



संस्कृति मंत्रालय  
MINISTRY OF  
CULTURE



# NATIONAL WORKSHOP

## Lecture Series cum Exhibition

### on

## Sacred Groves of India

Theme

### Sacred Groves as Reservoir of Bio-Cultural Heritage and Sustainable Conservation

25<sup>th</sup> FEBRUARY to 1<sup>st</sup> MARCH, 2026



Organized by,  
**Indira Gandhi Rashtriya Manav Sangrahalaya, Bhopal**  
in Collaboration with  
**Indian Statistical Institute, Kolkata (Giridih),**  
**Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts, New Delhi &**  
**Sankala Foundation, New Delhi**

## Background

Sacred groves have long formed the ecological and cultural backbone of many communities across India. These forest patches, protected through traditional belief systems and ritual practices, serve as living repositories of biodiversity, heritage, and collective memory. Found from the dry regions of Gujarat to the lush landscapes of the Northeast, and from the Himalayan belt to the coasts of Tamil Nadu and Kerala, sacred groves reflect an ancient worldview that ties nature, spirit, and society in a single continuum.

Over generations, communities have safeguarded these groves as taboo zones where extraction, disturbance, or misuse is restricted. With changing times, however, the moral authority behind these practices is weakening. Modernisation, large-scale land use change, and shifts in cultural values have led to a steady decline in grove protection. Recent recognition including by the Supreme Court has highlighted the importance of sacred groves as eco-cultural heritage requiring urgent attention and revival.

This national workshop and exhibition emerge from this context, aiming to bring together researchers, practitioners, tradition bearers, and local communities to engage deeply with the living traditions, ecological value, and ritual performances associated with sacred groves in India.

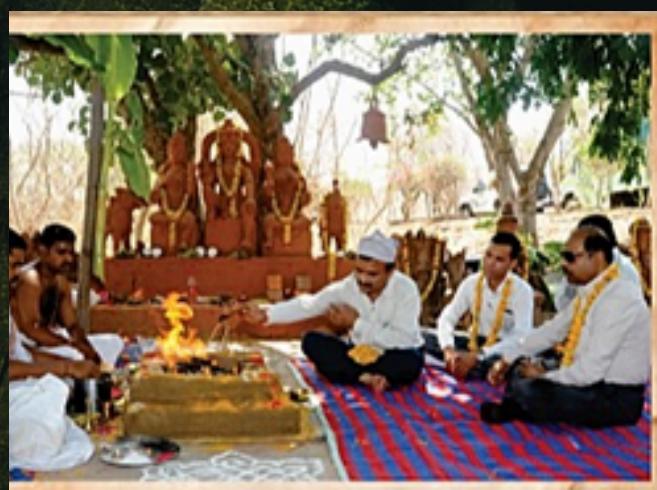
## Focus of the Programme

The event focuses on exploring, understanding and examining the role of sacred groves as reservoirs of bio-cultural heritage, in preserving traditional ecological knowledge and fostering sustainable conservation. It highlights:

- The diverse ritual practices, taboos, and belief structures that safeguard groves.
- The contemporary challenges faced by communities in maintaining these sites. The ecological services that sacred groves provide-biodiversity conservation, water regulation, micro-climate maintenance, and cultural continuity.
- Ways to strengthen community ownership and revive traditional knowledge through participatory involvement.
- The workshop will combine academic insight with lived experiences, offering a space where traditional custodians and scholars can share, learn, and co-create pathways for conservation.

## Sub-themes

- Anthropological studies on sacred groves
- Sacred groves and Indian Knowledge System
- Indigenous communities and biodiversity conservation through sacred groves
- Best practices in sacred groves and bio-cultural conservation in India



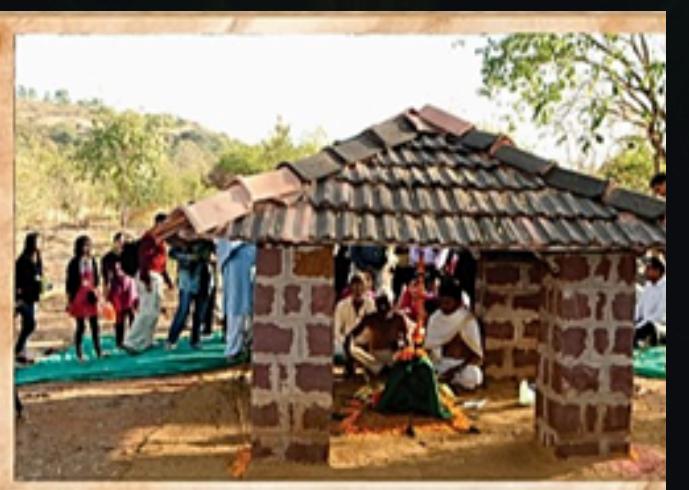
Tamil Nadu



Kerala



Jharkhand



Maharashtra

## Broad Course Objectives

The programme aims to inculcate the following:

- Understanding of eco-cultural heritage: Participants develop a nuanced appreciation of sacred groves as landscapes shaped by belief, ecology, and social norms.
- Sensitivity to community worldviews: Encouraging respect for local custodianship, traditional authority, and the spiritual dimension of environmental protection.
- Capacity for interdisciplinary thinking: Introducing cultural, ecological, anthropological, and policy perspectives to study groves holistically.
- Skills for documentation and conservation planning: Training participants in mapping, recording oral histories, and interpreting ritual performances associated with sacred groves.
- Appreciation for indigenous environmental ethics: Fostering deeper engagement with traditional conservation models and their relevance in the modern context.

