



**KARNATAKA LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL
ONE HUNDRED AND FIFTY EIGHTH SESSION
(Adjourned Meetings)**

**THE KARNATAKA JNANA BHANDAR MANUSCRIPTS AND DIGITISATION
BILL, 2026
(LA Bill No. 02 of 2026)
(As passed by the Karnataka Legislative Assembly)**

A Bill to provide for the survey, documentation, conservation, digitisation, research, publication and public access of manuscripts in the State of Karnataka, to establish the Karnataka Manuscripts Authority.

Whereas it is expedient to provide for the survey, documentation, conservation, digitisation, research, publication and public access of manuscripts in the State of Karnataka, to establish the Karnataka Manuscripts Authority and for matters connected there with or incidental thereto.

Be it enacted by the Karnataka State Legislature in the seventy seventh year of the Republic of India as follows:

1. Short title, and commencement.- (1) This Act may be called the Karnataka Jnana Bhandar Manuscripts and Digitisation Act, 2026.

(2) It shall come into force on such date as the State Government may, by notification, appoint

2. Definitions.- In this Act, unless the context otherwise requires,-

- (a) "Manuscript" means any handwritten or palm-leaf document, birch-bark, paper, cloth, copper-plate, stone inscription or any other material bearing script in Sanskrit, Kannada, Prakrit, Pali, Tamil, Telugu, Arabic, Persian, Modi, Sharada or any other Indian or foreign script, not printed or lithographed, and includes illustrated manuscripts, miniature paintings on palm-leaf or paper, and audio-visual recordings of oral traditions that preserve ancient knowledge,
- (b) "Authority" means the Karnataka Manuscripts Authority established under section 3.

3. Establishment of the Authority.- (1) The State Government shall, by notification, establish a body to be called the Karnataka Manuscripts Authority.

(2) The Authority shall be a body corporate having perpetual succession and a common seal.

4. Composition of the Authority.- The Authority shall consist of following members namely:-

- (a) The Minister in-charge of Archeology - ex-officio-Chairperson.
- (b) The Secretary to Government, Department of Tourism-ex-officio Member-Secretary.
- (c) The Secretary to Government, Finance Department - ex-officio Member.
- (d) The Secretary to Government, Higher Education Department - ex-officio Member.
- (e) Vice-Chancellor, Hampi Kannada University- ex-officio Member.
- (f) The Director, Oriental Research Institute, Mysuru- ex-officio Member.
- (g) The Commissioner, Department of Archaeology Museums and Heritage-ex-officio Member.
- (h) Three eminent scholars in Indology, Kannada literature or manuscriptology nominated by the State Government- Members.
- (i) Two representatives of private manuscript holders or mathas-Members.
- (j) One expert in digital humanities – Member.

5. Functions and powers of the Authority.- The Authority shall,-

- (a) cause a comprehensive survey of manuscripts in public and private custody within Karnataka and abroad that originated in or relate to Karnataka;
- (b) prepare and maintain a State Register of Manuscripts;
- (c) promote conservation, preventive and curative, digitisation, critical editing, translation and publication;
- (d) establish or recognise Manuscript Conservation Centres and Resource Centres;
- (e) frame guidelines for access, reproduction and commercial use while protecting intellectual property rights of traditional custodians;
- (f) prevent illicit trafficking and facilitate repatriation of Karnataka manuscripts from abroad; and
- (g) integrate manuscript knowledge into school and university curricula.

6. State Register of Manuscripts.- The Authority shall maintain a digital and physical State Register containing details of location, ownership, physical condition, script, language, subject and access conditions of every manuscript.

7. Mandatory reporting by owner or possessor.- Every person or institution possessing manuscripts shall, within one year from the date of commencement of this Act, furnish particulars to the Authority in such form as may be prescribed.

8. Access for survey and digitisation.- The Authority or any officer authorised by it may, with due notice and during reasonable hours, enter any premises to survey, photograph or digitise manuscripts, subject to reasonable conditions imposed by the owner for security and privacy.

9. Karnataka Manuscript Conservation and Digitisation Mission.- The Authority shall launch a time-bound Mission for conservation and high-resolution digitisation, of at least 5 lakh folios every year.

10. Public domain and restricted access.- Digitised manuscripts in public domain shall be uploaded on a dedicated portal Karnataka Jnana Bhandara with free public access, except where the owner has imposed justified restrictions for religious or privacy reasons.

11. Karnataka Manuscripts Fund.- A non-lapsable Fund shall be created with grants from the State Government, Central Government schemes, CSR contributions, and donations.

12. Prohibition on damage or export without permission.- No person shall wilfully damage, destroy or export any manuscript declared as Karnataka Heritage Manuscript without prior written permission of the Authority.

13. Penalties.- Contravention of sections 7 and 12 shall be punishable with imprisonment up to three years or fine up to 5 lakh or both.

14. Power to make rules.- The State Government may by notification in the official Gazette make rules after previous publication for carrying out the purposes of this Act.

(2) Every rule made under this Act shall be laid, as soon as may be after they are so made, before the House of the State Legislature, while it is in session, for a period of not less than fourteen days which may be comprised in one session or in two successive sessions and if before the expiry of the session in which it is so laid or of the sessions immediately following, the House of the State Legislature makes any modification in the rule or resolves that the rule should not be made, the rule shall thereafter have effect only in such modified form or be of no effect, as the case may be, so, however, that any such modification or annulment shall be without prejudice to the validity of anything previously done there under.

15. Overriding effect.- The provisions of this Act shall have effect notwithstanding anything inconsistent therewith contained in any other law for the time being in force.

16. Removal of difficulties.- (1) If any difficulty arises in giving effect to the provisions of this Act, the State Government may, by an order published in the Official Gazette, do anything, not inconsistent with the provisions of this Act, which appears to it to be necessary or expedient for removing the difficulty:

Provided that, no order under this section shall be made after the expiry of two years from the date of commencement of this Act.

(2) Every order made under this section shall be laid, as soon as may be, after it is so made, before each Houses of the State Legislature.

STATEMENT OF OBJECTS AND REASONS
(As appended to at the time of Introduction)

It is considered necessary to,-

- (i) provide for the survey, documentation, conservation, digitisation, research, publication and public access of manuscripts in the State of Karnataka; and
- (ii) establish the Karnataka Manuscripts Authority to achieve the above said objects.

Hence, the Bill.

FINANCIAL MEMORANDUM

There is no extra expenditure involved in the proposed legislative measure.

MEMORANDUM REGARDING DELEGATED LEGISLATION

Clause-14	Sub-clause (1), Empowers the State Government to make rules carrying out the purposes of the Act.
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The proposed delegation of legislative power is normal in character.

H. K. PATIL

Minister for Law, Human Rights, Parliamentary
Affairs and Legislation and Tourism

K.R. MAHALAKSHMI

Secretary
Karnataka Legislative Council