

# Digitization of Haribhakti manuscripts begins at MSU's history department

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

**Vadodara:** As part of its digitization drive, M S University's Department of History has started work on digitization of manuscripts of 'Haribhakti' merchant family.

Haribhakti family was one of the foremost business and banking houses of erstwhile Baroda state which originally had its connection with the Pune state.

The department had acquired the manuscripts from Arvind Haribhakti, a descendent of Haribhakti family in 1986-87.

These manuscripts belong to the third quarter of the 18th and the end of the 19th century with subject-matter related to trading and commercial operations covering major portions of western India. A large portion of the manuscripts resembles with Gujarati and Marathi alphabets.

"We have a rich collection of over two lakh manuscripts written in 'Modi' script. Through a project under the 11th plan of University Grants Commission, we have already digitized our archival collection of 2,000 manu-



scripts. Now, we have approached national and international agencies to carry forward the digitization project," head of department Adhya Saxena told TOI.

The manuscripts of 'Haribhakti' have also attracted international research scholars to the department.

Sudev Seth, a US-based NRI who is working on his PhD on 'Gaekwad state of Baroda: Government and Organizational Aspects' will be devoting a complete chapter in his PhD based on these documents.

Haribhakti had opened its branch at Baroda around 1775 AD. Soon, the fam-

ily had established influence at the Gaekwad's court and worked in the capacity of state treasure while continuing multifarious traditional business activities like money-lending, indigenous banking, coin-changing and traders in private capacity. This family had devised meticulous mechanism in documentation of issues related to state-connection and private affairs. The headquarters of this firm at Baroda came into existence in the beginning of 1902.

Late professor G D Sharma has noted that these documents can be categorized into bahis or vahis, chittis, hundis, jama-kharch and their sub-categories. These documents were prepared subject-wise and they covered wide range of firm transactions. These were not restricted to the financial dealings with the Gaekwad state alone.

Later part of bahis indicate details regarding the functioning of the bankers, money-lenders and traders operating at Baroda state and other main cities of Gujarat like Ahmedabad, Jambusar, Navsari, Bharuch and Dabhoi. Haribhakti firm had also financed marching troops of Gaekwads.