(1) that the application is supported by the India Office and that office undertakes the responsibility for the safe return of the manuscripts, and

(2) that it is certified by the Curator that the manuscript is in a condition to be transmitted and is not a very rare one.

Each case may be decided on its merits with reference to these factors, but the rule may be taken as not being too rigid as at present.

5. The Government Oriental Manuscripts Library will soon pass from the hands of Government to the Madras University. Pages 4-9 of G.O. No. 565, dated 14th June 1913, and paragraph 3 of Letter No. 566, dated 14th June 1913. But the question may perhaps be considered now so that if it is eventually decided to relax the rule in the above respect that may be imposed as a condition of the transfer. The rules of the Government Oriental Manuscripts Library will also be applicable to the Tanjore Palace Library.

The question will have to be settled whether, when the latter is acquired by Government, it will also be transferred to the University or retained by themselves.

P.R.—1-8-13.

C. RAMANUJACHARI—1-8-13.

Mr. Macdonell is Professor of Sanskrit at Oxford University.

2. Submitted that our rules appear to be illiberal compared with those of other Provinces and other Universities and that we might allow manuscripts which are certified as fit to travel to be lent to *Universities* in Europe and America.

Little work on them seems to be done at present in this country and it seems a pity they should be buried always in the Government Oriental Manuscripts Library.

W. FRANCIS—2-8-13.

Professor Macdonell may be informed how the matter stands, and that his observations will be borne in mind.

P[ENTLAND]—4-8-13.

Please send following demi-official :—

"DEAR PROFESSOR MACDONELL,

"I am directed to reply to your letter of 27th June about the Tanjore Palace Library of Sanskrit Manuscripts and this Government's rule that manuscripts from their Oriental Library should not be sent out of India.

"2. As to the Tanjore library, it is at present in the palace in the hands of the Official Receiver. Claimants have arisen to the estate and litigation is going on between them. Until this is over (which is hardly likely to be soon) no action can be taken to acquire the library. Government have not lost sight of the matter, but are obliged to wait on events.

"3. The rule that manuscripts should not be allowed to leave the Government Oriental Library is of very long standing and one or two special exceptions to it which were made only served to demonstrate the necessity of adhering to it strictly. Copies of manuscripts have always been granted freely to all applicants. Your suggestion that manuscripts might without risk be lent to *Universities* is a different matter, however, and I am to say that your observations will be borne in mind.

Yours sincerely,
W. FRANCIS"

6th August 1913.

Submitted that the notes may be recorded and printed for record. A draft order is submitted for approval.

P.R.—11-8-13.

C. RAMANUJACHARI—11-8-13.

C. S. ANANTARAMA AYYAR—12-8-13.

[G.O. No. 743, Educational, dated 13th August 1913.]

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