## Methodology

To ensure a rich learning experience, the programme will adopt a blend of interactive and participatory methods:

- Expert lectures by anthropologists, ecologists, and cultural scholars.
- Demonstrations and performances of rituals and traditions linked with sacred groves by invited community practitioners.
- Exhibition walkthroughs, showcasing visual material, artefacts, and oral narratives.
- Group discussions and thematic sessions addressing cultural rights, ecological significance, and community challenges.
- Hands-on documentation exercises focusing on beliefs, practices, and symbolic elements associated with groves.

## Attraction of the Programme

Ritual performances by community custodians of sacred groves. Exhibition photographs, objects, maps, and oral accounts from sacred grove regions across India. Interactive sessions with renowned scholars working on ecological anthropology and traditional conservation systems. Cultural evenings showcasing music, stories, and practices connected with sacred landscape traditions. Opportunity for participants to engage directly with tradition bearers and community leaders. Documentation corners for students and researchers to practice field techniques. A collaborative space to develop future research and conservation networks.



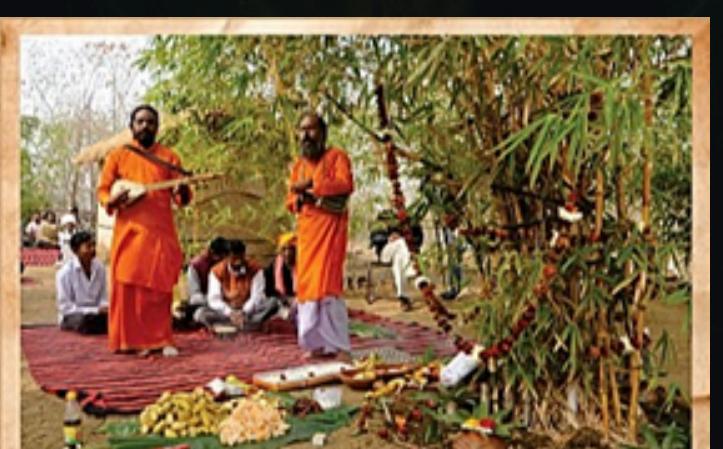
Manipur



Tamilnadu



Meghalaya



West Bengal

# Eminent Speakers of the Lecture Series

## Director, IGRMS

Prof. Amitabh Pande, Director, IGRMS, Bhopal, MP, India



## Eminent Speakers-

1. Prof. P. Venkata Rao, Former Dean, School of Social Sciences, University Hyderabad
2. Prof. K. K. Misra, Former V.C, Utkal University, Former Director, IGRMS, Bhopal, Anthropological Survey of India
3. Dr Prasant Kumar, Ex PCCF, MP
4. Dr Sameeta Rajora, PCCF, MFP Federation
5. Prof. Saroj Kanta Barik, President, Indian Botanical Society Former Director, CSIR-NBRI
6. Prof. A. B. Ota, IAS (Rtd.), Director and Special Secretary, SCSTRTI & Odisha State Tribal Museum
7. Prof. K. Anil Kumar, Professor, HoD, Janapada Sampada, IGNCA, New Delhi
8. Prof. Arun Kumar Acharya, Professor, Department of Anthropology, Sambalpur University, Director, COE-RDTS

## Other Key Speakers-

1. Dr. Hari Charan Behera, Associate Professor, Sociological Research Unit, ISI Giridih
2. Dr. Akshaya Kumar Rath, Associate Professor, School of Humanities, Social Sciences & Management, IIT Bhubaneswar
3. Dr. Alok K. Pandey, Assistant Professor, Department of Anthropology, University of Hyderabad
4. Dr. Bhubaneswar Sabar, Assistant Professor, Department of Anthropology & Tribal Studies, Maharaja Sriram Chandra Bhanja Deo University

## Duration

The program will be a six - day festival featuring a three-day intensive lecture series followed by exhibitions, discussions and ritual performances.

## Venue

The program will be held at **Indira Gandhi Rashtriya Manav Sangrahalaya**, Bhopal. The museum's open-air settings, tribal habitat zones, and cultural research environment make it an ideal venue for exploring eco-cultural heritage.

## Organizing Committee

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