



National Conference
on
Tribal Arts and India's Conservation Ethos
Living Wisdom

A Dialogue on Heritage, Culture and Conservation



Friday, 10 October 2025
9:30 – 14:00 hrs
Silver Oak, India Habitat Centre, New Delhi

Indira Gandhi Rashtriya Manav Sangrahalaya
&
Sankala Foundation

(Sankala Centre for Cultural and Natural Heritage)

National Conference on **Tribal Arts and India's Conservation Ethos: Living Wisdom** A Dialogue on Heritage, Culture and Conservation

India's tribal communities embody a long-standing continuity of human-nature relations. Their subsistence, cultural practices, and cosmologies are deeply intertwined with forests, rivers, hills, and wildlife. The roots of this relationship extend deep into antiquity. Archaeological evidence from the Indus Valley Civilisation reveals reverence for trees, animals, and river systems, reflecting an early understanding of ecological interdependence that underpins India's conservation ethos.

Over centuries, tribal and forest-dwelling communities have sustained this ethos through painting, pottery, music, dance, and storytelling, serving as modes of knowledge transmission. They preserve ecological memory, affirm cultural identity, and pass wisdom to future generations.

In this context, the **Silent Conversation: From Margins to the Centre**, an art exhibition – cum – conservation initiative, has evolved into a national platform for tribal communities to share their ethos with the rest of the world. The 4th edition of this exhibition, organised by Sankala Foundation, seeks to transcend the boundaries of an art exhibition and initiate a dialogue, fostering stewardship to promote tribal arts and their conservation ethos.



About the Conference

The national conference on **Tribal Arts and India's Conservation Ethos: Living Wisdom** will serve as a dialogue on Heritage, Culture and Conservation. Scheduled for **Friday, 10 October 2025**, at **Silver Oak, India Habitat Centre, New Delhi**, it will bring together policymakers, scholars, practitioners, artists, curators, conservationists and community leaders to explore the vital role of tribal and forest-dwelling communities in shaping India's ecological and cultural landscapes.

Discussions will focus on how traditional knowledge, cultivated over generations, can guide contemporary urban planning, environmental policy, and sustainable development. The initiative honours tribal communities as custodians of natural and cultural heritage, while also reminding us of the society's responsibility to document, preserve, and transmit this knowledge to younger generations. By amplifying tribal voices and showcasing their arts, the conference seeks to foster partnerships and policies that honour the deep, symbiotic relationship between communities and nature.

Our Vision

The aim is to bring voices from the margins to the centre, guiding India's conservation through the creativity and ecological wisdom of tribal communities. We aim to reimagine conservation as both a cultural and ecological responsibility.



Objectives

Celebrate the Tribal Arts: Recognise and amplify the creativity of tribal artists from across India's forests, particularly tiger reserves and protected landscapes. The conference will offer an opportunity to explore how these communities coexist in harmony with nature.

Advance India's Conservation Ethos: Encourage greater appreciation for the traditional knowledge and wisdom of tribal communities, who have lived in harmony with forests and wildlife for generations. This dialogue aims to place their wisdom at the centre of the present and future conservation policies.

Foster Economic Empowerment: Create sustainable livelihoods by showcasing and connecting artists directly to buyers, patrons, and policymakers. Cultural and creative work can become a vital path for dignity and economic independence.

Spark Urban-Rural Dialogue: Engage urban audiences, especially youth, in conversations around eco-living, and heritage (natural and cultural). This event aims to bridge the gap between city-dwellers and tribal communities by providing a platform for discussion, reflection, and mutual learning.

Strengthen Cultural Exchange: Through live performances, artist interactions, storytelling, and open conversations, the event will immerse visitors in tribal traditions and values while fostering a meaningful dialogue around culture, conservation, and community.



Sankala Foundation

The Sankala Foundation is a Delhi-based non-profit organisation focused on expanding knowledge and fostering dialogue on climate, SDGs, conservation of natural resources and sustainability. Committed to mitigating the impacts of climate change, particularly on vulnerable communities, Sankala carries out its work through research, training, advocacy, education, and knowledge-sharing. The foundation is dedicated to protecting wildlife and their habitats, recognising their vital role in both ecological balance and the sustainable livelihoods of forest-dwellers. Through strategic partnerships and interventions, Sankala aims to create lasting positive changes for the protection of the environment and nature.

The **Sankala Centre for Cultural and Natural Heritage**, run by the Sankala Foundation, is committed to contributing to preserving and promoting India's rich cultural and natural heritage through research, education, training, and community engagement.

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Time (hrs)	Programme
9:30 - 10:00	Registration
10:00 - 10:45	Inaugural Session
10:45 - 12:00	Session I: Tribal Communities - Conservation Ethos
12:00 - 12:20	Tea Break
12:20 - 13:35	Session II: Tribal Arts and Culture - Way Forward
13:35 - 14:00	Valedictory Session
14:00 hrs onwards	Lunch



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