

# Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts Kala Nidhi Division

*Cordially invites you to*

**Special Lecture**

on

## **Strategies in Manuscript Conservation: A Practical Framework**

by



**Ms. Varsha Kotphode**

HoD & Training Head- Chief Conservator  
Conservation Deptt.

Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, Pune

Chair



**Prof. (Dr.) Ramesh C. Gaur**

Head- Kala Nidhi Division &  
Dean, IGNCA

On

**13<sup>th</sup> April 2026 at 4.00 P.M.**

At

**Umang Conference Hall, 4<sup>th</sup> Floor**

Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts

Janpath, New Delhi - 110001

## About the Lecture

Protecting old manuscripts is no longer just about fixing damage after it happens. Today, it is about using smart, simple, and eco-friendly tools to stop decay before it starts. This modern approach to keeping history alive focuses on non-destructive checking and green cleaning methods. By using electronic pH pens to monitor acidity and angled flashlights to find hidden structural issues, conservators can assess fragile pages without causing physical stress. Furthermore, replacing harsh chemicals with "smoke sponges" made of dry rubber and utilizing natural biocides like turmeric and neem ensures that manuscripts remain free from dirt and pests through sustainable, time-tested means.

The strategy also leverages cutting-edge technology and preventive infrastructure to ensure long-term survival. Digital rescue efforts now go beyond simple photography by using Artificial Intelligence to read faded handwriting and digitally clean blurry text, preserving the knowledge even if the physical medium remains delicate. On the storage front, prevention is prioritized through the use of IoT sensors to monitor heat and moisture, alongside the use of acid-free boxes and breathable cotton wraps to block mold and rot. Ultimately, this framework aims to move conservation out of specialized labs and into everyday libraries and homes, providing practical steps to safeguard our collective memory for centuries to come.

## About the Speaker

Smt. Varsha Kotphode is a distinguished art conservator with over sixteen years of dedicated experience in heritage preservation. Trained at the Regional Conservation Laboratory (RCL), Mysore, and the National Research Laboratory for Conservation of Cultural Property (NRLC), Lucknow, she integrates scientific expertise with a deep appreciation for cultural heritage. Holding academic qualifications in Fine Arts and Ancient Indian History, Culture & Archaeology, along with UGC NET certification in Museology and Conservation, she has built a multidisciplinary career as an artist, conservator, researcher, curator, and educator. Her notable conservation projects include the restoration of wall paintings at the Prime Minister's Office, South Block, New Delhi, and collaborations with esteemed institutions such as Kesari Wada Museum, Mahatma Phule Vastu Sangrahalaya, the National Film Archives of India, and the Forest Department (Wildlife), Pune.

Varsha's contributions extend to institution-building and international engagement. She established four specialized conservation laboratories in Pune, supporting archival documents, manuscripts, paintings, and metal antiquities. Currently serving as Chief Conservator and Head of Department at the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute (BORI), she also coordinates a Postgraduate Diploma in Preventive Conservation in collaboration with the Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts (IGNCA). A recipient of the Nehru Trust Fellowship at the Victoria & Albert Museum, London, and participant in the Metropolitan Museum of Art's conservation fellowship, she remains committed to advancing scientific conservation practices and mentoring future professionals.